

**Role of Women in the Political History of
Sikkim (1642-1975)**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



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

By

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February, 2020

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DECLARATION

I, **Ingnam Subba**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled **“ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SIKKIM (1642-1975)”** submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the **Degree of Master of Philosophy** is my original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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This is to certify that the dissertation titled "ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SIKKIM (1642-1975)" submitted to the Sikkim University for partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Master of philosophy in the Department of History, embodied the result of bonafide research work carried out by Miss. INGNAM SUBBA under my guidance and supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any Degree.

All the assistance and help received during the investigation have been duly acknowledge by him.

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my sincere thanks to my supervisor **Dr.SangmuThendup**, whose guidance; patience, support, and encouragement enable me to complete my dissertation. I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to the faculty member of History Department**Dr.Vijay KumarThangellapali,Dr. Venu Pant,Dr. V Krishna Ananth, Dr. AniraPhiponLepcha, Dr.SJeevanandamand Dr. KhwairakpamRenuka Devi**, for their valuable guidance throughout my dissertation.

I express my sincere thanks to **Dr. RuthLepcha** for her unconditional support and guidance.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to members of theRoyal family namely: **Hope Lizum, JigmePhuenkhang, Dr.TsewangTendukPulger** for giving their precious time for this work. Also, I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart to **Hope Cooke,Mrs. Ruth KarthakLepchani** and **N.B Khatiwada** for being cordial and of very approachable nature.

Thank you to Librarians of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and Sikkim University Librarians for their help and support. I express my sincere thanks to Mrs. Bishnu Maya Karki, staff in the department of History, for her timely assistance at various stages of my research.

I'm forever grateful to my parents, for there constant source of support and love. Last but not the least; I would like to thank my friends**Solami Rai, PerismitaBasumatary, JigmeDorjiBhutia** and **Govind Chhetri** and my seniors for their love and support during this dissertation.

INGNAM SUBBA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of the role of women in the history of Sikkim falls within the fold of women's history. Prior to the 1970s the study of history was basically confined to political history, historical events, and the achievements of the leaders; predominately men. Women were usually excluded and when ever mentioned, were portrayed in stereotypical roles such as: wives, mothers daughters and mistresses. But this dynamic started to change with the feminist movement of the late 1960s in America where women started to question the existing historical narratives and the invisibility of the women in history. They started to stress on the importance of the study of women in the historical front and the whole process of historical revisionism started. "The women's history that now fills the shelves of libraries and appears in computers searches had its beginnings in the feminist activities of the late 1960's in the North America and the United Kingdom."¹

From 1970s onwards, where second wave of feminist historians, influenced by the new approaches promoted by the social history, led the way and the insistence of the women such as "Gerda Lerner in The United States and Sheila Rowbotham in England that history consists of two sexes both worthy of inclusion in our narratives and analyses of the past."² In that way with the efforts of the feminist movement and the many female historians the study of women's history started. Women's history is the study of the role that women have played in history and the methods required to do so. It includes the study of the growth of women's right throughout recorded history, personal achievements over a period of time, the examination of individual and

¹ Judith P. Zinsser '*Women's History/Feminist History*' The Saga Handbook of Historical Theory, p 239.

² Ibid,

groups of women of historical significance, and the effects that historical events have had on women.

Women in Sikkim

Before Sikkim became a part of the Indian union in 1975, it was an independent kingdom ruled by the Namgyal Dynasty from 1642 to 1975. Three distinct ethnic groups constituted the population of Sikkim: the Lepcha, Bhutia and the Nepalese. Among them the Lepchas are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim and the other two ethnic groups are believed to have immigrated from Tibet and Nepal respectively. According to tradition, Phuntsog Namgyal was crowned the first Buddhist king of Sikkim in 1642 and after him the legacy of the Namgyals continued up to 1975 until Sikkim became a part of India. With the establishment of a Buddhist kingdom in Sikkim, the king became the temporal and the religious head, while Buddhism was made the state religion of Sikkim. “By tradition the Namgyal rulers were racially and culturally close to the Tibetan theocracy.”³ The Namgyal dynasty had to face many challenges both politically and economically right from the time when the British entered Sikkim in the 19th century up to the time when they left Sikkim with the end of British colonialism. Sikkim was made into a protectorate state of British India from 1889. The main struggle for the Namgyal rulers started when the educated people of Sikkim wanted to do away with the monarchical system and there was a huge upsurge against the monarchical system. The upsurge was led by many new political parties to abolish monarchy as a form of government and for Sikkim to join the Indian union. In this political struggle, there were

³ A.C Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, Indus publishing company, New Delhi.p.15.

many people both men and women who took an active part. Unfortunately, the role of women in the political struggle of Sikkim has often been overlooked in the historical narratives of Sikkim. Regarding the position of women and the role of women in Sikkim, before the establishment of the Buddhist monarchical rule and the advent of British into Sikkim it is important to understand the political organization of Sikkim. Prior to the establishment of the monarchical institute, Sikkim was mainly a place where chieftdom was prevalent and among the ethnic groups which resided, the prominent one was the Lepcha community, but the presence of Limboo and Mangar communities have also been recorded. The Lepchas were totally unknown to the outside world and they lived in the forest, which provided them food and shelter. “Lepcha women were part and parcel of the Lepcha economy and this was because women’s status and role in any tribal society is different than among the non tribals.”⁴ Since their main economy was based on hunting and gathering and women were as active as men in this process their position was same as that of men in the tribal community. As far as the religious aspect is concerned, in the tribal society the people earlier used to follow animist form of religion where females also had a high position. But after the establishment of the monarchical rule we can see the changing dynamics in the position of women. As Sikkim slowly moved away from the traditional tribal element and came under the theocratic patriarchal model of the Namgyal Dynasty, where Buddhism was made a state religion and there were several conversions which took place, Tibetan Lamaism became the prominent religion in Sikkim, and under it the clergy class started to flourish with monastic monks starting to dominate the religious front. Because of this, the animist form of religion lost its prominence within the tribal communities and so did the importance of the female priests of the Lepcha community who were called *Mun*. Besides in the religious front, we can also observe huge shifts in the women’s

⁴ D.C Roy, *Status of Women Among The Lepchas*, Akansha Publishing House New Delhi,p.8

position of Sikkim when the Namgyal Dynasty was established as the center of the Tibetan theocratic and patriarchal system in Sikkim. Naturally, the society of Sikkim became regressive towards women, the overall position of women was weakened under the umbrella of the Namgyal rule, women did not have any kind of voice-be it politically, socially, or economically and they were basically confined to the household. Their jobs were to look after their husbands and children and the status of women in the feudal structure was at the bottom. “In the past, Sikkim under monarchy had no schemes to empower the local women so they had no role to play in major decision-making process. The old laws gave no rights to women and the kingdom was basically about the men and the king”.⁵ Even though with the saturation of women’s position in Sikkim under monarchical rule, Sikkim has also witnessed many prominent women who had voiced their opinions against the rigid patriarchal society and had tried to break free from the existing social setup. These women left a mark in the history of Sikkim by playing major roles politically, socially and economically.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Sikkim’s history is very fascinating and there are many topics of interest in the study of this region, such as the cultural aspects of Sikkim and its people, the relation between Sikkim and others regions, its religious history, and various other issues remain a subject of interest to scholars. But what is even more fascinating is the political history of Sikkim which constitutes a major part in the history of Sikkim. However, what is lacking in the past studies about the history of Sikkim is the study of the role of ‘women’ in the political history of Sikkim. We can find lots of books dedicated to the political struggle of Sikkim which extensively deal with the role of kings of Sikkim

⁵ Bitu Subba *Women, “Quest” for Empowerment in Sikkim’s society*, International Journal of Scientific and Research Publication, volume4, issue9, sep2014.

and the male political leaders in Sikkim's political history, but not about the role and the contributions of women in the history of Sikkim. There were and are many strong women personalities who played an active part in the politics and society of Sikkim like Pendi Wongmo, Yeshey Dolma, Pema Tseuden (Coocoola), Hope Cooke, Kazini Elisa Maria, Ruth Karthak Lepcha and others. But most of the books present a patriarchal view of women and disregard their role in the history of Sikkim. Most previous works have only projected women as a 'phase' and bring forth the negative portrayal of women as trouble makers for that particular phase in the history of Sikkim. Those works have neglected their qualities of leadership, aims, and their contribution towards Sikkim. For instance, Pendi Wangmo was the first woman in the history of monarchical Sikkim to fight for the throne and challenge the male succession system in 1700. She is also blamed for having invited the Bhutanese to invade Sikkim. She was one of the first women in the dynastic history of Sikkim who gathered enough courage to go against male domination and the system of primogeniture. Yeshey Dolma the 9th Namgyal queen of Sikkim had been a significant person, who witnessed the first phase of the British domination in Sikkim and had also written a book along with the *Chogyal* Thutob Namgyal called 'History of Sikkim' in 1908. Another woman who played an important role in the development of Sikkim and its policies was Pema Tseudeun popularly known as (Coo Coola). She was a princess from the Namgyal family and was very much involved in Sikkim's political and social arena. She is mostly; identified as the sister of the 12th *Chogyal* Pelden Thondup Namgyal during whose time Sikkim became a part of India. She worked very hard for the rehabilitation of the Tibetan refugees in Sikkim when a large number of Tibetans fled Tibet during the occupation of the Tibetan Autonomous Region by China in the 1950s. She was also very vocal about her stand, of Sikkim not being a part of India and advocated its independent status. But somehow her individual identity and her contribution have

gotten lost in historical narratives of Sikkim. Hope Cooke, the American queen of Sikkim has been a prominent personality in Sikkim's History who was very much involved in the economic, social, and political developments of Sikkim. But often her contributions are overlooked and at times she has been accused of being a CIA agent and a person who was propagating anti-Indian feelings among the children of Sikkim. Kazini Elisa Maria was another significant personality during the upsurge to bring down monarchy in Sikkim and she had a huge impact on the Sikkimese politics like no other. She was the first woman who openly criticized the monarchal Namgyal rule. She has also been credited for building an army of educated youth of Sikkim to go against the rule of the last Namgyal monarch. Ruth Karthak Lepcha a native woman from the Lepcha tribe is also one such personality who challenged the Namgyal Rule in Sikkim. We only get to know about these women and their contribution in bits and pieces and that too within patriarchal perspectives where they are mainly projected as someone's daughter, sister, or wife. Their significant roles have been marginalized and their genuine works have been often ignored in the absence of written and recorded sources dealing solely with women's participation and their significant role in various fields in the history of Sikkim. Thus, the present study will attempt to minutely study the role of women in the political history of Sikkim from 1642 and highlight their contribution to the fields of polity, education, industry, society etc. The study will compare and analyze the role of native women *vis-à-vis* foreign women in the history of Sikkim. The work will also try to assess the impact of modern western education on the women of Sikkim.

1.2. Literature Review

The literature review for this work includes works on two important topics (i) women and gender, (ii) History of Sikkim. It becomes imperative to study the question of ‘women’ and ‘gender’ in order to understand their role in the political set ups. The first part of this review consists of works on women and gender, though they are not directly related with Sikkimese history, they talk about the issue of women, gender, their role in society, polity, economy and the household. The second section of this review consists of literature on Sikkim, its history, culture and socio-economic development since 1642.

‘Marginalization of Women’s Popular Culture in Nineteenth century Bengal’ by Sumanta Banerjee in *Recasting women: Essays in Colonial History* edited by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (1989) is an essay which talks about how women and women’s popular culture were marginalized in the 19th century by the *Bhadralok*⁶ man just because these men did not approve of these cultures in the 19th century. The essay also highlights how in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century there was a thriving culture of women who took part in storytelling, street performance, poems, plays songs and dances basically in the field of learning and entertainment and they were expressing the social condition which they were in at that time. But this thriving culture was not approved by the men and society of the 19th century, so the women who took part in it these activities were looked down upon and the popular culture of women began to be marginalized.

‘The Magic Time: Women in the Telangana People’s Struggle’ by Visantha Kannabirrn and K Lalitha in *Recasting Women: Essay in Colonial History* edited by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh

⁶(well educated men typically Bengalis, regarded as members of a high social class)

Vaid (1989), is an essay, where the authors have written about the women's participation in the Telangana people's struggle which began in 1946 and lasted till 1951. The writers have written about the position of women in this region being very much poor. The writers have also written about the influence of the communist party upon these women and how much the struggle impacted their lives and the changes which took place when the struggle was going on to the position of women in Telangana.

'Gender Theorizing Feminism' by V Geetha (2002) is a book which tells us about the in-depth gender differences in the world, and how these gender norms came to be. The author has written about the age-old gender norms for men and women and how different institutes have played their roles in solidifying the gender norms like religion, education, politics, and media. The author goes on to write about how these institutes have projected both the gender differently and we get to understand how these institutes have given subordinate positions to women. This book also highlights the debate regarding masculinity and femininity by different scholars. By this book we get to understand how gender defines us and how we define gender.

'Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens' by Uma Chakravarti (2003) is a book which deals with women's position in the caste structure of the Indian society. Chakravarti writes about the Brahmanical patriarchy which dominated the Indian caste society and also highlights the suffering of women in the caste structure. She writes about how women are suffering in general and in India because of this caste structure women are suffering in different way at different levels as the women belonging to the upper strata of the caste has to deal with different kind of difficulties and

women who belong to the lower strata of caste have to deal with different kind of difficulties with in the Brahmanical patriarchy in India. This book also talks about the reformation and criticism on caste and also the role of British in establishing more rigid caste system in India.

‘Women and the Nation; the Trouble with the Voices’ by Partha Chatterjee, in *Women’s Studies in India* edited by Mary E. John (2008), is an essay which talks about the emergences of women’s narrative history in Bengal in the late 19th and early 20th century and the views and ideologies of the nationalist at that time. The writer writes about how during the colonial era, women of the middle-class households had started to study in secrecy because the men in the society did not approve of the developments. These women later came up with their autobiographies. According to nationalists the women were not allowed to study religious text in the past, but due to their devotion to god they started to read the religious texts and also to write. But the nationalists failed to acknowledge the struggles and resistance these women had to face just to gain the basic educational rights in the patriarchal pre-modern times. The writer has focused on the work of Rasundari and her autobiography *Amar Jiban*, to bring forth the issues of women during the time when the books was written.

‘*Stridhika* or Education for Women,’ by Tanika Sarker, in *Women’s Studies in India* edited by Mary E. John (2008), is an essay which also analyzes aspects of Rasundari’s autobiography *Amar Jiban* and compares her writing with the reformers at that time and writes about the anxieties and arguments against women education and narrates the stories of women coming and asking for equal rights for women. She also writes about how women were denied education because the men thought that women were ‘inherently stupid’ and also later when women were getting education

these men were so persistent to deny them the right because they were afraid that once women got education they would be total opposite to the traditional women who were ‘domesticated’, ‘chaste’, ‘good wife’ of old times. They feared that the education equaled to the end of the patriarchal marriage system

‘Creating an Enabling Environment’ by Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, in *Women’s Studies in India* edited by Mary E. John. (2008), is an essay, where the writers have written about the problems of the Muslim girls of India in achieving education and higher education. The writers state that people usually blame the religious factors for the lack of education imparted to the Muslim girls. But they have given a detailed account of the other factors which are more responsible for the lack of education among Muslim women rather than religious ones. Some of these factors are socio-economic factor which dominates the decisions taken by the family to not send their girls to schools and prefer them to work and provide for the family as majority of the Muslim household comes under poverty line. The Muslim boys are also not in higher ratio in the education of India because they are busy in the field of skill and craft so they drop out of schools and because the boys are not educated in higher level the girls also have to drop out because women are presumed inferior to men. Being more educated to men is like a crime in the society and also the girl who is more educated will have a hard time to get married. According to them, all these factors have contributed to the low ratio of the Muslim women in the education and higher education in India.

‘The Tyranny of the Household’ by Devaki Jain and Nirmala Banerjee, in *Women’s Studies in India* edited by Mary E. John.(2008), in this essay the writers have written about the position of women in the household and talks about how family and household are not the same entity either

conceptually or in relation to statistical theory and method. 'Household' is the term used frequently in economical and statically analysis and the family is termed as something intimate in human relationship. The position of women in both these entities is lower in hierarchy but we see that within the family women possess social power due to age or custom but certainly not economic power but household more than the family contains or conceals within it the gender based inequalities and these inequalities stride across class, caste, race and religion.

'Of Begums and Tawaifs: The Women of Awadh' by Saleem Kidwai, in *Women's Studies in India* edited by Mary E. John. (2008), is an essay where the writer writes about the women of Awadh and how they played a very important role in the politics as well as the culture of Awadh and how there is a preconceived notion about Awadh's decadent culture kept alive by commentators and historians, of them being licentious and hedonist. In this essay, the writer has clarified how this was not the case and women in general had played very important roles and has focused on the two Begums of Awadh. Nawab Begum and Bahu Begum were a duo of mother in law and daughter in law and even though they were in *purdha* (seclusion) system, they still had control over the court. The writer also states that even though the male of the family was the Nawab these women had the real power in Awadh and they also fought against the British for their state.

'Women in Struggle': A Case Study of the Chipko Movement by Kumud Sharma, in *Women's Studies in India* edited by Mary E. John. (2008), is another essay which talks about the struggle of the women in the Chipko Movement in Uttarkhand where there was a struggle against the logging

of forest which was affecting the livelihoods of the people of that region and women in particular, These women fought the men who belonged to the bureaucracy and also the men from within their community who sold these forest lands to the companies without considering the struggles of the people of the region.

‘Women’s History/ Feminist History’ by Judith P. Zinsser, in *The Sage handbook of Historical Theory* edited by Nancy Partner and Sarah Foot, is an essay which narrates how women’s history has developed over the years with the efforts of the American scholars at first in 1960s and 1970s because they wanted to know and develop women’s writing and perspective in history which was ignored and marginalized for many centuries. She has also written about how the feminist activism of the late 1960’s in North America and United Kingdom helped to develop the women’s history. The women’s history dealt with the question of the women’s statues in society, economic and politics and the study of women’s past was their means of creating a collective identity. The women’s historian followed the Marxist methodologies and also looked into the aspects of anthropology, sociology, economics, and psychology to trace and identify the women’s history. The sources they took to write on women were the journals, memories, diaries, magazines, novels, sermons, and cookbooks. With these kind of efforts, women’s history was developed in United States and many women scholars graduated from renowned universities and colleges like Jone Kelly, Gerda Lener, Natalia Zemon Davies, Judith W. Scott and many more and they started to write articles, journals and started to publish them and their dissertations were also turned into books and with this development of the women’s history in the United States it also spread into other countries and became a worldwide phenomenon and they also started to write about the women’s history of their countries.

Coming to the second part of the literature review the following review consists of works on the History of Sikkim.

‘Short Political History’ by Lal Bahadur Basnet (1974) is a book which narrates the political history of Sikkim and gives a detailed historical account from the time of formation of monarchy to the British intervention into Sikkim. The author has given detailed chronological map of events that took place after the end of the British Colonialism and the political drama involving the Chogyal (King) Palden Thondup Namgyal, Queen Hope Cooke, different political party leaders namely Kazi Lendup Dorji and his wife Kazini for the power struggle in Sikkim and the coming of democracy in Sikkim. The author also writes about how communalism was rampant in this power struggle and how Sikkim eventually became the 22th state of India.

‘Time Change an Autobiography,’ by Hope Cooke (1982). From this autobiography we get to know and understand about the life of Hope Cooke right from her childhood to her becoming the queen of Sikkim and the struggles that she faced. She has written in details about her family history, her life in Long Island in the U.S. She goes on to explain how her life was with her grandparents and her sister and how her school life was like. She has also written about her life in Teheran when she was staying with her uncle who worked at the U.S embassy of Iran. She writes about her life in Sarah Lawrence College as a student and her friends. As a college student during her holidays she came to Darjeeling and met the then prince of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal who was there to visit his children who were studying in Darjeeling. In this autobiography she

does not shy away from telling the truth about the up's and downs of her relationship with Palden Thondup Namgyal. She has also written about her contemplating feelings before her marriage to Palden Thondup Namgyal and whether she would be able to leave her life of New York and move to a completely new place. In this autobiography she also wrote about her complicated relation with her sister in law Coooola. As we move forward, we get to know about her life in Sikkim and how her life completely changed when she got married at the age of 23 to the then prince of Sikkim and became the Queen and her contributions to the development of Sikkim in education, economy etc. She also has written about the difficulties she faced in Sikkim and shared her experiences in Sikkim how at times she felt completely lonely in the palace, her relation with her step children and her close friends she made during her stay in Sikkim, her happy times, her hard times and how eventually under certain circumstances she left Sikkim and went to the U.S never to return again.

'Sikkim Saga' by B.S Das (1983) is a book written by the chief Administrator sent by the Indian Government to look after Sikkim's affair in 1973. The book tells the story from his point of view of the political drama in Sikkim. He gives a detailed account of the situation in Sikkim at that time and has written about his role in the maintenances of the smooth administration of Sikkim. The book describes his relationship with the Chogyal and also talks about the women's involvement in the power struggle. He specifically talks about Hope Cooke, Kazini Elisa Maria and Indira Gandhi. Das has written about the aims and aspirations of these women for Sikkim and for themselves and how particularly Hope and Kazini had influenced the political minds of their respective husbands Chogyal Palden Thundup Namgyal and Kazi Lendup Dorji. He also has written about the election process of Sikkim and also how with the popular peoples demand the merger happened in 1975.

‘Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim’ by Sunanda K.Datta Ray, (1984) is a book which also talks about the political drama of Sikkim where the writer highlights the role of the Indian Government in adding to the anti-chogyal element in Sikkim and how the Chogyal was under the thumb of the Indian government and Indian Officials stationed in Sikkim. Ray writes about how Queen Hope Cooke did not like the presence of Indian Officers and the cold vibes between the Indian Government and Hope Coke. The book also focuses on the power struggle between the Chogyal and Kazi Landup Dorji and his wife Kazini and the Kazini’s her role in supporting her husband’s political career where in Kazi led the pro democratic forces and ultimately led to the merger of Sikkim with the Indian union.

‘Sikkim: Feudal and Democratic’ by A.C Sinha (2008) is a book where the author has written in details about the History of Sikkim, from the very inception of the Namgyal Dynasty and its rulers. He has given a very detailed account on the invasions from Bhutan and Nepal and the effects and impact that they brought to the Namgyal ruler. He has also written about the influx of the Nepalese people and the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of these migrations to Sikkim and the Namgyal rulers. The author also discussed in details about the period of British domination in Sikkim. In part two of the book, the author has highlighted the elites of Sikkim where he has talked about the feudal setup of Sikkim and the social organization of Sikkim in that period.

‘Status of Women among the Lepchas’ by D.C Roy (2010) is a book which gives a detailed account of the position of the Lepcha women in the community. To get a clearer view on this topic the author has tried to identify the position of the Lepcha woman in various social standing of the

Lepcha community, He has written in detail, about the status of Lepcha women in the field of religion, marriage, economic front and also in the political front. He has also discussed in details about the socio-political changes and its effects on the Lepcha women.

‘Sikkim Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom’ by Andrew Duff (2016) is a book which narrates in details about the life of the Chogyal (King) Palden Thondup Namgyal from his early days to the time when he became the 12th Chogyal of Sikkim, his relation to his wife an American citizen, Hope Coke and their struggle to keep their Kingdom’s separate identity from India. This book also deals with the internal struggles faced by the Chogyal and the Queen by different political parties and its leaders and the rivalry between Chogyal and Kazi Lendup Dorji (political leader) on the other hand between Queen Hope Cooke and Kazini the Belgium-Scottish wife of Kazi. The book also traces the story of how Chogyal eventually lost his kingdom at the end. In this book, Duff has used sources, such as personal letters of Scottish missionary teacher who used to stay and run the School in Gangtok and had made a very good relation with the royals, so from those letters he has traced many insights into the political development and the situation of Sikkim that time.

‘Sikkim’: Dawn of Democracy’ the truth behind the merger of India, by G.B.S Sidhu (2018) who was the head of the Research and Analysis Wing officer at Gangtok in 1973, is yet another book from where we get to know about how the R&AW (Research and Analysis Wing) of India played a role in the merger of Sikkim. As the writer was the officer of this branch in Sikkim, he writes about the political upheavals which were going on when he arrived in Gangtok in the year 1973. He also has written about the political parties and their leaders and how the R&AW supported

these political leaders and the parties to go against the autocratic value of the Chogyal. The author also talks about the Chogyal's aspirations towards Sikkim, Kazi Lendup Dorjee's political ascendances, and his wife Kazini's involvements in Kazi's political career and about her personality and aims. He also has mentioned about Hope Cooke and her journey in Sikkim as a queen. Sidhu has written in detail about his and the R&AW's support towards the anti-Chogyal aliments and how he was working with the political leaders particularly with Kazi to bring down the monarchical system during the time of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister of Indian.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this work are:

- To analyse the political history of Sikkim during the stated period with special reference to women's presence and identified roles.
- To identify and trace the role and contributions of the women leaders who were able to make an impact on the socio-political structure of Sikkim like Pendi Wangmo, *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma, Princess Pema Tseuden (Coocoola), Hope Cooke, Kazini Elisa Maria and Ruth Karthak Lepcha .
- To analyze and compare the role of foreign women *vis-à-vis* native women and evaluate their participation in the political scenario of Sikkim.
- To analyze the impact of modern education on the increasing presence of women in the political sphere in Sikkim.

1.4. Methodology

The method for identifying and locating resources for this work involved a quantitative research based on primary and secondary sources.

For primary sources, state archive documents, letters, correspondence, and newspaper writings from the archives and other sources were identified and analysed.

Secondary sources such as books and articles have been accessed and analyzed to obtain a thorough understanding of the political process and the status of women in Sikkim. Oral history narratives in the form of interviews have been conducted with prominent women and also some men who witnessed the political transformation of Sikkim, with regards to the role of women in the political history of Sikkim.

1.5. Chapterisation

- Chapter 1: *Introduction*

This chapter introduces the topic and includes a brief political history of Sikkim from its nascent stage to further development. It has the statement of the problem the literature review, the methodology, and brief chapterisation.

- Chapter 2: *Women's position in Sikkim: with reference to the changing socio-political dynamic of Sikkim.*

In this chapter the changing socio-political dynamic of Sikkim have been highlighted with the coming in of the Bhutia, and the Nepalese in Sikkim, and how the inter mixing of the cultural, religious, and traditional element have affected the position of women in Sikkim have been discussed in detail. This chapter has also dealt with the question of economic

position of women during that period and how the women in Sikkim were controlled by the state for the political need.

- Chapter 3: *Eminent political women personalities*

The third chapter gives a brief biographical sketch of six eminent political women personalities namely Pendi Wangmo, *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma, Princess Peme Tsedeun, Hope Cooke, Kazini Elisa Maria, and Ruth Karthak Lepchani. Along with that the political activities of these six women their prominent role and contributions to the political field have also been discussed in details in this chapter.

- Chapter 4: *Foreign women versus native women.*

This chapter has compared the role of foreign women and native women in their participation in the political history of Sikkim and also has analyzed the perception of these women among the people of Sikkim for their political activities.

- Chapter 5: *Influence of modern education.*

In this chapter the educational institutes of Sikkim have been studied from its nascent state to the arrival of the modern western education in Sikkim and has also dealt with the question of women's education. It has tried to bring forth the influence of modern education on the increasing presence of women in the political sphere in Sikkim, and has also studied the role of Kazini Elisa Maria and Hope Cooke in the mass mobilization of the youth of Sikkim in the political movement.

- Chapter 6: ***Conclusion:*** This chapter sums up the work of the previous chapters and analyzes the role of women in the political history of Sikkim as per the evidence found in the sources such as primary, secondary, and oral narratives.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN'S POSITION IN SIKKIM: WITH REFERENCE TO THE CHANGING SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMIC OF SIKKIM

Society has always been the fundamental element to human life, right from the birth of a child he/she belongs to a particular society. An individual cannot exist outside it. Men and women form an integral part of a society and can be seen as complementary to each other. The smooth functioning of a society is determined by the relation that exists between men and women. With the passage of time we see the relation between the two changed drastically leading to the establishment of one's superiority over the other. This is to say that the men began to be considered as a stronger sex as compared to the women. Thus, the importance of women subdued into the background. The position of women in a society hints to how developed and civilized a society is.

In the light of the above statement in order to understand the position of women in Sikkim it is essential to gain some ideas regarding the different communities and cultures of Sikkim, their history and what position did the women hold in their respective communities. Sikkim is a land of multi-cultural communities and tribes which bear their own unique culture, belief systems, and traditions. It is in this framework interesting to analyze how the intermixing of the culture, religion, and tradition, led to changes in the social standing of women in Sikkim.

It is well known that "...the earliest known inhabitants of Sikkim were the Lepcha and Limbu tribes, but from at least the 13th century onwards Tibetans begin to migrate southwards into

Sikkim, often referred to as ‘Bhutias.’¹ Later in 1642 from the same community, a man named Phuntsong Namgyal was crowned the first king of Sikkim. Talking about the people of Sikkim in particular and its society in general, Sikkim has witnessed and adapted to lots of changes, from being a sole tribal territory to being under a Buddhist theocratic monarchy and the influence of the British with the influx of the Nepali community and later the merger with India. With all these changes and influences over many centuries, we cannot undermine the fact that it directly or indirectly hit the social and cultural aspect of Sikkim’s communities and also shaped it to what it is today. The transition has been quite visible in the cultural and social spheres. It is interesting to see how the intermixing of the elements of different communities has been accepted by one another. The three most dominating communities that reside in Sikkim are the Lepchas, Bhutias, and Nepalese. These communities have their own culture and social identity where they differ in many ways. For instance, the Lepchas were the ones who used to live and lead their lives in pure tribal ways. Then came the Bhutias and with them, they brought along the Tibetan culture and last but not the least, the Nepalese came who now constitute the majority population of Sikkim. Their culture and social structure are different but in spite of the differences, all these communities under the umbrella of theocratic monarchy faced several changes, ups and downs, and adaptations in the context of religion, culture, society, and politics. All these three major communities of Sikkim will be discussed under a separate head in order to analyze each of them in detail.

¹ Alex Mckay, *Their Foot Print Remain: Biomedical Beginnings Across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier*, Amsterdam University press 2007, p 86.

2.1. The Lepchas

The Lepcha community is believed to be the aboriginals of Sikkim; many scholars claim that the Lepcha came from Tibet or China via Assam. However, they do not have any migration theory from the past. They believe that “the Lepchas are born and live at the foothills of Mt Kanchenjunga and this land is known as ‘*Mayel Lang*’ ‘*Ma*’ in Lepcha means hidden, ‘*yel*’ means eternal, everlasting, and ‘*lyang*’ means country.”² The Lepcha call themselves ‘*RongkupRumkup*’ in short ‘*Rong*’, means “The son of the snowy peak, the Son of God”.³ “They originally worshiped the spirits of the mountains, rivers, and forests, a natural outcome of the surroundings”⁴ before the establishment of the Monarchy, they used to live an animistic and tribal life, with their own cultural, religion and social standings.

Lepcha people have their own traditions about the origin and it is kept alive by telling the story of origin, generation after generation, with this, they trace that, they are originally the children of Mt Kanchenjunga. The story goes like this:

“...The Lepchas, believe that God created Fadongthing, the first Lepcha male, meaning ‘the most powerful’ in Lepcha and ‘Nuzaongnyoo’, first Lepcha female, meaning ‘ever fortunate’ from the pure and virgin snows of Mt Kanchenjunga’s pinnacle. Fodongthing and Nuzapngnyoo were considered as brother and sister because they were created by God, Itboo-Deboo, himself with his own hands. When they were growing up the god commanded and said to them, ...you two are brother and sister, therefore, you two should hold on to the excellence of morals’ and warned them both of impending disaster, untold misery and

² Lyangsong Tamsang, *Lepcha Folklore and Folk Songs*, Sahitya Akademi, p 4.

³ K.P.Tamsang, *The Unknown and Untold Reality about the Lepcha*, Mani printing press, Kalimpong, 1983, p 1.

⁴ J.C. White, *Sikkim & Bhutan Twenty One Years on the North-East Frontier 1887-1908*, Pligrims Publishing 2009.p 8.

misfortune if they cross the limit. God then sent Fadongthing to live at the top of ‘*Tungseng Nareng Chu*’ (mountain) and Nuzaongnyoo was put next to ‘*Naho-Nathar Da*’, a lake next to the base of the mountain they were thus separated from each other... Nuzaongnyoo was unable to control and resist the temptation, so she one day built a golden ladder and climbed up to ‘*Tungseng Nareng Chu*’ and met Fadongthing... against the will of God ... in anger, God summoned them both and said. ‘You have committed a Sin... as a punishment, both of you now must live at the foothill of Mt Kanchenjunga as humans and suffer’... they were sent down to the foothills of Mt Kanchenjunga as husband and wife. They gave birth to several children and thus these children, in course of time, spread over the foothills of Mt Kanchenjunga. Fadongthing and Nuzaongnyoo are, thus called ‘*poomthing*’ meaning the first ancestor of the Lepcha race by the Lepchas.”⁵

But many researchers have pointed out the migration theories of the Lepchas, and they have different versions of Lepchas migrating from a different region into Sikkim. J.C White, Sikkim’s first British Political Officer claims that the Lepchas are supposed to have come from the East along the foothills from the direction of Assam and upper Burma and he also said that “...the Lepchas bear little resemblance to the Tibetans, they are smaller and slighter in built with fine-cut features, in many case Jewish and their language is distinct one, not a dialect of Tibetan.”⁶

There is also a theory about the Lepchas being the lost tribes of Israel which was put forward by Mr. D.R Foning, according to whom; there are many similarities between the Lepchas and Israel people. “Like the story of creation of the first men and women. The Great flood of Noah’s time, and Towers of Babel under Nimrod’s have similarities with some Lepcha folklores and Stories.”⁷ He also pointed out that there are also some similarities found between the Lepcha words and the

⁵ Layangsong Tamsang, Op.cit., p 3.

⁶ J.C white, Op.cit.,p 7.

⁷ D.T.Tamlong, Op.cit., p 8.

Middle East and Europe words. He pointed out that the Lepchas had the same custom of bride price and the custom of giving the service to the bride's father for the marriage as in the case of the Israelis. This was practiced by the ancient Israelis and "...even the custom of marrying the widow by the deceased husband's brother or other kin of the husband was a common practice among both the Israelis and the Lepchas:"⁸ On these grounds, many say that the Lepchas are the lost tribes of Israel. There is also a theory on Lepchas migrating from the east and also migrating out of Sikkim and settling in northeast India and other parts of the world mainly the Southeast Asian countries. Halfden Siiger had said that:

"...if a straight line is drawn from the north through Sikkim and Darjeeling and if the Lepchas are compared with the other people of the west and the east, the Lepchas are much similar to the eastern people, and as such, the Lepchas may have migrated from the east to Sikkim and Darjeeling in the dim past. Then comes another version in which they reject the opinion of them migrating from the east and allege that "...the aged Lepchas say that the Nagas, Khasis, Mizos Mungs are the very descendants of those migrated Lepchas that had fled from Sikkim to Assam in the dim past and therefore many Nagas, and other tribal spoken words, numbers, customs, dress, culture, and features are much similar like that of the Lepchas. The Lepcha version intimates that the Lepchas have not migrated from the east to Sikkim, but it was the Lepchas who had migrated from Sikkim to Northeast India and the South, East Asian countries."⁹

Regardless of many theories on Lepcha migration, the Lepchas of Sikkim hold themselves as the original people of Sikkim the son of Sikkimese soil and with that, they carried on with their primitive way of life until the invasion of the Tibetans, British, and Nepalese into Sikkim. Lepcha people were originally hunters and gatherers and lived a nomadic life. According to Lal Bahadur

⁸ Ibid,p 8.

⁹ K.P.Tamsang, Op.cit,p 6.

Basnet the Lepcha people were “The archetypal lotus-eaters. They were hunters of nomadic habits, roaming at large in thickness in search of food. They had no settled life they lived in caves and bamboo huts amidst the vast, wild, magnificent, forests, old as the hills themselves. Each family lived by itself, with the least interference from the neighborhood, their needs were few, and the jungle provided all of them, including food.”¹⁰ Before they came in contact with the other groups of people in Sikkim they lived a very primitive life. Later when they came in contact with the outsiders many centuries later and particular the British, according to J.D Hooker “The Lepcha in one respect entirely contradicts our preconceived notions of a mountaineer, as he (Lepcha) is timid, peaceful, and no brawler; qualities which are all the more remarkable from contrasting so strongly with those of his neighbors to the east and west.”¹¹ He also gives a description of their features and where he describes them having a small body and shallow or often a clear olive complexion and the hair of men is plaited flat or round and he points out that the lower limbs of the Lepcha people are powerfully developed for being genuine mountaineers. He also describes the Lepcha women “...in like manners, the girls are often very engaging to look upon, though without one good feature: they are all smiles and good natured.”¹²

Religion

With regards to the religion of the Lepchas before the influence of Buddhism, they followed an animist religion where they worshiped the nature, rivers, flora & fauna, and most importantly the Mt Kanchenjunga and within this, the Lepcha people also used to believe in the practice of *munism* and *Boongthism* (shamanism) where they believe that they have the power to communicate with

¹⁰Lal Bahadur Basnet, *Sikkim a Short Political History*, S chand and Co pvt 1974, p 8.

¹¹ J.D Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, John Murry Albemarle Street 1855, p 118.

¹² Ibid, p 120.

the god and the good and evil sprites, so in the Lepcha community the *Mun* and *Boongthing* priests were respected a lot. They in general cure the sickness, pray for good harvest, good things for the household and especially the *Mun* Priests were able to carry the dead souls to heaven. Most of the *Muns* were females in the Lepcha community.

Munism

The *Mun* is the female spirit, "...they are attached to family lines and are roughly hereditary; they often descend from grandfather to grandson or from grandmother to granddaughter, but there is no regularity and a man may inherit a possessing spirit from a woman and *vice versa*. Once the vehicle dies the spirits may not choose another body immediately and large groups maybe without the possessing spirits for number of years. The manifestation of the spirit (for the spirits themselves live immortal beyond Kanchenjunga)."¹³ And the people possessed by the *mun* spirit practice healings, perform and conduct ceremonies for the good harvest and for the goodwill of the household and prophase and predict what may come in the future for the village. But in the *Mun* culture, "...the chief super-natural(deities) of the *Muns* are: the two feminine deities Iptmu and Narzong-nyou. Iptmu herself is never directly invoked; it is always her creations who are sacrificed and prayed to. Narzong-nyou is actually the chief Lepcha goddess."¹⁴ There is a classification of seven classes of *Munasim* called *Avor Mun*, *Pildon Mun*, *Angan Mun*, *Tungli Mun*, *Munjyum Mun*, *Mun Mook* and *Lyang-Eet Mun*. They are classified by the way they perform ceremonies and the power they hold with themselves.

¹³ Geoffrey Gorer, *Himalayan Village an Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim* ,Pilgrims Publishings 2005 p 215.

¹⁴ *Ibid*,p 225.

In particular '*Pildon Mun*' performs different ceremonies:

“...form the ordinary ceremonies to the delivering up of the soul of the dead person to heaven. By her supernatural power, she finds out the wondering soul of the dead person which is believed to be wandering in the atmosphere for forty-nine days and then takes him or her to heaven. That is why this class of *Mun* is called *Pildon Mun* in Lepcha, which means a *Mun* that finds out the soul. Also, she has the power to call back the spirit of the dead person on her body and speaks out in the very voice of the dead person and tell the good and bad happenings of the future of the family members and bids goodbye to his or her heavenly home.”¹⁵

The rest of the *Muns* are considered ordinary ones who “perform rituals, ceremonies, forecasts, make predictions and act as medicine women for the Lepchas but they cannot deliver the soul of the dead people to heaven. The annual ceremony of these *Muns* are called *Soogi*, in which they offer one hundred and eight flower garlands to Gods and pray the whole day and night by chanting hymns, invocations, and prayers in the tune of birds, in the sound of the wind, falls, rivers etc, which are very melodious and very pleasing to the ear, very soothing to the soul and very gladdening to the heart. Therefore in the Lepcha language, the meaning of the *Mun* is not only a Lepcha priestess but she is the liberator of the soul of the dead person to heaven and as such

¹⁵ K.P.Tamsang, Op.cit.,p 47.

Munism is the Lepcha's ancient religion or philosophy of the soul."¹⁶The practice of *Munism* holds a very important tradition in the Lepcha society and according to Geoffery Gorer "the service of the *Mun* are continuously necessary in the Life of the every Lepcha. They always are present at birth, at marriage they are the only essential priests, and at the death of laymen, their role is of more emotional importance than the lamas. Throughout life, they are necessary for cleansing from supernatural danger, for blessing and solemnizing different undertakings, and above all, for expelling devils."¹⁷

Marriage System of the Lepchas

Marriage systems throw light into the social standing of women to a great extent: as in the freedom of choosing her life partner or else her say in the decision of marrying a man chosen by her family. The Lepcha marriage system in the past was commonly an arranged marriage, contacted in childhood but the catch was that the bride had to be purchased, even though they were arranged. The groom had to give the bride price and also the groom had to provide service to the father of the bride. With this, the father of the bride used to calculate and judge whether the boy was suitable for his daughter or not. The groom thus had to pass all the challenges of being the perfect husband to the bride. According to Geoffrey Gorer:

"...there are two stages in Lepcha marriage *asek* or betrothal and *bri* or bringing home the bride. *Asek* is actually the validating ceremony at which the formal gifts from the family of the groom to that of the bride is presented, these gifts are called the price of the bride and once they are accepted the groom has the full access to his bride and all children born after *asek* are considered as legitimate. But until a large and expensive marriage feast or *bri* has been performed, the wife and the possibly her children, stay at her

¹⁶ Ibid,p 49.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Gorer, Op.cit,p 230.

father's house save possibly for short visits; and during this period the son-in-law is, as it were, his father-in-law's servant, and has to go and work for him whenever he is summoned and cannot leave without obtaining his permission; he is in a subordinate position and though he may be taunted, he must never reply."¹⁸

These were and are the customs of marriages of the Lepcha people though nowadays giving services by the groom to the father-in-law has quite stopped, but the practice of paying the bride price is still prevalent to this day. In the Lepcha society both monogamy and polygamy is practiced. Levirate marriages was also there, as the Lepcha people after when they pay the bride price and complete the task of service to the father-in-law, the wife is the property of the husband's family or group and, if in case of the husband's death the wife is married off to the men belonging to the husbands family (brothers) or group and the wife has no say in it. But Gorer states that it is all in theory and "...in practices these regulations are not always carried out and relatively seldom if the women is childless."¹⁹ After marriage the women in the Lepcha community loses a substantial hold in her natal home. She becomes part of her husband's family and in the case of levirate marriages her family is not even informed about the marriage; she has no land right over her father's property once she gets married. She is only given the animals and jewellery which she receives during her marriage. The Lepcha people believe in the clan system and they forbid the marriage between the same clan, as they believe that they belong to the same ancestors. They are divided into two groups: by birth and marriage, one is the patrilineal clan or *ptso* and the other is the immediate and extended family, they count decadent nine generations back from the father's side, and four on the mother's side. "A person who shares a common ancestor on the patrilineal

¹⁸ Ibid, p 154

¹⁹ Ibid, p 153

side nine generations back is addressed in the same way as your real brother and sister”.²⁰ They hold the tradition of the clan system very near to their heart and it is in a way very rigid. When it comes to marriage of people belonging to the same clan, the Lepcha community views them as the most terrifying incest and considers it as a sin and if that occurs, they are boycotted by the villagers and in such cases, they have to leave the village and settle in an isolated place.

These were the general background of the Lepcha tradition, culture, and religion in its purest form but with time, the culture, tradition, and religion of this community started to get dominated by other communities of Sikkim. There occurred many alterations in the Lepcha way of life particularly in the position of the Lepcha women. The changes in the standing of women in this community will be studied in detail in the later half of the present chapter.

2.2. The Bhutias

The second ethnic community of Sikkim are supposed to have originally migrated from Tibet and settled down in Sikkim. It is from the Bhutia community that the first Buddhist monarch of Sikkim was established in 1642. Regarding the stories of migration of the Bhutias, there is a popular historical narrative related to them as to why they started to migrate southwards from Tibet. One such narrative is of how the first descendant of the first king Phuntsog Namgyal called Khye-Bumsa came down to Sikkim from Chumbi valley, Tibet in search of the Lepcha Priest called Thekong Tek to seek his blessing for a child, as he was childless. Finally, he met the Lepcha priest and got his blessing for three sons and also got a prophecy that his descendants would become the rulers of Sikkim. With that he returned to Chumbi and the blessings of Thekong Tek came true and he was blessed with three sons later, “the blood brotherhood treaty was sworn between

²⁰ Ibid, p 144

Thekong Tek and Khye-Bumsa at Kabi Lungtok signifying the unification between the Tibetans and the Rongs (Lepcha).”²¹ With this there was a start of the incoming of the Tibetans into Sikkim the earliest ones were the Tibetan pastoralist who came to graze their animals. Later, the trades came down to Sikkim in search of the new market and then the missionary Lamas came and settled down in Sikkim to propagate Buddhism. According to Aparna Bhattacharya: “It has evidently been accepted that the people from ‘Kham’ province of eastern Tibet first started to come down to settle in Sikkim from about 10th -11th Centuries, due to various socio-political, economic and religious reasons.”²² There is also another claim regarding the origin of the Bhutias “as many clans of Sikkim that claim or can trace their ancestry to regions of Bhutan, such as Ha and Spa gro.”²³ Florence Donalson describes the Bhutias as people “on the Tibetan frontier, and nearer the snow line, live the Bhooteas, a hardy, well-to-do people, rich independent, but often aggressive and quarrelsome. Besides, these are the Tibetan traders, and dwellers in the monasteries. The principal lamas are of this nationality. They are the spiritual rulers of the country and have great power and influence over the native.

According to popular narrative, “Khye-Bumsa’s, three sons crossed into Sikkim and settled there. Khye-Bumsa’s youngest son was Mipon Rab, who’s fourth son, Guru Tashi, shifted to Gangtok. Guru Tashi’s eldest son was named Jowa Apha. Jowa Apha’s son was Guru Tenzing, and Guru Tenzing’s son was Phuntsong Namgyal”.²⁴

²¹ Lal Bahadur Basnet, Op.cit., p 13.

²² Aparna Bhattacharya, *The Bhutia-Lepcha Women of Sikkim: Tradition and Response to Change, Sikkim society, polity, economy* edited by Mahendra P Lama, Indus Publishing Company New Delhi 1994, p 1.

²³ Saul Mullard, *Opening the hidden Land*, Rachana Books and Publications 2011. p 37.

²⁴ Ibid, p 13.

And it was Phuntsong Namgyal who was crowned the first king of Sikkim in 1642 at Yuksom by the three Lamas who came from Tibet in search of the real monarch of Sikkim. Phuntsong Namgyal was made “*Dharma raja*”²⁵ of Sikkim and very little is known of his reign but according to H.H Risley he was the one “...who was chiefly engaged subduing or winning over the chiefs of the petty clans inhabiting the country east of Arun”.²⁶ This was done by the advice of the three lamas where Phuntsong Namgyal after becoming the King “...divided the territory of Sikkim into 12 *dzongs* (Districts), each under a Lepcha *Dozongpen* (Governors) or district chief. A body of councillors, composed of 12 Tibetans was also formed.”²⁷ The consecration of Phuntsong Namgyal as the ruler of Sikkim was a huge turning point in the History of Sikkim, where now Sikkim witnessed the domination of the Bhutia culture, religion, and tradition. Under the umbrella of the Namgyal dynasty, the Lamaistic Buddhism flourished, and the Tibetan culture started to gain foreground. Tibetan language, tradition, and culture were becoming a dominant part of the Sikkimese society. The Bhutias were the semi-nomadic agriculturists, who were also pastoralist. With the coming in of the Bhutias and the establishment of the theocratic monarchy in Sikkim, a new class of the clergy began to appear and then came the landlords the *Kazi* class. With the establishment of the monarchical system in Sikkim, the practice of feudalism also became prevalent and with that the-*Kazis* (landlords) emerged. They were in charge of the regional territories, “the Kazi and officials enjoyed some authorities over specific traces of land, but the final authority was the King in all matters of important”.²⁸ The *Kazis* were assigned to look after the land and collect the revenues and in the course of time they also started to practice the judiciary

²⁵ (Religious and political head)

²⁶ H.H Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, B.R Publishing corporation, Delhi, 2010, p 10.

²⁷ Lal Bahadur Basnet, *Op.cit.*, p 15.

²⁸ A.C Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim a Sociological study*, Thomson press India PVT, 1975, p 19.

in their regional areas. The inter marriage of the *Kazis* was also prevalent with the Namgyals (ruling class) and so, upon becoming the kinsmen of the rulers in the course of time some of the *Kazis* became very strong in Sikkim.

Religion

The Bhutias followed the Lamaistic Buddhism founded by the three Lamas who were behind establishing monarchy in Sikkim. “Buddhism in Tibetan is known as Lamaism. A Lama is a superior monk and a religious teacher. A Lama is also a guru (protector) of the practicing religion which is known as Lamaism.”²⁹The Bhutia people worship Buddha and they also recognize and worship Guru Padma Sambhava as their second Buddha because he was the one who founded the *Nying-ma* sect of Buddhism. The ruler and the majority of the Bhutia population belong to that sect. This form of religion became dominant in the Sikkimese society and the Lamas enjoyed the clergy status in Sikkim. “They were the custodians of the important monasteries of Sikkim like Dubdi, Pemiongchi, Tashiding etc, exercising significant influence as advisers to the Chogyal in the political administrative affairs of the state. The monasteries were in possession of huge landed property over which the lamas enjoyed both revenue and administrative control.”³⁰ Monastery studies also became very important element in Sikkim with the development of monarchy. It was the third king of Sikkim Chagdor Namgyal who introduced a rule where one boy child from each and every household of the Bhutia and the Lepcha communities had to compulsorily pursue the Monastic life in the *Gompas* (monasteries) of Sikkim. The young boys were taught to read and recite the Holy Scriptures in Tibetan and after many years of training they are even allowed to perform religious ceremonies. The Lamas are one of the most important aspects in the Bhutia

²⁹ Dr.Narendra Kumar Dash, *Guru Rin-Po-Che and Lamasim In Sikkim*, Bulletin of Tibetology, p 37.

³⁰ Suresh Kumar Gurung, *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics a Triadic perspective*, Kunal Books 2011, p 108.

society. No ceremonies are done without their presence, from birth ceremonies to praying for the wellbeing of household, good harvest to marriage ceremonies to funeral rites; all these are conducted by the Lamas. Thus they perform religious rituals in these events and they hold a very high and important status in the Bhutia society. But we do not see the same regard towards the female monks in the Bhutia society. The nuns are also there in few monasteries and the presence of nuns in Sikkimese society can be trace from the early 18th century itself. In the history of Sikkim there is a popular narrative that the fifth King Phuntsok Namgyal II's mother was a nun so the phenomenon of women becoming a nun in the Bhutia society was not new. They are popularly known as 'Lamani' and are learned in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist philosophy...they do not perform religious rituals or ceremonies for private individuals, nor are they given a place inside the main hall at the monastic services. Their devotions are confined almost entirely to the turning of prayer wheel and counting the beads."³¹ In the monastic front we can see a complete domination of the male monks and almost all everyday rituals are performed by the Lamas, thus the nuns do not enjoy similar platform, status, or importance as their male counterparts. Apart from Lamaism the "Bhutias of Lachan and Lachung placed great emphasis on coercive rites of exorcising and destroying demons. Like Lepchas, the execution of religion is in the hands of trained specialist *Pau*, *Nejohum* and Lamas. *Pau* is male and *Nejohum* is female".³² They are the Bhutia equivalents of the *Bongthing* and the *Mun* of the Lepcha community but because of the popularity of the Lamas in the society their population and importance is very less in the Bhutia society.

³¹ Aparna Bhattacharya, Op.cit., p 32.

³² Bhasin veena, *Ecology Culture and Change: Tribes of Sikkim Himalayas*, Inter-India Publication, 1989, p 334.

Marriage Systems of the Bhutias

In the Bhutia community four types of marriages are prevalent monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, polygyny. Amongst these four types of marriages polyandry was popular “earlier Bhutias with more sons and limited resources went for fraternal polyandry as the dominant form of marriages. “Though fraternal polyandry functioned to conserve land and labour in the family yet it managed to produce a pool of unmarried females”.³³ Just like the Lepchas, most of the marriages are arranged, where the boy’s family come to ask for the hand of a girl. There is also bride price system and the maternal uncle of the girl plays a very important role in the negotiation. Many gifts are offered to him in the process of negotiation by the boy’s side which includes items such as like alcohol, colored garments, money, and also one whole pig. If the gifts are accepted by the uncle of the girl it signifies the acceptance of the proposal. “The marriage rituals are performed by Lamas at the bridegroom's house and the bride’s home. The first negotiation is called the *Kanchang* when the marriage is settled and the auspicious day is selected for the betrothal ceremony and relatives of both sides are invited to the bride’s house, the expenses of the functions being borne by the boy’s party. In a ceremony called *Chhesiam*, the maternal uncle of the girl and parents are seated on the raised platform”.³⁴ And the Lamas perform prayers to facilitate the Marriage. The Bhutias are patriarchal in nature and follow the father's lineage. As mentioned earlier more than any other forms of marriages, polyandry was dominant in earlier Bhutia society and the position of women

³³ Ibid, p 274.

³⁴ Dr. Bandana Mukherjee, ‘Some Aspect of Bhutia Culture in Sikkim’, Bulletin of Tibetology 1995, p 85.

in this system was such that women controlled the household and their husbands used to go out to earn; the women in the family had complete control over her child and the household.

These were the general elements of the Bhutia community and the effects of the establishment of the monarchy in Sikkim.

2.3. The Nepalese

The Nepali community is one huge heterogeneous community which comprises the majority population of Sikkim. “The Nepalese came to Sikkim after the Lepchas and Bhutias. But many hold a narrative that the Limbu and Mangar, (Kirati) Nepalese were among the earliest settlers along with the Lepchas. Tharkuri elements came as part of the invading Gorkha armed forces and settled down in their conquered land in course of time. The Newars came to Sikkim at the invitation of the Namgyal courtiers for the purpose of developing a thinly-populated southern district so that agriculture could be encouraged and cash revenue could be generated.”³⁵ According to A.C Sinha “...there appears to be two waves of Nepalese immigration in Sikkim, the Gorkha Incursion from 1770 to 1815 and the British induced settlement efforts since 1861 onwards.”³⁶ With these immigrations in Sikkim, the population of the Nepali stock started to grow. The Nepalese in Sikkim is inclusive of three sub-cultures: the Kiratis, the Newari and the Ghurkhas. As the former is the tribal stock and the latter two are the Hindu stock. The Kiratis include Limbu, Rai, Manger, Gurung, Tamang, a host of marginal tribal stock, and they differ from the other Nepalese group such as Newari and Ghurkhas in terms of the features, language, customs, etc. They fall more towards the Mongolian stock and the rest falls more on the Aryan stock. According to A.C Shina “On the socio-cultural ground, the Nepalese in Sikkim may be divided into two groups; the

³⁵ A.C Sinha, *Feudal and Democratic*, Indus Publishing Company, 2008, P 66.

³⁶ Ibid,

Tagadhari- those who wear the sacred thread such as the Brahmins and the Gurkhas; and the *Matwali* -those who do not put on the sacred thread”.³⁷ The *Matwali* term is used also on the bases of the ones who use alcohol in their praying rituals. The Nepalese stock of *Tagadhari* used to look down upon the Bhutias and the Kiratis because they consumed meat. They are the ones who follow the Hindu tradition and followed the caste system, With the coming of the Nepalese, they brought along with them their culture, language, costumes, traditions and religion, and one Nepali Stock called Newars became as prominent and powerful landlords as the *Kazis* of Sikkim and they were referred to as *Thikadars* .But the immigration of the Nepalese was not liked by the Namgyal rulers and many times there were restrictions to the immigration of the Nepalese.

Religion

Culturally when the Nepalese came, they brought with them their religion, culture, tradition and the language which became a crucial element and later dominated the Sikkimese society, leaving behind the Bhutia and Lepcha community as minority in their own land. They brought along with them the Hindu religion and caste system particularly the Ghurkha stock followed all these elements of the Hindu culture and they strictly followed the hierarchy system of caste. On the top of the hierarchy pyramid are the *Bahun*s (Brahmin) and then the *Chhettris* (Kshatriya) and the *Kamis*, *Damais*, and *Sharkis* fell in the lowest strata in the caste hierarchy system. “Those who are well conversant with the *puranas* (an ancient book written in Sanskrit containing stories of the Hindu gods) are known as *pandits*”.³⁸ Thus they perform rituals and conduct ceremonies at birth, marriages, and deaths. The *Pandits* stay and take care of the temples and perform rituals there and they also give individual services to the people. Apart from the *pundits* in the Nepali Hindu

³⁷ A.C Sinha, Op.cit., p 8.

³⁸ Sudhansu Gangopadhyay, *Brahmin, Anthropological Survey of India*, Seagull Books Calcutta 1993.P 40.

religious community there are also women shamans called *Matas* who don't perform rituals or conduct ceremonies at birth, marriages, and death like the *Pandits*, but they predict the future and perform exorcism. The *Matwali* communities of the Nepali stock in particular are not predominately Hindus, as some of them follow their shamanist religion, and some of them have also adopted Hinduism, Buddhism etc. Limbus in particular used to follow *Yumaism* "Yumaism is a belief in a matriarchy or feminine Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, cosmic consciousness, who is considered as transcendent, immanent the eternal being, and who created the universe and all there is."³⁹ Like the Lepcha *Mun* Limbu there are women priest called *yema* who perform rituals, heal sickness etc, but because of the influence of the Buddhism and Hinduism the traditional Limbu religion lost the importance of *Yemas* in Sikkim. A.C Sinha holds the opinion that "... The Nepalese immigrants in Sikkim are predominantly Hindus. There have been three parallel systems of the sacred specialists among the Nepalese, viz: the shamans, the Hindu brahmanical priests, and the lamas, who have evolved a system of near co-existence."⁴⁰

Marriage System of the Nepalese

In the Nepalese tradition, especially within the *Matwali* tradition, they practice marriages through elopement. Polygamy and monogamy is prevalent in the *Matwali* tradition and inter caste marriages between the *Matwalis* are also allowed. After eloping, the boy's family goes to the girl's home with the middlemen and asks in the official way to handover their daughter to them. The middlemen help in the negotiation, in some of the *Matwali* groups the practices of bride price is also there e.g Limbu, Rai, Tamang etc similarly like that of the Lepchas and Bhutias. The Bahuns,

³⁹ J.R Subba, *Yumaism, the Limboo way of Life: A Philosophical Analysis*, Yakthung Mundhum Saplapa, 2012, p 1

⁴⁰A. C Sinha, Op.cit.,p 40.

Chettris, and Thakuris the ones form the *Tagadhari* stocks who hold the highest position in the social hierarchy in the Nepali Hindu caste system, do not believe in matrimonial alliances with other castes “*Gotra* exogamy is strictly followed among the Brahmins. Adult marriage is the rule. Marriage by negotiation (*mangni biha*) is the normal practice among them, though marriages by elopement (*chori biha*) have been there in few cases. Monogamy is the rule, and junior sororate is practiced...bride price in the form of cash and kind is not demanded in every case...widower remarriage and junior sororate takes place, but widow remarriage is not practiced”.⁴¹

All together the Nepalese community is a heterogeneous one where different group have their own tradition, culture, and language and in course of time they became one of the major communities in Sikkim.

⁴¹ Sudhansu Gangopadhyay, Op.cit., p 45.

2.4. The Changing Position of Women in Sikkim

The land of Sikkim experienced various changes overtime not only in the context of polity but also social and economic. There took place the coming of several groups from different parts of the world and settling down in this area with their diverse culture and tradition. With these diversities the prevailing social customs and traditions seem to be intermingling with them. Sikkim, in general, had to adapt to many changes from being an unknown tribal state to being the monarchical state and also witnessed several migrations of the different group of people. The Sikkimese adapted to different social changes that affected every aspect of the life of the different communities residing here. These changes become glaring when evaluating the position of women in Sikkim.

All these intermixing of cultures directly or indirectly affected the position of the so claimed indigenous Lepcha women. As mentioned earlier before the establishment of the theocratic monarchy, the Lepchas pretty much lived a primitive life where they were "...totally unknown to the outside world and they lived in the forests which provided them food and shelter. Lepcha women were part and parcel of the Lepcha economy and this was because women's role in the tribal society is different than among the nontribal".⁴² All this started to change when other people Bhutias at first and later Nepalese started coming in. With these began the practice of semi-nomadic agriculture and pastoralism and later the system of terrace-farming which was encouraged by the British to gain revenue. The hunting and gathering practices of the Lepcha community were stopped in course of time and they started to adapt to cultivations and the women who earlier used to take active part in the primitive economy was now predominately confined to the household activities.

⁴² D.C Roy, *Status of Women Among the Lepchas*, Akansha Publishing House New Delhi, p 8.

The changes in the religious front can be observed with the women priest called *Mun* losing her significant status. According to D.C Roy "...the society by respecting the *Mun* respects the females. Females occupy a prestigious position and status in the Lepcha society due to the important role and power of the *Mun*".⁴³ In the *Mun* mythologies the women deities are shown as the most powerful and respected element and those who practice *munism* were also given the same respect and accolades. The male shamans are also there in the Lepcha community called *Boongthings* but in comparison the *Muns* were viewed as powerful and were also in great demand as compared to the male *Boongthings* in the earlier times. "Over the different phases of political rule in the Lepcha land, the Lepchas got influenced by the ruler's religion and in the process got converted first into Buddhism .The role and position of the *Mun* also changed with the changed circumstances".⁴⁴ Though *Munism* was not completely abandoned by the Lepcha communities and they carried on side by side with Lamaism but they lost their importance in the course of time, in comparison to the Buddhist Lamaism and Christianity. The Lepcha community slowly lost touch with their animist tradition as there in Sikkim, in particular, they started to convert into Buddhism.

⁴³ Ibid,p 109

⁴⁴ Ibid,p 120

2.5. The Social Change

Women had to go through changes within the tribal customs, as mentioned earlier when Nepalese came to Sikkim they were predominantly Hindus and with them, they brought along with them their customs, belief systems and traditions. In Hindu society, menstruation is termed as impure and taboo and there are many superstitions related to that. One thing that got hold on to the tribes of Sikkim was that they started to believe in the superstition of menstruations which was never heard by the tribes of Sikkim. According to Geoffrey Gorer "... there is a fairly vague tradition that menstruating women should not approach the flowering plants which bear the fruit that the people of Mayal sell. - pumpkins, cucumbers, egg-plants and chilies or plants will rot. Apparently, he was told that... this is a formal rule among the Nepali."⁴⁵ In a way, the women started to get secluded for the biological reason of their body.

2.6. Economic Status of Women in Sikkim

Economically the status of women can be evaluated in the context of the inheritance. In Sikkimese society the position of women appears to be weak as they were not given the same rights as compared to men. The property of the father was not given to the daughter. Also, she had no right or claim over the land "...they may share animals and jewellery... girls after marriage lose their importance in their natal families".⁴⁶ Even after marriage the husband's landed property was never transferred to his wife. They had only right over the "...movable personal belongings, ornaments, and utensil etc".⁴⁷ The intermarriages between the Lepcha and the Bhutia community started to take place after the establishment of the monarchy, at a very high rate and the cultures started to

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Gorer, *Op.cit.*, p 239.

⁴⁶ Sudhansu Gangopadhyay, *Op.cit.*, p 246.

⁴⁷ Aparna Bhattacharya, *Op.cit.*, p 37.

collide and the two communities were called in unison tone by the rulers as the Bhutia- Lepcha community. The Bhutias were semi-nomadic agriculturist and pastoralist, the men of this community were in charge of earning, and the women were in charge of the household. The women were mainly confined to the household and agriculture “... the Bhutia –Lepcha women in the rural area take an active part in the cultivation of the land of...almost in each and every household both men and women spend their free time in carpet weaving or knitting the wool”.⁴⁸The Nepali women were also confined to the household and agriculture. But since the core base of the immigration of the Nepalese was to provide the British service and labor the women were also active as labours “... at the road making or building constriction”.⁴⁹

In the economic standing the women’s position in Sikkim was very weak, she had no independent property right, and they were predominately confined to the household. The women in general had no power in the decision making as the men and the king were the ones dictating every element, be it social, political, economic, religion in the Sikkimese society.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p 35.

⁴⁹ Ibid,

2.7. State's Control over Women

When Sikkim came under the patriarchal theocratic monarchy it was natural that the women were at the bottom of the strata, where the King and his men had complete control over Sikkim and its people. As mentioned earlier the Bhutias used to practice fraternal polyandry form of marriage and slowly it was adopted by the Lepchas. In the system of polyandrous marriages, the elder brother only marries the girl who may also be shared by his younger brothers. Many accounts suggest that polyandry was prevalent among both the Lepchas and the Bhutias but according to the J.D. Hooker in his *Himalayan Journal* states that in the Lepcha Community "...Polyandry was unknown and polygamy was rare."⁵⁰ If the statements of J.D. Hooker are to be believed then the system of Polyandry was started by the Lepchas much later. The practice of this form of marriage was becoming the social and political issue in Sikkim. Because of this form of marriage, the population of unmarried women was at a rise, there was a low birth rate of the Bhutia and Lepcha Community as compare to the immigrant Nepalese and this was becoming a huge problem to the rulers as their population was now becoming minority in their own land. To combat this problem Sidkeong Tulku drafted one order to abolish polyandry in 1912. Sidkeong Tulku, born in 1879 succeeded his father Thutob Namgyal as the ruler of Sikkim on 11th February 1914. His reign was very short as a king, as he died the same year in December, but he was very active as an administrator before he became the king, he was given the administrative charges from 1908 by his father. "He was the first King of Sikkim to get western education and also the first King to attend Oxford. He had been therefore exposed to several western modern ideas".⁵¹ With that modern outlook he wanted to reform many social issues. "He was determined to sound the knell of feudalism in Sikkim. The monks were

⁵⁰ J.D Hooker, Op.cit., p 121.

⁵¹ Joshi, H.G. *Sikkim: Past and Present*, New Delhi: Mittal publication, 2010, p 19.

alarmed when Tulku talked of the monasteries discharging their social responsibilities. This was the revolutionary heterodoxy coming from a man who was supposed to safeguard the interest of the privileged few”.⁵² Not only had that, he also wanted to uplift the women in Sikkim. He was the first King to initiate the idea of women's education in Sikkim and he wanted to abolish the practice of polyandrous marriages in Sikkim along with many social issues related to Sikkim. His contribution is huge towards Sikkim even though his reign was short. But one particular episode of his is quite contradictory towards the question of women's position and it shows in a subtle way how women were positioned in the society of Sikkim.

In his draft order to abolish the polyandry system of marriage he states:

‘...take note, all you Kazis and Tikadars of Sikkim our subjects. Though we ought to be ruling over a prolific race and populous country without diminishing in number as we are the inhabitants of the sacred hidden land of Guru Padma –sam-bhawa yet our Bhutia and Lepcha race is dying ours owing to the evils of the marriage customs prevailing amongst us, which allows polyandry the custom of several bothers marring one common wife.’

He also points out the system of bride price of the Lepcha being too high and the poor men being not able to pay the price do not marry at all. He also states the abnormal customs of the marriages among the Lepchas marrying without the disparity in age of the men and the women and “... sometimes so bad that and old gray-headed man is matched to a girl in her teens or a boy hardly out of his teen matched to an old woman fit to be his grandma... all these militate against the prolific reproduction of healthy children. The real cause of the scarcity of the birth amongst Bhutia and Lepcha can be traced to the above evils.”

⁵² Lal Bhadur Basnet, Op.cit., p 64.

In this very draft, he has ordered 8 sets of rules to be followed by the Lepcha and Bhutia communities. Out of that the 6 most important orders made by him, it is to be noted that:

“... (1) Hence forth, with a view to increasing the birth-rate and number of the race the Lepcha and Bhutia must marry each brother one wife to himself and not have a common wife.

(2) Should the first wife prove barren then a man may take another wife or as many as he can support according to his means, the eldest wife must not object to this

(5) Amongst Lepcha, the hitherto prevailing and abominable custom of vast disparity of age amongst the husband and wife must be abandoned, only a reasonable difference in age or boys and girls of the same age shall be permitted to marry.

(4) During the lifetime of the eldest brother, the younger brothers must not regard the wife of the eldest as a common wife ...

(5) The Bhutia and the Lepcha must not inter-marry with paharias or madhaysias (Nepalese or Plainsman) intermarriages between Bhutias and Lepchas may be allowed but as a rule, Bhutias and Lepchas Should marry amongst Lepcha as far as possible with a view to preserve the purity of the race.

(6) Amongst the Kazis when a daughter is given out in the marriage as he been done hitherto except the customary preliminary offerings of rupees, they should not take any further price. Similarly, amongst Bhutia and Lepcha too...”⁵³

And the rest was regarding the restriction on the huge bride price, on the restriction on the urging the people for the marriage certificates as that was not practiced by the people back then, and the last one was the payment by the unfaithful party to the faithful one.

⁵³ Sikkim state archive, file no 57, Darbar, 2012

In the orders that he had drafted there were some very good reforms towards the society in general and there is no denying this. But some of the orders are quite contradictory towards the position of women in Society. The six orders which have been listed here tells a lot about the women's status in Sikkim and duties they had to perform. Just when we start to think that the orders were in favor of the women, when one proceeds further, we get to know the real intentions behind the orders drafted by him. The majority of his points in that draft indicate that the women were viewed as a reproductive agent and her job was to marry into the Lepcha and Bhutia Communities respectively and produce pure Lepcha and Bhutia children. Polyandry was to be banned as the birth rate was very low of these two communities so to increase the population polygyny was encouraged in his second order. The women who is not able to produce a child (first wife) had no say in it if her husband married as many women as he could afford. In his 5th order, we can see how he ordered that no one from Lepcha and Bhutia communities was to marry with the Nepalese and the plainsmen, thus the right to choose was also restricted. It has to be understood that this was drafted when Sikkim was facing the problem of getting over powered by the Nepalese immigrants which was encouraged by the British. Sidkeong Tulku was the man with a modern point of view but deep within he seemed to be patriarchal and parochial. He worked to better the Sikkimese society and many of his works were commendable but in this particular drafted order, we cannot help but notice how there was complete state's control over the women. Women's procreative power was placed under the hands of the state and whom she was to marry was also guided by the state. Thus, we see how the freedom of women was curtailed by the state giving it a sanction of political needs.

In conclusion, it can be said that the position of women in Sikkim got deteriorated culturally, socially and politically with the coming in of different institutions, mainly with the establishment of the theocratic and patriarchal rule in Sikkim. There was a domination of religion, culture and everything in between and the Sikkimese society became more rigid with regards to the position of women where there was a complete state control over the women. The women were mostly confined to the household and agriculture, politically they were not visible, and it was all about the Kings and his aristocratic men. Earlier the women in the Lepcha culture was part and parcel of their economy they used to take active part in the hunting and gathering activities the division of labour was also not much known to them and the position of women were as equal to the men as “... primitive societies women have a position quite as full of anomalies as they hold among civilized race”.⁵⁴ The women priest of the Lepcha community lost their status due to the conversion of the Lepcha community to Buddhism and we see the rise of the *Lamas* in the Sikkimese society. The women were not given the land rights they had no say in the big decision making in household. The society had completely become patriarchal in nature. Nevertheless, we do have in the history of Sikkim very few but strong women who challenged the prevailing form of patriarchy and contributed their efforts in making Sikkim as it is today. Their involvement and attempt to make the women of Sikkim empowered in an era where the patriarchal notion was overriding the society is immensely valuable. Their contributions shall be studied in the next chapter.

⁵⁴ C. Gasquoine Hartley, Mrs Walter M. Gallicham, *The Age of Mother-Power the position of women in the primitive society*, New York Dood Mede Company 1914, p 10.

CHAPTER III

EMINENT POLITICAL WOMEN PERSONALITIES (1642-1975)

Sikkim, as discussed in the earlier chapter, was a theocratic patriarchal Monarchy and as said women's voice in this manner especially covering the fundamental aspects of political features remains ambiguous or rather clouded by mirrors and smokes. As far as recorded history goes which portrays monarchy, the position of women was comparatively very weak as compared to the men in the Sikkimese society be it socially, economically and politically.

When it comes to politics, all over the world, the participation and position of women are in a subordinate position. Women's role, in general, is considered to be only that of a mother, sister, and wife. Mostly societies have confined the women into the domestic roles, and have restricted women in many worldly functions due to gender norms. When we look carefully and understand gender norms, we get to know how these norms are guided for both the sexes, and women in many aspects have faced unequal and unfair treatment because of the gender norms which society has created for the women. Keeping in mind the gender roles when it comes to politics and anything to do with power and decision making, all the important positions are naturally handed over to the men in society. Women are mostly confined to the household and are restricted in domestic roles by the gender norms. Politics was always seen as the job of men, because when we talk about politics; it is related to leadership, power and all these qualities according to the gender divisions should were possessed by men and not women in the society.

However, history has also witnessed women who took charge of leading the nation, women who have had leadership qualities, aims for themselves, and the nation which they were leading. But there is a huge disparity when it comes to women in politics worldwide from many centuries, when a woman takes charge of the power or politics she is questioned about her motive, character and on many occasions blamed for the wars and misshapes in the past. Sikkim is no exception when it comes to the position of women in the political scenario, being a theocratic patriarchal monarchy from 1642 to 1975. It was all about the King and the aristocrat men of Sikkim, who possessed immense power in their hands and controlled each and every aspect of the Sikkimese society, women on the other hand were just limited towards the household be it the Royal women or the common women. But regardless of that the history of Sikkim has had women who stood their ground in a male dominated society. There are six eminent women personalities of Sikkim whom we will study in details, they are from different eras and came from different back grounds. But one thing that sets them apart from the rest is their ambition, their zeal to do something for themselves and the society and the state; they were the ones who challenged the societal norms and the state at their respective times and in a way made a symbolic contribution to Sikkim when it came to the women question. The six women who will be studied below are: Pendi Wangmo, *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma, Princess Pema Tsedeun (Coocoola), Hope Cooke, Kazini Elisa Maria and Ruth Karthak Lepchani.

3.1. Pendi Wangmo

Pendi Wangmo was the daughter of the 2nd *Chogyal* (King) of Sikkim named Tensung Namgyal (1644-1700). It is believed that he married three women from different places “one of them being from Bhutan, called Nambi Ongmo, who gave birth to a daughter, named Pandi Wangmo. One of the *Ranis* was the daughter of Deba Zamsar, a noble family residing near Tinkejong in Tibet, in the north west of Sikkim. This lady gave birth to a son, the next Maharaja, Chagdor Namgyal. The third *Rani* was the daughter of a Limbu chief, who ruled in the Arun valley in the west of Sikkim, named Yong-Yong hang. The lady also gave birth to a son, named Guru.”¹ Getting married to these three women from three different places symbolized that he was making relation with these places through matrimonial alliances, but this act of his was mainly not seen as best decisions. His offspring, particularly from his Bhutanese wife is seen as an obstacle after his death for the secession of the Namgyal Dynasty. As Pendi Wangmo was born from the Bhutanese mother, she in a way was greatly influenced by her mother’s family. As Sikkim was under the patriarchal system it had no tradition of women inheriting property and women had no place in the power structure with in the monarchical system. On the other hand, “Bhutan’s traditional society has been defined as both patriarchal and matriarchal”² the inherent system was both paternal and maternal and the girl child was also given the inheritance of the parents unlike Sikkimese society. Even though both countries were Buddhist countries but looking at the minute cultural aspects of both the societies we get to know that there were lots of differences especially when it came to the

¹ Thutob Namgyal and Yeshay Dolma, *History of Sikkim* translated by Kazi Dousandup 1908, p 24

² Verma Priyadarshini, *Women in Bhutan: Exploring Their Socio-Cultural Status in the Late 20th Century*, Proceeding of the Indian History Congress, Vol 75, Platinum Jubilee (2014). p-p.920-927, Published by Indian History Congress.

issues about inheritance of property by women in the society. It is believed that she had been greatly influenced by her mother and her maternal uncle in developing a leaning towards Bhutan, and from this we get to witness how the environment and company can affect the mindset of a person. How much Pendi Wangmo was influenced by her Bhutanese side can also be seen by the physical remains of her palace, which later turned into a monastery. The design, architecture is all in Bhutanese style of the Dzongs. Both Bhutanese and Sikkimese architectural Style is greatly influenced by Tibetan style of architecture, but both Bhutan and Sikkim have developed a style of their own and in the case of the Pendi Wangmo's palace we can see the heavy influence of the Bhutanese style of architecture, specifically when we look at the style of the windows of this palace the size of the windows is kept small for the first floor and it gradually increases as one ascends on the upper floors, the walls of the palace is slanted inward and small details in the motifs and drawings on the walls are predominately in the style of Bhutanese architecture.



3.1. Pendi Wangmo's palace.

Source: Sikkim.historyhunter.blogspot.com



3.2. Inside of the Palace

Source: [Sikkim-historyhunter.blogspot.com](http://sikkim-historyhunter.blogspot.com)



3.3. Palace of Pendi Wangmo

Pendi Wangmo being the daughter of the 2nd King of Sikkim resided in the area called Namchi (present day south Sikkim). The main Royal palace at the time was at Rabdentse in west Sikkim as it was the capital at the time of Tensung Namgyal's reign. She was in a way in charge of the Namchi area where she was residing, but we can see that she was not happy with that kind of arrangement under the monarchical setup. When her father died in 1700, the question of succession came up and according to tradition, her half-brother Chagdor Namgyal whose mother was from Tibet was selected as the next King when he was just 14 years old. This thing did not go down well with her as "she claimed her right to succession by virtue of her seniority in age."³ She was the first of her kind to seek the throne of the Namgyal dynasty being a woman and also the last, in the history of Sikkim. The succession war took place in Sikkim in the year 1700, and at that time the Bhutanese had also consolidated their Kingdom under Deb Raja of Bhutan and Pendi Wangmo is credited, in history of Sikkim to have invited the Bhutanese troops into Sikkim to lead the war against her half-brother Chagdor Namgyal and Sikkim. Due to the attack Chagdor Namgyal had to flee from Sikkim "with the help of a loyal councilor, Yug Thing Yesha Chagdor and fled to Tibet via Elam and Walong in Limbuan."⁴ After the attack the "Bhutanese occupied the Rabdentse Palace for about eight years."⁵ In those eight years of Bhutanese occupation the status of Pendi Wangmo is unknown whether she was made the head of the state or not, under the guidance of the Bhutanese influence. But according to many historical narratives recorded and rewritten by many scholars, she was romantically involved with a lama (monk) who happened to be the third generation lama from Rabjungpa sect and according to H H Risley "The Raja's half-sister, Pende

³ Lal Bhadrur Basnet, Op.cit, p 18.

⁴Ibid, p 18.

⁵Their Highnesses the Maharaja Sir Thutob Namgyal (*KCIE*) and Maharani Yeshay Dolma, Op.cit, p 26.

⁶ H H Risley, Op.cit, p 11.

⁷ Lal Bhadrur Basnet, Op.cit, p 19.

Amo (Pendi Wangmo), had meanwhile formed a liaison... the lama by his vows of the Rabjungpa sect, which was very strict, ought to have maintained the strictest celibacy, and in marrying Pende Amo had committed a mortal sin.”⁶ This view was followed by Lal Bhadur Basnet who stated that “Pendi Wangmo’s position had been greatly weakened by her having formed a liaison with the third lama of the Rabjungpa sect.”⁷ The affair of Pendi Wangmo with the lama is also said to have a decline in the position of Rabjungpa lineage of that sect of the lama, about which we find mention in Saul Mullard’s work according to whom,

“Mnga’ bdag rin chen mgon (the lama), perhaps unwittingly, was embroiled in this even through his affair with Phan bde dbang mo (Pendi Wangmo) and whilst it appears that he was not an active opponent of Phyag rdor rnam rgyal (Chagdor Namgyal), his relationship with Phan bde dbang mo (Pendi Wangmo) made his position as royal preceptor untenable.”⁸ Mullard also states that due to this affair the Mng’ bdag (Rabjungpa sect) which was the main spiritual house for the initial phase of the Namgyal Dynasty as they were the royal preceptor, lost importance in the Sikkimese society and the ruling house was also not on their side. When Chagdor Namgyal came back to Sikkim after his exile along with him Jig Med Dap believed to be the reincarnation of Lha Sen Chenpo who was among the three main lamas to have crowned the first king of Sikkim Phuntsok Namgyal, Lha Sen Chenpo’s teachings and traditions got revived. Naturally there was a decline of the Mng’ bdag tradition in Sikkim. Thutob Namgyal and Yeshey Dolma in their book ‘The History of Sikkim’ states that “the princess (daughter of the Bhutanese lady) named Pende Wangmo (Pendi) became the consort of the Nag-bDag Lama, Rinchen-gon.”⁹ These kinds of narratives prove that

⁸ Saul Mullard Op.cit, p 165.

⁹ Their Highnesses the Maharaja Sir Thutob Namgyal (*KCIE*) and Maharani Yeshey Dolma, Op.cit., p 24.

Pendi Wangmo was involved with a lama and due to this affair and marriage they both suffered severe consequences. Pendi Wangmo tried to revive her position and according to H H Risley and Lal Bhadhur Basnet “Pendi Wangmo built the Guru Lakhnag Monastery at Tashiding.”¹⁰ This act was propagated by Pendi Wangmo to mitigate the punishment of the spiritual lamas, as the lama with whom she had a liaison belonged to the Rabjungpa sect having very strict vows when it comes to the practice of celibacy and liaison was looked upon as a mortal sin. Even though she was facing all these problems in her personal life, her ambition to become the ruler was not dead yet, in a way we can see her desperate attempt to rebuild her position, as when the Bhutanese had gone back and Chagdor Namgyal had returned to Sikkim and ascended the throne after coming back from Tibet and nothing was going down in her favor, she resorted to assassinate her half-brother Chagdor Namgyal. When Chagdor Namgyal “was unwell and had gone to the Ralang Hot Spring in 1716, for treatment, Pendi Wongmo conspired with the physician, who opened the Raja’s veins and thus caused his death. This did not help Pendi Wangmo or her cause, for she was strangled to death for her part in Chador’s death, while the Physician was executed.”¹¹ and thus, with her also ended her dream of becoming the Queen of Sikkim.

¹⁰ Lal Bhadhur Basnet, *Op.cit.*, p 19.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p 19.

Pendi Wangmo in the historical narrative

Pendi Wangmo was the first woman in the history of Sikkim who had fought for the throne, and hypothetically speaking if she was able to achieve her dream of becoming the queen of Sikkim, the whole history of Sikkim would have been completely different but that was not to happen. Instead what Pendi Wangmo's activities resulted for Sikkim was that Sikkim lost many parts of its territory to Bhutan and the King had to resort to exile in Tibet for many years because of Pendi Wangmo. She was also the main culprit behind the death of Chagdor Namgyal and because of all these reasons, in the history of Sikkim she has been projected as an evil persona who was possessed by the evil spirit. According to H.H Risley she was "destined to play an important and disastrous part in Sikkim (Sikkim) History"¹² she is said to be the incarnation of evil soul basically anything to do with evil was credited to her "This Pendi Wangmo was said to have been the incarnation of Tsum-mo Za-mar-gyan a wicked Rani of King Khri-Song Deu-tsen of Tibet."¹³ She in the history of Sikkim is depicted as the evil person who because of her selfishness resorted to the cruel activities that she did. But one thing that we are completely ignoring is that her ambition to become a queen of Sikkim, at the time when society was completely driven by men, and regardless of historical narratives projecting her as this evil soul, she still remains the only woman in the history of Sikkim to have had the courage to challenge the succession pattern, being a woman in that prevailing monarchical setup and in a way she has made a mark as a strong and ambitious woman to have lived in Sikkim. She challenged the patriarchal norm of succession. Being a woman, she

¹² H H Risley Op.cit., p 11.

¹³ Their Highnesses the Maharaja Sir Thutob Namgyal (*KCIE*) and Maharani Yeshay Dolma, Op.cit., 32.

thought herself to be capable of ruling a country on her own. She also dared to fall in love and marry the man who according to religious norms had to live a life of celibacy.

3.2. *Maharani Yeshay Dolma*

Maharani Yeshay Dolma was the 9th Queen of Sikkim. She was the wife of *Maharaja Thutob Namgyal* and belonged to the Lhayding house of Tibet; she came to Sikkim after her marriage at a time when there was a political instability in Sikkim because of the increasing influence of the British in Sikkim. The British wanted to build a trading relation with Tibet via Sikkim and because of this *Thutob Namgyal* and *Maharani Yeshay Dolma* had to face lot of challenges at the hands of the British.

It has been stated that *Maharaja Thutob Namgyal* was not interested to get married after his first wife died at child birth, but he had to comply with the affable pressure of his court. His marriage to *Maharani Yeshay Dolam* was in a way a political move by his court as in the book 'History of Sikkim' it is stated that "In 1881 (Chag Dul of the 15th century 1st month 6th day) the ministers and lamas of Sikkim in a body submitted an address to *Maharaja* and the Dowager Rani (mother of the *Maharaja*) praying that His Highness should think of marrying another Rani. This address was accompanied by a seven-fold *Nazar*, so the Durbar addressed a request for two elephants from the British Government. There was twofold purpose to be formerly in the Sa Tag year the Chagzot Kusho (Tenzing Namgyal) and the Dewan Namgyal had petitioned the Tibetan Government and Chinese Amban named Soong Amban to grant an extension of the Tibetan property."¹⁴ Her marriage to *Maharaja Thutob Namgyal* took place at Lhasa in an unconventional way, as at the time of the marriage *Maharaja Thutob Namgyal* was not present and his half-brother Lhasay

¹⁴Ibid, p 82.

Kusho represented both of them at the marriage ceremony. She was married into the polyandry form of marriage, as this was the traditional system of marriage of Tibet and she was the wife of both *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and his half-brother Lhasay Kusho. In the book 'History of Sikkim' it has been mentioned that the official people of Lhasa had publicly announced that she was the joint wife of both brothers, and the marriage took place "on the 22nd day of the 11th month of the same year"¹⁵(1881). *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal was to be at Tumlong the Capital of Sikkim at the time of marriage and did not meet with his wife in the initial years after their marriage, as both *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma and Lhasay Kusho decided to come to Sikkim from Lhasa only after some years. "In 1883 (Chulug of the 15th century 5th day, 6th month) Lhasay Kusho started for Sikkim with the Rani, and arrived at the Chumbi palace on the 13th day of the 7th month. It was reported that the Rani was with child, and Tugyig Ngodup had sent a confidential report of it to Khangsa Dewan Brothers who took the advantage of this to sow discord between the *Maharaja* and the new *Rani*. This coolness lasted for about 5 years."¹⁶ It has been stated by Lal Bhadr Basnet that *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma was a gifted woman who did not settle for less and the reconciliation took place because of her very zeal to be at her rightful position of being the *Maharani* of Sikkim. If she decided to be the wife of just the Maharaja's half-brother, she would only remain the wife of a royal member and not be the Maharani. "The Rani, used to Thanley (Lhasay Kusho) from the very night of her nuptials, and whose child she now carried in her womb, was nothing loath, at first, to the consequence of Thutob's lack of interest in her; this left her wholly to Thanley. If there had been any other woman in place of Rani Yishey Dolma (Yeshay Dolma), she would, perhaps, have preferred the continuation of this arrangement, but the Rani was too gifted a woman to rest content with her position. She was brilliant, within the limitation imposed by her

¹⁵ Ibid, p 83.

¹⁶ Ibid,

Tibetan upbringing and society, was a gifted conversationalist, and had deep knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism. She was an accomplished calligraphist and had much other grace to commend her in the eyes of men. So, before long, she set about to prove what lay at the root of Thutob's aversion to her."¹⁷ When Thutob Namgyal came to Chumbi at the summer palace she was able to successfully reconcile with *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal.

As mentioned above *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma got married to both Thutob Namgyal and Lhasay Kusho and came to Sikkim at a time when there was huge influence of the British and the political scenario of Sikkim was not in favor of the ruler. Sikkim had always proved its allegiance towards Tibet, and always had a close relation with Tibet because of the religious and matrimonial alliances. But this very close relation became the cause of many obstacles for the Sikkimese monarchs. The first contact of Sikkim with the British took place when the Anglo-Gorkha war broke out in 1814-1816. And at that time Sikkim was facing frequent invasions from the Gorkhas and had lost many territories to them. The British wanted to establish a trading relation with Tibet via Sikkim and this war was the perfect opportunity for both parties to build a friendly relation and help each other in the process. Sikkim helped in the war and in return they were promised to get their lost lands back from the Gorkhas. The Gorkhas lost the war and signed a peace treaty called 'Treaty of Segoulee' in 1815 and by the clauses of article 6th of the treaty "the Rajah (Raja) of Nipal (Nepal) engages never to molest or disturb the Rajah of Sikkim in the possession of his territories; but agrees, in any difference shall arise between the state of Nipal and the Rajah of Sikkim, or the subjects of either, that such difference shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government by which award the Rajah of Nipal engages to abide."¹⁸ Further the British

¹⁷ Lal Bhadur Basnet, Op.cit., pp 48-49.

¹⁸ R.Moktan *Sikkim: Darjeeling Compendium of Documents*, Publisher R.Moktan "Sumaralaya" 2004,p 5

also signed a treaty with Sikkim called 'Treaty of Titalya' to build the friendly relations with Sikkim. And according to this treaty the British will protect the Sikkimese land against the Gorkha invasion in return they had to abide by the clauses of the treaty, and according to the treaty under:

“(Art.II and III) Sikkim would render military assistance to Company in case of war in the hill (Art IV); would not permit any European or American to reside in Sikkim Raja’s territories without the company’s permission; would deliver up any dacoits or criminals from British India taking refuge in Sikkim and would afford no protection to the revenue defaulters or other delinquents from British India (Art VI&VII). Sikkim authorities would afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company’s provinces and would leave no transit duties on their merchandise (Art.VIII).”¹⁹

These two treaties had played a very significant role in the history of Sikkim as the Treaty of Segoulee restricted the invasion policy of Nepal upon Sikkim and there was a relief from the Nepal threat. Treaty of Titalya marked the penetration of British into Sikkim and eventually affected the freedom of the Sikkimese authorities in their own land. At first the Sikkimese side thought that it was a win, win situation to be the ally of the British but with the passage of time this token of friendship became suffocating with the British influence becoming more and more authoritative, as they were trying to build a trading relation with Tibet and in that process there were many losses for the Sikkimese side and one significant loss was when the British acquired Darjeeling from Sikkim. Every political move of the British towards Sikkim was motivated to build a trading relation with Tibet and Tibet was not budging even an inch when it came to opening its land for the British. In that process Sikkim was in the middle with Tibet showing resentment towards Sikkim for being an ally of the British, and the British were pressuring Sikkim to open some kind

¹⁹ Aitchison C.U. A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating of India and Neighboring countries, Vol, XII,PP. 58-59. (found in the book, *History of Sikkim (1817-1904) Analysis of British Policy and Activities* by Pranab Kumar Jha)

of negotiation with Tibet for trade on behalf of the British. Relation with the British started with *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal's father the 7th King of Sikkim: Tsugphud Namgyal and Thutob's half-brother Siedkong Namgyal. The influence of the British in the matter of the internal affairs of Sikkim became heavier, as again during the reign of Chogyal Tsugphud Namgyal there was some conflict with the British and another treaty was signed between the British and Sikkim in 1861. "A new treaty, consisting of 23 articles, was signed between the British and the Sikkim Raja in 1861. While Sikkim remained theoretically independent, it had to make much concession to the British...Sikkim was opened for free trade with India. Sikkim also agreed to render all possible help to the British in their efforts to develop trade with Tibet. The Raja of Sikkim began to be addressed as the *Maharaja*, though there was no formal declaration to that effect."²⁰ It has been stated that it was the British who had made Thutob Namgyal King of Sikkim and they were also now playing the King makers of Sikkim. Through this treaty by the time when *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal ascended the throne after the death of his half-brother Siedkong Namgyal in 1874, we can see the British hegemony in Sikkim and also their effort to build trading relations with Tibet came into full force in the last quarter of 18th century and they hoped that the Sikkim *Maharaja* would give all his support in their adventure towards Tibet. The British continued their efforts many times to establish trade with Tibet but Tibet was not willing to do anything with the British. The British even sent an Indian origin man to Tibet from Darjeeling called Sarat Chandra Das. He was sent by the British government to conduct a geographical survey of Tibet in the disguise of a Buddhist scholar. But this mission of British also failed as Tibetans came to know the reason behind the scholar's visit. The result was that trade between Sikkim and Tibet was stopped by the Tibetans. There was a strong anti-British feeling from Tibet and Thutob Namgyal's attitude was

²⁰ Lal Bhadur Basnet, Op.cit., p 40.

also bugging the British when Finance Secretary Colman Macaulay visited Sikkim to investigate the cause of the stoppage of trade and Thutob Namgyal was of not much of a help to them at that time. They then realized that the British influence over Sikkim was comparatively weakened and the pro Tibetan element was overpowering the *Maharaja* of Sikkim. According to P.R Rao “with the *Maharaja’s* second marriage the influence of the Tibetan faction had increased and consequently the British influence declined.”²¹ Another mission was in process under Macaulay to Tibet. As per the plan, they wanted to open trade relation via China and at that time China and British had developed a good relation and allowed British to form trade relation. But this was not accepted by the Tibetans and again there was a strong resistance from Tibet’s side. “After months of cooling heels at Darjeeling, the Macaulay Mission was abandoned in 1886.”²² The matter became worse when due to this there was a border dispute between the British and, Tibet fortified the place called Lingtu. “Thutob Namgyal who was then staying in the Chumbi valley of Tibet supported the Tibetan action and declared that the land in occupation really belonged to Tibet, even though Sikkim as a matter of grace was allowed to use it.”²³ This thing did not go down well with the British and *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal was ordered to stay at Darjeeling in May 1887, but Thutob Namgyal refused to comply with that order and seeing that he was even threatened by the British to stop the money which he was getting for Darjeeling. But he was not willing to budge and he stated that the reason behind his unwillingness to comply with the order was because.

“He and his people had, in 1886, signed a treaty declaring that Sikkim was subject only to China and Tibet; that he was therefore unable to come to Darjeeling without the express permission of the Tibetan Government. This was also news to the British and had created some sort of discomfort and the matter of

²¹ P.R.Rao *India and Sikkim* (1814-1970), Sterling Publishers, 1972, p 68.

²²Lal Bhadur Basnet, *Op.cit.*, p 54.

²³ P.R.Rao, *Op.cit.*, p 83.

Tibetan occupation of Lingtu was also not solved. So, all these above reasons resulted in the Anglo-Chinese convention in 1890 where the Tibetans had to withdraw their forces from Lingtu and “Sikkim was sacrificed at the altar of Anglo-Chinese relation. Thutob Namgyal was thoroughly disillusioned, but it was too late for him to mend matters. His ordeals had begun before the Convention was signed.”²⁴

Due to all these activities of Thutob Namgyal, the British were angered and they wanted to teach him a lesson and eventually *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma were detained at Kurseong and Darjeeling from 1893 to 1895. J.C White was appointed the first political officer and was handed over the administration of Sikkim. Ultimately in 1895 *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma were able to come to Sikkim but the position of the ruler was not the same under the British Political Officer and after *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal his son Sidkeong Tulku Namgyal was selected as an heir apparent by the British.

***Maharani* Yeshay Dolma’s role in the political life of Thutob Namgyal**

During the reign of *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal we see a very strong resistant towards the British influence, by the attitude and policies of Thutob Namgyal towards British. The reason behind *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal’s rebellious nature towards British has been mostly credited to the advices of his wife *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma. She had played a very significant role in the political life of *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal as she had been the most influenced character in the court of *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal. According to J.C White “Thotub Namgyal *Maharaja* of Sikkim, was a man of about twenty – eight years of age, of medium height, typically Mongolian in appearance and much disfigured by a bad hare-lip. He was a man of indolent disposition, whose inclination was to live in retirement and aloof from the worries and troubles of the government of his little

²⁴ Lal Bhadhur Basnet, Op.cit., p 57.

State, of very kindly disposition, and although weak and easily led, possessed also a good deal of common sense. He was entirely under the influence of *Maharini*, his Second wife.”²⁵ White came to Sikkim when the political relation was not good between Sikkim and British and both *Maharaja* and *Maharini* resented him and there was some animosity between the two parties. But he in his book does not shy away from acknowledging and complementing *Maharani Yeshay Dolma* for her ability and intelligence. He states that “Her disposition is a masterful one and her bearing always dignified. She has a great opinion of her own importance, and is the possessor of a sweet musical voice, into which she can, when angry, introduce a very sharp intonation. She is always interesting, whether to look at her or listen to, and had she been born within the sphere of European politics she would most certainly have made her mark, for there is no doubt she is a born intriguer and diplomat.”²⁶ *Maharani Yeshay Dolma* being the back bone of *Maharaja Thutob Namgyal* had tried to snub the influence of the British from Sikkim, by constantly encouraging Thutob Namgyal to be strong and independent. She was his confidant, adviser and most trusted member of his court. For the British, she was the cause for bringing the strong influence of Tibetan element to Sikkim and the *Maharaja's* rebel nature towards the British. The resistance to British eventually resulted not in the favor of the monarch, but what we can see from their attempt was that even though there was this extreme pressure and influence of the British power in the tiny state they tried to hold on to their beliefs and tradition, and *Maharini Yeshay Dolma* was the reason behind that strong but short resistance towards the British.

²⁵ J. Claude White, Op.cit, p 22.

²⁶ Ibid, p 24.



H. H. The Maharani of Sikhim

3.4. source: Sikhim and Bhutan: Frontier 1887-1908 by J.C White

The other four women personalities whom we will now study are from the same era; these four women have made their mark in the history of Sikkim. When Sikkim was in the transitional phase and the monarchical institution was fighting for its very existence and there was a strong element to make Sikkim a part of India these four women played significant roles and contributed to the political arena of Sikkim. These women had their own reasons and circumstances to be involved in the political drama which was going on at that time. They had to face many prejudices of society and faced challenges head on which came their way. The four women whom we will study are Princess Pema Tseun popularly known as Coocoola, Hope Cooke, Kazini Elisa Maria, and Ruth Karthark Lepchani. They all came from different backgrounds and had different upbringing but what was common about them was that they were the ones who were paving the way for women in the political scenario of Sikkim.

The political scenario of Sikkim was changing at the time when these women came in to the political scene of Sikkim. Sikkimese people were asking for a democratic establishment after the influence of the Indian independence in 1947. The political movement took place from 7th December 1947 and eventually ended with Sikkim being merged as a part of the Indian Union in 1975 and these women have witnessed and played very important roles in the transitional phase of Sikkim.

3.3. Princess Pema Tsedeun

Princess Pema Tsedeun was the daughter of Sir Tashi Namgyal the 11th chogyal of Sikkim. Born on 6th September 1924, she was educated in the modern western system as she got her education from St-Joseph's convent in Kalimpong. She was a woman of many qualities imbedded in her. From a royal background she was also intelligent and had great diplomatic qualities within her. She was married into the Phuenkhang family of Tibet in 1918 and her husband belonged to the family of the 11th Dala Lama. Her husband was the governor of Gyantse province in Tibet. It seems that she was the first woman to have rejected the offer of marrying into the Polyandry system of marriage which was the prevailing tradition of Tibet during those days. Heinrich Harrer the author of 'Seven Years in Tibet' has described her as:

“She was more interesting than her husband and was, to boot, one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. She possessed the indescribable charm of Asian and the stamp of old age oriental culture. At the same time she was clever, well-educated and thoroughly modern, and had been taught in one of the best schools in India. She was the first woman in Tibet to refuse to marry her husband's brother because this did not conform with her principles. In conversation she was the equal of the most intelligent woman you would be likely to meet in a European salon. She was interested in politics, culture and all that was happening in the world. She often talked about equal rights for women...but Tibet has long way to go before reaching that point.”²⁷

Her life in Tibet was going well but she had to return to Sikkim in 1950 because of the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Princess Pema Tsedeun took active part in the Tibetan rehabilitation program

²⁷ Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, Harper Perennial 2005, p 132.

and “She worked as the Chairman of the Sikkim Relief and Rehabilitation Committee for Tibetan Refugees funded by the Government of India.”²⁸ She came back to Sikkim when the Royal family was facing a lot of opposition and many political parties had come up against the Monarchy. The democratic movement was strongly advancing at that time. After her arrival in Sikkim, her sister in law first wife of Kumar Palden Thondup Namgyal, Sangey Diki died leaving behind three children due to the fourth pregnancy complication in 1957. After her sister in law’s death she was the one who looked after her father Tashi Namgyal and elder brother Palden Thondup Namgyal. She was also involved in the Sikkimese political affairs being the unofficial adviser to her brother *Kumar* Palden Thondup Namgyal and according to Nari Rustomji “she functioned as the Prince’s roving ambassador, whether in the corridors of power in New Delhi or socialising with the American president’s aides in Washington. She was the prince’s chief hostess at State functions, as well as the chatelaine of his Palace.”²⁹ As mentioned above by the author Heinrich Harrer, Princess Pema Tsedeun often talked about equal right of women in Tibet. The society in Tibet was as such not in the position to comply with that kind of question related to women. So when she came back to Sikkim after the political instability in Tibet, she did not let her desires to do something for the equal right for women in society to just limit to words; she put her desire into action, she was involved in the Women Welfare Association and “She also became Chairman of Women Welfare Association.”³⁰ She worked for the upliftment and empowerment of women in Sikkim. Other than that she actively used to entertain the foreign dignitaries who used to visit Sikkim at that time. As mentioned above she was also involved in the Political affairs of Sikkim, at that time there was a huge pressure from Sikkimese subject upon the monarchical institution. After

²⁸ Anna Balikci –Denjongpa, *Princess Pema Tsedeun of Sikkim (1924-2008)*, Bulletin of Tibetology 2008, p 197.

²⁹ Nari Rustomji, *Sikkim A Himalayan Tragedy*, Allied Publishers Limited, 1987, p 68.

³⁰ Anna Balikci –Denjongpa, *Op.cit*, p 197.

the 1950 Treaty, Sikkim became the Indian Protectorate and thus increased the Indian influence on Sikkim. During that time, whenever she used to host the political dignitaries, she made sure in her own way to let everybody know that she was not at all to be taken lightly. Sunanda K. Datta Ray who was a close associate of Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal in his book describes Princess Pema Tsedeun as:

“a formidable woman who never permitted the least liberty with her rank as the wife of a Tibetan duke. Her crest flaunted the coveted five yaks’ tails allowed only to a handful of Lhasa aristocrats. Durbar Officials in Gangtok were under orders to formally describe her as ‘Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal’ ...CooCoola entertained far more regally than her more restrained brother. Her guest was often more distinguished, and the best French wines were poured from her heavy cut-glass decanters. But more revealing of the general sumptuousness was her style at table: her own place was set with golden coasters and cutlery to remind even the most honored guest of the difference in rank.”³¹

She was also the active advocate for the independent status of Sikkim and, was very vocal about the political situation and showed her discomfort with the political development at that time. One such incident took place when there was a proposal to make the Indian origin people who were inhabited in Sikkim for many years likely to get a seat in the general category within the Sikkim Council. In this matter also she was very vocal about her disagreement to that arrangement and thought that the Indian people were trying to sabotage the political situation. According to Nari Rustomji “princess CooCoola had always kept her ears very close to the grounds as far as Sikkim’s local politics were concerned and was even more forthright than Hope in Speaking out her mind on delicate issues affecting India’s relation with her Protectorate.”³²

³¹ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, *Smash & Grab: Annexation of Sikkim*, Vikas Publications 1984, p 89.

³² Nari Rustomji, *Op.cit*, pp 68- 69.

It is important to remember that Priencess Pema Tsedeun had lost her home in Tibet because of the Chinese invasion and had come back to her land of safe haven, but the land she was depending on was now slowly coming to its end. So in her power she had done everything she could do to retain Sikkim's Independent status but the time and destiny of Sikkim was not in favor of monarchy and Sikkim became part of India in 1975. She eventually lost her home at the hands of the Indians, thus ending the monarchical rule of Sikkim. Even though everything was over she did not keep quiet and when she was in Hong Kong, she gave the press an interview about India taking over Sikkim. "From Hong Kong Cocoola issues several strong statements to the press absolving Mrs Gandhi but saying the Indian Intelligence Bureau is behind the take-over."³³ Being a woman she had projected herself in the society and tried her best to keep Sikkim safe. She became this exemplary personality at that time when society was not in a position to accept women being active in the men's world, she "Cocoola: Kula was regarded as foremost among her admirers... British politician and American diplomat also paid court to Chogyal's sister. India House resented her prominence, her air of cool disdain and- even -more its inability to put her down. Bajpai, the second- last PO (political officer), called her 'the dragon lady'." ³⁴ the political involvement of Princess Pema Tsedeun was there but she also promoted and represented Sikkim in many international events like, the exhibition in Tokyo Japan, and her contribution in the cultural aspects of Sikkim remains most valuable as she was one of the founding members of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in 1958. She in the history of Sikkim remains one of the most elegant and strong woman personalities who stood her grounds in front of the Indians to save her state at that time.

³³ Hope Cooke, *Time Change an Autobiography*, Published by Simon and Schuster 1980, p 243.

³⁴ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, *Op.cit*, pp 89-90.



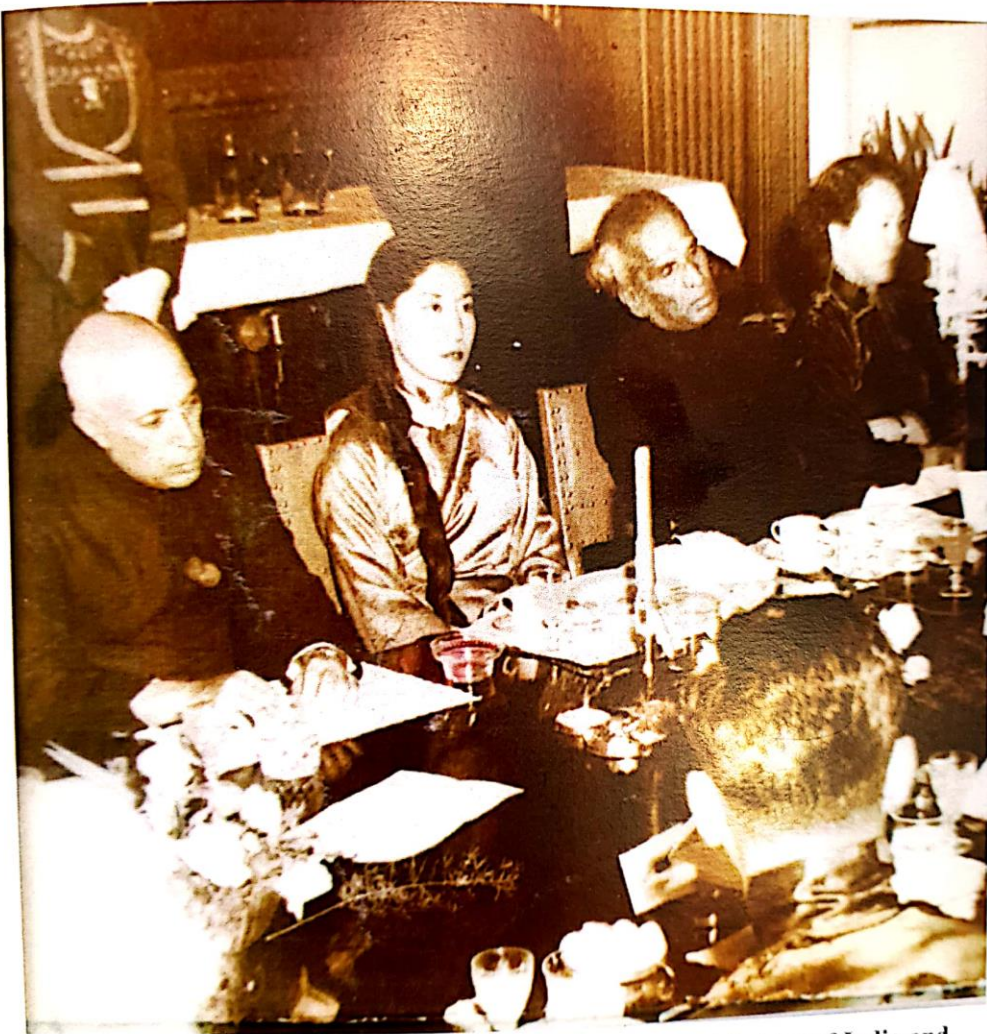
3.5.(Pincess Peme Tsedeun with her Women Welfare members at Kaluk)

Sources: personal collection of Dr. Tsewang Tenduk Pulger



3.6. Princess Pema Tsedeun with Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal and Nari Rustomji

Sources: personal collection of Dr. Tsewang Tenduk Pulger



Princess Pema Tsedeun with Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister of India and Mr. Krishna Menon, the Defence Minister and the Crown Prince Thondup Namgyal in the front row at the State Dinner, New Delhi.

3.7. Source: personal collection of Dr. Tsewang Tenduk Pulger

3.4. Hope Cooke (the American Queen of Sikkim)

Hope Cooke was born on 24th June 1940 and was an American national who had grown up in New York; she became an orphan at a very young age when her mother died in the plane crash. She and her sister grew up with her maternal grandparents after her mother's death. She had also lived her life in Teheran when her maternal uncle was posted to as his country's ambassador to Teheran. During her stay at that place she developed an immense interest in Asia and Buddhism "her reading of the Asian history and culture at the prestigious Sara Lawrence College, where she subsequently graduated, was extensive and thorough, and her thirst for travel and first-hand experience took her eventually to India and the Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim."³⁵ She met Chogyal Palden Thondup at Darjeeling when he was there to drop his children to their boarding school in 1959. She met Chogyal Paldan Thondup Namgyal when the political situation of Sikkim was not good as there was a constant pressure from the political parties of Sikkim against him and also the Indian domination was starting to penetrate into Sikkim. They fell in love and got married in 1963. "After Six years as a widower the Maharajakumar married Miss Hope Cooke, an American, in March, 1963."³⁶ They had to face some objection from the royal Court when they got married as she was an American citizen. "The union was by no means popular. The Lhadi Medi's consent was reluctantly given and only after a hectic day-long session behind closed doors. The lamas were sceptical of Hope's claims to erudition, and the kazis found her notion of court etiquette baffling."³⁷ And when their marriage finally took place after everything was settled in the court, their marriage became the headlines of many international covers, and suddenly the small Kingdom of Sikkim was gaining international recognition and many foreign dignitaries also graced

³⁵ Nari Rustomji, Op.cit., p 63.

³⁶ Lal Bhadur Basnet, Op.cit., p 123.

³⁷ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit., pp 91.

their presence in the tiny Himalayan state. Shortly after their marriage “Palden Thondup Namgyal and his American bride were crowned the King and Queen of Sikkim at a colourful ceremony at the Palace Chapel, on 4th April, 1965, his 42nd birthday.”³⁸ The marriage union was benefiting the tiny Himalayan Kingdom which not many people knew about so Palden Thondup Namgyal was very happy about this union and according to B.S Das :

“Hope Cooke provided all that Prince Palden wanted in a consort; specially her American origin itself gave a charisma and made news in the international press. For a tiny remote Himalayan Kingdom all this publicity enhanced the image of Sikkim. Prince Palden loved that it brought Sikkim into instant limelight. The marriage attracted a large foreign presence. When Prince Palden succeeded the throne on his father’s death, his coronation was splashed all over the foreign press, Especially American.”³⁹

Although their marriage had brought immense popularity at Sikkim in the international level, but this attention also bought lots of troubles to Hope Cooke. The Indian government was not very happy with the international coverage which Sikkim was getting and the Indian government was also not happy with Hope Cooke’s American influence upon Sikkim. At that time when she got married to Palden Thondup Namgyal the Indian government had already started to post Indian Officials in Sikkim and Sikkim was in a subtle way under the thumb of India.

“According to Kaul (the Indian official at the time), ‘the new ruler, Palden Thondup Namgyal, under the influence of his newly-wedded American wife and her friends, started giving pin-pricks to India on the matter big and small.’”⁴⁰ Also, she was in a way dragged into the political mess of Sikkim and had to face many remarks and criticism from the biggest rival of Palden Thondup

³⁸ Lal Bhadur Basnet, Op.cit, p 123.

³⁹ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit, pp 92- 93.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p-p 91 93.

Namgyal called Kazini Elisa Maria, wife of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee. There was a two way fight between Palden Thondup Namgyal and Hope Cooke on one side, and both the Indian Government and Kazi Lhendup Dorjee, Kazini Elisa Maria on the other side. *Chogyal* Palden Thondup Namgyal was constantly fighting for the cause of keeping the status of his Kingdom independent. Hope Cooke as the Queen of Sikkim also represented her husband *Chogyal* Palden Thondup Namgyal and Sikkim in many internationally occasions “Hope Cooke arrived back in Gangtok happy after the press conference she had conducted in London on her husband’s behalf during the crisis of 1965. Despite her youth, she had felt ‘good and mature’ in front of the microphones. She was pleased to have played her part in representing Sikkim’s cause.”⁴¹ Hope Cooke also tried her best in her ability to promote the culture and handicraft of the Sikkimese artisan. Regarding this cause Hope Cooke states “that the handicraft movement was a genuine cottage industry spread throughout the country and to that end tried to collect *rari* rugs made in western Sikkim by the Gurung villager, masks, from anywhere in the country and woolen blankets from north Sikkim.”⁴²

With all her efforts she was also able to showcase the handicrafts and talents of Sikkim in America she states in her correspondent through email that “Later in 1972 with the help of a local tailor, Rinzing Gyatso, I made 34 models of various Sikkimese clothing styles and had a fashion show at the Smithsonian Institute in Wastington DC, Bergdorf Goodman’s in NYC and at the Norkill in Gnagtok.”⁴³ Hope Cooke did all these things with the sense of belonging towards Sikkim and according to Andrew Duff:

“Desperate to become part of Sikkim’s future, she built on this newfound sense of belonging by beginning a series of initiative to give philosophical, cultural, and historical underpinnings to the country’s assertion

⁴¹Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom*, Penguin Random House India, 2015, p 132.

⁴² Email sent by Hope Cooke regarding the craft development to me on 2 August, 2019

⁴³ Ibid, 2 August, 2019

⁴⁴ Andrew Duff, Op.cit, p 133.

of its own identity. She helped produce a glossy commemorative booklet on the coronation; she gave support to the development of local cottage industries to demonstrate Sikkimese handicrafts; she chaired a major project to develop school books focused on bringing Sikkimese history and culture into the classroom.”⁴⁴

As mentioned, she was also involved in the revision of the syllabus of certain subjects being taught at Sikkim’s Schools. But this effort to Hope was looked upon by the Indian Officials as her way of brain washing the children of Sikkim against the Indian government. However, when we analyze the purpose of revising the syllabus, we get to know that it was actually for the benefit of the children of Sikkim. This was the opinion of Hope Cooke herself:

“Sikkim children are the liveliest. The most eager to learn in the world; but previous to 1968 education was pedantic, dull and designed to alienate the children from the land and themselves. For a brief period from 1967-73 we set out on a course intended to return education to children’s needs and interests. Our attempt in Sikkim was parallel to those in many developing countries. Because of our small size, however, the problems involved were at the same time more exaggerated and also easier to articulate and resolve. The sense that it was actually possible to make sweeping changes in the education system that might ultimately have a real effect on the lives of the student of Sikkim brought a special change special excitement to our work.”⁴⁵

Hope Cooke’s involvement in all these events were making the Indian government doubt her intentions and rumors were also there that she might be a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) agent deputed in Sikkim. There was a strong resentment towards Hope Cooke and her activities and one such incident took place when the Indian thought that it was a direct insult to the Indian prestige.

⁴⁵ Development of Curricular and text book grades kindergarten-VII in Sikkim 1987-1974

That famous incident was when Hope Cooke wrote an article titled 'The Sikkimese theory of landholding and the Darjeeling Grant' in 1966 where she stated that:

“Darjeeling was given for its particular usages of the health resort. In Sikkim where all land is believed to be held from the King and usage of the land is extended freely but no technical sufferance from the King, the gift of Darjeeling for the certain purpose without transferring the donor’s right of authority and jurisdiction and sovereignty would be according to strictest Sikkimese tradition. In this context the limitations and conditionality inherent in the grant of Darjeeling would be seem unquestionable.”⁴⁶

This article of hers irked the Indian government and Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal had to apologize to the Indian officials on behalf of Hope Cooke, but one thing was clear to them was that Hope Cooke was not at all on their side, and started to blame Hope Cooke for the anti-Indian element even if she was not involved. One such incident took place when during the 1968 the Independent day celebration of India there was some anti-Indian protest conducted by some school children at Gangtok(Sikkim) was blamed as the instigator the *Himalayan Observer* a popular newspaper reported: “August 15 '68 a small anti-Indian demonstration had been staged just outside the Indian House allegedly under the management of some Sikkim Government officials and with the knowledge of the PAO Mr Haldipur.”⁴⁷

Hope Cooke in her autobiography clearly states that she wanted to get help from others but Chogyal and she were not in that position because of the tight grip of the Indian Government:

“We wanted people to have Sikkim in their consciousness. If God help us, something happened, we wouldn't be quite alone. We knew they wouldn't be able to help, but somehow the mere fact of outside

⁴⁶ Hope Namgyal, *The Sikkimese Theory of Land – Holding and The Darjeeling Grant*, Bulletin of Tibetology, 1996, p 59

⁴⁷ Himalayan Observer, August ,21 1971, p 5.

people knowing of us seemed to diffuse the awfulness of a potential takeover and possibly magically, keep it in abeyance.”⁴⁸

All these pressures and the political situations created a crack in the personal relationship between Hope Cooke and her husband *Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal* and eventually they got divorced in 1980 and Hope Cooke left Sikkim for good. Hope Cooke had faced a lot of challenges from the minute she set foot in Sikkim; she became queen of Sikkim at the peak of the political instability and had to face enemies from both sides; one from Kazini at first and later the Indian Government. It seems that every progressive move she took for Sikkim was looked upon with suspicion and jealousy and the Indian government tried to undermine her efforts by accusing her of spreading the anti-Indian element in Sikkim. Hope tried her best to promote the cultural aspect of Sikkim and showed her interest in the social and educational lives of the common people of Sikkim. Her attempts have not been gone in vain as she is still in the history of Sikkim as an exemplary woman who was once the *Gyalmo* of Sikkim, and had always stood by Sikkim to protect its identity and promote its unique culture.

⁴⁸ Hope Cooke, Op.cit., p 201.



3.8. Hope Cooke in the traditional Sikkimese attire



3.9. Hope Cooke with *Chogyal* Palden Thondup

Sources: personal collection of Dr. Tsewang Tenduk Pulger

3.5. Kazini Elisa Maria

Elisa Maria Langford-Rae was born into an ordinary family in Edinburgh, Scotland. She met Kazi Lhendup Dorjee a political leader of Sikkim in the year 1958 and after their marriage she along with her husband became a very strong opposition of the ruling house of Sikkim. Kazini Elisa Maria's marriage to Kazi Lhendup Dorjee became a turning point in Kazi Lhendup Dorjee's life as she became very much involved in the political career of her husband and she gave full support to him to fight against the monarch of Sikkim. She has been the most prominent force behind the rise of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee and his party Sikkim National Congress.

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee started out his political journey with a small organization/party called Praja Mandal at Chakhung his hometown, this organization was the voice of Chakhung people and their grievances at that time along with that, other two organizations were also formed at different places of Sikkim one was the Praja Sundarak Samaj of Gangtok and the other was Praja Semmelan of Timi Tarku. These three small social welfare organizations were the trail blazer for the new political development in the kingdom. "As three separate entities they did not have a cohesive action but they had at least two demands in common (i) the abolition of landlordism and (iii) establishment of popular government."⁴⁹

On 7th of December 1947, all these three parties met at Gangtok and united to form Sikkim's first political party called Sikkim State Congress. Kazi worked under this party for quite some time but he eventually parted ways and formed a new party called Sikkim National Congress and he was the president of that party. According to G.B.S. Sidhu; "By marrying the Kazini, Kazi suddenly

⁴⁹ N. Sengupta, *State Government and Politics Sikkim*, Staring Publishers, private Limited 1985, New Delhi, p 8.

went from being a comparatively obscure person to being noticed in New Delhi's social and political circles, owing to his wife's previous access. So did the cause for which he was fighting for."⁵⁰

Kazini Elisa Maria seemed to many people to be a very mysterious lady and many people narrated different stories of her from the past and their encounter with her and According to Sunanda K Dutta Ray her own story was quite untrustworthy; he states:

"Her own story was far more colorful. But the different version she trotted out seldom agreed, dates never. She was Scots by birth and had been brought up in a Belgian convent. No, she was Belgian but had studied medicine in Edinburgh. The sepia photograph of a woman in veil and bustle, taken three-quarters from behind in the style of fifty years ago, was her mother, 'a dear little German baroness'. Her mother had been a French countess settled in Geneva. She had a flat in Brussels crammed with period furniture, cut –glass and antique silver. Her treasures were stored with Harrods in London, and she had ordered the store to send flowers to Sir Tashi after an operation at the London Clinic."⁵¹

She took active part in the political career of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee and she was the unofficial drafter of Kazi's party manifestos. According to Sidhu she would actively write in the "Himalayan Observer, which came in handy for her to plant pro-Kazi and anti- *Chogyal* news reports."⁵²

Majority of her years she spent at her home in Kalimpong and she used to vigorously make plans for Kazi and his party. She was the actual brain behind every political move of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee and his party Sikkim National Congress and according to Lal Bahadur Basnet:

"Kazini Elisa Maria Dorji took over the charge of the publicity wing of the Sikkim National Congress and began producing a stream of written words that began to expose, for the first time, the Sikkim political

⁵⁰ G.D.S. Sidhu, *Sikkim Dawn of Democracy: The Truth Behind the Merger with India*, published by Penguin Random House India Op.cit., p 89.

⁵¹ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit., p 145.

⁵² G.D.S. Sidhu, Op.cit., p 89.

landscape to public view. Simultaneously she began to build up the image of her husband as the leader of the Sikkim National Congress, the party that in the fullness of time and because of the publicity boost, matured into the 'opposition'. If the activities of the party lacked colour, it was amply supplied by the fertile imagination of the Kazini; and where the party leaders failed to exhibit courage and determination, the Kazini's vigorous language lent all the fire needed."⁵³

She was a constant critic of the monarch of Sikkim and his wife and every move they made she used to write about them and according to Sunanda K. Dutta Ray "most of her stories were libelous. All were in the bad taste. But they could be funny they depicted the *Chogyal* and Hope as empty, vain and tyrannical."⁵⁴ She is believed to have protested the arrival of Hope Cooke into Sikkim "As she (Hope Cooke) made her way back up to Gangtok she could see Kalimpong from the jeep. She noticed a glow of fires in the distance, convinced for a moment that it was the demonstration that the Kazini was rumored to have arranged"⁵⁵ She also became one of the most important person to have influenced the educated youths of Sikkim by her constant effort to bring down the ruling house of Sikkim. She had become that figure who was not afraid of the monarch, and her writing had heavily influenced the youths of Sikkim to be at her side to fight against the monarchical system of Sikkim. Because no one before her in Sikkim was able to criticize the Sikkim Durbar as she did, she also helped to break the illusion and fear of the Sikkim Durbar. "Around Kazini gathered a number of educated young Nepalese men who were intoxicated by her eloquence and convinced that destiny had singled them out to re-enact the French Revolution. Lal Bhadur Basnet, who had been an educated crops NOC and spoke French passably well, was an early protégé. Krishna Chandra Pradhan came later and so did N.K Subeidi. But the most favored was

⁵³ Lal Bahadur Besnet, Op.cit., p 119.

⁵⁴ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit, p-p 149 150.

⁵⁵ Andrew Duff, Op.cit., p 104.

Nar Bahadur Khatiawara, a peasant lad from near Gyalzing whom Kazini adopted and put through school and college in Kalimpong.”⁵⁶ Her most important write up which was also the most controversial one against the ruler of Sikkim was the Bulletin No 2 “it is said that the revolution of the Sikkimese people started with her famous “Bulletin No.2” the Bulletin became an important document with its proclamation that: “a country can live without a king, but he cannot live with a country.”⁵⁷ She in a way was building her support with the youth and the people of Sikkim had become at that time the most powerful opposition of the monarch of Sikkim who did not fear the consequence from the ruler. After the 1950 Treaty Sikkim had become an Indian Protectorate and, the relation between Sikkimese ruler and Indian government became sour with time. It is stated that Kazini took full advantage of that situation to gain the support of the Indian government “Elisa who was commonly known as Kazini (being the Kazi’s Wife), began to line up support for establishing a pro-Indian democratic set up, reducing the *Chogyal* to a mere constitutional head.”⁵⁸ In the political scenario of Sikkim, *Chogyal* Palden Thondup Namgyal was struggling to hold his position as a ruler of Sikkim as he and his party called Sikkim National Party was facing many defeats in the elections and on the other hand he was also feeling the pressure of the Indian Government. In January 1973, there arose the issue of unfair referendum that later became the reason behind a huge revolt that Sikkim have ever witnessed. During that particular incident, Sikkim National Congress accused the party members of the Sikkim National Party; the counting of the votes was not carried on by fair means. This led to some verbal fighting between both party members; they were protesting the incident and later Sikkim Janata Congress also joined Sikkim National Congress. The result of the election was announced on 15th February and the result was

⁵⁶ Ibid, p 151.

⁵⁷ George Kotturan, *The Himalayan Gateway*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, p 106.

⁵⁸ B. S. Das, *Sikkim Saga*, Vikas Publishing house PVT, LTD, p 94.

in the favor of Sikkim National Party which was supporting the monarch, which won by 11 seats and had won the election. But this was completely rejected by the two losing parties and said that they will boycott this setup and asked *Chogyal* Palden Thondup to look into that matter. But he did not give any heed to their request and the matter became worse when the two parties decided to join hands and a mass protest was launched where people from different parts of Sikkim came to Gangtok in huge numbers. On 4th April 1973, the day of *Chogyal* Palden Thondop Namgyal's 50th birthday "At 6.30 a.m. the demonstrators after some pep-talk from their leaders, advanced towards the barrier. Tear-gas shells exploded. Undeterred, the demonstration surged forward. A police man lost his nerve and fired two shots from his revolver. This was a signal for some trigger-happy policemen who discharged a burst of rifle fire. Dozens of demonstrators were wounded. The mob ran helter-skelter."⁵⁹ This was by far the most violent protest in Sikkim and Kazini Elisa Maria is believed to be one of the main persons behind the idea of mass protest. B.S Das states that "...she became the brain trust of the 1973 movement against the *Chogyal*. As her entry to Sikkim had been banned by the *Chogyal*, she operated from Kalimpong, a sub-divisional headquarters of Darjeeling district in India. It helped the movement a lot. Residing in India so close to Sikkim, her house in Kalimpong became the operational headquarters for the movement launched in April 1973."⁶⁰ After the incident many common people were wounded and the police brutality towards common people did not stop and regarding this incident, the Kazini under the disguise of a correspondent had written in the Himalayan Observer "we congratulate the heroic people of Sikkim for their struggle against the brutal oppression and tyranny of the *Chogyal* of Sikkim. The *Chogyal* and his puppets are entirely to be blamed for this unprecedented political

⁵⁹ Lal Bahadur Basnet, Op.cit., p 119.

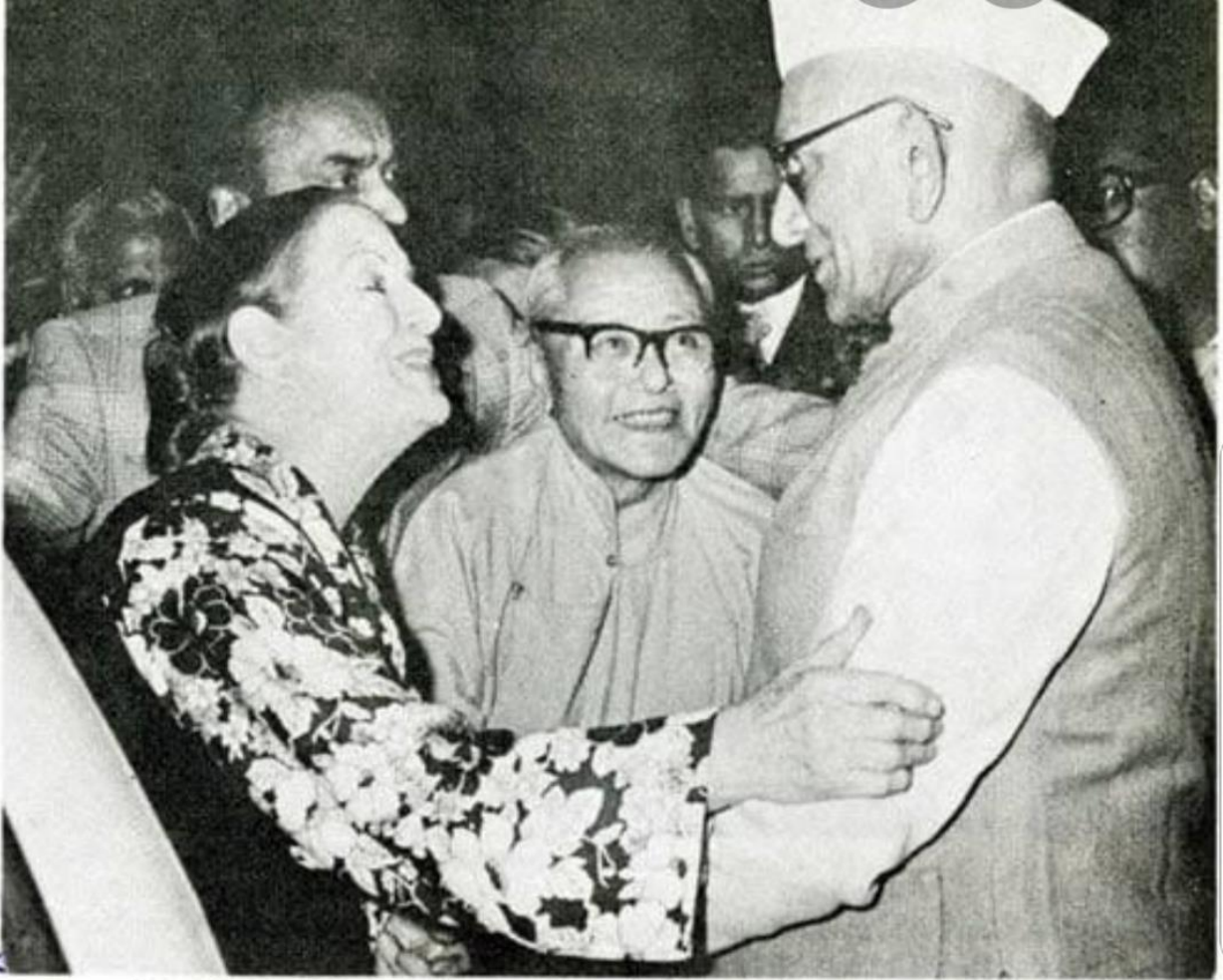
⁶⁰ B. S. Das, Op.cit, p 94.

turmoil in Sikkim for he denied even the basic human rights of the citizens.⁶¹” Eventually Sikkim became a part of Indian union in 1975 and the independent status of Sikkim was lost with Kazi Lhendup Dorjee becoming the first Chief Minister of Sikkim.

Kazini Elisa Maria had a very dominant personality and she had become the talk of the town at that time, and many hold the view of her as this very negative person who came to destroy the lives of Sikkimese monarch. While describing her in the narratives, many writers’ often describe her as manipulative, with venomous energy. Basically, majority of her image was very negatively portrayed in the history of Sikkim.

Even though majority of the narrative sided with her being this very evil person who for her personal gain did what she did, but what we cannot deny, is the fact that she was a woman who was challenging the ruler left right and center and at that time she became one of the most prominent woman personality who was looked upto by the youth of Sikkim for inspiration and guidance.

⁶¹ *Himalayan Observer*, April 21 1973



The Kazi and Kazini with the prime minister—glad to rule over Sikkim

3.10. Kazini Elisa Mari



Chakung Kazini leading a procession of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress (1976)

3.11. Kazini Elisa Mari

3.6. Ruth Karthak Lapchani

Ruth Karthak Lapchani was born on 12 May 1934 at Arithang, Gangtok, Sikkim. Her father Chandra Lal Karthak was a Lepcha, mother was Bhutia from Gensapa clan from Tinki Tam of South Sikkim her grandmother was a Nepali, she thus belonged to all three major community of Sikkim. Ruth was educated at Paljor Namgyal School in Gangtok and after finishing her school she went to Calcutta to pursue advanced nursing at P.G Hospital (now Seth Suklal Karnani Hospital).

She came back to Sikkim in 1955 with the intention to serve the people of Sikkim, after seeing the poor condition of the Lepchas in Sikkim under the monarchical rule. She started advocating for the Lepchas of Sikkim and talked about how Lepchas were losing their lands and becoming helots in their own land. “She observed and was touched by the pathetic condition of the Lepchas living in the village areas. All the intruders were found to be much better and well off at the cost of the aboriginal simple Lepchas.”⁶² The social and political condition of Sikkim was at the time was such that the ruling house belonged to the Tibetan origin and the nature of the socio-political setup was feudal and the King and the Kazi (landlord) had all the powers. The common people of Sikkim were facing lots of challenges in the monarchical setup. When she came back to Sikkim after finishing her nursing there was a shift in the political situation of Sikkim, where in after the treaty of 1950 Sikkim had become the Indian protectorate and the anti-Chogyal feeling was at its peak and democratic movement was being launched by many political parties against the *Chogyal*. She embarked on to take the cause of the Lepcha people and came into the political scene. She

⁶² D.C Roy, Oc.cit.,p 230.

“launched her independent party, the Sikkim Independent Front in 1966.”⁶³ Ruth believed that Sikkim belonged to the Lepchas and not the immigrants from Tibet so she launched a political war against the monarch of Sikkim *Chogyal* Palden Thundup Namgyal. The issue of the Lepcha was believed to have been embedded in her by her grandfather named Bag Singh Karthak Lepcha since her Childhood “who was one of the general secretary of the Government of Sikkim.”⁶⁴ She tried to challenge *Chogyal* Palden Thundup Namgyal and his party Sikkim National Party in “1967 elections of the Sikkim Council.”⁶⁵ But she was not able to do anything, as she was arrested in Singtam the same year “on March 23rd 1967, along with her husband, A. Halim, under the Sikkim security act.”⁶⁶ A. Halim was by decent an Indian Muslim and they had met when she was studying nursing at Calcutta. “She met Md. Ahsan Halim; a Calcutta based Muslim businessmen, a patient in the hospital and fell in love with him. Ruth got married with Md.Ahsan Halim, in Calcutta at the age of 21 on 8 December, 1956.”⁶⁷ Her struggle when 1967, her husband was ordered to leave Sikkim and never to return and on 3th January 1968, he was forcefully taken to Rangpo outpost and handed over to Indian Police. While Ruth was still detained in the prison there was a complaint against her by the officers of the government and she had allegedly said:

“1. The present ruler of Sikkim is not its real ruler...the *Chogyal* is a Bhuytiya, the real rulers of Sikkim were Lepchas.

“2. The present *Chogyal*, being a non- Lepcha, has no right to rule over Sikkim.

⁶³ Lal Bahadur Basnet, Op.cit., p 148.

⁶⁴ Dr D.C Roy, *Prominent Personalities Among the Lepchas*, published by Mayel Layang Lepcha Development Board, 2014, p 105.

⁶⁵ Lal Bahadur Basnet, Op. cit, p 148.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p 148.

⁶⁷ Dr D.C Roy, *Prominent Personalities Among the Lepchas*, Op.cit, p 105.

“3. The Lepchas are being suppressed in Sikkim. The Sikkim Durbar is intending to rehabilitate 5,000 Tibetan refugees in Sikkim. The move of the Sikkim Durbar is to harm the Lepchas.”⁶⁸

Due to all these reasons she was announced guilty by the court. “On November 15, 1968, Ruth was sentenced to undergo two years rigorous imprisonment by the Chief Magistrate of Sikkim. But before the completion of the sentence she was expelled from Sikkim with the injunction not to enter Sikkim again. During this time, she stayed for some time in Kalimpong and thereafter left for Calcutta to join her husband.”⁶⁹ once Ruth was at Kalimpong she made a statement:

“I was afraid of some other kind plot of being hatched by the Sikkim bureaucrats who cannot suffer my presence in Sikkim among the masses, they hate me. I did not go to my home in Chisopaney. My house has been sealed by the police ever since I was put in jail. I had some money left in my bank. The Sikkim Police was shadowing me. Although I was advised to go and took my personal thing at Chisopaney, I did not believe that I was free from the spidery nest of Sikkim government. So, I ran for freedom. The release order which snatched away my birth right a lawful citizen of Sikkim virtually rendered my status to that of a stateless person. I thought of only way to escape, and made my way for India immediately”⁷⁰

The reason behind her departure from Sikkim and her losing the Sikkim subject right was that she was married to Indian Muslim a non-Sikkimese man and hence she was no longer a subject of Sikkim. “Sikkim Durbar on 15th March 1969 initiated proclamation of scrapping Sikkimese citizenship from women who marries outsider (non- Sikkimese) not belonging to the state of Sikkim.”⁷¹ This was done while she was in prison, so when she was released from prison and

⁶⁸ Himalayan Observer, 1961 p (1) (found in the book *Sikkim a Short Political History* by Lal Bahadur Basnet)

⁶⁹ D.C Roy, *Status of Women*, Oc. cit,p 231

⁷⁰ *Himalayan Observer*, March 15,1968 (found in the book *Sikkim a Short Political History* by Lal Bahadur Basnet)

⁷¹ Bitu Subba, Op.cit, p 2.

ordered never to return to Sikkim, she left behind all her ancestral property, some of which had been confiscated by the Sikkim *Darbur*.

Ruth Karthak Lepchani was the first woman who was politically challenging the Sikkim Durbar. There was Kazini also who had become a strong opponent of the Sikkim Durbar but the difference between them was that Ruth Karthak was fighting the battle with the Sikkim Durbar in the front line where as Kazini was playing from her husband's behind, and this made Ruth Karthak the first woman to have had challenged the political authority head on. So, she had to face consequences which were hard and outright evil. She was made homeless; her property was confiscated in just few years after coming into the political scene of Sikkim.

The reason behind Sikkim durbar's attitude towards her can only be seen as

- Her whole party image was based on the Lepcha empowerment of Sikkim.
- She being a common woman and challenging the ruler was an offensive act at that time.

When we analyze the two reasons mention above, we get to see the panic behind the Sikkim Durbar when she decided to contest election in 1967. Her reason behind her decision to contest election was because of the poor condition of the Lepcha people, so she actively spoke against the Sikkim Durbar to the Lepcha People and this act of hers was becoming dangerous as the Sikkim National Party supported by the Sikkim Durbar had gained support from the communal tactics by protecting the interest of Bhutia and Lepcha community. The other party which was there was seen as a 'pro' Nepali party and the support which the Sikkim National party was getting was majorly from the Bhutia, Lepcha Community of Sikkim and they were quite dependent on these two communities. Dividing these two communities (Bhutia, Lepcha), it would result in them becoming the minorities. So, when Ruth Karthak came up with her party in the election the threat of losing the

support of Lepcha Community was greater. So, they had to do anything in their power to stop her and they did that to her.

The 'second' reason is so obvious her being a woman and challenging the ruling authority was way out of the line at that time. The society at that time when she rebelled was not at all in favor of her as Sikkim was a theocratic patriarchal society and she was also married to a non-Sikkimese. In a way Sikkim Durbar showed how women were victimized left right and center if she dared to question the authority. It was not like she was the first person to have challenged the authority, many political parties existed before her and there were many male political leaders before her, but the way she was treated, we can clearly see the gender bias and in how she was treated by the Sikkim Durbar: very harshly and the scrapping of Sikkim subject right was out- right evil.



3.12. Ruth Karthak Lepchani



3.13. Ruth Karthak Lepchani

In conclusion it may be said that all these six women whom we have studied above have one thing in common: that their fearlessness towards the men or the society at their respective times. They have in their own ways left a mark in Sikkim's history. Being women, they have showed great leadership qualities, ambitions and have worked their way up to achieve their dreams. Their journeys have been extremely significant in the Sikkimese society. They came at a time when the Sikkimese society was tremendously patriarchal even so in the time of Pendi Wangmo and *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma. Not only did they have to put up a fight against the existing patriarchal system but also pressures from the other countries which had power over Sikkim in different eras of the Namgyal Dynasty. *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma had shown her incredible qualities in her time to stop the influence of the British in her Kingdom. Princess Pema Tsedeun and Hope Cooke were also the ones who put up a strong fight against the Indian dominance at their time. Pendi Wangmo holds a momentous role in the history of Sikkim, for her courage to question the succession prototype at that time, when beyond men and their achievement we did not get to know about others existence. Kazini Elisa Maria has left her mark for being the significant player in the political history of Sikkim and Ruth Karthak Lepchani was the one who fought against the Sikkim Durbar. They were the ones who were constantly challenging the prevailing patriarchal system, from challenging the succession pattern to making policies, to involving in the male dominated political arena these women had done it all, and their individual journeys have been very eye opening about Sikkimese society, culture, customs and most importantly how women were looked upon when they started to do things out of the gender norms. These women in the history of Sikkim have made a mark and have symbolized a very empowering image for the women in the society.

CHAPTER IV

FOREIGN WOMEN VERSES NATIVE WOMEN

In the previous chapter we have dealt in details about the eminent women personalities who had very impressive journey in the Sikkimese politics and society, and in this chapter we will be dealing with how these women were perceived by the society and the impact of the foreign women in the Sikkimese politics vis-à-vis the impact of the native women.

Sikkim did not have an isolated history and its contacts with the other states and kingdoms have been recorded since very early times. In many ways Sikkim has been influenced by the outside elements, it came in contact with many other countries such as (Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, Britain, and India) over the past in different eras. Because of the influence of these countries the society of Sikkim had to go through many alterations. The women personalities who we are studying were in the mists of all these developments, and have also played a major role in the political scenario of Sikkim and its relationship with these countries. Moreover, two of the women personalities within the scope of this dissertation belong to western countries: American (Hope Cooke) and Belgium scot (Kazini Elisa Maria) origin.

All six eminent women had played a major role in the political history of Sikkim. They were the ones in their respective times who stood against the existing system of the Namgyal Dynasty and against the pressure of the other states. They made a huge impact in Sikkim in regard of being fearless women figures. Their individual political journey has not been easy but they were able to stand out amongst the rest because of their ambitions and objectives in the political history of Sikkim. As mentioned above not all six women that we are studying were native women, Sikkim having been a small kingdom at the transitional period during the Namgyal Dynasty from being a

sole monarchical state to being a part of the Indian union we get to witness the coming of two foreign women (Hope Cooke and Kazini Elisa Maria) into Sikkim. The common element which binds all six women together is their political involvement in Sikkim. But what set them apart are the impact and results of their political activities in Sikkim which have been quite different from one another. To understand more in details about the impact and the result of native women verses the foreign women's political activities, the six women will be discussed under two separate heads namely: native women and foreign women.

4.1. Impact of the native eminent women in Sikkim

Pendi Wangmo, Maharani Yeshay Dolma, Princess Pema Tsedeun and Ruth Karthak Lepchani were all from Sikkim.

Pendi Wangmo

Pendi Wangmo's political activities have already been discussed in the last chapter which states her importance in the political history of Sikkim. Basically, she had a very bad name in the history of Sikkim; 'one' was because of her involvement in killing Chagdor Namgyal the 3rd King of Sikkim and 'second' is that she is said to have invited the Bhutanese to invade Sikkim and the hostility between Sikkim and Bhutan which followed thereafter. This story has also been depicted in the Thangka painting painted by Rinzing Lhadripa Lama. In the Thangka painting there is detailed description of the events that took place in the reign of Chagdor Namgyal:

“This thangka illustrates the life of third Chogyal Chagdor Namgyal). On top left corner, a male (Chagdor Namgyal's father Tensung Namgyal) is sitting with his three wives (Sikkimese, Bhutanese and Limbu). On the top right corner, a male (Chagdor Namgyal) is teaching some Lepcha people. On the center a war between Tibetan and Bhutanese people, and a female (Pendi Wangmo) is shown giving instruction to the

Bhutanese army. On the right side of the war, Chagdor Namgyal is witnessing the mask dance on Panglabsol. On left side of the mask dance a male is setting in the center with people around with text in their hands. On the bottom right corner Chagdor Namgyal is shown taking a bath on Ralong hot spring. On the left bottom corner, a female (Pendi Wangmo) is being killed by few men and her cremation is also there.”¹

¹ Classified Accession Register (CAR) of Namgyal Institution of Tibetology.



4.1. The Life of the third *Chogyal* Chagdor Namgyal

In the context of Pendi Wangmo and her role in the Bhutanese invasion of Sikkim, she is perpetually blamed for that particular incident. But if we look closely and study the relation between Sikkim, Tibet, and Bhutan the Bhutanese invasion of Sikkim was inevitable at that time, as Bhutan was consolidating its empire and geographically if we look at it Sikkim and its territories was the closest when it came to taking over the territories in the process of consolidating their empire. The important fact which we don't see in the historical narrative of Sikkim about the Bhutan, Tibet, and Sikkim relation is that the war or invasion of Bhutan over Sikkim was much more than the territorial gain or for the cause of Pendi Wangmo. The relation between Tibet and Bhutan had been hostile even before Sikkim came into the scene, these two states were having a religious political conflict as Tibet represented the Galugpa sect of Buddhism and Bhutan represented the Drukpa sect of Buddhism. They both were in the process of spreading their own religious and political supremacy in other Himalayan states like Ladakh and Mustang which had religious and political inclination towards Bhutan. According to Karma Phuntsho "...the Bhutanese, by the time of Migyur Tenpa's regency, had already secured a good standing in Ladakh and Mustang...several monasteries in these countries were under Bhutanese care and lamas were appointed from Bhutan... Princes of Ladakh had been trained in Bhutan and occupied important posts. Bhutan enjoyed a similar relationship but to a lesser degree with Mustang"² and after the establishment of theocratic monarchy in Sikkim it was inclined towards Tibet in the religious and political scene. "The struggle between Tibet and Bhutan, argues Ardussi, were not merely of territorial matters but fundamentally of religious orientation. Thus, wherever the Drukpa and

² Karma Phuntsho, *The History of Bhutan*, Penguin Random House India 2018, p 266.

Gelugpa religious school met, there was a potential for affecting their own national interests.”³ Tibet and Bhutan were involved in many wars when Sikkim came into the scene after the establishment of theocratic monarchy and their inclination towards Tibet was seen by the Bhutanese as a threat towards their supremacy and having been so close to Sikkim in geographical stand point the invasion was inevitable with or without Pendi Wangmo’s invitation. As by invading they were not only gaining the territories, they were also standing their grounds in Sikkim to make Tibet weaker in the religious and political rivalry. So, to blame Pendi Wangmo solely about Sikkim and Bhutan’s hostility is unfair. What is even more unfair is that she is projected as a villain for her will to be at the throne of Sikkim and if we look at it now, we could see that she was right in her claims, as she asked for her right to claim the throne on the grounds of her being elder than her brother. But probably the time was not right for a woman to do that and hence her ambition had to die with her when she was strangled to death.

Maharani Yeshay Dolma

Maharani Yeshay Dolma had played a very important role in the political history of Sikkim involving the British and Tibet, when she came to Sikkim the suzerainty of the British in Sikkim was very much installed and the British were involved in every affair of Sikkim and they were even playing the King makers in Sikkim. This was all due to the British interest to build the trading route to Tibet via Sikkim. The political scenario started to change when *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma started getting involved in the matters of the state, she is believed to be the person behind the policies which by the British is presumed to be anti-British and pro-Tibetan. According to P.R Roa

³ Ibid, p 266.

“He was under the influence of his Tibetan wife whom he had married in 1880. She became the chief advocate of the Tibetan point of view in Sikkim Durbar”⁴. This shift in the political approach of *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal’s court was also felt by the British when a British officer visited Sikkim “so in November 1887 the government of Bengal sent A.W Paul, deputy commissioner of Darjeeling, to Gangtok, the new capital of Sikkim and reported the existence of Pro-British and Pro-Tibetan faction in Sikkim court.”⁵The impact of *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma was such that the British feared about having another Tibetan woman in Sikkim, in the position of *Rani* so J.C White the political officer started to suggest for then Prince Sedikong Tulku to get a bride from any other place other than Tibet.

“The system in Sikkim royal family was to find a bride in Tibet and the Maharaja would not like his Son’s marriage with any of the Kazi’s daughter. But the prince could not be allowed to marry in Tibet because the experience with the present Rani was that she was ‘very discontented with her lot in Sikkim and most Tibetan in all her leaning’ White was totally opposed to marriage with any girl of Tibetan sentiment and even suggested to look for a girl in Bhutan and in support of his suggestion referred to the precedent of marriage of Raja Tensung Namgyal in Bhutan in 1670.”⁶

The last blow that Thutob Namgyal delivered to the British was when British sent the trade mission to Tibet, *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal was not very helpful as they thought he would be to them and *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal was purposely staying at his summer palace in Chumbi Valley and this act of his was also not liked by the British. So finally, the British were done with *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and they installed a British political officer in 1880 in Sikkim and *Maharaja*

⁴ P.R.Rao, Op.cit., p 83.

⁵ Pranab Kumar Jha, *History of Sikkim (1817-1904): Analysis of British Policy and Activities*, O P S Publishers Private Ltd. 1985, p 31.

⁶Ibid, p 40.

Thutob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshay Dolma were sent away from Sikkim and kept under house arrest. According to J.C White "...the incident, though amusing, was very pathetic at the same time, and I was heartily sorry for them both. They had come into opposition with the British Government and from an exaggerated idea of the importance of Tibet and China, and with no conception or understanding of our ways, they had run against a mighty power to their hurt and consequent suffering."⁷

It has been projected that *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal's rebellious act towards the British was due to *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma's influence and because of this he had to suffer the consequences. Had he not done all of this; he would have had a better reign. But it is important to acknowledge that *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma had actually tried to keep Sikkim out of the British influence and did everything in her power to not make Sikkim the puppet of British. But her aim to do that could not match with the British Power and they had to finally succumb to the British hegemony. But what we can take away from her policies is that she was not afraid to stand her grounds and wanted to make British know that even though they were small and less powerful than British, they could not be bullied by them. Apart from that she had been the rock behind her husband *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal throughout his reign. Being a woman, she was not afraid to voice her concern for her kingdom and oppose the British. She took interest in the politics of Sikkim in those times and wanted to protect it from the manipulation of the British power. She was a woman of great foresight and bold political acumen.

⁷ J.C White, Op.cit., p 26.

Princess Pema Tseduen

Princess Pema Tseduen (Coocoola) was another figure from the royal lineage and the elder sister of *Chogyal* Palden Thondup Namgyal and was married to a high officer in Tibet. Who did everything in her power to keep Sikkim's status independent. In this process her life was turned upside down, first she had to leave her home in Tibet due to the Chinese invasion in 1950's, and when she came to Sikkim, she now again had to face the danger of losing another home. After coming to Sikkim, she was first involved herself in the rehabilitation of the Tibetan refugees "the strong historic ties between Sikkim and Tibet meant that there was family member who were affected by events. Coocoola in particular, married to a Tibetan nobleman, felt a personal responsibility to help the larger number of refugees who were piling into the state."⁸

Princess Pema Tsedeun put up a fight for Sikkim which she could not do for Tibet. She wanted to do something for women's right in Tibet but she was not successful, she was able to fulfill her dreams in Sikkim by forming the women's welfare association, she even became Palden Thundup Namgyal's unofficial adviser and started to take care of the diplomatic relation between Sikkim and other states and made every foreign official feel her presence and everybody had a very high impression of her " following the death of her brother's first wife, she had now taken on the role of being Thondup 's partner at official functions."⁹

She was also very vocal about the pressure that the Indian government was using upon Sikkim and she made her stand very clear about her not liking the Indian government's presence into Sikkim's internal affairs. B.S Das, the Indian officer at the royal court has penned down some of her attributes in his book 'The Sikkim Saga' which states that "running a prosperous business from

⁸ Andrew Duff, Op.cit., 2015, p 82.

⁹ Ibid, p 82.

Gangtok and Calcutta, thanks to the favours bestowed by Indian officials charmed by her appealing personality, she wanted to be the main adviser to the *Chogyal* even on political matters. The emergence of Hope Cooke on the scene and the instant dislike between the two curbed her style and spirits. Nevertheless, she continued cultivating her contacts with the senior Indian officials and some foreigners and used them not only for the business deals but also for projecting Sikkimese aspiration. She made virulent attacks on India's support to the 1973 agitation...¹⁰ she did everything in her power to advocate for the independent status of Sikkim. When she came to Sikkim, she was able to unleash her inborn diplomatic talent and she fought for her land. The impact she made in Sikkim and its political scenario is evident from the high regards from the Indian officials in their narratives of her and at the end the only constant of *Chogyal* Palden Thundup Namgya was Princess Pema Tsedeun.

¹⁰ B.S Das, Op.cit, pp 96-97.



4.2. Princess Pema Tsedeun with Indian dignitaries.

Ruth Karthak Lepchani

In the native women category Ruth Karthak Lepchani is the only woman who does not belong to the royal lineage. A Lepcha by origin, her life took a complete turn when she decided to take part in the political arena of Sikkim in the year 1967. She tried to contest the election, in 1967 against the Sikkim Durbar with the agenda to empower the Lepcha population of Sikkim which according to her had suffered a lot under the monarchical regime of the Namgyals.

Prior to her advance into the 1967 election she went to India and gave an interview in 1966 with the news outlet called 'The Current' where she talked about the Lepcha population of Sikkim their culture and the political situation of Sikkim:

“The Karthaks, she had said her ancestors were the priestly ruling class: “some 300 years ago, they were overthrown by the ancestors of the Chogyals. She compared the Lepchas to the pre-Dravidians of south India. “My people still live on monkeys, squirrel flesh, snakes, and cardamom fruits” she added “we are the people of outdated habits. If we are not able to absorb modern ways swiftly, we may well be on the way to extinction within a couple of hundred years from now.”¹¹

In that same interview she also talked about her desire to contest the election and the lack of a proper judiciary system of Sikkim. The interviewer of 'The Current' has stated that:

“We particularly avoided asking her any political questions, even though she had told us that she was thinking of standing for the election to the local Assembly in Sikkim, or whatever that body was called. But that she felt strongly about certain matters we gathered from her when she told us: “our people (the Lepcha) are absolutely uneducated. There are no courts in Sikkim, no codified laws, no written constitution. We are

¹¹ *The Current*, September,24,1966, p 23,

governed by proclamations and decrees, under the understanding arrived at with the government of India in 1953.”¹²

If we look at her time in the political scene from 1967 to 1975, she was actually cut out from the race even before the race started, she was just preparing for the election, and half way in the process she got arrested by the Sikkim Durbar on March 23rd 1967. First her husband got thrown out of Sikkim and later when she was serving her time in the prison, her Sikkim subject rights too were taken away from her and she was ordered to leave Sikkim on the basis of her being married to a non-Sikkimese man.

The only explanation to this harsh treatment conducted by the Sikkim Durbar to Ruth Karthak Lepchani as mention in the previous chapter was that she was coming into the political field of Sikkim with the issues of the Lepcha population and at that time the political scenario in Sikkim was in a very crucial stage and it had been quite communal in nature, and Ruth Karthak Lepchani contesting election and being opposition to Sikkim National Party which was in the favor of the Sikkim monarch was very threatening to the latter, which was contesting election with the confidants of the Bhutia, Lepcha community “the National party captured all seven Bhutiya-Lepcha seats in the first election held in 1953. The State Congress did the same in Nepalese constitution.”¹³ So, Ruth Karthak Lepchani’s intention of making the Lepcha population go against Sikkim National Party was very a dangerous situation for the Sikkim Durbar so she was cut out of the race even before the race began. Moreover, electoral positions and contestation had always been a male prerogative in Sikkim. No women from any community had dared to contest the election or even voiced their interest to do so.

¹² Ibid, p 28,

¹³ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit., p 131,

Even though she suffered very much by the harsh treatment of the Sikkim Durbar, we get to see the effect and impact which was caused by Ruth Karthak Lepchani when she decided to take part in the election against the Sikkim Durbar, She was taking about the issues related to Lepcha community, about their poor conditions, health, education, which at that time no one was paying attention to. She was becoming a very dangerous threat and the Sikkim Durbar ordered to eliminate its political opponent. But with the case of Ruth Karthak Lepchani we get to witness how women were treated by the state when a common woman raised her voice against the injustices of the rule and also her fearless courage to stand up against the Sikkim Durbar.



4.3. Source: from personal album of Ruth Karthak Lepchani

4.2. Impact of the foreign women

The two foreign women whom we are going to study under this category are Hope Cooke and Kazini Elisa Maria. These two women had been very important figures in the history of Sikkim; these two women represented two polar opposite side of the political spectrum at that time. Hope Cooke being the queen of Sikkim had shown her support to the monarchical setup and Kazini Elisa Maria at that time had established herself as the strongest opponent of the monarchical setup: one being supporter of the Royal power and the other being an opponent of it. It is interesting to note that these two opponents were both women of foreign origin and had come to the helm of the political affairs of Sikkim by virtue of their marriage with the men of Sikkimese origin.

Hope Cooke

Hope Cooke being Sikkim's first American queen, attracted lots of attention when Palden Thundup Namgyal and Hope Cooke decided to get married in 1963. But Hope Cooke's journey as a queen of Sikkim was not easy because when she came to Sikkim the position of the monarchical system in Sikkim was at the edge, as there was huge political movement going on to get rid of the monarchical setup by the people of Sikkim and along with that the Indian officials were also stationed at Sikkim, as Sikkim had become a protectorate of India with the treaty of 1950 the Indian government in a way was supporting the anti-monarchical movement. Her reign in Sikkim as queen became very complicated as the relation between her and the Indian officials stationed in Sikkim was not a good one Hope Cooke as her marriage brought along with her a lot of international attention "...the marriage of Maharajakumar was, no doubt, a big event of the year for Sikkim but the amount of publicity given to it in the U.S. press made it one of the most

significant events of the world. A whole battery of American T.V Cameraman, press-photographers and correspondents had converged on Sikkim that so many outsiders had come all at a time.”¹⁴ People from the outside world was now interested in Sikkim, Sikkim was getting the recognition which had never been the case for Sikkim. The Indian officials started to get annoyed with the attention which Sikkim was getting and there was even rivalry between the Indian officials and the Sikkim palace while hosting the dignitaries from other countries “there were opportunities for both as distinguished foreigners flocked to Gangtok and the palace and Indian House squabbled over them like ambitiously climbing hostesses. Most of these guests arrived with introduction to the Gyalmo, but the PO (political officer) insisted that only Indian government could invite them to Sikkim.”¹⁵

It was evident that the Indian officials were insecure after the arrival of Hope Cooke in Sikkim. Hope Cooke also was not happy with the presence of the Indian Officials in Sikkim and she had tried to stir up a discussion with American diplomat friends about the Indian presence in Sikkim “American diplomat, Anthony Quainton, recalled that Hope had quite a following in the United States and constantly stirred up American domestic opinion about the plight of the Sikkimese under India.”¹⁶ She was also embracing the culture of Sikkim and had tried to do something for the education system of Sikkim and the promotion of Sikkimese artisans and handicraft industries “the Gyalmo accomplished in interior décor, dress design and school curricula. The palace’s heavy Victorian furniture was sent into storage and replaced with low cushioned divans, carved and gilded chokseys, and wondrously woven carpets. A series of text books was planned to inspire

¹⁴ Satyendra R. Shukla, Sikkim the Story of Integration, S.Chand .co Pvt Ltd, 1976, p 86.

¹⁵ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit, p 94.

¹⁶ Andrew Duff, Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom, Op.cit, p 148.

national pride. Promising young men and women were helped to study abroad, especially in the US, where Hope's contacts enabled them to gain college admission."¹⁷

If we look at her activities in Sikkim, there seemed normal, as she was taking up issues which mattered to Sikkim and as a Queen, she was doing her best for her country. But her activities involving Sikkim was not liked by the Indian officials and they made it sound like she was doing something bad. Hope Cooke had also participated in the cause of revising the 1950 Treaty with India and according to this treaty Sikkim had become the Indian protectorate and was given huge power over Sikkim. So naturally many of the Sikkim Subjects and especially the ruling house was not happy with the arrangement and the demand for the revision of the treaty started which was not liked by the Indian officials and according to Satyendra R. Shukla " an anti-Indian origination Study Forum was formed. Its members were drawn from the ruling elite particularly Bhutia officials. Though it was apparently formed to improve the administration, its actual functioning showed that its avowed aim was to get the Indo-Sikkim Treaty revised, a demand for which was already voiced by the U.S born Gyalmo (Queen).¹⁸ With the media attention that Sikkim was getting Sikkim having an American national Queen, both Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal and Hope Cooke were trying to spread and make awareness about what was going on in Sikkim and persistently stood for the Sikkim's independent status. Hope Cooke herself had expressed her frustration about the domination of the Indian government in Sikkim in her autobiography where she states "I was telling the Chogyal that Sikkim's policy vis-à-vis the government of India is like the Piantem folktale in Sikkim. The Piantem is a legendary creature that looks like a coffeepot with a beaker nose. Piantem makes an odd whistling noise, and whenever you hear it, you should

¹⁷Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, *Op.cit.*, p 159.

¹⁸ Satyendra R. Shukla, *Op.cit.*, p 70.

run, as they carry off prey, particularly children. However, if you can't run, you should stand your ground; look at the creature and say, "I'm smaller than you." Out of a spirit of competition the Piantem shrinks, and then again you say, "I'm smaller than you" and so on until he disappears. I think we're trying to do that with Delhi, but they don't play by Sikkimese rule and keep getting bigger every time we appeal to them on grounds of magnanimity."¹⁹

Through her journey as the Queen of Sikkim, we get to understand how the society of Sikkim was functioning and how politically Sikkim was under the constant pressure of India. But even in that situation being a Queen of Sikkim she tried to do her job for the betterment of Sikkimese society. She took up Sikkimese issues which were very important at that time, like arts of Sikkim and education system of Sikkim. She tried to make Sikkim and its issues relating to India known to the other countries for which she got many criticisms from the Indian government and was blamed for spreading "anti- Indian" sentiment in Sikkim, and in particular she was even called the CIA agent in Sikkim according to Satyendra R. Shukla "in certain quarters it was openly suggested that Cooke was a CIA plant and was sent there to fish out information of logistic and diplomatic importance and to send the same to her masters."²⁰ The impact of Hope Cooke in the history of Sikkim has been huge. Because of her at that point Sikkim got the exposure to the world media. Even with all the pressures and criticisms she went and took up the issues of Sikkim and made the world aware of that. It was mostly because of Hope Cooke that Sikkim received international attention.

¹⁹ Hope Cooke *Time Change an Autobiography*, Op.cit., p 173.

²⁰ Satyendra R. Shukla, Op.cit., p 86.



On the "Today" show, appealing for Chogyal's safety following 1975 attack on the palace

4.4. Source: The Time Change by Hope Cooke

Kazini Elisa Maria

Kazini Elisa Maria as mentioned in the previous chapter was a very prominent opposition of the Sikkim Durbar. She played a very important role in her husband's political career and had established herself as the person who was the center player of the political scenario of Sikkim.

Her impact and contribution to the Sikkim's politics is huge, even bigger to those who were fighting for the anti monarchical setup, to them she and her husband was the ultimate figure who could free Sikkim from the monarchical system. The political moves which Kazini Elisa Maria made against the Sikkim Durbar had a very enormous effect like on other. Both Kazi Lendup Drojee and Kazini Elisa Maria advocated for the democratic setup and fought for the rights of the common people which were denied in the monarchical setup "the Sikkim National Congress was born there with Kazi as president and Soman Tshering as vice-president. The new party, which included some remnants of Rajya Praja Sammelan, demanded responsible government, a written constitution, universal adult suffrage on a joint electorate and guaranteed fundamental rights. With Kazini in the background, it was far Superior to the National Party when it came to language and rhetoric."²¹

Kazini Elisa Maria with all her activities to promote her husband's party and being a constant critic of the royal couple and very prominent opposition of the Sikkim Durbar, along the line she had also been perceived by many as the evil person and she had gained quiet a negative image. It is

²¹ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit., p 133.

evident from some of the written description of Kazini Elisa Maria by many authors in their works, for e.g. Sunanda K. Dutta Ray a close associate of Chogyal Palden Thundup Namgyal describes her:

“A stately woman with honey-blond hair drawn into a tight bun swept into the room, long skirts resulting about her ankles ‘I am the Kazini of Chakung’, she announced. Her face was a thick smooth white, resembling the chalk masks of Japanese kabuki dancers. On it arched a pair of thin blue-black eyebrows and the scarlet gash of a painted mouth. Her long lashes were stiff with mascara. Only the eyes were real, glittering like live coals.”²²

We could clearly see that the author did not hold a very high regard of her and he has implied that only her eyes were real and everything about her was fake. G.D.S Sidhu writes “The Kazini was a very shrewd and intelligent but often manipulative person with a talent for back-room politics.”²³

The words that are used for Kazini Elisa Maria are very questionable when you describe a person who has been a very important figure in the political history of Sikkim, Andrew Duff has stated:

“...by 1959, where the Kazi started his new political party, the Sikkim National Congress, the Kazini was already well established in Kalimpong where she was known for her witty, amusing articles (often satirising Sikkim’s unique situation), written on a typewriter in the back room of the house, in support of her husband’s political aims. All she needed now was a female counterpart upon whom she could focus her venom.”²⁴

²² Ibid, p 141.

²³ G.B.S. Sidhu, Op.cit., p 89.

²⁴ Andrew Duff, Op.cit., p 88.

The word venom has been quite often used while describing Kazini and her activities “...she and the Kazi had therefore settled in Kalimpong instead of in Sikkim, but all her venomous energy was squarely focused on the country’s situation.”²⁵

It is clear that her activities were making *Chogyal* Palden Thundup Namgyal uncomfortable and one such incident took place when the Chogyal had actually tried to prevent her stay in Kalimpong and Sunanda K. Dutta Ray describes this incident in his book as:

“Diplomats, civil servants, politicians and newspaperman were the special targets of her attention. They were regaled with grave allegations of corruption in the durbar, of political machination and administrative chaos enlivened with spicy anecdotes of the Chogyal’s liaisons and the Gyalmo’s affectation. Whether entirely fabricated or grotesquely exaggerated, the stories found neither the mark, nor least in Gangtok where the Chogyal seethed with impotent anger. Eventually, he persuaded the West Bengal authorities to withdraw her special permit to live in Kalimpong.”²⁶

The presence of Kazini Elisa Maria in the political development at that time made a huge difference. The political career of Kazi Lendup Dorjee took off after his marriage to Kazani Elisa Maria. She was able to make a difference in the Sikkimese politics; she was able to win the trust of the people of Sikkim who were trying to do away with the monarchical setup. In that process she had also been perceived as wicked woman for her activities and it alone shows that her persona has made a mark in the Sikkimese History. However, she can also be perceived as a matron or motherly figure to many young men, with a political ambition who were nurtured and led by her in the political sphere.

²⁵ Ibid, p 103.

²⁶ Sunanda K. Dutta Ray, Op.cit., p 150.

In conclusion it can be said that the contribution and impact of the both native women and foreign women in the political history of Sikkim have been enormous. They have showed their desires to not be in control of any other forces; they emerged in the political scenario at a time when the absolute power was in the hand of the ruling authorities who were solely male: be it the Sikkimese King or the Indian Government officials.

With in the native category; Pendi Wangmo had revolted in 1770's even though she was not able to ascend the throne as a ruler of Sikkim, she was able to send Chadgor Namgyal to exile in Tibet, which in a way shows her power and impact at that time and her ambition to be at the throne was so strong that eventually turned into a bloodshed battle. She tried to break the traditional pattern of succession which eventually resulted in her death. With Maharani Yeshay Dolma one could easily say that she was the reason behind the difficult relationship between British and Sikkim, and because of her influence *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal had to go through house arrest and there was a division in the court of *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal's reign one being 'pro British' and another being 'pro Tibetan'. But the more we study and the more we analyze we get to understand that *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma was just trying to support *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal at a time when there was an extreme tight grip of the British power in Sikkim. The British interest in Sikkim was just for the benefit of the British who wanted to build the trading relation with Tibet. Sikkim was in a way their pit stop to Tibet and in their process to advance into Tibet over the years the rulers of Sikkim had just been acting like the agents of the British. The role and impact of *Maharani* Yeshay Dolma becomes important here as she tried to break that power play of British and tried to free *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal from the grip of British influence.

The foreign verses native women question gets interesting here when studying about Princess Pema Tsedeun, Ruth Karthak Lepchani these two being native women and Hope Cooke, Kazini

Elisa Maria being foreign women as these four women were the contemporary of each other at that time. They had appeared in the Sikkim's politics when monarchical institute of Sikkim was facing lots of oppositions from Sikkim subjects and also the influence of Indian government into Sikkim was also getting increased. These four women stood and fought for different institutions, ideologies, and beliefs. In that process all four women were able to make difference impacts in their own way, and when we talk about native women Princess Pema Tsedeun constantly stood for the independent status of Sikkim, her aura was such that everyone whom she met had a very high regard of her. Ruth Karthak Lepchani on the other had challenged the Sikkim *Durbar*, and brought the issues of the Lepcha person's suffering under the monarchical institute, she was arrested before she could make a change. Now when we talk about the impact of the foreign women Hope Cooke and Kazini Elisa Maria again these two women represented and stood for the two different institutes, but what was common amongst the two was the reach and influence of these women which was much bigger than the reach and influence of the native women. Being foreign women, they had huge advantages as they were able to get the attention of the world media than the native women. Of course, Princes Pema Tsedeun was also involved in handling the diplomatic relation of Sikkim and had made many friends from different countries but the connection and attention which Hope Cooke received was unmatched. The pure example of this we could see from the exposure Sikkim got when *Chogyal* Palden Thundup Namgyal and Hope Cooke got married. Kazini Elsia Maria on the other hand, with her writings had made a mark in Sikkimese society. In terms of injustice or punishment received by the women, we could see that being a foreign woman Kazini Elisa Maria had advantage over the native woman Ruth Karthak Lepchani as they were both against the monarchical institution, but we could clearly see disparity between the treatments received by these two women by the Sikkim *Durbar*. We are not implying that the foreign women

had their ways easy as they too had to suffer and fight for their aims and objectives, they had their own struggles and triumphs, but in comparison the native women had many disadvantages in the political scene of Sikkim as compared to the foreign women, as the native women were bound by native rules and regulations from which the foreign women were exempted. The rules regarding Sikkim Subjects, marriage and inheritance of property were to be implied only in the case of native women and not the foreign women. If a native woman married a non-Sikkimese man, she could lose many of her rights.



Photo courtesy of the Kazini, Kazi Lhendup Dorji's wife

(From left to right) Governor B.B. Lal; the Kazini, Kazi's wife; Mother Teresa and Kazi in Gangtok on 16 February 1976.

4.5.. Source: from the book Sikkim of Democracy by G.B.S Sidhu

CHAPTER V

INFLUENCE OF MODERN EDUCATION

The element of education in the political history of Sikkim has been neglected in many historical narratives. The power of education especially modern western education in the transitional period of Sikkim played a major role. When society was divided into two fractions one was fighting for the democracy and the other was fighting for the continuation of the monarchical institute in Sikkim, the role of educated youth belonging to both factions made a very significant impact in the political history of Sikkim. The mass mobilization of these youth to fight for their respective sides was in fact carried out by the efforts of two eminent personalities Kazini Elisa Maria and Hope Cooke. They both in their political activities have resorted to the influence and reach of the youth of Sikkim to support their respective political agendas.

Education has undoubtedly been the means to enable the individual to move up in the society and to cause mobility. The education provided within any given society has changed from time to time as the society changes. In a democratic society, education in a particular way can prepare the members of the society for the change and that is a part of creative function. That is why education is valued so much for any change to be effected in a society. A society bereft of properly organized education lags behind in progress and is rendered backward in every sense. The society with no educational empowerment to back it up remains in deep slumber and Sikkimese society was suffering with all these issues because of the backward educational policies under the Namgyal rulers. There was control over each and every aspect of the Sikkimese society by the monarchy. When we talk about the education system of Sikkim it may be noted that for the longest period of

time Sikkim only had a traditional monastic style of education, and we only see the coming in of modern and liberal education in Sikkim with the beginning of the 20th century.

5.1. The Monastic Education

According to traditional beliefs, Buddhism in Sikkim was first introduced by Guru Padma Sambhava and it got a firm footing in Sikkim with the arrival of the three learned lamas and the establishment of theocratic monarchy in Sikkim in 1642. Hence the establishment of Buddhism as a religion started with the support of the ruling institute and with that, Buddhism became a very important element in the society of Sikkim.

The dominant educational system of Sikkim was the monastic style of education for the longest of time under Namgyal rulers. “With the passage of time, during the 17th century lamaist form of Buddhism was introduced which led the foundation of monastic education imparting education especially to the lama priest, it was the only kind of education that prevailed for about 250 year.”¹ The third king of Sikkim Chagdor Namgyal, made compulsory rule for the subjects of Sikkim belonging to the Bhutia, and Lepcha communities to send the second son of each and every household to pursue the monastic life, “Monasteries are in fact the religious institutions to cater to the spiritual needs of the followers. Monasteries serve as the training ground for preparing priests called lamas who pursue the study of Buddhist Philosophy.”² The aspirant young lamas were taught about the principles of Buddhism and the monastic rituals. In Sikkim it is believed that many efforts were taken to advance the monastic learning from the very inception so “in the beginning, Pemayengtse and Tashiding *Gumpas*(Monasteries) and many others were in the practice of sending batches of young monks to Mindrol-Ling and Dorji-Dak Monasteries in Tibet

¹ Amal Datta, *Sikkim since Independence*, New Delhi: Mittal Publaction, 1991, p 32.

² Dr.Chowang Acharya, “*Aspects of Monastic Education in Sikkim*”, Gangtok, Bulletin of Tibetology, 1998,p 3.

for the instruction in strict discipline and religious rites. After undergoing this, these lamas used to come back to their respected *Gumpas* and teach whatever they had learned, to the interested devotees.”³ These were the steps taken by the rulers and the head of the monasteries to established and improve themselves as the learning institute of Sikkim.

The enrolment of the young boys into these monasteries was not very easy, as the sound physical health of these boys were important criteria for getting admission to the monasteries. According to H.H Risley “...the boy candidate for admission was usually brought age between eight and ten years and very seldom twelve years... the boy is then physically examined to ascertain that he is free from deformity or defect in his limbs and faculties. If he stammers or is a cripple in any way or bent in body, he is rejected.”⁴ He has also given a detailed description on how the young boys were taken as a probationer and according to him after the physical examination:

“Then by consulting his horoscope one of the monks is fixed upon as being his most suitable tutor; and this tutor receives from the boy’s father a present of tea, eatables, and beer. The tutor then takes the boy inside the great hall where the monk are assembled, and publicly stating the parentage of the boy and other details, and offering presents of beer, he ask the permission of the elder monks, to take the boy as a pupil. When approved, the boy becomes a probationer.”⁵

The process of getting accepted to the monasteries and becoming monks were not very easy and they had to go through lots of examination and step by step, they become a monk. At first, they had to stay with the tutors in his house being a probationer and train and work under his tutor and after some years he was sent to the monastery and then in there:

³ Ibid,p 147.

⁴ H.H Risley, Op.cit., p 294.

⁵ Ibid,

“They are taught initially Tibetan alphabets, and then to read and recite by heart some special prayer books. After some years of reading, writing, and reciting of religious scriptures by heart he was for the first time brought under monastic rules. His hair is shaved and had to take certain vows and to dress as a monk. He was given a religious name and was subjected to the monastic rules and discipline and must abide by them. He has to learn by heart the books of all kinds of rituals. Before being admitted as a junior monk the boy had to work as an apprentice running errands for and help out the elder monks beside getting trained in making cakes made of wheat flours to be offered to the deities called *torma* and playing various religious instruments.”⁶

Other than that, they were also taught about the important moral disciplines. ‘The eight precepts’ they were forbidden to “...using coarse language, impoliteness, talking with pride, want of foresight, harsh manners, staring, immoral conduct, unbelief in books, disrespect of teachers, making one’s self unpleasant, covetousness, speaking abusive language, being angry with old men or with women, borrowing what cannot be repaid and stealing.”⁷ After some years spent in the monasteries learning the monastic order the young monks had to sit for the two examination for the promotion in the monastery and to upgrade his status as a proper monk “the examinations are conducted in the presence of the assembled monks, who observe a solemn silence, and the test is for the candidate to stand up in the assembly and recite by heart all the prescribed books...on passing these two examination...he is presented with a scarf of honour by the monks, and is considered a member of the order even though he be under 20 years of age. And from that date he is relieved of the menial office of serving out tea and beer, and he takes a higher seat in the assembly hall.”⁸ After passing and getting promotion the newly promoted monk would be eligible

⁶ Dr.Chowang Acharya, Op.cit., p 4.

⁷ H.H Risley, Op.cit., pp 296- 297.

⁸ Ibid, pp 299-301

for reward for his work, which earlier was only the right of his tutor, as he was mere probationer monk at that time and he used to act as the assistant of his tutor but after promotion “he now directly receives his share of the money and other lay gifts which had hitherto been the perquisite of his tutor.”⁹

Pemayentse monastery was the exemplary monastery in Sikkim; it was at the top as being the royal preceptor. At the initial stage of the monastic education, only the pure blood Tibetans were allowed to enroll at Pemayentse monastery. “The parentage of the boys is enquired into (and at Pemongchi/Pemayentse) only those candidates who are of relatively pure Tibetan descent are ordinarily admitted to that monastery.”¹⁰ The monastic form of education was limited just a few monasteries of Sikkim “...this system of education was followed by only in a few renowned *Gompas* like those at Pemayangtse, Tashiding, Phensang, Enchy and Kathok-all from *Nyingma* School and Ralang, Rumtek and Phodong of *Kagyudpa* School.”¹¹

5.2. Women and Monastic Education

Coming to the question of women getting admitted to the monasteries for the monastic education and perusing the monastic life, we here see a huge disparity. In the history of Sikkim, we get to know about the presence of nun since the 18th century itself. But in regards to the nuns of Sikkim, there seems to be no firm institute to support women’s cause of choosing the monastic life like the monks in Sikkim. The nuns of Sikkim did not have the same kind of privilege as the monks in terms of them getting support in the field of education, having a firm institute that would teach and train the nuns like the monks. Hence most of the women who were pursuing the monastic life in

⁹ Ibid, p 301.

¹⁰ Ibid, p 294.

¹¹Dr.Chowang Acharya, Op.cit., p 4.

Sikkim were old and they lacked the proper training which the monks were privileged to have got. “Most of them have had no real training and cannot read or write properly.”¹² And without proper training and knowledge it was evident that they were not treated as equivalent to the male monks. Besides that, they did not have the right to perform rituals like the monks. Hence it will not be inappropriate to say that in the then society of Sikkim, monks were perceived as superior beings than the nuns. This disparity in the system can be traced through the position of the nuns in the Buddhist *sangha*. As the rule set by the Buddha himself for the women in the *sangha*, he himself had placed women in a much-subordinated position in comparison to the men in the *sangha*. Which is clear by his eight rules for the women who wanted to pursue the monastic life; the eight rules were called *Gurudharmas* which includes:

- i. Bhikkhus were always to have precedence over Bhikkunis in the matters of salutation, etc. irrespective of any other consideration.
- ii. Bhikkhunis could not observe the annual retreat (*vassa*) in a district where there were no Bhikkhus.
- iii. Bhikkhus had to set the date for Bhikkuni *uposatha* ceremonies.
- iv. Confessing transgression by Bhikkhunis had to be done before the assembly of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkunis.
- v. Certain judicial processes in case of Bhikkhunis had to be undertaken by both the sanghas.
- vi. Upasampada initiation of Bhikkhunis should be given by the Bhikkhu sangha as well.
- vii. A Bhikkuni should never abuse a Bhikkhu.
- viii. Bhikkhus can officially admonish Bhikkunis, but not vice versa¹³

¹² Aparna Bhattacharya, Op, cit., p 32.

¹³ Swarna de Silva, *The place of women in Buddhism*, Midlands Buddhist Society (UK) 1988

Sikkim followed a Tibetan style of Buddhism called Lamaism. Nevertheless, there are ample evidences of the existence of inequality in connection with the position of nuns. This can be seen in the context of the majority of Sikkim's monasteries fully dedicated for the education of the monks and their lack of interest for building a nunnery for the nuns in Sikkim.

The monastic education of Sikkim was the traditional form of education and the only form of education which provided the young boys to be enlightened in the Buddhist philosophy and train them to be a monk. But what was lacking in this style of education was that its scope was very limited as the majority of population remained outside its pale.

The monasteries not only acted as the educational institution but also became one of the important elements of feudal structure in the region. The Lamas were seen as the clergy class in the Sikkimese society "...the monks and the nobles were closely connected and there could not be any absolute separation between spiritual and temporal estates."¹⁴ We could see the society was dominated by the feudal structure where the king was at the top of the hierarchy followed by the clergy and the landlords of Sikkim. Here it becomes imperative to have some knowledge regarding the feudal structure prevalent at that time because this shows the power relation in the society. People who were at the top of the hierarchy had control over every element in the society including education. As only the people belonging to the higher strata of the society were privileged to gain education. In comparison, to the common people, education was a luxury which they could not afford during that point of time. Along with this kind of hierarchy, there also prevailed patriarchal norms where men were given the special privilege of formal education and made into monks, but women who had adopted nun hood were not provided proper formal monastic education. The practices within

¹⁴ A.C Sinha, Op.cit., p 125.

the religious institution in a way regulated the social practices in the lay society of Sikkim in those days. However, these days there are three nunneries in Sikkim

(i) Ranka Ani Gompa

(ii) Karma Chokor Dechen Nunnery Rumtak

(iii) Semten Doma

With the passage of time and several cultural changes taking place, education also did not remain static. Education in Sikkim marks a remarkable change with the coming of the British and introduction of Modern or Western Education.

5.2. Modern Education

The entry of the modern education into Sikkim happened only in the 20th century. Before that, Sikkim only had the traditional style of education which was the monastic education and trained the young boys for the monkhood. So by and large the ordinary people of Sikkim were deprived of education. When we talk about the modern education in Sikkim the entry of the Christian missionaries and their role for introducing education to the common masses of Sikkim is very essential as it was them who first made education accessible to the general people of Sikkim.

Before the general subjects of Sikkim got access to the modern education, the first recipient of this facility were still the people from the higher strata. “When J.C White was appointed in Sikkim as a first political officer by British government, he educated the royal prince and the children of some influential families like the lamas and Kazis.”¹⁵ The first Namgyal Prince to get modern

¹⁵ Mohammad Yasin, Durga P. Chattri. *Politics, Society and Development Insight from Sikkim*, Kalpaz Publication, 2012 p 259.

education from Sikkim was Sidkeong Tulku .The British government even sent him to London to study there. The royals before Sidkeong Tulku all got their education and knowledge in the traditional style of education. On the other hand after British acquired Darjeeling in 1835 under British rule Darjeeling was very well developed in comparison to Sikkim and it had soon become the educational hub in the Himalayas, the schools setup by the British in Darjeeling were St Paul's school, St. Joseph's School North Point to name a few, where the royal and aristocrat also used to study at that period. Whereas Sikkim under the theocratic monarchy stayed with the traditional style of education and so all the communities and particularly girls were not able to get education under that system so the majority population of Sikkim were deprived of education. But slowly the educational development started to take place with the arrival of the British officers, the efforts of the Sikkim *Durbar* and the involvement of the Christian missionaries in Sikkim in course of time.

The role of Scottish missionaries in Sikkim with regards to education is commendable it is believed that "...it was Rev. Macfarlane who advised a broad scheme for the widespread dissemination of elementary education to cover up not only Darjeeling hills but also the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim and Bhutan."¹⁶ Other than that the presence of the Scottish missionaries in Sikkim, the Finnish missionaries were also one of the missionaries to have tried to open a school for the people. "Miss Ritchie in her write-up mentions slightly about Finnish missionaries' educational activities in some parts of Sikkim apart from the Scottish mission. She says, Finnish missionaries with their sight set on Tibet, had established themselves, first at Sang and Khamdong, and then later moving to Lachen. It is in Mangan also a primary school was established by Finnish Mission in 1880."¹⁷

¹⁶ B. Dick Dewan, *Education in Sikkim (An Historical Retrospect Pre Merger and Post Merger period)* Pedong :Tender Bud's Society, 2012, p 174.

¹⁷ Ibid, p 176.

But somehow the continuations of the school at those places are not recorded and it is evident that before the efforts of these Finnish missionary there were no Schools in Sikkim for the common people.

At the beginning, the entry of the missionaries into Sikkim and them establishing missionary schools was not welcomed by the Namgyal rulers. As Sikkim was a Buddhist state and looking into it from the religious perspective, their activities for the Sikkimese rulers were tricky, because they were already under the foreign power and in addition to this, the entry of the missionaries into Sikkim was threatening the religious standing of Sikkim. So naturally there were resistances from the rulers for the involvement of the missionaries in Sikkim “it is said that one school opened at Gangtok in 1883 under the supervision of Rev. Macfarlane was not allowed to exist there. As Miss Ritchie comments, on the whole Christian activities was not looked on with much acceptance by the Maharaja and missionaries were not allowed to live in Gangtok.”¹⁸ So logically the missionaries carried their activities outside of Gangtok and “Temi became the headquarters of overseas personal who might be working in Sikkim.”¹⁹

The arrival of J.C White in Sikkim as a political officer in 1889 was a turning point in Sikkim history. He brought many changes into Sikkim mainly in the administrative front and the most noticeable change he brought was the land taxation system in Sikkim. Other than that after his arrival in Sikkim the practice of sending royals to get modern education outside of Sikkim started. The first recipient of the modern education was Sidkeong Tulku, the first prince of Sikkim who got the modern education after this we see a promotion of secular education because of the efforts of Sidkeong Tulku and also because of the increase in the migration of the Nepalese in Sikkim and

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

the advancement of the education in Darjeeling through Christian missionaries. The urge to develop educational center in the kingdom of Sikkim also increased.

So, first time in the history of Sikkim the educational institute which was different than the usual monastic education was established for the boys. At first Bhutia boarding school was founded in 1906 and a year after that, the Nepali boarding school was founded in 1907. Sidkeong Tulku also established Enchey School in 1909 "...to provide liberal education on Government expense to lamas drawn from various monasteries in Sikkim."²⁰ These establishments of Schools for the boys were the first step towards liberal education by the Sikkim Durbar but it is interesting to note the increasing communal division based on separate schools built for specific communities. So, to end this segregation on the communal front Sikkim Durbar decided to amalgamate these two separate Schools into one where boys belonging to every community could study under the same roof "The establishment of Bhutia boarding school in 1906 and the Nepali Boarding school in 1907 encouraged the communal disorder in Sikkim. So, to maintain peace and to abolish the communalism in Sikkim both these school were combined to form one high school called Sir Tashi Namgyal high school in 1925."²¹ Other than schools in Gangtok in 1921, three government schools in three different places Namchi, Rhenock and Panthang started functioning. These were all schools for the boys.

Even though slowly Sikkim opened its door to the educational development in the 20th century, they were lacking in many fronts, there was a clear disparity in the quality of education received by the haves and the have nots of Sikkim, and the most important drawback of the education system of Sikkim was that the women education was not yet introduced simultaneously for the girls when

²⁰ Ibid, p 184.

²¹ Durga P Chettri, *Sikkim Chronicle*, Siliguri, India, Impact publication 2010,

the Bhutia and the Nepali Schools was founded for boys in 1906 and 1907 respectively. We only see the initiative of women education a decade later with the establishment of the first girl's School in 1924.

5.3. Women's Education

The society of Sikkim being theocratic and patriarchal in nature, the evolution of education for women happened much later as compared to men. First, the education system was dominated by the monastic traditional style of education, which in its self was very limiting as only the Bhutia and Lepcha boys were able to get enrollment in the monasteries to become the monk, and the women in that form of education were not at all accommodated as it was only for the learning monkhood purposes. Pretty much for the longest time Sikkim was focused on the Buddhist monastic education.

Later, with the arrival of the British power in Sikkim we see many changes in the society and the system of education was also such element that was affected. We see that the Sikkim Durbar gradually took an initiative to develop the educational system. They were now focusing on the secular style of education and opened many schools in Sikkim. The schools which were opened were all boys' schools. It seems that the first initiative for the girls' education was proposed by Sidekong Tulku. For that purpose, Sidkeong Tulku had written a letter to the then political officer "C.A Bell in 1912 to initiate female education in Sikkim."²² He had also held a council in that same year for the necessity of female education. "As a result, the school for the daughters of the King and Kazis was opened"²³ but schools for the common girls were not started at that time. We

²² Sikkim State Archive, File no 57/Durbar, 17,12,2012 (not able to get photocopies of the latter)

²³ Anira Phipon, *Women Education and Marry Scott in Sikkim(1923-1939)*, Adroit an International Refereed Research Journal vol 4, 2017, p 2.

only see the result of his intention a decade later, when Marry Scott a Scottish missionary was allowed to open a girl's school in Gangtok. Before her, the Christian missionaries were not allowed to enter the kingdoms domain. It is believed that it was her aristocratic background that made easy for her to get entry in Gangtok. "Born in Scotland in 1877, a daughter of the 8th Lord Polwarth ...she was permitted to live in Gangtok a great concession by the Sikkim Maharajah that was apparently a personal tribute to her character and reputation rather than a result of any initiative by the political Office."²⁴ After getting permission to stay at Gangtok she promptly established school for the common girls which was lacking in the region at that time " the girls school, after an informal beginning, was started on a regular basis with two pupils in 1924, and by 1926 had grown to 45 pupils, including some boys."²⁵ At first "the school was originally housed in a residence in what is now the T.N Academy compound, and then for a short while in a rented house above the bazaar. In 1931 it moved to Mazong Kothi, built with Miss Scott's assistance, and then rented by the school from the owner."²⁶ In the beginning the effort to build the school was solely made by the Scottish Church and Mary Scott but later Sikkim Durbar also started to fund the school "in the beginning, it was a middle class school upto class VI. But, later after seeing the dedication, determination, and excellent work done by Scott, it was upgraded with the assistance rendered by the government of Sikkim and the Church. The support of the Sikkim government also reveals the state's desire to propagate the women's education."²⁷ This was the first initiative taken by the state government for the common girl's education in Sikkim. In 1945 the School officially got the proper name in memory of the Late Crown Prince Paljor Namgyal and the Sikkim's first girl's school came to be famously known as 'Paljor Namgyal Girls School'. "...with an aim to educate and

²⁴ Annabella Pitkin, *Cosmopolitanism in the Himalayas*, Bulletin of Tibetology, 2004, p 32.

²⁵ B. Dick Dewan, Op.cit., p 177.

²⁶ Ibid., p-p 177- 178.

²⁷ Anira Phipon, Op.cit., p 2.

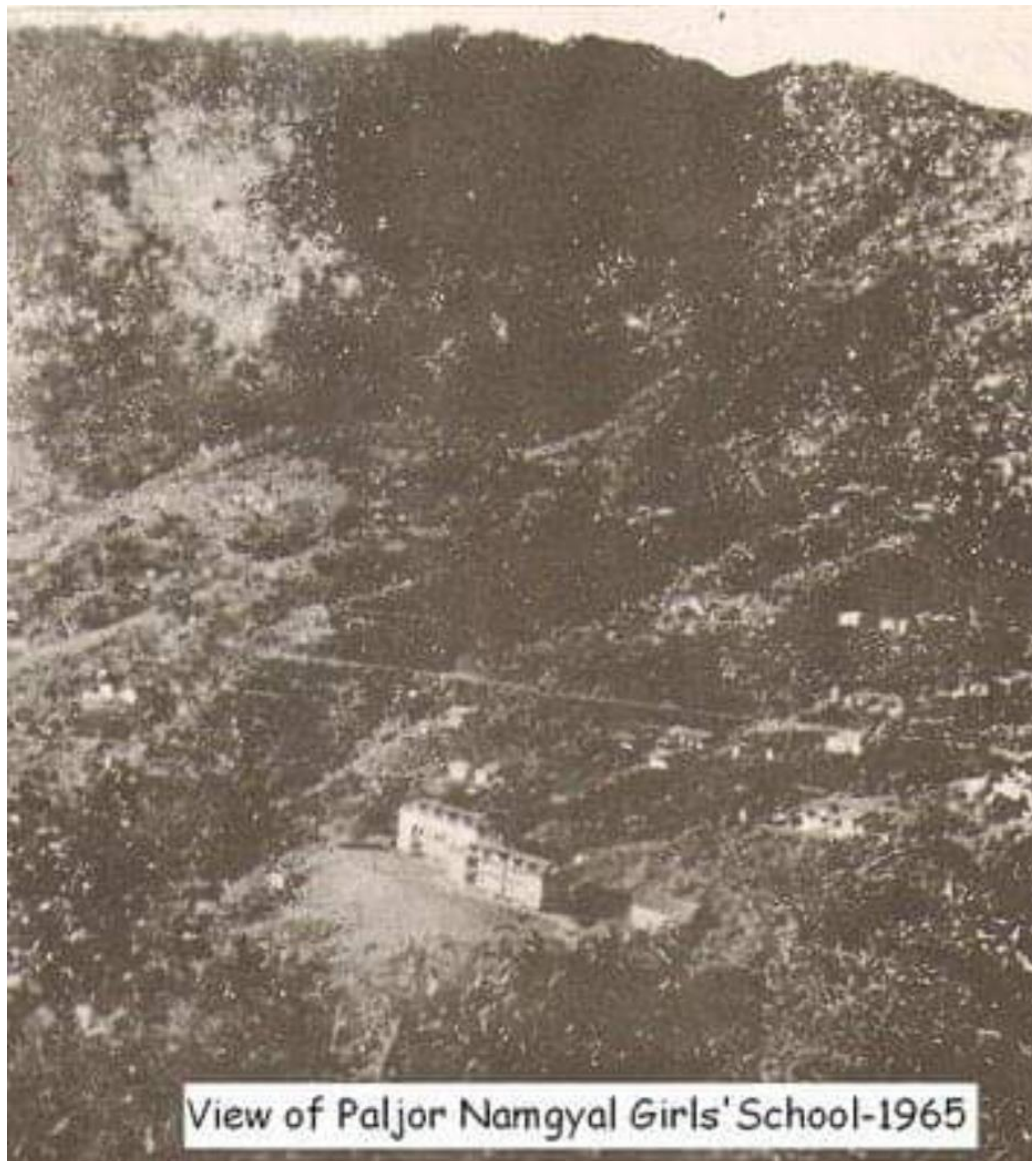
uplift the deprived women, particularly, youngsters. This was the only female educational institution in the state for many decades.”²⁸ The school started to function smoothly with the help of both church and the Sikkim Durbar which in its self was a development in terms of progress in the society of Sikkim under the monarchical rule, where we see the support of the Buddhist Monarch Supporting a Church funded School that too for the girls, and we can see through the changing dynamics of Sikkim.

The establishment of a girl’s school in Sikkim by Marry Scott in 1924 was a turning point for the women education in Sikkim and women’s position in general. It was in a way the first step towards empowering women and paving the way towards gender equality which was very much lacking in the Sikkimese society of those time. The increasing growth of the students in very short period of time hints towards the fact that the people of Sikkim were welcoming the idea of their daughters getting education and accepting that girls getting education was not a taboo. With the growth and popularity of Paljor Namgyal Girls School we could see that the society in general was changing and the empowerment of women was on its way.

Princess Pema Tsedeun was one such person who because of her background in the modern western education was able to stand up for her own right when, she refused to get married in the polyandry form of Marriage when she was married off in Tibet, which made her the first person in Tibet to do so. When we talk about the contribution of Princess Pema Tsedeun in Education, she was very close with the Scottish missionaries of Gangtok and because of that also it was easy for the Scottish missionaries to run the Christen School in Gangtok smoothly. Princess Pema Tsedune had a close relationship with Martha Hamilton, she in her letter had talked about the

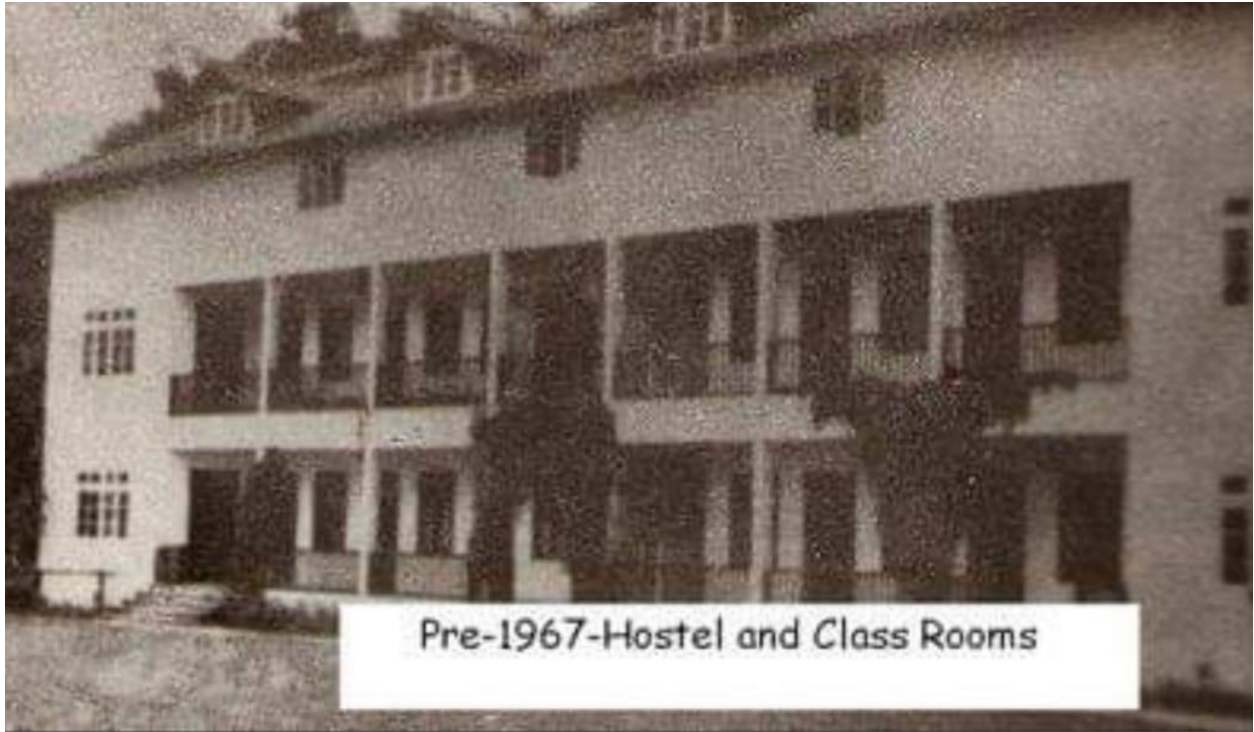
²⁸ Ibid,

refugee project that they did together “We went with Kumari down to the Refugee Camp for which we collected money from our concert.”²⁹ Princess Pema Tseduen had also given land to established Rangali senior secondary School for the local people of Sikkim.



5.1. Source: from Paljor Namgyal Senior Secondary School Facebook account

²⁹ Andrew Duff, *Op. cit.*, p 81.



5.2. Source: from Paljor Namgyal Senior Secondary School Facebook account



5.4. The role of Hope Cooke and Kazani Elisa Maria: in the mass mobilization of the educated youth of Sikkim.

The whole political dynamic started to change in Sikkim with the arrival of the British power. As mentioned above when J.C White arrived in Sikkim in 1889 as a first political officer, there was a shift in the power politics of Sikkim. The British officer directly took control of Sikkim, and the say and power of the Namgyal rulers in the matter of their own kingdom drastically decreased. The Sikkim monarch was basically under the thumb of the British government. J.C White in particular brought lots of changes in Sikkim, after his arrival he quickly started the reforms in the administrative front of Sikkim, he built roads, bridges, school and hospital in Sikkim and the most important element was he "...encouraged industrious immigrants from Nepal to settle in the almost unpopulated southern areas of the State"³⁰ for the agricultural development in Sikkim so that he could tax the land which was earlier uncultivated by the people of Sikkim. This move of his in particular became a major turning point in the history Sikkim. The whole demography of Sikkim changed after this. The Namgyal rulers were not in favor of this influx of immigrants of Nepal into their kingdom, but J.C White and few Kazis of Sikkim encouraged this influx of immigration. The result of this large influx of immigrants was the Bhutia and Lepcha communities were now minorities in their own land and this naturally became the cause of insecurity to the Namgyal rulers. But the society of Sikkim was still in the hands of the feudal aristocrats, and under them the common people were suffering.

³⁰ B. J Gould, *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollection of an Indian political*, Chatto and Windus: London 195, p 169.

It was under J.C White's tenure that the first School in Sikkim was founded and in course of time with the efforts of the Scottish missionaries and much later the involvement of the Sikkim Durbar. The common Subjects of Sikkim were able to get modern education, which later played a very active role in the democratic movement of Sikkim. It was because of the modern education they were able to be self-aware and their society, rational thinking got introduced to them, and they started to question the existing political structure of Sikkim. It was this politically aware and educated classes of Sikkim who were the ones that first started to revolt against the age old feudal monarchical system of Sikkim. They formed regional organization to fight against the feudal system of Sikkim "...the Praja Sundarak Samaj was formed with Tashi Tshring, Sonam Tshering and Kenzang Tenzing as its light. A second party, the Praja Sammelan was formed at Timi Tarku, under the leadership of Gobardhan Pradhan and Dhan Bahadur Tewari. The Praja Mandal was formed by Kazi Lhendup Dorji,"³¹ and later on 7th December 1947 these three organizations united to form Sikkim's first political party called Sikkim State Congress. With the formation of this party in 1947 the political struggle started which lasted till 1975.

The role of these two women Hope Cooke and Kazini Elisa Maria in the mass mobilization of the educated youth of Sikkim at the peak of the political struggle of Sikkim is commendable. These two women stood and fought for two polar opposite causes, one was fighting for the cause of the Sikkim's independent status and continuation of the monarchical institute in Sikkim, and the other was fighting for the democratic setup in Sikkim. After their arrival in Sikkim they both quickly became the fearless figures that the educated youths saw and took them as their leaders. The popularity of these two women in Sikkim was partly because of their foreign origin, but most

³¹ Lal Bahadur Basnet, Op.cit., p 76.

importantly because of their work in their respective field. There activities regarding the mass mobilization of the youths of Sikkim by these two women are as follows:

Hope Cooke

When Hope Cooke arrived in Sikkim and became the 12th *Gyalmo* (Queen) of Sikkim in 1965, the monarchical institution was struggling to hold its grounds in the political upheaval of Sikkim. In one hand there was a very strong demand for the democratic movement led by the common subjects of Sikkim and on the other hand Indian government had already planted their roots in the soil of Sikkim with the Treaty of 1950 which had made Sikkim the protectorate state of India. Hope Cooke in particular had to struggle a lot with the Indian officials who were stationed in Sikkim. She was targeted by the Indian officials from the very beginning of her arrival, as her being an American national when she got married to Palden Thundup Namgyal they had gained lots of media attention, which was not liked by the Indian Officials because it brought unnecessary attention to their protectorate state, by the looks of it, it actually bought lots of insecurities to the Indian Offices at that time. So, from the beginning their equation was not balanced, and Hope Cooke in particular had to struggle a lot in Sikkim because of that.

The 1950 Treaty which made Sikkim Indian's Protectorate and according to certain clauses of the treaty "Defiance, External Affairs, Customs, and Communication of Sikkim became India's responsibility. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty gave India far more sweeping powers over Sikkim than the 1861 treaty had given the British."³² At first this treaty was welcomed by the King with open arms, but it soon became the cause of many distresses to the monarch because it restricted many

³² Ibid, p 95.

economic opportunities and also it became a factor of restrictions in general for the kingdom to run as an independent state.

Hope Cooke had actually tried to do something for this cause being a queen of Sikkim. She had actually founded and supported an organization called Study Forum where she and the educated youth of Sikkim who were like her, fighting for the independent status of Sikkim were involved in this organization. Study Forum was created “to advise the Darbar on specific matters relating to the national interest of the Kingdom. Consisting of a group of ‘intellectuals’ in Sikkim, the Study Forum stood clearly for revision of the treaty to enhance Sikkim’s credential as separate nation.”³³ Under the banner of Study Forum they used to write lots of article in favor of the revision of the 1950 treaty and other important issues related to Sikkim. Because of these activities Hope Cooke was branded by the Indian officials as a propagator of anti-India in Sikkim.

Hope Cooke in her ways at many occasions tried to develop a feeling of Sikkimese nationalism into Sikkimese youths and children, be it by her efforts in the Study Forum for the autonomy of the state, or her efforts in revising the school text book of Sikkim which was at first regulated by the Indian government “she at first examined the text-book being used in the school in Sikkim and found it necessary to be modified and improved as she found it inappropriate to the need of the society. She got books from abroad and translated all the books from class I to IV into English from Nepali during 1962-63.³⁴” Besides there activities, she also actively promoted Sikkimese arts and artisans to build some sort of national identity for themselves and for Sikkim.

³³ Andrew Duff, Op.cit., p 141.

³⁴ P.Thulung, *Sikkim Ma Siksha ko Vikash. Namchi: Sangchipta Parichay (Nepali)*, Boomtar, 1998, p 67.

Kazini Elsia Maria

Kazini Elsia Maria was another such person who had a huge impact on the youth of Sikkim. She can be undoubtedly called the main person behind her husband and his party Sikkim National Congress's success. With her excellent intellectual write ups against the Chogyal of Sikkim and in favor of her husband's party. She was able to gain the loyalties and trust of many Sikkimese youth and with that she became one of the most important figures in the political history of Sikkim who played a key role in the mass mobilization of the youth against the Chogyal and his rule. She too was a product of modern western education, so she could easily influence the educated youth.

Many of the young educated political leaders are believed to have been associated and trained by her namely, Lal Bhadhur Besnet, Krishna Chandra Pradhan, N.K Subeidi, Nar Bahadur Khatiawara who all were at that time the young political leaders and later became important leaders of Sikkim and according to Sunanda.K Dutta Ray, Ruth Karthak Lepchani the first female political leader who challenged the Sikkim Durbar was also her protégé "the action taken against one of the Kazini's very few female protégés was equally ham-handed Ruth Karthak Halim was a Lepchah women married to an Indian businessmen. Possibly prodded by Kazini, she claimed descent from Thekong-tek and suggested that the thorn was hers by right."³⁵ According to G.B.S. Sidhu an Indian officer who was stationed in Sikkim at time and had a close association with Kazini Elisa Maria, "she could draft pretty lattes, manifestos, and resolutions in English. She was a good sounding board for Kazi to know what was happening in the party behind his back as a number of younger party leaders would meet her and convey what they would not have told Kazi because of

³⁵ Sunanda K. Datta Ray, Op.cit., p 153.

their respect for his political stature and age. ³⁶” In many historical narratives Kazini Elisa Maria is highlighted in a negative light, but one cannot deny the influence and the reach she had on the youth leaders of Sikkim like no other, she was the only person who with her writings constantly criticizing the Sikkim Durbar. It made a huge impact psychologically on the youths, because of that the fear of monarchical institution started fading away from the mind of the youths. This also led them to become a strong supporter of hers and her political aspiration.

Thus, it can be said that the change from the traditional form of education to the modern western form brought with it a lot of advantages for the political changes in Sikkim. Modern western education also empowered and emboldened women along with men to actively participate in the political field and fight for their rights.

³⁶ G.B.S. Sidhu, Op.cit., p 89.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be said that the position of women under the umbrella of the Namgyal Dynasty in Sikkim was very weedy as the foundation of Namgyal Dynasty was based on the theocratic and patriarchal values.

After the establishment of the kingdom in 1642, the domination of the Tibetan culture, tradition and religion started to dictate the existing social structure, where we see the aboriginal tribes of Sikkim such as Lepcha and in some extent Limbu communities started to come under the pressure of the social domination and started to lose their tribal tradition, culture, and religion. As they were believed to be converted into Buddhism by the Namgyal rulers, soon the society of Sikkim transformed into an aristocratic feudal system, where the King was at the top, followed by the clergy and landlord class. Other than that, the influx of the Nepalese immigration also affected the social structure of Sikkim, where they also followed the rigid patriarchal system.

Due to such changes under the Namgyal Dynasty, the women of Sikkim were the most effected, as earlier in the tribal society women had a distinct position of their own. The tribal society was not so much rigid in comparison to the theocratic and patriarchal society. But with time everything about the position of women started to change. We can see there was a complete domination of men in every social, cultural, religious, and political space.

During the Namgyal period the women were seen and made into a reproductive agent, their jobs were to reproduce and look after the children and the household. They did not have any voice socially, politically, or economically. Society of Sikkim became very regressive towards women. Women were deprived in every element of the society, be it religion, tradition, economy and

education. The idea of what today is known as ‘women empowerment’ tends to be absent in the whole structure of the Namgyal Dynasty.

Nevertheless, even in such chaotic environment Sikkim witnessed few exemplary women personalities who fought and raised their voice against the authoritarian and monarchical rule. The six eminent women whom we have studied in the above chapters namely Pendi Wongmo, *Maharani* Yesha Dolma, Princess Pema Tsudeun, Hope Cooke, Kazini Elisa Maria, and Ruth Karthak Lepchani, have all been very important women figures in the history of Sikkim.

Pendi Wangmo is one of the most important political figures of Sikkim; it can be said that she was the most courageous princess of the Namgyal Dynasty to have ever existed. She is the only royal woman who had gathered enough courage to fight for the throne of Sikkim. But in the popular historical narratives of Sikkim she is projected as an evil person, who for her greed is said to have invited the Bhutanese into Sikkim and is blamed for everything that happened after that. Another political figure who has also been projected in the same light as Pendi Wangmo in the historical narratives is Kazini Elisa Maria who is held responsible for the political instability in Sikkim and for her constant opposition to the Sikkim Durbar. She has blatantly portrayed as a ‘Venomous’ person by authors. It is also interesting to note that all previous narratives were penned down by male authors and historians.

The next prominent women figure in the history of Sikkim is *Maharani* Yesha Dolam who during the time of British domination in Sikkim tried to snub the British hegemony in Sikkim. But again,

she is blamed for having influenced her husband Maharaja Thutob Namgyal to go against the British government.

Princess Pema Tsedeun another eminent woman persona did everything in her power to save the independent status of Sikkim. She had been an unofficial adviser of Chogyal Palden Thundup Namgyal. But she is also in some of the narratives has been perceived as this power-hungry person, her contribution towards Sikkim have been over shadowed by the authors that chose to highlight more on the inner conflict between her and Hope Cook and had tried to project her as this jealous person for the power and fame.

Hope Cooke *Galymo* of Sikkim had a very short and difficult stay in Sikkim; she too tried to promote Sikkim's independent status and was a support system to *Chogyal* Palden Thundup Namgyal. She is blamed for spreading anti-Indian feeling amongst the Sikkimese subjects. In the case of Hope Cooke, we can see the domination of the Indian government at that time and how her works towards betterment of the Sikkimese people have been questioned by the Indian government at that time.

Ruth Karthak Lepchani a native Lepcha women who gathered courage to fight against the Sikkim Durbar was the victim of power and patriarchy, she was the first women who came out and had the courage to challenge the Sikkim Durbar in the political election, and for doing this she was severally punished by the Sikkim Durbar at that time.

All these six eminent women personalities have two things in common one is that they all fought for their beliefs, and the other common is that they were blamed, questioned about their motives, were the victims of the patriarchal rigidity in Sikkim. In the earlier popular historical narratives, there is no reasoning about their actions, they have bluntly projected them as power hungry

women, their actions and contribution have been marginalized, but all these women have played a very vital role in the history of Sikkim. They were the ones who stood against the existing patriarchal social structure and the other contemporary foreign powers. Pendi Wangmo stands tall for her courage to question the succession pattern of Sikkim where right to Succession was vested mainly with men. Maharani Yeshay Dolma played an important role in the reign of Maharaja Thutub Namgyal, she was his confidant, his biggest supporter and the visionary for a British hegemony free Sikkim. Priencess Pema Tseduen was an independent and intelligent woman who constantly advocated for the independent status of Sikkim. She was also a prominent figure for the women empowerment in Sikkim. Hope Cooke coming from America had brought with her lots of international attention into the tiny Himalayan kingdom, and because of this she had a very difficult relation with the Indian Government. Kazini Elisa Maria was one such political personality who was able to gain the trust of the people and had a huge contribution in the political career of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee and his party. Ruth Karthak Lepchani was the only woman politician who had the courage to fight against the Sikkim durbar, where because of this she was victimize by Sikkim Durbar and her Sikkim Subject right was scrapped by them and was made state less in one go.

It is thought provoking that even at this regressive period of Sikkim, when there was hardly any person who would give importance to the females. There were women who were brave, enough to fight for their rights and aims, and had voiced their thoughts and opinion. It is however of interests to see that, their works and efforts were not seen as a progressive and constructive. Nevertheless, here it can be analyzed that how a society dominated by the conventional patriarchal perception tries to restrict the movement and find ways to darken the image of women. The society of Sikkim cannot be thought of an exception to this.

Frequently and yet still they are blamed and questioned about their selfish motives not withstanding with the major contribution they have made in the Sikkim politics in particular and society in general. In spite of all odds these women of extraordinary caliber and unfailing bravery were able to make a mark and emerge as inspiring figures in the history of Sikkim.

Regd. No. C-255

HIMALAYAN OBSERVER

(AN INDEPENDENT NEWSWEEKLY)

Registered Under The Registrar Of Newspapers For India R.N. IS436/69

VOL. 6 NO. 31

KALIMPONG

SATURDAY

April 21 1973

PAISE 20

CHOGYAL AND NATIONAL PARTY ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE

DANGERS OF CIVIL WAR

—By Your Correspondent

Kalimpong: Unless the Government of India deals with Sikkim's problems firmly and sincerely keeping in view the aspirations of the people, the day may not be far off when the only solution to the problems bedeviling the 'Tiny Sangria' of the Chogyal and the Gyalmo' would be a full scale 'civil war' in Gangtok, South, West, East and North Sikkim. This is what I gathered from the incident of Saturday April 14 when immediately after normalcy returned to the strife-torn state with the intervention of the GOI, large processions were taken out by the National party consisting of hired hoodlums denouncing the Joint Action Council, the GOI's assurance, the Prime Minister of India and the Indian Army.

Communal rancour again spread out when a lady volunteer of the Joint Action Council, a school mistress in Gangtok, was insulted and abused and attempts were made by the hired goondas of the National Party to strip her naked with the intention of criminally assaulting her.

After nearly a week of virtual confinement in the Palace, when his administration was running only in the periphery of the Palace campus, the Chogyal came out with a contradictory statement to the press that the Executive Council formed after the

results of the last election, which was boycotted by the seven opposition councillors of the Joint Action Council, would function as usual. The JAC and the people rose in revolt against the Govt. based on the most obnoxious communal principle of 'party' and did not co-operate with the Govt. and demanded that the election be held void. They cannot tolerate such insults to the people hurled deliberately by the Chogyal and his henchmen. According to the JAC no solution for the interim period is thinkable within the present frame work of 'Chogyalocracy' based on minority rules and administered by pro-Durbar and pro-American officials in Gangtok.

The so-called 'Crown Prince' gave another contradictory statement to the Press in Delhi that there was going to be an 'All Party' meet in May to find out measures for political solutions of the problem. But according to the JAC all avenues of negotiation with the Chogyal or the National Party were tried from the 28th March to the 3rd April but they failed. Now they have no faith upon the Chogyal and they would never open dialogue with the Chogyal or the National Party since both were opposed to Democracy and one-man-one vote and were busy arming refugees and the supporters. There had never been any agreement to hold a joint meeting in May.

It is learnt that the National Party which is pro-Chogyal and enjoys the support of a handful of vested interests in Gangtok has been making propoganda for 'status quo' in Sikkim. They have already armed some 2000 supporters and refugees with lethal weapons, consisting of

stenguns, rifles, revolvers, hand grenades all secured from foreign countries. It is alleged that the Palace is the armoury of the Sikkim National Party, and trained hand were allowed to occupy the premises during the period of crisis. So much so that all essential commodities and ration were forcibly lifted from Gangtok bazar for the National Party-Chogyal garrison of hired goondas, refugees and anti-people forces in Gangtok.

Thus it is as clear as day light that as long as the Chogyal is allowed to function from the Palace despite his de-jure authority, the National party, the anti-India and the anti-people parties, the foreign brain-trusts of the National party and the Chogyal who believe in the theory of communal upheavals to make the border sensitive and alive no power on earth can stop the situation going from bad to worse while the GOI is now thinking seriously about the demands of the JAC for 'constitution and one man one vote,' the Chogyal is harping on his old game of 'Bhutan style' status for the Kingdom. The Chogyal has now forfeited his rights to speak on behalf of the people. It is the people and their representatives who would decide the fate of 2.5 lakhs people through a democratic process. It is they who would decide what type of relation they would keep with India in future.

LONG LIVE SIKKIMESE LIBERATE THEM FROM ESLAVEMENT

—By A Correspondent

We congratulate the heroic people of Sikkim for their struggle against the brutal oppression and tyranny of the Chogyal of Sikkim. The Chogyal and his puppets are entirely to be blamed for this unprecedented political turmoil in Sikkim for he denied even the basic human rights to its citizens.

The prevailing communal voting system is evidence of the fact how an artificial wall had been created between its main communities i. e. the Bhotias and Nepalese. It is obvious that the main objectives of the Chogyal for creating this artificial division is to bring about a communal discord so that these people are never united to fight against the autocratic rule of his Durbar.

The Durbar has become a strong fortress of vested interest. Corruption is rampant even at the highest level of administration which has retarded the progress of the country very much. The exploitation of the peasantry by the land-lord class (Kazi class) has surpassed all time record. Nepotism and Favouritism have raised its ugly head and these were enough to bring this country to a brink of disaster. Hunger, epidemic and poverty have invaded every hut in unprecedented scale in this tiny Himalayan Kingdom.

The steps under such circumstances taken by the leaders of the Joint Action Committee is very much welcomed by every section of people in India. Their demands for administrative reforms and change in the communal voting system are just and legitimate which must be met. We have every sympathy and support to the Sikkimese people in their just struggle.

In this critical juncture of Sikkimese history, the administration of that country has been taken over by India. The great faith which has been reposed by the Sikkimese people on Indian authority to bring back a durable peace in the strife-torn kingdom is yet to be seen. The Indian Army has moved in at last in their peace-keeping mission. Every Indian hopes that the Indian Army will play a role worthy of its name so that every Sikkimese people will be liberated from the perpetual enslavement of the Sikkim Durbar. Let another laurel come to the glory of the Indian Army.

I salute the fallen heroes of this grim battle. Long Live the People of Sikkim! LONG LIVE THEIR UNITY.

SIKKIM INDEPENDENT FRONT

THE 21 ST PUKAAR FROM THE YOUTHS OF SIKKIM (Part II)

Continued from part -1(...through registered party reserved symbols.)

Dear friends,

Before we continue on from part -1, to discuss politics, let as first be done with this burning language issue -the use of Nepali in the hills and elsewhere in our country: Hand in hand, as Hindi is rightly being promoted by our patriotic national leaders and our constitution; Hindu Nepali speaking people are continually being crushed and divided by this Cong(I). Suppression of Nepali language will create legions of disloyal people. That is destruction of unity. In this, lie our national downfall. Unity of a people originates in its language. Suppress the language - the people are destroyed.

Nepali is a link language from Ladakh to the borders of Burma. People of many tribes, different from Nepali tribes, communicate, transact business and even exchange cultural ideas through it. Plains people also use Nepali in their daily lives, while living among various tribes, each different from the other. It is a language suitable to primitive people. It is easier to use than Hindi, because it has no gender, even though its script and grammar are deeply rooted in Bhojpuri. Nepali is steeped in Hindu religion, even more than Hindi. Let me give you only one 'Good' example: 'Good' in Nepali means 'Ramrai' - like Ram - pure! Why destroy this culture?

A language should be simple as its people. As people develop, so too does their language. We should rather encourage the use of this link language. It unites, peoples of many different tribes, and creates a comradeship feeling amongst them. Whereas Hindi creates hostility, like in Southern and North-Eastern States. Aren't they all Hindus too? The use of Hindi in our Southern and North-East and North-West regions will destroy our Nation.

Urdu has already done it with Pakistan in erstwhile East Pakistan - now Bangladesh - and will ultimately, completely in the future, in the West too. Because Urdu is not the lingua-franca of Pakistan - It is the bol-chaal of Delhi and Lucknow - Hindi will also ultimately do the same in India. We do not need an external aggressor. Instead of Hindi, the suitable thing to do today, is to encourage Hindustani in any script. Even British people used it in Roman script. This is the only suitable approach to our language problem. Nepali is almost like Hindustani. Hindustani can absorb all languages, even Nepali and English. For more read my 10th Pukaar of 1979

Hindu Nepali are too immersed in Nepali, it is their religion. They will never accept Hindi-- Hindustani maybe. By promoting Buddhism and suppressing Hinduism in the Nepali people, the Centre is playing with fire, and fanning the flames of fundamentalism. Fire in the long run, which may go out of control. Buddhist Nepali may accept Hindi but will destroy peace and unity in our border state. Buddhist Hindi learning Nepali people will promote hatred in the Hindu Nepali speaking other half. This has amply been proved in the recently held assembly elections by the Centres division of Nepali speaking non-tribal Hindu Nepali and the Hindi learning Buddhist Nepali tribals. Because of these artificially created divisions, corrupt M.L.As have again been re-elected in our assembly with reserved symbols.

Now, back to politics. When your dish is dirty, what do you do? Wash it of course! Here in Sikkim, we have a similar situation, what we need is intensive cleaning. Reject all parties and start with new fresh people. Politics of any nation will follow the economic order of that nation. Soviets collapsed, because their economic theory was faulty. Even our Western type economy is not very sound, so we have unsound politics everywhere. There is nepotism, corruption and power mongering in our daily affairs, so in our politics too. We have no alternatives, till economic theories make sweeping changes from defective full production economy to 'Newer' Economics. Till then, we must expect more and more chaos in politics and in everything. The correct definitions of profit should be changed to legal disguised dishonesty. Bigger the profit - greater the dishonesty. Who will change our economic order? This cannot be done in a day, or even in decades. This change has to be so sweeping, that at present, we do not have even a glimpse of this order, except an uneasy feeling, that this change will be linked to our WANTS. Reduce your WANTS and wealth and production, become unimportant. I feel, only a Messaiah with clear vision can help us in our search for a better meaningful existence and we have to await his coming. Till that day, let us keep on striving to improve ourselves, especially our, MORAL values. I feel strongly - very strongly this might be a beginning available to us right away- today. Let us begin to learn - how to SHARE. Profit, production and wealth, should no more be our motive in life.

Previously our populations were small, and the world a large place to live in. Basic NEEDS were less and our economy simple. Just demand and supply, evolving without taking into consideration the socio-eco-political implications on our planet. Above all our needless WANTS too, were much less. The only way to maintain our present defective order is to reduce our present population and WANTS. But this too, is only a stop gap arrangement - as gradually our Earth ages and her natural resources used up by our defective full production economy, driven on by our ever increasing WANTS - we must

SIKKIM INDEPENDENT FRONT

The 22nd Pukaar from the Youths of Sikkim (Part I)

Dear Friends:

Ours at the most, is an imperfect world. Imperfection worse compounded, directly in geometric progression to our progress. And will remain imperfect, inspite of however much we improve our sciences. The total present world concepts of political theories are absolutely off gear, to our political realities. Almost all our present world political leaders are mostly ignorant, incapable and failures in life. Having no recourse to any other avenues of prosperity, they become adept at public speaking and deception. They then mislead our equally ignorant, incapable and greedy poverty stricken masses with defective ideologies. We have now, broadly speaking, two types of failures. The leader type succeed with deception and false promises, and become all powerful masters of the world, bringing us to the edges of chaos, in our already confused world. Whilst the other mass types, serve best-at the beck and call-of these first type masters. Between them, they are destroying our already fragile tottering world of us common people. Because of this situation, the good elements of our society, who matter-are capable, and really can do something good-fight shy of politics.

Our World has changed immensely in these last five decades. Old ideas no longer hold any fascination for our younger generations. Rightly so! For in truth, what values have they, today? Economic theories have all collapsed; their values, too inconsequential. The seven pillars of wisdom, which held up our world for centuries, have now too crumbled down under the strain of scientific progress. All our sciences are galloping towards self- destruction, in guise of human progress. Human feelings have all eroded away and chaos is prevailing all around. Anywhere we turn to, we find confusion and fear. What are we common people coming to? Is there no way out? I know time is not in our favour any longer. We seem to have lost all our WILL to survive in CONTENTMENT; and now we are nearing the threshold of our last point of vanishing. And yet, I do see, one tiny chink of light shining through and if we, common people follow it absolutely with diligence and self- sacrifice, then we will surely emerge from this present- age dark tunnel, into a new dawn of freshness and complete fulfilment. For all this, we must begin politics afresh with new faces. If politics can be cleaned up, then confusion is ironed out. From this stage on, will follow: Better understanding of Newer economics, cleaner social values and clearer spritual awakening.

Let us all, we common people combine and with one mighty shove, push out all these mighty half-baked party leaders from their chairs of power. Let us all, get together and destroy these party bases and then they will all fall down. Bhandari with his heavy corruption created 5,000-6,000 super-corrupts among his elite followers. Whereas Chamling, with all his honest intentions, without realising, has today created indiscipline and 50,000-60,000 mini corrupts--by his promises of impossible dreams--to legions of disgruntled school drop-outs!! Which is worse??

With Bhandari around, there is no hope.

With Chamling around, there is some hope.

With neither around, there is more hope, in the future.

So do vote Independent in this M. P. elections.

For this, for a beginning, let us begin with good, proven, capable, honest, educated and qualified people, free from party interest and elect them as Independents on common free symbols. Only when we succeed in such a way, we can start to proceed with social reconstruction. Our present regional parties

SIKKIM INDEPENDENT FRONT
The 22nd. Pukaar from the Youths of Sikkim (Part II)
 Continued from part 1 (... What is the solution ?)

Dear Friends :

Get rid of - first step - the Congress of Indira, as quick as possible. Was it not Nehruji ? Who said : " let us industrialise fast and quickly get rich." He did not succeed. But Sri Narshima Raoji might, to our future sorrow. What did Gandhi jr say : " Let us make our farmers prosperous; let us plant more and prosper slowly with the seasons." Was Gandhiji not and still correct, even today ? Our Prime Minister will make the town - rich —even richer. The towns will live off the toils of the farmers. One example : An office - goer, who does nothing year in, year out, just ^{listen} ~~listen~~ around, but push pen and carry files hither and thither, for about two to three hours daily, five days a week — he is a parasite — earns easily 100- 200 rupees per day. Whereas a farmer who toils, under sun, rain and hale, four times as much, seven days a week, year in — year out, barely earns even 20 rupees daily. No, the progress of the towns will never reach the villages, as Nehruji claimed. It will consolidate the towns people, making them richer, without doing any real work, harder than us farmers.

In this process of industrialisation for the past five decades from Nehruji - to Induji - to Raoji, India has incurred a total foreign debt BURDEN of more than 5 1/3 lakh crores. We common people now pay this foreign debt burden, in INTERESTS alone about 50 crores every morning. This is about 75 N.P for every man, woman and unborn baby of 70 crores, every day. This is breakfast value of a poor man's food. What breakfast will they eat after paying this 75 N.P interest ?

This interest totals up to about 1/3 of our total gross central tax receipts, or 1/2 of all our central revenue receipts. This aggregates to about, a staggering 20, 000 crores annually- vanished away by foreigners in interests alone. What about the original foreign CAPITAL debt repayment of about 5, 34, 000 crores? Where has all this unimaginable wealth vanished to? It did not permeate to us 50 crores poverty stricken people in the villages, or even to the poor of the towns. We are still hungry! I will positively tell you. It has gone to (1) the Himalayan regions from Ladakh to Arunachal; to the terrorists and anti-socials of our land, who are today using this accumulated unearned wealth-in the worst possible way-to slaughter off our poor Kisans, who serve in the defence forces. It has gone to, (2) the CHOSEN FEW elite industrialists in the large cities, who support this corrupt system, to continue, keep on earning in this immoral way, ad nauseam. It has gone to, (3) the crores of parasite office-people with fat salaries-for a few hours of pen pushing and file carrying, to and fro, in the towns and cities. It has gone to, (4) the multi-nationals for building, more & more eco - destroying systems. It has gone to, (5) our corrupt political leaders, gangsters and smugglers who are all rolled up into one, protecting and helping each other.

These five groups of 25% people of our country have each in their own proportion, gobbled up all of the 5,340,000,000,000 rupees (5 1/3 lakh crores) of foreign money for the past 50 years. And now we poor of the villages and towns, the 75% majority bear the burden of sacrificing away our breakfast of 75 N. P every morning, to pay for interests alone. What about capital repayment? This is about 7, 500 rupees capital foreign debt for every individual, who do not possess even Rs 100. Even a new born baby, will be bound to this debt, by the death of another. What would you describe this as? DEBT TRAP— DEATH TRAP! the Congress party now after exhausting all their foreign sources for begging loans — which eventually only reached the CHOSEN FEW — again took back these lakhs of crores from these same CHOSEN FEW at even higher rates of interests, as internal debt liabilities, amounting to about 3 lakh crores, a little more than half of our previous total foreign debts. These clever politicians have added another 40 N. P to our breakfast bill as interest only. And a grand total capital Death trap of about 12, 000 rupees per person —payable 7,500 to foreigners and 4,500 to the CHOSEN FEW of our own kind, inheritable and transferable to every new born child — but all these wealths, finally again accruing to the super —super criminally rich-rich CHOSEN FEW.

In almost every pukaar, I tell you folks a tale. I have just remembered another. I will for now, just tell you a very small part of it: "... lost, out on a vast ocean, in the middle of nowhere; many people are languishing on a boat.

THE CURRENT

VOL. XVIII, NO. 3 All India Edition 35 p. WEEKLY

Elections

Congress Running Into Serious Trouble

WITH about four to five months left for the General Elections of 1967, the Congress Party, which since Independence has more or less had its own way for 19 years, is now running into serious trouble.

By D. F. KARAKA

The elections in February 1967 will be the fourth General Elections in this country. The indications are that they will differ from the three earlier elections. The legend of an assured Congress victory in all the States and at the Centre seems to have come to an end. The expectation is that the Opposition parties will do much better than before and it is also expected by some that in two or three of the States of the Union, the Opposition will defeat the Congress.

Some factors which result in this expectation of a rough time for the Congress Party are:

1. The magnetic personality of the late Pandit Nehru will not be available to the Congress in 1967.
2. There is a move on the part of the Opposition to close its ranks. How far it will succeed is not yet known. Hitherto it has been noticed

that despite the fact that a Congress candidate is elected, the combined opposition secures the majority of the votes.

A serious attempt is now being made by the Opposition parties to present only one agreed candidate to fight the Congress so that a division and wastage of votes will not take place.

It is expected that in the 1967 elections a multiplicity of Opposition candidates will be avoided. The Opposition parties



Hamilton Studios

Interview with the Editor Sikkim Girl Wins Rs. 500

See page 21

Sodium, the Horse that made an Indian a Millionaire...



are now said to have formed several electoral alliances among themselves with the sole purpose of offering solid and united opposition to the Congress.

There is also a view expressed that there will be fewer independent candidates standing in 1967.

Even the Left Communists have entered into electoral understandings with other leftist parties. These include the S.S.P., the R.S.P., the Forward Bloc and the Workers and Peasants Party, in addition to the attempted alliance with the Right Communists.

The Praja Socialist Party seems to be the only major left party which has stayed clear of this Left Communist alliance group.

On the right the Swatantra Party is making a serious attempt to forge an alliance with the Jan Sangh, on the national platform. In Madras, the Swatantra Party has an electoral understanding with the D.M.K.

If this unity in the Opposition, both of the left and the right, produces a Congress defeat even in a few States of the Union and produces a few more Opposition M.P.s in Parliament, the first serious blow to the Congress Party will have been dealt. The rot that has set into the Congress may then abruptly come to an end.

In West Bengal, Mr. Ajoy Mukherjee's Bangla Congress has been gaining in strength.

These are the general observations on the eve of the elections, although it is realised by all political observers that anything can happen between now and February 1967.

It is however not with this

broad and general picture that we are concerned just now, as with blow after blow that seems to have been dealt to the Congress from within the party itself.

CURRENT had earlier mentioned (August 29, 1960) that a "revolt was simmering within the Congress Party" and that a number of prominent M.P.s may soon quit the serrated ranks. This came in a report from

Shattering P. A. C. Report on Commerce Ministry

See Page 3

CURRENT's Delhi Bureau. Among those we mentioned as being most likely to leave the Party in order to join the Bangla Congress, was Mr. Humayun Kabir, former Cabinet Minister. Mr. Kabir has fulfilled our prophecy.

The fact that Mr. Humayun Kabir, who has been a Cabinet Minister (originally appointed by Mr. Nehru) for a number of years, has resigned from the party is itself a great blow to

(Continued on page 13)

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Finish of the St. Leger

CURRENT brings you this live picture of the exciting two-finish in glorious September sunshine of the mile and three-quarter St. Leger, the last classic of the English racing season won by MR. RADHA SIGTIA'S "SODIUM", the horse that made this (deserving) Indian a millionaire.

SODIUM (Left, F. Durr up) is seen on the outside beating the Derby Winner CHARLOT-TOWN (Centre, J. Lindley up) by a head.

There were a few anxious moments when two enquiries were held by the Stewards after the result was announced, but the decision stood.



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