

# **Role of Ritual Specialists among Tamang Community of Sikkim**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

By

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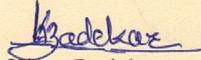
# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

(भारत के संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा वर्ष 2007 में स्थापित और नैक (एनएएससी) द्वारा वर्ष 2015 में प्रत्यापित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)  
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## DECLARATION

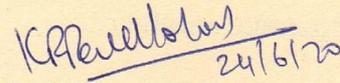
I, **Kiran Badekar**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation entitled “**Role of Ritual Specialists among Tamang Community of Sikkim**” is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any university or institute.

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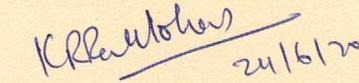
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### Role of Ritual specialists among Tamang Community of Sikkim

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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Rituals play the significant role in a human's life. Rituals are in many forms and have various functions in every culture. To perform rituals, specialists are important to organize the rituals in a systematic way. In the absence of a specialist one may not perform the rituals according to the cultural norms. To become a specialist person, one shall be well knowledgeable in every aspect of rituals. Ritual plays important role in human life for meaningful participation in a particular event. Rituals are the medium to bind people within a given culture. In the earlier societies, ritual specialist had important place in the society. Rituals are providing unique features in any society. Rituals are different from one society to another. Likewise, a ritual specialist is also recognized different through his knowledge, power and performance in every community. It is generally understood that to become a ritual specialist in any society, one must sacrifice many things to achieve special powers, which common individuals may not be able to possess. Most of the rituals are interconnected with story or myth depending up on a given cultural context. Rituals provide many clues about a society's origin, their ancestors and how they have performed over years. Rituals are powerful medium to know about how a society is organized.

Sikkim is the state situated in the North-Eastern Himalayas. The state borders are shared by three countries. In the north side Tibet, Bhutan in the east and in west side Nepal is located. In the year 1975 Sikkim was merged as 22<sup>nd</sup> state of the Indian union. The

Sikkim state also known as land of Buddhism. The Buddhism travelled from Tibet to Sikkim in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and state emerged as Buddhist states where Tibetan monks were main persons to run monasteries. The Guru Padmasambhava has exposed hidden land of Sikkim. Guru Padmasambhava is the main protector deities of Sikkim and he is also known as the second Buddha. Under the Buddhism there are three main branches they are *Mahayana*, *Theravada* and *Vajrayana*. In Sikkim *Mahayana* Buddhism are following but in *Mahayana* Buddhism there are major sects, they are *Nyingmapa*, *Kagyupa*, *Gelukpa* and *Sakyapa* (Gazetteer of Sikkim 2013). The *Nyingmapa* is the main sect which following by Tamang community. The *Bhutia*, *Lepcha*, *Sherpa*, *Tamang*, *Limbu* and *Nepali* communities are the main ethnic communities of the state. Every community have the unique culture and tradition. Every community has their own social structure, belief system, food habits, mythology, folktales and, ornaments.

Ritual process provide the fulfill meaning to its functioning. In anthropology, ritual studies stress the meaning and reasons of why particular rituals are practised in the community. It also helps to highlight the origin and development of rituals in the society. The study also focused on how community mandated the ritual values in their culture. A long standing anthropological theme is that ritual taking place in time reveals the timeless, the local manifests the total.

Collins (1998) suggested that the theoretical perspective shows that agency and structure are opposite side of one coin. Rituals do structure human behavior, because social relations are ritualized and therefore relatively predictable, people can be effective agents. They used ritual as medium to perceive conscious and unconscious aims. And they able to act collectively to change cultural patterns by creating new ritual and giving

new meanings to new ones. Ritual has made feel more secure in spiritual and moral wellbeing hence ritual form are frequently embedded in structure of authority that are oppressive, stigmatizing racial groups, the poor, or women as less worthy than a powerful (male) elite, as in the case of the ritual bow. They may be reinterpreted that is empowering the individual as in the metaphor through which the bow before the mirror become a moment of self-reflection. Theoretical models of text and performances have brought a new complexity to ritual studies in emphasizing the different kinds of agency that are involved in the enactment of a ritual.

The most of the communities have the specialist of ritual, who is having the knowledge about the rituals and their actions. This action performed by specialist who has the exclusive knowledge from their father or grandfather. They have unique place in society. Traditional specialist trained by their forefathers or some specialist got knowledge from religious institution. Sometime not every specialist has been trained by generation or institution, some specialist becoming specialist through supernatural power or by spiritual power. Interesting part is talking about their behavior and secretes of mantras or spiritual knowledge it's always make curiosity in mind. That's the peculiarity among communities. It becomes the part of belief system in their culture.

Gluckman (1954) pointed out and theorized that rituals as the Rebellion. It allows the temporary role reversal in societal hierarchies, but these temporary breaks only reinforce the overall societal cohesion. Any social structure of society is the safety well mechanism and one of the safety well mechanism is temporary movement of relaxation were people ritualize rebellion, ritualize opposition to this particular kind of structure for a temporary

period of time. It is Accessible time band sentiments, rebellion, can be expressed. So end of the day it gives more power of structure and more power of social cohesion.

Norbeck (1963) suggests that “ritual of rebellion” should be seen as part of a large category of rituals that allow for momentary relaxation of social rules, but overall affirm societal unity. Both are people saying same thing that “ritual of relaxation” and ritual of Rebellion” are somewhere safety well mechanism which give people certain ritualize time, ritualize kind of space to perform differently but they end of the day actually solidify ritual a such.

Genep (1960) theorizes ‘rite of passage’ as a key type of ritual that includes three stages. He talks on about what we called life cycle rituals. Life cycle rituals are that perceived transition of one-person stage of life to another stage of life. These stage could be said many things. For example, Marriage state the change to the person as unmarried to married and different cultures and different rite and ritual that accompany marriage to mark this particular rite of passage. He gave the three stages which each stage ritual has rite which we perform. First stage is before marriage stage which we called bachelorhood is clear cut category and after marriage stage is second category. There are certain days, certain time, and certain practices which are in between. That in between middle is called ambiguous time and this time is the time of ritual. This ritual can be prolonged or can be short; this ritual can be having many kinds of implications.

Goffman (1967) explained the application of ritual by showing how it is found in one degree or another throughout everyday life; in the secular realm as in the sacred and official words, ritual plays a key role in shaping both individual character and stratified

group boundaries. He stated that ritual takes place in a condition of situational context. In rituals, physical appetite involved for full scale encounter to become centre interaction. Therefore, physical body maintain the pressure to keep up social solidarity, so here ritual enthroning and made the influence for conformity to be a part of society. In the society various kinds of social relationships are enacted by the different shades of deference rituals. These range in time and continuity from brief face engagements, to acquaintanceship anchored in past relations to the obligations in cured by varying degrees of intimacy. There are boundaries among different kinds of social bonds, as well and persons perform ritual work both to keep up an expected tie and to fend off intrusion that would shift it to a closer level.

Mariza (2000) define ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in the multiple media, whose content and arrangement are characterized in varying degree by formality (conventionally), stereotype (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy. The Austinian sense of performative, where in saying something is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different sense of staged performance that uses multiple media by which the participants experience the event intensively and in the sense of indexical values. Author observations of Nuaula tribe's ritual are the centre part. Rituals primarily as the re-enactment of myth, of what the ancestors did, a means of maintaining contact with the ancestors of strengthening the bond between living and dead. Author generalized that ritual is the re-enactment of mythic events. Few who participate in them have other than a fragmentary knowledge of those myths. This is equally true of some of the principal actors or, at least, they

themselves think they have a deficient knowledge because in part they see in the misfortune that follows or accompanies rituals a failure of their own knowledge that in turn has led to a failure of correct ritual performance. Because of the reality and perception of ignorance, author believed myths serve only a limited function in determining how ritual is conducted. The stories provide a useful mnemonic to remember particular features and overall structures, an interpretative aid where that is necessary and, of course, some ultimate legitimating.

Roy (2012) said that ritual performance is like the working of a perpetual motion machine, whereby in order to maintain life it must constantly reproduce what has been done before ever since the creation of the world.

Plancke (2012) suggested that the ritual actions organize on occasions of an illness, death, birth of twin are deliberate to make contact with ordinary world odd abundance through engaging liminality, using liminal bodily substances, and trying to link up place and stated which are separated in past. He has shown the incidence through water spirits ritual are linked to animals from the water the earth, and the sky, as well as natural phenomena and in their power to promote well-being, embody a community beyond the human, an originally universe of regeneration before differential logic. The ritual practices not only based on native or positive logic of the white back distinction, but also visualize the symbols and along this different color used for to become more powerful transformational qualities in rituals. While the ritual actions focused on liminality are intended to establish a continuous link between the world of humans and of spirits from the position of humans who are already cut off from the spirit world, the ancestor, when

successful. Allow humans to rejoin the latter, through an experience mediated by a shared cultural imaginary and to adopt the reality encompassing perspective of spirits.

Kapferer (2004) assumed that the dynamic of ritual in relation to life as a flow. Ritual, into virtual nature is “method for entering within life’s vital process and adjusting its dynamics” For him repetition is one of the dynamics that works toward this end.

The ‘ritual’ is much concerned with mythic and symbolic arrangement of our common metropolitan existence as with teaching, literature, divine, reliquaries, religious principles or the ecclesiastic polities’ associated with organized bodies of religious worship. A group or community’s rituals are associated with the symbolic codes for interpreting and negotiating events of everyday existence. They are more than mere signs or symbols in some kind of socio-cultural cluster. The entire social structure has a preventative dependence or rituals for transmitting the symbolic codes of the dominant culture. These are the daily based activity which reflects their religious nature and produce the structure to society with ritual actions functioning to individual under the religion.

According to Tylor (1978) he pointed out that all peoples in primitive societies believed in animism. It means there is existence of intangible, non-material or spiritual beings which may be souls, ghosts, ancestral spirits, fauna, flora, ogres or monsters, or simply objects. The origins of beliefs in such spiritual beings are probably multiple. He stated that once the basic premise of an animistic ideology as belief in the existence of spiritual beings and souls had been developed, the path was laid for eventual development to later stages of religious ideology. But before the second stage was reached, the original belief

in souls and spirits had come to include beliefs in malevolent spirits or demons, and in the spirit of ancestor.

Barbara and Moore (1977) explains rituals frequently serve normative functions governed by the categorical imperatives or “ought’s”, that are rooted in the psychic structures of social actors, through the process of continuous socialization.

Grimes (1982) according to him a ritual is a form of symbolic action composed primarily of gestures (the enactment of evocative rhythms which constitute dynamic symbolic acts) and postures (a symbolic stilling of action) where gesture is formative; it is related to everyday action and may oscillate between randomness and formality. Ritual gestures are always concerned with the genesis of action; they constitute a class of mediating action which transform the style and value of everyday action, thereby becoming the very ground of action itself. Rituals may be considered as gestural embodiments of the inner cognitive or affective states of the performance.

Durkheim (1991) suggested religion is a challenging task to anthropologist to reexamine religious belief and ritual practices in community’s life. The religious rituals show the influence of different colors with specific combinations and ritual values.

Doshi and Jain (2001) stated that ritual is a very complex field. It is important too because the ritual seen as a synthesis of several significant levels of social reality; the symbolic and the social, the individual and the collective; and usually brings out, and tries to resolve at a symbolic level contradiction in society. Religion is philosophy and other hand ritual is not concerned with theoretical part of religion. The rituals of magic man and priest bind the people to regulate their dietary habits. Thus, despite being

associated with religion, a ritual is essentially social in nature. It gives rise to a larger number of social processes. The ritual practices are carried by Shaman, Priest, Traditional healers. These actions of ritual specialist depend on specific time.

Rituals are not only depending on specific time but it also gives importance to place. In every society there are various kinds of rituals done by specialists. These different kinds of rituals are organized for society, family and individual. Some rituals organized to solve the problems of family and some rituals held for to get protection from evil spirits, ghost. In the rituals fire, different colors, and particular musical instrument are the main components. The rituals provide important connection between people in different stages of life as from birth to till death ritual works in human's life.

Kreinath J (2005) This article establish a new framework in the study of ritual and lead to a paradigm shift in religious studies by attempting to take the anthropological approach in the study of ritual to be primary to the study of religious texts and discourse. Geertz's introduced his approach by defining religion as a system of symbol and identifying ritual with religion. According to him, the sense of the 'really real', which is the essence of religion originates in ritual because "the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms. For Geertz's ritual generates religion because it is capable of embedding the system of symbols and combing the model and the model for reality. In such a way that it 'acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in mean by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence'. At the same time this work promises to give ritual studies a more central role in the study of religion.

## **Review of Literature:**

Risley (1928) stated that the Tamang community belongs to the Mongolian group. He stated that they are known as '*murmi*', Lama (1965) opinion was that Tamang were not the immigrants from Tibet but they were natives of Nepal. There is an oral tradition according to which the Tamang were soldiers serving in the Tibetan cavalry. The group settled in Tibet-Nepal border. After Nepal- Tibet war they later flourished where they spread all over Nepal, Darjeeling and Sikkim.

Narboo (1981) gives a detailed study on *Bon* religion. Tamang were the early followers of *Bon* religion when they are in Tibet, because *Bon* is the primitive religion of Tibet and when Buddhism reached Tibet in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. That time Tibetan king *Tsong-tsen Gampo* was adapted Buddhism and he made Buddhism as state religion. They also mention that those day's *Bon* followers were persecuted and faced several problems to survive under such situation, some *Bon* teachers and followers moved to other places for save themselves and their faith, and they migrated to the border area of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and northern parts of India. Some of them *Bon* followers were settled in central Tibet and adopted Buddhism as their religion. The present day Nepal where they could proactive their religion in relative ease and they subsequently came to be known as *Tamang*, *Sherpa* and *Gurung*. Because of this reason in present day in Nepal country these people still practicing *Bon* as their religion.

Holmberg (1989) studied the Myth, Ritual and exchange among Nepal's Tamang. He examines the ritual life of a community of western Tamang in sociological and historical perspective and compares Tamang culture with other cultures in the Hindu Buddhist

world. Study infer more directly and systematically with the interpretation of ritual, myth and social structure and with comparative issue. Tamang village to the northwest of the Kathmandu valley engage some eight ritual specialists, who were prominent and were recognized as local persons in the ritual system. In Tamang community, religious and ritual practices are done by three persons these are the Buddhist associated with *Lamas*, the sacrificial associated with *Lambu* and the Shamanic associates with *Bonpos*.

Holmberg (2000) said that ritual action created a local socio polity that constituted a source of power, bolstering oppositional acts whether the ‘individual act of foot dragging and evasion’. That Individual acts undertaken against the backdrop of ritually produced social fields. Symbolic power is an elementary form of power produced in the activity of ritual itself.

Gellner (2001) suggested Buddhism is divided in to the *Theravada* and *Mahayana* Buddhism. He mentioned *Theravada* scripture were translated in English and *Mahayana* scripture translated in China and Tibet language. The script of *Mahayana* tradition preserved in *Srvastivadin* monastic code. *Mahayana* it means Great “Vehicle” or Great “Way”. Indian *Mahayana* Buddhism is existed only in India, Kathmandu valley, Nepal and Bali. To analyze syncretic view, he has compared Buddhism in Nepal and Japan. He focused on *Newar* community where in Nepal to seen influence of Hinduism and Buddhism in their religions and rituals practices. To understand the origin of community’s, author explained the introduction of modernist standards of ‘purity’ and ‘authenticity’. He elaborates and distinguishes four types of situation. One of them for 1) Syncretism- In this disparate elements are combined, usually of just two traditions; the actors may recognize it and see it as a positive thing, as with the *Maharjan* peasants or

modern ecumenical churchmen, or may be defensive about it and attempt to deny it. 2) Synthetic traditions- such as any of the so called world religion, which are made up of elements of different origin, but combine them in a systematic way, with an internal logic that relates and explains them.

Samuel (2013) and Peter (1998) suggested that Buddhism as Tamang religion and their ancestor worship proves that they are the early followers of *Bon* religion. They have *Bonbo* in their society. Now days, in Sikkim no Tamang found to be a *Bon* follower but in Nepal, there are lots of Tamang who still follow *Bon* as their religion.

Balickci (2002) explains how Buddhism adapted many of the animistic and native *bon* practices into its own ritual practices and thus soon won over many of the people. The arrival of the great Buddhism Tantric Guru Padmasambhava or more popularly known as *Guru Rimpoche*, who went around Sikkim subduing malevolent spirits many years prior to the arrival of the three monks established the kingdom, gave a sort of mystical legitimacy for the rise of Buddhism practices and monasteries in the state.

Subba (2008) mentions about the etymology of the word Tamang as “*Ta*” means horse and “*mang*” means trader in Tibet. According to him Tamang formed one of the major Tibeto Burman speaking communities who were originally called *Bhote* and Tamang later. He provides ethnographic account of Tamang in Sikkim. Additionally, he mentioned that Tamang are the mongoloid people, who originally belong to Tibet then Nepal. Tamang were in *Bon* religion which was animistic religion, but later they adopted Buddhism.

Tamang (2018) assessed Tamang that the community accepted Buddhism as their religion, there is conflict between *Tamba* and *Lama* Tradition has been encountered. They are stressed between the *Tamba* tradition and Buddhism, these challenges are between written and the oral tradition, institutionalized and the folk.

Tamang (2018) has studied oral narrative story shows similarity that Tamang are inhabitants of Tibet. Tamang culture, food habit, traditions and customs are very similar with Tibetan culture. Religious affiliation; oral narratives story cleared that Tamang were the *bon* religion before adopting Buddhism. In those days' peoples offered animal sacrifices to supernatural deities. In Nepal Hindu king were forced to Tamang people to adopt Hindu culture and religion. Gradually Tamang community follows the Hindu belief, culture and religion. This historical movement affected on Tamang community it shows syncretism. In present also, it is clearly visible that influence of different religions on Tamang, such as Bonism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The above studies show that this syncretic approach is needed to study in detail.

Tamang (2018) stated that the Tamang community was undergoing changes in status, language, rituals and beliefs practices during migration period from Tibet to Nepal and from Nepal to India. In Nepal, Tamang were adopted Hindu beliefs and practices Hindu deities in worshipping. They have adopted Nepali language and celebrate the Hindu festivals of *Dasai* after migration to Sikkim also. In this paper she explained the Tamang culture but in religious practices, she has given general information about religious practices and rituals of community.

Tamang (2018) suggested that the traditional Tamang community have various social leaders among them as *Tamba* is an important personality in Tamang culture. The meaning of *Tamba* is ‘*Tam*’ means speech and ‘*ba*’ is the agent of speech. He has a traditional knowledge and ancestor history, family history and stories of origin. He also the person who knows the Tamang song related with customs and rituals. She pointed out very essential issue of *Tamba* oral tradition in transference of tales. *Tamba* Tradition transferred by observing and listening to *Tamba* but no written record found on indigenous Tamang history or story of community to preserve their *Tamba* culture. In the Tamang community very less people knows the Tamang language. Usually they used Nepali language in daily life. So, they are lost their own language and adopting Nepali language. *Tamba* oral tradition is primarily linked with Tamang language but declined the Tamang language. *Tamba* is on path to lose along with the stories, myths, legends, histories regarding community.

### **Situating Tamang Community in Sikkim:**

The Indian State of Sikkim is found on the borders between China (Tibet) in the north, Nepal in the west and Bhutan in the east. It was established as a Buddhist kingdom in 1642. The Tibetan Buddhism is the main religion of the state. In the Sikkim, many communities have migrated and settled permanently.

Originally, communities in Sikkim mainly practiced *Bon* religion and were nature worshippers. Sikkim population includes not only the indigenous groups of *Lepcha*, *Limbu*, *Bhutia* and *Tamang*, but also the immigrants from the neighboring Tibet, Bhutan

and Nepal. The communities who migrated from Tibet and Bhutan soon created a cultural identity of their own that was very different from their original place.

The present study is focused on Tamang community, a significant ethnic community in Sikkim. They are spread all over the parts of India, Nepal and Tibet. Tamang community originally belongs to Tibetan stock. They had migrated from Tibet to Nepal after that they came Darjeeling then Sikkim. In Sikkim, Tamang community has occupied their own ethnic identity with the others ethnic groups of Sikkim (Tamang 2016).

In 2002, Indian Constitution has declared Scheduled Tribe Status to Tamang community. Tamang community has their own distinct Culture, Religion, Myths, Language, Customs, and Traditions. These are the valuable significant characteristic to know the Tamang community as a unique ethnic community in the Himalayan region.

Etymologically, “*Ta*” means horse and “*mang*” means trader in Tibetan language. Other senses of Tamang include ‘horse warrior’, people of the flat land. The Tamang also described as *Murmi*. In the past Tamang were settled in border area. According to history they were occupationally might be horse traders (Singh 1993). Tamang men wear a cap called a *Tagi*, a shirt called *khenjar*, a waistcoat called *khenjo* and long trousers called *surlung*. Women traditionally wear a blouse called *hangrey*. The women’s sari *ssyama*, or *fare*, with a multi-colored apron called *kitel*, on the back. Women also wear *tagi*, like *themen*, but with different designs. It is similar to Bhutia. The women’s ornaments consist of necklaces made of pearls and *Biru*, large big red beads, and a coin necklace called *tangamhar*. Their nose ornaments describe as *namhar*, their bangles as *mathie*, *chyap* for finger rings, and their earrings are called *botil* and *aalong*. Men wear *dangling*

ear ornaments, also called *aalong* and garlands of *totola* flowers, believed to bring good luck.

The Tamang are an endogamous group and are divided into number of exogenous clans. These are *Moktan, Yonjan, Lopchan, Thing, Bomyan, Bat, Pakkrin, Grangden, Syangbo, Waiba, Thokaz, Jhinba, Dong, Titung, Gyapok, Domjan, Bropchan*, and *Negi* are the original ones and are 18 clans. There are some other clans like *Golay, Kalden, Chising, Singon, Remba, Nyasum, Chungma, Syangden*, which seem to have been added later.

The structure of Tamang social culture is made of *bon* elements from interior and from the interior it is full of Buddhist customs. This is very important sign to know more about Tamang religion and their religious practices. Consequently, the influence of two religions and assimilation with Nepali culture and society gave birth to Tamang culture. The Tamang ethnic culture is represented by the *Tamba* culture. *Tamba* is a person who has extensive knowledge about Tamang history. He also knows the prevalent traditional rights and customs, behavior, life style and poetry, folktales, folklores and oral tradition and oral statements. *Tamba* is a historian in Tamang community and a unique personality whose performance is an important role in the community. The *Tamba* oral tradition is primarily lined with Tamang language and now days increasing number of Tamang speakers the *Tamba* figure is slowly being lost and along with it the stories, myths, legends and histories associated with it (Tamang, 2018).

In the past, every ceremony of Tamang ethnic group is incomplete without presence of *Tamba*. So, this institution became essential part of the Tamang rights and customs. *Tamba* is the antiquarian of extensive ancestral history. Who possess all the aspects of

Tamang genealogy and chronology. Since the knowledge of *Tamba* is not written and based on literature of oral tradition and passing through the method of hear-say from generation to generation, this sometime mix the mythology and legends regarding the origin and culture of the Tamang.

The Tamang are the early adaptors of Buddhism, when the embraced Buddhism is a mixed form of *Bonism* and Buddhism emerged, which is known as *Lamaism* or most commonly known as Tibetan Buddhism. Most of the Tamang are Buddhist by faith and birth, their religion is *Lamaistic* Buddhism and they use the religious texts and scriptures written in Tibetan and Tamang language. The Tamang share several basic similarities with the *Tibetans, Sherpa and Bhutia* (Tamang 2002).

*Bon* was the systematized shamanistic and animistic ancient religion. That was suppressed by Buddhism in the eighth and ninth centuries. However, it revived in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and has lived alongside and in controversy with Buddhism till the present day. According to literature community have mixture of *Bon* religion and Buddhist religion. Some people are still performing ancestor worship in Sikkim. One side, in village area I heard that a people practicing the animal sacrifices and other side they are purely Buddhist. In Buddhism, animal sacrifices are prohibited. This activity shows the Tamang people have mixture of both religions.

Subba (2015) he stated important archaeological and historical knowledge about Tamang community. The traditional land of Tamang ethno-group was within cross-border countries of Tibet of China and Nepal extended from Tibet of china to the modern Nepal.

Many scholars are of the opinion that the present Tamang ethnic group comprises of a mixture of many ethnic *Kiratas* as they being the early inhabitants of the valley, came early in contact with the numerous cultures who visited this cross-road of culture. As the valley was slowly occupied by the other ethnic cultural people, the Tamang slowly moved away towards the periphery again where they are inhabited at present.

During the process of moving towards the valley first and the periphery of the valley later, the Tamang ethnic group encompassed many other ethnic groups within it from the valley as well as periphery. This is evident from their *Bonism* variation in the present day Tamang population. The author mentioned that Neolithic *Kiratas* the Tamang evolved from hunting gathering nomadic ancient *Kiratas* during their Neolithic Revolution (c.3000 BC – 600/700 AD), with their distinct Neolithic oral mythic history of origin, ethno-*Kirata* religious ‘Cognitive and socio functional *hierphany*’ (*Bon*) traditions as any other Neolithic *Kiratas* earlier, but they were very early influenced by *Bonism*, and then by Mahayana Buddhism. Which is also a syncretic religion of Buddhism and Hinduism incorporated their *Bon* traditions (Bonism + Hinduism + Buddhism). Although, they were subjugated and influenced by the indo-Aryans Hinduism and Hindu culture as well as Bonism and Buddhism of Tibetan migrants which they have adopted during the *Licchari* period (c. 194 BC- 879 AD) They have maintained their distinct Tamang language, Tamang culture and customs till date.

From the Census of 2011 the total population of Tamang community in Sikkim is 39,457. The considerable population of Tamang community is situated in South district as Damthang, Kateng, Jorethang, Rateypani, Melli, Maniram and Temi-Tarku are the main villages. In West Sikkim, Rinchenpong, Chakung and Singling villages and in the East

Sikkim, Tamang population situated in Ranka, Assam Lingzey, Gangtok, and central Pendam.

## **Statement of the Problem**

In Tamang community ritual processes are performed by three ritual specialists namely *Tamba*, *Bonbo*, and *Lama* through time. The three ritual specialists are unique in their character, roles and their performances among the Tamang. The review literature shows that least availability of anthropological study on ritual specialist of Tamang community of Sikkim. These ritual specialists perform ritual practices through time immemorial among Tamang community, therefore their interaction with community is significant and hence, there is a need to study in detail. There is need to understand role of individual ritual specialist and regard to change and continuity in the present context.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the role of ritual specialist the *Tamba* among Tamang community in Sikkim.
2. To understand the role of ritual specialist the *Bonbo* among Tamang community in Sikkim.
3. To investigate the role of ritual specialist the *Lama* among Tamang community in Sikkim.
4. To find out the change and continuity of the three ritual specialists among Tamang community.

## **Research Methodology**

The present study is empirical and qualitative in nature. The research study is mostly descriptive; therefore data collection method includes participant observation, interview, case study and focused group discussions were used for present research study. Both primary and secondary data collected were adopted for the study. Secondary sources as archival records and available published articles on folklore of Tamang community with regard to ritual specialists were collected. Field area for the study are the three villages selected where Tamang population is highly concentrated in East, West and South districts of Sikkim. The selected villages are Syari in the East, Singling in the West and Kateng in the South districts of Sikkim. Total numbers of 17 ritual specialist samples are taken for present study as availability of ritual specialists in the selected villages. In the selected villages elders and community members of Tamang were taken into account for eliciting information about the current practices.

## **Chapterisation**

### 1. Introduction

- This chapter contains Introduction, Review of literature, Situating Tamang community in Sikkim, Statement of the problem, Objectives and the Research methodology.

### 2. The Ethnography of Tamang community

- This chapter presents the ethnographic description and overview of land and people.

### 3. The role of *Tamba* in Tamang community.

- This chapter present the ritual practices performed by *Tamba*.
4. The role of *Bonbo* in the Tamang community.
    - This chapter present the ritual practices performed by *Bonbo*.
  5. The Importance of *Lama* in the Tamang community
    - This chapter present the ritual practices performed by *Lama*.
  6. Change and continuity of specialists in Tamang community
    - This chapter illustrates the current practices with regard to change and continuity of the ritual specialists.
  7. Conclusions
    - This chapter concludes the main aspects of the three ritual specialists and the findings of the study.

## Chapter 2

### ETHNOGRAPHY OF TAMANG COMMUNITY

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The Indian state of Sikkim is found on the borders between China (Tibet) in the north, Nepal in the west and Bhutan in the east. It was established as a Buddhist kingdom in 1642. The Tibetan Buddhism is the main religion of the state. In the Sikkim, many communities are migrated and settled permanently. Originally, communities in Sikkim mainly practiced *Bon* religion and were nature worshippers. Sikkim population includes not only the indigenous groups of *Lepcha*, *Limbu*, and *Bhutia*, but also the immigrants from the neighboring countries Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal. The communities who migrated from Tibet and Bhutan soon created a cultural identity of their own that was very different from their original place. The present study is focused on Tamang community, who are considered to be significant ethnic community in Sikkim. They are spread all over the parts of India, Nepal and Tibet. This community originally belongs to Tibetan stock. They had migrated from Tibet to Nepal after that they came Darjeeling then Sikkim. In Sikkim, Tamang community has occupied their own ethnic identity with the others ethnic groups of Sikkim (Tamang 2016). In 2002, Indian Constitution has declared Scheduled Tribe Status to Tamang community. Tamang community has their own distinct Culture, Religion, Myths, Language, Customs, and Traditions. These are the valuable significant characteristic to know the Tamang community as a unique ethnic community in the Himalayan region.

From the census of 2011, the total population of Tamang community in Sikkim is 39,457. The considerable population of Tamang community is situated in South district as Damthang, Kateng, Jorethang, Rateypani, Melli, Maniram and Temi-Tarku are the main villages. In West Sikkim, Rinchenpong, Chakung and Singling villages and in the East Sikkim, Tamang population situated in Ranka, Assam Lingzey, Gangtok, and central Pendam. The present study area consists of three villages from Sikkim, representative as Singling from West Sikkim, Kateng from South Sikkim and Syari from East Sikkim.

Etymologically, “*Ta*” means horse and “*mang*” means trader in Tibetan language. Other senses of Tamang include ‘horse warrior’, people of the flat land. The Tamang also described as *Murmi*. In the past Tamang were settled in border area. According to history they were occupationally might be horse traders (Singh 1993). The famous writer of Tamang community Mr. Norbu Tamang not agrees with the meaning of the word Tamang. He said the Tamang word came from Tibetan classical word it is “*Takmang*”. The meaning is ‘*tak*’ spiritual vision and ‘*mang*’ mean many. He stress the colloquial meaning is having many spiritual vision and power. It is very unique information has collected from him. It gives the depth to do research among Tibetan Tamangs, to link the historical background of Tamang. I felt like something is true behind his information there is need to go in depth. In Tibet when Guru Padmasamhava reached in Tibet to prichining in 8th century A.D. There were five *Bonbos* from Tamang community; they are *Narobon*, *Yurungbon*, *Dolbon*, *Singbon* and *Ngarobon*. Those were very strong and powerful shamans. This information passed by Lt. Sangey lama he was the founder of Aaley Tamang monastery in Namchi, South Sikkim ( Norbu Tamang 2017).

## **Clan**

Generally in Tamang community there are 12 main original cast and 18 sub cast are assumed in the community. The Tamang are an endogamous group and are divided into number of exogenous clans. These are *Moktan, Yonjan, Lopchan, Thing, Bomyan, Bat, Pakkrin, Grangden, Syangbo, Waiba, Thokaz, Jhinba, Dong, Titung, Gyapok, Domjan, Bropchan*, and *Negi* are the original *rus* and are 18 clans. There are some other clans like *Golay, Kalden, Chising, Singon, Remba, Nyasum, Chungma, Syangden*, which seem to have been added later. Every clans have their different ancestral diety.

## **Marriage**

Marriages within the same clan are prohibited. These are *Yonjan, Bomjan, Dumjan, Mikchen* and *Lopchan*. In the community there are three types of marriages. These are *Chori vivaha* in nepali and *yolaba* in Tamang language. It means marriage by stolen. According to the Tamang custom for stolen marriage, grooms family gives extra materials to bride's family. These are 6 *patee* rice, 6 bottles of *jaad* which is local drink, 6 bottles of *Raxi*, 6 *Dharnee khasi* means Buck, Traditional food which is *chokore babari roti* which made by millet. It is traditional and another form of marriage is *Mangne vivah* is a traditional marriage which is arrange marriage. The person of the family goes with elders for propose to girl to her house. They take 1 rooster as omen to the bride's family. Traditionally marriage rituals are performed by *Tamba* and marriage ceremony was done in bride's house. The groom family carries the traditional drink, *Babri roti*, one rooster, raxi and gifts to the bride family. For the procession *damphure* plays the *damphu* for entertainment and create the enthusiastic environment during the occasion of marriage

ceremony. *Damphu* is the musical instrument of the community and the person who plays the *damphu* is called *damphure*.

### **Ancestor Worship**

Tamang once in a year perform the ancestral worship. It comes in the period of *Dashera* festival. With this period they choose the convenient day for family members. In earlier days for the ancestors Tamang used to sacrifice the one rooster, five *tormas*, offered by them but now-a-days Tamang are following Buddhist principals so, they stop the animal scarifies. Today, they offer sweets and fruits for them. In Tamang language it is called as *Khepasung*. The way of offering is depend on clan to clan also. Some clans still believe in sacrifice the rooster. Some here stopped the performing ancestral worship.

### **Traditional dress of Tamang**

Tamang men wear a cap called a *Tagi*, a shirt called *khenjar*, a waistcoat called *khenjo* and long trousers called *surlung*. Women traditionally wear a blouse called *hangrey*. The women's sari *ssyama*, or *fare*, with a multi-colored apron called *kitel*, on the back. Women also wear *tagi*, like the men, but with different designs. It is similar to Bhutia community; women's ornaments consist of necklaces made of pearls and *Biru*, large big red beads, and a coin necklace called *tangamhar*. Their nose ornaments describe as *namhar*, their bangles as *mathie*, *chyap* for finger rings, and their earrings are called *botil* and *aalong*. Men wear *dangling* ear ornaments, also called *aalong* and garlands of *totola* flower believed to bring good luck. This flower is also the symbol for cap.

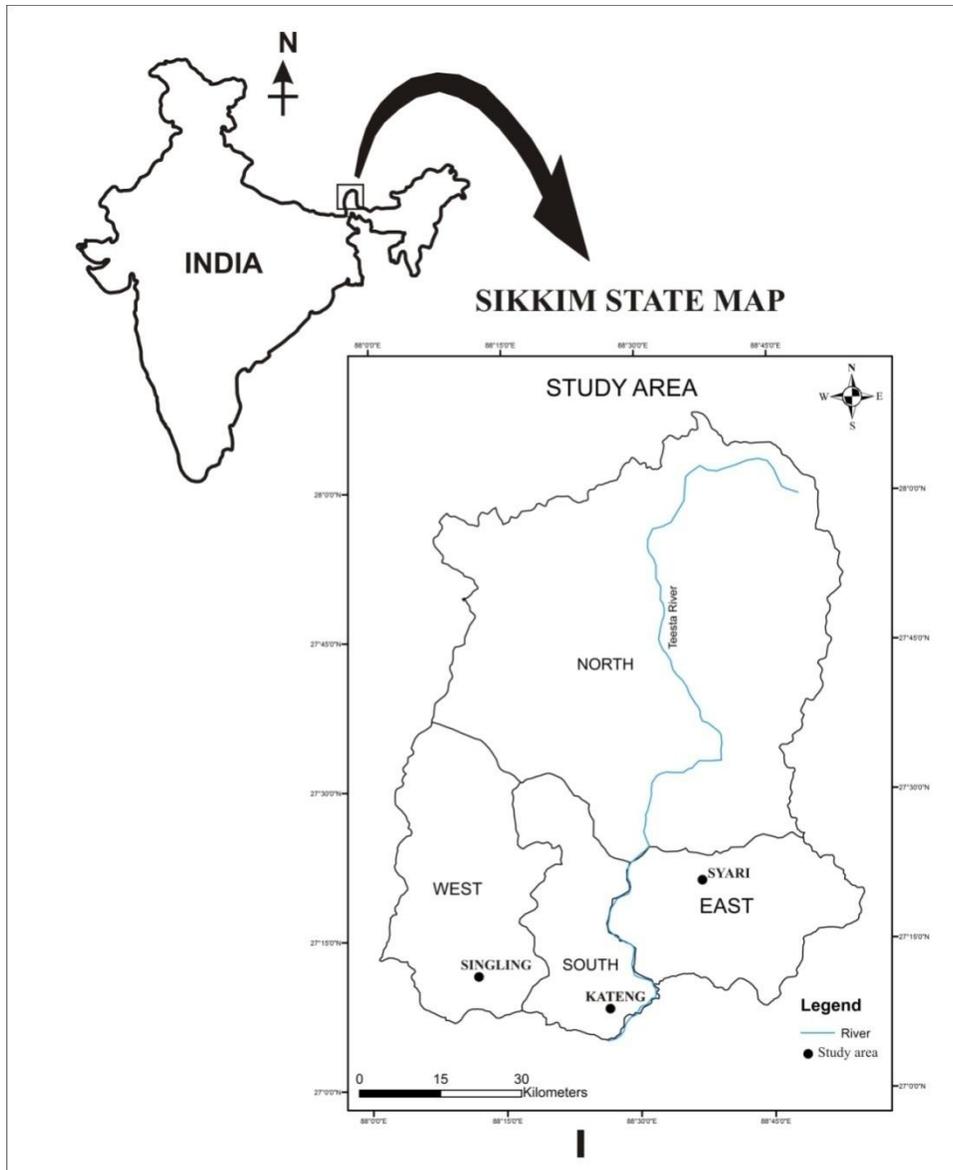


Fig. 2.1 Regional map of Sikkim with study area locations

### **Singling village in West Sikkim:**

The Singling village is part of Soreng Sub-division located in southern part of West Sikkim. The geographical coordinates of Singling are latitude  $27^{\circ}.16'94''$  N and longitude  $88^{\circ}.19'86''$  E. It consist of five wards but ward III and IV are selected for present study as Tamang population is concentrated in these two blocks. There are 170

houses of Tamang consist of Clan as *Gyabak, Goley, Ghishing, Pakrin, Waiba, Dumzon, Syangden, Mikchan* and *Bomzon*. Ecologically area covered by farm. People have an inherited land. Farming is the main occupation of village. The village issues solve by Gram panchayat samiti. In this village there are two government schools till primary education. In a village Tamang Language is also included in school curriculum. Further secondary education students prefer the Soreng village. The Soreng village is the main source for market and hospital for villagers. For the basic material in the village are have the small shops. In this village people not eat the pig meat. It is prohibited for the community. In agriculture land they does vegetables, cardamom and tea plantation along it some villagers are have domestic animal like chicken, cow and goat.



Image 2.2 Singling village, West Sikkim

### **Kateng village in South Sikkim:**

Kateng is located in southern part of South Sikkim. The geographical coordinates of Kateng are 27°.13'61'' N lat 88°.46'72'' E. In the Kateng village there are total 200 houses. The lower and upper Kateng majority are Tamang. Total Tamang population in Kateng 1200 to 1400 approximately. According to one elder person in before Chogyal time, Kateng village is 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century old village of Tamang. Kateng its name derived from tree name. It believes that in this area Kateng tree was majority found here. Before Tamang, Lepchas were used their land.

### **Belief system of Tamang of South Sikkim:**

In this village people have certain beliefs. On the day of full moon day and half moon day non-vegetarian food should not eat. If anyone eats, they believe that they will get stomach problem. Another belief is that, if someone going out from village, for stay they should not come back on Saturday if they not follow this kind of belief then they will become sick, or face any misfortune.

Kateng village is very close with to forest area where, wild animals also roam around the village. With regard to the animals, they have fortune and misfortune beliefs in their life. When people are going to somewhere, if they seen the deer, it deer go to right site it will be good sign and if deer go to the left side it will be bad sign, people believe that their work will not complete today. Members inherit land from their families. The main occupation of the village is farming.



Image 2.3 Field photograph of Kateng Village

In the farm, they take Corn, seasonal vegetables, plants of fruits. These are ginger, local vegetables cucumber, lemon, tomato, naspaati, guava etc. Some people are government employees and some are doing private jobs. In a village there is one school. Each house is located on far away to another. Majority of the houses are constructed by wood and few houses are a made in concrete. In this village only, one old monastery is there and one is under construction. Majority of the villagers are Buddhist but, total 28 families are converted in Christianity. In the year 1985 Christianity came in village. In the village three churches are there. It is reported that 3 to 4 generations back there were *bonbo* in each family. From this village many young boys and girls go to nearby city for their education.

**Syari village in East Sikkim:**

The Syari village occupies location in eastern part of East Sikkim. The geographic coordinate consist of 27°.32'18" N and 88°.61'94" E. It comes under Gangtok Subdivision. This village is divided into three divisions as Lower Syari, Middle Syari, and Upper Syari. The approximate population of Syari is around 2000. The Tamang population is considerable number present in Lower Syari. The Middle and Upper Syari the population is of mixed communities. The Tamang community of lower Syari is having influence of urbanization. The people are working in government and nongovernmental sectors.

## Chapter 3

### ROLE OF *TAMBA*

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*Tamba* is the elder person who has the historical knowledge about community's norms in the Tamang community. *Tamba* plays significant role for the Tamang community as he occupy a central position in the society. They have exclusive knowledge about indigenous tales and stories about creation of the world and histories of clans, and relate them with the real life. Their communication is mainly in Tamang language with traditional way in very simple and polite. In earlier days, medium to transfer knowledge within people is mainly by oral method. It was their skill that how very quickly and easily translates the stories in the rhythm. The marriage ceremony and death rituals are main areas where *Tamba* plays an important role. The learning process of *Tamba*'s tradition was not in form written theories; it's based on oral custom. Their performance is completely in Tamang language only. The meaning of the word *Tamba* in Tamang language is “*tam*” means speech and “*ba*” is older person. They were also known to community as historian and poet. This *Tamba* tradition has long roots as continuing from the Bon religion.

The total four *Tambas* were available from study area as two from West Sikkim, one from South Sikkim and one from East Sikkim.

#### **Singling (West Sikkim)**

Interview of *Tamba* 1: Prem Tashi

The first *Tamba* for study is from Singling is Mr.Prem Tashi Tamang. He has a vast experience as *Tamba* of more than 30 years. He discussed about the life of *Tamba* and highlighted the important aspects of *Tamba*. The knowledge of *Tamba* he perceived through oral way. There were no written books on *Tamba*, so the person with knowledge of Tamang language can easily adopt the information during period of learning. If a person has the interest to know the history and past folk tales, then he will adopt techniques very soon. The teaching and learning is in the form of remembering stories, if any difficulty in understanding story the student should repeatedly meet his guru. He first performed a death ritual in the year1993 at Soreng village.



Image 3.1 *Tamba* from West Sikkim: Prem Tashi Tamang

### Death ritual

In this ritual *Tamba* express his speech in front of villagers, lamas and guests. Actually, it was the tradition that, first the *Tamba* should take his role to give address about his speech and very respectfully request to the lamas to send dead persons soul in heaven

without the touch of evil spirits. This is for death person's soul should happily go in the heaven. Then Lama starts to read sacred books as they send his soul to heaven without his sorrowfulness, through mantra the person's soul will be claimed and purified.

Then, *Tamba* in front of all the villagers declare that how the person has died. In earlier days day people also like to go *bonbo*'s house to take out the solution on the illness, for that *bonbo* through some rice grains in a plate and arrange it and observe there arrangement which is term as persons '*kundale*' in nepali it is called *jokhana*. Therefore, through that *bonbo* will know the reason of illness. Through the *jokhana* they also know the karma of death person from his birth to death. They believe in that as every person will die when the time will come.

So, *Tamba* explains the reason of death of a person. Then ,*Tamba* has continued with a story about how human was born on this earth, after birth how human have survived, how they are living in the society, in this life ,the person may attached by evil spirit or ghost, human life is very precious made by god which is not like any other animal, after the death who can purify his body, every organ of the human body made up of elements, therefore ,humans need to perform systematic rituals to human beings at the last stage in their life. Those earlier days' people search for good and powerful strong person who will take in charge. So, in those days, lama was the only one person, who completes his knowledge through the meditation and learn through the books. Therefore, he can use his knowledge, worshiped to god through the mantra, lama will be protect from the destruction. Then *Tamba* inform to all that from today onwards lama will take responsibility of purification and send the soul to heaven (they believed that Chitragupta has been written his death time). Through Buddhist religious process lamas are given the

promise to Gautam Buddha. Lamas are the devotees of Buddha, who can help the soul to reach in heaven. Then *Tamba* will tell to soul of death person that for your purification and peace in the heaven we called to lamas from place or monastery, please you don't take any endearment, disenchanting from this earth, you give a blessings to the people, today, all the relatives had come here and they gave you your favourite food without any sadness please you accept it and go to heaven. That time, *Tamba* will call the five gods which are living in different directions. These gods are icons of the Buddha and are as: 1. East 'Shar'- God *Dorjee Shempa* 2. North- God *Rinchen Zunney* 3. West- 'Nup' – God *Navathaye* 4. South-'*Jhyang*'- God *Dhoen Dhoba* 5. Centre- '*Wai*' – *Enamvar Nanjey*. In the presence of these gods we are forwarding or completing this ritual, in presence of village elders, we are completing your ritual. After this lama will start to read holy books and performed the funerary rights.

In recent times, *Tambas* are very less in numbers, while the elder generation *Tambas* have died. Therefore, if an elder person has the knowledge of *Tamba* work, then that person also plays the role as a '*Tamba*'. In the community there is no any heredity or traditions that if a father from family is *Tamba* then his son may or may not be a *Tamba*. There is no compulsion for family members; it depends on their interest to become a *Tamba*. Mr. Pream Tashi Tamang has transferring the *Tamba* tradition to one younger person who has the interest to follow the *Tamba* tradition. That person belongs to singling village. Now days he attended the marriage ceremony two times as a *Tamba*. The process of transferring the knowledge to younger generation, authentic knowledge has been loosed. He only teaches the marriage ritual and death ritual to him. Now day's death ritual not performs by *Tamba* so person not pays complete attention for it, slowly

information is loosed. In coming days younger generation should not be aware of *Tamba* tradition in future. They will not understand, why his role was important to the community? So *Tamba's* role is challenging part to community to preserve the Tamang culture.

#### Marriage ritual-

From the earliest times *Tamba* were exist in Tamang community, which are being expert and exclusive persons to perform marriage ritual. The *Tamba* is invited respectably on the occasion of marriage from any elder person from bride's family with *khada* and *raksi* traditional drink as gesture. Traditionally marriage held in bride's house. In the marriage ceremony *Tamba* has a central position, as both groom and bride family hand over the necessary items of marriage ceremony to *Tamba*.

During his performance, he explains the story of creation of the earth which involves the step by step evolution and construction of the human society. For the oblation, *Tamba* keep the *babari roti*, 1 rooster, and 2 bottle *raksi* from both families as an omen. The *raksi* is in a liquid form while another homemade traditional drink '*jaad*' (in Nepali) it is solid form made from millets are kept in a plate during the ritual. The flowers are arranged in brass (*pital*) pot as a representation of image of panchsheel bhagwan (Gautam Buddha). In another plate image of *panchmahabhut* with different colours as yellow, white, red, orange and blue. In Buddhism these colours are indicative of five elements of the earth. Then, they offer *khada* to show respect which is used in all ceremonies. The oblation will keep with a traditional alcoholic drinks bottle in both sides. Then one mud bowl for *dhup* for purifies the place of puja and cloths as well. *Tamba* takes one more

brass plate and keep the some rice in it on front side, while, on that rice they keep Buddhist lamp. That will inflame by groom and will be hold with position of folding leg. The groom's father will seat near the groom. Then with the bride's her father will seat next to them and after that both families will worship to 'kul' deity. In the presence of guest and god *Tamba* or brides father will announce process of *kanyadan*, in which they say that 'from today I am giving my daughter to..... person (name of groom)'. After that *Tamba* again speak in Tamang language that 'today in the witness of Gods, Seas God, Birds, Animals, Sun God, hills and mountains God, Forest God, five elements of the earth, God Buddha, Snake all have been listened that, Today ..... girl (bride) .....daughter giving to .....boy, from this time she will be grooms responsibility. ....daughter's liability will be taken by her husband.

This announcement is conveyed to all and their responses are considered. Then the groom will keep the lamp down and bride sits near the groom. After that, *Tamba* will give blessing to bride and groom. During *kanyadan* time *Tamba* or bride's father announced that 'we are giving our daughter with her right, responsibility but not giving her bones to 'Jwain' (son -in -low). Her bones will be our responsibility. It is unique norm of Tamang community that the bone will be her further right, till her last breath. This norm is a protection and right for her family, if, in any case during her married life she faces any problem from husband or husband's family then her family interfere with this right. This right gives security and relief to that girl. The son-in-law can show the responsibility or right on her but her bone will never be property of his side.

The reason of this tradition was, in those days where, community's life has struggling with issues during this time if they have been fight with her or for the personal reason

anyone will push her in the river. To save her from this harassment it was to prove that our girl is safe or happy with him. It was a sign that her death has been naturally occurred and considered to be a natural death or as normal death. Till today, Tamang community believe in this custom. In death ritual, if Tamang lama came then he will perform this custom, but now a days, young lamas are not follow this custom. They do not have thrust on this traditional norm. The Lama is the main person in rituals today, so many places this custom is not followed in recent times. Therefore, Tamang community is losing this unique and authentic custom, which was made by their ancestors. The skipping of this tradition in community is due to modernization process and also by imitating buddhistic way in their culture.

In the past, marriages were held during night time, that time *barat* was to stay one night. But, through the changing times at present, marriages are takeing only one day, then after marriage same day groom go back his home with bride. In Tamang language they use word '*Remtem*' for these norms.

Singling, Second *Tamba* (Interview of second *Tamba*+ lama)

Name – Mr. Sanchbahadur Tamang

*Tamba* 's role in death ritual:

*Tamba* narrates the stories at the time of death ritual. In that, he speaks on the birth of human on earth. The human body is the made up of flash because of it, we human are becoming sick, or ill. Then he further discuss on human body and sickness. Then, first the *bonbo* or *lama* looks to person's astrology book. Through which lama will know the problem of the sick person, also know the reasons for sickness. If, sick person has to meet

bonbo, he will play the astrology through rice. Then, he takes some rice in a plate and he chants the mantra and put out some rice in the plate. This way he will know reason of sickness.

Historical background of *Tamba* or *Tambas* role in past:

In the early days of the community's life and their culture has to depend on Bon religion. Tamang were originally come from Tibet. *Tamba* tradition was there in Tamang culture before Buddhism. In earlier time's period, Tamang death ritual has been performed by *Tamba*, *Lama*, *Ganba* and *Bonbo*. Those days these four personalities performed different roles. Their roles are infers the community's significant structure. In that period of Bon religion the death rituals are performed by *Bonbo* and *Tamba*.

*Ghewa* means the last rite of death ritual, on that day; Tamangs does the puja for death soul. In the olden days, during the ghewa *Tamba* played an important role. First day of the rite, all the main respected persons were present. *Tamba*, *Lama*, *Ganba*, *Bonbo* these are main ritual specialists come together for three days to complete the death person's last right. On the First day, they select a place to build up the puja. In Tamang language it's called as '*Kilkhor*'. The family persons or *Tamba* clean that area and will purify that place. In the base of *kilkhor* *Tamba* will draw the picture or image of sun, moon, and five elements of the earth with the help of soil. After that they do land worship, which was done in the presence of that four people. With help of the lama needed material was collected to make a *Kilkhor*. On this day, they make *Torma*, 108 butter lamp, and then lama will starts to read holy book.

On the second day, they make '*Ghur*', It means the representative body shape of that dead person (replica). This was made as holy and of able to be used for death rituals. It was made by clothes; with this *ghur* they keep the bones of death person. They also offered some food, drink, rice, money, to that death person's soul. In this process, the lama will idolize the death person in a *ghur*. In this ritual position of *ghur* was placed near head lama. Then the Lama purifies that *ghur* and death person soul. After that , the head lama will call to death person's soul and request that we offered some material to you, Then he tells to soul that 'please you take it, today we purified the soul, and we worshipped for you'. As a tradition, lama also does request soul that 'Today we offered some foods, material money to you, kindly take this, and go to heaven. It is our human body which one day it will burn. You stay very peacefully there; don't leave any attachment with the things in this world. You go; your path is cleared by guru and rest in peace. We gifted you the things which you like during your journey of life'.

Translation of the *Ghewa* speech of *Tamba*

In this world birth and death are definite things. The sacraments are not only performed after birth but also they are also performed after death. In this process, ritual specialist plays an important role, which is known as *Lama*, *Tamba* and *Ganba*.

*Ganba*: In this ceremony *Ganba* address towards *Tamba*, head lama and all villagers. In this ceremony village elders are also present. The preparation for the ceremony is completed and ready for religious ritual performs. Then *ganba* request to *Tamba* for speech.

*Tamba*: Then *Tamba* will start his address to direct the path to soul for reaching in heaven and he also support to mournful family members. After that, he starts his speech about the creation of earth. In which he explain about beginning of earth as a air, fire, water, ice, soil, rock, plants and animals developed sequentially. This process continues in establishment of Brahma in sky, on land hunters, in water, snakes and birth of five gods in five directions.

In singling area interviews were taken from two *Tambas*, according to their view now days, *Tamba*, tradition has been less in *ghewa* (death ritual). In this village only few families are following old traditions. So as part of Tamang custom, they are inviting the *Tamba*. The second reason they reported that Tibetan lamas are avoid to follow the Tamang tradition on death rituals, according to them, the performance of *Tamba* is not required. They are suggesting people to follow the religious principle which are the more truthful and good for the society. The third reason is older generation are very less in the village. After their death, family is not aware of the Tamang rituals and they don't have detail knowledge and correct method of rituals. The fourth is that, the new lamas are coming from other places like Dehradun, Darjeeling, and Mysore etc. So, they are following only Tibetan Buddhism. They do not have detail knowledge of community's belief and norms. In some places lama strictly tells them that he will not perform tradition of Tamang. The Tibetan lama skips three rites from the death ritual of Tamang which are done by *Tamba* as: 1) *Chhoga Pratsi* 2) *Thunda Sursi*- to offer food, rice, money to death person 3) *Thuiba Pratisi*- the passing of bone of death person to his family. These three rites were done by *Tamba* in the past, but now day's community is stopping the traditional rites of rituals. It is a very big problem that new generation believes only on

lamas for customs, but the old persons are having detailed knowledge about old traditions, and customs. There is no hereditary path to transfer *Tambas* role from one generation to another either in the family or in community and upcoming generation in village is not interested to learn *Tamba* tradition.

This can be interpreted as; Lamaism is the main reason to move the *Tamba* culture or role from the Tamang community in the death ritual. Some lamas informed that religion, culture or traditions cannot be mix up. The religious rituals are better to follow as written in the religious holy books. If, in the village Lamaism learned by guru from the village, then that lama thrust on *Tamang* belief and community's system which can allow to *Tamba* in rituals.

### **South Sikkim (Old Namachi)**

Mr. Norbu Tamang (*Tamba*)

He is 72 year old; he is a well-known Tamang writer and *Tamba* also. He has written three books on Tamang languages and culture. First he has not agreed about, the origin of Tamang as horse trader. He believed that Tamang, the name used by other for the community. In Tamang language '*Ta*' means vision and '*mang*' means many. This information was transferred by his father. He also said that Tamang were known a '*Murmi*' 200 years back. In 1891 Gazzeter of Sikkim for Tamang preferred the name '*murmi*'. He stress on the story related to the origin of Tamang. Many years back when two people crossed the Tibet border and they reached to Nepal when some person noticed that two people are coming down along with horse. They were thought each other and

said '*Tamang Porey*'. This word slowly spread and changed it become only '*Tamang*'. This story told by his Guru his name is Mr. Indraman Tamang, he is 88 years old.



Image 3.2 Mr. Norbu Tamang, Tamba, Old Namachi

He also provided valuable information about *Tamba*. As a mention earlier, *Tamba* is an elder person from Tamang community who had the knowledge about the culture, norms, belief and songs. Those days community life is very simple they were busy in agriculture land. They believe that originally, they are Buddhists but living with other community. Tamang people also made the social norms for betterment of the community. They have given important place for *Tamba*. Those day communities' issues were solved by the senior person, *Tamba*, *Lama* and *Bonbo*. These three persons were leader for the community.

As *Tamba* they said the significant role of *Tamba* for the *Tamba*'s song or folktales known as '*Tamaba Kaiten*' in Tamang language '*kaiten*' means story. These stories are regarding of history, nature, myths, social events etc. as well as *Tamba*'s main aim to protect the community's belief and society's unity. *Tamba kaiten* must be in Tamang language, because through this Tamang language will be alive in the community. He was also the expert to tell the origins of clan.

During the marriage ritual *Tamba* used the spear. This spear is to protect the brides and grooms cloth. It also signifies as a protector deity in this ritual. Tamang believe that spare is a protector for us. We can protect ourselves when marriage procession goes from forest. *Tamba* hold that in his hand. He walks front of the people. So using this instrument it involves in ritual. It becomes a *Tambas* instrument which use in marriage ritual. This spear use to get protection from evil spirit, ghost and animals. On the day *Tamba* description of elements materials and objects in marriage ceremony it's called '*RHAMA*' and it is a kind of *Gazal*.

## Chapter 4

### ROLE OF *BONBO*

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In Tamang language ‘*Bonbo*’ term is used for shaman. The ‘*Bonbo*’ is a part of Bon religion in the Tamang community. This is a practitioner of the spiritual power and healer. There is belief that in ancient time Tamang are the originally came from Tibet. Those days in the Tamang community have main five *bonbos*, which were very powerful and strong. These are the *Naru bon*, *Shing bon*, *Yurung bon*, *Dolbon*, *Nagaru bon* these five *bonbos* were main ritual specialists in those days. According to Mr. Sanchbahadur Tamang these *bonbos* were placed in different directions. This everyone had the different characteristic to perform on particular situation.

- *Naru bon*: He works for the birth ritual ceremony, death rituals and help for better life.
- *Tala bon*: He lives in plain areas. He was the mediator between plains and god, goddess. His main work was to convert plains gods. He also does the healing for illness and death rituals too.
- *Shing bon*: He was known as forest *bonbo*. He was lives in forest; his responsibility was to protect animals.
- *May bon*: He was working on control the fire through his bone. He used the sacred mantras.
- *Sheley bon*: This *bonbo* fight with the lightening. He can dislocate position of lightening and save the peoples life.

- *Paye bon*: During that period, the mantras written on the rock were used by *Paye bon* to heal the problems of people, illness etc.
- *Turung bon*: This *bonbo* utilized medicinal plants to cure health problems of people.
- *Dole bone*: This *bonbo* fight against ghost, death body, and negative powers for this purpose, he fights very energetically and powerfully. This *bonbo* eat animal flesh.

### **The process becoming a *Bonbo*:**

The first symptoms would be the person will start feeling illness/ sickness. Majority of the time in age of 9-10 year that spirit will start to attack or enter the person body. During the full moon day and half moon day that person starts to behave like a mad or abnormal type. During this time, the person shall start to shake his body and walk around the village or forest area. The spirit comes inside the person's body and that spirit starts to create problem for the person also. Personally, that person also do not have any clue in the beginning, because, the spirit only forced the body to behave abnormal. That time, the person cannot talk with others. This situation shall also create unconsciousness state of mind in that person. There is no particular time to enter the spirit in his body. When person will cross the age of 18 or 19 spirit starts to come in his dreams and show the place and gives the message to him. It will be the first time when that person will know about that spirit, and journey will start to find the Guru.

Afterwards, to find solution on this problem, the Tamang *bonbo*, if the spirit is of their ancestor only then, *bonbo* will understand the language of the spirit. Traditionally,

Tamang ancestor soul comes in as spirits. Here, for communication with the spirit, people need Tamang *bonbo*, which should be very powerful, strong and well knowledge. The communication with the spirit will be in Tamang language only. To become a *bonbo* they need to take knowledge from guru and mahaguru. In the process of learning there are four stages to be successful *Bonbo*.

1. '*Khoiba mewa*' First stage: The spirit of *bonbo* will select mainly teenage boy or girls. Their age may be between 12 to 13 year old. The ancestor *bonbo*'s soul shall enter to his body. That person will be seen as mad, fell dizzy, etc. During that time, person cannot take sleep or eat. These are the symptoms to be recognized as a person being a *bonbo*.
2. '*Lha Kheba*' Second stage: In this stage, that person will able to learn the secret knowledge from Guru. For the learning the spiritual powers, mantras the person need a Tamang guru. Guru called to ancestor soul or to that spirit and they communicate to each other. This soul will be the ancestor soul of the family. When any *bonbo* has died from family then his soul will be alive. This soul will be found to a family member from his house. Senior guru will come and offer some food, to that soul and both persons pray to him and in the presence of all gods, goddesses, senior guru offered '*Dhangro*' (Drum), *ghanty mala* (bell), white dress, and *Rudraksh mala* to the person. To get all these materials, *bonbo* will be ready to preserve the knowledge from Guru. From Guru that person will teach the methods of puja, techniques of beating *Dhyangro* (drum), dance, and self control. During this time all gods and, goddesses will be present in his body. When the spiritual power enters the person's body, it will start to shake body. It is a very

long process, they do not teach everything in one day. It will take months to complete the basic knowledge of *bonbo*. Guru will teach the secret mantras, techniques of handling the ghost or dead person's soul. The Guru will assist person to how to interact with the soul. These are all techniques, knowledge will be taught by guru to that person. A along with it guru also helps to teach how to control or take action against the bad evils. After this training the person would be able to tell god, goddess, and souls and perform pujas.

3. Third Stage: This stage is consisting of acquire mastery over the knowledge, which he learned from his *Mahaguru*. Then he can perform rituals, diagnosis and healing rituals.
4. In the fourth stage, *bonbo* can achieve techniques of fighting different spirits through chanting of mantras and beating his drum for seven days and night. Very few *bonbo* enters in this stage. In this stage, the person needs to do meditation near the cemetery. After this stage, person will be considered as *bonbo*. Lastly, after completion of *bonbo* training that person does the Guru puja at home.

#### *Bonbo* as a healer:

The *bonbos* in the *Tamang* community are working peace for the village, illness, and fights with evil, spirits rituals for planet peace, ritual for unnatural death etc. Food poisoning for the illness he used some forest plants and mantras to the recovery of illness. Twice in a year *bonbo* does 'Guru puja' which comes on the day of '*Guru Purnima*' or in November month. Traditionally, *Tamang bonbo* is having 'Guru-Chela' relation with guru. The *Tamang bonbo* have the food taboos, these are they avoid to eat non-veg, pig meat, garlic, ginger and *shisnu* is the locale green vegetable. The *bonbos* also avoid

visiting new born babies of the house. Some *bonbos* avoid eating food in the death ceremonies.

During the research study, a total 5 *bonbos* as 2 are from Singling, 2 are from Kateng and 1 from Shyari are interviewed.

### **Singling, West Sikkim**

Mr.Santbahadur *Tamang*:

He is 65 years old *bonbo*, lives in singling village in the fourth ward of the village. He is belongs to *Gyabak* clan. His main economic source depends on agriculture land. He has two sons and two daughters. When he was 9 years old, he has started the journey to become a '*Bonbo*'. Some of his relative told him when he was in mother's womb from that time his mother started to shake her body. It was big symptom for everyone had a doubt about baby will become a *bonbo*. He was born in 1954. In the age of 9 years old his behaviour was abnormal. In the beginning there are no particular times when spirit comes in body. Generally, people said like spirit attack when person goes to forest, some time person when working in agriculture land and some time it also attacked when he comes near the river side.



Image 4.1 *Bonbo*: Mr. Santbahadur Tamang

In the case of Santbahadur Tamang, the spirit comes when he was in mother's womb, but after his birth he was normal he does not had any physical or mental disorder till the age of nine. After nine his abnormal behaviour started, sometimes after entry of spirit in body he heard the sound of '*dhyangro*' he was automatically attracted and reach to that house where another *bonbo* performing. It is continuously happened till the age of 28. In this age, spirit opens the mouth and talked with him. The family member calls to his uncle who was *bonbo* that time. He made 'Guru' to him. As a gift he got 'Rudraksha mala' from his guru. Second stage of being a *bonbo* was started. Therefore, he did meditation in the forest for whole night to acquire knowledge from *Mahaguru* and other forest spirit as well. To give a protection from evil spirit guru plays important role. During this time in the place of meditation guru tied up sacred thread around him. He also uses the mantras for his safety. With the help of bamboo they make a small square around the *bonbo*. It is called '*Leingo*'. If the *bonbo* stop his meditation in the mid night there is a big chance to

forest ghost can attack on him. In this time guru remain sat in the house of *bonbo*, from the house he uses his power to help his '*Chela*'. So guru will be in the house and *Chela* will be in the forest. Then, after the successful completion of this stage training starts in the burial site. The reason to conduct the first meditation in burial site is that person can gain his ability from fearless, it's also mentioned that ghost also has the certain power and secret spiritual power so, *bonbo* will invite them and tied them by his mantra. That ghost demand for the favourite things. *Bonbo* will do the contract with them and they agree to pass their knowledge to *bonbo*. The *bonbo* also got the training from guru how to control them. Some time they make guru to ghost also. In the place of meditation they keep 108 *tormas* will offer to ghost. After it, they will agree and done the contact with them. The selection of the exact place was confirmed by the spirit. Sometimes spirit shows it in the dream or sometime spirit enters in the person body. He will choose the place and leave the '*Thurme*' for sign. The person can come back to home that time he will be a normal. Spirit decides the date for meditation. Before it *bonbo* will go with some people to find the place where they leave the '*Thurme*' as a sign. '*Thurme*' it's a very important instrument for *bonbo*.

On, the fixed date the *bonbo* first time wear the white dress, *rudraksha mala*, and red cloth use for waist, white *pheta* on the head, *ghanti mala*, and take *dhyangro* in his hand. That time guru, villagers, and some close relatives present for program. Then the beating *dhyangro* procession move forward to reach that place, along with material which will be needed. After reach their guru purified that place through the milk of cow and using mantras. With the help of local tree leaves they make a small shed their, all villagers also help them to build shed. The guru arranges the materials and things for the puja in the

place where *bonbo* will sit. After that guru does the puja with his *Chela*. Till the complete meditation guru and *chela* having a fast before start puja they eat fruits only.

From that evening guru leave his *chela* there and they come back to his home at evening 7 o'clock. They does the meditation, along with it puja of guru is also performed. After 11:30pm to 1:30am ghost puja they done, in this puja, ghost also help him to transfer the knowledge whatever they has. Then after 1:30am to morning they continue his training from mahaguru.

In the morning guru come to take his *chela* to house. This time all family members and villagers also can go with Guru. Before the move out, guru perform final puja and offer the holy water and milk to finish his fast. He allows to *chela* finish the puja. Then Guru leaves the *tormas* their which is offered to forest ghost. Some *tormas* bring back to home as '*prashad*'. So second day they bring some material at home for *Gurupuja*, this puja is organized for thanking Guru.

After he come back to home *chela* calls the spirit again and also invite the gods like Shiva, Kali, local deity for the *Gurupuja*. They make same small temple inside the house with a help of local trees. They collect the particular trees to make a bundle of the leaves. In *Tamang* language they call '*Shevle*'. It is used for the making temple for god and goddess. They make small images of god in the form of rice, *tormas*, and small lamps. After it, they serve *torma* as prashad and offer the roasted chicken liver to god and egg will be roast in the fire and it is offered to goddess, deity etc. The remaining chicken distributed is served the people and guru also.

As a return gift, from *chela* guru got the *raksi*, *khada*, brass plate and some money. Some people also give dress to him. In the last of programme they offer money to small kids. They should be seven to five boys or girls. When the villagers came to puja and they also offered money there. That money goes for guru as gratitude. *chela* takes blessings from guru and pays the attention for his long life.

On the Third day all material along with temple it immerses in the clean water (place) or keeps on the border of river. It is the beginning stage of training some training also had in dream. When *bonbo* complete the basic training and capable for healing shows the some basic knowledge is transferred by guru.

In every year *bonbos* should perform the ‘Gurupuja’ which generally comes in the months of November to December. In local language it’s known as ‘*Mangsere*’ month. Some *bonbo* does it within 3 years. For this puja he also invite to his ‘*chela*’. They together does the puja to say thank to mahaguru and gods and goddess. On this day, they call to god and in front of them guru and *Chela* does dance to entertain them. These days are very important to *bonbos* for them it is festival also.

*Bonbo* as a healer:

He offers some essential knowledge about healing system. If someone has illness, like pain in stomach or knee then he first checks the reason of it. To check the reasons he uses some rice grains and through spiritual power, then he take outside some grains from plate and he will get know the problem. So, as a healer he uses the local grass as instrument to put out the illness from particular area. During this time he also uses the mantra to remove the problem from the body. I have personally, witnessed when he was healing.

That time he strictly said to me don't disturb during this time. From the main door will be open as belief that problem will go by the road so if some came in his road it will attack to another also.

*Bonbo* does another healing is about an abortion case. In the pregnancy, if baby dies before birth and it is happening with her repeatedly, then people take suggestion from *bonbo*. As solution, for this case, *bonbo* does the ritual. In Tamang it's called '*Moj satpa*'. This ritual is done in patient's house. For whole night he does the meditation for convince to god behalf of her. He also request to god please don't make difficulty for her. Today, we are doing your puja please accept our pray. As a mother she has life become a sorrowful today, from today onwards you do not come here to be calm down. For the mother, this type of situation should not come again in her life for it is solution *bonbo* use the skull of dog. This skull will bury in the ground, in front of house where, rain water can easily drop from top of house. They believe that dog is image of *Yamraj*. The Yam god is a *Rig-vedic* deity.

In Tamang language the ritual, performed for peace of planet is called '*Kyon dup*' ritual. It is important for the house and for family member's life. He performs a ritual of planet peace. In this ritual, with the help of mud he makes planets, as well as draws the picture of planet and 12 months of year. The ritual process need to be organized at a place of puja. The *bonbo* uses wheat, sesame seed, curd, milk for offer to planets. This ritual signifies that after the planets peace, problems of person will finish. They will make positive and happy life for the family. This entire ritual process is performed in night time.

**Suicide case:** *Bonbo* works for suicide case or an unnatural death. Tamang language it is called '*Shey Satpa*'. The *bonbo* believe that when person met an accident or suicide case, person's soul tries to attack on someone. The person's soul disturbs the family or anyone to complete their wish. Therefore, the family calls to *bonbo* for the peace of death person's soul. To perform this ritual *bonbo* use the locale trees and their leaves to make an instrument and built the temple with the help of trees. These are '*Katus, Kaulo, Aamlusho*' take it together and make seven bundles of it. These bundles buried in ground and make a small marquee.

*Shavele* it means bundle of particular leave of tree. This *shavele bonbo* will hold it in the hand and through the mantras power he call to death person soul. The only *bonbo* have ability to see the death person's soul. Therefore, *bonbo* ask to soul the reasons why his soul is troubling. The *bonbo* communicate with the soul in their language, he requests souls to give your favourite foods hear you eat it and go don't create problems for others *bonbo* also try to understand the feelings of soul. After conversation soul enters into *bonbos* body. *Bonbo* prepare the road for soul which is made by local tree it's called '*Ghongrin*'. Through the spiritual power, *bonbo* controlled the soul. Sometimes soul try to run away but for it *bonbo* make the road like bridge which made by local tree which is *Ghongrin*. *Bonbo* complete his wish, offer the food and depart the soul. For the small sickness he use the mantras, these mantras also works as a medicine. Like, his mantras will exorcise into water. That water should consume by the patient. Mantra is a soul of *bonbos*, without mantra *bonbos* can't be a powerful. He learned different mantras witch works for different rituals and for sickness.



Image 4.2 *Shevele* a bundle of locale trees

#### Food Poisoning:

If person had food poisoning, *bonbo* make a *Tawiz*, inside the *tawiz* he keeps the small piece of elephant's teeth, snake bone, and some medicinal plant leaves etc. With help of mantra he gives to person hand to wear in his neck. This kind of *tawiz* also use for '*Moj*' it means child diseases. For food poisoning he use the root of '*Bikma*', this plant is usually available in Himalaya. To make *tawiz* he use the ; bones of elephant, tiger bone, snake skin, *marongay roots*, *ghyarhya sheshnu*, *kule jaad*, black spider leg, *nyauri* mouse. These all ingredients use for various purposes. These kinds of *tawiz* also make for child to deal with the problems of children as irritation, dehydration, and weakness.

Pneumonia disease: For Pneumonia he gives '*Aaishyalu*' plant root, in form of powder of root or juice. It gives to the person.

Material used by *Bonbo*:

Dress: First *bonbo* wear the white gown, which is known as ‘*Tar Gaijian*’ in *Tamang*.

White or red belt in nepali it is called *Patuku* and in *Tamang* ‘*Wala Key*’. For white *pheta* which call ‘*Ralba*’ which around the head. He not uses the feather inside the *ralba*.

Materials: 1) Rudraksha Mala: they have 3 to 4 rudraksha malas. In each mala total 108 rudraksha are linked. It is used for meditation, sometime this mala also give to *Chela* as a ‘guru gift’. It also represents favourite mala of lord Shiva.

2) *Shyang Thenga*- Brass ghanti mala is usually consisting of 6 to 7 bells. These contain two types of bells as open end and partly closed end also.



Image 4.3 Materials of *Bonbo*

- 3) *Thurme*: The *thurme* is a very essential instrument for *bonbo*, it helps when they troubled with evil spirit or soul. This instrument use for to catch the soul, to kill evil things, during unnatural death. This will be always with *bonbo*. On this '*Thurme*' drawing of gods as these are Sun, Moon, Trishul, Shiv, Dhanush, Snake etc.
- 4) Black Deer Horns or '*Ghoral*' Horns': These horns are useful in some rituals as they represent energy and braveness.
- 5) '*Sheela*': The stone or rock is of black and white colour; in which white colour represents the colour of egg.
- 6) Walnuts 2 in numbers.
- 7) *Sheley Mhendo*- It is a local flower.
- 8) Snake Bones: It represents to god Shiva as he worn the real snake in his neck. So they use snake bone as a mala.
- 9) '*Kukari*'- *Kukari* use for to cut the plant.
- 10) Sharp Stone: they assume that it is formed due to lightening.
- 11) White '*Sheley Bumba*'
- 12) Brass Plates 2 isn number and barking bear horns for beating the brass plate.



Image 4.4 *Dhyangro*

## **Kateng, South Sikkim**

Mr. Bhimal Singh Tamang is 62 years old he belongs to Bomjan clan. He is a farmer. He has 30 years experience as *bonbo*. To become a very powerful *bonbo* it's important to do meditation in forest or burial site, but he never did meditation in forest. He did meditation in night time at the river side. According to him forest or burial site meditation is very taught, there is no guaranty of life. Person can die also because they belief that ghost also has the power they can attack on them. He learned the mantras and techniques from guru and Mahaguru. The Mahaguru teach him in a dream, and next day he does practises on it, which should be performed very secretly. In the month of July they not perform ritual or healing, because in this month all gods are sat for meditation till August. After August they can do puja and perform rituals. After completion of meditation of gods they should organize the '*Guru puja*' which perform on the day of *guru pournima* in August month.



Image 4.5 *Bonbo*: Mr. Bhimalsingh Tamang

Gurupuja: To do gurupuja he uses fourteen *tormas*, two roosters, two pigen, one goat and one egg. First night they make a small *pandal* in the house, keep *tormas* there. The entire night they call to god, goddess and their spirit during this meditation, they also do dance in their style with beating drum. In next day at morning they scarify rooster, goat and pigeons blood to the god, ghost and local deity of the village. Then meat of animals is cooked separately and served to guest as a *prashad*. Here for the peace of planet they sacrifice the rooster. In the puja animals sacrifice its special and favourite food of deity. He has a *dhyangro* which is made by goat skin, rudraksha mala, *shying* mala, brass plate etc.

At the age of 20<sup>th</sup> year, he feels vibrations in the body. During these early days, he roamed around village or forest areas in sleeping time, so family member kept him tied in his home. Then they call senior *bonbo* in reference of either he infected by disease or ghost attacked on him. Then, during this time he behaves as abnormal person, but he not had a fever or sickness. They believe that their grandfather as a god, who guide him in his dreams and talk with him in *Tamang* language. At the time of *Pournima Panchami* senior *bonbo* call him and discuss about their situation, this discussion will remain in between them only. To become a strong *bonbo*, he needs to sit at the burial site for meditation but it depends on their choice. He reported that, when they enter into cave for meditation then after that very less chances to return in a live position. He also provided information regarding the *bonbos* meditations which he not following. For the burial side meditation senior *bonbo* help him in meditation in cave or burial side that time senior *bonbo* also sat at home for meditation to protect person from evil powers. He does not prepared dress of *bonbo*, as his perception is that knowledge is more important than

dress. He was not wearing the white dress of *bonbo* during ritual time. The senior *bonbo* give knowledge about planet peace (*gruh shanti*). They use different methods to make peace of particular planet. Today, he only performs the rituals for normal disease which are capable for him, injury or critical disease he suggests to take the person in hospital. The garlic and ginger is a taboo for him. It is also not offered to god at home.

Healing: the *bonbo* work to help people from problems of ghost vampire, ascendant, physically problem etc. In Tamang community there are different gods and goddess, so there are chances in variation in healing practices. In Tamang language they use ‘*Shardhan*’ word for design which is on *bonbos* drum. On this drum they should draw the image of sun and moon on both sides. The tradition of *bonbo* is continuously followed from his forefather as his father, fore father and his uncle were *bonbo*. Therefore, his hereditary proof is that the spirit came from father to son.

They belief that after death of *bonbo* if there body is burned then the spirit will came in his grandson or granddaughter, but this spirit not for goodness as it comes up as evil spirit. This evil spirit will never support to become a good *bonbo* and it will disturb the person’s life. Therefore they believe that after death of *bonbo*, the body should be bury in the ground. The names of his Mahagurus are *Naru bon*, *Seliaker bon*, *Singh bon* (*Ban jhakri*) and *Dhansyagre bon*. These are main gods for *bonbo*. The food taboos are don’t eat garlic, *sisnu* vegetable, beef and pig meat, so he cook food separately for him.

In lower Kateng part of South Sikkim it is observed that influence of Hindu traditions on their death ritual. They cut their hairs and avoid eating salt for three days. If, the death of a mother in a family occurs then her son will avoid drinking milk for one year. In

*Tamang* community there are traditions to build the *chorten* outside near the house, where unknown persons cannot touch to the *chorten*. Once in a year they put 108 butter lamps for them inside the house.

In kateng village there are two *bonbos* but they both are not wearing their dress because they felt awkward. According to them wearing dress and using materials are not important. For them effect of mantras are important to solve the illness.

### **Syari, East Sikkim**

Mr. Prakash Chandra *Tamang*

He is 71 years old, and performs the role of *Bonbo* and *Tamba* in the community. He is a *bonbo* in lower Syari, from the age of 6 years parents started to give *bonbos* knowledge by another *bonbo*. Those days community were following bon religion, for adopt the *bonbos* knowledge parent wish to send their child to become a *bonbo*. Those day schools were not available. The *bonbos* were get very respect from villagers. He was the main religious guru. His guru name was Kalusing Tamang. He belongs from Glan (clan name) clan of Tamang. He learned the all mantras and techniques from guru. Those days if mantras not learn then guru gave punishment to him. The knowledge is transfer by oral form, not by written. It was difficult to remember the mantras, but guru was very strict, he always told to him without forget, you should repeat the mantras continuously in a day, otherwise he will get punishment. After complete the mantras he learned practical rituals. For practice guru take him when guru has the rituals or programme somewhere. As Tamang were follower of bon religion so all rituals were perform by *bonbos* only.

Those day funeral can only attend by men persons only. The death rituals were performed by *bonbos*. In a village three day *bonbos* were keep dead body at home. After that dead body take out in forest and along it male goat takes with him to offer it to death person. After it served the guest sometime some people leave goat there. The sacrificing goat and serve meat among villagers its call '*Maypsasa*'. All the ritual was done in *Tamang* language. After it they divide the groups of people for the *ghewa*. These groups were divided for distribution of work on *ghewa*. To offer the food for death person, son –in-law has the main responsibility in *Tamang* community. If son-in-law is from another community, then he will not take these responsibilities and even though entry in pujas place not allow to him. In the community welcoming to the guest and pay a respect it's done by one group it called '*changbosa*'. In final rite of death person, *bonbo* make replica by death person cloth and keep it in near the puja place. Tamba offer the rice, money to death person's soul, which s called as *Thudasorsi*.

During the present research study it is noticed that, becoming a *Bonbo* is not only influence of spirit but during earlier day's bon religion people beliefs that from the family one person should learn the principals of religion. So, Mr. Prakash Chandra *Tamang* has followed the *bonbo*'s character but he is not a *Bonbo* who became by the spirit. He learned the knowledge of *bonbos* from his *bonbo* guru. He told that those days Buddhism entered in Sikkim, to protect the bon religion in the community, his father forcefully had been gave the *bonbo*'s education to him. After completion of the education he started perform the all rituals. In between these times slowly Buddhism influenced over *Tamang* community of Sikkim. It was critical time for *Tamang* community to leave their traditional norms, beliefs and culture. Then, this Buddhism brought the changes in the

Tamang community. In present majority Tamang are following Buddhism so all rituals are performed by lama. Mr. Prakash Chandra Tamang stopped his *bonbo* role and hence family converted to bon religion to Buddhist religion. He is the witness for the old traditions and culture of Tamang community. Now-a-day's he perform ritual for needy people only, who come to his house.

## Chapter 5

### ROLE OF LAMA

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In Buddhism, a monk is a priest, to fulfil the rituals for human's life, for a peaceful and happy life. In Tibetan language, a monk is called as a '*Lama*'. He has the prestigious position in the Buddhist religion. *Lama's* have the main and significant roles in Buddhism. The *Lama* or monks are having a restricted life. They are bind by the Buddhist principals till the end of life. Being a *Lama*, he has the responsibilities of the life of the humans, animals, insects, environment, and etc, to pay off peace to their life. Through the power and the mantras *Lama's* can fight with evil spirits, evil souls. In the Buddhist religion, *Lama's* have much respected place. To become a *Lama*, they have to sacrifice their life, life style and self nature will be a transfer in the monastic life. In their daily life, they do meditation, pujas and work in institution for the people, for Buddhist communities and for the world. The self emotions, angriness, principle of life everything they leave to walk a Buddhist path. In Buddhism, *Lama* or monk considered to be, the mediator between god and people. *Lama* is always capable to resolve the problems of human life and maintain the healthy, peaceful and sanctified environment in the village or on the earth. Sikkim is the state where Tibetan Buddhism as a main religion. Some communities are Buddhist by faith and some of them are converting in Buddhism. In the Earlier days, communities followed the animism as a religion, like wise Tamangs of Sikkim are originally migrated from Tibet. Before Buddhism they community were comes under the 'Bon Religion it mean Animism religion. In Tibet 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Padmasambhava came in Tibet and had spread to Buddhism. After the controversial

action with the bon religion community stopped the animal sacrifices and started to following the Buddhism. The Tamang of Tibet was also having stopped scarifying animals. They started to follow Buddhism.

The every religion provides the significant place to person as a religious guru. That person takes responsibility to guide to people. The religious guru has a historic and reverential role in every community. He show the path of life based on the religious principal, where community belief on reverence of god or religion. The life is based on religious beliefs, gods and goddess which control the human tendency. His role is important for society to walk on religious path. The guru has the ability to gain spiritual power for goodness of people. His power attract to the people. To protect the life brings the positive light in their life. As a guru first priority is serving the knowledge, values, shared the extensive knowledge of holy books, motivational and inspirational thoughts.

In Buddhism, Buddhist monk is having respectable place in the religion. The monk who spend his life for enlighten. The lots of dedication and sacrifices are done by monk to achieve the Buddhist path. They followed the principals of Buddhist compensation to deliberate the existence of human nature. The *Tamang* who originally has the Buddhist root as a religion, before accepting Buddhism they were following Bon religion. Through the time it was a need for society to be a religious guru to enlighten. The *Lama* as a religious guru, play the significant role for the *Tamang* community. The *Lama's* are not distinguish the community wise as in Buddhism all are equal. Religion is not a based on community, as ritual specialist *Lama* playing his role in different rituals.

Then Tamang community started *Lama* tradition in their culture. *Lama* brought the changes in religion, belief, culture and also the rituals. As a religious guru and ritual specialist they performing various rituals, these are death ritual, purification of new born baby and mother is called '*Navrang*' in *Tamang*, various kinds of pujas inside the house for wealth, happiness and future, marriage rituals, new construction land etc. They also work against the evil spirits and ghost attack. *Lama*'s puja takes very long time and very expensive also, some rituals take two days or more than that.

The *Lama* as a ritual specialist performs different types of rituals in Tamang community. His role is to give the authentic meaning and reasons of the person's life. People believed that rituals connect their life to the blessings of Lord Buddha. So lamas get reverence by their roles. The following rituals are performed by the lama in Tamang community.

*Navrang*: New born baby rituals are termed as *Navrang* in Tamang community. After, the delivery of women purification will performed on 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> day. The *Lama* does the purification ritual for new born baby and women. For baby girl, the purification was done on third day and for boy it will be on the 7 day after birth. They believe that after the delivery women should be stay separately in house. For her all utensils and things are separately keep in the room. She will be separate till the completion of purification. Through the holy books and the chanting mantras, *Lama* purify the all materials, utensils for purification he use the holly water. From that period, women can enter in the all rooms of house. Both mother and baby get blessing from *Lama*.

Home Puja: *Lama* performs house puja, which based on the different reasons. Once in year *Tamang*'s does the *Domang* puja at home. It is takes three days or five days also. It

depends on family's financial situation. In this puja, minimum three number of *Lama*'s participate and maximum seven *Lama*'s. The '*Domang*' is a holy book. In this book there are parts which read for the various family member, wealth, and health of family, protection from evil spirits, village happiness and for the peace of planets. In this puja along with head *Lama* four or seven *Lama*'s should take part.

Marriage ritual: In present *Lama* also invite for marriage ritual. Tamang invite *Lama*'s to give the blessings for couple's new life. In Buddhism there is one holy book which read on this ritual.

Role of *Lama* in death ritual: As a religious guru *Lama* has the responsibility to help the death person soul to leave earth very peacefully. He also prays for the peace for death person soul. Without the help of *Lama*, soul cannot go to heaven. The death person soul should be live in peace. The *Lama* read the sacred books for death person's soul to clear the way and reach in heaven. In Buddhism they believe that after the death person still alive in the form of soul and need to complete the ritual. First *Lama* checks the astrology of death person. That astrology clears the past, present and future of the person after his death. In Tamang community dead body keep in house for three days only. During this day family member offer the favourite foods to dead body, to him breakfast, lunch, dinner should be offered. In between these days friends, relative, guest offer the white *khada* to the dead body for the peace of soul. The third day funeral will start on the scheduled time. In Buddhism the time will be decided based on death persons timing and day, it is based on astrology. The head *Lama* holds the knot and walks till the reach the burial site, because after the purification and mantras, evil spirit should not attack on his soul. The head *Lama* has the responsibility to protect the death person soul and keep the

body safe. That time in another hand *Lama* hold the ‘bell and *dorjee* (vajra)’. The vajra is an instrument, has the power to fight with evil spirit. It also the symbol of Padmasambhava’s powerful instrument. After reach the death body at burial site *Lama*’s start the reading holy books. The music instrument is also used in the middle time. At the burial site puja takes place for one and half hour. Before burn the body *Lama* offer the water for death person, and keep the lamp there, first fire to dead body was given by *Lama* and then by death person’s son. During this time for the guest who is present in his funeral, family gives the tea and biscuit to them. The finishing funeral the last right conduct on 21 days or 49 days. In Tamang it is called as ‘*Ghewa*’. This programme took place for three days. In first day head *Lama* and assistance will organise the preparation for the puja. They make *tormas*, draw the picture of five elements of earth. Every *torma* have the particular place and meaning in the ritual. Along this ritual dead person’s bone will be kept in a side. First day *Lama* read the holy books for the peace of death person. In the second day all family members offer food and drink to death person. Along it, family member divide the work with a group. Third day of *ghewa* all relatives, friends, neighbours attend the last right of death person. In this day death person bone gives in the hand of son in law. Along with eatables and *tormas*, the bones are kept in a very clean area, where it will safe from evil spirit and animals. After it food will serve for the guest. At the end of *ghewa* family say thanks to *Lama*’s and give some amount in envelop. The head *Lama* gets the more money than others.

The *Lama*’s are religious gurus who have extensive knowledge and experience about the religion. From age of 6 to till 25 years, *Lama*’s spending their life to become successful religious teacher or master. We, humans believe on god and we do various types of puja

to worship gods for wellness and happiness. Without a specialist no one can offer the systematic and disciplined rituals. A specialist plays an important role for everyone's life. Without them rituals cannot be performed.

In Tibetan Buddhism *Lama's* are specialists in the monastery. They put their entire life in the *Lamaism*. From early in the morning to evening they all are busy inside the monastery. Every day, they do meditation and worship. After very hard and difficult stages they qualify to be successful monk. The life style of *Lama's* are the completely offer to god Gautam Buddha. From childhood to end of life they should wear the red and yellow coloured cloths. In Tibetan Buddhism red and yellow or orange colour are favourite colours of Lord Buddha. In Tibetan Buddhism, there is one *shloka* which presents the meaning and significance of *Lama's* dress colour. In this *shloka*, red, yellow and orange are the favourite colours of Buddha. The yellow colour is used for upper shirt in Tibetan it is called as '*khenja*'. This colour also represents the sun, volcano and soil. There is strong belief that *Lama's* are the very strong energetic and powerful who have ability to fight with all the evil spirits and he also the mediator to maintain the peace on the earth. These colours also reflect the importance of five elements. The *Lama* is having all kinds of powers like volcano and the sun. After wearing this colour, it shows the positive energy in their personality. The red colour used for lower wrapper it called '*Santap*' in Tibetan. Regarding *Lama's* dress and colour they believe that evil spirits, ghost, spiritual power cannot touch or disturb the *Lama*. They also believe that unseen powers and animals or insects pay the greeting for *Lama's*. All animals and insects are also gives a respect to them. After sacrifice everything for the lord Buddha, *Lama* becomes a very unique personality. He is deserved to have very huge respect after

devoting entire life to enlighten. In his entire journey *Lama's* life is dedicated to being a *Dharmaguru*. They received hard training during these times they miss all the childhood memories in their life. As a human, they also bear the psychological conditions, up and down movements in their life. End of the end self realization is playing essential and dynamics features in their life.

### ***Tamang Lama's:***

Originally, Tamang were followed bon religion. It is an animistic religion. Over a period of Guru Padmasambhava reached in Tibet, he spread Buddhism there. Though, from that time Tamang community have also started to follow Buddhism as a religion. Community have migrated from one place to another through this time many members following Hindu religion in Nepal. In Sikkim, Tamang community is following Buddhism. Here, they believe that by birth they are Buddhists and they believe on Lord Buddha.

In Tamang community there is no hereditary tradition that from each family one person should become a *Lama*. To becoming a *Lama* there is no restriction in the community. It depends on family members or sometimes child wish also. Generally, parents support their children for good education, but if child does not agree, then they think to send him to a monastery. Gradually, when child goes in monastery, they do not have other option, so they find their path and complete the education in the respective monasteries.



Image 5.1 Head Lam with their students

In this my present research study 3 villages were chosen which are in different districts of Sikkim. During the field work, seven *Lama*'s were interviewed.

Singling, West Sikkim

First *Lama*: Mr. Sanchbahadur Tamang

Mr. Sanchbahadur Tamang is 65 years old. His father was a *Lama*. Those days in the village, very less number of *Lama*'s were in the community, He acquired the *Lama*'s knowledge from his father. He told that originally, they came from Nepal. Their forefathers were first come to singling. Those days proper education was not available, so in the age of 11 they learn *Lama*'s knowledge from their father. That time they do not have a particular topic or method for adopting knowledge. In the free time, father had given the book to learn the mantras. The organizations of pujas those day elements and

objects they learn from their father. He is not an educated person, but holy books he can read. The *Lama's* traditions were followed as heredity in their family. With him, three generations were *Lama's*, but now, their children do not have interest to become a *Lama*. He has been taken knowledge from the guru these are Chewing Tashi Lama (Ghesing), Chey Dorjee Tamang (Pakhrin), Norbu Lama (Pakhrin).

Those days Chewing Tashi Lama was the head of Dali Monastery, which is in Darjeeling. He came to west Sikkim and started preaching there. That time, he built the two monasteries in west Sikkim, particularly in Singling and Soreng village. In 1982, he started to train the *Lama's* from *Tamang* community. Those days being a *Lama*, they do not get money after puja . Only a head *Lama* used to get money. Those days generally, assistance will get money when they complete their *Lama's* training. He was junior so, their work was to help head *Lama* for organizing puja, collecting materials, and works, where related to monastery as well. The *Lama's* training was continued till to finish the meditation in the forest. At least five times they should do meditation in different places and without disturbance of others.



Image 5.2 *Lama's* meditation place in the forest

According to him, he completed his *Lama's* basic training within 1 year. After that, he started meditation in forest. First time in the meditation training Guru joined with him. That time, with his guidance they arrange the materials and needy things. Therefore, guru practically shows the how to do the puja or use of mantras and also how to control the evil spirit, which things are offered to spirit, and how to control his power. He did his first meditation for more than one month. When they do meditation for a long day, all hair and nails are grown up. In the middle time guru visit to their place and ask the questions to them and all about their experiences. For practical knowledge, various kind of meditation should be performed by them. The training of meditation is very important which help to gain concentration and support to become a powerful lama as well as its help to gain confidence. The place for meditation in gravity, necessary for the *Lama* to should become a strong and avoid apprehension and anxiety from them. After this self realization process began. This complete process of meditation changes the view from

normal person to become a *Lama*. According to him, becoming a successful and complete *Lama* they should do the meditation, but because his health issues, he stopped his meditation, now he does the death ritual, *navrang*, *vastu shastra* rituals, exorcise ghost etc.

Along with the *Lama's* tradition he also gives importance to *Tambas* role in community. He also performs the old Tamang ritual in the puja's. For example, he gives the preference to *Tamba* in death ritual ceremony. He believed that every community have different norms in the society, community definitely pay the respect for it and not give a space to loss it. Till today, he is following Tamang tradition and norms during rituals.

He also told that, now-a-days community having a vast change. The younger generation are not much aware with traditional norms. They give priority to Tibetan *Lama's* who have completed their training from institutions. According to him young *Lama's* who completed their training in Tibetan monasteries they give a less importance to follow Tamang norms in the rituals. Now-a-days very less people call him for puja. As he belongs from Tamang community, he believes on their tradition. When he attends any death ritual he performed tradition of Tamang community.

Second *Lama*: Mr. Ong Tshering *Lama*, Singling

He is the head lama of Ugen Lundupchey monastery. This monastery is also known as *Tamang* monastery in this village. He was born in 1982. Before, he became a head *Lama* of this monastery; his father was a head person of this monastery. In his family three generations had been worked in the monastery. Till the class 7, he completed his primary education in government school of singling. After it, he felt to become a *Lama*. So he

completed his 12<sup>th</sup> class in Darjeeling monastery. After it he had taken graduation Degree in Mysore. A total 9 years he completed Buddhist training there. In this period, he completed theoretical part of *Lama's* training for further education he got admission for MA in Darjeeling. After completing a MA, he got *Lama's* degree, it is also known as 'Aacharya'. In Darjeeling, in Dali monastery he completed his master degree in 2014 in. To gain his knowledge and power he did meditation for 4 years. He also had given the information about entire meditation programme.

1. First stage is '*Sharangaman*', it is a Sanskrit word. In this stage they read the holy book and speak the mantra as well. In Tibetan it called '*Kyabdo*'. In one day, 4 times they have to read book. They speak the mantras one lakh time, to complete this stage it takes 3 months.
2. Second stage is '*Chitoutpatee*' in Tibetan it is called as *shamkay* or *semket*. This stage is practical process to development of environment, compassion, ignorance. This stage will help to *Lama's* for transformation of thoughts.

Third Lama from Sichey, East Sikkim:

Mr. Girme Lama is the head lama of the Tamang monastery. He spoke about the meaning of *Lama* in Buddhism; the meaning of *Lama* is very vast and deep. *Lama* consider greater then god because the preaching of the religion done by lama. The *Lama* gives the speech for people to understand the religion. In Mahayana Buddhism, there is a *Nyingma* sect. According to this sect first respect forwarded to *Lama*, second respect goes to god, third religious holly book and fourth obeisance pay for sangh.



Image 5.3 Head *Lama* of Sichey *Tamang* Monastery

Fourth *Lama*:

Mr. Sherap Tsondui *Tamang*

First to be a *Lama*, children need to learn basic education like nursery to class 12<sup>th</sup>. In the earlier day's *Lama*'s education was only based on religion. But now-a-days in monastery classes are run by grade wise. Now, from Nursery to class 8<sup>th</sup>, are academic education are given to them. In this class, they are teaching small pujas, methods, techniques, philosophy, grammar and English and Tibetan languages.



Image 5.4 Materials used in rituals

In Sikkim Government there is a special department for monastic development known as Ecclesiastical Affairs Department. Through this department teachers will be selected for the different monasteries. This department pay the salary to teachers. The monastic founding and monastery related issues handled by this department. From 1980 to 1986 he learns *karmakand* knowledge from Namachi monastery. From 1987, he joined the Nyingma Institute for further education and he taken knowledge from the Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma studies.

He explained the detail education system of Lama -

I. Basic education-( Under the HRDD)

-Learning alphabets

- Reading skill

-To finish this text book it takes 5 to 6 years.

The book name is '*Tsochod*', it has 300 pages.

II. After completing this book II stage will start that is basic knowledge of *karmakand* and puja study will start. To complete the *karmakand* study it takes maximum 6 years. In the learning process first they learn theoretic knowledge of puja and *karmakand* and then practical chapters will start as second part. In practical learning they learn the making *torma*, music instruments etc. It takes minimum six months and maximum one year. After completing these students prefer to continue higher education.

III. Third stage: Higher education, some *Lama's* leave the higher education and work in monastery or they can continue the puja sections in the monastery. But to complete the *Lama's* education, meditation is very important part. Without meditation, *Lama* cannot complete his education. Higher education is very essential because, they will learn the meanings of all holy books. In higher education, *Lama's* get in detail and meaningful information and knowledge about religious books and their functions.

Graduation: Three years.

Aacharya Master- Two years

Ph.D---

In Nyingma institute, master degree starts from nine classes. After nine year they complete their Master degree. After master degree someone choose PhD, For PhD they can choose specialization area in meditation or *karmakand*.



Image 5.5 Tamang Monastery , Sichey

#### Meaning of *Lama's* Attire:

Red Colour is favourite colour of god Buddha. Red, Orange, Yellow are the favourite colours of Buddha. According to him, god Buddha has given special blessings to their dress. This colour and dress of *Lama* are the liberated and free from sin and guiltiness. In Buddhism, *Lama's* dress has a very pure and sanctified meaning. After wearing this dress evil spirit, ghosts and souls will not follow and attack them. It became a symbol in Buddhism; it also became an identity to Buddhist monks. He also stated that if after becoming a *Lama* who is not wearing the dress they are not aware of the meritorious feature of it. It is very unfavourable. When a child is entering Buddhism it's compulsory to wear a *Lama's* dress. It's a principle and discipline in Buddhism. After getting ordination (*diksha*) from a guru, it becomes compulsory to wear a *Lama's* dress. Continuously wearing the dress it

become own identity. To *Lama's* the dress gives own identity and huge respect in the society. It is also offered peace in the world.

Rules and Regulation or Taboos for the *Lama*:

After becoming a Buddhist *Lama*, he should not kill the animals. It is very important and significant principle for the *Lama*. Along, *Lama's* should be a very honest pure soul. He should not talk impolite and never think negatively for others. To become a *Lama* he never pays attention for physical crime from heart they do not think badly for others. He will not give a lie or promises to anyone. It is very strictly and prohibited for *Lama*. In Buddhism, they believe that animal sacrifices will reduce the human's age of life.

There are marriage restriction for *Lama*, for the *bhikshu* there are 253 rules and regulations. When, *Lama's* are taking knowledge it called *diksha*. They give promise to their guru. In *bhikshu's* life, if they want to marry then they should return the *diksha* to their guru. If guru dies then it will return to other senior guru or who were witness, they will return *diksha* to them. Then the *bhikshu's* can marry. He was *bhikshu* in Tibetan it called '*Dhompa*' or '*Lappa*'.

According to him, the forest meditation is done by Tantric *Lama's* and called as Tantric Meditation. Summer retreat meditation which organized under these monasteries it came under the *stutra* meditation which is done by *bhikshu*. It is organized for 45 long days, within these times they take only one time food. The schedule for the programme as follow:

During this meditation biting eatables' are restricted and prohibited. This schedule will continue for 45 days. The total 280 *bhikshus* can participate in this programme. During

this day they not go outside for 45 days. They will be inside one hall where meditation is going on till 45 days. They do not keep contact with anyone. In a monastery all needy things will be arranged inside the room only. In Tibetan they called '*Gheylong*' to *bhikshu*. For summer retreat they call '*Yarney*' in Tibetan. Why it is important in Buddhism: it believes that during the God Gautam Buddha in summer time, various kinds of insect spread those day people believe to Buddhism that they not having a principles or regularities for the particular months. Like hindus ,during '*Shravan*' month they avoid to eat meat, they do fast for the month so, similarly in Buddhism god Buddha started the summer retreat programme for the *bhikshus* from that time, till now, monasteries are organized the summer retreat programme. This programme not followed in only India but also all over world.

## Chapter 6

### CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

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In Tamang society, *Tamba* is the older person and his highest regard in the community. *Tamba* has the ability and responsibility to solve the issues of the community. Today Tamang community have been in a changing process, the *Tamba*'s are the very less in number in the Tamang community. The transfer of *Tamba* knowledge from one generation to next generation is not hereditary. Young generation is not much aware about *Tamba* tradition; therefore, it is observed that through time, this source of information is vanishing from the Tamang culture. The present research provides information about that *Tamba* tradition is decreasing in the community, along with its features and significant role for preservation of Tamang culture, this has become a major loss for Tamang community culture. Here is a big gap in transfer of *Tamba*'s knowledge, which results in losing the original information as only usable information passing to next generation person like; now a day's *Tamba*'s role is limited for marriage ceremonies. So person has learnt the marriage rituals only, he is the only member who know the stories of origin, songs, poems, etc. of Tamang community.

Today, *Tamba*'s role as ritual specialists is completely reduced, as death rituals are performed by *Lama*. The community's preference and belief on *Tamba* has changed, as for rituals, the preference goes to *Lama*. In present situation, *Tamba* are very rarely found, as in West Sikkim the study area there are only two *Tamba*'s found. Through their experience, from past to present community's belief has changed on *Tamba* tradition.

Today, only in marriage ceremony, *Tambas* are invited but it's depending on individual's choice. But, till today, in Singling village, marriage rituals are performed by *Tamba*. Here villagers still give importance to *Tamba* for marriage ceremony.

It is observed that in ritual performance, *Tamba's* from South Sikkim were using a spear/weapon but now-a-day the use of spear is out of use from the *Tamba* tradition. It reflects the changed in materials use for *Tamba* rituals.

In Singling village of West Sikkim, the *Bonbo's* life is dedicated to help community member, they also introduce him as a messenger of god. He works to maintain the peace on the earth, give protection to villagers and the village from evil spirits. They believe that they are born for as ambassador of god's will. He also reported that his meditation is not only for him but it works for all villagers' life to be a happy, healthy and also reduce the problems from their lives.

For the *Bonbo* pork, *sisnu*, and garlic are prohibited to eat. If they eat, they will become sick. They can eat only chicken. The *Bonbo's* are belief in Buddhism and Hinduism. By birth they are Buddhist but in entire life they have belief on Hindu gods like god Shiva, goddesses Kali etc.

When *Bonbo* dies, his body is not burned it should be buried, but now a days, funeral time, *Lamas* are do not agree to do this. The *Lama* performs *Bonbo's* death ritual like a common man. In indigenous Tamang community they believe on *Bonbo's* death body should be buried, because if body burned then all powers will die and it will never come again. After the death all materials should kept on his burial place or inside the house.

The respondent reported that in earlier times they keep all materials in the place of burial but now- a-days family keep it in house.

The role of *Bonbo*'s healing is being a less in society. Now-a-days people are having a facility of hospital in the nearest area, availability of doctors. The first preference they give to doctors for serious issues. In this village many people call him for general sickness. There, people who financially are very poor or weak they believe in *Bonbo*. In this village ward third is highly influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. The ward fourth area majority peoples are farmers, they thrust on spirits and ghost. So they call *Bonbo*, after healing they people offer money or alcohol as a return. As a *Bonbo* they never accept anything from people. In earlier days in village three *Bonbos* were considered to be very strong. But now-a-days only two *Bonbos* are there, one is lady *Bonbo* but she was hesitant to discuss about the role of ritual specialists among Tamang community, particularly the loss of interest in talking *Bonbo*'s performances by the community members. It was told that this woman *Bonbo* was highly accomplished person has immense knowledge about the rituals.

In Kateng village of south Sikkim, Tamang population is highly situated in upper and lower Kateng. In lower Kateng people are having their belief on *Bonbo*, if they have any problem then they preferred to go *Bonbo*'s house. But, in this village community member also trust on 'Sonar *Jhakri*', because they said his healing works for them. Practically people not have compulsion to prefer only Tamang *Bonbo*; they prefer to other communities *Jhakri* as well.

In lower Kateng, earlier day's maximum five *Bonbo*'s were there, those day *Bonbo*'s influence on community highly seen. They use ayurvedic plants for medicine to heal particular causes. These indigenous Tamang community still belief on their old tradition, custom, they do not want to stop it. The *khepasung* is celebrated through traditional way, in this ancestor worship they scarifies red rooster. They kill the rooster in front of the door, which is very old method. They are belief that, if you not kill the rooster then the local deity and ancestor can be punish to the family member. This old ancestor worship continuing by them, which is also known as '*Kul Puja*'. The some clans of Tamang community call *Bonbo* to perform *Kulpuja*.

In the upper Kateng Tamang are strictly following Buddhism. They stopped the killing animals. They offer fruits and sweets on the day of *Khepasung*. If they have any problem then they take help from Lama. In the upper Kateng community members are following the Buddhist principles. In upper Kateng thirteen to fifteen families are converted in Christianity. They stopped following traditional rituals, and as well as they celebrate only Christmas.

The lower and upper areas of Kateng death ritual are performed by *Lama*. The last right of death ritual held on twenty one or forty nine days after the death of person. In lower Kateng, community members give a small role to *Ganba* in *ghewa*. *Ganba* is a very elder person from the community and his role is to only observe the ritual and be present there.

In Kateng village *Lamas* are performing the traditional norm in *ghewa*. The ritual of passing death persons bone to her paternal family is still performed in lower Kateng and upper Kateng. In this village *Tamba* is not available, so the elder person of family request

to *Lama* to do that tradition. In marriage ritual elder person who has the knowledge about *Tambas* role they play the *Tambas* role but in marriage from guest any elder person play the role for *Tamba*. In Kateng the Tamang community is following the Hindu, Bon, and Buddhist traditions.

Among the Tamang *Lama*, having difference through the time, village *Lamas* are trained by Guru. *Lama's* practice and rituals knowledge is transferred by Guru to *Lama*. This is due to less availability of monastic school near village. The village *Lamas* were completed their training in the guidance of guru, some time they practice in nearest monastery. Now days various changes are came in *Lama's* education system, younger Tamang *Lamas* are getting training in Darjeeling, Mysore, Dehradun etc. Their knowledge and training is completed in Tibetan language. After completing education some of them are doing job in monasteries. In religion, their belief is on Tibetan Buddhism. These *Lamas* are strictly following the rituals through Tibetan Buddhism. They are not aware by the Tamang's traditional norms and belief; even they not give importance to it. They suggest community member to leave the traditions and follow the way of Buddhist traditions. These *Lamas* are systematically learned all the stages and meanings from holey books. Therefore, according to them village *Lama's*, who are trained by guru are not having complete knowledge of Buddhism. While, *Lama's* are educated from institution is having complete knowledge. So, in the village's younger generations are giving first preference to Tibetan *Lama*.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION

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The indigenous life of Tamang community is centred particularly by *Bonbo* and *Tamba*. These cultural/ritual specialists are highly respected members in the society. All rituals are performed in the presence of *Tamba* and *Bonbo*. The social structure of Tamang community is situated around these highly specialized leaders in the society. The *Tamba* tradition in the community is there from the earliest times. The specialists have exclusive knowledge about customs and traditions of Tamang culture. Now-a- day's *Tamba*'s are rarely found in village locality, as this tradition lack in transfer from generation to generation. *Bonbo* also have the position in the rituals as a healer. His works is limited today due to the availability of medical facilities to people. In Tamang community these two specialist numbers have also reduced. The process of modernization also impacted their position in the community and their existence is restricted towards remote localities only.

Tamang community is following Buddhism as their main religion. For Tamang community *Lama* is the main guru and ritual specialist to perform rituals and spiritual powers now-a-days. The *Lamas* are playing important role in Tamang community. He is the head person for all the ritual processes. As my research study area is in West Sikkim, the village singling Tamang community are slowly changing their through and trying to follow the all Buddhist principles as Buddhist, but in lower Singling, where people are dependent on agriculture land hence inclination towards ritual specialists. These people

stopped animal sacrifices but for sickness or any problem they take help from *Bonbo*. The monastery *Lama* is currently spreading awareness about Buddhism among them. In west Sikkim Tamang are converting into being a pure Buddhists.

In south Sikkim at Kateng village upper and lower part of village, most of them are Tamang families. Many families are converting in Christianity, indicates Christianity influence on Tamang community. Here, *Tamba* is not available. In this village, two *Bonbos* are practicing the spiritual power to protect their village. One *Bonbo* have traditional spirit and other following Hindus gods. In the south, along the bon religion they also have influence of Hindus gods in *Bonbos* tradition. In upper areas, Tamang families are more aware about Buddhist religion. They do not sacrifice the animals. In South Sikkim, Tamang are following their indigenous customs, norms, and belief system.

In the case of *Bonbo*, when compared to south and west *Bonbo*. It is found that difference between Tamang *Bonbo*'s. In west Sikkim, Tamang *Bonbo*'s spirit comes from their ancestors. They wear the dress and materials for the ritual performance, for them all materials are valuable. At the time of *Gurupuja* it is necessary to wear dress and all material. The *Bonbo*'s from South Sikkim are not wearing dress during the ritual performance. They believe on mantras than dress and materials. In the ritual performance during *Gurupuja* variability of animal sacrifice is observed. In South Sikkim, they use different animals and birds, while in west Sikkim *Bonbo* use only red rooster. In the east Sikkim animal sacrifices concept is now-a-day completely eliminated.

In East Sikkim, the process of modernity is highly influenced on Tamang community culture with regard to *Tamba* and *Bonbo*. In Lower Syari village only, one *Tamba* found.

Majority of the Tamang are call to *Lama*, for marriage and death ritual. In East, compare to the upper and middle Syari Tamang, lower parts Tamang still believe their tradition of marriage. The upper and middle Syari Tamang even they don't know about *Tamba* tradition. In East Sikkim, Tamang are not following their tradition, as they are Buddhists and following Buddhist religion.

The ritual specialists *Bonbo* and *Tamba* are slowly on a path towards diminishing. This trend indicates that the Buddhist *Lama* is being replaced in the roles performed by highly ritual specialists like *Tamba* and *Bonbo*. This slow process informs us that the Buddhist *Lama* is being considered as the sole Guru for the Tamang community. The *Lamas* are taking in charge being ritual specialist and religious guru for the Tamang community.

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**APPENDIX: FIELD PHOTOGRAPHS**



**Image 1: Old Tamang house from Singling, West Sikkim**



**Image 2: Tamang Cultural Bhavan, Kateng, South Sikkim**



**Image 3: Black deer horn on the front door of Bonbo's House Syari, East Sikkim**



**Image 4: Totala flower is significant flower used by Tamang community**



**Image 5: Traditional ancestor worship as “Khepasoong”**



**Image 6 : Participation of family members in “Khepasoong”**



**Image 7: Mr. Sanchbahadur Tamang, Tamba and Dumphure, Singling, West Sikkim**



**Image 8: Interaction with people of Kateng Village, South Sikkim**



**Image 9: Lady Bonbo with his Guru performing puja after successful meditation in forest**



**Image 10: arrangement of materials at place of meditation**



**Image 11: Training of meditation in forest to become a Lama**



**Image 12: Death ritual performance by Lamas**



**Image 13: Lamas are making tormas for Domang Puja**



**Image 14: Aaley Monastery is the one of oldest Tamang monastery (established in 1948) at Old Namachi, South Sikkim**