

# **Sherpa Folk Music in the Sikkim Himalaya: A Geographical Perspective**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

By

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**July 2021**

Date: 30/07/2021

**DECLARATION**

I, **Zigme Topzer Sherpa**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the thesis titled “**Sherpa Folk Music in the Sikkim Himalaya: A Geographical Perspective**” submitted to Sikkim University for the award of the **Degree of Master of Philosophy**, is my original work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Sherpa Folk Music in the Sikkim Himalaya: A Geographical Perspective**” submitted to Sikkim University for the partial fulfilment of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the Department of Geography, embodies the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Zigme Topzer Sherpa** under our guidance and supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associateship and fellowship.

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

We recommend this thesis to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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**‘Sherpa Folk music in the Sikkim Himalaya: A Geographical Perspective’**  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

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*“The bird doesn’t have to go to a conservatory to learn to sing, the bird will sing just because the sun comes up”.* (Victor Wooten, Grammy Award winner).

Music Geography is a sub-field of Cultural Geography which is sub-field of Human geography. Music geography falls under the ambit of study of human-made cultures which is influenced by the geographical environment of a particular region. The usage of the word ‘Geographical Environment,’ includes physical features, nature, cultural landscape, and the social environment of a specific geographical space. Music geography relates environment, space, place, community, ethnic groups, spatial diffusion, migration, etc. with music. It focuses; music consumption as a reflection of the landscape and geographical spaces surrounding it. The rise of bebop provides an effective example where ‘place’ has played an important role in the stylistic evolution of Jazz (Stump, 1998).

One of the primary themes of cultural geography is the interaction between humans and the geographical environment. As, music is the most consumed form of culture, the interaction between human and environment can certainly be reflected in their music. In fact, music changes according to the geographical environment. As any specific place has a geographical variation with another place, the music also have a variation with each other. Among the countries regarding variety of its musical and folkloric traditions, Peru is one of the world's wealthiest countries. (Olsen, 1986). There are vast geographical and cultural contrasts from the northern highlands to the southern part of Peru. The diversity that makes us human inevitably takes on a spatial context, and as most cultural geographers will attest, if it occupies space on the earth, it can be studied

geographically (Byklum, 1994, p. 274). Regional music can be used in a case study of a specific place (Fitzgerald, 2005). Regional music are mostly bounded by the ethnic music. However, geographical knowledge of ethnic music is practically very less despite the fact that anthropologists, folklorists, and ethnomusicologists have for years studied variations in both rural and urban contexts (Carney, 1998, p. 6). Geographers need to produce work on the various forms of place and culture-specific music. Cultural geographers offer a different perspective to music and they have a unique contribution to make in understanding music as an element of culture as well as the importance of a geographical place and its role as a source of musical innovation. The analysis of music within the social sciences raises inherently geographical questions, particularly around how musical practice carves spaces of performance, expression, and culture and how it shapes social spaces of identity, belonging, and community (Jazeel, 2005). Music phenomena that geographers have studied are divided into nine general categories: 1) style 2) structure 3) lyrics 4) Performers and Composers 5) centres and events 6) media 7) ethnic 8) instrumentation 9) Industry (Carney, Music Geography, 1998). George O. Carney is accepted as the '*Guru*'<sup>1</sup> of Geography of Music mainly in North America and Canada (Dutta S. , 2013). The book titled 'The Sounds of People and Places' is regarded as first published work on this sub-field of cultural geography written by him.

Historically, music was purely an oral tradition until the advancement of technology. Music is a resource and a distinctive form of artistic expression. There is immense variety in music, an incalculable number of music forms and styles, all of which reflects a parallel variety in human cultures, societies and ingenuity (Waterman, 2006, p. 1). Music is by nature geographical (Hogan, 2007, p. 162). The geographical space is an influential factor in relation to music and moreover to understand the nine categories

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<sup>1</sup> Teacher/master of certain knowledge or field

of music phenomena mentioned by Carney in his article named 'Music Geography in 1998.' Music is strongly linked to culture and environment (Khalil, 2010). Any cultural or ethnic group of music can shape the entire realm of country or world music. Every music has its own cultural hearth which we need to look from a Geographical perspective. However, there are many loop holes in the proper dissemination of the music from the cultural geography perspective. The geographical knowledge of music lacks, so there is a need of geographically understanding music to know the origin, evolution and diffusion of music phenomena. Cultural geographers' traditional concern with human/environment relationships has continued. Over the past decade renewed debates about how nature is constituted and understood across different human societies have been particularly vigorous. (Duncan, J.S; Johnson, N.C & Schein, R.H, 2004). The geographical importance of music lies in its role in reflecting and shaping geographical processes and, simultaneously, the role of geographical processes in shaping the music that is produced (Kearney, 2010). As it has been noted, Music performs several different roles in society. Music is connected to power (Kearney, 2010, p. 48). The culture has not been explored widely and properly where music is also a part of it, so it can be used successfully to illustrate most of the important concept in cultural geography (Larry, 1971, p. 455).

In order to geographically explore a culture where music is a core element, folk music provides an opportunity to understand the wider dimension of cultural ecosystem. The music which is sung by the people and which is being orally transmitted from generation to generation. Folk music is the expression and reality of the lifestyle, environment, traditions, beliefs, rituals of common folk.

In the contemporary context, the world is globalized and urbanized. People migrate from one place to another for better employment and life, and the population of a particular place is clustered with mixed cultured settlements. Even though the cultural landscape of the ethnic group or a region in the world's recent scenario is scattered and diverse, every people have their own cultural identity. Folk music is one of the identities of an ethnic group.

Sherpa is an ethnic community of the eastern Himalayas who basically and predominantly inhabits Sikkim, Nepal, Darjeeling, and Bhutan. Sherpa shares a common Tibeto-Burman language. 'Sherpa' evolved from the word '*Shar-wa*' which is derived from the combination of *Shar* meaning east and *pa* or *wa* suffix for belonging. The literal meaning translation of *Shar-wa* or Sherpa is "people from the east". They are of Tibetan origin with faith in the Nyingmapa school of Mahayana Buddhism and language of their own with Sambota script. The title 'Sherpa' has been popular throughout the world due to high altitude mountaineering. The role of Sherpa culture in nature conservation is among the world's most successful examples. The Sherpa people began conserving nature through religion and culture. In Sikkim, Sherpa inhabits all four districts of the state. In the early decades, Sherpas were rarely educated, socially, and economically deprived, which led to the demolition of Sherpas right. Due to the early political propaganda's which was against the welfare of the Sherpa people led to the different story of the Sherpas in Sikkim. Nevertheless, the Sherpa people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are more aware of their political and economic right, signifying their education progress. Indeed, they are fighting continuously for it, which also leads to safeguarding and protecting the Sherpas' culture and identity in Sikkim. Sherpa is one of the scheduled tribes of Sikkim according to the schedule tribes order 1978 but it is considered one of the sub-tribes of Bhutia. It is not in 1978 that Sherpa community was



considered one of Bhutia sub-tribes, but the census of 1911 are the evidences which records population of Sikkim as Bhutia including Sherpa's, Lepcha's and Paharias. (Pinasha, D. & Sherpa, D., 2017).

As Sherpas are basically the followers of Buddhism, they celebrate the festivals which is celebrated by the Buddhist people. Losar is the festival celebrated by Sherpa at the start of their new year normally in the month of February. Around December, Mani Rimdu is celebrated with different songs and dances (Pinasha, D. & Sherpa, D., 2017). Sherpa music is similar to the music of Tibet around the trans-Himalayan region. Tibetan music is mostly religious music, reflecting the influence of Tibetan Buddhism. Simultaneously, the Sherpa traditional folk songs have been influenced mainly by the natural landscape and their geographical environment where they live in. Sherpa people's inclination towards nature has been depicted in the Sherpa folk songs, which helps to know about the Sherpas relationship with their environment. This study tries to understand the linkage between human-environment relation in a spatio-temporal framework through the study of Sherpa folk music. This includes the origin, evolution, diffusion, types, variation, performances, lyrics, musical instrument of Sherpa folk music.

## **1.1 Overview of the Literature**

In order to chalk out a theoretical rooting of the study and formulate proper objectives and research questions, a selection of available relevant literature has been consulted. The same has been categorized into six sub-sections.

### **Music Geography- A Historical Background**

As we look back to the history of music geography, its basic works started in the mid-60s. The first scholarly article on music authored by a professional geographer

was in 1968 by Peter Hugh Nash of the University of Waterloo (Carney, Music Geography, 1998). Carney (1998) further says that, in 1973, Wilbur Zelinsky (1973), a cultural geographer called for studies on folk music to better understand the spatiotemporal processes in American culture which supported further research in Music geography. The prehistory of music geography was dominated by ethnomusicologists and folklorists, who focused not only on the types and location of musical instruments, but also on music regions (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 70). According to the author, the acceptance of music geography as a cultural geography sub-field was legitimized in the 1980s and 1990s by an increase in citations in human geography textbooks such as *The Human Mosaic: A Thematic introduction to cultural geography*, *Human geography: Landscape of human activity*, and *the cultural landscape: An introduction to human geography* (Carney, Music Geography, 1998, p. 1). Music has recently been included in the retheorized perspectives on cultural geography according to Smith (1994) and Kong (1995) as cited in (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 70). Articles have examined the role of folk music traditions, composers and songwriters in creating a sense of place and engaging with the attitudes and changes of society (Kearney, 2010, p. 47). Music from a specific area can convey images of a place (Kong, 1995, p. 184). The author states that there is Environmental rhythms which include those of night and day, as well as our various seasons, which once governed when and where we would sleep, work and play (Adhitya, 2017). Environmental and human rhythms cannot be separated from one another, and the detrimental impact of our modern-day rhythm of life is now manifesting itself in the form of climate change (Adhitya, 2017, p. 5). He furthermore says to acknowledge that, we must treat human and environmental rhythm as one in order to survive. Music has been included in the

retheorized perspectives on cultural geography according to Smith (1994) & Kong (1995) as cited in (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 70).

### **Folk Music:**

Music is one of the few universal cultural norms: we do not know of any society throughout human history that lacked music according to Levitin as cited in (Florida & Mellander, 2010, p. 787). The forms of music making, encountered by Ken Russell (Director of a film called 'In search of English folk music') represent thriving and creative cultural practices. Each in its own way is firmly located in the specificities of place, community and everyday culture (Revill, 2005, p. 693). Conventional theories of folk music production rely on bounded notions of community and static conceptions of place in which music is created through long term engagement between the specificities of land and people and the intimacies of labour and leisure (Revill, 2005, p. 693). The author states that, according to 'Johann Gottfried von Herder' perspective, folk music provides an authentic cultural resource, which once defined, recorded and classified, this resource could play an educational role for promoting good citizenship, engaging the people and expressing the essence of the nation (Revill, 2005). Sabine Baring Goul, a folk music collector was motivated by hopes that contact with folk song would encourage a national school of English 'art' music, promote a sense of national pride, and reverse the degenerative effects of urban culture' (Ramnarine, 1996) in arguing for the inclusion of folk music in education. The author argues that, in spite of calls for its demise, folk music continues to be practiced (Revill, 2005). He further says that folk music has recently been experiencing something of a resurgence of interest and has been given renewed artistic vitality by a wide variety of fusion and crossover styles. Folk music still derives from an aesthetic of stability and self-containment according to Frith (2000); Harker (1985) & Stokes (2003), as cited in (Revill, 2005, p.

694). This suggests the need to rethink our conception of folk music as a cultural practice within the context of recent thinking on the nature of place (Revill, 2005, p. 694).

### **Geography in Diffusion of Country Music:**

Country music may be defined as a mixture of Anglo-Scot-Irish ballads, that were transplanted to America during the colonial period, which gradually absorbed the influences of American social experiences as expressed through song (Carney, 1974, p. 34). The Country music from an embryonic hearth stage to mainstream in a diffusion process tackling with barriers and circumstances encountered in a diffusion process has been analyzed geographically because it interprets the relation of music to the natural environment of the region. The development and expansion of music geography can be understood in terms of themes and their concomitant variations which in not temporally divided, and their evolutionary nature is interdependent and non-linear (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996). The mixing of musical cultures in the south led to the origin and evolution of seven substyles of country music during the twentieth century: traditional, singing cowboy, western swing, honky tonk, bluegrass, country pop, and country rock (Carney, 1980, p. 16). According to the author, there has been investigation in variety of cultural traits in cultural geography studies unique to the American south including dialect, traditional economies, politics, folk tales etc, but cultural geographers, however, have not studied one of the most unique southern cultural traits i.e. Music (Carney, 1980). Country music offers students and instructors of geography a fertile area for explaining many of the concepts and traditions emphasized in the field (Carney, 1974, p. 34). Country music is one of the well-known and established music genres in the world since many decades. There are many country music artists who have gained so much respect and fame in terms of music in the contemporary world. Country music

has played an integral role in American culture. The folk song renaissance of the 1970s has rejuvenated interest in bluegrass (Carney, 1974, p. 40). There has been migration of the music and musicians of Bluegrass which is a sub style of Country music. The extended mobility of the American population and the newer vehicles of communication and transportation has led to the migration of bluegrass music to other sections of the society (Carney, 1974). The author states that, an English folklorist named Cecil sharp discovered that singing was almost as universal a practice as speaking and that the mountaineers relied heavily on British folk song material carried into Appalachia from the New England and Mid-Atlantic hearth areas (Carney, 1980). So, as we see the diffusion process of country music, migration has played an important role in it.

### **Imagining Landscapes**

There are various perspectives regarding the imagination of a Landscape. The landscape is a portion of the earth's surface that can be comprehended at a glance according to Jackson as cited in (Bronx, 2019). In Literature, geography is a construct (Bronx, 2019, p. 111). He furthermore says that the literature is a central place to examine the Landscapes because Garrett (2003) has examined the Jewish idea of Landscapes in the Jewish literature. When it comes to the analyzing of relationship between Music and Geography the literature plays a vital role where a particular landscape opinion differs from one to another. While London is real, physical space in the world, London in a literary work is described according to the author's imagination (Garrett, 2003, p. 111). Landscape influences the people in their music also. Folk music is mostly influenced by the landscape where they live in. As, music is a part of culture and landscape as a physical setting where they live, forms a mixture of a natural and man-made components known as cultural landscapes. The idea of a cultural landscape

is at once simple and complex. Studying cultural landscapes entails natural and man-made components of the environment and the ways in which they have changed over time. (Longstreth, 2008). Peter Hugh Nash used participant observation and interviews to analyze some places as polarities of geo-musical growth in his paper on the comparison of geo-musical growth in two localities where the impact of music was based on ten specific criteria : 1) physical fundament; 2) cultural fundament; 3) history; 4) political factors; 5) cultural forces; 6) sociological implications; 7) economic factors; 8) transportation and accessibility; 9) tourism; and 10) musical factors and performance modes (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996). It was demonstrated that community without Propinquity may be an apt description of early artistic endeavours, but in the universal language of music, propinquity is gaining clout as global preferences crystallize and localize, not only as *Treffpunkte* (regular extended meeting places), but also as transhumance (regular seasonal migration) areas (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 72).

### **Influence of Geography in Music Economy**

Music geography is also a part of economic geography. People have changed their location according to the development of the regional economy (Florida & Mellander, 2010). People located around river deltas and other sources of fertile productive soil and with the rise of trade, villages, towns, and nascent cities grew up along ports, river-ways, and transport routes and furthermore, during industrial age, giant agglomerations of factories, shops, warehouses, offices and people swelled near sources of raw materials and transportation routes (Florida & Mellander, 2010). The author identifies music's unique accessibility in that it can be consumed with either full or partial attention, and almost everyone is at least a casual listener or buyer Bull & Cowen (Florida & Mellander, 2010, p. 787). The music industry can give us insights



into the economic and geographic changes in industries in which a physical product is becoming a digital product, with all the challenges that transformation entails for market participants (Florida & Mellander, 2010, p. 786). If we look to the history of changing trends in creative activities like Music, people have continued to cluster. Even though musicians do not make use of raw materials and do not have to go to work in giant, capital-intensive factories, several studies note considerable concentration in locations of music production according to Florida and Jackson (2008) & Scott (1999) as cited in (Florida & Mellander, 2010, p. 786). The economic geography of music is being reshaped by the two key interacting forces: economies of scale and economies of scope according to Andersson and Andersson (2006) as cited in (Florida & Mellander, 2010). Musicians and music industry firms will be attracted to larger places where scale economies can take place (Florida & Mellander, 2010). Where the scale of economies is high, economies of scope is certain at that place. Research argues that there may be seeing a shift in the geography of music from locally constituted and genre-specific music scenes to music clusters in larger regions that offer scale economies in the form of larger, multi genre and cross-genre markets for performance and experience and scope economies that stem from the concentration and spillover effects of related artistic and creative producers and industries (Florida & Mellander, 2010, p. 786). The spatial distribution of music wrought by new technologies provides an opportunity for cultural studies to bring distribution to the centre of the study of media (Jones, 2002, p. 213). He furthermore says that we can better understand cultural processes as not only industrial ones but ones of geography, audience and fan. Technologies associated with the distribution of music over the internet are also technologies of geography and, in turn, of audiences (Jones, 2002, p. 214). It is important to not lose sight of the fact that recording technology also enabled the transportation of sound and thus its distribution

beyond the distance inceptive sound waves travelled (Jones, 2002, p. 214). It is easy to overlook and misunderstand the nature of distribution because to ordinary members of the public, as well as to many specialist writers on film (who should know better), film is mainly associated either with the experience of watching films in a cinema (or increasingly on TV) or with all that the word Hollywood represents in popular mythology, while distribution appears to be a mundane and mechanical function of linkage according to Garnham, as cited in (Jones, 2002, p. 216).

### **Themes of Music Geography**

There is an evident chronology in the literature of this sub-field of cultural geography, but it must not be confused with the chronology of music itself (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 70). There are seven themes of Music Geography namely- 1) Origin 2) World distribution and types 3) Location analysis 4) Source areas of musical activities 5) Trends based on electricity 6) Impact on landscapes 7) Global music, which all focuses on the geographical ramifications (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996).

Genetic forces have been active for many decades in the formation of music geography (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 70). Every music has its origin and its historical background from where the music has been evolved. So, the spatial aspects in this regard comes under Music geography.

The entry of geographers into the field of music cannot be pinpointed (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 70). As in the late 1960s and 1970s, geographers began to ask the embryonic question that, what is mappable concerning music? After several research, Nash concluded that there was evidence of music being a surrogate measure of culture, especially in terms of growth and change as mentioned by Nash and Carney (1996).

The location of musical styles as a theme of Music geography is also of importance. The specific involvement with location of musical activities, such as the compositions and travels of their composers rather than broader world distribution of regional delineations (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 71).

Source areas of musical activities is a dynamic theme than location analysis because of the involvement of source areas of musical activities, with their concomitant phenomena of migrations and diffusions (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996).

Trend based on electricity is a natural outgrowth of the source areas of musical activities because electricity is the common denominator, without which radio, television, and electric guitars would not have been possible (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 71). Attention is on the medium rather than the process.

The 'impact of music' category leads the evolutionary development of music geography (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996). They further say that the examinations are not based on the music itself, but on the impact on landscapes. The global music as a music geography theme is ethereal, but it is also substantially intriguing. The focus is on the planet and the broad conditions of life on earth rather than on specific sites (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996, p. 72).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Geographical knowledge of ethnic music is practically less despite anthropologists, folklorists, and ethnomusicologists have for years studied variations in rural and urban contexts (Carney, 1998). As the academic works on Sherpa folk music are rare and moreover, adding the concept of Geography in relation to Sherpa folk music seems to have a vast research gap. A dynamic sub-field of cultural geography-music geography has been an emerging field. But even after a long debut till date, geographers have not

begun to tap the wide range of music data and ask geographical questions about them (Carney, 1998, p. 5). Thus, the wedding of cultural geography with the study of music still constitutes an important research frontier, a frontier complete with questions, a more-than ample database, and a seemingly endless future (Carney, 1998, pp. 5-6). While the literature is fairly impressive, a number of research questions go unanswered, and several social/cultural theories beg to be tested (Carney, 1998, p. 4). The geographical environment primarily influences Sherpa folk music which can be recognized in the songs but how it influences the Sherpa people is an important question that needs to be researched. As a geographer, the nine general categories of music phenomena mentioned by George O. Carney in 1998 seems to be missing regarding Sherpa folk music in a Spatio-temporal framework. Seven themes of Music Geography mentioned by Peter H. Nash and George O. Carney is also a research gap that subsists in Sherpa folk music.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

- 1) To comprehend the linkage between Human and Environment relationship through Sherpa folk music.
- 2) To examine the changes and continuity in the Sherpa folk music due to advancement of technology and urbanization.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- 1) Has there been a relationship between Sherpa folk music and geographical environment? If yes, how has it influenced the Sherpa folk music?
- 2) Has there been an appreciable degree of departure in the Sherpa folk music prevalent in Sikkim from that of Nepal?

- 3) What has/have been the prominent axis of the Sherpa folk music, and factors that influence it?
- 4) What has been the trend of change in Sherpa folk music?

### **1.5 Conceptual Framework**

Folk songs are basically compositions conveying something about the way of life. Folk music, is a cultural practice within the context of thinking on the nature of the place (Revill, 2005). These are an outcome of the relationship between humans and their geographical environment. It is evident, with the change of specific geographical environments, the lyrics, tune, and style keep changing their flavours accordingly. Changes and transformations in music are moving at a high pace. The Spatio-temporal variation of Sherpa folk music in Sikkim is crucial for knowing the geographical environment, which is constantly changing. The idea of authenticity is central to debates about the nature of folk music; in turn, this maps on to a discussion about the nature of a place, community, and nation (Revill, 2005, p. 694). Therefore, while considering folk music, the relationship between music and geography is to be studied. Music develops continuously over space and through time, stimulating, absorbing, influencing and constantly changing (Waterman, 2006, p. 1). As with other cultural artefacts, music genres, instruments, performing styles- spreads from various points of origin and is adopted and also adopted by other cultures. Acts of consuming or producing music are deeply meaningful to many people; they tell us a great deal about who we are, the culture in which we are embedded, and the values to which we adhere (Bell, T.L & Johansson, O, 2009). Art matters for the subject of geography because the production, performance, and consumption of art are so often mediated by spatial strategies and metaphors (Smith, 1997, p. 50). Geographic, climatic and cultural features influence music of any particular ethnic community. The Sherpa folk music in

regard to this need to be studied, to know about the changing human-environment relationship and to understand the similarity and variation of Sherpa folk music that occupies a cultural landscape in a spatio-temporal basis. Furthermore, the interaction of Sherpas with their geographical environment needs to be studied to know about the dynamic nature of that place and the Sherpas consciousness about the place where they reside.

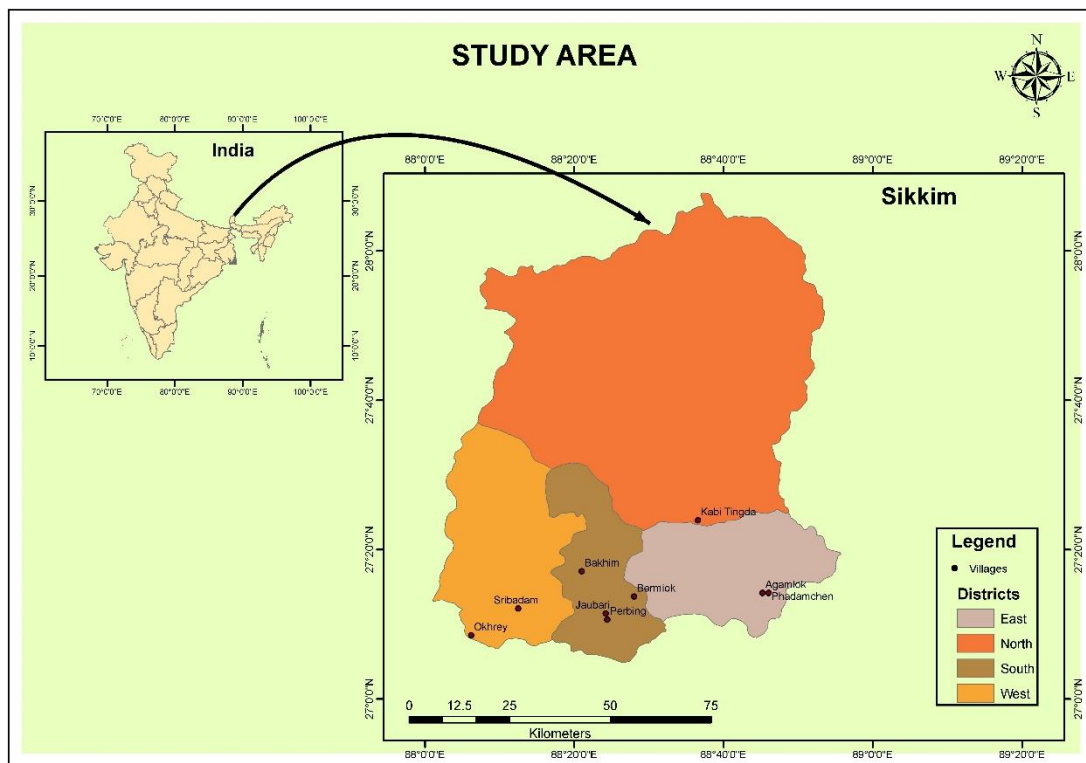
### **1.6 Study Area**

Sikkim is an Eastern Himalayan state of India with a total population of 610,577 as per the 2011 census; it is 7096 sq.km in area. It has four districts, namely East Sikkim, West Sikkim, North Sikkim, and South Sikkim. Sherpas have settled in all four districts. The latest census of 2011 does not publish any census data on community and moreover as, Sherpas are included in the sub-tribe of Bhutia, the total state's population of Sherpas according to the voter's list of 2004 constitutes 4.45 percent.

Sites chosen for the field study are the areas where Sherpa folk music is enriched with. In Sikkim, the mentioned sites are the places where there is a majority of the Sherpa population. Oral transmission of music has been widespread in this place which is vital for folk music.



Map I.1



## 1.7 Database & Methods

The study employs qualitative methods. This is an ethnographic study and has looked into the relationship between Sherpa folk music and the geographical environment in the Sikkim Himalaya. Nature has often been influential in creating folk music of any ethnic group. Music composition and writing songs are about relationships and emotions where knowledge, reality, experiences, nature, etc., moulds them to create music. Especially in creating folk music, nature will be dominant because it is all about the way of living. It is the emotions, culture, social practices, rituals, etc, in a composer's mind where the geographical environment is a mediator for creating music. Folk music also contributes to the cultural landscape of Sikkim. Conversation done in the field with peoples has helped to know the effect of physical landscape and their geographic environment in their music making processes. It also focuses on the changes in Sherpa

folk music brought by urbanization and the advancement of technology in the contemporary world. Mapping, as a conventional tool for data analysis, has been used. Cartographic Frequency (concentration) plotting of Sherpa folk music has been attempted. ARC GIS tool has been used to depict the popular Sherpa folk songs and district-wise Sherpa folk song distribution in Sikkim.

### **1.7.1 Sources of secondary data**

Music geography as a field in geography has emerged long back but there has been a vast gap between early music geographers and emerging music geographers. There are very few literary works published related to the study of Sherpa folk music. The secondary information that has been acquired are:

- 1) Ethno cultural report of Sherpa community in Sikkim which was published in 2017 by the Maulana Azad centre for Northeast studies.
- 2) Sherpa samudaya ko maulik Pahichan published in (Vikram sambat 2074) by Serku Sherpa.

As the secondary data available are not sufficient to achieve the objective of the study, this work has included primary data to meet the objectives.

### **1.7.2 Sample Size**

Following villages were identified to conduct the field survey so as to generate primary data.

**Table I.1** Sherpa villages of Sikkim according to altitudinal differences

<b>Altitude (in meters)</b>	<b>Areas with concentration of Sherpa's folk music in Sikkim</b>	<b>Altitude of Sherpa villages in Sikkim</b>	<b>Districts</b>
Low and mid altitude (Below 2000 m)	Agamlok	1911 m	East Sikkim
	Siribadam	1967 m	West Sikkim
	Kabi-tinda	1642 m	North Sikkim
	Bakhim	1868 m	South Sikkim
	Jaubari	1654 m	South Sikkim
	Perbing	1985 m	South Sikkim
	Bermiok	1061 m	South Sikkim
High altitude (Above 2000 m)	Okhrey	2177 m	West Sikkim
	Phadamchen	2140 m	East Sikkim

The snowball sampling done in the study area villages has taken to some of the other villages beyond the sample villages. Such villages are Bojoghari in east Sikkim and Begha in west Sikkim.

### **1.7.3 Methods of Primary data collection**

In-depth interviews have been done with open-ended questions in order to add more questions in the discussion, in case of need. It will help analyze the essential elements of what molds them to play/practice/create music. Interviews have been conducted with the:

- i. Folk songwriters to understand the influence/importance of the geographical environment in their song writing.
- ii. Luthier to comprehend availability of local materials for making instrument and the possible importance of geography in the instrument making process.
- iii. Elderly people and musicians to understand origin, diffusion processes and changes of/in the Sherpa folk music.

In-depth interviews were conducted in the following villages. Villages were selected according to the higher concentration of Sherpa population and hence, Sherpa folk music in these areas. The Sherpa folk music instrument called *Danyen* are crafted in these areas. Consequently, Sherpa folk music in these villages are relatively more noticeable.

**Table I.2** Villages where In-depth Interviews were conducted

<b>District</b>	<b>Village</b>	<b>Target group</b>
East Sikkim	Phadamchen (2 In-depth interviews)	Folk songwriters, Elderly peoples
West Sikkim	Okhrey (3 In-depth Interviews)	Elderly musicians, Elderly peoples
North Sikkim	Kabi-tingda (3 In-depth Interviews)	Elderly peoples
South Sikkim	Perbing (5 In-depth Interviews) Jaubari (5 In-depth Interviews) Bakhim (3 In-depth interviews)	Luthiers and folk songwriters

Participant observation as a central research method has been adopted. It involves participating in and observing social life and conveying this to others mainly through writing (Aitken, S., Crang, M., Delyser, D., Herbert, S. & McDowell, L, 2010). Participating and observing lead to understand the nuances of the Sherpa community and how they interact with the geographical environment that forms the relationship between them.

Focus group discussion helps to get insight into the feelings, opinions, and behaviours of the people.

**Table I.3** Villages where FGDs were conducted

<b>One FGD per Village</b>	<b>Group size</b>	<b>Group composition</b>
Perbing, south sikkim	5	Elderly peoples, Contemporary folk musicians, Early folk musicians
Okhrey, west Sikkim	5	Elderly peoples, middle ages, community leaders
Kabi-Tingda, North Sikkim	6	Elderly peoples, middle ages, community leaders
Bakhim, south Sikkim	5	Folk musicians, Folk songwriters and Elderly peoples

#### **1.7.4 Method of Data Analysis**

Content analysis is a technique by which one can discern the way in which words, images and practice hold a specific pattern (Dixon, 2010, p. 393). Folk songs recorded during the field survey were transcribed. The key term –‘Human-Environmental’

relationship has been analyzed through the content of the folk songs so as to understand how Sherpas relate to their geographical environment.

### **1.8 Organization of chapters**

Chapter 1. Introduction- This chapter introduces the field of the study of Music Geography under the branch of cultural geography. Overview of literature has been done to know the works done in this field. Conceptual framework has been constructed accordingly with the research gap that has been left within the existing literature of Music geography. Sources of data, methods for data collection and data analysis have been discussed.

Chapter 2. Sherpa folk music and performance- This chapter describes about the history, development and significance of Sherpa folk music in Sherpa culture under the ambit of music geography. It further discusses about the importance of folk music in the study of Music geography. Performance and performers of Sherpa folk music is explored in the later section of the chapter.

Chapter 3. Poetics and Cultural Landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim- This chapter explores the lyrics of early folk and modern Sherpa songs to differentiate the nature of writing and the change that has been prevalent between the two. Content analysis has been done to analyze the data collected from the field and to know Sherpas relation with their geographical environment through the medium of songs. Furthermore, the cultural landscape of Sherpas has been discussed through the folk songs that is prevalent in Sikkim.

Chapter 4. Sherpa folk music: Continuity & Change- This chapter unfolds the continuity and changes in the Sherpa folk music. There is an effort to understand the circumstances that has occurred in the diffusion and continuity of traditional Sherpa folk music while



the role of contemporary Sherpa folk music has been discussed for continuation of performing Sherpa folk music. Furthermore, the need of culture and musical heritage has been mentioned that would help to preserve the Sherpa folk music in a long run.

## Chapter 5. Summary and Conclusion

Finally, summary of findings and conclusion of the study has been given in this chapter.

### **1.9 Limitations of the study:**

To analyze the relation of Sherpa folk music with geography, the data collected within a limited period of time has a limitation for conceptualizing the study. It is even difficult because many of the regional and old Sherpa folk songs have disappeared. Most of the old Sherpa songs are not in recorded form, and collecting the old Sherpa folk songs from the field with correct lyrics and transcription in limited time has been challenging. Sherpa folk music as an intangible culture is changing and developing in a temporal and spatial framework; thus, the study needs to be with longer time frame for the field study.

There are few research challenges encountered. Firstly, the literature regarding Sherpa folk music is very few. Most of the elderly Sherpa people who knew about the Sherpa folk songs are not alive. There were only few peoples who knew the complete songs while most knew only few lines / verses. Some people could interpret the meanings of the songs, and some could not. Without the proper meanings of the Sherpa folk songs, the study would be incomplete. So, some of the popular Sherpa folk songs were not included for the analysis in the study. All these were notable challenges. Some respondent couldn't speak clearly, some could not hear properly while some could not understand the questions due to their old age.

## *CHAPTER II*

### **SHERPA FOLK MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE**

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Music and its essential elements are universal throughout the world, but the difference is the music's interpretation in various regions and cultures, which gives the music a unique flavor. To understand and appreciate any kind of music, it is essential to know about the philosophy and culture of a place where it belongs. In the contemporary world, music is the most consumed form of culture.

The main idea of this chapter is to know about Sherpa folk music from a cultural and music geography perspective. The Spatio-temporal dimension of Sherpa folk music is of great significance which helps us to know about the geographical environment and other phenomena that influence Sherpa folk music.

#### **2.1 Sherpa Folk music**

As a geographical study of music, folk music appears worthy enough to study the relation of music and geography. Folk music is sung and lived by people that is influenced by the geographical environment within a particular region. Music changes as the environment change. So, to know the geographical similarity and diversity across regions, folk music as a geographical study would be appreciable. International Folk Music council held in London in 1952, a provisional definition was proposed, which says 'Folk Music is music that has been submitted to the process of oral transmission. It is the product of evolution and is dependent on the circumstances of continuity, variation, and selection. (Karpeles, 1955).

Sherpas have a rich culture of folk music and dances (Pinasha, D. & Sherpa, D., 2017). Sherpa people have preserved their folk songs from ancient times in the Sherpa

language (Sherpa, Vikram Sambhat 2074). It used to be orally transmitted from generation to generation and was not in the written form earlier. The process of transmission and learning of the songs by the younger generation was through the religious and cultural occasions where people traditionally gathered and performed songs and dances. It led to both entertainment of the people as well as learning of the songs informally. This process has helped in preserving the folk culture of Sherpas and continues to do so.

**Plate II.1**

Performing traditional Sherpa folk song



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

The Sherpa elderly people in Sikkim also have a common consent: they have all learned the forms of Sherpa culture (folk songs, rituals, customs, traditional beliefs, etc.) from their elders and ancestors. They have also been protecting and safeguarding the language and culture of the Sherpas from early generations. Most of the Sherpa folk songs were orally transmitted from the earlier generations. According to the Sherpa elderly people of Sikkim, Sherpa folk music is an essential element of the Sherpa

culture. It is Sherpa people's tradition to perform Sherpa folk songs in marriage ceremonies within the Sherpa custom. Without the Sherpa folk songs, marriage is considered to be incomplete.

**Plate II.2** Performing traditional Sherpa folk song



Source: Field Survey, 2020

Sherpa folk songs showcase the traditional cultural lifestyle of Sherpas and their ethnicity. Norbu Tshering Sherpa, a middle-aged man of Bermiok, South Sikkim says “The Sherpa folk songs are an important element of our culture. It is a custom and tradition of Sherpa people to perform Sherpa folk songs in a marriage ceremony. Without the Sherpa folk songs, the marriage is incomplete.”

As we are looking at folk music from a cultural geography perspective, it is important to know the core definition of Cultural geography. Cultural geography is the study of spatial variations among cultural groups and the spatial functioning of society. It focuses on describing and analyzing the ways language, religion, economy, government, and other cultural phenomena vary or remain constant from one place to

another and on explaining how humans function spatially. T.J Jordon and L. Rowntree (1990) as cited in (Dutta S. , 2013). As music is the most consumed form of culture, it will help to manifest the meaning and study of cultural geography. Moreover, connecting the basic concept of time and change from Carl Sauer's cultural geography, it will be justifiable to cover the key elements of geography, which is time and change through the study of Sherpa folk music.

Folk music that varies or remains constant from one place to another in relation to time, is key for knowing the geographical environment of a specific place and how it changed in a course of time. Several factors are responsible for the Spatio-temporal variation in folk music which shall be discussed further.

Human lifestyle is influenced spatially. The geographical environment is responsible for the functioning of humans in a society. As the environment changes, the lifestyle and functioning of society change. To understand a particular geographical environment, music as the strongest element of culture will be a key to understand the geography of a place. As music geography relates environment, space, place, community, ethnic groups, spatial diffusion, migration, etc. with music, Sherpa folk music will be examined to understand how Sherpa relates with their geographic environment. There is a traditional phrase in Sherpa- *Lu min taam yin*- which means songs are not just songs but are a medium of communication. Consequently, Sherpa folk songs are sung by the folks to communicate. Sherpas have a history of living in high-altitude environments determined by nature and natural phenomena. It certainly influenced their life. So, they would surely communicate about the nature and geography of that region where they reside. So, folk songs will be further unfolded through a geographical lens.

Meanwhile, before understanding the geography of Sherpa folk music, I would like to draw attention towards language. The primary element of any ethnic group is Language. Without language, we can't communicate. Concerning having a distinct identity, language is of utmost importance. Indeed, we should know the existence of ethnic language in the contemporary world. Lakpa Norbu Sherpa, an elderly man, aged about 64 years has a concern about the declining Sherpa language. He says "In my youthful days, there was a seriousness and regularity in speaking Sherpa language but slowly it has decreased, due to dominance of other languages in the society. The preferences of other languages in the Sherpa society had posed a threat to Sherpa language."

So, to achieve linguistic goals, folk songs have a crucial role to play. Folk songs are very helpful in learning the language. As people learn the language, they can create more songs with the help of language. Eventually, it is a give-and-take relationship. The tune and melody of a song help the learner to remember the line and verse more efficiently and effectively. In the contemporary world, most of society is influenced and affected by westernization and modernization. The focus of education is primarily centered on the English language because of the effectiveness in international communication, socializing in any place or country, the demand and chances of getting jobs, etc., which has led to the transformation of the language learning system. This entire process is causing a significant threat to Sherpa's language. Therefore, music can be a great asset and a tool for safeguarding the language and culture of any ethnic group.

Sherpa folk music is an essential element of Sherpa culture. Musicians generally sing in themes of religion, natural landscape, and lifestyle of Sherpa people. There is a huge tradition of performing the Sherpa folk songs. In Sherpa custom, folk songs have an essential role to play. There is a saying- '*Sherpi tenpi-ki sunglu, sungha*' which means 'let's start the song of Sherpa tradition' which is commonly used on auspicious

occasions. On several Sherpa occasions, people perform live Sherpa folk music accompanied by Sherpa folk dances like *Khirkuley*, *Shebru*, *Gamdhar Chyam*, etc.

Music has the power to influence society culturally and emotionally. The lyrics and the sound of the music can portray the message to the people. The more intentional we become with the sound and lyrics through our music, the more influential the impact will be on society. Music can influence people positively and negatively as well. It depends upon the composer who creates them. Sherpa folk music is so profoundly imbibed within the elderly Sherpa people that they cry when they listen to the songs. They have an emotional attachment to the folk songs because Sherpa people's reality and their life are expressed in the folk songs. Sherpas are known worldwide for their highly developed skill in mountaineering and for living in harsh topography. Although, Sherpas also have enormous cultural resources that should be researched. Even though Sherpa folk music is aesthetically appreciated and decorated beautifully with the sentiments and emotions of Sherpa people, it has not propounded its cultural and musical heritage in Sikkim's society.

Before moving ahead to know the geographical specificities of Sherpa folk music, it is necessary to understand the debatable concept of 'Authenticity' regarding folk music. After clearing the concept of 'what is authentic', we will move further beyond.

## **2.2 Authentic Sherpa Folk music**

The Sherpa elderly people of Sikkim argue that the Sherpa music of the contemporary world (which is influenced mainly by popular music) doesn't have the essence of authentic Sherpa folk music. Enquiring Sherpa folk music's authenticity, most of the elderly respondents of Sikkim argues that Sherpa music of their times is quite different

from today. Passang Sherpa, an elderly *Lupa*<sup>2</sup> of Bakhim South Sikkim says “Our Sherpa song performances were accompanied mostly by *Danyen*<sup>3</sup>, but nowadays, due to modernity the music is also modern which is accompanied by modern popular western instruments.” Another respondent Phurba Sherpa, *Lupa* of West Sikkim mentions the lyrics differences in old and new Sherpa songs. “The old traditional Sherpa song was about the lifestyle and nature but nowadays, it is more of a love song. The instruments are also different in the contemporary songs.”

Most elderly people believe that the modern Sherpa song doesn't have the Sherpa value and essence of authentic Sherpa folk music. The Sherpa elderly people only perform, which they have learned from their Sherpa forefathers, and perform only on Sherpa occasions and festivals.

Sherpa folk music has transformed from old rural folk to contemporary folk, folk fusion, and many forms of modern music. It has been evolving continuously in a spatial and temporal framework. The traditional way of playing the *Danyen* accompanied by other Sherpa traditional instruments is believed to be the authentic-sounding flavor of Sherpa folk music by the Sherpa elderly people of Sikkim. In the contemporary world, Sherpa music is being digitalized with technology and accompanied by modern popular instruments.

Furthermore, the song's lyrics of folk music demands Sherpa's lifestyle, culture, and geographical environment where the Sherpa resides. Nowadays, the Sherpa people's settlement has been largely shifted towards an urban settlement with a mixed settlement and shared culture within an urban lifestyle. Consequently, we can see the change in

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<sup>2</sup> Male Singer

<sup>3</sup> A Sherpa traditional instrument



song composition as well. So, the question and debate about authenticity need to be addressed for conceptualizing the dynamic nature of authenticity.

The authenticity in terms of music is a time and place-bound notion. No culture or music is static. Every community undergoes a change according to time and space. One community may adapt to the change faster, and another may adapt to the change slower. The pace of the change may vary according to time and space.

Besides, every community has to go through a process of change in terms of their cultural activity to adapt to the pace of time. In Sikkim, the Sherpa elderly people of recent times consider Sherpa folk music as authentic Sherpa folk music that was sung and performed when they were young. Perhaps, the folk music which today's elderly people consider authentic Sherpa folk music was not authentic to their forefathers. Although to have the essence of folk music, it is also essential to mention the lifestyle, culture, and geographic environment of the Sherpa who writes the song whether it may be about the lifestyle of early folks or the lifestyle of contemporary folks. Sherpa folk music's authenticity is a geographical process that is mainly related to time and space. It continuously changes over time and spatially shifts from one place to another. Nevertheless, to be considered as a folk song, folk's description should be mentioned in the songs.

### **2.3 Sherpa folk music variation between Sikkim and Nepal**

There is an appreciable degree of departure in the Sherpa folk music prevalent in Sikkim from that of Nepal but as a geographical study of Sherpa folk music only in Sikkim, it is very difficult to incorporate the comparative study of both Nepal and Sikkim within a limited time. Even though there is a wide range of spatial and temporal variations of Sherpa folk music between Sikkim and Nepal, it is difficult to distinguish

between the two. Within Sikkim itself, there are huge range of spatial and temporal variations regarding the Sherpa folk music. It is also certain that there is a wide range of spatial and temporal variations regarding Sherpa folk music within Nepal. Moreover, there are more Sherpa villages and Sherpa population in Nepal as compared to Sikkim. The variation between Nepal and Sikkim needs for comparative study of Sherpa folk music between the two. Eventually, it is needed for further research because of the time restriction to explore and analyse the Sherpa folk music of the two places.

#### **2.4 Sherpa Music: Sherpa Folk Music vs Sherpa religious music**

Sherpas are rich in terms of music. People play their folk music during cultural occasions and festivals. There is music for religious occasions too; it is not the same as their regular folk music. There is a vast difference between the two. Sherpa folk music is mostly performed along old rural folk, urban folk, and contemporary folk songs. Songwriters often reflect people's general sentiments and lifestyles in their lyrics. Thereby, music is played according to the instrument one has access to and the music technology that has emerged. Instrumental music is rare in Sherpa folk music till date. However, Sherpa folk music is an important ingredient of Sherpa culture. It seems to be overwhelming for the listeners generating admiration and applause.

The Sherpa religious music is largely same as the traditional tunes and incantations of Tibetan Buddhism. It is so because Sherpas trace their origin in Tibet and follows the same Mahayana Buddhism as other Tibetans. It is performed according to the Buddhist custom because the forefathers of Sherpas had adopted the religion of Mahayana Buddhism and the majority among them follow the Buddhist philosophy. Religious music has spatial and temporal relations due to religious linkages within Sikkim and across borders.

Music performed at religious ceremonies is an integral part of their music. It is perceptibly different from Sherpa folk music performed during cultural occasions including festivals. Meanwhile, Sherpas have adopted other religions apart from Buddhism in recent decades. Sherpa religious music is basically a Buddhist religious music. Majority of the Sherpa population follows Nyingmapa school of Mahayana Buddhism. The Sherpa religious music using certain instruments that are played basically during religious incantations. During Sherpa religious ceremonies, Sherpa folk music may or may not be played after religious performances get over. It depends upon people of particular Sherpa society who organize the occasion.

## **2.5 Sherpa Music Instruments**

Due to human evolution, the evolution of musical instruments has also taken place. People played and developed the instruments according to their ethnic and social environment. The use of musical instruments has also been determined by religious linkages, migration, spatial relations, and the modern phenomena that have been a major factor in influencing music instruments from one place to another. So, these instruments have given identity to a particular ethnic group and society. Similarly, Sherpas have also developed the various musical instruments which they have been playing for many generations. These instruments accompany the songs which further helps to garnish the aesthetics of music. Instrumentation is one of the music phenomena that geographers have studied historically (Carney, 1998). The origin of musical instruments and the spatial dimension of music instruments dealing with human migration, transportation routes, and the geographical environment are important aspects in the study of music geography.

The musical instruments used by the Sherpa are divided into two categories: -

**2.5.1 Religious music instruments:** Sherpa community plays this instrument in religious and ritual activities. Sherpas are of Tibetan origin and as they are predominantly the follower of Mahayana Buddhism, these religious instruments have been a great influence in the Sherpa society. These instruments have been an influence of religious linkages which is similar to Tibetan religious instruments. It has been transported as Sherpa migrated from Tibet to various places in the eastern Himalayas with religious instinct in it. Meanwhile, in contemporary times, these religious instruments are available almost everywhere due to better transportation facilities and in a globalized world.

Even though, these instruments are so much bounded to religious intuitions which limit the geographical study of music but the history of Sherpas' attachment with the religious music needs to be incorporated to further explore the huge music culture of Sherpas distinctively. Within Sikkim, these instruments remain constant in a spatial relation within Sherpa residing villages. Temporally, the use of these instruments has continued and maintained a balance across Sherpa-populated villages within Sikkim due to religious inclination and faith towards Buddhism. Sherpa (Vikram Sambhat 2074) has classified the religious instruments used by Sherpas. Some of the important and commonly used religious instruments are as follows: -

***Dorje Til-bu:*** The *Dorje* (Vajra) and *Til-bu* (bell) are the most important ritual instruments of Sherpa's. Mostly, every religious head and lamas have a pair and know how to use them. The religious heads mainly play it. *Dorje* is held by the right hand, and *Tilbu* is held and played by the left hand. When there are religious worship rituals at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist scripture. In the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the religious head. The other religious instrument is also played simultaneously at that time. Secondly, after completing

religious worship rituals, all the monks play this instrument while reciting the Vajra Satwa<sup>4</sup> mantra. This instrument has a religious spatial relation with Tibet and the migration of Sherpas has led to play this instrument in the modern world.

**Plate II.3**

*Dorje Til-bu*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

This instrument in Sikkim is imported from Kalimpong which is one of the hubs of Buddhist shops in West Bengal and Sikkim. People also buy this instrument from Bodhgaya in Bihar when they go there for religious purposes. Still, it has not been manufactured in Sikkim. There has been a lack of geographical resources for crafting this instrument and the challenge of technology in producing this instrument. Apart from *Dorje Til-Bu*, the other religious instruments which are imported correspondingly and have similar challenges are *Dha-mar*, *Chyo-dam*, *Gya-ling*, *Buk-chal*, *Sang-dung*, *Sil-yen*, *Kangling*, *Ting-sha*, *Tung*.

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<sup>4</sup> It is a Sanskrit word which is a “Mantra”.

***Dha-mar***: It is a small two-headed drum used in the religious occasions of Sherpa's. It is of different shapes. It is called *Damaru* in Sanskrit. In Sherpa Buddhism, the *Dha-mar* is used as an instrument in religious practices. The religious heads mainly play it. When there are religious worship rituals at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist

**Plate II.4**

*Dha-mar*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

scripture. In the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the religious head. The instrument is held by right hand with *Tilbu* in the left hand and played together at the same time. The other religious instruments are also played simultaneously at that time.

***Chyon-der/Chyo-dam***: It is a small two-headed drum used in the religious occasion of Sherpa's. It is only round-shaped and a little bigger than *Dha-mar*. It is called *Damaru* in Sanskrit. In Sherpa Buddhism, the *Chyo-dam* is used as an instrument in religious practices. There are different types of religious activity in the Sherpa tradition. One such type is *Chyo/Chyo-Tshok/Tshok-Lay*<sup>5</sup>. This Puja is performed in a

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<sup>5</sup> It is a name of puja (the act of worship) in the Buddhist tradition.



Source: Field Survey, 2020

melodious way. So, this instrument is held and played by the right hand with *Tilbu* in the left hand.

***Gya-ling***: It is a woodwind instrument played by the Sherpas on religious occasions. The *Gya-ling* is oboe-like in appearance with a long hardwood body and copper brass bell. The instrument is generally covered with ornate embellishments of colored glass. The double reed, which is made from a single stem of marsh grass, is placed upon a small metal channel that protrudes out of the top. The monks play it. Firstly, it is played in the morning, mid-day, and evening time after the *Rak-dung* is played. This entire process is called *Nesa*. Secondly, when there are religious worship rituals at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist scripture. During the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the monks. Thirdly, it is played at funerals when the dead body is carried towards the cremation grounds. Fourthly, it is also played when people go for the reception of *Rinpoche*<sup>6</sup>. Lastly, it is played when the groom members

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<sup>6</sup> Spiritual leader.





Source: Field Survey, 2020

leave towards the bride's home and when they come back to the groom's family during the marriage procession, which is performed explicitly in the Sherpa tradition. Notably, the melody played in the Puja is different from the melody played in a marriage ceremony.

***Buk-chal/Bup-tshyal:*** *Buk-chal* (cymbals) are used in Sherpa religious music. It is also called *Rolmo*. It provides the structural outline and rhythmic articulation in ritual chant and provides rhythmic impetus in the instrumental ensemble. However, *Buk-chal* cymbal playing is not only viewed as beneficial for rhythmic and time-keeping purposes but is a sensitive ritual in itself. The number of cymbals beats in a chant forms a complex mathematical structure with great symbolic value. Every beat, for example, consists of three parts: the initial stroke, the accelerating pulse(s), and the concluding hum. When there is a religious worship ritual at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist scripture. During the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the monks. The person who plays this instrument is called *Omzay*. It is





Source: Field Survey, 2020

played at the time of funerals when the dead body is carried towards the cremation grounds. It is also played in a marriage ceremony. The time signature used in this music performance is 4/4. The way and style of playing are quite different for Pujas than funerals and marriage ceremonies.

***Sang-dung***: It is a wind instrument made up of copper. When there are religious rituals at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist scripture. During the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the monks. It is also played in the morning, mid-day, and evening time. This entire process is called *Nesa*. It is played at the time of funerals when the dead body is carried towards the cremation grounds.

**Plate II.8**

*Sang-dung*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

*Sil-nyen*: This is a tiny cymbal used in prayer and rituals by Sherpa Buddhist followers. Two cymbals are joined together by a leather strap or chain. The cymbals are struck together, producing a clear and high-pitched tone. When there is a religious worship

**Plate II.9**

*Sil-nyen*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

rituals at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist scripture. In the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the monks. The way of playing and

time signature is different from the playing of *Bup-tshyal*. In the funeral, this instrument is also used when the dead body is carried towards the cremation grounds.

**Nga:** The Nga is barrel-shaped with a hollowed shell made up of a solid block of wood. It is used widely in Sherpa rituals. It is used with brilliant techniques to produce a variety of musical patterns and styles. When there are religious worship rituals at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist scripture. In the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the monks. This instrument is played either in Puja or funeral with *Buk-tshyal* and *Sil-nyen* rhythmically following the timing and rhythm of both the instruments. *Nga*, is made in some places of Sikkim but the making of *Nga* is

**Plate II.10**

*Nga*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

rare. It is imported from other regions due to geographical factors and lack of materials to meet the requirements of the instrument.

**Khar-ngang:** This instrument is played in the special Puja in the Buddhist monastery called *Gumpa*. It is played in the morning and afternoon to inform monks and let them know about the timing for the beginning and resuming of the Puja.



**Plate II.11**

*Khar-ngang*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

***Kangling:*** *Kangling* means *Kang* (leg), and *Ling* means (flute) is the Tibetan name for a trumpet or horn made out of a human tibia or femur, used in Tibetan Buddhism for various rituals as well as funerals. It is basically made up of human thigh bones. When

**Plate II.12**

*Kangling*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

there are religious worship rituals at home, the monk usually reads the Buddhist scripture. In the middle period, there is a specific time to play this instrument by the monks. In the normal pujas, this instrument is played, which is also made up of wood, copper, and brass. The two monks play this instrument in the normal pujas but the *Kangling*, made up of thigh bones, is especially played in *Chyo/Chyo-Tshok/Tshok-Lay* by all the monks individually.

***Ting-sha***: *Ting-sha* is small cymbals used in prayer and rituals by Sherpa Buddhist followers. Two cymbals are joined together by a leather strap or chain. The cymbals are struck together, producing a clear and high-pitched tone. There is a special puja in the Buddhist tradition called *Sur*. This instrument is played two times each by monks when

**Plate II.13**

*Ting-sha*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

the scripture is in the reciting process, and as the sound played by this instrument fades, the monks again play this instrument two times. This is the way of playing till the end of the scripture recitation. On the other hand, during the death ceremony, at the time of

meals, the food is also served to the dead body according to Buddhist tradition. The monks take the meal to the pot filled with coal called *Sang-Bur*. They burn the meals that were served to the dead body and perform puja. During this process, the monk plays this instrument.

**Tung:** It is a conch shell. Conch, also known as a seashell *horn* or *shell trumpet*, which is a *wind instrument* which is made from a conch, the shell of several different kinds of sea *snails*. The Monks usually play this religious instrument in the Buddhist monastery,

**Plate II.14**

*Tung*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

also called *Gumpa*, in the morning time when there is a Buddhist religious puja like *Nyung-Nay*, *Tshok-boom*, *Wang*, etc. This instrument is also played when the dead body is carried towards the cremation grounds as well as in the Puja of death ceremony.

**2.5.2 Traditional music instruments:** The Sherpa community has been playing these instruments traditionally on various Sherpa cultural occasions and festivals. Mostly, folk songs are accompanied by these instruments. The geographical inquiry of these musical instruments is of great significance however the usage of these instruments in



a spatial and temporal framework is of great challenge in the context of Sikkim. These instruments are declining in Sikkim due to the impact of popular music dominated by the western style. So, within Sikkim, the spatial variation and consistency of these traditional instrument usage from one Sherpa-populated village to another is quite impossible to acquire. The consistency and drawback of using these instruments can be gained on a temporal basis. However, these instruments show the connectivity of the Sherpa people across the community. Sherpa (Vikram Sambhat 2074) has classified the traditional instruments used by Sherpas. Some of the important and commonly used traditional instruments of Sherpas are as follows: -

***Danyen (tungna):*** *Danyen* is a stringed instrument. It is a traditional Himalayan folk music lute and the most common and well-known instrument of the Sherpa community. It is used primarily as an accompaniment to singing in Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, and regions of eastern Himalayas. The music that is produced from this instrument gives an authentic- sounding flavor to the Sherpa folk music, according to Sherpa elderly people

**Plate II.15**

*Danyen*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

of Sikkim. They run in 3 double courses. It commonly has six strings, and each two strings are tuned in the same pitch. (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> string in D), (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> string in A) and (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> string in E). It's of various shapes and sizes. It is also called the cultural identity of Sherpa's. Sherpas have a spatial relation with Tibet, Nepal, and other eastern Himalayan regions that is observable from this musical instrument. This instrument is distributed spatially mainly in regions where there are human settlements of Tibetan origin. It has maintained a constant spatial relation due to religious purposes influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. This instrument is crafted in Sikkim due to the geographical availability of the resources needed for crafting this instrument. However, instrument making will be discussed later in the chapter. In Sikkim, this instrument is used widely in Sherpa occasions and festivals. This instrument has a constant spatial relation within Sherpa populated villages of Sikkim. It is almost used in every Sherpa village. But, the performance of this instrument is declining on a temporal basis.

***Lumu/Ling-bu (flute)***: This instrument is widely used all over the world. The origin,

**Plate II.16**

*Lumu/Ling-bu*



Source: Field Survey, 2020



location, and distribution of this instrument comprises of huge history. So, this will not be a matter of concern as it diverts the study. However, it is a commonly used instrument in the Sherpa folk songs. According to Sherpa (Vikram Sambhat 2074) Mainly, the Sherpa people living in the Himalayan region who are engaged in livestock rearing usually use this instrument. In Sikkim, the Sherpas rarely use this instrument on their occasions and festivals. However, as this instrument is worldwide and can acquire easily, people play this instrument in personal interest and learn through advanced technologies in a modern world. In fact, the geographical history of using this instrument by Sherpas is null in Sikkim.

***Piwang (Himali sarangi):*** *Piwang* is a bowed stringed instrument and also one of the necessary musical instruments in the Sherpa community. It is mainly used in Sherpa

**Plate II.17**

*Piwang*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

folk songs and *Shebru*.<sup>7</sup> This bowed instrument is quite different from other common *Sarangi*.<sup>8</sup> According to T.W Sherpa (B.S 2073), as cited in Sherpa S. (Vikram Sambhat

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<sup>7</sup> A typical Sherpa folk dance.

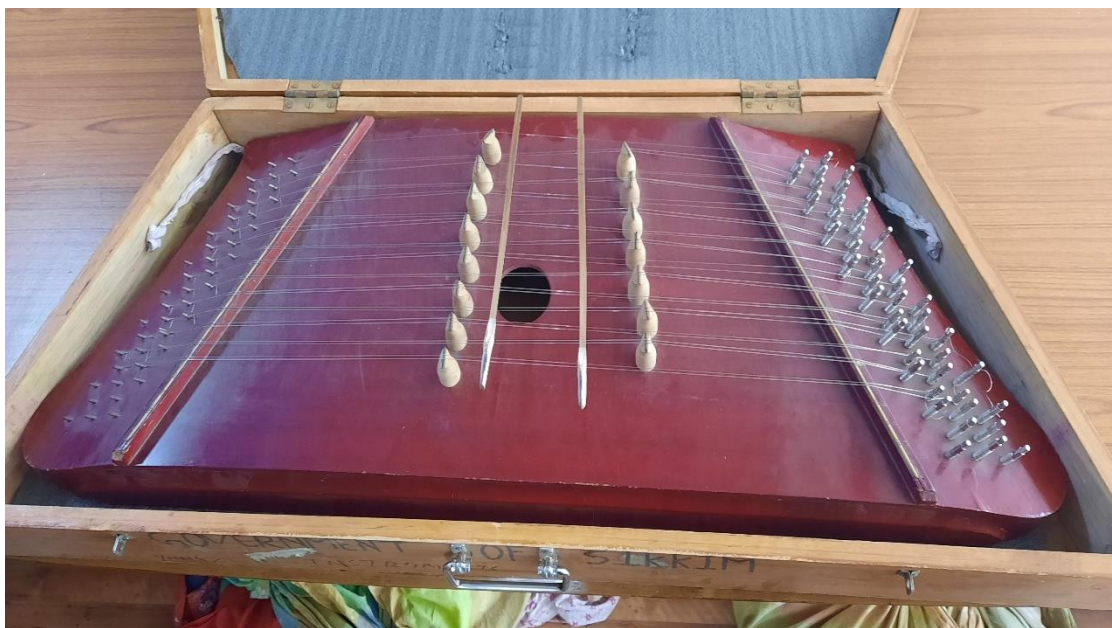
<sup>8</sup> Bowed string instrument.

2074), *Piwang* is commonly known as *Himali Sarangi*. In Sikkim, the use of this instrument is nearly declined. This instrument was only found in some Sherpa residing villages. The photo of this instrument is mentioned in Plate II.17, which I clicked in Bakhim, south Sikkim. Lakpa Sherpa, an elderly *Lupa* who has this instrument says “I know to play this instrument very little. I have also not seen the people who play this instrument. It is almost declined.” As the Sherpa history of playing this instrument in Sikkim is clueless, it is further difficult to know the spatial relation and variation of this instrument within Sikkim. Temporally, the use of this instrument has not remained constant in performing folk songs which has led to the decline of this instrument. In Sikkim, this instrument is usually brought from Dharmshala when people go there for religious purposes.

***Gyumang/Yangchen (sohnghor)***: Another common traditional instrument played by the Sherpas is *Sohnghor*. It is also called *Gyumang* or *Yangchen*. This instrument is played in welcome songs and dances. It is also played in Sherpa folk songs as well as

**Plate II.18**

*Gyumang/Yangchen*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

*Shebru* dances. In Sikkim, this instrument is rarely used nowadays. It has temporally declined. Furthermore, the instrument which lacks its performance history in the context of Sikkim will surely be difficult for the geographer to understand the spatial relation and variation within Sikkim and across borders. In Sikkim, this instrument is also brought from Dharmshala when people go there for religious purposes.

***Kahang (binayo)***: It is a small mouth harp that is carved from pieces of Bamboo. Historically, the geographical region where Sherpa resided was a place where the bamboo was found. This shows how Sherpas are inclined towards nature and how they are attached to the geographical specificities where they live. Nowadays, the settlement

**Plate II.19**

*Kahang*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

of Sherpas has changed to a huge extent. In Sikkim, Sherpas are highly being urbanized and living in an inter-mixed rural-urban society. Sherpa people have been playing this instrument for a very long time. This instrument is commonly played in Sherpa folk

*Dohori*<sup>9</sup> and *Ngading*<sup>10</sup> songs. In Sikkim, the use of this instrument has rarely been found. Temporally, the history of this instrument usage cannot be traced in the context of Sikkim and the consistency and variation of this instrument cannot be mentioned temporally. Furthermore, the spatial relation and variation of playing this instrument within Sikkim have not been found. Moreover, it is a need for more detailed research. In Sikkim, this instrument is bought from Nepal.

## 2.6 Sherpa Instrument making in Sikkim

Sherpa people in Sikkim use many religious and traditional instruments, but only a few instruments are crafted in Sikkim. There are many reasons for the drawback and

**Plate II.20** Jigmee Gyalpo Sherpa (Luthier) crafting *Danyen*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

inefficiency of Sherpa traditional and religious instrument crafting. Geographically, there is an unavailability of the required materials in Sikkim's region for doing the

<sup>9</sup> The term **Dohori**, means 'back and forth' and refers to the exchange of lyrical phrases between the contesting singers. The song production is collaborative and involves many individuals.

<sup>10</sup> Sherpa song performance in nepali

crafting work. People are also not well trained and experienced to work as a craftsman for making of sherpa instruments in the state. The crafting of *Danyen*, which is the traditional folk instrument of Sherpa's is prevalent in Sikkim. It is crafted by Luthier.<sup>11</sup> One of the luthiers who crafts *Danyen* in Sikkim is Jigme Gyalpo Sherpa, a resident of Jaubari, South Sikkim. *Danyen* is the most common and well-known instrument of the Sherpa community. It is of two types. One is small and around 60 cm with four strings. The other one is big and around 120 cm with six strings. The *Danyen* is a long-necked, double-waisted, and fretless lute. It is usually hollowed out of a single piece of wood and can vary in size from 60 cm to 120 cm in length. Basically, the wood, skin, and string are required for making the instrument.

Commonly, the birch tree's wood is used to make the instrument because of its availability in Sikkim. It is placed in the upper body part of the instrument. The wood of the birch tree is hard and easy for carving. The hardwood gives an excellent sound to the instrument. Any wood that won't break easily can be used in the lower part of the neck and tuning pegs. The tuning key also needs hardwood. Bridge also needs wood. The skin is used of goat or sheep. Strings usually used in recent times is nylon. In ancient times, the intestine of the sheep was used for the string. It was used after stretching the intestine and drying afterward.

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<sup>11</sup>A craftsperson who builds and repairs string instruments that have a neck and a sound box.



**Plate II.21**

Tools and materials used for crafting *Danyen*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

**Plate II.22** Jigme Gyalpo Sherpa (Luthier) giving finishing touches to the instrument



Source: Field Survey, 2020

*Nga*, a religious Sherpa instrument, is made in some places of Sikkim, but the making of *Nga* is rare. It is imported from other regions due to the lack of materials to meet the instrument's requirement.

Although the materials may be insufficient for crafting the instrument and the lack of proper knowledge for doing the crafting work, the Sherpa people still have been able to craft some of the Sherpa instruments in Sikkim hitherto. According to the pace of time, technology has also developed, which indeed has influenced the Sherpas of Sikkim. In the modern world, Sherpa people in Sikkim have been able to master the art of instrument making in Sikkim through various technological resources. Spatially, the lack of materials in Sikkim has been countered by the modern developmental phenomena's which is a continuous process. Moreover, it has helped the craftsman to do their task more effectively and efficiently.

## **2.7 Sherpa Custom**

Sherpa custom is an essential element of Sherpa culture. However, the custom is a different subject of research. To mention the custom of Sherpas in this study is due to the necessity of Sherpa custom in performing Sherpa folk music.

### **2.7.1 *Sherung*:**

It is an essential custom of Sherpa culture. It is also called *Shyorgay*. It can be defined as a custom done for requesting something and also done before thanksgiving. *Sherung* is a custom of Sherpa Buddhist tradition, mainly done in a marriage ceremony, religious occasion, birth ceremony, etc. As culture is continuously evolving according to time and space, *Sherung* as a custom of Sherpas has also been evolved and done towards guests in various cultural occasions in recent times. *Sherung* is in fact necessary



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, research video

custom of the Sherpas. It is of three types:

1. *Sherung* done towards Religious heads (*Gaden* and *Yikdu*).
2. *Sherung* done towards male people.
3. *Sherung* done towards female people.

**2.8 *Yadoshiba/ Yangdu-syimba*:** These two terms are same but there are spatial variations regarding the term in the Sherpa residing villages of Sikkim. *Yado* means to make progress, while *Shiba* means Sweet. *Yangdu* means to secure prosperity while *Syimba* means Sweet. The songs which start with *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* are called *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* songs. The song titles are different, but generally, they are called *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* songs. At the beginning of the song, *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* is said. When describing anything, it is customary to say, ‘*Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba Lu Sa*’, in a very sweet way, praising how things were accomplished and how progress was made, exemplified by the song as an example.



Most of the songs in the wedding ceremony start with *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba*. It is also performed on different Sherpa occasions.

**Plate II.24.** Sherpas of Sikkim performing *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* songs



Source: Field Survey, 2020

**Table II.1** Spatial variation in the term *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba*

Place	District	Spatial variation
Bakhim	South	<i>Yadoshiba</i>
Bermiok	South	<i>Yadoshiba</i>
Jaubari	South	<i>Yadoshiba</i>
Perbing	South	<i>Yadoshiba</i>
Okhrey	West	<i>Yangdu-syimba</i>
Siribadam	West	<i>Yangdu-syimba</i>
Agamlok	East	<i>Yadoshiba</i>
Phadamchen	East	<i>Yadoshiba</i>
Kabi-Tingda	North	_____

### **Spatial variation of *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba***

There are three variation in *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* according to the spatial context in the Sherpa community of Sikkim.

i) *Sung la Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba Lu(song) Sa:* It means to tell or let's sing *Yadoshiba*.

ii) *Sying Chya Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba Lu(song) Sa:* *Sying Chya Yadoshiba Lusa* means 'Yadoshiba Song,' which has been formed on our earth like heaven since time immemorial.

iii) *Sung Chya Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba Lu(song) Sa:* *Sung Chya YadoShiba Lusa* means 'Yadoshiba Song,' which has been mentioned by our ancestors since ancient times.

**Table II.2** Spatial variation of the prefix term before *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba*

Place	District	Spatial variation
Perbing	South	<i>Sung La,</i>
Bakhim	South	<i>Sung La, Sung Chya</i>
Bermiok	South	<i>Sung La</i>
Jaubari	South	<i>Sying Chya</i>
Okhrey	West	<i>Sung La</i>
Siribadam	West	<i>Sung La</i>
Agamlök	East	No prefix used
Phadamchen	East	No prefix used

The variations mentioned by the researcher are collected in a limited time framework. There may be more variations in the term. Knowing and understanding more about the variation and the reason for the occurrence should be further researched.

The in-depth interviews done with the elderly people and musicians have achieved some critical data findings of the spatial variation regarding the *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba*. The people in west Sikkim perform *Sung La Yangdu-syimba Lu sa*. Lakpa Norbu Sherpa, an elderly man of West Sikkim, says “We sing *Sung La*. Whichever variation we sing, the core meaning and the destination is same in the song. I have also listened to many variations in Sikkim.” The word *Sung* is an authentic and original Sherpa word according to the Sherpa elderly people of West Sikkim. *Sung la* is used respectably, and *Sying* is used as a straightforward word. The Sherpa people have learned *Sung la* from their elders and ancestors. These terms have been modified spatially according to their social environment over time. These variations make the culture richer. The spatial functioning of the society is also influenced by their environment which creates variation among different villages where Sherpa resides. Whichever variation they sing, the core meaning and the destination are the same in the song. The *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* is not performed nowadays in Kabi-Tingda in north Sikkim. The Sherpa people of Kabi-Tingda mention that their cultural performances have been restricted due to other communities' domination in the past. Their cultural performances have been decreased to a great extent in the contemporary world. The prefix of the term *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* is not performed or used by the Sherpas of Agamluk and Phadamchen in east Sikkim. They are traditionally performing without the prefix term of *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba*. Consequently, all these variations impact the cultural landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim.

## 2.9 Types of folk songs and dances collected from the field

*Dawlu*: It is a ‘back and forth’ singing performed in Sherpa marriages which is very common in Sikkim. The song battle is between the bride and groom singers. The Sherpas of Sikkim has a huge tradition of performing *Dawlu*. Meanwhile, the performance has spatial relation among Sherpa residing villages, however, the relation contradicts. Whenever the marriage is between the Sherpas it is spatially united among villages in Sikkim but if there is an inter-caste marriage then it is rarely performed. It is quite similar to the ‘back and forth’ singing of Nepali called *Dohori*. Moreover, it is also similar to the 12-bar blues music of Afro-American people. All these music have in common is a responsive element in their music. Inclusively it is a response to a statement. This indicates how Sherpas of Sikkim have a spatial relationship with other

**Plate II.25**

*Dawlu* performance in Sherpa marriage



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

cultures within Sikkim and across borders. Temporally, the performance has been declined due to high inter-caste marriages in Sikkim.

*Damche Lu*: It is a 'back and forth' singing which is a song battle performed in the time of sowing the crops in the field. This form of folk culture has been collected from Phur Khangdu Sherpa, a residence of Bakhim, South Sikkim. She says “*Damche Lu* is a form of folk culture, a song battle performed in the time of sowing the crops in the field. It is played in the time of cropping in the field. But, I don't remember the songs.” Even though the songs are a bit unclear but the folk culture has an attachment to nature and the geographical environment. Historically, Sherpas' lifestyle was bounded by natural activities. One of their daily routine works was agriculture. This form of folk culture signifies the Sherpa relationship with their environment and how they were attached to the nature and environment. Some other elderly people have a concord that it is the tradition and custom of Sherpa people. The elderly people of the contemporary world are not much aware of the name of songs performed in *Damche Lu*. The reason for this is because they have seen the *Damche Lu* performance when they were small. Although, the pattern is explained by the same respondent who told about this *Damche Lu* performance. She says “In the beginning, the fork is thrown upwards in the air, and the person turns around his/her body and hold on to the fork again, and starts singing.” This was the pattern of performing *Damche Lu*. Nowadays, it is rarely performed. Temporally, it has declined to a great extent. Meanwhile, a majority of people disagree considering *Damche Lu* as a culture of Sherpas.

Exploring *Damche Lu* and its performances, only a few of the respondents have a piece of knowledge about the *Damche lu* performances. Passang Ongdup Sherpa, an elderly *Lupa* of perbing, South Sikkim says “I have heard little about it. The elderly people of our times talked about *Damche Lu* but I have not seen the performance.” Another respondent named Phurba Sherpa, aged 57 years of West Sikkim who is *Lupa* says “I heard that it was performed in the early times, but I haven't seen the *Damche Lu*

performances.” They only heard that it was performed in the early times, but they have never seen the *Damche Lu* performances. According to the Sherpa elderly, it can be traced that the *Damche lu* performance is one of the endangered cultures of Sherpas in Sikkim.

***Ul-Lu Lu:*** It is a type of Sherpa folk song collected from Phurba Sherpa of West Sikkim, who is a well-known *Lupa*. He says “*Ul-Lu Lu* is a type of folk song performed by mothers to make the baby happy and not allow the baby to cry through singing the *Ul-Lu Lu* song. The mothers involved in frying the maize and carrying a baby on their back had to sing this song simultaneously doing the domestic works. I have seen the performance when I was quite young. Our elderly mothers usually performed this *Ul-Lu Lu* song” However, the song lyrics are incomplete. The Sherpas historically were bounded to domestic works. Maybe, singing was part of their daily routine. Temporally, the performance of this folk song has declined, as the environment of inter-mix culture is influential in modern society. The other elderly respondents of Sikkim have heard little about this song from their seniors, but they don’t know the complete song. They have also not seen the performance of this song. Apart from west Sikkim, there is no performance of this type of folk song in other Sherpa residing villages in Sikkim which creates a regional spatial variation in their cultural performances.

***Shebru:*** It is a typical Sherpa folk dance that is performed in almost all of the Sherpa-populated villages. This folk dance is accompanied by the Sherpa folk songs. It is a crucial performance art denoting the Sherpa folk culture. The *Shebru*, in coordination with the Sherpa folk song, gives a proper audio-visual foundation of the Sherpa folk culture. *Shebru* is performed on every cultural occasion and festival of Sherpas. Passang Ongdup Sherpa, an elderly of Perbing, South Sikkim says “*Shebru* is performed almost in all of the Sherpa residing villages of Sikkim. The Sherpa people even organize the



Shebru dance performance at various places in Sikkim on cultural occasions.” It is a form of entertainment and fun for the people. It has a constant spatial relation among the villages within Sikkim apart from Kabi-Tingda. The performance is declined in Kabi-Tingda of North Sikkim due to numerous reasons which have been mentioned earlier in the chapter. Temporally, it has maintained a constant performance in almost all of the Sherpa residing villages. This is because of the regularity in this performance which is often done on cultural occasions and festivals.

**Plate II.26**

*Shebru performance at Jaubari (Losar 2021)*



Source: Field Survey, 2020

**Plate II.27** Sherpa people practicing *Shebru* for cultural occasions



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

***Khirkuley***: It is a folk dance that is prevalent in the Sherpa culture of Sikkim. It is performed in almost all of the villages apart from KabiTingda. It is performed as a

**Plate II.28** *Khirkuley* dance performed at Bakhim, south Sikkim (2020)



Source: Field Survey, 2020



group forming a circle. Lakpa Sherpa, an elderly *Lupa* of Bakhim, South Sikkim “The Sherpa people of Sikkim have been performing this Sherpa folk dance for many generations. It is an essential form of Sherpa folk dance. It is performed in most of the Sherpa villages of Sikkim.” Temporally, the performance has not been constant due to inter-mix settlement in contemporary times. However, it has a spatial relation within the Sherpa residing villages of Sikkim apart from Kabi-Tingda in north Sikkim.

***Gamdhar Chyam:*** It is a Sherpa folk dance also called Dove dance. It has been collected from Tshering Tashi Sherpa of Perbing, South Sikkim. He says “I have seen the *Gamdhar chyam* performances but nowadays, the performances have been missing. I hope the younger generations who are interested in Sherpa culture will preserve this performance. The elderly people of Perbing, south Sikkim has enormous knowledge about this form of dance.” Firstly, it is performed after the grain is sown and secondly after the grain is harvested. It is a symbol of the happiness of a dove after the grain is grown. The people dance in the form of a Dove. Sherpas are nature worshipers and historically they have lived in an environmentally determined society. It also shows how animals are influential in their geographical ecosystem. The geographical region where Sherpa resides is also the place where people are dependent upon primary activities like agriculture. Temporally, the performance has been declined to a huge extent. In Sikkim, this performance has a spatial imbalance that creates a spatial variation in folk culture among Sherpa residing villages. This performance has only been recognized in Perbing, south Sikkim. Others are unaware of this type of folk culture. Meanwhile, it doesn't have particular lyrics, but it is performed in any of the Sherpa folk songs that mention happiness and joy in a song's lyrics. It is a dance of celebration.

*Nagding/Nading*: It is a tradition of Sherpas to sing in Nepali and have fun during cultural occasions and social festivals. It is called *Nading* song, but it is not considered to be a Sherpa folk song. Even though *Nading* is not a Sherpa folk song, it still has been a significant tradition of the Sherpa people to perform *Nading*. The Sherpas of Sikkim live in a shared cultural society with mixed ethnic groups where the majority of the population is dominated by a Nepali-speaking community. Eventually, the Sherpas are influenced by their culture and language. Most of the Sherpa people understand and speak the Nepali language. It is the main language spoken by the communities of Sikkim. This performance signifies the cultural relation among Sherpa and other ethnic groups in Sikkim. Temporally, it has been constantly performed in most of the villages of Sikkim. The performance shows the unification of inter-mix society in a cultural ecosystem.

### **2.10 Endangered Sherpa folk cultures in Sikkim**

Many Sherpa folk cultures have been declining in recent times. Some may have declined totally. The endangered Sherpa folk cultures have been found with different Spatio-temporal diffusion processes and circumstances, which has affected the Sherpa folk culture to a vast extent. The primary endangered Sherpa folk cultures are *Damche Lu*, *Ul-Lu Lu*, and *Gamdhar Chyam*.

Phur Khangdu, a female elderly of Bakhim, South Sikkim says, “*Damche Lu* has been prevalent in Dentam, West Sikkim, but the performance's exact way is not evident to the contemporary elderly peoples.” *Ul-Lu Lu* is only stated by one respondent and the other people do not know about the performance at all. *Gamdhar Chyam* has been performed in Perbing, South Sikkim, but the performance is not being done in recent

times. According to one of the respondents named, Tshering Tashi Sherpa of Perbing, South Sikkim “In order to preserve it, it has to be continuously performed.”

These endangered folk performances have created a huge variation regarding the cultural landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim temporally. The above-mentioned folk performances have constantly declined as the living environment of Sherpas is continuously changing.

### 2.11 Performing Sherpa folk music:

Music in Sherpa society is usually played at the time of *Losar*<sup>12</sup>, marriage ceremony, and several other cultural occasions. In the early days, Sherpa people use to gather for

**Plate II.29** *Yadoshiba* song performed in Sherpa marriage



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

singing and dancing. They used to dance and sing playing Danyen, which has been declining in recent times. In *Losar*, Sherpa people perform folk songs for fun and frolic.

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<sup>12</sup> The new year celebration of Sherpa according to the first month of the Tibetan calendar

Some Sherpa villages organize *Shebru* nights. In marriage ceremonies, there is a tradition of performing Sherpa folk songs sequentially. As the preferred folk song in a marriage ceremony, it starts with *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-Syimba* songs.

**Plate II.30** Sherpa man dancing in the marriage procession



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

In the early days, there were few other cultural events apart from festivals. So, the performances of the Sherpa folk music were limited to a certain extent. In contemporary times, there are so many cultural events organized inside and outside the state; Sherpa's have been performing their different styles of folk music across cultural events which has led to a temporal change regarding the performances.

On special occasions, they say a phrase to start the song. Passang Sherpa, *Lupa* of Bakhim, South Sikkim says “We in our village say *Sherpi tem bikey sunglu sungla* which means let us start our Sherpa traditional song.” The performance of Sherpa folk music is of great significance. It helps connect young people with their traditional folk music. It inspires and encourages young people to know and understand the value and



importance of folk music. It also helps to strengthen the Sherpa folk culture and its essence.

### 2.11.1 Musical Insight of Sherpa Marriage:

Sherpa folk music plays a significant role during Sherpa marriages. Without the account

**Plate II.31** People performing Sherpa folk songs in a marriage



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

of the Sherpa folk songs, the marriage is incomplete according to Sherpa custom. There is a vast tradition of performing Sherpa folk songs in the Sherpa marriage. Most of the Sherpa marriage song starts with *Yadoshiba*. It has various forms, namely in chronological order:

*Sapche Lu (Yadoshiba)*: It is a marriage song performed mainly the day before marriage. Its starts with singing *Yadoshiba*. It is also sung at other times during the

wedding. It doesn't have a fixed set of rules for singing. It is sung at the time of *Tochang*<sup>13</sup>, the day before marriage.

*Norbu Denchu Doyay/Topa Gyakku Lu (Yadoshiba)*: It is a marriage song starting with *Yadoshiba*. *Norbu Denchu Doyay* means that the bride is compared with a jewel and depicts the bringing of this precious jewel to the groom's house. On the day of the marriage in Sherpa custom, the *Khorlolama*<sup>14</sup> carries *Khorlo*<sup>15</sup>; the groom carries *Pumba*<sup>16</sup>, two men play *geling*, one plays the cymbal, two men dance holding a sword in the right hand and a white scarf in the left hand. The reason for carrying a sword in the right hand is to protect from evil spirits, and to carry a white scarf in the left hand is for good fortune. All this procession is done for the bride to bring her into the groom's family.

*Lapcha Sholu (Yadoshiba)*: It is a wedding song starting with *Yadoshiba*. *Lapcha Sholu* is a traditional marriage procession mentioned in this song where the bride's and groom's families are very far from each other and they had to walk for many hours and even many days to complete the marriage procession. Midway to the bride's house, they cut branches of trees and make an altar. The altar is called *Lapcha*. There is a Sherpa custom of performing puja to the mountains. As Sherpa accepts mountains as their deity, their relationship with nature and geographical landscape signify their closeness with nature and the geographic environment. The monk performs the puja at that altar to be safe, and for the success of the marriage procession. The *luma*<sup>17</sup>, *lupa*<sup>18</sup>, and other people sing and dance. The song is called *Lapcha Sholu*.

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<sup>13</sup> Meeting regarding the wedding ceremony.

<sup>14</sup> who carries khorlo

<sup>15</sup> Dharmachakra

<sup>16</sup> Vessel

<sup>17</sup> Female singer

<sup>18</sup> Male singer

*Nama Lon-gu lu (Yadoshiba)*: It means the song of asking the bride. It is a wedding song starting with Yadoshiba. In Sherpa marriage custom, the *luma* and *lupa* prepare their incantations for both sides, i.e., the members of the family of both the bride and the groom. The members of the bride's family do not give their daughter away so easily. The bride's *luma* tries to hide the bride through the song, but the *luma* and *lupa* of the groom claim that the bride is here itself and requests to give the girl to them.

*Goshay Lu*: When the bride finally reaches the groom's house after the marriage procession, the members of the family have a debate with the *Janti*<sup>19</sup> through the song. The conversation between the two groups will be presented through the medium of music. This song is called *Goshay Lu*. *Go*(door), *Shay* (explanation, or speak), *Lu*(song). *Goshay lu* means the 'song of explanation at the door'.

*Tar Gelu Lu*: When the bride finally reaches the groom's house after the marriage procession, a five-colored flag is hanged at the top of the house's main pillar after singing. This song is called *Tar Gelu Lu*.

*Tar Tolu Lu*: The five-colored flag hanged at the time of *Tar Gelu Lu* is taken down. The song performed in this process is called *Tar Tolu Lu*. *Tar*(flag), *Tolu*(release) *Lu*(song).

The Sherpa folk music contributes to the Sherpa culture making their resources wealthier. In Sikkim, folk music in marriage has constantly maintained the spatial relation between the villages however temporally it has changed and declined due to urbanization and inter-caste marriages in the contemporary world. However, it has a

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<sup>19</sup> member of the marriage procession

huge contribution to Sherpas' cultural ecosystem and further impacts on cultural landscapes.

### **2.11.2 Performers and Events**

Sherpa folk music with various circumstances in its diffusion process still continues in the contemporary world. Even though there was a lack of proper dissemination of Sherpa folk music, it continues to be performed. There is music among Sherpas for both cultural and religious occasions. As most occasions are either religious or associated with religious ceremonies, music associated with regular cultural occasions often follows after religious rituals get over.

The monks and religious heads perform on religious occasions' with the playing of the sacred instruments. These performances are quite different from folk music performances on cultural occasions and festivals. Indeed, religious music is a very integral part of Sherpa tradition and culture.

Similarly, folk music during occasions is performed by folk artists, common villagers, and at times by folk bands incorporated by traditional and modern popular instruments. Such performances have been taking place even at the state and national levels on selected occasions. The most popular Sherpa folk band of Sikkim is Rewa Band, which was established on 18 January 2019. Their folk music and performances are influenced by traditional folk as well as popular music in the current scenario of the globalized and urbanized world.



**Plate II.32** Rewa band performing on Global Sherpa day in Gangtok, 2019



Photo Credit: Sonam Bhutia

**Plate II.33** Rewa band performing on State level Losar, 2021



Photo Credit: Gyaltzen Sherpa

Apart from Sherpa cultural occasions and festivals like Losar, Mani Rimdu, Dumji, Lhapsang, Yarchang, etc, Sherpa folk musicians and artists have performed in Red

panda Winter Carnival festival, a tourism event in Sikkim named after Red Panda, the state animal. Other events where Sherpas of Sikkim have performed is a national-level cultural event organized by the EZCC (Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre).

**Plate II.34** A Monk playing Sherpa religious instruments



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

**Plate II.35** Monks playing *Geling* (religious instrument) in religious occasions



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

Sherpa folk music has been studied within the periphery of cultural and music geography. The importance of folk music in geographical studies helps to explore the study extensively. Folk music assists to know the Spatio-temporal relationship of Sherpas with their geographical environment and the human-environment relationship which is a key concept of geography. Sherpa folk music maintains a spatial variation and integrity within various regions of Sikkim and across borders. Folk music has always been an integral element of Sherpa culture as well as a consistent form of culture. There is significance of language in Sherpa folk music and the declining language in the contemporary world is also a huge concern. The concept of authenticity regarding Sherpa folk music is central to debates because the Sherpa elderly people questions about the essence of purity in Sherpa folk music in the contemporary Sherpa songs. They even claim about their old traditional Sherpa folk songs as pure and authentic.

Sherpa folk music in contrast to the Sherpa religious music is a comparative study to be further researched. Although, the difference between the two is also of great significance. Sherpa folk music is constantly changing spatially and temporally with new flavors, Sherpa religious music on the other side is bounded by the religious Buddhist rituals that are performed traditionally according to the Buddhist philosophy. The role of musical instruments in folk music has been immense. It has helped to preserve the aesthetics of folk music. Furthermore, instrumentation is one of the important elements of music which geographers have studied. Sherpa instrument making has been prevalent in Sikkim but there are only a few instruments crafted due to many factors. Moreover, the geographical location has been one of the major challenges in the instrument-making processes. But, still, it has helped to know about the geographical specificities of Sherpa residing villages in Sikkim. The types of folk

songs and dances collected from the field have a spatial variation and relation as well. Temporally many of the folk cultures have been declined.

Performances of Sherpa folk music are continuous in Sikkim with temporal change in the center, events, and its style of performing folk music. The most important performance of Sherpa folk music is in the Sherpa marriages. It is performed according to a Sherpa custom traditionally. In the contemporary world, where there are so many cultural events organized, there has been a rise of performing Sherpa folk music hugely by the folk artists, common villagers, and folk bands. Meanwhile, the early periods had witnessed minimum performances of the Sherpa folk music due to few cultural occasions. They usually sang the Sherpa folk songs while doing cultivation, domestic works, grazing, etc.



## CHAPTER III

# POETICS AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF SHERPAS IN SIKKIM

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A geographical engagement with musicology is well positioned to explore the spatial politics that inheres in musical form, expression and negotiation, to tease from musical sources new questions around place and belonging, identity and difference, and to apply a scholarly geographical imagination to what musicologists refer to as 'the reality of music making' according to Berliner (1994) as cited in (Jazeel, 2005).

The physical environment is the most important influence on the origin, structure, and evolution of music and particular physical environment like climate, topology, soil, vegetation, and types of water bodies determine the production of sound and dialects. Moreover, the dialect changes in few miles, and consequently the production of sound changes (Dutta S. , 2013).

This chapter tries to explore the culture or to be more specific, Sherpas' way of life through the medium of folk songs. Whether nature determines the Sherpas lifestyle or, are people changing the environment. We shall encounter those questions in this chapter.

### **3.1 Sherpa Poetics:**

Folk song is lived and sung by the people. Even though the song may have an individual origin but folk song is said to be of communal authorship (Karpeles, 1955). In Sikkim, Sherpa folk music's core lies in Bakhim, Bermiok, Jaubari, and Perbing in south Sikkim, Agamluk, Bojoghari Phadamchen in east Sikkim and Begha, Okhrey, and Siribadam in west Sikkim where the majority of Sherpa population resides. However,

as mentioned in 2nd chapter, Sherpa folk music is been rarely performed in Kabi-Tingda of North Sikkim, where there is also a majority of the Sherpa population. Sherpa usually is influenced by nature which is indeed visualized in the Sherpa poetics. In the early days, during the marriage ceremony, the *Lupa* (male singer) or *Luma* (female singer) used to sing a song, wherein one of the verses portrays the daughters as a flowing river that doesn't come back. This gives insight into how society usually viewed their daughters and accepted that the daughters are born to leave their homes someday for good. Specifically, it shows the description of the natural environment, place, and belonging of Sherpas in a musical form which helps to determine the geographical features of the Sherpa residing regions.

Sherpas have an intimate relationship with nature and further their daily works were inclined with their natural environment in the past which was surrounded by natural beauty. Nature has hugely been influential in expressing their emotions and socio-cultural aspects of society through musical lyrics.

Ken Russell, a director of a film called 'In search of English folk music' went out of his home to discover the essence of English folk music. The forms of music-making he encountered represented thriving and creative cultural practices. Each in its own way was firmly located in the specificities of place, community, and everyday culture (Revill, 2005). His encounter replicates the significance of geographical space in the music creation.

Sherpa poetics is mainly influenced by surroundings where Sherpas reside. It depicts the lifestyle, traditional beliefs, customs, rituals, etc., of the Sherpa people and their connection with nature. Their emotions are determined by the nature and cultural elements of a specific geographical region. However, in the contemporary world, the

cultures of other geographical regions have been influencing a particular society through many modern phenomena like urbanization and advancing technologies. Ultimately, after different culture integrates, a new style and form of culture is born.

Sherpa people sing one very popular folk song, *Kang Dini Syoleng Ray*. This is a song asking blessings from the mountains. Thus, showing their deep-rooted inclination towards nature and how natural landscape has influenced their life in a geographical setting. Consequently, the effectiveness of Environmental Determinism in the early times and the view and idea of Possibilism in the contemporary world have a significant impact on changing the shape and form of Sherpa folk songs. If we compare the Sherpa folk songs of early forefather writings with the contemporary Sherpa folk songwriters, we can see a huge and drastic difference in the songs. Nowadays, contemporary songwriters are mostly keener on addressing social, political, and modern issues of the environment where they live in. *Thamakha*, a modern Sherpa song is one of the finest examples which talks about modern issue like drug addiction which has massively affected society. The content of this song will be further analyzed in the chapter.

The contemporary world has transformed from a deterministic environmental society into an industrialized, urbanized, globalized and technically advanced society. As society have transformed, certainly, the lifestyle, culture, politics, economy, climate, etc have also changed spatially in a course of time. Eventually, the music is also transformed due to different lifestyle and social environment, creating a vast difference in the early and modern generations.

### **3.2 Sherpa Folk Songs**

There are numerous folk songs prevalent in the Sherpa culture which are of different types. They are ‘welcome’ song, song for ‘gratitude’, song of ‘merrymaking’,



‘gathering/meeting’ song, song of ‘separation’, etc. Elderly Sherpas hold that folk songs have been transmitted orally from the earlier generations and have a belief that older songs are not only original but are better also. The lifestyle, environment, and landscape where they dwelled led them to write such songs.

Sherpas' contemporary folk songs contrastingly are massively influenced by the modern physical and socio-cultural environment where globalization, urbanization, and technologies have a huge impact on society. The modern socio-cultural environment of the Sherpas is different from the old Sherpa people. Transition in the mode of habitation and settlements of Sherpas has also impacted a lot in creating the new versions of Sherpa songs. There is a considerable difference between the older and new Sherpa folk songs.

**Plate III.1**

Elderly performing Sherpa folk song



Source: Snapshot from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Sherpa research (2009)

According to time and space, folk music is continuously evolving in. To categorize the Sherpa folk songs yearly, decadal, or even centenary-wise in a Spatio-temporal

framework is impossible in a limited time. The study would be in the long run. Eventually, to be distinct in a general way, I have categorized the song in two parts, which are as follows: -

### **3.2.1 Old Sherpa folk songs**

The old Sherpa folk songs are the songs that are performed by the Sherpas from their early generations, but the specific time of the origin of old Sherpa folk songs is unknown. The elderly Sherpa people mentioned that their forefathers performed the old Sherpa songs which they perform now also. The Sherpa folk songs transmitted orally from many generations are categorized as old Sherpa folk songs and which exist till today.

### **3.2.2 Contemporary Sherpa songs**

Contemporary Sherpa songs depict the current lifestyle, environment, culture, traditions, etc., of Sherpa people and songs that are composed hitherto. Basically, the term 'Contemporary' is a temporal process; The contemporary songs of recent times shall not be contemporary to the upcoming generation. Similarly, contemporary songs of the earlier generations are not contemporary for the present world. 'Contemporary' regarding songs change in a course of time.

However, these songs to be a folk song needs some time, but the question also arises, how long will it take? To be logical we have to know the critical insights of a folk culture environment. Karpeles (1955) have answered this question in his work titled 'Definition of folk music.' He states "In communities in which there is a strong folk music tradition a composed song which hits the popular imagination will very quickly be absorbed into the tradition, but where the existing tradition is declining the process of transformation will take longer, if indeed it happens at all." Eventually, as Sherpas

have a rich tradition of folk songs and the history of musical environment in their society, it may have transmitted quickly but also may face circumstances in the diffusion process. Nevertheless, a folk song should be of communal authorship.

### 3.2.3 Folk and Contemporary Sherpa songs in Sikkim

The songs have been collected from the fields in a limited time. There may be more songs that should be of further research. Some of the collected songs are as follows:

**Table III.1** Sherpa folk songs in Sikkim

Old Sherpa folk songs	Contemporary Sherpa songs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Chyo ki nawa sersum</i></li> <li>• <i>Kang dekhi then-lhabu/ Sili lemu</i></li> <li>• <i>Kang dini syolung ray</i></li> <li>• <i>Kangdi chik-chya Kangdi nyi-chya</i></li> <li>• <i>Kha bappi lo/ Kha bashi lo</i></li> <li>• <i>Khangri</i></li> <li>• <i>Long ni syok la</i></li> <li>• <i>Losar pullu</i></li> <li>• <i>Lungpa khamsang</i></li> <li>• <i>Nima Dawa</i></li> <li>• <i>Nyungma Kaapu</i></li> <li>• <i>Semchen lawi lu</i></li> <li>• <i>Sherbu sare nima</i></li> <li>• <i>Soya</i></li> <li>• <i>Suna sebhi metho ray</i></li> <li>• <i>Tallu</i></li> <li>• <i>Tashi sol-che</i></li> <li>• <i>The lambu</i></li> <li>• <i>Thuila</i></li> <li>• <i>Ula yong sarey</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Chawi Lama</i></li> <li>• <i>Dejong Sherpi Rewa</i></li> <li>• <i>Gawi Losar</i></li> <li>• <i>Jyen Suyang may</i></li> <li>• <i>Lhala Rewa Maaki</i></li> <li>• <i>Nge semki taam</i></li> <li>• <i>Noki jyu</i></li> <li>• <i>Phukchen Jee</i></li> <li>• <i>Pumo Zema</i></li> <li>• <i>Sem Natongu pumo</i></li> <li>• <i>Tadik Wai</i></li> <li>• <i>Thamakha</i></li> <li>• <i>Tinchen Fama</i></li> <li>• <i>Tsheri Khurbu</i></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Yadoshiba/Yangdu-Syimba</i></li> <li>• <i>Yari pangti</i></li> <li>• <i>Yolo namkha</i></li> </ul>	
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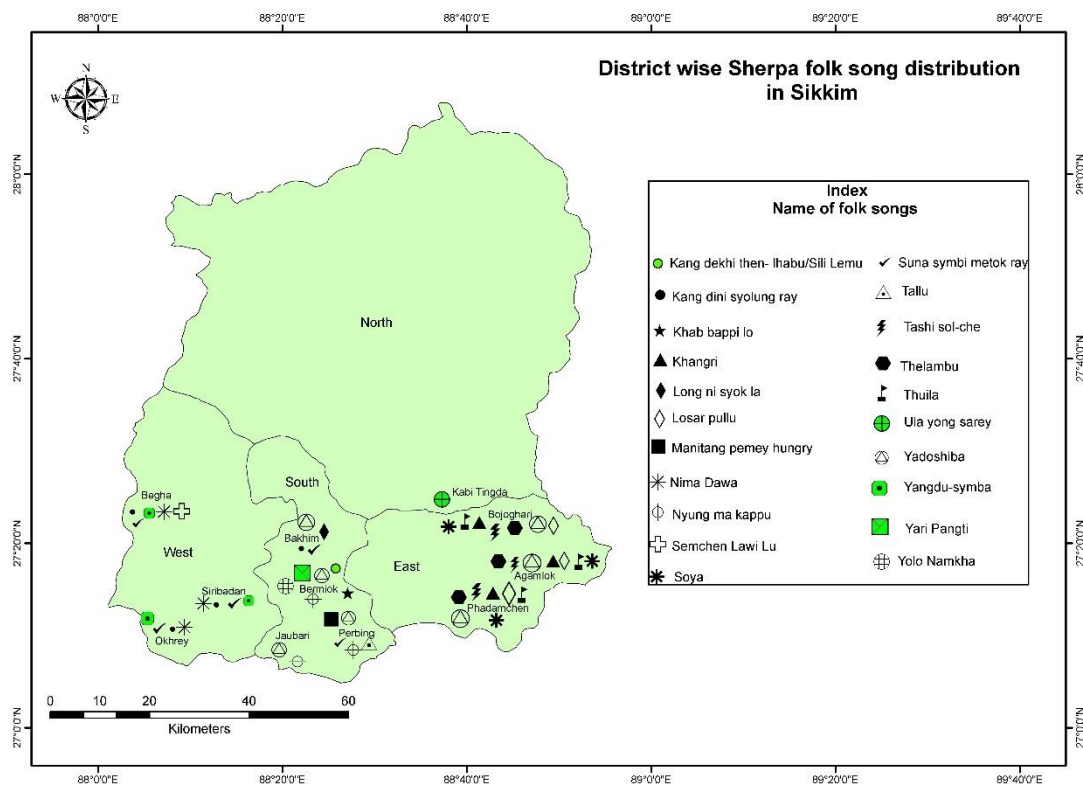
### 3.2.4 Spatial distribution of Sherpa folk songs in Sikkim

The songs listed below in (Table III.2) are the Sherpa folk songs that are frequently performed in particular villages. These Sherpa folk songs have considerable spatial variation in Sikkim. Although, some of the folk songs are sung more frequently in a lot of villages while some other songs are not that widespread. As a geographical study, it has been attempted to map such folk songs in Sikkim.

**Table III.2** Spatial distribution of Sherpa folk songs in Sikkim

<b>Villages</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Regional folk songs</b>
Agamluk	East	<i>Khangri, Losar pullu, Soya, Tashi sol-che, Thelambu, Thuila, Yadoshiba,</i>
Bojoghari	East	<i>Khangri, Losar pullu, Soya, Tashi sol-che, Thelambu, Thuila, Yadoshiba,</i>
Phadamchen	East	<i>Khangri, Losar pullu, Soya, Tashi sol-che, Thelambu, Thuila, Yadoshiba,</i>
Begha	West	<i>Kang dini syolung ray, Nima Dawa, Suna syimbi metok ray, Semchen Lawi Lu, Yangdu-syimba,</i>
Okhrey	West	<i>Kang dini syolung ray, Nima Dawa, Suna syimbi metok ray, Yangdu-syimba</i>
Siribadam	West	<i>Kang dini syolung ray, Nima Dawa, Suna syimbi metok ray, Yangdu-syimba</i>
Kabi-Tingda	North	<i>Ula yong sarey,</i>
Bakhim	South	<i>Kang dini syolung ray, Suna syimbi metok ray, Long ni yok la, Yadoshiba</i>
Bermiok	South	<i>Kang dekhi then-lhabu/ Sili lemu, Kha bappi lo, Nyungma kaapu, Yari pangti, Yadoshiba, Yolo Namkha,</i>
Jaubari	South	<i>Nyung ma Kaapu, Yadoshiba</i>
Perbing	South	<i>Manitang pemey hungry, Nyung ma kaapu, Suna syimbi metok ray, Tallu, Yadoshiba</i>

**Map III.1**



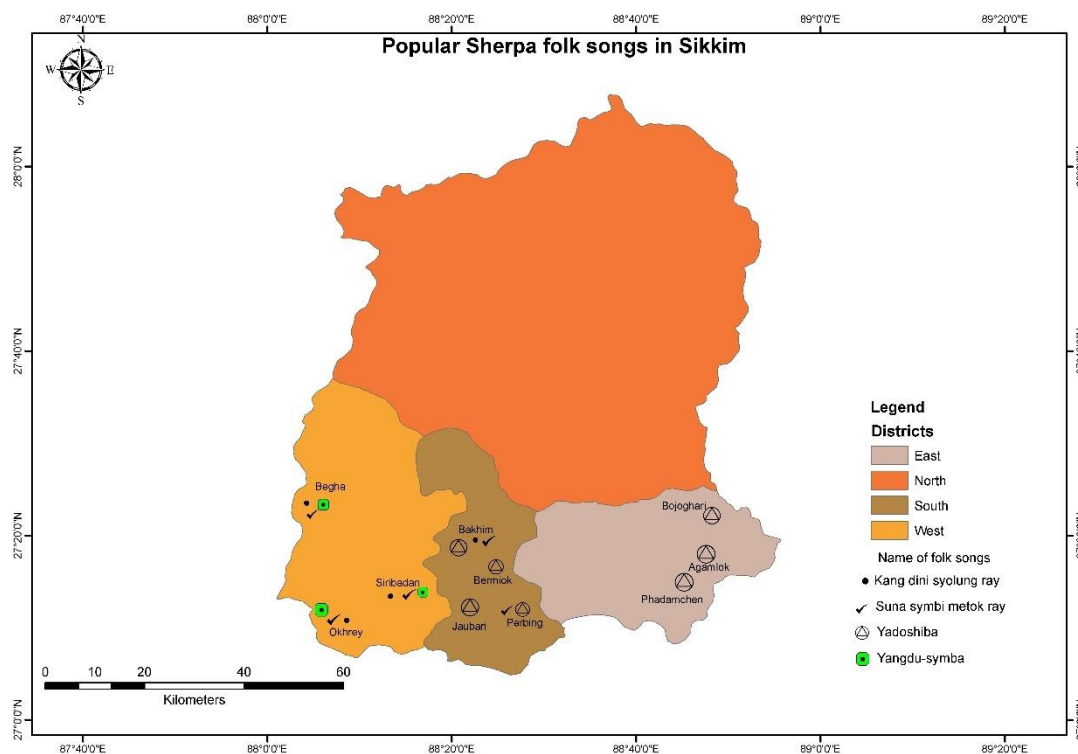
### 3.2.5 Popular Sherpa folk songs in Sikkim

These folk songs are frequently sung and heard in villages with a sizeable number of Sherpa households. (Table III.3) shows the popular Sherpa folk songs that are prevalent in Sherpa villages.

**Table III.3** Popular Sherpa folk songs in Sikkim

Villages	Popular Sherpa folk songs
Begha, Okhrey, Siribadam, Bakhim	<i>Kang dini syolung ray</i>
Begha, Okhrey, Siribadam, Bakhim, Perbing	<i>Suna symbi metok ray</i>
Agamluk, Bojoghari, Phadamchen, Bakhim, Bermiok, Jaubari, Perbing	<i>Yadoshiba</i>
Begha, Okhrey, Siribadam	<i>Yangdu-symba</i>

**Map III. 2**



### 3.2.6 Content Analysis of the Sherpa folk songs

Selected Sherpa folk songs of Sikkim have been transcribed, while Some known folk songs have been missed in the transcribing process due to the lack of acquiring the complete lyrics as well as interpreting the proper meaning of the songs. The interpretation and the analysis of some of the Sherpa folk songs has been done below:

#### Song III.1

*Nyung-ma Kaapu* (old Sherpa folk song)

Sambota Script	English Language (Roman Script)	Meaning in English Language (Latin Script)
ལྷུང་མ་ཀཱུ། ལྷུང་མ་ཀཱུ།	<i>Nyung-ma Kapu. Nyung-ma Kapu</i>	White Bamboo! White Bamboo.
བཤུགས་པའི་བཤུགས་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<b><i>Chuk-pi Chuk-luk Maa-she Nga (Chorus)</i></b>	I don't know how to plant.

ཨ་ལེ་ལུང་གླུ།ཨ་ལེ་ལུང་གླུ།	<i>Aa-lay Loong-syu. Aa-lay Loong-syu.</i>	Oh! get the verbal transmission.
ཞབ་ཐོ་གཡས་དང་གཡན་ལ་མཛུན་ལ་འཛོག།	<i>Syabdo Yetang Yenla Dinla Jyog.</i>	Keep your right and left leg in front of dance.
ཡང་ཞུས་པའི་མེ་ཉྱལ་ལན་མཛེས་མོ།	<i>Yaar Syupi Metok Len-zemu</i>	The answer to the flower you offered will be good.
<b>Main part</b>	<b>Main part</b>	<b>Main part</b>
ཆུས་པའི་ཆུས་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Kepi Keluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how it grows.
བཅད་པའི་བཅད་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Chyepi Chyeluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how to cut.
བཀག་པའི་བཀག་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Kaakpi Kaakluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how to break it.
ཤུས་པའི་ཤུས་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Shupi Shuluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how to examine it.
གྲན་དེ་གྲན་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Tendi Tenluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how to begin weaving.
ལྷ་པའི་ལྷ་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Lhabi Lhaluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how to weave.
འཁྱུར་བའི་འཁྱུར་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Khurwi Khurluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how to carry it.
འདོགས་པའི་འདོགས་ལྷགས་མ་ཤེས་ང།།	<i>Dawbi Dawluk Maa-she Nga.</i>	I don't know how to keep in the right place.

'Nyung-ma Kaapu' is a famous folk song in Sikkim. This song has been collected and recorded from Passang Ongdup Sherpa of Perbing, South Sikkim. He is one of the *Lupa* of the Sherpa community of Perbing. This song is considered and believed to be transmitted orally by the earlier generations to them. This song has its importance in Sherpa folk music due to its dynamic and profound lyrics. This song has an artistry and portrays the idiomatic form of expression among the ancient Sherpa community. As Sherpas has been oriented towards nature, their songs too have such descriptions. They



have made the natural elements of a geographical region, a part of their cultural mosaic. The emotions they pour out in the song talk about the socio-cultural aspects of their society where geographical features are the mediator for expressing their thoughts. Moreover, it shows the relationship between their music and the geographical environment which is the main concern in the study of Music geography.

A wise man was once asked by an enthusiastic person, that he/she is unable to plant bamboo (white bamboo) and does not know the process of planting it and how to use this bamboo in a skilled way. The wise person with enormous knowledge tells the keen learner that he/she should learn it from the intellectuals to get the right and helpful answer, but the way of speaking and referring the eager learner about this knowledge by the wise person is done weirdly and mysteriously.

In the ancient Buddhist tradition, learners to acquire knowledge had to go to persons with profound knowledge. The learning process was a type of chain referral. One knowledgeable person referred the other person to the learner. The knowledgeable person did this system of recommending and referencing to test and understand the interest and dedication of learners in their quest. It actually tested learners' patience and love for the knowledge. It is an attempt to examine the curiosity of the learner and experiment with their behavior in regard to knowledge.

Bamboo (a wild-growing woody grass) has been used as an analogy to the learning behavior of the learner. It shows as Bamboo has been significant in the Sherpas' day-to-day living and knowledge has been important in a person's life.

This song is most prevalent in south Sikkim. In the Sherpa villages of south Sikkim, people usually sing this song. This song doesn't have a variation in regard to lyrics and tune.

Song III.2

*Suna simbi metok ray* (old Sherpa folk song)

Lines	Sambota Script	Roman Script	Meaning in English Language (Latin Script)
1.	གསུང་གནང་ཞེས་པའི་མེ་རྟོག་རེད།	<i>sungnang syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.
2.	ལུང་པ་མམ་བཟང་འདི་ནང་ལ།	<i>lungpa amzang di nangla</i>	Within this beautiful motherland.
3.	མེ་རྟོག་ལགས་མོ་ལ་ཤར་སུང་ལ།	<i>metok lumula sharung la</i>	Very beautiful flowers bloomed.
4.	མེ་རྟོག་ལགས་མོ་ལ་ཤར།	<i>metok lemula shar</i>	Very beautiful flowers bloomed.
5.	ཇ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowola jyudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
6.	མེ་རྟོག་ལགས་མོ་ལ་ཤར།	<i>metok lemula shar</i>	Very beautiful flowers bloomed.
7.	གསུང་གནང་ཞེས་པའི་མེ་རྟོག་རེད།	<i>sungnang syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.
8.	མེ་རྟོག་ལགས་མོ་ཤར་སུང་ལ།	<i>metok lemu sharsung la</i>	Very beautiful flowers bloomed.
9.	བྱ་མོ་མེ་ཡུལ་ལ་འགྲིམས་སུང་ལ།	<i>pumo miyulla dimsung</i>	The daughter was taken captive and moved to another country.
10.	བྱ་མོ་མེ་ཡུལ་ལ་འགྲིམས་སུང་།	<i>pumo miyulla dimsung</i>	The daughter was taken captive and moved to another country.
11.	ཇ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowola jyudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
12.	བྱ་མོ་མེ་ཡུལ་ལ་འགྲིམས་སུང་།	<i>pumo miyul la dimsung</i>	The daughter was taken captive and moved to another country.

13.	གསུང་གནང་ཞིམ་པའི་མེ་ཉླ་རེད།	<i>sungnang syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.
14.	བྱ་མོ་མེ་ཡུལ་ལ་འགྲིམས་སུང་ལ།	<i>pumo miyulla dimsung la</i>	The daughter was taken captive and moved to another country.
15.	མར་ལ་རྒྱུག་རི་ལ་ཆུ་སྐྱུ་ལ།	<i>marla gyuri la chyu mula</i>	It is like water flowing from a mountain.
16.	མར་ལ་རྒྱུག་རི་ལ་ཆུ།	<i>marla gyuri la chyu</i>	It is like water flowing from a mountain.
17.	ཇ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowola jyudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
18.	མར་ལ་རྒྱུག་རི་ལ་ཆུ།	<i>marla gyurila chyu</i>	It is like water flowing from a mountain.
19.	གསུང་གནང་ཞིམ་པའི་མེ་ཉླ་རེད།	<i>sungnang syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.
20.	མར་ལ་རྒྱུག་རི་ཆུ་སྐྱུ་ལ།	<i>marla gyuri chyu mula</i>	Water flowing from the mountain.
21.	ཡར་ལ་ལོག་ས་ལ་མེད་དོ་ལ།	<i>yarla loksa la meto la</i>	Now it will not come up again.
22.	ཡར་ལ་ལོག་ས་ལ་མེད།	<i>yarla loksala may</i>	Now it will not come up again.
23.	ཇ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowola jyudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
24.	ཡར་ལ་ལོག་ས་ལ་མེད།	<i>yarla loksala may</i>	Now it will not come up again.
25.	གསུང་གནང་ཞིམ་པའི་མེ་ཉླ་རེད།	<i>sungnang syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.

26.	ཡར་ལ་ལོག་ས་ལ་མངོན་དོ་ལ།	<i>yarla loksa la meto la</i>	Now it will not come up again.
27.	བ་མ་བཟང་བའི་ལ་བུ་ལ།	<i>fama zangpila pu mula</i>	With the son of a very good family.
28.	བ་མ་བཟང་བའི་ལ་བུ།	<i>fama zangbila pu</i>	With the son of a very good family.
29.	ཨ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowola jjudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
30.	བ་མ་བཟང་བའི་ལ་བུ།	<i>fama zangbila pu</i>	With the son of a very good family.
31.	གསུང་གནང་ཞེས་པའི་མེ་ཉླ་རེད།	<i>sungnang syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.
32.	བ་མ་བཟང་བའི་ལ་བུ་ལ།	<i>fama zangbila pu mula</i>	With the son of a very good family.
33.	མི་ཡུལ་འགྲིམས་རྒྱལ་སོང་སྲུང་ལ།	<i>miyul dimgyula songsung la</i>	She went to another country in captivity.
34.	མི་ཡུལ་འགྲིམས་རྒྱལ་སོང་།	<i>miyul dimgyula song</i>	She went to another country in captivity.
35.	ཨ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowola jjudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
36.	མི་ཡུལ་འགྲིམས་རྒྱལ་སོང་།	<i>miyul dimgyula song</i>	She went to another country in captivity.
37.	གསུང་གནང་ཞེས་པའི་མེ་ཉླ་རེད།	<i>sungnang syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.
38.	མི་ཡུལ་བུ་མོའི་མ་མ་འགྲིམ་ལ།	<i>miyul pumoi madim la</i>	If the daughter was imprisoned and did not go to another country.

39.	སྐྱུ་ཡང་འགྲིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་མེད་དོལ།	<i>suyang dimgyu la meto la</i>	There is no one else to go.
40.	སྐྱུ་ཡང་འགྲིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་མེད།	<i>suyang dimgyu la may</i>	There is no one else to go.
41.	ཨ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowo la jyudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
42.	སྐྱུ་ཡང་འགྲིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་མེད།	<i>suyang dimgyu la may</i>	There is no one else to go.
43.	གསུང་གནང་ཞིམ་པའི་མེ་ཉླ་རེད།	<i>sungnag syimbi metok ray</i>	They said that it's like a sweet flower.
44.	སྐྱུ་ཡང་འགྲིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་མེད་དོལ།	<i>suynag dimgyu meto la</i>	There is no one else to go.
45.	བ་མ་སེམས་བ་ལ་མ་གནང་ལ།	<i>fama sempala manang la</i>	Please don't hurt my parents.
46.	བ་མ་སེམས་བ་ལ་མ་གནང་།	<i>fama sempala manang</i>	Please don't hurt my parents.
47.	ཨ་ཇང་གཙོ་བོ་ལ་བཞུགས་མདང་ལ།	<i>ajyang chowo la jyudang la</i>	In the presence of uncles yesterday.
48.	བ་མ་སེམས་བ་ལ་མ་གནང་།	<i>fama sempala manang</i>	Please don't hurt my parents.

*Suna Simbi Metok Ray* is an old Sherpa folk song that is very popular in the Sherpa community of Sikkim. This song has been collected and recorded from Passang Ongdup Sherpa of Perbing, South Sikkim. The songs express the life of a daughter who is married now to a son of another family.

There is a saying that the daughters are like beautiful flowers with a sweet fragrance and loved by all. But yesterday, in the presence of her uncles, saying that she had to go

to another country under the bondage of someone, a newly pledged married woman complained and expressed her heartache and pain which is expressed in this song.

Lyricist compares the girl with a sweet flower. As the girl is young, she is like a flower that has bloomed. The song composer also compares a girl's life to water flowing from a mountain that never comes back again. She has to go one day from her motherland to pledged husband's homeland.

As even the human relations are depicted drawing analogies from elements of nature such as mountains, water, and vegetation (flower). It helps us understand the influence of natural landscape and environment in the life of the people. The term “Environmental Determinism” which is also known as “Geographical Determinism” has a huge significance in respect to the framework of Sherpa folk songs. According to the environmental deterministic thought of the classical and medieval period, environmental features completely determine the physical and intellectual qualities of the societies. Therefore, in this regard, the environment has played an influential role in the creation of nature bounded Sherpa folk songs since older times. As humans have developed the idea of overcoming and adjusting to the environment, the term “Possibilism” has gained significant traction in the world and the human-environment relationship.

This song has also a spatial variation regarding tune and lyrics. Although, the meaning and message of the song are similar.

**Song III.3**

*Yari pangti* (old Sherpa folk song)

Sl. No.	Lyrics in Sambota script	Lyrics in English (Roman script)	Meaning in English (Roman script)
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1.	ཡར་རི་ལྗང་འདི་མཐེན་པོ་གང་ལ་ཆགས་ལ།	<i>Yari pangti thenpo kangla tshyaak la.</i>	How beautiful this mountain is like a meadow.
	ལྗང་དེ་གི་མཐེན་པོ་དཀར་བསང་ལ་ཆགས།	<i>pang teeki thenpo karsangla tshyaak.</i>	What a beautiful white cloud covered the grassy ground of that mountain.
	དཀར་བསང་རྒྱལ་མཛེས་རྣམས་ནི་གླུར་ཁང་འདྲ་ལ།	<i>Karsang za-zay namkee kurkhang daalaa.</i>	This ground is like a house for white clouds.
	ཨོ་རུང་གཞིན་གཞིན་རྣམས་གནས་དགའ་བ་རྒྱུས།	<i>Orung syon-syon naamnay gawa kay.</i>	We were happy to see the land where the youth live.
2.	ཡར་རི་བྲག་འདི་མཐེན་པོ་གང་ལ་ཆགས་ལ།	<i>Yari taakdi thenpo kangla tshyak.</i>	How beautiful this high rocky mountain is
	བྲག་དེ་གི་མཐེན་པོ་བྱ་ཚོད་ལ་ཆགས།	<i>Taak teeki thenpo chyago-la tshyaak.</i>	Vultures have formed on that rocky hill.
	བྱ་ཚོད་རྒྱལ་མཛེས་རྣམས་ནི་གླུར་ཁང་འདྲ་ལ།	<i>Chyaago za-zay namkee kurkhang daalaa.</i>	This rocky mountain is like a friend and home for vultures
	ཨོ་རུང་གཞིན་གཞིན་རྣམས་གནས་དགའ་བ་རྒྱུས།	<i>Orung syon-syon naamnay gawa kay.</i>	We were happy to see the land where the youth live
3.	ཡར་རི་གངས་འདི་མཐེན་པོ་གང་ལ་ཆགས་ལ།	<i>Yari kaangdi thenpo kaangla tshyaak la.</i>	How beautiful this high mountain is
	གངས་དེ་གི་མཐེན་པོ་སང་གི་ལ་ཆགས།	<i>Kang teeki thenpo sengela tshyaak.</i>	Snow lions live in that mountain
	སང་གི་གཡུ་རལ་རྣམས་ནི་གླུར་ཁང་འདྲ་ལ།	<i>Senge yurak namkee kurkhang daalaa.</i>	It is like a friend and home for mountain lions



	ཨོ་ཅུང་གཞིན་གཞིན་རྣམས་གནས་དགའ་བ་སྐྱེས།།	<i>Orung syon-syon naamnay gawa kay.</i>	We were happy to see the land where the youth live
4.	ཡར་རི་མཚོ་འདི་བརྟན་པོ་གང་ལ་ཆགས་ལ།།	<i>Yari tshodi thenpo kangla tshyaak la.</i>	How beautiful is this stagnant sea
	མཚོ་དེ་གི་བརྟན་པོ་ཉ་བྱུང་ལ་ཆགས།།	<i>Tsho teeki thenpo nyajyung-la tshyak.</i>	There are fish in this stable sea
	ཉ་འབྱུང་རྗེས་མཛེས་རྣམས་ནི་གྲུང་ཁང་འདྲ་ལ།།	<i>Nyajyung za-zay namkee kurkhang daalaa.</i>	The stagnant sea is like a home for fish
	ཨོ་ཅུང་གཞིན་གཞིན་རྣམས་གནས་དགའ་བ་སྐྱེས།།	<i>Orung syon-syon naamnay gawa kay.</i>	We were happy to see the land where the youth live
5.	ཡར་རི་འདི་མཐོན་པོ་གང་ལ་ཆགས་ལ།།	<i>Yari reedi thenpo kangla tshyaak la.</i>	How beautiful this high mountain is
	རི་དེ་གི་མཐོན་པོ་ཤ་བ་ལ་ཆགས།།	<i>Ree teeki thenpo shawa-la tshyaak.</i>	The deer has resided in this mountain
	ཤ་བ་ར་འབྱུང་རྣམས་ནི་གྲུང་ཁང་འདྲ་ལ།།	<i>Shawa rajyung namkee kurkhang daalaa.</i>	This high mountain is like a home for deer
	ཨོ་ཅུང་གཞིན་གཞིན་རྣམས་གནས་དགའ་བ་སྐྱེས།།	<i>Orung syon-syon naamnay gawa kay.</i>	We were happy to see the land where the youth live.
6.	ཡར་རི་ནགས་འདི་མཐོན་པོ་གང་ལ་ཆགས་ལ།།	<i>Yari naakdi thenpo kangla tshyaak la.</i>	How beautiful is this tall and dense forest
	ནགས་དེ་གི་མཐོན་པོ་དོམ་ལ་ཆགས།།	<i>Naak teeki thenpo tomo la tshyaak.</i>	Bears live in that dense forest
	དོམ་རྗེས་མཛེས་རྣམས་ནི་གྲུང་ཁང་འདྲ་ལ།།	<i>Tomo za-zay namkee kurkhang daalaa.</i>	This dense forest is like a home for bears

	ཨོ་སུང་གཞིན་གཞིན་རྣམས་གནས་དགའ་བ་རྒྱས།	<i>Orung syon-syon naamnay gawa kay.</i>	We were happy to see the land where the youth live
chorus/	འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་བའི་ལས་ལ་རྒྱོབ་རྒྱེས་ལ།	<i>Jigten sheewi lela kyowa kela.</i>	It hurts to think of this dying ritual of the world
	ང་ནི་དབུག་པའི་རི་ཁྲོད་གནས་སུ་རང་འགྲིམ།	<i>Ngani wenpi reetho nesu-rang dim.</i>	May I reach the mountain of peace
	ཨ་ལ་ཨོ་བསང་མ་ནི་བརྗེ་རྩྭ་ལ།	<i>Alaa omsang mani peme hung la.</i>	Chant the mantra of many gems
	གནས་རང་བཞིན་འོད་ཀྱིས་མཛེས་སྲུ་ལགས།	<i>Nay rang-jyin hoki zemu la.</i>	This world is beautiful because of the rays of nature

‘*Yari Pangti*’ is a Sherpa folk song performed in some of the villages of Sikkim. It has been documented from Nim Lhamu Sherpa of Bermiok, South Sikkim. The original writer of the song is Lt. Kalzang Dolma Sherpa of Bermiok, south Sikkim

This song is divided into two sections:

The first section praises nature. The person in the song is delighted to see cloud-covered meadows in the barren rocky mountains which are patrolled by vultures, inhabited by white lions, a colossal calm lake inhabited by fish, daunting slopes made home by deer, and the forests treaded by bears.

This folk song is evidence of old Sherpa society when they usually settled in high altitudinal geographical regions bounded by natural beauty. The cloud-covered meadows, Rocky Mountains, forest, and sea showcase the picture of the natural landscape of their geographical region, and the view about vultures, lions, fish, deers, and bears indicates the rich bio-diversity in Sherpa residing regions.

The second section (chorus) describes the rule of life that one day everyone has to die; however, deaths do not affect the beauty of nature. Though it hurts the heart to remember the episode of having to die again one day after being born in this world. Chanting of the mantras (*Om Mani Peme*) will be done by others for the peace of my spirit, but our passing away will not affect the magnificence of this world. The world will always remain as beautiful as these grasslands, Mountains and its peaks, stagnant sea, and the rays of the beauty of forest. This section delivers about the dominance of Environmental determinism and how it determined Sherpa society in their concept of the meaning of life and their socio-cultural environment.

**Song III.4**      *Dejong ki phuk chen jyi* (contemporary Sherpa song)

Sl. No.	Lyrics in Sambota script	Lyrics in English (Roman script)	Meaning in English (Roman script)
1.	དར་མངས་དཀར་མུ་ཤར་གྱི་ཕྱོགས་ལ།	<i>Tarsang karmu sharki chyogla.</i>	White flag to the east
	ཤར་གྱི་གནས་ཁང་ལ་མངལ་ཡིན།	<i>Shargi nekhang-la jyal-yin.</i>	I visited a religious place in the east
	ཨོ་རྒྱན་གྱི་ཅུ་བརྒྱུགས་པའི་བྲག་ཕུག	<i>Ogyen guru syugpi takfuk.</i>	The rocky cave where Guru Ringpoche lived
	ཤར་ཕྱོགས་ཐུག་ཕུག་ལ་མངལ་ཡིན།	<i>Shar-chog befug-la jyal-yin.</i>	I visited Sharkshog Berfug
2.	དར་མངས་ལོ་མོ་རྫོང་གི་ཕྱོགས་ལ།	<i>Tarsang sermo lhoyi chyogla.</i>	Yellow flag to the south
	རྫོང་གནས་ཁང་མངལ་ཡིན།	<i>Lhoyi nekhang jyal-yin.</i>	I visited a religious place in the south
	དོ་རྗེ་ཕག་ཨོ་བསང་བས་གསང་ཆུ།	<i>Dorjee fagmo sangway sang-chu.</i>	Holy water purified by Vajravarahi
	མཁའ་འགྲོ་གསང་ཕུག་ལ་མངལ་ཡིན།	<i>Khado sangfug-la jyalyin.</i>	I visitedKhangdo Sangfug

3.	དར་སངས་དམར་མུ་རུབ་གྱི་ཕྱོགས་ལ།	<i>Tarsang marmu nubki chogla.</i>	West flag to the south
	རུབ་གྱི་གནས་ཁང་ལ་མཇལ་ཡིན།	<i>Nubki nekhangl jyalyin.</i>	I visited a religious place in the west
	ཡ་མཚན་ཆེན་པོ་གནས་ཁང་འདི་ནང་།	<i>Yachen chenpo nekhang dinang.</i>	In this amazing religious place
	བདེ་ཆེན་ཕུག་ལ་མཇལ་ཡིན།	<i>Dechen fugla jyalyin.</i>	I visited Dexenfug
4.	དར་སངས་ལྗང་ཁུ་བྱ་གྱི་ཕྱོགས་ལ།	<i>Tarsang jyangkhu chyangi chogla.</i>	Green flag to the north
	བྱ་གྱི་གནས་ཁང་ལ་མཇལ་ཡིན།	<i>Chyangi nekhang-la jyalyin.</i>	I visited a religious place in the north
	གངས་རི་སྐོར་བའི་གནས་ཁང་འདི་ནི།	<i>Kangri korwi nekhang dini.</i>	A religious place covered with mountains
	ལྷ་རི་སྤོང་པོ་ལ་མཇལ་ཡིན།	<i>Lhari nyingpo-la jyalyin.</i>	I visited Lhari Ningpo
5.	དར་སངས་མཐོང་ལ་དབུས་གྱི་ཕྱོགས་ལ།	<i>Tarsang thinkha owki chyogla.</i>	The blue flag in the middle
	དབུས་གྱི་གནས་ཁང་ལ་མཇལ་ཡིན།	<i>Owki nekhangla jyalyin.</i>	I visited a religious place in the middle
	བླ་པ་དཀར་བཟའི་ཞེས་མཐོང་གྱི་འཁྲི་ལ།	<i>Takkar tashi dingki thila.</i>	On the throne of Takkar Tashiding
	ཨོ་རྒྱན་གྱི་ལྷ་མཇལ་ཡིན།	<i>Ogyen gurul jyalyin.</i>	I visited Ugen guru
	བུམ་ཆུ་བདུད་ཚིལ་ལྷ་ཡིན།	<i>Pumchyu duchila syuyin.</i>	Received holy water from the vessel

Sonam Phuntao Lama of Perbing, south Sikkim wrote the song. It describes four the great caves of Sikkim: i) Sharkshog Berfug ii) Khando Sangfug iii) Dexhenfug iv) Lhari Ningpo as well as the Tashiding monastery. The lyricist also mentions the sacred water which he received at Tashiding.

Full Name of Tashiding monastery- Takkar Tashiding.

This folk song showcases the view of the author regarding the geographical landscape. Even though it is a contemporary song, it shows religious linkage with old Buddhist philosophy. Even, in the modern world, Buddhism has a religious root in Sherpa society. Although, the world is constantly changing but Sherpas has continuously a religious linkage that has spatial and temporal relations within Sikkim and across borders.

The song showcases geographical landscape as well as places of piety from various directions in Sikkim. The song depicts the caves, waters, and mountains that designates these geographical sites as sacred spaces. The song discusses the beauty of nature thanking God. The geographical specificities of Sikkim can also be traced and the natural features in this song show the geographical location of Sikkim in the Himalayan region with environmental beauty.

**Song III.5**

*Gawi losar* (contemporary Sherpa song)

Sl. No	Lyrics in Sambota script	Lyrics in English (Roman script)	Meaning in English (Roman script)
1.	གནམ་ས་གསེར་གྱི་ཉི་མ་ཤར།	<i>Namla serki nyima shar</i>	The golden sun rose in the sky
	ས་ལ་ལོ་ཏྟག་ལེགས་མོ་སྐར།	<i>Sala lotok lemo gar</i>	The crops did well in the field
	སྲུ་སྟན་ལེགས་མོ་སྒྲངས་ནི།	<i>Lunyen lemu lani</i>	Singing good songs
	སྦྱིད་པའི་ཞབས་ཐོ་ལེགས་མོ་འབྲབ།	<i>Kipi syabdo lemu thaap</i>	Let's dance well
2.	བདག་པའི་དགའ་བའི་ལོ་གསར་ལ།	<i>Dakpi gawi losar la</i>	Our happiness in this Losar
	བཏག་ཤེས་བདེ་ལེགས་སྤུན་སྤུམ་ཚོགས།	<i>Tashi delek funsum tshok</i>	All being well

	ཨ་མ་བག་ཚོ་སྐྱེ་ལམས་བཟང་།	<i>Ama pakto kukham zang</i>	May there be happiness and good health.
	དྲིན་ཏུ་བདེ་བ་ཚོབ་བར་ཤོག།	<i>Tentu dewa thobpar shok</i>	Always be happy
3.	བདག་པོ་ཏེ་རི་འཛོམས་ནི།	<i>Dakpo teri zomni</i>	We all gathering together
	འགྱུར་མེད་དཀོན་མཆོག་ལ་མཚོན་འབུལ།	<i>Gyurme konchok la cho bul</i>	Let's worship God.
	བསངས་དང་གསེར་སྐྱེམས་བཏང་ནི།	<i>Sang tang serkem tang ni</i>	Doing Sang (purification through smoke) serkem (libation offering)
	ལྷ་ལྷུ་བཞི་བདག་ལགས་མོ་སྤང་།	<i>Lhalu jidak lemu soong</i>	Convince God and the serpents well
4.	སྐོར་བ་གཡས་གཡོན་བགྱིད་ཡིན་དང་།	<i>Korwa yeyon kiyin tang</i>	Turning right and left
	དགའ་བའི་ཐབ་ཚོ་ལགས་མོ་འཁྲབ།	<i>Gawi syabdo lemu thaap</i>	Let's dance of joy.
	ཡང་ཡང་མཇལ་བའི་སྤོན་ལམ་དང་།	<i>Yang-yang jyalwi monlam tang</i>	Pray to see you again and again
	བཀྲ་ཤིས་ལགས་པའི་སྤོན་ལམ་བཏབ།	<i>Tashi lekpi monlam tap</i>	Let's pray for good luck in the future

Karma Kalzang chopel Sherpa of Upper Sumin, East Sikkim wrote this song. This song captures the joyous mood of *Losar*. The song says let us all dance and rejoice, let us all worship God together, and let's pray that we shall meet again and may fortune be the best for everyone.

This song is inclined towards the Sherpas occasion and festival that has a contribution to socio-cultural aspects of the Sherpa society. This contemporary song shows how the occasional cultural environment has constantly maintained spatial relations in Sikkim

and across other geographical regions where Sherpa resides. It has also temporally been celebrated continuously.

**Song III.6**

*Thamakha* (contemporary Sherpa song)

Sl. no.	Lyrics in Sambota script	Lyrics in English (roman script)	Meaning in English (roman script)
1.	ང་ནི་མ་ཁ་ལ་དགའ་བཤྱིད་ཅུ་མི།	<i>Ngani thamakha-la ga kiru me e</i>	I am a person who like cigarettes very much
	ང་ནི་ཆང་མ་རག་ལ་དགའ་བཤྱིད་ཅུ་མི།	<i>ngani chang arak-la ga kiru mee</i>	I am a person who like alcohol very much
	ཉིན་གཅིག་སུ་མོ་ལྷལ་བཟའ་བཟུང་བེ་ནི་མཚོ་ཡིན།	<i>nyinchik pumo dalja zeo sini noyi</i>	One day I thought I would make a girlfriend
	དབང་པོ་བུ་ནི་མན་ང་ལགས་སུ་བཀོན་ནི་ཡུག་བཟུལ་ཡིན།	<i>ongbu tuni majya lemu konni yug gallin</i>	I took a bath, put new clothes and went
	སུ་མོ་ལྷལ་བཟའ་ལགས་སུ་རྒྱ་རྒྱེད་ཀྱི་ཉེ་བེ་རེ་བ་ལ།	<i>pumo dalza lemu, nyeki te siru rewa la</i>	Hoping that I will get a better girl
2.	ཁྱོད་ལ་བསྐོས་པ་མི་འོ་དུ་བ་མེད་དུ་བ་ལྷལ་བཟའ་ཉི་མ་འཕྲད་སྲུང་།	<i>thomla lebsi hotu metu dalja tiba thesung</i>	I met friends in the market
	ཅ་ལག་ལགས་སུ་ཁོ་སུ་འོ་ཡོད་འཐུང་དུ་འོ་ཡོད་བེ་ནི་དྲི་སྲུང་།	<i>chyalak lemu khobu hoi thungu sini tisung</i>	They have brought nice weed and ask me to have it
	ཅ་མ་ཁ་ཉི་འཐུ་ནི་གནམ་ལ་ཕུར་ཅུ་མདོག་གི་བཟུལ་སྲུང་།	<i>cha thamakha tee thuni namla</i>	After taking weed, it started to feel like flying in the sky



		<i>furru dogay galsung.</i>	
	ང་རང་གི་རང་ལ་གན་ནིང་མེད་དུབ་དཔའ་བོ་མདོག་གི་ཚོར་ཅུ་བྱ་སྲུང་།	<i>nga rangi rangla kening metu pawo dogay tshorru syusung.</i>	I felt like a hero
	ངའི་ལག་འཛག་གི་འཁྱུལ་ནོག	<i>nge lagpa hanak kay khyolnok</i>	My hand has already reached
	དཔའ་བོ་ལ་འོར་བཤྱིད་ཅུ་མི་འགམ་པ་ལ།	<i>pawola hor keeru mee dambala</i>	On the cheek of the one who abused the hero
3.	ད་འདི་ཉི་འཛུང་ཅུ་བེ་ནི་མནའ་བ་ལ་བསྐྱེ་སྲུང་།	<i>ta dee teri pangu sini nawa la lesung</i>	Now the thought came that I had to give it all up
	འོང་རང་ཚོག་ཅི་ཁ་ལ་རྩ་ཐ་མ་ཁ་ལ་ཅིག་མཐོང་སྲུང་།	<i>longrang chyokchi khala thamakha chyik thongsung</i>	But I saw a weed on the table
	མིན་འོ་ཞི་འ་རིང་འཐུང་ཅུ་བེ་ལ་ནས་མ་བཏང་ཅུ་མནོ་ཡིན།	<i>min hoshi haring thungu sala nema tangu noyin</i>	No, I thought I would drink it for the last time and quit tomorrow
	ཟེ་ལ་ཟེ་ལ་ཟེ་ཡིན་རང་གི་མི་ཚོ་དུག་རང་ན་བཏང་ཡིན།	<i>sala-sala siyin rangi, mitshe tugrang na tangin.</i>	I ruined my life by saying tomorrow
	འདུག་གྱུ་བཏང་འཐུང་ཅུ་སྐོབ་ནི་དྲན་མེད་མ་བཟོ་བྱིད་རེའི་མི་ཚོ་ལ།	<i>dukya sahap thungu lopni, tonmay mazo khyore mitshe la</i>	Don't make your life miserable by learning to eat and drink bad things

4.	འདི་འཇུ་ཟེན་བསྐྱབས་བྱ་ལགས་མུ་འོར་མདོག་གཞིར་གྱུ་	<i>dee thusi labjya lemu hor dogay tshorgew</i>	If you take this, even good advice seems like abused
	རང་ལ་འོ་དུབ་ཅ་ལག་ཏེ་འི་བརྗེད་ནི་འཇུ་ནི་ཟེན་གྱི་	<i>rangla hotu chalak teri jyeni thuni singew</i>	All your wealth will be invested in the drugs unknowingly.
	འ་འིང་གཅིག་འཇུ་ཟེ་ཟ་ལ་གཞན་རང་འཇུང་ཏུ་སེམས་ལང་ངེ་ནོག་	<i>haring chik thusi sala jenrang thungu sem langi nok</i>	If you try one today, you will like to try it tomorrow also.
	འདི་ཚོད་འདི་ཚོད་རང་མོ་བུང་ན་བཀལ་ལུ་ཆ་རང་མེད་རྗེད་ནོག་	<i>dijo-dijorang orung nagallu chyarang menyenok</i>	Slowly, we don't know, that it's ruining the life
	རྗེས་ངན་པ་འདི་ཟེ་ནི་འཇུ་ནི་	<i>ze ngenpa dee soni thuni</i>	After having the drugs
	ཆེ་གྲགས་གང་ཡང་མེད་རྗེད་ནོག་མོ་བུང་ལ།	<i>kangyang menyenok orung la</i>	My dear friend, we don't get anything good

Jigme Gyalpo Sherpa of Jaubari South, Sikkim wrote the song. The song describes the life of a drug-abused person who has now changed and advises the younger generation. Drug abuse is rather a common problem that exists in society. Drugs are affecting not only concerned individuals but entire families. As the song says there is no benefit in taking the drugs and neither is good for health. It only ruins life. It is better to quit it today itself and not wait for tomorrow.

The song showcases the reality of the existing social environment with modern challenges in the modern world. As the world is constantly changing, the socio-cultural

environment is also changing spatially and temporally. Moreover, the contemporary relation of people with their social environment can be mediated by the song. The spatial functioning of modern society with various circumstances exists in a geographical region of Sikkim where Sherpa resides.

So, in this regard, the person who has recovered from the drug abuse gives health advice to the young people mentioning the effects and consequences of regular drug abuse in their life.

### **3.2.7 Analysis of old folk and contemporary songs**

Songs usually change all the time because of changing lifestyles, settlement patterns, migration trends, socio-cultural environment, etc. Analyzing the contents of old folk and contemporary songs helps us understand the range of Sherpa. Most old Sherpa folk songs were about nature. The lifestyle and daily work of old Sherpas were inclined to nature. While, the contemporary songs are mostly about the contemporary socio-cultural environment where there are challenges of drugs, climate change, overpopulation, and phenomena like urbanization which are influencing society. Meanwhile, religious songs are influenced profoundly by Buddhist philosophy and rituals that have spatial and temporal relations.

Differences are inevitable on unstable earth. The change in the human lifestyle and their environment is due to the changing demography, climate, habitation, disaster, etc. To cope up with the changing earth, the necessity is also changing to live a better life and have better living conditions which consequently shapes the lifestyle of humans and their interaction with the environment.

The content analysis of the old sherpa folk songs and contemporary sherpa songs has helped us know about the variation of the Sherpa songs that have constantly been

changing on a temporal basis. The old Sherpa folk songs were mainly about nature and determined by the natural beauty where the Sherpa resided. The lifestyle and daily work of ancient Sherpas was inclined with nature which helped and influenced them to write such songs. Simultaneously, the contemporary pieces are primarily about the contemporary socio-cultural environment. Although some Sherpa people also write about the beauty of nature in the contemporary world. Meanwhile, the concept and understanding of writing religious songs are similar to old and contemporary people molded by Buddhist philosophy due to the majority of Sherpa people having faith in Buddhist philosophy. The old and contemporary songs of Sherpa occasions and festivals also have the same motive described in the songs which shows the temporal and spatial relation within Sikkim.

Songwriting is influenced by the environment. There are still Sherpa residing villages in Sikkim where the people depend upon primary activities. Such activities are guided by the nature and are reflected in the traditional lifestyle. However, most of the conventional Sherpa villages have been decreased.

Most Sherpa villages have mixed with other ethnic groups. It has influenced the Sherpa people's socio-cultural and economic activity. Further, many Sherpas have migrated to various rural and urban places due to marriage, employment, and for better living conditions. So, all these causes have changed the surroundings and have served as a significant influence on the songs. Older songs are often about the natural environment. The Sherpa's living in mixed and urban socio-cultural environment accordingly has a flair in their songwriting. Sherpa songs are spatially and temporally varied.

Temporally, every society changes in a course of time. The change may be slower or faster but the change is certain in an environment. Spatially, a particular village in

contrast to the other village will develop differently in time. So, some villages may change and adapt according to modern times faster than the others; it creates a spatial variation across Sherpa residing villages. Physical settings of a Sherpa residing village may differ from others which may help or hinder the change/development in the living environment. Moreover, in the case of culture, the geographical theory of Carl Sauer says, humans transform their surroundings through a particular way of life. As the surrounding changes, the perception of the human's changes.

### **3.2.8 Spatial and temporal variation of Sherpa folk songs in Sherpa residing villages of Sikkim**

In Sikkim, there is a spatial and temporal variation regarding the Sherpa folk songs. In the context of marriage, every song starts with *Yadoshiba*. However, some of the songs performed by the *Lupa* and *Luma* of a particular Sherpa village is different from another Sherpa village in Sikkim. Meanwhile, some Sherpa village folk songs do match with another Sherpa village. The spatial variation of Sherpa folk music is quite dynamic.

In one of the folk songs called (*Suna Simbi metok ray*) the lyrics are the same, but the tune or melody of the song performed in Bakhim, South Sikkim, is different from that of West Sikkim. The tune and intonation of the Sherpa folk song, which the people of Okharey, West Sikkim perform vary with most of the Sherpa villages of South Sikkim. Meanwhile, the Sherpa folk song performances in Kabi-Tingda of north Sikkim have decreased to a great extent. They hardly sing the Sherpa folk songs. Dawa Rinchen Sherpa, an elderly of Kabi-Tingda, North Sikkim says, “We don’t perform folk songs in Sherpa occasions and festivals nowadays. Most of the people in our village don’t know the folk songs.” There has been a huge communication gap that led to the diminution of Sherpa folk music performances in Kabi-Tingda.

The Sherpa folk songs in Sikkim have also been changing in a temporal framework. In a course of time, the lifestyle, culture, settlement pattern, and socio-economic pattern of Sherpas have been changing constantly in the geographical environment of Sikkim. Similarly, the lyrics of the Sherpa songs have been changed due to the changing environment where Sherpa resides. As new Sherpa songs are continuously evolving, the performance of the Sherpa folk songs is continuously changing where there is an inter-mixing of the old and new Sherpa songs. This leads to a change in regional Sherpa songs within Sikkim on a temporal basis.

### **3.3 Cultural Landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim**

The cultural landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim has changed over time. Due to the geo-environmental factors, socio-cultural factors, and modern phenomena like urbanization and advancing technology, the cultural landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim has remarked a significant change over the years.

Sauer (1925) has defined the term Landscape to characterize the peculiarly geographic association of facts. Equivalent terms in a sense are 'area' and 'region.' Landscape is the English equivalent of the term German geographers are using largely and has the same meaning, a land shape, in which the process of shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. Furthermore, it may be defined as an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural.

Cultural geographer Carl Sauer coined the term, 'Cultural landscape' in 1925. Eventually, his theory of cultural landscape becomes very important to explore this study.

The definition of culture is an identifiable way of life, and after the Landscape is added to a culture, as Carl Sauer coined the term 'Cultural Landscape.' He described the

cultural landscape in which ‘place’ was fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. (Gibson, C & Waite, G, 2009).

Carl Sauer explained the cultural landscape in the following terms:

Culture (as a way of life) was the agent

Natural area- the medium, and

Cultural landscape- the result of cultivation.

The cultural landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim has been constantly changing with a wide range of spatial and temporal variations. Every society change and adapts various new aspects of the socio-cultural activity in their lifestyle continuously and dynamically. Similarly, the cultural landscape of Sherpas has been reflected through the folk songs which are changing temporally and spatially in Sherpa residing regions of Sikkim. The cultural landscape is what people make it today. Society is an outcome of the surrounding environment. They adapt to their surroundings and change it as well. We will try to know the cultural landscape according to Sherpa consciousness through the medium of Sherpa folk songs.

As we have understood that the cultural landscape is the consequence of cultivation done by the people with a medium of their natural environment. Similarly, Sherpas have cultivated their emotions and feeling through geographical elements that are identified in folk songs. The folk song is one of the main components of the Sherpas cultural landscape.

Content analysis of the Sherpa folk songs has been done above which comprises both old and new songs. The result shows how the cultural landscape is been temporally changing with the view of Sherpa people, residing in Sikkim.

*Nyung-ma Kaapu* an old folk song talks about the elements that exist in the environment and shows how this song is related to the cultural landscape and how it impacts the

cultural landscape. The bamboo that exists in a natural area is a medium for the people to express the importance of bamboo in their life through the medium of songs. Moreover, the natural environment influences the people and people as well modify the environment.

Through folk songs, we can identify the cultural landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim. For instance, the folk song, '*Suna Simbi Metok Ray*' shows the connection of Sherpa people with the beauty of natural landscapes. The Sherpas way of life has been determined by the medium of nature that contributes towards the cultural landscape. The features of geographical landscapes interpreted by a Sherpa in the old folk song *Yari Pangti* show the environment-determined society of Sherpas and the cultural landscape of their times. Eventually, we can identify the huge impact of nature in the cultural landscape of Sherpas in Sikkim in the earlier Sherpa society. However, the cultural landscape of modern times shows how people are adapting and slowly changing the environment. The earlier Sherpa society and the modern society contradict each other in relation to cultural landscapes. In contemporary times, there is moreover a shared cultural landscape with other ethnic groups in an urbanized and globalized world. There are modern challenges of drugs and contemporary issues that is mentioned in the contemporary Sherpa song called '*Thamakha*'. Due to modern phenomena and challenges that exist in society, the way of life has changed which has a huge impact on the cultural landscape. Music as the most absorbed form of culture has helped us to know about the cultural landscape which is changing on a Spatio-temporal basis.

Sherpa folk music is dealing with various issues; changes have been noticed along its diffusion process. Music has been part of Sherpa culture; hence, Sherpa society is a repository of several folk songs. They have been singing and composing folk songs all along. The poetics of Sherpa folk music has been transformed from an Environmental



deterministic thought of Sherpa ancestors to a modernized, technically forward-looking form. Nevertheless, songs related to natural beauty and its life amid nature are still being written. It is evident from the folk songs that the people conventionally had a vibrant relationship with their surroundings. The traditional Sherpa society has been the product of nature and they have been aligned to the natural setting of a geographical space that surrounds them. Modern Sherpa folk songs in a contrast seem influenced by contemporary events and issues. However, traditional Sherpa folk music is still played. Changes in living pattern and mixed settlements of Sherpas has led to creation of contemporary Sherpa music. The changing lifestyle of Sherpas has led to a spatial and temporal variation in the Sherpa music which exemplifies their perception about life. The old Sherpa folk songs were molded by nature whereas the contemporary Sherpa songs define contemporary issues and the modern living environment influenced by the modern phenomena. They are many Sherpa songs that are prevalent in Sikkim and some Sherpa songs have also disappeared according to the elderly Sherpa people of Sikkim due to the lack and unavailability of resources to preserve the Sherpa folk culture. There are also regional Sherpa folk songs that are popular in the Sherpa villages of Sikkim which creates a spatial variation of Sherpa folk songs in Sherpa residing villages. The old Sherpa folk songs like *Nyung-ma Kaapu*, *Suna simbi metok ray* and *Yari pangti* which has been analyzed are the popular Sherpa folk songs that are influenced by nature and the contemporary Sherpa songs that have been analyzed is a mixture of Sherpa religious faith, festival, and modern issues faced by Sherpas in the contemporary world. Consequently, we can see the change in poetics of Sherpa songs in a temporal framework. The contemporary Sherpa folk songs are quite dynamic covering various aspects of their lifestyle, religious faith, and many more aspects of their living environment. The difference in the environment of old and modern Sherpas has led to

a transformation in the poetics of Sherpa folk songs. Indeed, all the differences of Sherpa folk songs have been influenced by the living environment shaping the Sherpa folk song and exemplifying their particular environment that shifts Sherpa folk song to different levels.

## CHAPTER IV

### SHERPA FOLK MUSIC: CONTINUITY & CHANGE

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This chapter discusses continuity and changes in Sherpa folk music. Music is an art that continues to enthrall humans and music changes in correspondence with the environmental change. Study of continuity and change assist in understanding the significance of the environment concerning music and culture. Continuity and change in the periphery of Sherpa folk music cannot be overlooked as it explicates the core geographical concept of space and time. Urbanization and technology has impacted Sherpa culture as well. As culture and the ethnic language have registered fast pace changes in recent decades, music often serves as a repository of the older values and information. In addition, music heritage impart identity to the community and resource for the researchers. In critical grounds, more attention is required because the process of globalization and social transformation gives rise to grave threats of deterioration, disappearance, and destruction of the intangible culture, owing to a lack of resources of safeguarding such heritage (UNESCO, 2018).

#### **4.1 Continuity and Change in culture**

All cultures are evolving continuously. Folk cultures which include music as well, changes with passage of time. It adds up elements of modern culture which ultimately helps the folk culture to survive. There are some phenomena that are inevitably associated with great and irreversible change like economic modernization, industrialization, and many new technologies (Merlan, 2015).

The conventional culture to survive in contemporary times needs some changes and development in their traditional cultural performances. Likewise, Sherpa folk music

diffusion is a spatial and temporal process that is continued with a changing pattern within their folk music culture.

#### **4.2 Continuity in Sherpa Folk Music**

The Sherpa folk music in Sikkim has taken a kind of middle path for its continuity. Insights from the field survey reveals that, many of the Sherpa folk songs have declined. Elderly Sherpa people were not able to preserve their old folk songs because of the unavailability of the resources for preserving their folk music. Octogenarian Lakpa Sherpa of Bakhim village in South Sikkim, used to sing Sherpa folk songs on various occasions during his youth. He says “I have forgot many of the folk songs which I usually sang when I was younger. However, I have taught the folk songs to many people, but they perform in an incomplete way.” The ageing Sherpas have somehow not been able to pass on to the younger lot what they got from their elders.

Phurba Sherpa, a well-known 57 years old *Lupa* (male singer) from West Sikkim, performed folk songs in Sherpa marriages and cultural events in his early days. He resonates the octogenarian “I performed many Sherpa folk songs but I have forgotten many folk songs now. I am getting older and it is hard to recall some of the songs.” Earlier, the folksongs were not in the written form, so learning folk songs were a bit more demanding. However, the folk songs still propagated by being in frequent use. There was no recording facility, no media platform. The learning resources, if at all, were scant. Folk music orally passed on from area to area, region to region and across generations. It was usually a practice of ‘imitating’, learning of the ‘meaning’, gaining of ‘knowledge’, and following path of exponents and experts. Interested individuals had to wait for the cultural and religious events to learn from and then practice their music/song. There was barely any other medium of diffusion.

Sherpa folk music is performed usually during Sherpa marriages, cultural events, and festivals. Sherpa music now can often be heard cultural events besides the traditional events. Zigmee Gyalpo Sherpa, a young *luthier* and a member of Rewa (Sherpa folk band) is performing Sherpa music and dance for several years. He says “nowadays the cultural events are more and geographically wider-reaching. Apart from the conventional events, I have performed the folk music at the state and north-east regional level as well as national level events.”

Music is an important element of culture for any ethnic group. The tradition of performing Sherpa folk music on various occasions led to the continued usage of some of the old folk songs. The old and rural Sherpa folk song that is familiar in the contemporary world has all been possible through the cultural execution of Sherpa ancestors.

Exact time of the origin of Sherpa folk music in Sikkim is unknown. Sherpas have been singing their folk songs for generations. Passang Ongdup Sherpa, a man in 60s from Perbing village is a *Lupa* (male singer), says “I have learned the folk songs from my father and other elders of my community and my father learnt it from his father.” Sherpas primarily lived in high-altitude rural areas. Thus, their daily entire beat of life has prominently been influenced by elements of nature. Now also not a large population Sherpas are in urban areas. Sherpa musicians now are kind of a link between rural and urban as well as old and contemporary Sherpa society. Many among such musicians have already shot to prominence.

Music has gradually been changing. Nowadays, music is produced in digital format which has a massive influence of technology. On being asked about the continuity of traditional Sherpa folk music, Passang Sherpa a senior *Lupa* (71 years) of Bakhim

village in South Sikkim tenders his interesting perception. He says “Sherpa music of our times is quite different from today. Nowadays, people come up with dancing and digitalized music. In my perspective, it doesn’t have the Sherpa value and essence of genuine Sherpa folk music in contemporary songs. We only sang what we learned from our elders and sang only during Sherpa festivals and events.” Whether one is from a school of thought which prefers purity by not incorporating too many newer traits and characters in their cultural reference points such as music etc. or for fusion and experimentation in the folk music; Septuagenarian Passang Sherpa’ insight on folk music does suggest that the changes in the Sherpa folk music is certainly a tad bit too quick for a certain generation of people from the community.

Like any other community, Sherpas are also influenced by changing times as settlements having mixed societies are not uncommon. It has led to exchanges even in consumption patterns of both tangible and intangible aspects of the community. To be more specific, culture has been changing continuously by accommodating influences from other contemporary societies. Consequently, Sherpa folk music has gradually acquired the current style. Folk fusion is one of the performing music styles by the Sherpa musicians in recent times. Especially, folk fusion is a form of music where a particular folk song is arranged and performed with inter-mixing folk and popular modern forms of music.

Continuity of the old songs in its conventional form is not too commonplace because of the evolution of contemporary popular music that have influenced music in general. The modern musical environment has a huge temporal variation in contrast to the old environment. Music is been diffusing and migrating with the help of technological advancement all around the world. Old songs with new instruments and new music have a new style and taste which are acceptable to the consumers of Sherpa music.

Mingma Tharbu Sherpa of Bakhim, South Sikkim is an elderly *Lupa*. He points out the change in Sherpa folk music and says “our early Sherpa song performances were accompanied mostly by *Danyen*, but nowadays it is accompanied by modern music instruments.” Sherpas have switched to the new lifestyle; it has obviously impacted their music as well. Usage of technology is quite a commonplace attribute in music now. Rural people have not been untouched in respect to the usage of contemporary technology.

Newer Sherpa songs are usually performed with both modern and older musical instruments. In fact, the performance of the traditional music in new Sherpa songs often sounds peculiar to listeners. Contemporary Sherpa music is mostly composed in a popular music style like folk fusion, rock, pop, etc. New Sherpa music with modern beats and rhythms stands out in comparison to traditional Sherpa folk music.

People migrate to urban places for multiple reasons. With mixed cultures of urban areas, people do get influenced by cultures of one another. They share their culture continuously making a wider dimension of cultural integrity. Continuity of folk music can be hampered or be assisted by urbanization. George Carney and Peter Nash have reflected about the technology in the article titled Seven Themes of Music Geography (Nash, P.H & Carney, G.O, 1996). They have reflected technology as an emerging theme in Music geography. Example given by the authors is to portray the influence of technological innovation in modern society. i.e., it not only invokes marketing talent but begins the process of technology merging content with local needs. Thus, it can focus on geographical (spatial) needs, as well as on its cultural and political desires. This emerging theme can be more interesting in music geography.

Technology of contemporary spheres have helped in the process of continuity of the Sherpa folk music and its performances. Technology has helped the continuity of Sherpa folk music because the music can be recorded, printed, and preserved in digital and written forms lately. Technology usage has helped to explore folk music and its performance widely through internet and various social media platforms. Anywhere in the world can listen and engross the folk music. Demand of such folk performances are also widespreading. Thilen Sherpa, member of Rewa Band states, “Our band performance is been on more demands these days. People say that, they have seen the band performance in social media platmorms.” The continuous development of Sherpa music with the accompaniment of advancing music technology helps the producers and consumers to be more engaged in Sherpa folk music which furthermore helps in the continuity of the Sherpa folk music.

Sherpa folk music continues in a changing and developing manner that has a spatial and temporal variation. The music style, song lyrics, and music performances are changing.

#### **4.3 Circumstances in the continuity of traditional Sherpa folk music**

Traditional way of performing Sherpa folk music has been declining gradually. Performances used to be primarily on Sherpa cultural occasions and festivals. Curiosity of learning and performing traditional music has declined considerably. Shreds of evidence in this can be the rise in endangered Sherpa folk culture in recent times. As the traditional folk song is disappearing, traditional music is also kind of fading away. Field survey reveals that *Ul-Lu Lu* traditional folk song is about to disappear. The folk song *Ul-Lu Lu* could not be fully documented. Only one respondent could talk about it, but not with much clarity. Phurba Sherpa, a *Lupa* in his 50s from West Sikkim says “I



have heard little about this song from my father but I don't know the complete song. I have also not seen any performance of this song.” Without the old folk songs, traditional music cannot be expected to be performed.

There are many cultural occasions and festivals in recent times. According to some of the respondents, Sherpa folk music nowadays is modern than conventional. Pema Sherpa, a *Lupa* of Perbing village, of South Sikkim, says “Our Sherpa song performances used to be accompanied mostly by *Danyen*, but nowadays, western instruments are used.” Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted in Perbing, South Sikkim has also produced similar insight concerning the Sherpa folk music. Majority of the respondents agreed that Sherpa folk music has transformed in the recent times. As time has passed by, the Sherpa music has missed the originality opined by the Sherpa elderly people. Many among the Sherpa community now do not understand the old songs. Familiarity and consumption of old songs are very low in the contemporary society. There are many reasons for this. Some of the primary reasons are as follows:

#### **4.3.1 Usage of technology in their music**

Usage of technology has led to a transformation in Sherpa folk music rapidly. Global music is dominated by the western style of music; use of the internet resulting in new territorializations enables the movement of music and discourse about music (Jones, 2002). Similarly, it has an impact on Sherpa folk music as well. Sherpa folk music and its traditional instruments have not spread widely enough, despite the advancement of technology. Younger generations are not consistent with the taste of old traditional folk songs because of the lack of proper dissemination and the impact of popular music. Technology is advanced, however the dominance of popular western music is more as compared to Sherpa folk music. Norbu Sherpa, a youth of Bermiok, South Sikkim says

“Famous and trending songs are occupied in the sound box of most houses. I also like to listen popular and modern songs.” Developed digitized sound has attracted listeners. Old folk music seems less influential for the contemporary listeners. For instance, blues music (folk music created by African Americans) is still alive in western music, but it is no more prevalent. Popular music moved from Jazz and Blues to Rock and Roll, R&B, Rock, Funk, Disco, etc.

Contemporary Sherpa music is often digitized and influenced by the popular western music style. Sherpa music band of Sikkim- Rewa is being the bridge between old traditional music with their new and fusion music. Instruments used by the band are used regularly in contemporary popular music. Usage of technology is usually more in popular music. Popular contemporary music have been better disseminated as well. DAWs (Digital Audio Workstations) is popular in digitizing sounds. It has changed the old and raw sounding Sherpa folk music to be more organized and digitized sounding.

Passang Sherpa, 71 years, is a *Lupa* (male singer) of Bakhim village in south Sikkim, mentions “people use guitar and drums in the music nowadays. They also dance mostly in digitally recorded songs. The traditional way of performing Sherpa music of yester years and dance with it is rather outdated for the younger generations.”

#### **4.3.2 Urbanisation**

People have migrated from rural to urban places due to lack of opportunity, unemployment, etc., to better living conditions, opportunities, and lifestyle. Some rural settlements have become mixed and urban settlements in Sikkim. Accordingly, the old rural folk music of Sherpas has also been declined simultaneously with human settlements' changing pattern. Lakpa Norbu Sherpa, aged 64, of Okharey, West Sikkim says “Young people are now influenced more by the city’s lifestyle. Many Sherpas are

now living in cities.” Even though Sherpas are not yet highly urbanized still influence of urban lifestyle is considerable. Urban societies have mix culture. A culture group is often exposed to relentless exposures to other cultural traits if they are in minority. Sherpas are in minority in Sikkim. Music in urban setting is often influenced by popular culture which seems to have direct or indirect western flair. There appears to be disconnect between traditional and contemporary folk musicians among Sherpas.

Most of the active Sherpa musicians are based in rural areas whereas some musicians have also settled in urban areas as well. Sherpa musicians who are active in old traditional folk music are mostly elderly in rural mass. Some of the prominent names are Lakpa Sherpa and Passang Sherpa of Bakhim village, Passang Ongdup Sherpa and Tshering Tashi Sherpa of Perbing village and Phurba Sherpa of Martam village. They are unique with their old and typical flavor. Young Sherpa musicians are sited in both rural and urban setting. Notable names are Zigmee Gyalpo Sherpa of Jaubari village and Karma tenzing Sherpa of Namchi town. They are the members of Rewa band who perform old folk and new Sherpa songs in modern music style. Usage of popular instruments like guitar, drums and digital music gadgets are part of their music while traditional instrument- *Danyen* is also incorporated in their music to stick with the folk music flavor. Advantage of using popular instruments leads them to attract the majority consumers of music while the raw sounding music of old songs seems to disappear which owns the essence of typical Sherpa folk music to the elderly. Listeners of old folk songs are numerously traceable in rural areas but few in urban setup due to the demand of popular music style in modern society. However, there seems a possibility of performing the old folk songs in modern style.

### **4.3.3 Lack of listeners of old folk music**

The lack of a larger listener base of the old Sherpa folk music is the reason for the suppression of the old sherpa folk music. Revill (2005) states that folk music is still practiced which is partly fuelled by the interest in so-called world music and the renewed artistic vitality by a wide variety of fusion and cross-over styles. As there are changes in lifestyle and living environment, the music also changes. Contemporary music of Sherpas is influenced by digital sound and popular music like rock and pop. Nim Lhamu Sherpa, an elderly, of Tingrithang village currently settled in Namchi town says “environment in which Sherpas lived has changed over the years. There are inter-caste marriages and mixed society. There is barely a trend of performing old folk songs lately”. Any folk art cannot survive without the connection with people. It has to be lived and performed by the folks, for the folks. Lack of performance leads to lack of listeners and vice-versa. People want to listen songs that are more influenced by popular music dominated by western society. The arguments above may be mentioned in general which applies to the Sherpas as well.

### **4.3.4 Lack of promoting old folk music**

Ethnic groups usually have their own music. Folk music is an art and an element of a culture. No culture and their history have been without their share music. It is the most accepted and practiced form of culture. It is a reality even in the modern world. One case study was done in Hua'er, China to understand the challenges inherent in bringing authentic folk singing into the mainstream higher education music curricula in China are threatened by some powerful forces, i.e., the increasing westernization of the traditional music culture through widespread access to global music media in which western music predominates. They are one of the powerful forces (International Society

for Music Education, 2010). Record label companies are usually not interested in promoting folk music because of this genre not having a larger market. There was also a time when Radio and Doordarshan promoted folk music in India. There is barely any support for folk music anymore. There is almost no preference for the old raw-sounding music in the era of digitized music technology. Promotion of old Sherpa folk music has declined. One of the elderly *Lupa* Lakpa Sherpa is well-known in Sikkim for his music. He is nearly 82 years old and says “I have forgotten so many folk songs because I am old now. I am not in touch nowadays. Our culture is also declining slowly.” However, the old folk music can be preserved with the usage of modern technologies, afterward promoting it.

#### **4.3.5 Language as a barrier in continuity of the Sherpa folk music**

A language is a system of communication. It helps best to tell “what we want to say”.

English Language is widely used around the world. English has reached to a high level where it is difficult to be replaced and nearly a quarter of the world population are competent in English. The critics also blames English for introducing in many cultures and societies as part of colonization (Etzioni, 2008).

Often change in English language has influenced the education system globally. The other language is Nepali in the context of Sikkim. Most People in Sikkim speak Nepali language mainly due to the majority of the Nepali population in the state. Nim Lhamu Sherpa, an elderly woman aged 74 years says “We nowadays only speak Nepali because everyone speaks Nepali. My grandchildren do not know the Sherpa language. They are not interested.” As Sherpas are being continuously settling in major towns of Sikkim and beyond, they are speaking in the Sherpa language less due to mix settlement, inter-caste marriages and migration. Eventually, it affects ethnic language learning naturally

and people are not familiar with the old folk songs. Consequently, the Sherpa language is threatened language at least in sikkim with not effort to preserve it. T.T. Sherpa of Perbing, South Sikkim mentions about the temporal change in the Sherpa language in Sikkim. He says “Earlier, there was a seriousness and importance of Sherpa language but slowly it is decreasing leading to a negative impact on the social environment. The preferences of other languages in the Sherpa society had posed a threat to the Sherpa language. It was almost finished. Slowly, after understanding the value of language that it is a core identity of any ethnic group, there was awareness about the Sherpa language in Sikkim. In recent times, there have been attempt to preserve it.” As Language is a core element of any culture, the cultural identity is safeguarded by the language. Indeed, it has created a substantial temporal variation that has occurred constantly.

#### **4.4 Sherpa folk music: Changes and Transformation**

Sherpa music has been changing with time. Any community is the product of the surrounding environment. People adapt to the environment and change the environment as well. Change of traditional culture into contemporary culture is certain. It changes developing and including new forms of modernity in the culture. The popular agents for cultural change are migration, diffusion, and environment (Gramsch, 2015). Similarly, Sherpa folk music has been spreading with various diffusion processes like migration, environmental, and non-environmental factors. It's always in a transition. The diffusion process occurs from source of origin and slowly reaches various places. Migration is one of the primary agents for diffusing music in places. Various cultures from different geographical regions integrate to form a new cultural environment.

Sherpa folk music is based from old and rural folk to contemporary folk and urban folk compositions incorporated mostly with popular and folk fusion style of music. It is

influenced by different styles of contemporary and popular forms of music. Old Sherpa folk music performance has been fewer of late. It has been transforming to the contemporary folk and folk fusion style of music because people are getting more interested in popular forms of modern music. The age we live in is massively influenced by the scientific and technological revolution (Prasad, 1974). With rapid improvement in music technology, people enjoy digitally produced sound and music. They often like to dance on remix music, *allegro*<sup>20</sup> and *presto*<sup>21</sup> music with strong bass. Development of audio technology like Digital Audio Workstation (DAWs) has also influenced Sherpa music.

Sherpa folk music of Sikkim has gone through various phases till now tackling with political, economic, Spatio-temporal barriers and circumstances. Sherpa culture was bounded by folk music. One of the respondents named Mingma Tharbu Sherpa of Bakhim, South Sikkim is an elderly *Lupa*. He has been performing Sherpa folk songs for several years. He says “We are singing the folk songs since as early as i could remember. I don’t know the exact time of origin but my grandfather told me that it has been performed since time immemorial.” They have tradition of playing music in Sherpa customs, religious occasions, cultural festivals, etc. Sherpa folk song shows that the trademark of their folk songs has been natural landscape and environmental factors. *Suna simbi metok ray* and *Nyung-ma Kaapu* are the finest examples of nature bounded songs mentioned in the 3rd chapter.

Ethnic groups of Sikkim (Bhutia, Lepcha, and Nepali) used to be settled in different places of Sikkim in a clustered, semi-clustered, and dispersed form of settlement.

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<sup>20</sup>Allegro- It is an Italian term for fast, quick and bright piece of music.

<sup>21</sup>Presto- It is an Italian term for very fast piece of music.

Settlement of earlier times was of a particular ethnic group as well as mix of several ethnic groups. During that time, their activities were mostly limited within the boundaries of a particular settlement with limited influence from outside; so, their cultural traditions were transmitted quite naturally to the younger generations and this process reoccurred in an uninterrupted loop till the urbanization became more commonplace.

More than 80% of the population of Sikkim depends on agriculture (Sharma, E., Sharma, G., Sharma, R., & Singh, K, 2000). The Sherpa people of Sikkim are also primarily known for their agricultural farming. They contribute to the agricultural sector of the state. Sherpas of Sikkim perform their custom called “*Salma Soltang*”. At the time of sowing, this custom is performed. It is a prayer request to deity and goddess for adequate harvesting from their crops. This custom has been declining in recent times. “*Damche Lu*” is one of Sherpa's folk song sung during sowing crops in agricultural field. It is rarely sung these days. Singing “*Damche Lu* with back-and-forth movement” is not been performed lately because of a general change in the milieu of Sherpas. Phur Tenzing Sherpa, of Jaubari, South Sikkim, a teacher by profession says “Nowadays people are more involved in the secondary activities. Primary sector like agriculture does not much generate surplus production. People also have migrated to urban places temporally.”

Main crops grown by Sherpas in Sikkim are potato, radish, wheat, barley, maize, peas, etc. Mingma Tharbu Sherpa, of Bakhim, South Sikkim does agricultural farming. He says, “The production of regular crops and vegetables has shown decadal downfall for many decades.” Passang Ongdup Sherpa, farmer and a *Lupa* of Perbing, South Sikkim has recognized changes in routine activities over the years. He mentions “we cultivated potato, wheat barley, maize, etc.; my father used to produce potatoes which were much



larger in size. Nowadays we are producing mostly small size potatoes and the production is much less as well. Some people in our village have already quit agriculture. They are into secondary sectors now. I think the main agents of this change are soil deterioration and climate change.” When agriculture is affected, “*Damche Lu*” is bound to undergo change too. Changes in natural, physical, and socio-cultural settings are the cause of change in society. Climate change also has significant impact on agricultural activities. Large group of scientists working within the framework of the UN, evaluated the likelihood of occurrence of climate change and its impact upon human settlement, agriculture, and social infrastructure (McMichael, 1994).

Song writing and music compositions of agricultural and urban settings are different. Folk songs were part and parcel of their lifestyle and in turn their culture. Their compositions were bounded in these elements and instruments used by folk musicians were also determined by geographical and technological factors. There was raw-sounding flavour of the earlier folk music; however, it has slowly been more digitalized. Altogether, it talks about the geographical environment of a particular region. The usage of ethnic folk music instruments have also been declining extensively due to the proper unavailability of folk instruments in the markets. The demand for these folk instruments is very low due to lack of proper diffusion resources for the instrument. Musicians are influenced by western/popular music, prefer using guitar, piano, drums, etc. Common place usage of these instruments have encouraged people to play this instrument. All these factors have an impact on the Sherpa folk music.

As music technology got innovative and gradually developed, folk music has been transformed too and has shifted from old rural folk to urban folk, contemporary folk, folk fusion, and modern folk music. However, different sub-genres and crossover styles within the folk music is debatable as per many scholars. They argue about the

aesthetically appreciated essence of old folk music compared with contemporary sub-genre and crossover styles of folk music. Within the periphery of music technology also, there has been a gradual shift. The historic timeline illustrates significant events in the recorded sound industry, which focuses mainly on technical aspects of sound recording technology which is chronologically arranged (Schoenherr, n.d.). It is mentioned below.

**Table IV.1** Historical timeline of significant events in the recorded sound industry

<b>Year</b>	<b>Sound recording technology</b>
1857	First recorded sound
1877	Invention of Phonograph
1886	Development of the wax cylinder
1887	Development of the flat disc recording
1888	Birth of North American Phonograph Company
1894	Flat Disc Record Appears- The First Format War Begins
1896	Phonography as Consumer good
1901	Victor is born
1902	mass production of Recordings
1904	First superstar
1917	First jazz recording
1920	The coming of Electrical (wide range) Recording
1928	Recording radio broadcasts
1932	Stereophonic Sound Recording is invented
1934	Recording radio broadcasts
1935	Dawn of Magnetic tape recording

1940	Multi-track Recording and Instant, Portable Sound Recording
1948	The switch to magnetic tape
1948	The New speed Revolution and another Format War
1957	Stereo emerges
1963	Tape Recording Miniaturized and Quieted
1964	The Fab four on American Vinyl
1980	Travelling music
1983	CDs and Digital Audio and Another Format War
1996	Digital encoding
1999	Digital miniatures
2004 to 2006	Major transitions

Climate, soil, natural landscape, politics, demography, and socio-economic environment of a particular place are largely responsible for lifestyle and living conditions of people. Culture changes in time and space. People of a particular place adapt to the change faster or slower as compared to the other site. It varies due to the elements of the environment creating a spatial variation on a temporal basis.

#### **4.5 Contemporary folk music**

Lucas (2019) described how traditional Persian music has changed after the nineteenth century. Since the nineteenth century, the music principles, phenomenon of historical Persian music has been different. Change in Persian music was marked by difficult turmoil in temporal framework.

Folk music can only survive if there are participation and engagement by the folks. No matter, whatever change occurs, it has to continue for existence of their music and

culture. It is evident that the music of recent times lacks traditional folk lyrics and folk music which Sherpa elders talk about; the reality has to be accepted regarding folk music transformation and the demand of the listeners and learners which encourage them to learn and perform folk music. Modern bands use popular music as a central canon which includes rock, pop, rnb, edm and other contemporary style (Vasil, 2020). This popular music is dominated by western music cultures and is different from the folk music of eastern society, or to be more specific, it is different from Indian society. Most significant event in world music has come from western musical culture to all other cultures (Nettl, 1986). Diffusion of western music have led world music to be dominated by their music.

Contemporary folk music is the form of music where people can consume the music quite naturally. Songwriters are from similar lifestyle and environment where the listener lives. This leads to the connection between the songwriter and the listener. Music style and sound of contemporary folk music are also amicable with the ears of folk music listeners.

The debate of the originality of folk music that arises now and then among the research scholars, and simultaneously the necessity for preserving the folk music. It is the responsibility of modern folk songwriters and musicians to balance between the essence of folk music and the demand of folk music listeners, leading to safeguarding endangered folk music.

#### **4.6 Music and Cultural Heritage**

There seems to be a general decline in the continuation of the Sherpa folk music. Tshering Tashi Sherpa of Perbing, South Sikkim, a teacher by profession, engaged himself into Sherpa culture in his youth. He says “more importance used to be accorded

to culture earlier which has gradually been decreasing. Influence of other cultures on the Sherpa society had been considerable leading to near threat of discontinuation of various cultural traits of the community.”

One of the critical steps for preserving the Sherpa folk culture is through the ‘Sherpa music’. UNESCO considers the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2018). Not many are keen on the preserving their folk culture. Tshering Tashi Sherpa says “Our language and culture were almost finished. Understanding the value of language and culture is core of identity of an ethnic group; there was awareness about Sherpa language and culture in Sikkim. In recent times, it has been revived to some extent.”

Folk cultures are waning; it is crucial to value cultural heritage among ethnic people. Heritage is a unique, inherited sense of identity, the values, traditions, culture, and artefacts passed down by previous generations. Cultural heritage includes tangible culture and intangible culture. It can preserve the Sherpa folk culture in the state of Sikkim of which folk music has been integral aspect. Positives of the cultural heritage:

- i) Promotes preservation of Sherpa traditions, customs and culture.
- ii) Helps strengthen the community image and sense of pride.
- iii) Promotes cultural tourism.
- iv) Tools and resources for researchers and learning aspirants.

The cultural heritage is repository of past telling how society evolved. It helps us understand customs, rituals, music, and tradition, which are all integral parts of the culture. Flourishing cultural heritage is critical. It showcases the aesthetics of culture.

Thriving cultural heritage helps heritage tourism. It has a substantial economic and social impact. Cultural attraction plays a vital role in tourism, from the world culture to local identities attractions. Cultural heritage is also essential for the "identity construction" of an ethnic group. Cultural heritage plays a significant role in constructing a particular ethnic group's identity. The language they speak, customs they have, the rituals they perform, music they play, traditions and beliefs, folklores, etc., help construct the people's identity. Language as a heritage is cornerstone of an ethnic group.

Folk music is changing continuously. It is influence of many factors that shaped their folk music. It is not easy for the folk music to survive when there is domination of popular music. New songs with the contemporary music are common of late; new Sherpa songs with the traditional music are not usually performed nowadays. Traditional Sherpa songs in folk fusion style has been acceptable to consumers which has elements of both old and new. The old Sherpa folk music has been slowly going out of favour. Technology, urbanization, change in preference of old folk music listeners and composers, lack of promotion of old folk music and language are the major factors that have affected traditional folk music.

Everything changes according in time and space. Sherpa folk music is constantly changing and developing its new style and flavour too. Contemporary Sherpa folk music with its new flavour will help the continuation of the folk music. Sherpa folk music as a part of the community's cultural heritage is the crucial step responsible for safeguarding the Sherpa folk culture.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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Folk music is about way of life, surrounding environment, and changing lifestyle. Music develops continuously over space and through time, stimulating, absorbing influences and constantly changing as Waterman suggested in his work entitled ‘Geography and music: some introductory remarks’ in the year 2006. Sherpa folk music has also been constantly influenced by many elements and changed over time and space. It has helped us to know about the spatial variation of human-environment relationship and the temporal changes as well. (The human-environment relationship which is also a key concept of geography and one of the main objectives of the study is also fulfilled to a desired level through this study of Sherpa folk music). Sherpa’s have lived in ecologically fragile high altitudinal areas. The society largely lived in sync with the nature which often get portrayed in their folk songs. In other words, their folk songs reflected their relationship with their surroundings. They have been influenced massively by natural landscape and their ecology.

As things change over time and space, Sherpa folk music has also been transformed from old to contemporary as well as registered a tendency to being urban from being primarily rural. People create what they know and what they have lived. So, the changing dimension of Sherpa folk music is an evidence of the changing living environment of the Sherpa’s. It has shaped the Sherpa folk music and continues to do so.

In the contemporary times, Urbanisation has marked influence in human life; moreover, technology has impact on the lifestyle too. Likewise, the Sherpa folk music has been changing through the advancement in music technology. The folk music has often been

influenced by popular forms of music while keeping some part of the traditional elements. Thus, it has created a form of popular/contemporary folk music. The traditional way of performing the Sherpa folk music has undergone change significantly.

The work consists of four parts. Discussion done in those parts are summarized as follows: -

1.1 Sherpa folk music is worthy enough for the study, under the branch of Music geography. This music is influenced by the geographical surroundings and elements of nature which helps to understand the human-environment relationship and how it has changed over time and space.

1.2 Scholarships on Sherpa folk music has been limited.

1.3 Objectives of the study are to understand the human-environment relationship and to examine the changes and continuity in Sherpa folk music.

1.4 The study probes if there is a relationship between Sherpa folk music and their environment? If yes, how has it influenced the folk music as well as how it has changed over the years.

1.5 The folk music has been taken up for the study because a folk song is often an outcome of human-environment relationship. Sherpa has close relationship with their environment which has been analyzed through folk songs.

1.6 Sikkim, an eastern Himalayan state of India has been chosen as the area of study where Sherpas are inhabited in all the districts.

1.7 This ethnographic study employs qualitative method. In-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussion have been used. The data collected has been analyzed accordingly.

1.8 The study has been spaced over five chapters including summary and conclusion.



1.9 The information collected were limited due to time. The challenges encountered were mainly due to lack of preservation of folk culture.

2.1 Sherpas have rich culture of folk music.

2.2 The authenticity regarding folk music is debatable but the core element of folk music is a description of particular folk.

2.3 Even though, Sherpa folk music in Sikkim has an appreciable degree of departure from Nepal but there are limitations and challenges for the comparative study between Sikkim and Nepal.

2.4 Historically, music has been part of the Sherpa culture. It has huge influence of religion and their surrounding environment. However, there is huge difference between religious music and regular folk music.

2.5 Musical instruments described have been divided into religious and traditional instruments. Religious music instruments are used for religious purposes whereas traditional music instruments are mainly used in the regular folk songs.

2.6 Instrument making in Sikkim is significant for knowing the geographical availability of raw materials. The challenges encountered in the process of crafting are too many to deal with. However, some instruments are well crafted in parts of Sikkim. Temporally, there is kind of rise in instrument making in Sikkim.

2.7 Custom is a different subject but while exploring Sherpa folk music, Sherpa custom becomes an integral part for the study of performing Sherpa folk music.

2.8 The term *Yadoshiba/Yangdu-syimba* is of great significance mainly in the performance of marriage songs. This term has a spatial variation in the Sherpa residing villages and the prefix of this term has also spatial variations which manifest the richness of Sherpa culture.

2.9 Seven types of folk songs and dances collected from the field indicates the Sherpas intimate relation with their environment. Those type of songs and dances has been prevalent from early days.

2.10 Traditional folk cultures of Sherpa society are declining in Sikkim due to lack of preservation. Moreover, it has not been transmitted properly to the younger generations.

2.11 Sherpa folk music have been continued through many generations. Traditional performances are in marriage and occasions. Specially, the performances in marriage are with seven types of songs which is performed chronologically. In the modern world, there have been increase of performances due to rise in cultural events. Besides, the performers are been represented as artist and bands.

3.1 Sherpa poetics were mostly determined by the nature in the past, illustrating the geo-environmental specificities of their region. It is changing steadily according to their environment and adopting different cultures in a spatio-temporal basis.

3.2 Old folk songs hold the essence of Sherpa community according to elderly while the contemporary songs portray the lifestyle and environment of the modern society. Meanwhile, some contemporary songs talk about the life of typical Sherpa society due to religious and cultural instincts. Marriage songs are mostly popular in Sherpa society of Sikkim. Spatial variation exists where there is difference in melody and intonation in a same song.

3.3 Sherpas way of life has changed over the years as they have cultivated new possibilities in their lifestyle within their geographical space which are manifested in their art form like folk music. Cultural landscape was dominated by natural activity, old belief, customs and traditions in the past as it slowly changed into modern way of life with urbanisation and technology influencing massively in their lifestyle.

4.1 It is natural to anticipate that culture continues with some degree of change over a period of time. Culture is dynamic in terms of continuity.

4.2 Sherpa folk music is continuous in a dynamic way. Continuity of folk songs with influence from popular music has been incorporated with new events within the traditional events.

4.3 Circumstances subsists in the continuity of traditional folk music due to decline in old type of folk songs. As, old songs disappeared, traditional music got imperilled. Moreover, the influence of digitalized music and lack of promoting old pieces expose the downcast reality.

4.4 Changing flavour of Sherpa folk music accompanied by popular music instruments showcase the evidence of change and transformation in their music.

4.5 Producers create what they have while consumers accept what are familiar and good to their ears. Contemporary folk music not only assist but it's the reality for survival and continuation of the folk music.

4.6 As the folk culture of Sherpas has been declined extensively according to field reality, various steps for preservation in necessary where music and cultural heritage is the best way possible to safeguard the Sherpa folk culture.

Conclusively, folk music showcases the lifestyle of the Sherpa society while the ways they have made for their social structure in their geographical space depicts the developing cultural landscape of Sherpas in a wider perspective. Analysis of old folk songs collected from the field can widely be viewed as communal authorship and accepted by the majority of Sherpa people through the medium of oral transmission. In contrast, Sherpa songs are continuously evolving, but the amount of acceptance rate regarding the new Sherpa songs is very low which hampers in the process of being recognized as folk songs. Meanwhile, there are so many possibilities of acquiring and

preserving the songs in the modern world but the trend and familiarity of new Sherpa songs exist in a harsh reality. Contemporary society is inter-mixed with various ethnic groups. They have a different lifestyle, challenges, environment, and social structure that acts as an agent for the barrier of the folk environment of Sherpas. People consume what they need and what is socially acceptable. Even though there are many consuming and preserving resources, but new Sherpa songs tend to be lost in such cosmic society which is of huge concern for Sherpas in Sikkim.

On the other hand, old Sherpa folk songs are accepted widely but the threat of collapsing is severe. Things get remembered when it's in practice or when it gets preserved. Old folk songs are only in action when there are occasions and events. Continuation and consistency lacks regarding the performance. Moreover, the force of popular music dominated by western society which is a trend in every society in the modern world is a hefty situation to cope with. Meanwhile, there is a loophole in the preservation of old folk songs due to incomplete lyrics and inadequate knowledge about folk songs that hampers in transcribing and analysis process. People with enormous cognizance are also very few.

As the identity of any ethnic group is language and their distinct culture which includes music and other art forms, it becomes necessary to focus on preserving the folk culture that gives identity to any particular ethnic society. Cultural and musical heritage seems to be one of the best possibilities to encounter the existing challenges in the contemporary world. It not only preserves the folk culture but it leads to exploring, disseminating, and attracting the perceptible culture of Sherpas which may support the consuming procedure as well.

Massive attention is required in this context due to the requisite steps necessary to be taken for upholding the cultural integrity of Sherpas. Moreover, this study culminates into a position that demands the research in the long run which should be supported by stakeholders. A collaborative effort from the Sherpa society with broad knowledge is also one of the demanding steps in the future course of action.

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