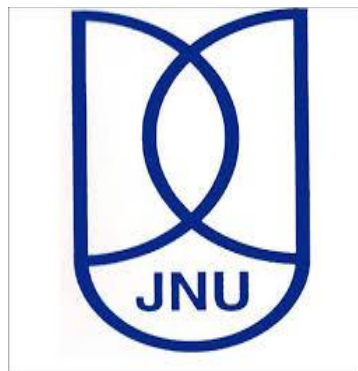


**ELECTORAL RESERVATION AND
REPRESENTATION IN SIKKIM**

*Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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**CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
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2018



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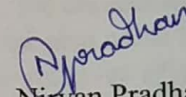
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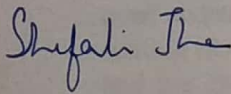
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I declare that the dissertation titled "ELECTORAL RESERVATION AND REPRESENTATION IN SIKKIM" submitted by me in the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY to Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. It has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.


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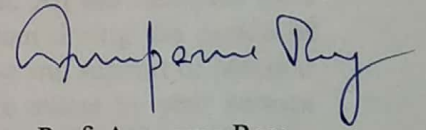
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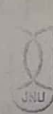
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Life is much more easier and sweeter if we live with a grateful heart and thankful lips. I would like to thank YHWH for his unceasing love for me. You have created me, loved me, nourished me and sustained me. Thank you, Jesus, for your gift of salvation. I know that I fail many times yet your grace and mercy have never failed me. Thank you for redirecting my life and for the peace and hope that you provide. This dissertation would not have been possible without the strength and support that you provided. I pray that I would use my gifts for serving others and loving people with the grace and love that you provide.

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Anupama Roy for going through all the drafts and providing valuable comments and suggestions. The thing I appreciate most was the freedom and space that you gave me in writing, which allowed ideas to germinate, grow and flourish in hindsight. I am also grateful to Professor Roy for her kind disposition and patient spirit.

I would like to acknowledge the huge support of Ama and Baba who have been supportive of every decision that I have taken. Even when my life choices didn't make sense you always encouraged me. The support for the fieldwork also came from them. Dad accompanied me to Sikkim and introduced me to many relatives of ours. Thank you for your care, concern and *storge*. You have been really good parents to all of us. Ama would be extremely relieved to know that the dissertation is complete and consequently I will be spending less time in the library.

Thank you Pragya for providing me the laptop to write this dissertation. Thank you for the vacation and all your support. You have been a bedrock for all of us. Thank you, Rita, for all that you do for everyone in the family. May God bless your heart and life while you constantly serve others with love. Sabita Auntie's presence in our lives has been a consistent reassurance of comfort. I love all of you dearly. Padma Aunty. Dhamba, Deepanjali, Kritan, Lalit Uncle, Meenu Kaki, Pranisha, Bina maiju, Rajen uncle, Nitisha and Josiah have supported me in innumerable ways. I have been blessed by your lives.

I would like to praise God for Capital Bible Church. All the members have been extremely supportive by constantly praying for wisdom during the period of writing my dissertation. I also want to praise God for the love and support of Malakar and the Buck family. You encourage me to love and serve others by your servant leadership. Thank you, Jon, Alyssa, Hannah, Katie, Sarah, Maggie, Abbie and Emma, for leaving your home and investing so much of your life and time with us. Your sacrifice has spurred my heart to work towards loving others. Thank you for all the conversations, encouragement and above all love. Thank you, Jon, for proofreading the draft. You are such an amazing and kind soul. Hopefully I can visit you guys in America real soon.

I would like to thank the members of Hope group of the JNUCF for sharing my happiness and troubles and praying for me in my struggles. All of you have given me hope in the season of despair and company in periods of solitude. I have enjoyed laughing with all of you, sometimes even till my tummy hurt. Thank you for making the Wednesday prayer meetings a time of prayer, reconnecting with God and a time of sweet fellowship. Thank you to Bonnie Ma'am and Uncle C. B. Samuel for living a Christ centered life.

I would like to thank Taylor Swift for all her songs which have fuelled me during my writing period. There were some amazing hits in *1989* and *Reputation* has got some pearls that you need to dig deep for.

I want to praise God for Sangam and Puneet. The three of us remained strong throughout our undergraduate program and even now every Sunday is another excuse to meet you two. Thank you for sticking by me even during arduous periods. Thank you for all the treats to this jobless person. Hopefully I can get a job after this (*Insha Jesus*) and take you guys out.

I would like to thank DJ, Mutahhar, Shailja, Sushil, Sonam Di, Preeti, Rakesh, Tunia, Bhupendra, Honjem, Miranda, Josey, Shahul, Rebekah, Shubhanginee, Prabhakar, Meban, Meilem and P.K for being great friends. My life has meaning because of your presence in it. I would like to thank Protim Dada for patiently hearing my thoughts and giving me insights to make my dissertation better. Not only has he been a warm presence in my life but also an intellectual companion that has always given me sage advice.

I would like to thank all my friends of Chandrabhaga hostel especially Vishal, Sonam, Shahnawaz, Rehbar, Minhaj, Faiz, Nivedita, etc. Even though many of you have move on from there all the moments that we lived was truly incredible. I will never forget the Ludo games, birthday celebrations, Uno shouts, scrabble musings, occasional dinners and chai's around Shiv bhaiya's canteen. You have truly been a blessing in my life. I would probably not have survived during the course of writing this M.Phil. had it not been for your company and friendship. I love you all and I hope that God grants you success in all your endeavours.

I would like to thank my family members in Delhi especially *Maile* aunty, Nauraj *daju*, Apem *bhauju* and Jayden for being a refuge whenever I needed one in this city. Your lives have blessed me immensely.

I would like to thank all my relatives in Sikkim who helped me during my field work. I would like to thank Tulsi Pradhan for taking the time to talk over a delicious cup of tea. Thank you Babita *Didi* for opening your adobe and welcoming us with such warm hospitality and kindness. Thank you Manika Rai (Pradhan), Buddhiman Pradhan, Prakash Pradhan, Gambu Pradhan for sharing your insight and comments on the status of Sikkim. I would like to thank Pabitra Pradhan for accompanying us in the first half of the field work. Thank you Thulo *bhai* for ferrying us across the two states. I would also like to thank Mr. Tashi Tseten Bhutia for his warmth and kindness in taking the time to address the concerns of the SIBLAC with me at his home in Gangtok.

Thank You for your friendship and teaching my heart to love again.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BGR-	‘Bras ljongs rgyal rabs
BMS-	Bla ma che mtshan gsum ‘bras ljongs sbas gnas phebs tshul
CIA-	Central Intelligence Agency
HDI-	Human Development Index
JNUSU-	Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union
LMT-	Lho Mon Gtsong Gsum Agreement
LTVC-	Limbu Tamang Voluntary Committee
MBC-	Most Backward Classes
NGO-	Non Governmental Organisations
OBC-	Other Backward Classes
PT-	Primitive Tribe
RAW-	Research and Analysis Wing
SC-	Scheduled Castes
SIBLAC-	Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee
SJP-	Sikkim Janata Party
SKM-	Sikkim Krantikari Morcha
SNC-	Sikkim National Congress
SSC-	Sikkim State Congress
SSP-	Sikkim Sangram Parishad
ST-	Scheduled Tribes

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

PRELUDE

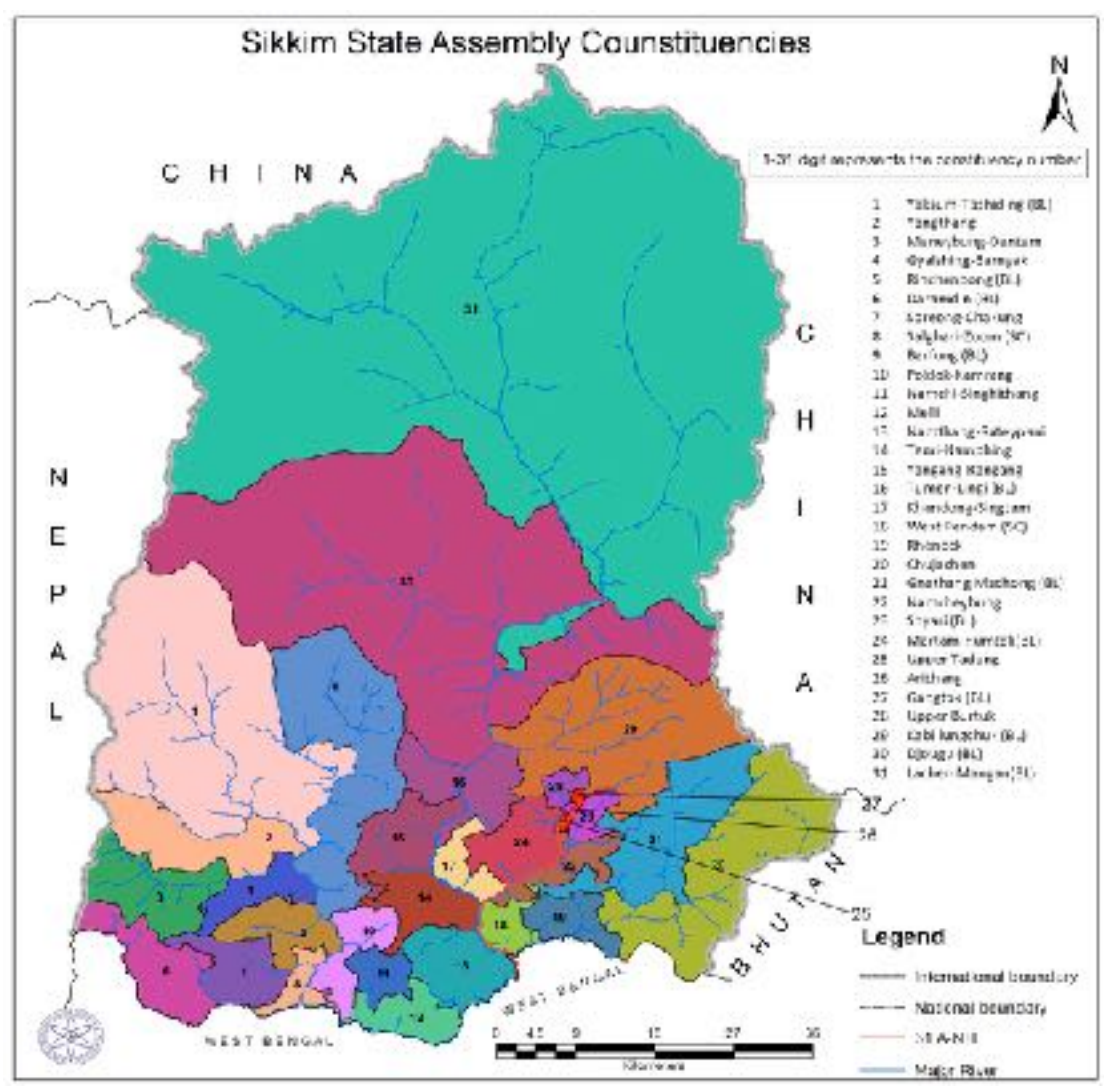
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Ever since the first act of creation, mankind has been immersed with various acts of creation. After all, musicians create music, artists draw upon their imagination to frame a sculpture, designers design clothes, directors produce movies, builders mould skyscrapers and authors write books. If this dissertation were to be recognised as a humble attempt at creating literature that enriches the existing body of knowledge the author would feel that the task assigned has been completed.

This work is a part of the larger corpus of work examining how ethnic diversity is represented in public institutions across Sikkim. These chapters aim at providing an account of the cultural diversity of Sikkim; the contentions over identity; the way the Indian Government has drawn strategies to manage and negotiate diversity and the patterns of representations in public institutions. The work provides a comprehensive account of representation along the axis of tribe and ethnicity. The Government of Sikkim has offered the people opportunities for representation and recognition by following the community-based reservation policy for Bhutia and Lepcha with ample reservations for the rest of the Sikkimese community in educational institutions and government positions. However, policy that is couched exclusively in terms of ethnicity and cultural identity of the population is inadequate if the goal is to create a more equal society in which members of all groups can enjoy the full rights of citizenship.

The framework of the research presumes that ethnic variance not only shapes the uniqueness of a state but also structures the opportunities of access to institutions and the assignment of resources. The dissertation explores the relationship between the various kinds of diversity and representative opportunities in the governance of the state. The focus is on state legislature, state formation and ethnicity. Has not the community-based system of reservation created a new elite within the Bhutia-Lepcha

community? In India, guaranteed representation in the form of electoral reservation is constitutionally provided only to the members of the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. Why then was community-based electoral reservation extended to the Bhutia and Lepcha in 1979? Why was it denied to the other ethnic groups inhabiting Sikkim? What are the socio-economic changes that have taken place in Sikkim after absorption by India and how have they effected the representation practice and demands? Is there a growing discontentment among the majority groups in Sikkim? How have special provisions for Sikkim in the Indian constitution under Article 371(F) worked out for the state? How has the Supreme Court dealt with challenges pertaining to ‘asymmetrical federalism’?

These are some of the questions that these following chapters aim to answer.



SETTING THE STAGE

Sikkim is a state in the union of India that borders China, Nepal, Bhutan and West Bengal. It is the least populous state of India, with a population of 610,577 in 2011. It is the second smallest state in terms of area after Goa. The population of Sikkim is disproportionately distributed across the state over 7,096 square kilometres. Therefore, north Sikkim has a population density of only 10 persons per square kilometre. Furthermore, its population of 43,709 people is dispersed over an area of 4,226 square kilometres. Contrarily, east Sikkim accounts for a population density of 297, as 46 percent of the state's residents inhabits this district which is spread over 954 square kilometres. Over seventy-five percent of the state's citizens resides in rural areas, with the rural population being a high as 96 percent in Sikkim's west district. While the governance of a small population spread over an equally compact geographical area might seem to be of a considerable advantage, this is not so. The geographical characteristics of Sikkim have posed a challenge for public administration and human development.

Sikkim was an independent Himalayan kingdom whose international status was that of a protectorate under India until it was absorbed by the union of India in 1975. The lingua franca of the state is Nepali and the different communities present in Sikkim are Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepali, Limboo, Tamang and others who have settled in Sikkim over the past couple of centuries. Khangchendzonga, the third highest mountain peak with its height of 8586 metres lies in between the Sikkim and Nepal border is also believed to be the guardian deity by the inhabitants of Sikkim.

The main thrust of the research would be to understand the different communities living in Sikkim and how their models of representation have changed over the years. These various provisions for electoral reservation for different communities in Sikkim have set off a huge crisis which is yet to be resolved. Sikkim Legislative Assembly is a 32-member assembly that has its headquarters in Gangtok.

¹ "Sikkim State Assembly constituencies," Election Commission of Sikkim, (Accessed online June 1, 2018), <http://ceosikkim.nic.in/images/Maps/Sikkim%20Assembly%20Constituencies.jpg>.

In 1979 the Government of India reserved 12 seats in the 32-member Assembly for members belonging to the Sikkimese of the Bhutia Lepcha origin and one seat was reserved for the *Sangha* (monasteries). While this special provision of community based electoral reservation was challenged in the Supreme court, the real challenge occurred when two communities belonging to the Sikkimese of Nepali origin were incorporated in the list of scheduled tribes. In conformity with the Indian constitution they were entitled to reserved seats in the legislative assembly which till date has been denied to these two communities. This blockage of reserved seats for these two communities and the larger debate about representation in Sikkim are the central issues that have been taken up in this dissertation.

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF REPRESENTATION

Hannah Fenichel Pitkin in *The Concept of Representation*² offers a detailed and comprehensive account on the concept of political representation. It is one of the most influential work to be published on representation. Since the concept of political representation is used in different ways she identifies four different views of representation: symbolic representation, formalistic representation, descriptive representation and substantive representation. The different views also provide a contrary benchmark for evaluating the representatives. Symbolic representation alludes to the way a representative “stands for” the represented or what measure of acceptance the representative has among the electorate. Descriptive representation indicates to the extent to which a representative mirror the electorate. This refers to the common interest that the representative shares with the electorate. Substantive representation looks at the work done in the interest of the represented. The concept of political representation is understood as a way of demonstrating validity of democratic institutions and also established norms for governments to be responsive to the necessities and requirements of the citizens.

While the existing literature has always focused on whether representatives would act as delegates or as trustees, Pitkin believe that rather than attempting to

² Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

resolve this paradoxical debate, we should try to ensure that the representative work towards safeguarding the represented interests while giving the representative enough autonomy to make their choices regarding their perceived understanding of the electorate's interest.

Anne Philips in her work *The Politics of Presence*³ echoes Pitkin's criticism of any one dominant conception of representation, arguing that, "while the politics of ideas is an inadequate vehicle for dealing with political exclusion there is little to be gained by simply switching to politics of presence." Her work looks at democracies that are working towards ensuring equitable representation for women and ethnic minorities. Her work analyses the use of gender quotas during the selection of party candidates and the delimitating process to ensure the representation of ethnic minorities in houses of Parliament. However, contrasting the politics of ideas with the politics of presence she argues that while politics of ideas focuses on accountability and efficiency regarding governance the politics of presence focuses on what is the composition i.e. gender, ethnic identity of the elected representatives. Thus, her leitmotif throughout the book is that we should not focus on either politics of ideas or politics of presence but rather work towards ensuring a new combination of the two models of representation.

However, this does not rule out measures such as electoral reservation, which maintain the main functions of majoritarian electoral system, whilst appending a measure which changes the social composition of the legislature whilst having minimal effect on the structure of party competition. The literature on group representation is most often seen emanating from North America, where strong individualism has always viewed ideas based around group rights with caution.

Melissa Williams in *Voice, Trust and Memory: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation*⁴ is more forthright in her challenge to

³ Anne Philips, *The Politics of Presence: Issues in Democracy and Group Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴ Melissa S. Williams, *Voice, Trust, and Memory: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

individualistic conceptions of representation. Whilst limiting her analysis to the United States, Williams sets out clearly the reasons why what she calls marginalised groups are forced to press for institutionalised procedures based on group membership. Legislative representation is required in circumstances where marginalised group has interests which can only be articulated by members of that group and this changes the outcomes of the deliberation process. Such a system arises in the United States with blacks and women who, because of a history of discrimination, feel alienated from the political system and have concerns and grievances that others cannot represent. She suggests the model of ‘mediation’ which includes “the dynamics of legislative decision making, the nature of legislature-constituent relations and the basis for aggregating citizens into representable constituencies.”

Like Williams, Will Kymlicka in *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*⁵ sees historical discrimination as a justification for special treatment of certain groups. However, a more complex reading of the internal homogeneity of groups and how this relates to institutional structures makes Kymlicka wary of rigid procedures for group representation, rejecting the notion of ‘mirror representation’ and suggesting that a threshold of representation for certain groups is necessary to prevent exclusion. These theories of group representation share a common concern that legislative representation is an important if not overriding element of democratic representation. There is an acceptance that procedural democracy has struggled to cope with the questions of group representation, particularly where there are groups that have faced a history of discrimination.

The Indian practice of electoral reservation for scheduled tribes/scheduled castes can evidently be legitimised under the outlook taken by the adherents of group representation. Scheduled tribes and scheduled castes have been meted with purposeful political exclusion and members of these groups have faced inhumane discrimination and exclusion. It has led to the perpetuation of separate exclusive

⁵ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995).

identity for them since they have been exposed to prejudice and caste violence by the society at large.

In her book *Inclusion and Democracy*⁶ Iris Marion Young argues about the importance of descriptive representation which could lead to the inhibition of marginal political voices. She argues that a Latino representative will unintentionally represent the interests of the straight Latinos to the neglect of the interest of the gay and lesbian Latinos. Therefore, the suppression of differences becomes a problem for all representation. Iris Marion Young challenges us to understand that diversity of the people being represented is an important albeit neglected factor. Her writings also sensitise us to how the various models of representation that are chosen not only include but also inadvertently exclude. Young understands democratic representation as a fluid process where there are ‘moments of authorisation’ when the people authorise the representatives to act but also ‘moments of accountability’ when the representatives are held accountable for their actions. Young therefore urges that the process of evaluation be ‘deferred’ because the assessment of a representative depends on the past track record as well as their future decisions.

Criticisms of preferential policies championed by Bhikhu Parekh⁷, Will Kymlicka⁸, Charles Taylor⁹ and Iris Marion Young¹⁰, etc. have come from Brian Barry in *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*¹¹ who defends liberal ‘proceduralism’ against the argument that concessions should be given to certain groups in the interest of maintaining a multicultural identity in society. The

⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷ Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

⁸ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁹ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹¹ Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

argument that the state should recognise cultural identities and exempt groups from certain laws and provide special privileges is also criticised. According to him identity should be sufficiently protected by universal freedoms, rather than by privileging certain groups within society and a focus on the special rights of particular groups acts as distractions to questions of socio-economic inequality.

Thomas Sowell in *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective*¹², presents a comparative study of the effects of preferential policies looking at measures which seek to perpetuate and overcome socio-economic or ethnic differentiations. His work covers racial discrimination in the United States and South Africa which sought to preserve the sons of the soil policies. In countries including Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Malaysia sought to reassert the economic power of majority groups and compensatory discrimination programmes in India and the United States which were targeted at improving the socio-economic position of groups who had traditionally faced persecution. He argues that the use of social or ethnic status as a means of tackling differences of economic and social performances is based on a series of misconceptions, which overestimate governments' ability to affect complex social interactions or effectively compensate certain groups for wrongs suffered in the past.

Sowell also suggests four common patterns in the implementation of preferential policies. First, "preferential programmes, even when explicitly and repeatedly defined as temporary have tended not only to persist but also to expand in scope. Second, within the groups designated by government as recipients of preferential treatment the benefits have usually gone disproportionately to those members already more fortunate. Third, he suggests that group polarisation has tended to increase in the wake of preferential programmes, with non-preferred groups reacting adversely." And fourth, "fraudulent claims of belonging to the designated beneficiary groups have been widespread." Sowell's arguments capture the backlash against preferential policies in Sikkim. The socio-economic data clearly reveals that the Bhutia have a good standing in society in terms of incomes and government jobs and it is this group that have also been given the electoral reservation of seats.

¹² Thomas Sowell, *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective* (New York: William Morrow, 1990).

Moreover, this preferential policy has fuelled the group polarisation between the various communities.

The critiques of Barry and Sowell are powerful reminders that equality of outcomes in terms of social background and ethnic group may be unattainable and is not necessarily an appropriate focus for government policy. They also highlight the point that correlation between social backgrounds or ethnic identity and measure of inequality are not necessarily caused by discrimination and even where the causal connection is much clearer tackling such inequality is smoother by focusing on characteristics of social background or ethnic identity, rather than appealing to universal values of fairness.

While most of the traditional theories of political representation focused on the formal accountability within nations, the latest developments in the international scenario have meant that international, non-governmental organisations and various groups have begun to take an active part in speaking for the people and acting as their representatives in the tabloids, media and shaping public opinion. They also “stand up” for the citizens within the nation state. As a result of these changes, elected representatives do not have the traditional central role in the determination of policies. Therefore, in order to understand the complexity of modern representation we need to evaluate the non-elective representative claims and also understand the role of social movements, interest groups and civil society in shaping policies.

In light of the recent changes, the normative understanding of representation needs to be modified to be kept relevant. Jane Mansfield in her article “Rethinking Representation”¹³ has identified four main forms of representation in contemporary democracies: anticipatory, promissory, gyroscopic and surrogacy. Anticipatory participation refers to the process in which the representative works according to what they believe the representatives will reward on the upcoming election and not on the pre-poll promises. Promissory representation deals with the assessment of representative based on the promises and assurances that are made to the constituents

¹³ Jane Mansbridge, “Rethinking representation” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003): 515-528.

before the elections. Mansfield explains gyroscopic representation as one where the candidates “look within” to understand the interest and principles which will determine the basis of their actions. Surrogate representation refers to the process when a representative is working more for the constituents of other constituencies. All four of these are a normative benchmark to evaluate representatives. In her recent writings Mansfield has suggested a ‘selection model’ of accountability which focuses on the impetus of the representative for working towards constituencies interest rather than the ‘sanction model’ which presumes that the representative have their own selfish interests to work for. Therefore Mansfield, through her writings, helps us to understand the multiple forms of democratic representation.

There are multiple interpretations of how identity is related to human development. In his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*¹⁴ noted academician Amartya Sen argues about the danger of illusion of unique identity which can be divisive and eventually lead to violence. Amartya Sen argues that all of us have inescapable plural identities and we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups and we inevitably belong to all of them. Therefore, a person can be without any contradiction a Christian, an Indian citizen, of Gorkha origin, with Sikkimese ancestry, a conservative, a meat-lover, sports enthusiast, a tech blogger, an assistant Professor, a feminist, a spiritualist, a tennis lover, an environmental conservationist, a pianist and a believer in the afterlife. Sen argues that none of these identities can be taken as the only identity and that others cannot categorise the person into a singular identity. Therefore, it is imperative that one has to decide on the relative importance of the different affiliations and loyalties in any given context.

Sen argues that violence is furthered by a fermentation of a sense of identity which is unique and different and this identity makes some extensive demands on all of our life. Thus, he believes the imposition of an allegedly unique identity leads to the sectarian confrontation. Instead of focusing on a common humanity we all focus on how we are diversely different. While the argument leads Sen to believe that the illusion of destiny and the nefarious relationship between identity and violence is the

¹⁴ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007).

major reason for communal flare ups around the world, my critique of the above is who or what is the criteria on which we decide to form our identity? It would seem that even Kierkegaard would disagree with Sen. Can the society we inhabit impose on us a particular identity that negates our multiple plural identity? Sen's classical liberal argument would be difficult to digest for communitarians as well as individuals who weave their life around a common philosophy or particular religion around which people lead their lives and find meaning from it.

Whereas if we do have multiple identities, this narrative can also be tangentially applied to questions of representation. In a democracy, individuals chose their representatives through the system of ballot and in the first past the post system the candidate securing the highest votes is elected the winner. However, since we agree that individuals have multiple identities simultaneously they also have plural interests that they would like their representative to promote. For instance, an academician would want their representative to promote primary education which lies in shambles especially in rural India. Another sports enthusiast would want their representative to pressurise the Government to spend more on sports and athletes in the hope of more Olympic medals. Again, a voter who strongly believes that the Ram Temple should be built at the contested site would want their representative to build pressure on their party to start the construction of the temple. In a democracy that has multiple sectarian interests and voices clamouring to be heard, whose voice should be championed over others? More often than not the clamour around elections rally focuses around the facade of development of the constituency or the promises of employment. Therefore, when the elected representative goes to the Parliament, can they truly claim to represent the plural voices of the society? Which voice gets to decide the agenda? Whose claims are pitted and promoted at the national level? Therefore, just as it becomes difficult to pinpoint the exact criteria around which individuals do form their identity and more often than not they would eventually form their identity around something, the question of which voices get represented also becomes debatable.

Alistair McMillan in his book *Standing at the Margins: Representation and Electoral Reservation in India*¹⁵ provides an account of the provisions made for the scheduled castes (henceforth SC) and scheduled tribes (henceforth ST) in the Indian constitution. The reservation of constituencies from which only they can contest elections is intentional so that these otherwise marginalised groups can be elected to the influential platforms of government. His work examines the practice and the principles of this structure of representation and traces the genealogy of how this was introduced by the British Raj in colonial India. He shows how these group members are discriminated against in socio economic development. They are also vulnerable to political control by the process through which reserved constituencies are allotted. His central argument is that electoral reservation has little impact on the voting patterns of SCs/STs and it only has an uncooperative impact on representation in general. The evidence for any real substantive benefit is meagre and the system only provides symbolic representation to these marginal group.

Elections in pre-independent India provided an opportunity for political expression for the natives but this outlet was controlled and manipulated from within the political establishment and also without. Although the rules were laid down by the British, these rules were actually a reflection of the different assessment of what the elections were for and who should be allowed to participate in them. These rules therefore differentiated between groups on the grounds of social, ethnic, regional and religious criteria providing certain qualifications and measuring the outcomes so as to benefit certain favoured groups. The question of reservation of seats developed into one of the most intriguing moments of political theatre: something which Alistair McMillan terms as the 'epic fast' and the Poona pact. The outcome of this confrontation between Gandhi, the British Raj and Ambedkar was the system of electoral reservation, the mechanism by which certain seats can only be contested by members of the scheduled castes or tribes which in a slightly modified form has persisted to the present day.

¹⁵ Alistair McMillan, *Standing at the Margins : Representation and Electoral Reservation in India* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 2005).

The term 'scheduled caste' and 'schedule tribe' are used to refer to members of social groups who are seen to be at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy and for whom special provisions are laid down in the constitution to improve their socio-economic position. Articles 330 to 332 of the Indian constitution provides for a number of reserved constituencies in which only members of scheduled castes or schedules tribes can stand for elections. This were provided to ensure that marginalised groups would not be excluded from the highest levels of representative government. His research examines the practice and principle of this mode of group representation. Group representation is used in preference to minority representation. Group is chosen as it is a more neutral term which avoids ambiguities surrounding of who is a minority and within which geographical boundaries or social context and whether a minority has to be confronted by a majority.

Scheduled caste is a category designed to include the members of 'untouchable castes' who suffered from damaging social, ritual and economic discrimination. Although untouchability has been banned by the constitution, the political system recognised that members from this group have continued to be disadvantaged and therefore needs to be redressed. The schedules tribes' category is used to include groups which were distinguished by a lifestyle associated with 'aboriginal' tribes somewhat isolated from the wider society. These groups were seen to require special measures of government protection and enhanced representation.

ELECTORAL RESERVATION IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

Cyprus is a sovereign Parliamentary Republic that follows a democratic constitution. The seats in the Parliament are divided between the Greek population following the Greek orthodox church and the Muslim Turkish community. Both the groups are provided with separate electorates. The Greek orthodox Christians are allotted 70 percent of the seats in the legislature while Turks Muslims are allotted 30 of the seats. Although Muslims formed only 20 percent of the entire population, they were allotted 30 percent of the seats.

One of the defense lawyers arguing in favour of the community-based reservation for the Bhutia-Lepcha in the Supreme court (*R. C. Poudyal Versus the Union of India*) gave the example of Cyprus in defense of the provision of preferential treatment to these groups. This argument of the defense lawyers was countered on the basis that every constitution of the world was different. Thus, the Cyprus constitution could not be compared to Indian constitution. Also, they argued by way of a historical counter-narrative that had partition not occurred in 1947 and the citizens belonging to all the different religious denominations consented to some settlement like the electors of Cyprus by adopting a constitution providing for sharing of power on religious basis, the constitution of Cyprus would have been admissible. However, the elementary features of all constitutions were heterogenous. The primary philosophy of every constitution was interrelated to various components like tradition, culture, political and social conditions as well as the historical background. Therefore, the members of the constituent assembly of India had categorically agreed to not provide any communal-based system of representation. This 'basic feature' of the Indian constitution was however kept aside for considering the system of representation in Sikkim. The upcoming chapters will attempt to provide some answer to this pertinent paradox.

STATE AND STATE FORMATION

Theda Skocpol provides an account of social revolution in her hugely popular book *States and Social Revolution: A comparative Analysis of Social Revolutions of France Russia and China*.¹⁶ She argues that social revolution can be understood by looking at their relations with the particular configuration of agricultural societies and their particular states. She also discusses how social revolutions are mostly fast paced changes in society's state and class structure. It is the crisis of state and how they handle the poor economy, food shortage and security concerns to re-establish the state and the role of the controlling class that take advantage of the revolutionary situation

¹⁶ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

that is the focus of her work. The book also deliberates and contrasts the source of the French, Russian and the Chinese revolution.

Taking a structuralist perspective in *Bringing the State Back In*¹⁷, she focused on the central role of state as an agent of social and political change. The book discusses about the changes engineered by state in Latin America, Africa and Asia and the role in shaping national economies by different authors. By comparing the formation of nation-states and the impact of the state in ethnic relations, rights of women and class formation the set of essays in the volume bring about a multi-faceted role of the state that was a change from the earlier ‘society centred theories.’ Skocpol also discusses “state autonomy” as an organisation having claim over its territories and people to work for goals that are not reflective of the interests of society, classes or social groups. She also discusses the role of states as a configuration of organisations that influence the meaning and methods of policies for all groups in the society.

Susanne Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph *In Pursuit of Lakshmi, The Political Economy of the Indian State*¹⁸ discuss the aspiration of the state and the citizens of India. It also discusses the main features of the India State and its relations with politics and economics. The authors have argued that the centralist character of the Indian State was formed as a result of the domination of the Congress. It also discusses the inadvertency of class consciousness within the Indian people. Rather it is the fissures amongst the electorate on the basis of caste, religion and community that have played a dominating role. The weakening of the state institutions concurrently occurred with the decline of the Congress system in India.

The book looks at the various segments of the Indian population that have made contesting claims over the resources and benefits provided by the state. In India the private sector has been forced to confront the state which is at the centre of the

¹⁷ Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁸ Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

policy making. They argue that the state in India is a result of the centrist oriented social pluralism that has defined the Indian political scenario since its independence. The Rudolph's analyse the rising level of social mobilisation and personalistic rule in India which has contributed to the declining state capability and autonomy. However, the range of political mobilisation have also led to more egalitarian distribution of economic benefits and political powers have contributed to the legitimacy of the state among the population.

Sudipta Kaviraj's article on "On the enchantment of the state: Indian thought on the role of the State in the narrative of modernity"¹⁹ provides an excellent account of the centrality of the state in the imagination of the people in India. He distinguishes the state in India as pre-modern conceptions of the Hindu and Islamic-Aristotelian with the modern state that was modelled along the lines of European models of modernity. The modernity of the state came with the advent of the British rule and the response of the Indians to it gave rise to the nationalist discourse. Kaviraj argues that while one strand of thinking produced a critical aspect of the European version of the state and discouraged its instalment in India, the other strand, championed by Nehru, advocated a complete overhaul of India along the lines of a modern state and sought to make a just and a democratic country. Gandhi believed in the modern idea of *swaraj* and moral restraint that was spurred by inward self-control, contrasting this with the reach of the Western State that has become a dominant player in the life of the people because people had no restraint. Therefore, Gandhi believed that humans should pursue *swaraj* based on the government of the self, especially in bodily matters. He also differentiated between internal and external government.

However, the Indian State was modelled along the lines of Nehru who had a modernist political imagination of the state as a vehicle to reduce extreme social and economic inequality. The Indian State after independence took a major role in the development of the economy. The imagination of the Indian State also appealed to the subalterns because they saw in the state an immense potential for social reform that

¹⁹ Sudipta Kaviraj, "On the enchantment of the state: Indian thought on the role of the state in the narrative of modernity" *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 46, no. 2 (2005): 263-296.

would remove the caste system. The constitution promised the removal of untouchability and also ensured reservation in legislatures, government higher educational offices and the government employment. The modern state appealed to the elites because they saw the power of the state as being instrumental to reach large sections of the society. Overall, Kaviraj argues that in India the people have an idea of the state to express their grievances and remove all obstacles, punish wrongs and provide justice. In other words, the Indian masses have an enchantment with the modern state that does not seem to be going away.

This dissertation looks at the academic thoughts on state and state formation. I have used the term state in this dissertation to mean an organised political community under the leadership of an administration or the government. Weber defines the state as an institution which claims the exclusive right to legitimate use of force in a particular territory. Thus, the state is an entity that controls the population of an area through the coercive use of force or power which are exercised either directly or through the assigned agents.

Legitimacy of a state to wield coercive force and power is elementary to the continuity of a state, although anachronistic understanding of the term legitimacy should be avoided. Thus, states in the earlier period were not considered legitimate by the entire population but by the influential privileged class and the repute and dominion of the chief.²⁰ Machiavelli propounded the concept of the monarch as the state. This formulation was carried forward by Hobbes who argued that the state is vested in the form of the monarch. It was later thinkers such as Dante who developed the idea of legitimacy of the states not being coincident with the stature of the ruler but rather being determined by the people themselves.²¹ Therefore the authority of the ruler came from the approval of the state by the people. In other words, it was not the inherent legitimacy of the chief because of his repute above the subjects of the state.

²⁰ Colin Hay, Michael Lister and David Marsh, *The State: Theories and Issues* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 7.

²¹ Ibid.

In understanding the pre-modern period in Sikkim, one must remember that legitimacy of the state came from the nobility and not from the population at large.

In using the term ‘State formation’ this author discusses the manner in which a state comes to be in existence. Unlike nations that are frequently formulated purposely, states are not formed by the intention of the ruler but rather are formed through “a process... driven largely by extraction, control and coalition formations as parts or by-parts of rulers’ efforts not to build states but to make war and survive.”²² This definition of Tilly is largely relevant to the case of Sikkim. The Tibetan beliefs of state power and societal arrangement were also foundational to the arrangement of the Sikkimese state.²³ Thus Tibetan religious and political theory of state power is appropriate as it was adopted in Sikkim with the fusion of political sphere with that of the religious sphere. Furthermore, economic conventions such as that of design of taxation and land ownership were also modelled on Tibetan practices.

Saul Mallard in *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*²⁴ discusses in detail the state formation in seventeenth century Sikkim. Although his work lacks archeological evidences, it nevertheless makes up for the lacunae by a thorough examination of the documents that have preserved the history of state formation in Sikkim. He argues that the formation of the state in Sikkim was not a single event of a coronation but was rather the culmination of the process of events and actions which included war, subjugation, collection of taxes, land practice and social stratification of the inhabitants. It was not the intention of the rulers to form the state that was the motivation for the formation of a Sikkimese State but rather the desire for control, establishment and maintenance of power that resulted in the state formation in seventeenth century Sikkim.

SIKKIM IN SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

²² Charles Tilly, “Why and How History Matters”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, eds. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 419.

²³ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 22.

²⁴ Ibid.

Lal Bahadur Basnet's *Sikkim, A Short Political History*²⁵ is an account by a local citizen who played an active role in the democratic movement that led to the absorption of Sikkim by the union of India. The author argues that it was an attempt to provide an account of the events in Sikkim from the perspective of the common people, as the other accounts were prejudiced and biased. The main thrust of the book is the description of the different modes of representation that was chosen in Sikkim from 1951-1973. The book provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the elections that were contested, models of reservation system, the infighting among the political leaders, the fissures in the nascent political parties and the ambitions of the last king of Sikkim. His conclusion is that ultimately it was the anger of the majority of the people towards the feudal system and the 'special interests' of the government of India that led to the absorption of Sikkim. The first half of the book provides an account of the different ethnic communities in Sikkim, the waves of migration and the arrival and departure of the British Raj. The second part of the book, which is more engrossing, provides an account of the different agitations and elections that occurred in Sikkim.

Andrew Duff's *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom*²⁶ is a memoir by the author tracing the footsteps of his grandfather who had served as an officer in the British Raj. Furnished with captivating letters written by two missionary ladies who served as educators in Gangtok during the pre-merger period, the work is a splendid chronicle on the occurrences in the life of the last Chogyal (king) Palden Thondup Namgyal. Although it is written from a foreigner's perspective, the book analyses the circumstances in the South Asia region and its consequential impact in Sikkim. Arguing that China's annexation of Tibet (1959), Bangladesh's Liberation War (1971), the marriage of the last Chogyal with an American lady Hope Cooke (believed to be a CIA spy) and the fierce resolution of Indira Gandhi which precipitated the annexation of Sikkim by India. Since the book has been recently published, the author has appraised the text with all the relevant information from the

²⁵ Lal Bahadur Basnet, *Sikkim: A Short Political History* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co.,1974).

²⁶ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India,2015).

files of the British Foreign office and top secret confidential files obtained by wiki-leaks. The book delineates the events leading to the annexation and pinpoints that that it would be immature to single out one party alone for the annexation. The book examines the tragedy that unfolded in Sikkim with the hindsight of time and manages to portray a comprehensive account of the characters and figures that played a decisive role in the history of Sikkim in the twentieth century. Since most of the colossal powers in Washington, London and Beijing were absorbed with larger issues of the Cold War, the concerns of the small kingdom in the Himalayas was never a concern for them. Written in a lucid manner, this book is unmissable for gaining an understanding of Sikkim's history.

Biraj Adhikari's *Sikkim: The Wounds of History*²⁷ discusses the unique circumstances and situations that led to the absorption of Sikkim by India. He discusses in detail the tensions leading to the tripartite agreement in 1973 and the special provisions for Sikkim under article 371(F) of the Indian constitution. The book attempts to narrate the events leading to the absorption from the perspective of a Sikkimese and is a scrutinised work on the details regarding the merger. Since, the author describes his generation as the first generation that was 'Indianised', his questions regarding the nature of the merger come as a fresh perspective to the existing list of available literature. The author expresses apprehensions regarding the promises made to Sikkim on the eve of the merger and also regarding the identity of Sikkimese people with the influx of foreign capital and migrant population. This has raised tensions regarding the nature of a true Sikkimese. Calling for a closure to the wounds of history, the book asks some uncomfortable questions regarding the referendum that was conducted in Sikkim post the merger and also about its impact on the lives of the people. It is an analytical legal look in the discrepancies of the merger and the special provisions for Sikkim in the Indian constitution.

Mahendra P. Lama in *Sikkim: Society, Polity, Economy and Environment*²⁸ argues that political institutions in Sikkim have not reached a level of maturity since it

²⁷ Biraj Adhikari, *Sikkim the Wounds of History* (Siliguri: Impact Press,2010).

²⁸ Mahendra P. Lama, eds, *Sikkim: Society, Polity, Economy, Environment* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing,1994).

has been recently installed. The virtual absence of both pressure groups and interest groups has seriously hampered the political institution maturity process over the years. Lama who served as the chief economic adviser to the chief minister from 2002-2009 has argued that the state is the major agent that is responsible for bringing economic and social change in Sikkim and that people's enchantment with the state regarding development has never lost any ground. He also argues for the need of involving and nurturing civil society to develop Sikkim in a holistic manner.

Nari Rustomji was a childhood friend of the last king of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal. The two of them hit it off like David and Jonathan during the civil service training course in Dehradun. Although Nari Rustomji served as an Indian bureaucratic officer for most of his life, the letters that were exchanged by the author with the different members of the Sikkim royal family provide the background for most of the contents in *Sikkim: A Himalayan Tragedy*.²⁹ The work is deeply moving as it provides a remarkable account of the major events in their intertwined lives woven through the exchange of letters. Rustomji also served as the *dewan* of Sikkim at the behest of the king and their friendship and time served in developing Sikkim during a brief interlude in 1950s were probably the golden years of Sikkim. While the author, due to his close friendship with the king, never analyses the intentions of major powers it is the contents of the letters that provide us an insight into the mind of the king who never left a personal account. The book also provides us cognisance regarding the migration of people from Nepal and the attempts by the king to pass a citizenship Act to deal with the crisis. Written in lucid style that is accessible the book gives a fascinating account of the joys and sorrows, hope and disappointments and reveals the humane figure of the last king who loved Sikkim and fought hard to ensure its independent status. The book is a sublime source into the life and times of the king and his family members with whom the author shared a familial relationship.

Sunanda K. Dutta's *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim*³⁰ was almost banned when it was first published in 1984. However, it was the distribution of the

²⁹ Nari Rustomji, *Sikkim, A Himalayan Tragedy* (Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1987).

³⁰ Sunanda K. Ray Datta, *Smash and grab: Annexation of Sikkim* (New Delhi: Westland Limited, 2013).

book that was actually steadily managed to ensure that only a few read about the authentic account of how the Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim became the twenty-second state of India during the early years. The book's narrative was confirmed with the publishing of P. N. Dhar's *Indira Gandhi, the "Emergency" and Indian Democracy*³¹ that India's RAW personally supervised all the 'seemingly spontaneous events' leading to the annexation. The RAW had started the revolutionary ball rolling before the protests by the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin due to China's conquest of Tibet. The book also provides an unforgettable account of the actual story that occurred in 1975, thereby making this book a must read for those who believe India's propaganda that Sikkim's story was that of an enslaved people struggling against a tyrannical king. This work also provides an authentic account of the details regarding the ruthless removal of the king and the installation of a democratic system by undemocratic means. The author conclusively proves that Indian officials were never able to prove the king's intrigues nor the perceived Chinese threat. Neither were Indian officials able to make any specific allegations that were substantiated. Arguing that the Chogyal would certainly have been hailed as a freedom fighter if he had been engaged with Western powers, it was his misfortune that pitted him against the newly democratic, anti-colonial India. It was ultimately Sikkim's lack of resources and trust in the sense of justice and legal commitments that led to the annexation. However, this book is a powerful reminder of the actions of India which were seen as imperial by many observers and the reverberations of this maneuverer will certainly be felt in the future. The Sikkim saga is definitely not over yet with the looming presence of China in the background.

Sonam Wangdi is a retired bureaucrat who served as the former chief secretary in the Government of Sikkim. *The Destruction of Sikkim*³² is his account of the factors that are responsible for the poverty and plunder of India and Sikkim. His claims in the book are quite debatable as his claims cannot be verified. Claiming that there were irregularities in the institution of private universities in Sikkim he claims that a probe

³¹ Prithvi Nath Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, the "Emergency," and Indian Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³² Sonam Wangdi, *The Destruction of Sikkim* (Gangtok: Baba Offset Press Works Private Limited, 2015).

should be ordered regarding the illegal institutions which are functioning in Sikkim. The book also questions the hydro power projects in Sikkim which are benefitting the private industrialists. He also questions the veracity of organic mission, the large scale of suicide rates, increasing corruption, ecological and environmental destruction, contempt of judiciary and also the increasing list of the people who are gaining access to the Sikkim Subject list by corrupt means. The book also criticises the move by the chief minister Pawan Chambling of giving extended tenure to the civil servants who have reached the age of retirement. Additionally, the book fiercely criticises the peace in Sikkim as a 'peace of graveyard' and urges the union government of India to check the corrupt practices in Sikkim. The narrative takes on the role of criticising the government and comes as a relief as the opposition in Sikkim is virtually non-existent.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH

1. What can be a workable solution that is fair and ensures equal representation to all the groups in the Legislative Assembly? What is the way forward towards building a durable consensus?
2. Is ethnic identity a political resource to negotiate with the state for control or access to public goods and services? What are the linkages between ethnic identities, socio-economic status and political claims-making in Sikkim?
3. How does one re-interrogate the seat sharing issue at an institutional level when there are a plethora of groups demanding the seats, none of whom are offering a workable formula?
4. What are the informal factors that are at play in electoral politics in the state that has the longest running chief Minister? What are the position of Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) and the Opposition regarding the seat sharing issue?
5. What are the political, economic and social changes that have taken place in Sikkim after the annexation of this former Himalayan kingdom? Have the discontentment and anger of the different groups been effectively managed or

are they going to take another turn towards mobilisation like the other regions in India?

METHODOLOGY AND CHAPTERISATION

I have used a mixed method approach for this dissertation. I have used the available books dealing with representation and electoral reservation and also delved into books that have discussed the political history of Sikkim. I have also looked into the various pamphlets, memorandums and leaflets that were produced by the Limbu-Tamang communities for this dissertation. I also conducted a field survey in West Sikkim and Gangtok during the month of April 2018. During the field work I got an opportunity to listen to a public speech given by the chief minister. I also got to interview the president of the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) in Gangtok.

I have also done thorough reading of the Burman Commission report and the Sinha Committee report and its recommendations as it is pertaining to the questions that this dissertation discusses. I have also made use of newspaper articles, books, vernacular newspapers, magazines and social media to understand the state of Sikkim better. The collected volumes containing the speeches of the chief minister of Sikkim were also consulted in order to gain an understanding of the workings and ideas of the chief minister who has been envisaging the development of Sikkim for the past two decades. The articles pertaining to the ethnic relations and representation from the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology bulletins were also consulted as they are a great source of information where distinguished academicians from around the world have written articles pertaining to Sikkim.

The first chapter looks at the 'local historical narratives' regarding state formation and emergence of the Bhutia community that have had a primary role in the understanding of state formation in Sikkim. The chapter therefore reconstructs the role that the State has played in modernising Sikkim. It traces the lineage of State in Sikkim that was established by the Namgyals in the seventeenth century and then goes on to describe the evolution of the state and its people. With the coming of the

British Raj the British officials established Sikkim as a protectorate and hereafter Sikkim came under the wing of the British empire. The period saw the construction of hospitals, roads and bridges. They however encouraged large scale migration of Nepali workers who would till the land and increase the land revenue for the State.

Following the departure of the British, Sikkim signed the Indo-Sikkim Friendship Treaty under which foreign affairs, defence and external communication of Sikkim would be handled by India. However due to geopolitical constraints and pressure from within the state the last king was forced to sign the tripartite agreement with India. Sikkim's annexation by India (1975) again saw the end of the rule of the last king and the merger of the State under the Indian Union, first as an associate state and then as fully-fledged state of India. This annexation was followed by huge amount of funds being pumped into the state by the Union Government. The effects of the Mandal Commission report on the assertion of the recommended OBC groups in Sikkim is also discussed along with the various modes of representation that have been constituted during the difference epochs of history.

The second chapter looks at Midgal's state-society approach which provides the underlying framework for the chapter. Compared to the neighbouring regions of Darjeeling and western Nepal there is a presence of a strong State in Sikkim that has managed to penetrate the society and regulate social resources. The state of society in Sikkim is a managerial welfare model that has a huge role in the ordinary lives of the people. This chapter also argues that the large-scale migration of people from Eastern Nepal and Limbuwan into the Darjeeling-Sikkim territory played a central role in the construction of the Indian Nepali identity. In Nepal, the term Nepali was only used for the upper caste Chettri and Bahun and the lower caste Kami, Damai and Sarki. The other ethnic groups were referred to as Newar(s), Rai(s), Gurung(s), Limbu(s) and Mangar(s) who had their own traditions, religions and language. However, the migration of people into the new territory of Darjeeling and Sikkim which was promoted by the tea plantation owners (in Darjeeling) and the first political officer of Sikkim led to an amalgamation of the different ethnic groups. Their shared affinities

and history, coupled with the solidarity of belonging to the same class of labourers, dissolved their intra-ethnic boundaries.

Instead as they migrated to new places such as Darjeeling and Sikkim a new language came to be used as the 'lingua franca' in place of their own ethnic languages. Therefore, the language which was earlier referred to as Khas boli, Gorkhali came to be known as the Nepali language. Since there was a large-scale migration of Limboos from Eastern Nepal and Limbuwan towards Sikkim (along with the other ethnic groups) the Limboos who were earlier present in Sikkim came to lose their distinct identity and were categorised under the rubric of Nepalis. Thus, even though the Limboos who are acknowledged as one of the earliest settlers of Sikkim the colonial administrators progressively classified them as Nepalis. This administrative construct also enveloped the distinct groups which had cultural, religious and linguistic differences as they had migrated into Sikkim.

This chapter then goes on to contend that the Limboos of Sikkim and other ethnic communities were also influenced by the *Janaajati* movement of the 1990s in Nepal. This movement saw the attempt by the Hinduized Nepali communities to return to their pre-caste and pre-hinds social practices, languages and religions. This attempt by them saw the revival of the own languages which were Tibeto-Burman and their own religions (Buddhism for the Newars, Animism for the Limbus). Thus, the acceptance of Indo-Aryan Nepali as their language and Hinduism as their religion came to be discontinued. The chapter also postulates about the economic conditions of the state of Sikkim and how the diminished returns from agriculture have led to an increased role of state and its agents.

The third chapter deals with the question of political equality and discusses the special provisions for Sikkim in the Indian constitution under Article 371(F). These special provision for Sikkim have played a key role in facilitating the entry of Sikkim into the union of India, without which there could have been hurdles and difficulties in the integration process. This chapter also debates the question of fair and effective representation.

The debate over the desirability of federalism in multinational democracies has continued for a long time. In this chapter I have argued that India's asymmetrical federal system has been a key feature which facilitates the entry of new states under Article 2 into the Union of India by ensuring special provisions for such states. As the new state may have a different set of governmental system, traditional laws, religious practices and legal system, their entry into the Indian Union may require a "transitional phase" in the political evolution of the new state. This transitional phase would thus require certain special provisions such as the reservation of seats for communities and religious based electoral reservation of a kind which would be violative to the constitution of India. Thus, the entry of new territory to the union of India would require certain special provisions to be added in the Indian constitution which would have been necessary in the admission of new border states into the union. It must also be reiterated that such special provisions can be incorporated due to the asymmetrical federal structure of the Indian Constitution. In *RC Poudyal Versus the Union of India* the Supreme court has also "justified the subvention of the legal process to the political contingency of admission of a border State to the Indian Union, while envisaging a peaceful and gradual process of transition." This has been the case when the erstwhile kingdom of Sikkim was merged into the India Union.

The chapter also attempts to look at the constitution of the Sinha Committee and the Burman Commission and prepare an honest appraisal of their recommendations. Despite having submitted the report to the Union of India, no other community has been included in the scheduled tribes list. The concerns of the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex community (SIBLAC) as well as the Limbu Tamang Voluntary committee (LTVC) are also discussed.

The fourth chapter aims to discern the paramountcy of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) that has constituted the government in Sikkim for the last 24 years. Sikkim joined the Indian union (1975) because the people aspired to abolish feudal monarchy and reside under a democratic system. However, the political incumbency factor has meant that there is no space given to conflicting and dissenting voices. Only when people are at liberty to criticise the government without fear of

repercussions can people genuinely profess that they live in a democratic state. The chapter also aims to comprehend ‘organic farming’ in Sikkim as an unconventional policy that would strive to escalate the returns for the farmers and in its second phase provide jobs to the unemployed youth in marketing and packaging organic produce. Sikkim intends and endeavours to become an organic powerhouse that exports ‘organic produce’ to the different markets in India and abroad. This chapter also aims to understand the managerial state in Sikkim that has governed with a tinge of welfarism.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Sikkim ranks as the fifth highest per capita income earning state in India. The past few decades in Sikkim has seen Sikkim improve its human development index at record levels. The objective of this dissertation will be not only to understand the models of representation in the state of Sikkim but also to understand what role if any has effective reservation played in keeping the state of Sikkim relatively peaceful vis-à-vis the other north eastern states. One can only think of states like Manipur, where ethnic fractures have paralysed the effective functioning of government services and other daily needs. This research will work towards building a case for understanding the policies of the Sikkim government vis-à-vis the various ethnic groups and how these have played an important role in effective political success of a certain political party.

The larger objective of the research will also to understand the larger Himalayan political manoeuvres that are based on the linguistic and ethnic solidarity of the people of Sikkim, Nepal and Darjeeling. If the demand of the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin to be incorporated in the scheduled tribes list is sanctioned by the Union Government, what would the implications be for the representation in the legislative assembly of Sikkim, West Bengal and also the various government positions and jobs? The effective categorisation of the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin into various backward groups and then providing reservation for them has been one of the crafty

policies of the Sikkim government. The dissertation will try and shed light and also simultaneously offer a fresh perspective to the system of representation in the Himalayan State of Sikkim in the future.

CHAPTER 2

STATE FORMATION, STATE AND REPRESENTATION IN SIKKIM

“If you don’t know where you’ve come from, how will you know where you’re going? ...History exacts its own revenge”

- Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Indian Member of Parliament

“It hurts our sentiments when our fellow countrymen still refer to us as people from foreign lands like Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet”- Pawan Chambling, Chief Minister of Sikkim (1994-2018)

I

INTRODUCTION

Seated across the dining table, my pastor’s son asked me what I would be doing my research upon. I unhesitatingly told him ‘electoral reservation and representation in Sikkim.’ His eyes grew larger and his second question swiftly followed as to what exactly is representation? It was my turn to squirm in my seat as I prepared to explain representation to a seven year old child. I was egged on by his mother and I fumbled with my example about how one student from each class is chosen to be the monitor usually for their good behaviour or, as it often happens in India and elsewhere, for sticking up to the teacher. If his class had chosen one student to be their monitor other classes would follow likewise and hence they would be representing the students of their class. I also continued with another example of a housing colony which conducts elections to choose their own President and Secretary. Looking nonplussed he continued to eat his breakfast in silence as I swallowed mine with secret shame.

His father once told me that any term or concept that we adults use should be so lucid as to be explainable or comprehensive to even a child. However academic discourse has taken the path of extreme complexity which has often left behind and

disillusioned the masses. Perhaps in the future the ever-widening gap between academic discourse and popular conversations can be bridged.³³

The concept of representation is exceedingly lucid and yet academicians have not been able to come to an agreed definition. Nevertheless, Hannah Pitkin succinctly sums up the definition of representation as to “make present again.”³⁴ Political representation occurs when citizen’s grievances, affairs, beliefs and perspectives are made present in public policy making procedures. However, the concept of political representation has various multiple dimensions and often conflicting views are present about which model of representation should be chosen for various states and nations.³⁵

This chapter is an attempt to understand the models of representation that have been chosen in Sikkim. It also attempts to comprehend the repercussions of these choices in the lives of the inhabitants. Even today representation to Sikkim Legislative Assembly has become the focal point for contestations as groups vie with one another for access to representation even as the state representatives sit at the centre and negotiate, identify, categorise and recategorise these individuals and communities. These historical events have helped shape the current discourse just as much as the current categories that are used to identify people by the state has become a norm similar to Foucault’s ‘governmentality’.

³³ This point was also highlighted by former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union (JNUSU) President Kanhaiya Kumar after his release from jail, following his arrest on allegations of sedition in the 9 February 2016 protests that took place in JNU to protest against the ‘collective conscience’ decision by an Indian court. The Afzal Guru case is another example where the academic discourse and the popular imaginations and conversations are not only at opposite sides but regrettably when the two parties do not even wish to acknowledge the other, leave alone converse with each other.

³⁴ Christians argue that Jesus is the representation and the exact image of God on earth. See, Hebrews 1:3 “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” The parallels of the argument are hard to miss. For a comprehensive discussion on representation see: Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

³⁵ See: Marian Sawer and Gianni Zappalà eds, *Speaking for the People: Representation in Australian Politics* (Melbourne: Melbourne University, 2001). The book offers an excellent discussion on the issues of aboriginals, women and ethnic minorities in the representational institutions of Australia and how it can be made more representative of the population.

This chapter is an endeavour to understand State formation in the seventeenth century in Sikkim. The first section of this chapter discusses the ‘local historical narratives’ which tell a story of unity and friendship and a pact that played a crucial role in the formation of the State in medieval Sikkim. The State formation in Sikkim using a key seventeenth century text is consequently discussed. This text prods us to question the veracity of the ‘local historical narratives.’ The next section identifies the reasons for the construction of the ‘local historical narratives’ and also the deviation in the historiography of State in Sikkim with the advent of the British interest in the Himalayan region which subsequently subsumed Sikkim. It should be stated that the main purpose of the British was never to subjugate Sikkim to their rule, but its strategic location and its proximity to Tibet caused them to subdue Sikkim as a British protectorate. It was during this time that the demographic changes instigated by the British, consequentially led to the weakening of the power of the monarch swerving the course of the state.

The departure of the British saw the signing of the Indo-Sikkimese Friendship treaty (1950) and Sikkim’s status as an Indian protectorate was confirmed. However, the events in the international arena, particularly in the South Asian region, gave way to security considerations following which India sought to bring the Himalayan Kingdom into a ‘permanent association with India’. Eventually the role played by the State authorities in categorising communities and allocating representational benefits will be discussed. This chapter is therefore an attempt to understand the genealogy of State formation, State and representation in Sikkim from the seventeenth century to the current date.

TWO LARGER QUESTIONS

Sikkim is a small mountainous state in the lap of the Himalayas. Although it is relatively peaceful compared to the other states in the north-eastern part of India, there are growing disputes among the inhabitants in Sikkim. The three fundamental ethnic communities in Sikkim are the Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis.³⁶ The medieval

³⁶ The term Nepamuls has been used by A. C. Sinha to refer to the Indians of Nepalese origin. I have used Nepalis in my work.

history of Sikkim goes back to 1642 when the Namgyal dynasty was established and state formation took place in Sikkim under the umbrella of a monarchical system. Henceforth the Namgyals were the royal family in Sikkim for exactly 333 years.³⁷

The larger leitmotif of this chapter would be to analyse the historical narratives of State formation in Sikkim and understand how state representatives have categorised the communities living there. The twin concepts of ‘representation’ and ‘ethnicity’ have taken centre stage in Sikkim politics. The Indian government, since Sikkim’s merger (1975) took the decision of reserving seats for the Bhutia and Lepcha community in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim in 1979.³⁸ However the notification of Limboo³⁹ and Tamang as scheduled tribes has put the central Government in a dilemma as they too are entitled to ‘reserved seats’ in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim under Article 332 of the constitution of India which provisions reserved seats for the scheduled tribes. Before we analyse the historical narratives of the region let us look at two central questions that this chapter in particular, and this work in general, will address.

The questions that have always perturbed modern states like Sikkim are ‘who we are’ and ‘how do we organise ourselves?’ Although the autochthonous inhabitants were the Lepcha(s), Mangar(s) and Limbu(s), the composition in Sikkim underwent a change with the coming and the assimilation of the Bhutias from Tibet.⁴⁰ This not only led to a clash with the other communities but they also formed the monarchical system with the coronation of a Bhutia as the first king of Sikkim. Thus, both the

³⁷ The Namgyals were the royal family of Sikkim enjoying the monarchical power from 1642 to 1975. While a good deal is known about the Namgyal Kings and the history of the Royal family, there has recently been a flood of knowledge regarding the lives of the royal family following the publication of the palace archives. For more information see Saul Mullard, Hissey Wongchuk and Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, *Royal Records: A Catalogue of the Sikkimese Palace Archive* (International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2010).

³⁸ The community based electoral reservation of 12 seats in a 32-member legislative assembly has been provisioned under Article 371(F) and not under article 332 which ensures representation for the schedule tribes in the state assembly.

³⁹ I have used both Limboo and Limbu in this dissertation to notify the Limbu community.

⁴⁰ Although the people who migrated from the different regions of Tibet belonged to different communities and regions, Saul Mullard has argued that the Bhutias have evolved themselves to be the Tibeto-Sikkimese people. I use the term Bhutias in this work as the modern-day state officials and locals identifies them as Bhutias.

inhabitants and the system of organising themselves underwent a change with the coming of Bhutias from Tibet.

The composition of Sikkim further underwent a sea change with the migration of people from Nepal during the nineteenth century, largely due to the encouragement by the colonial British officers. This altered the demography of the kingdom and with the passage of time the Nepali community began to assert themselves and question the hegemony of the king who belonged to the Bhutia community. From the period of 1920 onwards, the inhabitants came to identify themselves as Sikkimese due to their contact with outsiders and largely due to the efforts of the last king Thondup Namgyal. After the merger with India they came to identify themselves as Sikkimese Indians. The merger also changed their identity to being Sikkimese Indians and replaced the monarchy with a democratic self-elected government.

As to the second question of ‘How do we organise ourselves?’, this question has also produced varied answers over the course of the different centuries. In the seventeenth century a document locally known as the *Lho Mon Gtsong gsum agreement*⁴¹ i.e. *Lho* meaning *Lhotsampas* i.e. *Bhutias*, *Mon* meaning *Monpa* i.e. *Lepchas* and *Gtsong* meaning *Limbu*, (hereafter *LMT*) was signed, which documents a consequential settlement between the three ethnic communities of medieval Sikkim; Bhutia, Lepcha and Limbu.

This is a legal document which asserts the ascendancy of the Phun Tsogs rnam rgyal (Bhutia) as the premier of the of the public order in Sikkim, which is signed by the representatives of the three ethnic communities. This document was signed in the Water Hare year (1663)⁴² and although the original text does not exist, there is a large negative which was noted down in the twentieth century. This document provides an important clue as to how the different ethnic communities chose to organise themselves. It tells us that they agreed to the authority of the Phun Tsogs rnam rgyal

⁴¹ See R. Moktan, *Sikkim: Darjeeling Compendium of Documents* (Varanasi: Gopal Press, 2004),1.

⁴² The translation by R. Moktan dates it as 1641 but Saul Mullard has argued that it was a mistake based on the wrong calculation of the Tibetan calendar. See, Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 140.

(the first King of Sikkim) to live together and also not cause disturbance by siding or allying with the enemies of the land. It was around this time that the Namgyal dynasty was established, even though they were not the oldest settlers.

The manner of organising themselves and the role played by the Namgyals who were Bhutia, in placing themselves as the rulers while keeping the other communities subservient to their rule, needs to be understood. Moreover, with the passage of time the supremacy of the Bhutia community was challenged with the arrival of the Britishers that took over the power of the State and the control of the government shifted to the hands of the British political officers, away from the Namgyal king. This power was transferred back to the monarch when the British left India and Sikkim in 1947. For a brief interregnum, the last Chogyal Thondup Namgyal tried his best to hold on to power. The period from 1950-1973, therefore, is a time during which the Chogyal tried to determine electoral reservation and representation for the different ethnic groups. In this chapter I argue that the state representatives in Sikkim have always determined how the question of representation would be handled vis-a-vis the different ethnic communities. From the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty in 1643 to the end of their reign in 1975 the state agents have always been on the forefront of granting representation to the different ethnic groups in Sikkim.

Following the tripartite agreement (1973), the state again took the lead role in determining the system of representation by introducing community-based reservation policy to the legislative assembly. This was repeated in 1979 by ensuring community-based electoral reservation for the Bhutia-Lepcha and withdrawing the reserved seats of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin. When the Mandal commission report was implemented in the 1990s, it changed the way the Sikkimese of Nepali origin asserted themselves. While earlier they proclaimed themselves as the Sikkimese of Nepali origin who were deprived of their electoral reservation by the order of Representation of People's Act (1979), following the Mandal Commission report and subsequent reservation for 'other backward classes', certain groups recommended as backward classes reiterated their demand to be included in the list of other backward classes

(henceforth OBC) as it entitled them to state resources and benefits. The State government facilitated this change in the assertion of the Nepalese groups and subsequently placed them in the various categories of ‘scheduled tribes’, ‘other backward classes’ and ‘most backward classes’.

While the larger argument is that although ethnic groups may have existed, I argue that it is the state itself which identifies ethnicities and uses different categorisation for recognising citizens. The Indian constitution recognises the fundamental rights and electoral rights of the citizens on the basis of the individual rights and liberties. In Sikkim the Government sees their citizens as belonging to various different ethnic groups and places them into recognisable categories which entitle them to certain benefits and resources. Therefore, this categorisation of individuals belonging to various ethnic groups into governable categories justifies electoral reservation, preferential treatment and further entrenches State power.

II

AUTOCHTHONOUS LEPCHAS AND WAVES OF TIBETAN MIGRATION

Sikkim is known by many scholars as the *sbas yul*⁴³ or the hidden land. The area has had an important part to play in the politics of the Himalayan region. Furthermore, the history of Sikkim is intertwined with the history of Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. Additionally, Tibet forms the background for much the background of Sikkimese history. Sikkim has been closer to Lhasa than to New Delhi or Calcutta considering their religious, ethnic and social affinity.⁴⁴ Thus the political theories and

⁴³ The creation of Sikkim as a *sbas yul*, a hidden blessed land by Guru Rinpoche who set it apart from the rest of the world as a sheltered nirvana for Buddhism when it came under menace abroad is a popular local belief. This was a safe place which acted a gateway between the ordinary and the pure realm. It also had a religio-political function as a region to run off to in periods of oppression. For more details see: Diemberger Hildegard, *The Hidden Valley of the Artemisia: On Himalayan Communities and Their Sacred Landscape*, In *Mandala and Landscape*, 287-334, edited by A. W. MacDonald (New Delhi: DK Print world, 1997).

⁴⁴ Thus, marriages between the people of Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan were of common occurrence and so was the marriage between the aristocrats and nobles of Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan. Sikkim’s last King Thondup Namgyal was married to the daughter of a Tibetan nobleman while his sister Princess Pema Tsedeun was married to Governor of Gyantse whose father Sawang Chenpo Yabshi Pheuntsog khangsar Kung, was the oldest of the four Ministers of Tibet. For details see: Princess Pema Tsedeun of Sikkim (1924-2008) founder member, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, *Bulletin of Tibetology*, (Accessed online June 18, 2018), http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot_2008_01-02_review3.pdf.

practices in Sikkim were also similar to Tibet. Examples can be given of the integrated structure of politics and religion and the theory of divine kingship, although they have been adjusted to meet the unique needs of Sikkim, giving it a Sikkimese distinction.

In 2004 a group of Indian archeologists led by P. K. Mishra surveyed Sikkim for archeological digging which he published in 2008 as *Archeological Explorations in Sikkim*.⁴⁵ In his book he had noted that the polished tools shared similarities with similar finds of the Hoabinhian culture of the South East Asia and are dated to be around 8,000-4000BC. These findings seemed to verify the speculation by George van Dreim that while the 'first inhabitants of Sikkim may have migrated to the Brahmaputra basin their own ancestors migrated to the Brahmaputra basin from Sichuan.'⁴⁶ It can thus be ascertained that Sikkim has been inhabited by the Lepchas from at least c.5000BC.⁴⁷ It is also accepted that the Tibeto-Sikkimese (Bhutias) migrated between the ninth and the fourteenth century from Tibet to escape religious and political persecution in Tibet and entered the safe haven of Sikkim.

STATE FORMATION IN 17TH CENTURY

In this section I will summarise the 'local historical narratives' of Sikkim⁴⁸ which are the popular understanding of the locals regarding the origins of Bhutias (Tibeto-Sikkimese) and formation of State in Sikkim. After a discussion of the local historical narratives, I will analyse the missing links inherent in the writings. The fact that it has been recorded in written form later during the British influence in the region (late nineteenth and early twentieth century) should also be kept in mind. This section tries to interpret the 'local historical narratives' and corroborates this narrative

⁴⁵ See P. K. Mishra, *Archeological Explorations in Sikkim* (New Delhi: Sundeep Prakarshan, 2008).

⁴⁶ See G. Van Dreim, *The Prehistory of Tibeto Burman and Austroasiatic in Light of Emergent Population Genetic Studies*, (Mother Tongue, XI, 2006):170-211.

⁴⁷ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26(Boston: Brill, 2011), 9.

⁴⁸ The local "historical narrative" of the people is the way in which the people refer to how the past is portrayed in Sikkim. This however needs to be distinguished from the history which refers to the academic discipline.

in the light of a text that records a seventeenth century agreement between the Bhutias, Lepchas and Limbus. However, the ‘local historical narratives’ do not corroborate the details found in the *LMT*. The seventeenth century *LMT* agreement contradicts the local historical narratives in many fundamental issues. Thus, with the help of the *LMT* text we can conclude that the local historical narratives were constructed to advance the aspiration of a particular ethnic group in Sikkim. The constructed local history of Sikkim has a bias imbued with the interests of a particular ethnic group.

Following this discussion, we will evaluate the text of the seventeenth century agreement which is known as the *LMT*. By a proper reading of this we can conclude that local historical narratives have been constructed. This is because there is a marked difference in the evidence contained in the original text from the seventeenth century and the subsequent narratives. This section then concludes with a small discussion on the reasons for the construction of local Sikkimese history which were necessitated due to the various events in Sikkim such as the war of succession, influence of certain lamas and the advent of British interference in Sikkim. The construction of Sikkimese history was influenced by these incidents which were driven by political and religious concerns.⁴⁹ At the end of this section I discuss the relevancy of the history of state formation in Sikkim and the repercussions it has had in the political system of representation. The re-interrogation of State formation and the emergence of the Bhutia community in Sikkim has also led to a break up of solidarity between the Bhutia and the Lepcha communities. Thus, a better understanding of the history of formation of the state and the advent of the Bhutia

⁴⁹ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 31.

community had led to a ‘de-hyphenation’⁵⁰ of the Bhutia and Lepcha groups as a single community and subsequent re-categorisation by the state government.

LOCAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

In this section I will attempt to describe the ‘local historical narratives’ of the people in Sikkim regarding the origins of the Bhutia community and the formation of State in Sikkim in the seventeenth century. I have incorporated the various interpretations of the locals into a single narrative. The sources used in the compilation have been listed.⁵¹ All these sources have been written after the onset of the British attentiveness in the region following the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1817 which led to the signing of the Treaty of Titalia in the same year.⁵² Under this treaty many lands belonging to Sikkim including Darjeeling were returned to Sikkim by Nepal.⁵³ The local historical narrative focuses on the life story and exodus of a prince from Tibet. It also discusses his journey and his eventual settlement around the Chumbi valley in Sikkim. Following is the account summary of the local historical narrative from ‘*Bras ljongs rgyal rabs (BGR), The Gazetteer of Sikkim (GoS) and Bla ma che mtshan gsum ‘bras longs sbas gnas phebs tshul (BMS):*⁵⁴

⁵⁰ The Bhutia and the Lepcha community have historically been identified by the state administrators as a united category that deserve similar treatment. It was the British Political Officer Sir Charles Bell who prevented the settlement of outsiders in the Bhutia and Lepcha regions of North Sikkim and introduced Revenue Order 1 of 1917, which is still in force today and precludes the sale of Sikkimese Bhutia and Lepcha land to any other ethnic community. Subsequently they have both been included in the list of scheduled tribes by the Indian government and also seats have been reserved for both communities in the Legislative Assembly. The category of Bhutia hyphen Lepcha i.e. Bhutia-Lepcha has always been used whenever any provisions were made for the two communities. Following a better understanding of the state formation in Sikkim and the historical emergence of the Bhutia community the Supreme Court has certified the Lepchas as the autochthonous inhabitants of Sikkim. The Sikkim government also has therefore divided the Bhutia and the Lepcha unity by incorporating the Lepcha into the category of ‘Primitive Tribe’ while the Bhutia community have continued to be included in the list of scheduled tribe.

⁵¹ The three sources are the *(BGR)* or the ‘*Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*’ written in 1908. The second source is the *(BMS)* or the *Bla ma che mtshan gsum ‘bras ljongs sbas gnas phebs tshul*, approximately written in 1860. The final source is a publication of the Bengal Secretariat titled *The Gazetteer of Sikkim (GOS)* published in 1894. See Saul Mullard, Hissey Wongchuk and Gangtok Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, *Royal Records: A Catalogue of the Sikkimese Palace Archive* (International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2010).

⁵² See R. Moktan, *Sikkim: Darjeeling Compendium of Documents* (Varanasi: Gopal Press, 2004) 8, 9.

⁵³ These lands had been earlier captured in the Sino-Nepalese war of 1788-1792.

⁵⁴ The narrative that has been written is a combination of the three sources cited above which were written during the period 1860-1908. See Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 34.

The account of the origins of the people of Sikkim begins with the background of the Tibetan king Khri srong lde btsan.⁵⁵ His second son, prince Khams mi nyag received a vision from the local deity who told him that it was prophesied by Guru Rinpoche⁵⁶ that he should leave his present locality and travel to Sikkim. Along with his family, the prince left for central Tibet and upon his arrival in Lhasa he was told that his descendants were destined to rule the sacred land and should therefore proceed towards 'Bras mo ljongs. He then proceeded to Sa skya, the town of his guru. Upon reaching there he found out that the locals were erecting a new Lha Khang but were having troubles etching the central columns of the temple. However, his eldest son was able to raise the four pillars all by himself and was given the name of Gyad 'bum bsags.⁵⁷ They continued on their quest towards Sikkim but in Paksi the prince (Gyad's father) passed away. However, they continued in their expedition until they reached the Chumbi valley⁵⁸ where Gyad proceeded to construct a house.

When Gyad 'bum bsags lived in Chumbi he was unable to have children. Given his adjacency to Sikkim, he heard about a Lepcha chief who could help him with this problem. He apparently entered the land of Sikkim with his followers and met an aged duo and asked them about the whereabouts of the Lepcha chief Teg kong Teg. They claimed that they did not have the knowledge but as Gyad was suspicious he ordered his followers to hide. They followed the couple until they reached a bamboo house. Upon entering the house, they saw the man sitting on a high bamboo throne and realised that the old couple were Teg kong Teg and his wife.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ A lot of the periphery kingdoms around Tibet sought to establish the link of their monarchy with that of the ruler in Tibet.

⁵⁶ Guru Rinpoche is an influential lama in the Buddhist religion who many Sikkimese believe visited Sikkim in the ninth century and set it apart as a hidden land that would be revealed when the religion of Buddhism was under threat. In his travels he had visited Tibet, Bhutan, India and Sikkim while performing many miracles.

⁵⁷ This is perceived in the region as the accumulation for 100,000 champions.

⁵⁸ Historically a part of Sikkim where the Sikkim monarch had a summer palace. It lies in the Sikkim-Tibet border.

⁵⁹ The name of Teg's wife was Ngal. See Appendix six containing the Lho Mon Gtsong Gsum Agreement (LSG) in Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 240.

He described his woes to Teg kong Teg who agreed to help him. After returning to Chumbi the couple had three children within a couple of years. After the delivery of the third son, Gyad 'bum bsags decided to return to Sikkim to offer his gratitude and, coincidentally, Teg also decided to visit Gyad 'bum bsags. They met at a place called Dong tsa dong and resolved to offer prayers and hold a feast to celebrate their friendship. They reinforced their friendship through a series of oaths, whereby animals were sacrificed and the divinities of the land and their ancestors were called to observe.⁶⁰ Gradually Gyad 'bum bsags extended his control over the Lepchas and their territory in Sikkim.

“His middle son Mi dpon ran became the most influential and from his fourth son the kings of Sikkim descended. Guru bkra was the youngest of Mi dpon rab and his son was called Zhal nga a phug, who in turn had a son named Guru bstan 'dzin and his son was the first king of Sikkim-Phun tsogs rnam rgyal.”⁶¹

The second source *BGR* mostly deals with the investiture of the first Sikkimese king Phun tsogs rnam rgyal. It describes the challenges and the journey of three lamas who travelled towards Sikkim in search of a strong layman who could rule the land. They arrived in Gangtok where they found Phun tsogs rnam rgyal, milking a cow. In Yog bsam he was enthroned as the first king of Sikkim by the three Tibetan lamas. Following the coronation, the construction of several monasteries and a fort was initiated. Consequently, twelve Bhutia ministers and twelve Lepchas were chosen as the state administrators.⁶² This narrative also makes use of similar themes to describe the goal of the establishment of the Sikkimese State in the seventeenth century.

If one were to closely examine and analyse these ‘local historical narratives’, there are many pieces of information that they impart. Firstly, they provide an

⁶⁰ This event is said to have occurred in Kabi at the site of standing stones. Kabi is 17 kilometers away from Gangtok. Although the stones still stand and locals identify the place as the place where the unity pact was agreed the numerous visits by the tourists, worship offering by the locals have altered the historical archeology of the place.

⁶¹ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 43.

⁶² *Ibid*,46.

explanation as to ‘why’ the prince and his sons journey in search of Sikkim. They use spiritual grounds to clarify their motivation and also emphasise that it was a part of preordained plan of Guru Rinpoche to open the hidden land.

Secondly the local narrative also attempts to explain ‘how’ they travelled to Sikkim from Tibet. Significantly, the narrative had to tackle the fact that Sikkim was already populated by non-Tibetan tribes and thus set forth rationale as to why the Tibetans emigrate there. This was done through the tale of Teg Kong Teg and Gyad ’bum bsags. The ritual is also important as it recasts the Tibetan settlers “from possible colonisers to blood brothers.”⁶³ The result of this pact was the Tibetans started to settle in Sikkim and the symbolic blood pact of the Tibetans and Lepchas is recollected even today.⁶⁴ The aftermath of the pact saw the Tibetans settle in Sikkim and eventually the sons of Gyad ’bum bsags established their ascendancy over Sikkim and also the indigenous Lepcha and the Limbu population. The realm then grew and all the inhabitants whether they were family of the King or not, became his subjects.

The local historical narratives have become entrenched in the collective folk history of the local people. This projection of the local historical narratives has become imbued with authentic fact (religious traditions). It has become a component of the local belief system which cannot be subjected to scrutiny. The local people believe that any critique of this history is a reproval of those who endorse it. Any person who casts doubts over the absolute validity become equivalent to a declaration that the believer or propagators of this history are liars. “This has become very pertinent in Sikkim because the historical narratives have a political significance.”⁶⁵

In regard to the contemporary institutional debate about community-based electoral reservations, historical narratives are utilised to distinguish the longevity of the Bhutia and by extension their prerogative to be incorporated in programmes that

⁶³ Ibid,80.

⁶⁴ Not only does there exist a unity statue in Gangtok depicting the meeting between Teg kong Teg and Gyad ’bum sags but once a year the commemoration of the event is also celebrated.

⁶⁵ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011),54.

give them social, economic and political benefits. One line of argument goes that the Bhutias are the ‘original inhabitants’ of Sikkim and that their rights must be safeguarded. They argue that they are here for a longer period and are therefore entitled to favourable preferential treatment.

Just like the origins of the Tibeto-Sikkimese (Bhutia) which lacks direct historical proof, this local narrative also lacks archaeological and academic backing. The site at Kabi Longchok is identified as the place where the treaty was signed. This however has no archaeological backing that conclusively provide evidence to support the history of a treaty of blood brothers. The belief in the local historical narratives is extremely important because the authors of these texts attempted to document the projection of the ruler and the consolidation of State. The ritual was crucial as it transformed the Tibetan settlers from possible colonisers to ‘blood brothers’ which was witnessed by both the Lepcha and Tibetan gods.

The preface of this agreement indicates that the Lepcha and the Bhutia became one group and if the Bhutia were to become the dominating group in this relationship then it would not be a case of a Bhutia dominating a weaker ethnic group. “Rather it would be understood as a Bhutia group ruling over another branch of the same kinship group.”⁶⁶ This was however not widely accepted by the Lepchas. In fact, the interpretation of the agreement is one of the key misunderstandings which later led to conflicts and domination by the Bhutia groups.

Another key takeaway from this local historical narrative is the declaration that the Bhutia from Tibet and the autochthonous Lepcha had become one group. By seeking to unite the Bhutia and the Lepcha as a single group, the narrative sought to advance the aspiration of the Bhutia ethnic group in Sikkim. This binding of the Bhutia and the Lepcha as a single category sought to deflect any questions regarding the foreign origin of the Bhutia as well as included them in any policy that favoured the autochthonous Lepcha community in the future. Choosing to exclude the Limbu from the local historical narrative was also a deliberate decision because they sought

⁶⁶ Ibid,80.

to marginalise this group. The State power enjoyed by the Bhutia community in the early seventeenth century and the eighteenth century empowered them to bind the Bhutia with the Lepcha as a single category and also exclude the Limbu. This decision has been decisive in the advantages enjoyed by the Bhutia community and the disadvantages faced by the Limbu not only regarding representation but also regarding benefits provided by the state.

REVISITING STATE FORMATION IN THE 17TH CENTURY USING *LO-MON GTSONG GSUM (LMG) AGREEMENT*

Let us now look at a key text which altogether revises our understanding of state formation in the seventeenth century Sikkim. The source of this text is a legitimate record which was sanctioned by the representatives of the three ethnic communities recognising the authority of the Phun tshogs nam rgyal as the leader of the solo political order in Sikkim. It was countersigned in the Water Hare year (1663). The original document has no longer survived but there is a large negative taken during the twentieth century. A reading of this text not only leads us to accept the local historical narratives as being constructed but the entire ‘blood brotherhood’ and the formation of the state as a result of a peaceful union between two leaders of the different ethnic communities as manufactured. The text *LMG* underlines that it is a treaty of agreement between the leaders of the different ethnic communities of the area, notably the Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo, agreeing to the acceptance of the authority of Phun tshogs nam rgyal. This acceptance of the superiority of Phun tshogs nam rgyal however, transpired not by a peaceful pact (blood brothers), but rather was signed at the end of an antecedent domestic uprising or struggle instigated by the Lepcha and Limbu communities.⁶⁷ This section is concluded with a discussion on how the construction of local historical narratives occurred and also the rationale for doing so.

While a conclusive evidence of state formation in seventeenth century Sikkim is difficult without archeological evidences, we can comprehend this through the help

⁶⁷ Ibid,31.

of a key text of this period. To understand the state formation of Sikkim in the seventeenth century we can comprehend the process through a key text which is known as *The Lho-Mon-Gtsong sum agreement*⁶⁸ on account of the fact that it records a historic agreement between the three ethnic communities of Sikkim: Lho pa (Bhutia), Mon (Lepcha) and the Gtsong (Limbu). By using the text of the oath of agreement that was signed by the representatives of the state and other leaders from the different ethnic communities of the area we can understand the state formation in Sikkim not as a gradual peaceful process through ‘blood brotherhood’ but rather as a process that came about at the end of a domestic uprising or struggle that was organised by the Lepcha and the Limbu communities in opposition to Phun tshogs rnam rgyal.⁶⁹ This text states that from the date of signing the treaty the different ethnic groups in Sikkim accepted the rule of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal and henceforth agreed to not side with outsiders in case of an external attack.

Following is a summary of the main contents of the *LMG* agreement. The first section of the document basically deals with the invocation of the various deities of the Tibetan tradition. This is a recognition of the supremacy of Buddhism along with an intercession to the deities to bear witness to the agreement/treaty that was to be signed. Saul Mullard has argued that this innovation of various deities signifies that people in seventeenth century Sikkim probably believed in the power of the gods and also feared repercussions if they violated the terms of the oath.⁷⁰ It also mentions the local deities which underlines the fact that the representatives of the Sikkimese kingdom recognised the religious diversity of the area and would also be simultaneously helpful in binding the signatories to the oath they had undertaken.

The second section divulges the representatives of the different ethnic communities i.e. Limbu and the Lepcha who had come to sign the treaty. It propounds that earlier there was an internal rebellion by the Limbu and Lepcha communities

⁶⁸ See Annexure A

⁶⁹ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 31.

⁷⁰ Ibid,144.

against the rule of the Chos rgyal family. It is disclosed that they had hammered out a deal wherein a single government for the Bhutia, Lepcha and the Limbu would be formed. After the rebellion they had congregated as they wanted to establish peace and solidarity among the different ethnic communities. Furthermore, they had gathered in the place of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal to concede his dominance and accept the subordination of the three ethnic communities under his political order. The signing of the document by the different leaders also legitimised the reign of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal in the area.

The third section deals with the signatories who are either ministers or leaders. It also mentions that after the *Mon pa* war, or internal rebellion, they came together to end the hostilities and sign a peace treaty. The signing of the document also specified that the signatories must obey the directives and charges of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal in the future.

The fourth section deals with the theme of territorial integrity and warns of the consequence of breaking the oath they had taken. It summoned the deities mentioned in the beginning of the treaty to come and deal harshly with the oath-breakers in case of betrayal. The treaty also promised wealth and long life to the signatories if they obeyed the leadership of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal and provide help whenever any need arose for the same. However, it also mentioned that those who break their oaths would be liable to pay fines in terms of gold, physical punishment and in severe breaches of violation, they would be put to death. This document shows the supremacy and predominance the Phun tsogs rnam rgyal in the region. The last section deals with the list of signatories and their places of power which can be surmised as falling in modern western Sikkim, eastern Nepal (Limbuwan) and south Sikkim.⁷¹

The *LMG* therefore establishes that the reign of Phun Tshogs rnam rgyal was not uncontested but rather was one that was opposed by non-Bhutia local groups. Their defeat, however, led to the incorporation of their territory by the victorious ruler. We can thus establish that there is a huge inconsistency and disagreement

⁷¹ Ibid,151.

between the local historical narratives and the actual State formation in seventeenth century Sikkim.

UNDERSTANDING THE RATIONALE BEHIND CONSTRUCTION OF LOCAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

To comprehend how the construction of the local historical narrative occurred and became a widespread belief system, we must understand the key factors that led to this construction. The first war of succession (1699-1708) occurred in Sikkim between two different groups in the aristocratic class over the rightful descendant to the throne. Its aftermath saw the advent of the British influence in the Himalayas and ultimately British rule was established in Sikkim in 1888. The Sikkimese State in the seventeenth century emerged out of a network of many small ethnic independent or semi-independent proto-states as a result of war and diplomacy.⁷² The definition of Tilly regarding state formation is categorically applicable in Sikkim:

“Unlike nations that are frequently formulated intentionally, states are not formed by the intention of the ruler but rather are formed through a process... driven largely by extraction, control and coalition formations as parts or by-parts of ruler’s efforts not to build states but to make war and survive.”⁷³

This definition is certainly relevant to the case of state formation in Sikkim. The formation of the state was a political event which occurred due to the desire of the first king Phun tshogs nam rgyal to expand his powers, authority and wealth. The *LMG* treaty also gave legitimacy to the leadership of Phun tshogs nam rgyal.

Two key documents i.e. *BMS* and *BGR* pertaining to local historical narratives were written during the British period. British rule in Sikkim had a huge impact on Sikkimese society, and their interpretation of culture, religion and history underwent a drastic change due to this period. The large-scale destruction and loss during the course of War of Succession (1699-1708), Sikkim-Gorkha war (1788-1792) and the Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-1816) also played a key role in shaping these narratives.

⁷² Ibid,196.

⁷³ Tilly Charles, “Why and How History Matters” in *The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis*, eds. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 419.

Through the war of succession and the establishment of the Pemayangtse monastery and the Lha btsun tradition as the dominant powerhouse in Sikkim came the reinterpretation of Sikkimese history. The royal family who was in exile in Kalimpong and to whom *BMS* is attributed gave a religious interpretation to the activities of the Tibetan lamas who actually had fled Tibet to escape religious persecution “as a fulfilment of the prophecies of Guru Rinpoche.”⁷⁴

Sikkim’s later traditions following those of Tibet was dominated by religious scholars who interpreted histories in accordance with their religious beliefs. This interpretation led to a historiography that over emphasised the religious undermining without considering the critical aspect of the history. Thus, the construction of the local Sikkimese history revolved around the fruition of a divine prophecy that was born and accepted as the histories of the 19th and 20th century.⁷⁵ Furthermore there had been a tendency to portray Sikkim’s history as that of a nation which was in process to nationhood. Thus, in order to protect Sikkim’s independent status, they chose to portray the independent history of Sikkim as a challenge to the British claims of suzerainty. These local historical narratives were also constructed by the religious and political elites to advance the aspiration of the Bhutia ethnic group in Sikkim. As has already been mentioned earlier, this narrative sought to entrench the idea that the Bhutia and Lepcha had become one group. This not only deflected the issue of Tibetan origin of the Bhutia community but also included them to any benefits that favoured the autochthonous Lepcha community in the future. It was the access to state power enjoyed by the Bhutia that empowered them to construct the Bhutia-Lepcha as blood brothers history. The exclusion of the Limbu also had repercussions regarding access to benefits and representation of this community in the future.

III

THE BRITISH ERA (1886-1947)

⁷⁴ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 185.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 186-188.

Until the appearance of British in Himalayan affairs in 1817, the Sikkimese State was racked by internal conflict as well as external hostilities, especially with the Gorkha kingdom. Moreover, the changing political position in the Himalayas with regard to Tibet and Nepal caused further impact in the political fortunes of Sikkim. During the 1780s and 1790s Sikkim came under pressure from the eastward expansion of the Gorkha kingdom. During the Sino-Nepalese War of 1788-1792 the Gorkhas invaded Sikkim and captured the territory up to the Teesta river including all the modern districts of south and west Sikkim as well as Darjeeling. Although Sikkim was able to regain some lost territory after the peace treaty between China and Nepal, Nepal retained possession of all Sikkimese territory up to the Teesta river. The Sikkimese felt cheated and angry with both China and Nepal and the chance to exact revenge on Nepal came in the Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-1816), which gave them back their possessions west of the Teesta. Following this they ignored China's request to avoid contact with the British and had many confrontations as well as signed agreements with the British officials.

In this section I discuss the advent of the British interest in the Himalayan region. Compared to the strong, advanced and modern model of state that was a forte of the British Raj, the state and the monarchy in Sikkim remained factious, backward and feudal. However, it was the British encouragement of migration from Nepal into Sikkim that not only changed the demography of the region but also had a major impact in the future of the state. During this period the *de-facto* ruler in Sikkim was the British Political officer who was in charge of the internal administration in Sikkim and the King from the Namgyal dynasty was reduced to a *de jure* ruler. The British era in Sikkim had a major impact as the whole system of taxation in Sikkim was overhauled to a more centralised configuration, the rule of monarch was replaced with a rule by a Council with the British Political officer in charge, and the first census detailing the physiography and population was carried out. The British also modernised the state in Sikkim by introducing courts, police, school education and a fixed rate of taxation.

The splendid two-story Victorian mansion built in the style of a typical country house perched atop Gangtok is an imposing reminder of the role that the British Raj played in the history of Sikkim.⁷⁶ Today it is the official residence the Governor of Sikkim and has been described by Sir Basil Gould as “perhaps the most attractive medium-sized home in the whole of India.”⁷⁷ It is perhaps ironical that this house which hosted the *de facto* political head of Sikkim during the British era now hosts the *de jure* head (Governor) of Sikkim after its merger with India.

The residency came into existence as a result of a conflict which arose in 1886 between Tibet and British India over the occupation of a fort within Sikkimese territory by the Tibetans. To check Tibetan influence in Sikkim it was thought necessary to appoint a political officer in Gangtok.⁷⁸ J. C. White was asked by the British Raj to remain in Sikkim with the title of the Political Officer and administer the State with the help of a Council which was to be composed of the chief dewans, Lamas and Kazis. He was to serve as the President of the council.⁷⁹ The first Political Officer Jean Claude White (1853-1918) was the most assertive, influential and impactful British official posted in the position.⁸⁰ He constructed roads, bridges and bungalows and also introduced schools and hospitals in Sikkim. However, his most impactful decision was that he “encouraged industrious immigrants from Nepal to settle in the almost unpopulated southern areas of the state.”⁸¹ This decision of J. C. White to encourage migration changed the course of the Sikkimese population and demography as well as altered the ethnic balance of this sparsely populated state.

⁷⁶ Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, “The British Residency in The Himalayan State of Sikkim: A Heritage Building Restored to Its Former Glory,” *Bulletin of Tibetology* (2008): 171.

⁷⁷ John Gould Basil, *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollections of an Indian Political Officer* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957),168.

⁷⁸ See the Preface of John Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier 1897-1908* (New York: Longmans,1909).

⁷⁹ This was a proposal which Claude admits he accepted with diffidence as it was an absolute change from his own profession of an engineer in Darjeeling.

⁸⁰ Of course, I use that phrase only for British Political Officers. While the last Indian Political Officers was no less impactful and authoritative, their motives were far different from those of the British Political Officers.

⁸¹ John Gould Basil, *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollections of an Indian Political Officer* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957),169.

J. C. White has mentioned in his account that he walked almost every corner of the beautiful mountain country of Sikkim and met the heterogenous population of Lepchas, Bhutias, Tibetans and *Paharias*. It is noteworthy that he does not employ the term Nepalese but rather describes them as *Paharias*.⁸² While the *de jure* head of Sikkim was the descendant of Phun Tsogs nam rgyal the real power was under the British control. The very fact that the British residency was located at a higher ridge than the palace, gives one an indication as to White's views about who was superior in Sikkim.⁸³ We can thus conclude that the real power of the state therefore had passed on to the hands of the British and their decisions again played an important role in regard to ethnic population and categorisation in Sikkim. The first census in Sikkim was carried out in 1891 and mentioned thirteen races or castes namely Lepcha, Bhutia, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang, Rai, Jimdar, Khambu, Kami, Brahman, Chetri, Magar, Newar, Slaves and Dirzi.⁸⁴

The British Raj which controlled the state power in Sikkim from 1888 to 1947 encouraged the settlement of Nepalese because the state coffers were empty and White needed some means by which the revenue of the state could be raised. According to White the whole country was in a chaos as there was "no revenue system because the Maharaja took what he wanted from the people and there were no courts, no police, no public works and certainly no education."⁸⁵ Therefore in order to include more land under farming and to increase the number of produce and the revenue of the country, large scale immigration was encouraged from Nepal. This was also encouraged because they believed that since the "Lepchas... were steadily dying

⁸² See the Preface of John Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier 1897-1908* (New York: Longmans, 1909).

⁸³ "British influence was symbolised by the concrete road which ran from the Maharaja's palace to the British Residency." For details see Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre, 1904-1947* No. 14 (London: Psychology Press, 1997).

⁸⁴ H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1894. (Accessed online June 11, 2018), http://sikkimarchives.gov.in/download/old_sikkim_documents/GAZETTEER.pdf, 27.

⁸⁵ See John Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier 1897-1908* (New York: Longmans, 1909), 26.

out; that the incoming of the unoccupied land by the industrious Newars and Goorkhas of Nepal⁸⁶ would act as bulwark against the Tibetan influence.”⁸⁷

We can conclude that while Sikkim did exist as stateless space before the seventeenth century and was mostly a refuge for the people escaping political and religious persecution in Tibet, a State was formed and remained although it was weak at times. Until the arrival of the British this state continued to exercise control over its people by collecting taxes and also occasionally fought off Bhutanese and Gorkha expansion. However, with the coming of the British the State was rapidly modernised along the lines of a British colony. The modern Indian State in Sikkim is also a successor state to the earlier Sikkimese State.⁸⁸

Following the establishment of the British Political officer the British Raj maintained a constant presence in Sikkim since 1890 and there was a mutual cooperation between the British Political officer and the Namgyal monarch. While the British got an acquiescence ruler in Sikkim the Namgyal monarch also realised that the British provided valuable stability and protection.⁸⁹ Each year the incumbent Political officer filed a short reports on the progress of in the kingdom and stated that the system of governance in Sikkim was: “based on the good old patriarchal monarchy of ancient days of oriental civilisation where subjects stand as children of the ruler; and with the simple hill people unaffected by the virus of democracy and elections, the system works excellently.”⁹⁰

By the period of early 1940s World War II was ongoing but it seemed like a 'distant nightmare' in Sikkim. The end of the war however brought a prospect of

⁸⁶ They believed that the Gorkhas were the hereditary enemies of Tibetans. While Sikkim bore the brunt of the British-Tibetan rivalry it was the Gorkha card which was played by the British to strengthen their position in Sikkim. In fact, Risley wrote that: “In Sikkim, as in India, Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism, and the praying-wheel of the Lama will give place to the sacrificial implements of the Brahman. The land will follow the creed; the Tibetan proprietors will gradually be dispossessed, and will betake themselves to the petty trade for which they have an undeniable aptitude.” See H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1894) xxi.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and The Construction of Sikkimese History*, Vol. 26 (Boston: Brill, 2011), 190.

⁸⁹ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015), 22.

⁹⁰ Sikkim State Admin Report 1932-2(IOR V/ 10/1980, British Library).

change for Sikkim. It was inevitable that with the weakening of the British Empire they would retreat from India. While half of the Indian states were run by the British Government, the rest of them were a part of independent kingdoms, known as the Princely States. While all of them had accepted the British Raj over them as predominant they were also nominally sovereign. Sikkim had been admitted to the Indian 'Chamber of Princes' in 1935 but had been recognised as a unique state given its geopolitical location, Buddhist leanings and religious ties to Tibet.⁹¹ Determined to ensure its independence from India, the Prince Palden Thondup Namgyal persuaded Nehru to pass a resolution stating that Bhutan and Sikkim were 'not Indian states' and that their future should be brokered separately.⁹² Eventually India attained its independence from the British Raj in 1947.

⁹¹ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015), 22.

⁹² *Ibid*, 30.

IV

STATE FORMATION IN INDIA IN 1947 AND ITS IMPACT IN SIKKIM

In this section I discuss in brief India's response concerning its relationship with the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim. Doing so would give us a good understanding of why the Indian government chose to absorb Sikkim into the union of India. This absorption saw an international outcry from India's neighbours but India stood firm in its decision to absorb Sikkim. I also analyse which of these perspectives provides the most plausible explanation regarding the absorption of Sikkim into the Indian union (1975). There were two particular stands that played a determining factor in shaping India's relationship with Sikkim.

First were the nationalists who were initially puzzled as to the stature and strength of the alien rulers. The British did not conquer India all at once. In fact, they conquered large number of independent kingdoms that became political India during their period of rule.⁹³ The nationalists were perplexed as to how a small group of foreign rulers could control a territory of such vastness and diversity. Their conclusion led them to believe that it was not the military superiority but rather it was the 'national spirit' which was the stratagem of the "modern nation-state which produced a new constitutive relationship between a people and their state."⁹⁴ Thus the Indian nationalist discourse was born which was convinced that the only way to shake the hold of the colonial powers of the British nation state was to kindle a conviction of nationalism of their own and eventually gain freedom by the foundation of an Indian nation state. It was appealing to the modern upper class since they saw that there was an enormous advantage to be gained from the expansion of the modern form of the state over society. The political elites also understood that the international political order was also getting shaped along the lines of the modern nation state and therefore India could also take her place in this international order by taking a form of sovereign modern state.

⁹³ Sudipta Kaviraj, "On the enchantment of the state: Indian thought on the role of the state in the narrative of modernity" *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 46, no. 2 (2005): 273.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 279.

The nationalist perspective was best represented by Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru had a Himalayan bias and was fixated with the idea of a pan Asian solidarity that would form a ‘third way’ in the international scenario reeling under a possible cold war. Therefore, Nehru was of the view that Sikkim should remain a buffer zone alongside Bhutan and their pre-1947 status should continue.⁹⁵ In 1953 Nehru ‘who harboured an abiding love for the Himalayan states and for Sikkim in particular visited Sikkim with his daughter Indira Gandhi’.⁹⁶

However, Nehru was also dreaming of Asian federation of nations and made many concessions to the Chinese such as downgrading the representation to Tibet to a consul general, withdrew military escort in the Chumbi valleys and handed over the *dak* bungalows present there in a bid to improve Sino-India relationship. Nehru signed the Panchsheel Pact in 1954 and this ensured that India would never again intervene in Tibet. Nehru again visited Sikkim in 1958 enroute to Bhutan and admitted that he ‘dreamed of passing the twilight of his life in a quiet retreat’ in the country where he ‘could contemplate and record the essence of his life’s experience’.⁹⁷

In 1959 however, the military operations in Lhasa spiralled out of control leading to escalating violence. Nehru however refused to lend military support to the Dalai Lama as he was keen that India and China should take the lead in matters pertaining to Asia. It was his idealism that led him to misread China’s expansionist policy and Tibet was ultimately annexed by China in 1959.⁹⁸ The Dalai Lama took refuge in India (Tawang), straining the relationship between India and China, which

⁹⁵ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015), 47.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*,52.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*,66.

⁹⁸ The Tibetan leader had asked for military support from the Indian government but was let down. The Chinese troops marched into Tibet on 7 October 1950 and there were only pockets of resistance while the Chinese established broad control of Tibet. The British, United Nations and United States refused to provide any military assistance for the Tibetans. The Indian government also communicated that they would not be providing military assistance and advised them to hold to open negotiations and move towards a peaceful settlement. See Dalai Lama, *My land and My People* (New York: McGraw-Hill,1962),81.

was earlier championed by the press as ‘Hindi-Chini bhai’.⁹⁹ The annexation of Tibet brought China closer to India’s borders and shattered Nehru’s dream of a pan-Asian solidarity. The buffer zones of Tibet were removed and all that remained between the two Asian powers was the small Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim and Bhutan. Nehru however continued to support the independence of Sikkim which was disapproved by Sardar Patel.

The second view emanating from the functionalists viewed the establishment of the state in India as a vital process from the security perspective. The independence of India occurred simultaneously with the partition of India. It was not just the trauma of partition but also the creation of East and West Pakistan that added strain to India’s security considerations. Fighting a war on two sides would have been challenging. Therefore, considering the geopolitical factors over the continuing war in Kashmir, a modern state that had strong centre became necessary. Furthermore the 600 Princely states also had to be integrated into the Indian Union and that task was completed by Patel and V. P. Menon.¹⁰⁰ Sardar Patel, Minister of Home Affairs was aware of the challenges posed by the Communist China in the north and wanted a clear contention of India’s oversight and supervision of Sikkim. In 1950 the Chinese Liberation Army had taken over Lhasa and had a huge control over its territory. Nehru refused to side with the Tibetans convinced that accommodation and conciliation with Mao and Chinese communists was possible. However, it was the Chinese invasion of Tibet (1959) coupled with the flight of the Dalai Lama and the waves of Tibetan refugees into Indian and also Sikkim that shaped the future relationship between the two nations. When the Sikkim State Congress (SSC) had demanded the accession of Sikkim to India in 1947 it had the support of Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Sir B. N. Rau, the constitutional adviser, but it was rejected by Jawaharlal Nehru.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ For details about the American resistance to the Chinese communists by supporting Tibetans see: Mikel Dunham, *Buddha's Warriors: The Story of the CIA-Backed Tibetan Freedom Fighters, the Chinese Invasion, and the Ultimate fall of Tibet* (New York: Tarcher Perigee/Penguin, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ For details see Vapal Pangunni Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (Bombay; Calcutta; Madras: Orient Longmans Ltd, 1956).

¹⁰¹ Prithvi Nath Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, The “Emergency” and Indian Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 282.

Third, according to the Marxists the Indian State is merely an instrument in the hands of the ruling class to manage the affairs of the industrialists and the economically powerful class. The transfer of state power in India from the British to the Indian elite saw the transfers of the state powers from British elite to economically powerful elites in India. The ruling class still owned and controlled the major means of production. Shri Samar Mukherjee, CP(M) member of Parliament on the eve of India's absorption of Sikkim forecasted that since India was dominated by big businesses, monopolists and profiteers and therefore the absorption would lead to the people of Sikkim and its resources becoming the object of exploitation by the Indian vested interests and big businesses.¹⁰²

To understand the reason behind India's absorption of Sikkim in 1975 we need to study the South Asian region in the 1970s. Jawaharlal Nehru had passed away in 1964 and the idealism of Nehru towards the Himalayan kingdom was replaced by the fierce pragmatism of Indira Gandhi. The affectionate and understanding attitude of Nehru was replaced by hawkish attitude of Indira Gandhi. Unlike the optimistic approach of her father, her thinking was more in line with that of Sardar Patel. She was determined that India should have a firm oversight in Sikkim. Indira Gandhi believed that her father Jawaharlal Nehru had made a 'mistake by not heeding to the Sikkimese demand for accession to India in 1947'.¹⁰³ She guessed that Nehru believed that China would leave Tibet's autonomy undisturbed and in anticipation of this he thought it fitting to do nothing in Sikkim that provoked them. Indira Gandhi believed that in retrospect Sardar's Patel instinctive reaction seemed correct.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately it

¹⁰² Biraj Adhikari, *Sikkim The Wounds of History* (Siliguri: Impact Press, 2010), 75.

¹⁰³ Prithvi Nath Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, The "Emergency" and Indian Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 289.

¹⁰⁴ P.N. Dhar writes that Indira Gandhi took these decisions of absorbing Sikkim while feeling sorry for the Chogyal. She had inherited her father's favourable opinion of him. The Chogyal's father had requested Nehru to help his son to grow up to shoulder the responsibilities that would fall to his lot in the future. Nehru had accepted the suggestion and invited the *maharajkumer* to spend several months in Delhi in the Teen Murthi House as a member of the family. Indira Gandhi had come to know him well and developed personal regard for him. She had met him in Sikkim in 1952 and 1958 when she had accompanied her father on the state visits. She had been interested in the culture of Sikkim and its Lepcha/Bhutia component. She had also attended his coronation ceremony as his personal guest. Her disappointment began when she found him to weak or unwilling to resist the American Gyalmo's blatant anti-India moves. In 1974 when the Chogyal came to meet Indira Gandhi she was brief and curt and even though he wanted to continue their discussion she fell silent and looked aloof. By then she had perfected the art of silence as a negative response. *Ibid*, 289-292.

was the geopolitical concerns, security issues doubled with the determined agenda of Indira Gandhi that led India to absorb Sikkim.

INDIA'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SIKKIM UNDER INDIRA GANDHI

Before we jump to the precarious conditions of Sikkim in the 1970s it would be prudent for us to understand the happening in India and the South Asian region which had a direct impact for Sikkim, a then sovereign Kingdom. Moreover the crucial role played by India under Indira Gandhi in absorbing Sikkim needs to be revisited. The happenings in India had a direct impact in Sikkim as it was then a protectorate of India.¹⁰⁵

The Indian elections in 1967 came as a setback to the Congress Government.¹⁰⁶ They had managed to hold on to power in the Centre yet they had lost power in half of the states. This electoral defeat was the beginning of the first democratic upsurge. It a period when 'India was Indira and Indira was India'. Although she declared the emergency in 1975, her autocratic and totalitarian tendencies were revealed much earlier when her actions led to the split of the Congress party in 1969 comprising of two distinct groups: Congress (R) comprising of Indira's supporters and Congress (O), those who had opposed her.

When Mrs Gandhi called for a snap election rallying across the nation with the populist slogan of '*Garibi Hatao*' (remove poverty) it was in refutation to the Opposition parties slogan of 'Indira Hatao' (remove Indira). It was a characteristic populist move which managed to catch the imagination of the people who bought into this gimmick. In February 1971, she came back to New Delhi not only having the

¹⁰⁵ In 1950 India and Sikkim as two sovereign nations entered into an agreement where the defence, foreign affairs and communication were to be handled by India. The rest of the Governmental and administrative function were to be carried out by the Chogyal (king).

¹⁰⁶ Political analysts have termed it as the first democratic upsurge. The Congress party managed to come to power in the Centre but lost power in half of the Indian states. The Congress party since then never really managed to reach the heights it had accomplished under Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru had died in 1964, the nation fought a war with Pakistan in 1965 and the economy was in the doldrums. The nation seemed to be reeling under the onslaught of pessimism. We must remember that it was under these circumstances that Indira Gandhi took over. For an excellent analysis of the Congress system see Rajni Kothari, "The Congress System in India" *Asian survey* (1964): 1161-1173.

Election Commission affirming her faction as the legitimate Congress but also the “biggest democratic poll in history: 150 million people voted in 520 constituencies.”¹⁰⁷

Her victory in 1971 gave her a clear mandate¹⁰⁸, one which was not so during her previous tenure. The geographically divided state of Pakistan was one of the terrible decisions that was left behind the British Government in the South Asian region. For whatsoever their knack and flair as able administrators, the untidy mess that was left behind in Africa, the Middle East and Asia will always haunt their legacy as Tharoor so lucidly and tenaciously uncovered for the whole world.¹⁰⁹ During the closing period of the second world war, in order to satisfy the aspirations of the Muslim League, two separate homelands were created for the Muslims wherein they were a majority. Thus, West Pakistan and East Pakistan separated by a large landmass of India were created by the British Raj. The new East Pakistan where majority of Bengalis who followed the Islamic faith were treated with disdain by the people in West Pakistan who followed the same faith but spoke a different language. Thus, there was an integral inequality and discrimination from 1947 to 1971 which slowly drove the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to reevaluate their position in their new country. Two decades of neglect, in addition to the reluctance of East Pakistan to get involved in the 1965 war with India, only increased the separation between these two homelands.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 327.

¹⁰⁸ While Hillary Clinton could not win the contest for a seat in the Oval Office in 2016 and rued the fact that she could not shatter the ‘glass ceiling,’ India and other South Asian nations like Bangladesh and Pakistan have already had women holding the top positions in their country. In fact, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has made the point that as he moved from Delhi University to Oxford and from there to teach at Harvard the number of women colleagues also decreased simultaneously. For details see: Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (New Delhi: Allen Lane 2005), 233.

¹⁰⁹ The Oxford debate about the reparations that was owed by Britain to India took over the internet world by storm especially the arguments made by Shashi Tharoor. This video went viral and was the precursor to Tharoor’s highly successful book *Inglorious Empire*. The book has also documented the ugly racism of Winston Churchill: “I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with beastly religion... Let the Viceroy sit on the back of a giant elephant and trample Gandhi into the dirt. In the Bengal famine of 1943 nearly 4 million people died unnecessarily. Britain ate Indian bread while Indians starved and Churchill blamed the Indians for breeding like rabbits.” He calls it the “British colonial holocaust”. For details see: Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire* (London: Hurst, 2017).

¹¹⁰ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015), 159.

Sikkim lay just above East Pakistan, separated by only a narrow mass of Indian land. Things came to a standstill over the December 1970 elections held in both East and West Pakistan. As East Bangladesh had a dominance in terms of population, the Awami League won a majority of both votes and seats. Instead of allowing Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the President of the 'Awami League' to become the first Bengali Prime Minister of Pakistan, the ruling military junta under Ayub Khan refused to acknowledge the elections result. A non-cooperation movement was started and West Bengal in India became involved with the *Mukti Bahini*, forming the local base of the revolt. Ayub Khan tried to crush the resistors and came down heavily on the activists of Awami League.¹¹¹

Indira Gandhi feared that that instability in this region would be a potential threat on the chicken neck corridor that links India with the rest of the north-eastern states. This narrow stretch of land between East Pakistan and Sikkim was vital to India's connectivity. Moreover, this corridor running through Siliguri in West Bengal was strategically crucial after the invasion of Tibet by China in October 1950. If things got out of hand then there was a risk that China would break through the Chumbi valley in Sikkim and link up with the East Pakistan or the Maoist rebels in the Darjeeling district of Naxalbari. When the Indian government passed a resolution in the Parliament expressing "profound sympathy and solidarity with the people of East Bengal for a democratic way of life" there was a political storm over the use of East Bengal in place of Pakistan.¹¹² India and Pakistan were at loggerheads in the Himalayas, which could drag in the Chinese. As the influx of the refugees from Bangladesh reached 150,000 each day, Indira Gandhi decided that something had to be done after her persistent appeals to the Western powers fell on deaf ears. So, India's involvement in Bangladesh's Liberation war started. She declared war and with the victory and creation of Bangladesh, her position both within and outside the party was strengthened.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ibid,160.

¹¹² Ibid,160.

¹¹³ Ibid,160.

In Sikkim however, these developments were of little concern to the royal family in Gangtok. With Bhutan gaining a seat at the United Nations, the Sikkimese prince Thondup Namgyal was desperate to get a way out of the antiquated constitutional status of Sikkim as a protectorate. Throughout 1972 Thondup surrounded himself with symbols to assert Sikkim's separate identity from India. This was a period in which Sikkimese identity and nationality was given importance and encouraged by the Sikkim Government.¹¹⁴ The opposition to Namgyal's rule came largely from the Sikkimese of Nepali origin who felt that the Palace was biased towards the Bhutia-Lepcha community and neglectful of their concerns.¹¹⁵

Indira Gandhi wanted a change in the treaty as she was embarrassed by the neo-colonial nature of the term 'protectorate'. The Indian Government wanted Sikkim to sign a treaty mentioning Sikkim's 'permanent association' with the Indian Union.¹¹⁶ The year 1973 marked an important year for Sikkim as the king Thondup Namgyal was turning fifty. He had hoped that Sikkim would turn over a fresh leaf and start anew. However, by the end of the first month he found that the political problems were at his door-step. The elections in 1973 went in favour of the pro-palace National Party. They appealed to the Government of India that it should not lag behind in fulfilling the ambition of the people in enabling them to enjoy the status like that of Nepal and Bhutan.¹¹⁷ However the opposition party under the leadership of S. D. Kazi responded by alleging that the election was rigged in the favour of the National party. They argued that the whole voting system was in favour of the Bhutia-Lepcha and therefore against the Nepalis.

Following the arrest of political leaders for making incendiary speeches, there were large scale protests by the people around Gangtok and the Palace. The days

¹¹⁴ For details see, Jackie Hiltz, *Constructing Sikkimese National Identity in the 1960s and 1970s*, Bulletin of Tibetology (2003), (Accessed online on 18 June,2018), [http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/243140\(2003\)](http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/243140(2003)).

¹¹⁵ See the report of the Sir Terence Garvey, then British High Commissioner in Delhi in TNA, FCO 37/982: Political Situation in Sikkim, 2 November 1972.

¹¹⁶ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015),176.

¹¹⁷ They wanted Sikkim to gain a seat at the United Nations which would protect their sovereignty against an increasingly interfering India.

following the upsurge saw murder, lockups, arson, looting and even priceless Buddhist relics were not spared in the protests that had engulfed Sikkim with the Chogyal Thondup Namgyal unable to bring the situation under control. They were encouraged by the help from the Indian RAW officials that supported the pro-democracy forces.¹¹⁸

The Indian officials wanted the Chogyal to sign a document which bound the Chogyal to abide by Indian advice, seek India's protection for himself and his family and commit to carrying out extensive political reforms. The Chogyal signed the agreement under which the entire responsibility for law and order was passed to India and finally on 8 April 1973 the Chogyal signed the final draft handing over the government to the Indian Political Officer.

In *Inside Raw: The story of India's Secret Service* Raina has spelt out that this was the culmination of the two-year work that was initiated after the debacle of East Pakistan.¹¹⁹ Datta Ray in his *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim* has argued that it was the Indian support to the anti-Chogyal movement that fuelled the protests. The Indian officials "were to work towards highlighting the feudal character of the existing system and the people's revolt against it were to be highlighted consistently".¹²⁰ In fact during the press conference given by Princess Coocoola in Hong King, she told the press that 'India had financed the opposition' and that the rebels were from outside Sikkim.¹²¹ Indian officials however backed out of the complete absorption as the 'unusual publicity' of these actions led to 'foreign governments cautioning India against such hasty steps'.¹²² Therefore the Indian officials changed tact from supporting the democratic forces of change to assuming all the important powers in Sikkim. The main powers would be transferred to an Indian

¹¹⁸ Prithvi Nath Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, The "Emergency" and Indian Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 276.

¹¹⁹ See Asoka Raina, *Inside RAW: The Story of India's Secret Service* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Private, 1981) for details.

¹²⁰ Brajbir Saran Das, *The Sikkim Saga* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Private, 2002), 3.

¹²¹ TNA, FCO 37/1181; Political situation in Sikkim, fol.14, 13 April 1973.

¹²² Brajbir Saran Das, *The Sikkim Saga* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Private, 2002), 4.

chief executive who ‘could virtually rule Sikkim on India’s behest’. The Chogyal Thondup Namgyal would merely be reduced to a constitutional monarch-a figurehead and allowing him to retain his position deflected international criticism. Therefore, it was under these circumstances that the tripartite agreement was signed. Although Nehru had given a lease of life to Sikkim in 1950 by signing the Indo-Sikkimese Friendship Treaty, the security problems never changed. Furthermore, India understood the importance of the strategic location of Sikkim as it borders Nepal, China, Bhutan and West Bengal.

V

REPRESENTATION IN SIKKIM (1947-1973)

By the early 1940s there was a crisis simmering in Sikkim over land revenue. Due to the migration fueled by the encouragement of the British Political officers, the Nepalis in Sikkim now constituted about 75 percent of the population outnumbering the Lepchas and the Bhutias.¹²³ By the mid twentieth century they were up in arms against the feudal system of revenue collection and were protesting against its imposition. According to this system all land was owned by the Chogyal, who leased it to the kazis. The kazis were responsible for running the estates they were assigned and collecting revenue. The landless tenants tilled the land and had very scarce rights but faced many discriminatory practices.¹²⁴

It was these tenants who initiated the no rent campaign. The protests led to non-collection of taxes and eventually a large scale financial crisis occurred in the country. They were also influenced by the democratic movements in nearby India whereby the colonial masters were driven out and people ensured rights according to the new constitution. Although the tenants appealed to the last British political officer

¹²³ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015),33.

¹²⁴ One such burden was the system of *jharlangi* which required them to carry heavy loads for the British official and Sikkim government officers free of charge. There was also the *kalobhari* (*black load*) which was unjust and cruel. They were forced to carry heavy loads containing arms and ammunitions to Chumbi Valley nearing Tibet for no wages. They could not deny this service as disobedience meant punishment. These tenants were mostly from Nepal that had migrated to Sikkim during the end of the nineteenth century. They also faced the wrath and cruelty of the Kazis when they refused to obey orders.

Hopkinson, he refused to intervene, as by then the British had transferred the power back to the small council which was under the leadership of the Chogyal.¹²⁵ Therefore the protestors turned their appeals toward the monarch. It was during a political rally that a person read a tract called *A few facts about Sikkim* which questioned the legitimacy of the current system of government especially the relevance of monarchy.¹²⁶

C. D. Rai a person born in south Sikkim was present at that rally and someone asked him to translate the tract into Nepali.¹²⁷ This very act of translation was a political act as the disenfranchised Nepali community was empowered in a land where they were at the bottom of the social hierarchy with no rights. Following this political march, a new political party emerged which was called the Sikkim State Congress (SSC), whose purpose was to be more representative of the people of Sikkim rather than the few autocratic leaders in the council. They also send a memorandum to the monarch which had three unequivocal demands. Their first demand was that landlordism in the country would be abolished. Their second was that a responsible government truly representative of the people should be formed as a predecessor to a democratic government. Their third demand was that Sikkim should be acceded to India. These demands can be perceived as an attempt by the people in Sikkim to gain more political rights.

The State power in Sikkim by now had reverted back to the Chogyal Tashi Namgyal. However, it was his son Thondup Namgyal however who had taken over responsibility of running the administration. Thondup understood that a step towards representative government would give an unfair advantage to the Nepali communities who were in a majority. Therefore, he came up with an offer that the political parties should send three representatives-one from each community of the Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis. This was a clever move as it ensured that the Nepalis remained in a

¹²⁵ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015), 33-34.

¹²⁶ The tract was written to air the grievances of the downtrodden ryots (subject people) of Sikkim consisting of the Sikkimese of Nepali, Bhutias and Lepchas origin who were suffering under the corrupt administration.

¹²⁷ C.D. Rai is considered to be one of the legendary titans of the democratic movement in Sikkim.

minority representation and that the ‘true representation’ was put off for the moment. This offer seems to satisfy the aspirations of the Sikkim State Congress for the time being.

However, the third demand was an unnerving one for Thondup Namgyal. Many people in Sikkim believed that there would be economic benefits, political reform towards a representative government and other advantages if Sikkim merged with India. Thondup Namgyal however believed that the way forward was to develop Sikkim within the current monarchical system.

The situation in Sikkim deteriorated rapidly due to the protests especially in South Sikkim and by 1949 the British political officer had been replaced by the Indian Political officer, Harishwar Dayal. On May 1, 1949 the State Sikkim Congress organised a demonstration outside the palace.¹²⁸ There were about 5,000 protesters and the prince sought the help of the Indian Political officer who mobilised the Indian army to drive away the protestors. On the suggestion of the Indian Political Officer the prince changed the system of government where three members of the Sikkim State Congress and two nominated members from the Palace were to form a new ministry that would be in charge over certain departments. This interim ministry could not function as it was divided by internal factions and the Indian Political officer announced that a *Dewan*, or Prime Minister nominated by the Government of India would be appointed as a temporary solution until a treaty between Sikkim and India was signed.

In August 1949, John Lall was appointed as the Indian Dewan. He divested the landowning kazis of their feudal rights of tax collection and judicial powers and set up the modernisation of Sikkim “along the lines and pattern of an Indian district.”¹²⁹ India and Sikkim signed the Indo-Sikkim Friendship Treaty in 1950 under which defence, external affairs and communication would be under the responsibility of the Indian Government. Prince Thondup Namgyal, as head of state, retained control over

¹²⁸ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2015) 37.

¹²⁹ Nari Rustomji, *Sikkim A Himalayan Tragedy* (Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1987), 37.

police and finance while the other departments were under the charge of the elected representatives.

As has already been mentioned earlier, the historical narrative had sought to entrench the idea that the Bhutia and Lepcha had become one group by virtue of the blood brotherhood pact. This binding of the Bhutia and the Lepcha as a single category sought to deflect any questions regarding the foreign origin of the Bhutia as well as include them in any policy that favoured the autochthonous Lepcha community in the future. The parity voting system in 1951 was the first instance when the Bhutia was used in hyphenation with the Lepchas thus symbolising their unity and also ensuring representation under one single category. It was in 1951 that the parity voting system was established under which the Bhutia-Lepchas community (25 percent of the population) had at least 50 percent of the seats reserved for them. The Sikkimese of Nepali origin comprising 75 percent of the electorate also had only 50 percent seat reserved for them in the council.

The first election to the Sikkim State council was conducted in 1951. They clubbed the Bhutia-Lepcha communities as one and reserved six seats for them. Furthermore, six seats were also kept aside for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin in the 15-member state council. The rest three members were to be nominated by the King. In 1953 the King also issued the “Constitutional Proclamation” according to which the rules containing the formation of state and executive council, five nominated members by the Chogyal and the communal electorate pattern of voting was spelled out.¹³⁰ This Proclamation sought to entrench ethnic divisions regarding representation and also ensure that the ruling elite would have hegemony in the council.

In the 1953 council elections the ‘National Party’ won all the Bhutia-Lepcha seats while the Sikkim State Congress won all the six Nepali seats confirming their positions as delegates of the respective communities. This election’s results showed that the communities in Sikkim had been divided along the lines of ethnic communities, predominantly as a culmination of communal electorates. The next

¹³⁰ Ibid,45.

elections occurred in 1958 in which the state council was enlarged while continuing the communal pattern of representation.¹³¹ The Council was enlarged to give one seat for the *Sangha*¹³², one general seat for reserved for the plains people and one additional member to be nominated by the Chogyal thereby bring the total number of seats in the council to 20 from the earlier 17. According to the system of election, the winning candidate of a particular community was required to acquire a majority in his own community along with a minimum of 15 percent vote of the other community to be declared as the winner.

The election to the next state council was due in 1961 but the political situation was volatile due to the promulgation of the Sikkim subject regulation by the Chogyal in July 1961 which provided citizenship to three categories of people:

“(a) all person of Sikkimese domicile, if born in Sikkim and resident thereof or ordinarily resident of Sikkim for not less that fifteen years prior to the promulgation of the regulation.”¹³³

(b) Persons not domiciled in Sikkim but of Lepcha, Bhutia or Tsong origin whose father or grandfather was born in Sikkim, and

(c) Persons not domiciled in Sikkim but whose ancestors have deemed to be Sikkimese subjects before 1950.¹³⁴

The king’s main concern may have been to stop the ongoing immigration.¹³⁵ This was very controversial as the regulation referred to the Bhutia, Lepcha and Limbu community of people as among categories of people entitled to citizenship but excluded the majority Sikkimese of Nepali origin who comprised seventy percent of

¹³¹ Bhimsain S. Krishanchandra Grover, *Sikkim and India: Storm and Consolidation* Vol. 2 (New Delhi: Jain Brothers, 1974),46.

¹³² Lal Bahadur Basnet, *Sikkim: A Short Political History* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, 1974),117.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Sikkim Subject Regulation 1961 (amended) in, See R. Moktan, *Sikkim: Darjeeling Compendium of Documents* (Varanasi: Gopal Press, 2004),181-187.

¹³⁵ Nari Rustomji, *Sikkim, A Himalayan Tragedy* (Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1987),42.

the population. The Sikkim National Congress (SNC) criticised this regulation of 1961 as being discriminatory against the Nepali community. In deference to the wishes of the people and the huge controversy it generated on 16 January 1962 the references to communities were removed.

In 1966 seats were again increased to 24. The seats reserved for the Sikkimese Bhutia-Lepcha was 7, Sikkimese of Nepali origin were 7 and the seats reserved for the Sangha, Scheduled case, *Tsong*, General were all one. The number of members to be nominated by the Chogyal was 6. In the third, fourth and the fifth state council elections of 1967, 1970 and 1973 the communal representation system continued.

In the 1973 council election, the Sikkim National party won 11 seats (7 Bhutia Lepcha 2 Nepali). The opposition parties demanded a constitutional monarchy where the people's representatives would exercise the powers and run the government while the Chogyal was merely the *de jure* ruler. This was rejected by the Chogyal who did not want any drastic changes made to the system of representation. Following the allegation of a rigged electoral process in 1973 and the political turmoil that followed, the 8 May agreement of 1973 was signed.

VI

THE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT OF 1973

The tripartite agreement that was signed by the Chogyal, Foreign Secretary of India and the political leaders of Sikkim was a key document which laid the framework for the system of elections in 1974. It was hailed by the newspaper *Himalayan Observer* as the 'Sikkimese Magna Carta'. The agreement, while reiterating Sikkim's independent status, extended India's supervision to communal harmony, good government and economic and social development. The agreement also resolved that a thoroughly accountable government with an additional representative constitution, fundamental rights, independent judiciary, greater legislative and executive power to the people as well as the introduction of a system of elections giving equitable representation to all sections of the population on the grounds of one man one vote would be followed.

It was under these conditions that the system of election and representation came to be played out in Sikkim. Following this in 1974, Sikkim conducted its elections on the basis the tripartite agreement where total seats were 32. Sixteen seats were reserved for the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin and sixteen seats were reserved for the Sikkimese of Nepalese origin. It must be kept in mind that the *Tsongs* (Limbus), who were among the earliest settlers in this State and consider themselves as distinct ethnic tribe, were lumped under the Sikkimese of Nepali origin.

Table 2.1: Seat Sharing in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly in 1974

COMMUNITY	NUMBER OF SEATS
Sikkimese of Nepali Origin	16
Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin	16
Total	32

Source: Representation of Sikkim Subject Act, 1974.

In 1974 Sikkim was joined to the union of India as an associate state. In the following year of 1975 the institution of the Chogyal was deposed and Sikkim was merged as the 22nd State of India under Article 2 of the Indian constitution and special provisions for Sikkim were made under article 371(F) of the constitution of India.

STATE OF SIKKIM POST MERGER WITH INDIA-CONTINUING SAGA OF REPRESENTATION

While the Legislative Assembly elected in the pre-merger period of 1974 continued as the legislative assembly of Indian state of Sikkim post its merger, which was facilitated by Article 371(F). The term of this assembly got over in 1978. The Representation of People (Amendment) Ordinance 7,1979 (No.7 of 1979) was passed which provided for a 32-member legislative Assembly of which twelve seats were reserved for Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin, two seats were reserved for the scheduled castes, one seat were reserved for *Sangha* and seventeen seats were to be

kept open for General. The promulgation of the ordinance took away the reservation of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin who protested this withdrawal.

While earlier the entire assembly was reserved for the Sikkimese of the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepali community on a parity basis, this ordinance reserved twelve seats for the Sikkimese of the Bhutia-Lepcha community. In the Indian constitution, while there are provisions for electoral reservation for scheduled tribes and scheduled castes in the Legislative assembly under article 332, there are no provisions for electoral reservation of seats for communities (12 Bhutia-Lepcha seats) and a religious community seat (1 *Sangha* seat). In the statement of Objects and Reasons regarding bill no 79 dated 10 May 1979 it was argued that under the older system there were no provisions for representatives to the General community as all the seats were reserved only for Bhutias, Lepchas, Nepalis and scheduled castes. Thus the 'other' inhabitants of Sikkim were not able to contest in the seats for the assembly. Furthermore, it was projected that the Bhutia-Lepcha were the 'original inhabitants' of Sikkim and therefore there were provisions of 12 seats as reserved seats for them under clause k of article 371(F) which empowered Parliament to ensure community-based seat sharing.

The rationale of the statements of Objects and Reasons that were given following the promulgation of the Representation of People (Amendment) Ordinance 7,1979 which determined that the Bhutia-Lepchas were given community based reserved seats also was under the influence of the 'local historical narratives'. There is a tendency in Sikkim that argues that early habitation of Sikkim gives the communities a sacred right to political privileges. However, knowing that Mangars and Limboos were also the early inhabitants of Sikkim, this denial of reserved seats to them only reveals the advancement of the community interest of the Bhutia-Lepcha over the other groups.

By a notification in 1979, the Government of India notified the Bhutia and the Lepchas as scheduled tribes. It was quite surprising that the former ruling ethnic group were put in a category of backward primitive group to which special benefits were granted. Thus, for the Sikkimese Bhutias although they lost control of the State

they were incorporated into the status of a backward tribe which accorded them special benefits.

Kazi Lhendup Dorji¹³⁶, a politician who played a pivotal role in the absorption of Sikkim to the Indian union served as the chief Minister from 1974-1978. His government however failed to rein in inflation, corruption, migration of outsiders to the state, implement promised land reforms, etc. These failures of the government led by Kazi Lhendup led to an anti-merger and anti-India feeling amongst the people. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, a school teacher hailing from West Sikkim, formed the Sikkim Janata Party (SJP) in Gangtok in 1977.¹³⁷ In the next assembly elections of 1979 he fought against Lhendup Dorji and promised to bring real democracy to Sikkim, weed out corruption and bring in development for the state. The assembly elections of 1979 saw Bhandari winning a majority in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. After coming to power, he promised to protect the identity of the Sikkimese in India, work for the restoration of the Nepali seats in the assembly and implement policies for protecting the inhabitants of the state with regards to employment. It was his anti-merger stand in the 1979 Sikkim assembly elections which played a major role in his victory.

However, he was ousted as chief minister after he lost the vote of confidence following allegation of corruption. A brief government came in power but that too could not hold out for long. Eventually Sikkim was put under Presidential rule under Article 356 for the first time in 1984. Nar Bahadur Bhandari formed a new party called Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) in 1985 and in the next assembly election held in the same year came back to power winning 30 of the 32 seats.¹³⁸ He labelled his opponents like Lhendup Dorji Kazi and Bhim Bahadur Gurung as the architects of the merger and *desh bechuwas* (sellers of the country) and gave them a name (32

¹³⁶ In 1959 it was the rise of a new political part Sikkim National Congress that caused a new political movement in Sikkim led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji a member of the Sikkimese of Lepcha family, the Khangsarapas. Since his family had a connection with the Nepali immigrants in West Sikkim (Chakung), where his family estates lied he took it upon himself to champion their cause. Therefore he worked towards ensuring a fairer system of representation that did not discriminate against the Sikkimese Nepali population.

¹³⁷ Nirmalananda Sengupta, *State Government and Politics, Sikkim* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1985), 167.

¹³⁸ Suresh Kumar Gurung, *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics A Triadic Perspective* (New Delhi: Kunal Books, 2011), 336.

thieves)¹³⁹ which stuck with the masses. He was also successful in distinguishing the Sikkimese identity as distinct from the Indian identity. In the next assembly elections of 1989 his party again emerged victorious winning all the 32 seats and Nar Bahadur Bhandari became the chief minister for his third tenure.

The Mandal Commission which had visited Sikkim in 1980 recommended nine groups to be included in the OBC category; Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Magar, Bhujel, Tamang, Sunuwar, Tsong and Yakthumba. These were Mongoloid groups and this ethnic racial category was categorised as possible OBC. This move by the state is another example of the role played by the state in institutionalising categories and shifting ethnic loyalties.

When V. P. Singh implemented the Mandal Committee recommendations the whole of India went into an upheaval. In Sikkim however, the State Government under Nar Kumar Bhandari refused to accept the recommendations of the Commission because they did not cover all the Nepalese groups. His political opponent Pawan Kumar Chambling (current chief minister) rose on the angst felt by the recommended OBC groups who felt that they deserved to be notified as OBC and given subsequent economic and political benefits.¹⁴⁰ The role of the state therefore in inducing political change and subsequently social changes cannot be missed. Pawan Chambling campaigned extensively for the implementation of the Mandal Commission and won the elections in 1994 with the whole-hearted support of the recommended OBC groups. It is crucial for us to apprehend that the reclassification of communities by the state and by their positioning within an already existing pattern of representations, the OBC groups become a major political force to reckon with. Hence with the coming of the Chambling government, the recommendations of the Mandal Commission were gradually implemented.

¹³⁹ In the periods of 1970s and 1980s there was a lot of talk within Sikkim regarding the merger. While, some were supportive of the move, others believed that the Chogyal had not been fairly treated and the merger happened too quickly. Therefore, Nar Bahadur Bhandari used this feeling against his opponents who were the legislative assembly members when Sikkim was merged with India. It was their resolution asking for the merger which prompted India to absorb Sikkim. Thus they were labelled as '32 thieves' a name which stuck with them.

¹⁴⁰ Genevive Syangbo, *The Sikkim Democratic Front: The Politics of Popular Mobilisation in Sikkim-1993-2004*(PhD Dissertation, University of North Bengal, 2012), 55.

The Sikkim Democratic Front under the leadership of Pawan Chambling has been in power since 1994. It won the next assembly polls in 1999 and in 2004 it came to power winning 31 of the total 32 seats in the Legislative assembly.

The Limbu and the Tamang were included in the list scheduled tribes in 2003. The OBCs were again reclassified as the most backward classes and other groups like the Newars, Chettris and Bahuns declared as OBCs. Therefore, it becomes amply clear that the State through the recommendations of the Mandal Commission caused a change in the movement for classifications which preempted political changes. They did this by bringing the divide between the mongoloids and the Aryans within the Nepali community to the front, a category which had been framed by colonial administrators. “Therefore, while the administrative categorisation of Nepalese was deconstructed another criteria were introduced to organise the population was introduced; that of race.”¹⁴¹

In 2009 the Sikkim Democratic Front came back to power in a stellar performance, winning all of the 32 assembly seats and the single Lok Sabha seat. Many people have attributed its success to their identity-based ethnic politics as well as the pro-poor work that has been done by them. It was due to the efforts of Pawan Chambling that the Sikkimese were granted central income tax exemption in 2008.

While the state government included the Rai, Sunuwar, Mangar, Limbu in the central list of OBC, the Newars, Chettri and Bahun have been included in the state OBC list and the Lepcha, Bhutia, Tamang and Limbu have been included in the list of scheduled tribes. Thus, all the communities in Sikkim have been allotted reservation in public educational institutions and government jobs. In the assembly election of 2014 the Sikkim Democratic Party suffered as setback but came back to power winning 22 seats. The Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) led by Prem Singh Golay won 10 seats.¹⁴² However Prem S. Golay was arrested on corruption charges and put

¹⁴¹ Mélanie Vandenhelsken, “Reification of Ethnicity in Sikkim: “Tribalism” in Progress” *The Dragon and the Hidden Land: Social and Historical Studies on Sikkim and Bhutan* (2016): 183.

¹⁴² Election Commission of India, General/Bye Election to Vidhan Sabha Trends and Results, Sikkim Results Status, (Accessed online 16 May 2018), <https://www.webcitation.org/6PcYdpX1y>.

in jail following which many of the members of his party Sikkim Krantikari Morcha defected to the Sikkim Democratic Front.

VII

ROLE OF STATE IN ETHNIC IDENTIFICATIONS AND CATEGORISATIONS

The state of Sikkim is going through a huge institutional crisis as the issue of representation has divided the inhabitants. In the 32-member legislative assembly, 12 seats have been reserved for the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha while two seats have been reserved for the scheduled castes. One seat has also been reserved for the *Sangha* which is the seat that is the representative of the monks of Sikkim.

Table 2.2: Seat sharing in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly from 1979 onwards

Community	Number of seats
Bhutia-Lepcha	12
Scheduled Caste	2
Sangha	1
General (Sikkimese of Nepali Origin and others)	17
Total	32

Source: Representation of People (Amendment) Ordinance, 1979 (No.7 of 1979).

However, when the Limbus and Tamangs were included in the list of Scheduled tribes (2003) they demanded electoral reservation of seats under article 332 of the Indian constitution which provisions reserved seats for scheduled tribes in the state legislative assembly. In the state assembly elections of 2004, 2009 and 2014 the Limbus and the Tamangs were not permitted reserved seats in the elections. This imbroglio over seat sharing and representation to the Sikkim legislative assembly can be understood in the light of the historical events that have shaped the discourse on representation.

The ethnic categories moreover have played a vital part in the issues regarding representation. The colonial, Indian and the Sikkimese administrators have

represented the ethnic communities in official documents by placing them under various categories. Hence the importance of ethnic belonging cannot be neglected. In fact, ethnic identity has played a key role in accessing state benefits, claims of representation and even recognition in Sikkim. In this section I argue that by tracing the historicity of ethnic categories in Sikkim and how the State itself has constructed such 'categories' at various periods of history can understand its crucial role in determining the issue of representation. Therefore, the role of the State in reifying ethnic boundaries and politicising ethnic categories for various purposes is to be studied.

The role of the State in ethnic categorisation and also ethnic identification needs to be understood in the light of the various measures and policies that have been undertaken by them. The usage of ethnic categorisations by the State presents one an opportunity to study not only the cultural changes fostered by them but more importantly the political changes and mobilisations that occur. The influence therefore of State policies on politics of ethnicity and identity becomes significant.

It is paramount to understand the focus of categorisation by looking at the emergence of ethnicity and usage in Sikkim in order to comprehend the crucial role of the State in identifying and disseminating the idea of natural bond between the ethnic communities and other socio-political units. Therefore, the various categorisations that have been used by the state, which largely determine the socio-political position and condition of the people, emerged and were used needs to be examined. The importance of ethnic affiliation is all the more important for this study as the system of representation in Sikkim is founded on electoral reservation for ethnic communities and the current impasse also centres on the demands of ethnic communities. Therefore, the various social scientists in Sikkim and the lawmakers actually have an ethnic understanding of the populations without considering the various other agents and historicity of the categories.

The publication of the accounts of the first Political officer in Sikkim¹⁴³ as well as the Royal Family in Sikkim publications on the commemoration of the last Chogyal Thondup Namgyal mentions that Sikkim is made up of three ethnic groups which are the Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalese.¹⁴⁴ The dichotomous version between caste and tribe structured the census of Sikkim as well as the modern political institutions as the State was unable to decide which group to put in which category. Thus, this misreading by the State, or rather the distinct classifications which they came up, set the stage for the division of the communities in terms of political representation. Moreover, while the state under the Chogyal could have introduced open electorate for every community instead of introducing communal electorates it was decided not to. Therefore, this categorisation of Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese have stuck and decided the modes of representation right from the first Council that was formed in 1951. This categorisation moreover formed the groundwork for the 1973 agreement as they decided to give 16 seats to the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin and 16 seats to the Sikkimese of Nepalese origin.

This Nepalese category also included the Limbu which we have seen above were present before the Bhutia. This categorisation was further solidified in 1979 when the Indian Government decided to reserve 12 seats in the Legislative Assembly for the Bhutia and Lepcha. However, some people petitioned to the Supreme Court, terming the community based electoral reservations as infringing upon the ‘basic features of the constitution’.

The previous Sikkimese of Nepali origin on the basis of which the policies and politics had been based before 1990s was replaced by a new division. The Mandal Commission report shook the unity of this Nepalese category and hence the divide between ‘Indo-Aryan’ and ‘Mongoloid’ was revived on the basis of race. This not only defeated the ruling government in Sikkim for refusing to certify certain groups as OBCs but also brought into power Pawan Chamling who has been accused of

¹⁴³ See John Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier 1897-1908*(New York: Longmans, 1909)

¹⁴⁴ See the Coronation Booklet issued to commemorate the coronation of Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal.

breaking the unity of the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin. Therefore, many scholars have argued that the people in the state have used their ethnic identity to negotiate with the state for access to resources but they have failed to observe the role of the state in the division of the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin through its categories of the OBCs and MBCs which revived the notions of race. Furthermore, these categories also determine the socio-economic position of the ethnic communities.

This categorisation by the State government as backward class was seen as a step up in the ladder towards being enlisted in the coveted list of scheduled tribes. Thus, the recommendations of the Mandal Commission set up a strife and competition for reclassification. This was because the Indian State offered many benefits and protection of land, reservation of seats in education, government jobs and Legislative Assembly for communities belonging to the backward classes or scheduled tribes. Therefore, this scramble for reclassification by the various groups is specifically significant because of the benefits that State provides. The crucial role of the state in identifying, classifying and reclassifying certain groups therefore is a lacunae that has to be understood regarding Sikkim.

The later categorisations in Sikkim too were held under the auspices of the State administration through not just censuses but also the different forms of representation that was duly presented. For once the Bhutias who were now at the helm of power and had managed to identify and organise themselves as indigenous the modes of representation were also tweaked to their conveniences. From 1901 to 1971 there was no separate census conducted for Sikkim but were all conducted under the auspices of West Bengal census authorities.¹⁴⁵

Table 2.3: Classifications of ethnic groups in Sikkim

SIKKIM THREE ETHNIC GROUPS REFLECTED IN RESERVATION UNTIL 1979	CURRENT DIVIDE OF ETHNIC GROUPS	IN THE RESERVATION WELFARE SYSTEM		PERCENTAGE IN POPULATION (2006)
Lepcha	Lepcha	Scheduled	Tribes(1978)	

¹⁴⁵ Census of India 2001, Series 12–Sikkim, Analytical note: 3.

Bhutia	Bhutia			37%
	Limbu, Tamang	Scheduled	Tribes (2003)	
	Bhujel, Gurung,	CENTRAL LEVEL (Delhi):	STATE LEVEL (Sikkim):	
Nepalese	Rai, Mangar, Sunuwar (including Mukhia) Sayasi, Thami and Jogi	Other Backward Classes (1995-2000)	Most Backward Classes (2003) Adding Dewan and excepting Sanyasi	23%
	Newar		Other Backward	
	High caste:In Sikkim	“General”	Classes(2001)	23%

Source: Mélanie Vandenhelsken, “Reification of Ethnicity in Sikkim: Tribalism in Progress,” *The Dragon and the Hidden Land: Social and Historical Studies on Sikkim and Bhutan* (2016): 166.

The census of 1891 mentions that the Gurungs, Murmis, Limbus, Khambus and the Mangars as more or less connected. They also identify the Limbus and Bhutias as the indigenous people, while the Kami, Brahman, Mangar, Chetri, Newar, Slaves, Dirzi were considered as immigrants. The census then identified three main stocks based on their settlement dates. They sought to identify the three groups in Sikkim as the aboriginal inhabitants which were the Lepchas, the later immigrants from Kham namely Bhutias, and the Sikkim Limbus of the “Lhasa Gotra” which were presumed to have migrated from Tibet. They sought to differentiate the settlement of Limbus in Sikkim from the later Limbus who had migrated from Nepal at the end of the 19th century. They also sought to differentiate the ‘main stocks of Sikkim’ from the ‘later immigrants from beyond the Arun.’ This provided the basis for the organisation of the Sikkimese population in terms of Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese¹⁴⁶ divided between the ancient inhabitants and the migrants. Two things need to be noted here.

First, while considering electoral reservation in the post-merger period, Bhutias were considered as indigenous inhabitants and given community based electoral reservation. This was denied to the Limbus who were historically living in

¹⁴⁶ H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim* (Bengal Secretariat Press), 259 In the language report of 1893, the same distinction is based on language (Baines 1893: 148).

Sikkim and had a genuine claim to be counted as ancient inhabitants. Second, the Limbus of the Lhasa *Gotra* were lumped together with the Limbus who had migrated from Nepal and therefore lost their distinct identity and modes of representation in the 1940s. This historic misstep therefore points towards the use of state power in determining certain benefits. By the period of the 1941 census only Bhutia and Lepcha were identified as the Hill tribes. This was because Nepali was classified as an “Indo Aryan language” and most of the groups had begun to speak and identify themselves as speakers of Nepali language. There was now a marked turn in the classification of tribes in the hills who were now no longer identified according to their ethnic identity but according to the language they spoke.

Therefore in Sikkim in 1951, only Bhutias and Lepchas were identified as scheduled tribes in the Darjeeling hills.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, while all the Sikkimese languages and religions were enumerated, these data are still used to support the conception the population of Sikkim as being composed of Buddhists supposedly represented by Bhutia and Lepchas and the Hindu-Nepalese, which in 1961 include Limbus till today.¹⁴⁸ In Sikkim the ruling group of Bhutias who controlled the power of the state, viewed the Nepalese groups as outsiders and this confusion of castes and tribes also gave rise to the divide between indigenous and immigrants. In 1947 by the time the Sikkim State Congress was formed, the state representative asked for representative of the ethnic groups in Sikkim-Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis. The Limbus were incorporated into the category of Sikkimese of Nepali origin.

As we have seen the confusion regarding castes and tribes gave ground to a division between indigenous and immigrants in Sikkim. Therefore, the first modern institutions of representation were reflective of the divide in Sikkim’s own history and categories of thought and political factions and biases were used to modernise the state and shape the models of representation. Even then the Palace with Thondup Namgyal suggested that the political party should send three representatives-one from each community, the Bhutia, Lepchas and Nepalis-to function as official secretary to

¹⁴⁷ *Census of India* 1951-Vol. 5: 451.

¹⁴⁸ Awadhesh Coomar Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim* (Faridabad: Thompson Press India Limited, 1975),10.

the Chogyal. It was a shrewd move by the Chogyal who ensured that the Nepalese whom he considered as immigrants were not allowed to dominate the modes of representation as they were in a majority.¹⁴⁹ However the Sikkim State Congress (SSC) was not demanding an ethnic organisation of the Council but rather trying to air the grievances of the downtrodden peasants of the Sikkim State consisting of Sikkim Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas. They were demanding equality and justice as they wanted the old revenue system to be foregone, which was reciprocated with the political representation of the three communities thus introducing communal electorates in Sikkim in a small scale and then later fully.

It must be remembered that in the other Princely states of India, a political movement had occurred under which power was being wrested from feudal overlords to a popular elected Government. In Sikkim, Nari Rustomji argues that Thondup apprehended that the Nepalese would slowly and steadily occupy all the important positions in every sphere of cultural, political, administrative and religious aspect and threatened the Lepchas and Bhutias. Therefore, in order to protect the minorities there was to be a parity of seats in Sikkim's Council for the Lepchas and Bhutias. This strategy of nominated seats for safeguarding the 'special interest' of the ruler was a strategy to maintain parity and it made possible to avert the Nepali dominance in the Council.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, further tensions arose when the more qualified and competent Nepalis were overlooked in appointment in public offices and only Buddhism was accorded the status of the official religion.¹⁵¹ Thus the entrenchment of the community-based representation which was introduced by the Chogyal into the pre-merger period continued to hold dominance in the minds of the people. Therefore, this model of community-based electoral reservation was continued in the post-merger period even though the Indian constitution has many articles provisioning that there should not be community-based electoral reservation nor communal reservation of

¹⁴⁹ Nari Rustomji, *Sikkim, A Himalayan Tragedy* (Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1987), 32.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 32

¹⁵¹ Ibid,32-33.

seats for a particular religion. The history of representation in Sikkim has thus been overshadowed by ethnic identities and categories.

UNDERSTANDING CHAMBLING'S DEFENCE OF CATEGORISATION

While the chief minister Pawan Chambling has been criticised for breaking the unity of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin he sought to defend his actions. In this section I attempt to analyse his reasons that he provided for facilitation this split. The arguments are mostly picked up from his public speeches. Chambling claimed that genome research has found that 99.9% of all humans have the same DNA. Therefore, research has ruled out the possibility of any superior race in contrast to inferior race. Interestingly he points out that the discrimination between man and man and between communities probably started out as a means to monopolise power and control over other races. Therefore, Chambling has argued that the 'state government would try to pull down the wall-built years ago *to divide humans on the basis of caste, race and nationality* (emphasis mine).

Chambling has also argued that since time immemorial there were mutual contact and interaction among people. Therefore, it was problematic to classify and categories people on the basis of caste, nationality, indigenous and immigrant. After coming to power Chambling wanted to unite the factions that has been created by the state induced categories of scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and OBCs. He believed that people should not entangle themselves in caste barriers. Therefore, he wanted to move away from the divisive categorisations towards what he terms is a melting point.¹⁵²

Because Indian identity is a collective entity comprised of various groups, therefore strengthening the Indian identity and Indian culture means strengthening the identity and the culture of the sub-nationalities like Bengali, Nepalese, Gujarati and Kashmiri cultures. Similarly, Nepali culture and identity, like Indian culture and identity, comprise of a whole range of sub-identities and culture. There the cultural

¹⁵² *Sikkim: Perspectives and Vision: Speeches of Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chambling* Vol. 1. (New Delhi: Indus Publishing House, 2003),449.

wealth and the heritage of the Tamang(s), Gurung(s), Rai(s), Kami(s) and Mangar(s) goes to build the Nepali culture and their contributions together give the Nepali identity. Therefore, any decay in the cultural practices of these sub-groups would lead to the extinction of the Nepali culture in the long run. Chambling defended his move to recategorise the Nepali sub cultures on the ground that that he was committed to conserve and promote the sub-cultures. For him, only by conserving the various sub-cultures and sub-identities could the large canvas of Nepali culture remain intact. While other people preferred to protect and conserve their sub cultures through singing, writing and performing, his contribution to this was through his ‘affirmative action policies’¹⁵³ which would embrace each of the various sub-cultures, especially those who had been neglected in the past.

Pawan Chambling has also argued that their forefathers followed this “melting pot” where the pot is the Nepali identity and whoever enters into it would melt away but would leave the pot intact. Similarly, the pot which was the Nepali identity and the ones who entered it were the different groups of the Nepali community like Limboo(s), Damai(s), Sarki(s) and Gurung(s). This approach survived because they wanted to assert themselves as a single ethnic group rather than an amalgamation of various sub-ethnic groups. Now, however, with the era of cutthroat competition in India among various groups which wish to assert themselves and be socio-politically active, this has taught the Nepali community to reorganise themselves. Accordingly, therefore, the Nepalese in Sikkim have started participating in this race because their political actions were not effective and that they weren't able to mobilise at the centre. This has been compounded by the fact that some groups like the Chettris, Rais and Limboos have been considerably weakened as there were no efforts to nurture them. This could lead to the annihilation of the Nepali culture and identity from the national mainstream.

Therefore, the melting pot approach had to be replaced by the ‘Salad bowl’ approach. It is apparent that the salad represents the various constituents of the Nepali ethnic group and culture while the bowl is the wholesome Nepali culture. Therefore,

¹⁵³ Ibid.

the various sub-ethnic groups like the Rai(s), Limboo (s) and Tamang(s) were the various components of a salad - like carrot, onion and tomato. Therefore, the salad bowl approach was the most fitting way in which the Nepalese community could preserve their distinct identity. Moreover, if each of these components developed their language, future and literature the salad would become beautiful and attractive. Therefore in order for them to flourish and blossom the affirmative action policies which would categorise them as backward classes would give them the best opportunity for growing.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that the 'local historical narratives' have played a crucial role in the construction of the portrayal regarding the origins of the Bhutia community in Sikkim and the state formation. This narrative which was constructed in the British era in the Himalayan region as they sought to unite the autochthonous Lepcha community and the Bhutia from Tibet into one single group. This narrative also sought to advance the aspirations of the Bhutia ethnic group in Sikkim. The 'local historical narrative' which bound the two ethnic communities was successful in deflecting any questions regarding the foreign origins of the Bhutia and also including them in any policy that favoured the autochthonous Lepcha community. The narrative furthermore was successful in entrenching the interests of the Bhutia community. The challenge to the local historical narrative came through the text of *LMT* which revised the earlier understanding of the state formation and the blood brotherhood.

Following a ruling of the Supreme Court identifying the Lepchas as the 'original inhabitants of Sikkim', the Bhutia-Lepcha category was 'de-hyphenated' by the Government of Sikkim who placed the Lepcha community in the list of 'primitive community' while the Bhutia continued to be placed in the list of scheduled tribes. The unity that had existed for centuries between the Bhutia-Lepcha community was thus also split by the formation of the 'primitive community'. The members of Bhutia community have become the most advanced community in the state of Sikkim and have bagged many government jobs. It was felt by the members of the Lepcha community that being included in the same category with the Bhutia community was

therefore disadvantageous to their interests and their representation in these jobs. Owing to the better socio-economic locations of the Bhutias, the Lepcha community pointed to the unfair categorisation of Lepchas and Bhutias as part of the same category and their resultant exclusion from public employment in the government services.

The policies formulated by the British officials were significant in changing the demography of Sikkim. Furthermore, the British officials introduced the categories of Nepalese, Aryans, and Mongoloids in their census to divide the Nepalese from the Bhutia-Lepcha. With the departure of the British Raj from the shores of India the influence of the democratic movement led by Nehru was also felt in Sikkim. The feudal system of revenue collection was harsh and a movement by the peasants consisting of the Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali community of Sikkim was launched demanding an abolishment of the system. This movement soon galvanised into a democratic movement that sought to emphasise actual representation and challenged the monarchy of the Namgyals and his coterie of aristocrats. The democratic movement was successful in gaining access to representation but the shrewd move of the monarch to introduce communal representation denied the majority of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin a chance to gain 'real representation'. By the early 1970s, Indian officials were preparing to support the democratic movement in Sikkim and considering the geopolitical occurrences India sought a closer 'permanent association' with Sikkim. The democratic movement buoyed by Indian backing forced the king to sign the tripartite agreement in Sikkim whereby the real powers passed over to the hands of the Indian appointed official. This was the precursor to the absorption of Sikkim by the India (1975).

Following the absorption of Sikkim in 1979 the Indian government reserved 12 seats in the 32-member legislative assembly for the Sikkimese of the Bhutia Lepcha origin and revoked the reserved seats of the Sikkimese of Nepalese origin. In the 1990s the Mandal Commission report suggested that certain communities from the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin should be included in the list of OBCs. These communities therefore pushed for the implementation of the Mandal commission in

Sikkim as they surmised that there were more advantages to be gained from being categorised as OBC than to be categorised as Sikkimese of the Nepali origin. The Bhutia-Lepcha community having being notified in the list of scheduled tribes, had a favourable position with regard to state resources and benefits. This re-notification by the state government was followed by a period in which the OBCs developed as a powerful political force backing the Pawan Chambling government. It further ushered in the demands for reclassification by the various left out communities (of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin) as scheduled tribes or most backward classes as it would entitle them to resources and benefits.

This chapter has traced the various communities that have constituted the population of Sikkim in the various epochs of history. The demand for 'real representation' on the basis of one man one vote has also not been an easy road. There have been many hindrances that have occurred along the journey. Furthermore, the democratic movement in Sikkim believed that the absorption by India would lead to the purging of community based electoral reservation. However, this provision has been continued in the post-merger period under the provision of Article 371(F). The State has used ethnic identities and categorisation to maintain its legitimacy and lobby with the people. As the civil society in Sikkim is weak and rather non-existent there has been a crucial lack of dialogue amongst the ethnic communities' groups. Therefore, this lack of dialogue has strengthened the position of the State. Moreover, none of the groups have initiated dialogues outside the framework of State and always looked towards the State for airing their grievances. Therefore, in order to resolve the current impasse in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly requires an initiation of dialogue within the different communities. This could mean a rejection of the historical narratives by the locals and a critical engagement with the actual historiography. Only then can the gap the academic discourse and the local popular narratives be bridged. I have only made a small attempt to do so.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING SIKKIM: STATE AND SOCIETY FRAMEWORK

I

INTRODUCTION

The pervasiveness of the State over our lives cannot be undermined. Its presence is akin to that of a guilty conscience that one tries to bury (in one's mind), but the looming self-condemnation cannot be avoided nor evaded. While the focus and definition of State has certainly shifted away from the traditional definition given by Weber¹⁵⁴, the study of state-society relations have helped us understand the progress made over the last few decades.¹⁵⁵ In the case of Sikkim also this framework can help us shed light on the occurrences that have taken place which have shaped the politics of this region. While the state has definitely occupied a hegemonic position in Sikkim the society has also evolved and transformed. This chapter therefore pertains to the occurrences in the societies in Sikkim and the reverberations that it has had on the social and economic life its inhabitants.

STATE-SOCIETY FRAMEWORK

In his book *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* Migdal argues that for people in the West, the state appears to be as common as their natural horizon.¹⁵⁶ Its presence and its authority over the minute rules of our lives has been so pervasive that it has become impossible to imagine a different scenario. However, while all of us may give the

¹⁵⁴ "A state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."

¹⁵⁵ Weber's definition of state failed to explain the variation of states or the failure of some states. Thus, if any state fell short of the ideal state than new terms had to be developed to fill this gap. Furthermore, the assumption that state does and should create rules that only it maintains through the threat of the violence to make people obey the rules negates and underestimates the intense negotiation, interaction, conflict and resistance that occur in human society. Scholars have argued that there are other organisations that set up their own sets of rules.

¹⁵⁶ Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 15.

state a pivotal status in our collective imaginations, its pragmatic reality in major parts of the world is and continues to be exceedingly complicated.

Thus, on the one hand we have witnessed failed states that are unable to maintain law and order, set up political institutions and provide common goods to its citizens. This creates tremendous hardships for the people. It has also been observed that many states are unable to reach out to the rural areas, border regions and backward tracts to a considerable level. Thus, states can be pushed back by certain components of society although they claim sovereignty over their land. Example can be given of Afghanistan which has seen the Taliban push back against the state power in many pockets of the region.¹⁵⁷

On the other hand, there are many states that have taken up the task of being the fulcrum of social and economic change in their territory. There is an acceptance that being the principal political organisation within a given region, it should be the nodal agency to implement mandatory rules amongst its people. This argument has gained much acceptance within the countries in the West. It was also selected by the decolonized countries of Latin America in the nineteenth century, and later by the Asian and African countries in the twentieth century. Most of these countries including India,¹⁵⁸ viewed the state as the means of achieving economic development and thereby lifting people from the clutches of poverty. This led to a situation where the state was seen as the panacea to the problems of the people and thus there were multiple demands and expectations on state institutions.¹⁵⁹

However, in case of several decolonised countries there was a gap between the expectations of the people and the actual delivery of goods by the state. Midgal argues

¹⁵⁷ Morten Bøås and Kathleen M. Jennings “‘Failed states’ and ‘state failure’: Threats or opportunities?”, *Globalizations* 4, no. 4 (2007): 479.

¹⁵⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru viewed the state as the central agency which would be the key player in economic modernisation. In this regard the Planning Commission came up with the 5-year plans which set the pace and the plan for economic reconstruction of the entire nation. His conception regarding the modern state was opposed by Gandhi who believed in *swaraj* wherein the individuals themselves would regulate their desires and the reach of the state over the daily lives of the people would be minimum. It was Nehru’s idea of modern state that was eventually adopted by the newly independent country.

¹⁵⁹ Sudipta Kaviraj, “On the enchantment of the state: Indian thought on the role of the state in the narrative of modernity.” *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 46, no. 2 (2005): 296.

that his model rests on a framework of state-society interaction. He sees ‘society not as a monolithic unity but as a mélange of social organisations such as families, clubs, companies or clans.’¹⁶⁰ Thus the state is just another organisation among this multitude of communities that frame the interaction amongst the members. They offer “incentives (such as security, prosperity or status) or threaten with sanctions (violence or ostracism)” to make the members adhere to the rules that have been set by them. The rewards however need not only be material-using symbols, culture, myth, traditions and social organisations can confer value to the members lives as well.

The individuals considering the inducements and penalties have the option of choosing to submit to the authority of the social organisation. In acquiescing to an organisation rules, “the individual invests this specific association with social control over her/his behaviour. This social control is determined by the number of people that follow the rules”¹⁶¹ and their motivations for doing so. Midgal argues that since state is a social organisation it plays by the same rules, however on a much larger scale. Therefore, like the other social organisations, it seeks to control the people by incorporating its rules on their strategies of survival or in many cases monopolising their individual strategies of survival.

Therefore, Midgal’s main argument would be the state-society interaction: the state and social organisations continually compete for control over the social life. The State with its huge authority seeks to regulate the social relations within its territory, thus being the dominant force that would put it in antagonism against any social organisations that would resist their orders. The dominant authority determines who will make the rules that will be applicable to the population. In Sikkim we see a state post the merger with India (1975) as one which has co-opted the ruling Bhutia-Lepcha community by including them in the list of scheduled tribes. Ironically the members who belonged to the same community of the erstwhile ruling family were then designated as scheduled tribes, a category for communities which were considered as

¹⁶⁰ Joel S. Midgal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 28.

¹⁶¹ Ibid,22.

backward and primitive. This move by the state however saved them from a possible backlash during the early days of the merger.¹⁶² Thus the erstwhile ruling community went from being the foremost members of the old kingdom to the scheduled tribes in the newly democratic state, opening up the doors to receive benefits from the state.

In the Eastern Himalayas notably, Darjeeling and eastern Nepal¹⁶³ the general population have made their dissatisfaction towards the state known through agitations and struggles. Darjeeling from the 1980s has seen continuous strikes and struggle for recognition through the demand for Gorkhaland. While the demand against injustice has taken the form of recognition, the lack of healthcare provisions and unemployment amidst its educated youth¹⁶⁴ have led to constant flare ups and confrontations. They have blamed the West Bengal government for extracting hydroelectricity, tea and timber while neglecting the local population. The people in eastern Nepal have also blamed Kathmandu for neglecting the province of Limbuwan. The people have argued that they have received no funds for development from the state. In both these regions local people have rued the dismal attitude or more explicitly the ‘neglect’ by the state towards its citizens. Therefore, the injustice meted out to the people through the neglect of the state in provisions of healthcare, higher education and employment has taken the form of recognition struggles.

This phenomenon can be contrasted to Sikkim where there is a huge presence of state in the life of the people. The State in Sikkim post the merger with India has

¹⁶² By ensuring the erstwhile ruling families socio-economic protection within the category of scheduled tribes and reservation of seats on the basis of community (Sikkim is the only state that has reservation of seats in the legislative assembly on the basis of community) the Indian State sought to placate the Bhutia-Lepcha community which were former ruling community but were in the minority.

¹⁶³ I take up these two places because not only do they form a part of the Eastern Himalayas but the composition of the people’s ethnic groups is similar across western Nepal, Darjeeling and Sikkim. They not only share linguistic and cultural affinities but a shared history which has divided them across states and nation borders.

¹⁶⁴ The census data of 2011 shows that the literacy rate of Darjeeling District is about 80 percent which makes it one of the top five districts in West Bengal in terms of literacy rate. The lack of jobs and employment in the phase of jobless growth in India and Darjeeling has meant that a large number of youths are without access to dignified employment that provides security and salary. See Registrar General, India. “Census of India 2011: provisional population totals-India data sheet.” *Office of the Registrar General Census Commissioner, India*, Indian Census Bureau (2011). On the frustrated mobility of Darjeeling’s urban youth see: Trent Brown, “Youth Mobilities and Rural–Urban Tensions in Darjeeling, India” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2015): 263-275.

taken upon itself to ensure economic and social development of its citizens. Midgal argues that the increased capability of a state “include and rest upon increased state social control.”¹⁶⁵ Midgal argues that state capabilities:

“include the capacities to *penetrate* society, *regulate* social relationships, *extract* resources and *appropriate* or use resources in determined ways. Strong states are those with high capabilities to complete these tasks, while weak states are on the low end of spectrum of capabilities” (Italics in original).¹⁶⁶

If these are the markers for a strong state then a reading of the history of Sikkim post-merger would show that the state in Sikkim has been able to *penetrate* and *regulate* social relationships within the societies through the socio-economic categories of primitive tribe, scheduled tribes, scheduled caste, other backward class, most backward class, etc. One must take into consideration that it the post-merger Indian government backed state that came up with these categories.¹⁶⁷ Moreover they have also promoted the ‘ethnic associations’ which are the main bodies through which the state and the people interact and the latter make their demands. Moreover, the demands of the ethnic associations such as the Limbu associations, Tamang associations which have formed the Joint Action Committee (JAC) to take their grievances to the state for representation and redistributive justice seem to confirm the notion of a strong state in Sikkim. The committees and the commissions that were set up by the State Government of Sikkim to make the society socially and politically more inclusive: the Sinha Committee (2005)¹⁶⁸ and the Roy Burman Commission

¹⁶⁵ Joel S. Midgal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988),22-23.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*,4-5.

¹⁶⁷ Prior to 1975, although the category of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes were not unfamiliar to the people of Sikkim due to their geographical and social proximity with the people in Darjeeling but these categories were put in place by the government of India after the merger in 1975. Thus the same caste and tribes were recognised as scheduled tribes and scheduled castes who were earlier recognised as such in the late 1950s in the Darjeeling hills.

¹⁶⁸ A. C. Sinha, G. P. Singh, S. R. Mondal and T. B. Subba, “Ethnographic Report on selected communities of Sikkim” *Submitted to the Department of Social Welfare, GoS* (2005).

(2009)¹⁶⁹ both received anthropological memorandums from the leaders of the various ethnic associations in Sikkim. The ethnic organisations of the society identified themselves as representing the grievances and the demands of the members of the associations to the state appointed Sinha committee and Burman commission.

The third factor that Midgal highlights is the state capability to *extract resources* and appropriate them. While Sikkim always had a dependency on the Central Government for revenue generation the falling share from the centre meant that they needed to look for alternate avenues for revenue.¹⁷⁰ Thereafter the Sikkim chief minister identified the fast-flowing rivers of Teesta and Rangit as potential sources of revenue through the building of dams and generation of hydroelectricity. Thus, even the third criteria seem to validate that in Sikkim the presence of strong state has been a central agency in the socio-economic development within its territory. The Sikkim government has also highlighted the progress made by the state in the Human Development Index (hereafter HDI) Sikkim report. The improvement in various categories such as gender parity, female education, open defecation free state and other parameters highlight the success of the state as evident by the HDI Sikkim report of 2004 and HDI Sikkim report of 2014.¹⁷¹

This is not to suggest that it the state that is the single loci that determines the rules without taking the society's viewpoints into consideration. It is in these conflict laden interactions between the different groupings in society which lobby for resources and rewards that progress has occurred in Sikkim. The battles in the Sikkimese society over how people should behave have been determined within the framework of the state through the highly structured ethnic organisations that are

¹⁶⁹ B. K. Roy Burman, "Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESF)" *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008)

¹⁷⁰ The funds from the Central Government used to constitute as high as 77 percent of the total revenue in 1983-84 it markedly came down to about 60 percent in 1990 and about 58 percent in 2000. See the speech of Shri Pawan Chambling, Chief Minister, Sikkim at the 50th National Development Council Meeting on 21 December 2002 at New Delhi. (Accessed online 12 February 2018), <http://planningcommission.gov.in/plans/planrel/pl150ndc/sikkim.pdf>.

¹⁷¹ Mahendra P. Lama, *Sikkim Human Development Report* (New Delhi: Berghahn Books, 2001). Also see the Sikkim Human development of 2014. (Accessed online 13 February 2018), <https://www.sikkim.gov.in/stateportal/Link/Sikkim%20Human%20Developent%20Report%202014.pdf>.

presided by bureaucrats who possess lobbying power in the power corridors of Gangtok.

In Sikkim it is also evident that the state leaderships engage social organisations vis-a-vis the ethnic associations. Therefore, State leaders may attempt to incorporate strongmen and social authorities or they may pursue challenging their foundations of social power. At the village level, local state officials who Midgal calls ‘implementors have the task of implementing state policies.’ These officials are therefore engrossed and drawn into a conglomeration of requirements and demands from higher officials, local politicians, their bureaucratic peers and the clients of their program.¹⁷² Analysing Sikkim’s ethnic associations in the lens of Midgal’s approach it also becomes evident the role of ethnic associations in distributive policies of the state.

Joel Midgal argues that an ‘increased social control by the state improves its prospects in the international arena.’¹⁷³ While the capacity of a state to persevere and flourish depends on a various factors such as the size of the population, potential revenue, available resources, leadership qualities, international position ‘the most important criteria is its ability to mobilise the population.’¹⁷⁴ Mobilisation is the channelling of people into specialised organisational frameworks that empower the state leaders(political parties) to build vote banks, support base and ensure complete domination over the population. It would seem that the state in Sikkim has managed this through the various ethnic associations and party domination that have proliferated in the region. This mobilisation has shaped the structure around which the people have negotiated with the state for various issues such as representation and redistribution.

¹⁷² Joel S. Midgal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988),200-205.

¹⁷³ Ibid,51.

¹⁷⁴ Krasner has argued that a state’s strength in international relations rests on its strength in relation to its own society. See, Stephen D. Krasner, “Domestic constraints on international economic leverage” in *Economic Issues and National Security*, edited by Klaus Knorr and Frank N. Trager,160-181 (Lawrence, Kan.: Regents Press of National Security Education Program,1977).

If the state is able to achieve a high degree of social control then it can mobilise their populations effectively. Moreover, the state can achieve autonomy from the various groups in society in deciding “their own preferred rules for the society; they can build complex, coordinated bureaus to establish these rules.”¹⁷⁵ Migdal defines it as the acceptance of the symbolic order associated with the idea of the state as people’s own system of meaning. “To enhance the strength and autonomy states must increase their social control.”¹⁷⁶ Therefore they must mobilise human and material resources into serialised frameworks that come with already existing social control. The greater is the social control the more legitimacy and participation is accessible to leaders of the state to attain their objectives. Thus, we will observe how the state has been able to manage societal control through the ethnic associations through which the people are able to access the state in lieu of various welfare provisions, employment opportunities and the differential access to state benefits.

II

CHAPTER OUTLINE

“Jaso gara, je bhana jata sake laijau malai, yo man ta mero Nepali ho” (Do anything, say anything take me anywhere but in my heart, I am a Nepali.)¹⁷⁷

These are the lyrics to a popular Nepali song that was doing the rounds when I grew up during the 1990s. In our boarding school in Darjeeling we always chose Nepali as our second language and identified ourselves as Nepali. Darjeeling district hosts some of the top boarding schools in India and is a preferred destination of education for students hailing from Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, Bihar,

¹⁷⁵ Joel S. Migdal, *State in society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute one another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001), 52.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 53.

¹⁷⁷ “Nepali Ho-1974 AD,” YouTube, Video File, (Accessed online March 21, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpxsqLS-Xu4>.

Siliguri, Bangladesh, Assam, Mizoram and Sikkim.¹⁷⁸ While I was growing up this ‘Nepali’ identity was used by the students to identify and differentiate them(student)s from the other Thai, Bhutanese, Bengali, Marwari, Bihari, Mizo and Assamese students. In fact, the homogenous category of Nepali was so entrenched in our minds that intra ethnic differences were largely seen as insignificant. This solidarity was further entrenched by the common dislike for the West Bengal government which was blamed for opposing what we saw as our just demand for Gorkhaland, apportioning the profits from the tea industry¹⁷⁹ and systematically excluding the locals from position of power. This pressure and neglect from above solidified the Nepali community all the more, helping to dissolve the intra ethnic differences.

The conditions today however are starkly different. When the Limboo and Tamang community were notified as scheduled tribe in 2003, a common query that struck the other communities were why not us? Aren’t they Nepalis just like us? What is so special about them that they were notified as scheduled tribes? Why are we still being put listed in the General category when we share the same cultural and political position as them? Don’t we all speak Nepali? Why are we being discriminated against? If we all were ‘Nepali’ as the song above suggested then why was the state being discriminatory in its practices? It should either notify the entire Nepali groups as scheduled tribes or not seek to divide the Nepali community by notifying only certain communities.

The move by the state to notify certain communities as scheduled tribes has certainly led to ethnic revivalism among the Nepali community. The earlier identification as ‘Nepali’ has undergone a change when people who were labeled as belonging to certain communities now assert that they are not Nepali and do not want

¹⁷⁸ Darjeeling hosts some of the top boarding schools in India which were set up in the British period notably Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, Mount Hermon and Loreto Convent and many others that were established by Christian missionaries.

¹⁷⁹ For an excellent account of the woes facing the tea workers of Darjeeling and the larger political economy of tea see: Sarah Besky, *The Darjeeling distinction: Labor and justice on fair-trade tea plantations in India* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2014).

to be identified as such.¹⁸⁰ Thus major communities such as the Limboo, Gurung and Tamang have already started dissociating themselves from the Nepali community and emphasising their own distinct ethnic identity within the state of Sikkim and also in Darjeeling.

The Limboo Association of Sikkim has demanded that the Limboo community be notified as 'primitive tribe' in the state as their presence in Sikkim can be traced back to the *Lo-Mon-Gtsong agreement (LMT)* of the seventeenth century. The status of the 'primitive tribe' is a new category that has been introduced by the Government of Sikkim for the Lepcha who are identified as the autochthonous tribe of Sikkim. While the demand by the Limboo community certainly adds another dimension to the ever-increasing demands for ethnic re-categorisations by the ethnic communities a glaring lacuna need to be pointed in the present literature.

In the previous chapter we saw that the state has used ethnic identity of the people and placed them at various categories during the different periods in the history of Sikkim. The current literature does not answer the question as to why the Limboo were clubbed with the larger Nepali community in 1973¹⁸¹ when they were earlier allotted one separate seat namely the 'Tsong seat' in the Sikkim Council in 1968. This separate seat for the Limboo in the Sikkim Council continued until it was subsequently withdrawn with the signing of the tripartite agreement (1973) between the Chogyal of Sikkim, the political leaders of Sikkim major parties and the Government of India. Thereafter the Limboo were merged under the category of Sikkimese of Nepali origin. The current literature does not highlight why were the Limboo identified as Nepali when the Limboo presence predates that of the other

¹⁸⁰ On 16 February 2011, the Sukhim Yakthung Sapsok Saonjumbo (Sikkim Limboo Literary Society) made an appeal to the Census Directorate to give careful consideration to the correct enumeration of Limboos in Sikkim. The memorandum handed over to *Sikkim Express* (local newspaper) stated "it has been reported to our association that some of the staff of Census filled forms themselves in some of the columns and were reluctant to write Limboo, Yooma religion and Limboo language for the Limboo community of Sikkim. It has to be brought to your kind notice that we are not Nepali or Nepali citizen. We are Sikkimese Limboo strongly rooted with the lands of Sikkim because we were here prior to the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty as religious king of Sikkim in 1642."

¹⁸¹ In 1973 the agreement regarding the seat sharing issue in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly was agreed upon in Gangtok between the Chogyal, Indian officials and the local politicians of Sikkim. For details see: Sunanda K. Datta Ray, *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim* (New Delhi: Tranqubear, 2013),236.

Nepali ethnic community. This abolition of the *Tsong/Limboo* seat set the ball rolling for the gradual abrasion of the Limboo distinct identity.

The Presidential notification in 1979 reserved 12 seats for the Bhutia-Lepchas and subsequently took away the electoral reservation for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin, which included the Limboos. Thus they were contesting under the General seats from 1979 onwards till their notification as scheduled tribe in 2003. This notification has led to them demanding electoral reservation in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim under article 332 of the constitution of India, which provides that scheduled tribes must have electoral reservation of seats in the Assembly. This has been denied to them in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly elections of 2004, 2009 and 2014.¹⁸² However to understand this denial of representation, we must also understand why the Limboo of Sikkim were clubbed within the Nepali community. In understanding how and why this occurred in the past, it can help us understand the demand for electoral reservation and representation in Sikkim better.

This chapter therefore attempts to answer these questions. The state-society framework also underpins this chapter as the history of the Nepali language which is the lingua-franca of the masses in Sikkim played a huge role in the construction of the Indian Nepali category. Moreover, the construction of the Indian Nepali category also played a central part in the history of the Limboo community.

In this chapter I have argued that the large-scale migration of people from Eastern Nepal and Limbuwan into the Darjeeling-Sikkim territory¹⁸³ played a critical part in the construction of the Indian Nepali identity. In Nepal the term Nepali was only used for the upper caste Chettri and Bahun and the lower caste Kami, Damai and

¹⁸² Since there are no provisions for reservation for seats in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim for scheduled tribes any changes made would have to incorporate the relevant provisions of Article 371(F) and the Representation to the People Act (1951).

¹⁸³ The Darjeeling-Sikkim region was a single political territory inhabited by a few tribes like the Lepchas, Bhutias, Limbus and the Mangars until the takeover of the various parts of Darjeeling by the British around the mid-nineteenth century following an endowment by the Maharaja of Sikkim. Although they were supposed to give a plot of land in exchange for the endowment, by the time the Maharaja in Sikkim realised the deceit it was too late. For details see: Tanka B. Subba, "Migration and Ethnic Relations in Darjeeling and Sikkim" (2010), 357. (Accessed 10 January 2018), <http://dspace.nehu.ac.in/bitstream/1/2905/1/MIGRATION%20AND%20ETHNIC.pdf>.

Sarki. The other ethnic groups were referred to as Newar(s), Rai(s), Tamang(s), Gurung(s), Limbu(s) and Mangar(s) who had their own traditions, religions and languages. However, the migration of people into the new territory of Darjeeling and Sikkim which was promoted by the tea plantation owners (in Darjeeling) and the first political officer of Sikkim J. C. White led to an amalgamation of the different ethnic groups. Their shared affinities and history coupled with the solidarity of ‘belonging to the same class of labourers dissolved their intra ethnic boundaries’. Instead as they migrated to new places such as Darjeeling and Sikkim a new language came to be used as the ‘lingua franca’ in place of their own ethnic languages. Therefore, the language which was earlier referred to as Khas boli, Gorkhali came to be known as the Nepali language. Therefore, in Sikkim-Darjeeling the other groups like the Lepchas and Bhutias referred to the speakers of this language as Nepalis. Since there was a large-scale migration of Limboo(s) from Eastern Nepal and Limbuwan towards Sikkim (along with the other ethnic groups) the Limboos who were earlier present in Sikkim¹⁸⁴ came to lose their distinct identity and were categorised under the rubric of Nepalis. Thus, even though the Limboos who are acknowledged as one of the earliest settlers of Sikkim the colonial administrators progressively classified them as Nepalis. This administrative construct also enveloped the distinct groups which had cultural, religious and linguistic differences as they had migrated into Sikkim.

¹⁸⁴ Many Limbus have been inhabiting West Sikkim since time unrecorded. While some sections of the Limbus believe to have ‘originated’ from Kashi or Benares in India. Others believe themselves to have migrated from the Tsang province of Tibet. See: Tanka B. Subba, “Migration and Ethnic Relations in Darjeeling and Sikkim” (2010),357. (Accessed 10 January 2018), <http://dspace.nehu.ac.in/bitstream/1/2905/1/MIGRATION%20AND%20ETHNIC.pdf>.

Table 3.1: Status of Communities in Nepal

NEPALI UPPER CASTE	NEPALI LOWER CASTE	OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS
Chettri	Kami	Newar
Bahun	Damai	Limboo
	Sarki	Rai
		Mangar
		Gurung
		Bhujel
		Mukhia
		Dewan

Source: The author.

This chapter then goes on to argue that the Limboos of Sikkim and other ethnic communities were also influenced by the *Ganapati* movement of the 1990s in Nepal. This movement saw the attempt by the Hinduized Nepali communities to return to their pre-caste and pre-Hindu social practices, languages and religions. This attempt by them saw the revival of the own languages which were Tibeto-Burman and their own religions (Buddhism for the Newars, Animism for the Limbus). Thus, the acceptance of Indo-Aryan Nepali as their language and Hinduism as their religion came to be discontinued. This dehinduisation was mainly done in order hopefully make it easier for them to be listed as scheduled tribes.¹⁸⁵ Their common perception was that getting the ST status is the surest way of getting a job, which is increasingly competitive in Sikkim. For the other ethnic communities their expectations went up after the Limboo and the Tamang were included in the list of STs in 2003. However despite the constitution of the Sinha Committee in 2005 and the Roy Burman Commission in 2009 to facilitate their inclusion, no new caste or ethnic groups were added to the list of the STs till date. The recognition of Limboo as scheduled tribes by the Government of India in 2003 attempted to undo the historic injustice that was meted out to this community. They had been clubbed with the Nepali category while

¹⁸⁵ Tanka B. Subba, "Making Sikkim more inclusive: An insider's view of the role of Committees and Commissions," In *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices*, edited by Uwe Skoda, Kenneth Bo Nielsen, and Marianne Qvortrup Fibiger, (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013)136.

their presence predates the Bhutia who came later. While this notification did certainly come as a step in the right direction their struggles however did not end there.

The second half of the chapter traces the system of representation vis-a-vis the Limboo group that was practiced in the kingdom of Sikkim from 1950-1973 during the period it was ruled by a Bhutia king. The third part of the chapter then argues that low levels of returns from agriculture, rural poverty, increased levels of education and increased competition for access to jobs coupled with a dependence on the state has led to generating the ethnic associations as the central units through which people lobby with the state for resources and benefits. It also traces how the state has facilitated ethnic revivalism among the Nepali groups through promotion of ethnic languages, dresses and festivals. It then offers a conclusion that the reconstruction of the Nepali community in the light of socio political considerations have been initiated by the society members within the framework given by the state, thus positing the state society framework as the guiding leitmotif of this chapter.

A PRESSING CONCERN

In the Eastern Himalayas while ethnic politics have taken a precedence that have swept the imagination of the people, viable alternatives have not been forthcoming to counter this trend. So, while Sikkim did get its first taste of independent democratic elections in 1979 after its merger with India, politics in the state have still been largely been dominated by intra and inter-ethnic considerations. Following the Mandal commission report in 1991 the homogeneous Nepali group in Sikkim fractured as the Rai, Limboos and Mangars asked to be included in the category of OB. The Mandal commission report and the subsequent demand from these groups who comprised a considerable portion of the electorate was rejected by the then chief minister Nar Kumar Bhandari leading to his defeat in the next assembly elections held in 1994.

While the reclassification of the entire population of Sikkim into various socio-economic groups through which they could access the resources of the state has

occurred, a pertinent concern must be expressed. This concern has the potential to perturb the stability that one can observe in Sikkim for the past two decades.

If ethnic identities are “fluid, manipulable and contested (for example the ‘Tamang’ emerged only towards the early twentieth century) then an arrangement that distributes state resources on the basis of ethnic identity is certainly a volatile one.”¹⁸⁶In other words the assumption by the State that there is a rigid and unchanging ethnic identity needs to be reassessed. It is an outmoded view of understanding people and their culture which is largely reintroduced by ethnic activists for various purposes, mainly to gain benefits from the State. Therefore, one needs to be question the rationale behind basing a structure of redistribution and representation on ethnic identities which are empirically weak and could be dangerous for long term stability. Moreover, the only way a person can claim membership to an ethnic community is only through their fathers as it is based on patriarchal definitions of descent. This system also does not take into consideration that there are a significant number of inter-ethnic marriages in Sikkim-approximately 75 percent of couples are from mixed ethnic backgrounds¹⁸⁷, also creating hardships for those children who have been raised by their mothers and wish to claim ST status through their maternal ancestry.¹⁸⁸

Moreover, while claiming their membership they need references from at least two male relatives of the same group which implies that they must have their father’s relatives to vouch for them. This creates unnecessary hurdles for people who have been separated from their father’s family or have no cousins or male relatives on their father’s side. Moreover, in a region where gaining access to ration cards, government benefits and important documents is only possible through *afno manchey* (our

¹⁸⁶ David N. Gellner, “Not if but how”, *Kathmandu Post* (Accessed online 25 March 2018), <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2011-05-01/not-if-but-how.html>.

¹⁸⁷ Sara Schneiderman and Mark Turin, “Seeking the tribe: ethno-politics in Darjeeling and Sikkim” *Himal South Asian* 19, no. 2 (2006): 58.

¹⁸⁸ One of my friends had this issue when he wanted to claim scheduled tribe status from his mother’s side as his father had been largely absent from their life. He had to refer to a verdict from the Guwahati High court in order to claim his scheduled tribe status as the University Officials were not convinced that one could claim the schedule tribe category from their maternal side.

people), only about half of the people are actually eligible for and gain access in it. Therefore, one needs to question the very basis of the rules which make ethnic purity a difficult if not impossible category to identify.

In Nepal the crisis regarding ethnic identity is having constitutional ramifications. Scholars, anthropologists and the members of the “Constituent Assembly’s Committee for State Restructuring Committee and the Division of State Powers” are engaged in a lively debate over whether and if so to what degree should ethnicity be an elementary principle of the new constitution, especially pertaining to the federal features. Should the demand for the ethnic federalism especially pertaining to regions like Limbuwan, Khambuwan be incorporated into the new constitution?¹⁸⁹ Even if these demands were to be incorporated the questions regarding citizenship, access to representative bodies and governmental positions for the minorities living in such areas needs to be rethought. These sets of challenges are therefore timely warnings for the state of Sikkim that has started treading on the path of ethnic reclassifications.

Two communities in Sikkim who are the Sherpa and Yolmo are included in the list of scheduled tribes under Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin. However, they do not consider themselves and are not considered as Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin by the larger community. It was an official mistake that put them there. It could have major repercussions in the future as ethnic identities become more flexible and disputed. This dispute is just one example of how ethnic identities could lead to even more volatility in the times to come.

III

LOOKING BACK TO NEPAL

In Nepal the disintegration of the Karnali State in the fourteenth century led to the emergence of countless smaller states that were occupied with fighting one another. One of the small states was the principality of Gorkha which led by Prithvi

¹⁸⁹ For details see: Sara Schneiderman and Louise Tillin, “Restructuring states, restructuring ethnicity: looking across disciplinary boundaries at federal futures in India and Nepal” *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2015): 1-39.

Narayan Shah slowly but steadily annexed the nearby principalities and finally after numerous failures was able to capture the Kathmandu Valley¹⁹⁰ in 1768.¹⁹¹ This victory led him to be established as the first king of the Shah dynasty. The border of the new kingdom of Gorkha were constantly shifting and it stretched from Kangra Valley in the west (current day Himachal Pradesh) to all of East Nepal and a large portion of modern Sikkim.¹⁹²

The foreign notion of territorial demarcation was only imposed by the British after the Treaty of Segauli in 1814. The final boundaries were drawn after the westward expansion was restricted at the Sutlej by Ranjit Singh the King of Punjab in 1809-10, while the eastern demarcation was ensured by the defeat at the hands of the British in 1814-1816.¹⁹³ The defeat in 1816 also led to the loss of Kumaon and Garhwal (modern day Uttarakhand) where the Gorkhas had ruled for over 20 years. The Shahs had little establishment of an efficient administration that could collect revenue due to topographical limitations and lack of centralisation.¹⁹⁴ Therefore while the control of the monarch was strong over the seat of power in Kathmandu it was progressively weaker over the periphery areas especially Terai and Eastern Nepal. In eastern Nepal the Limbus had been incorporated to the Gorkha Kingdom in 1772-1774 after a military victory and a reconciliation that they would be granted autonomy over their traditional lands.¹⁹⁵ Therefore the hold of the central monarchy over the borderlands was tenuous and the authority of the king and his administration over these lands was weak and indefinite.

¹⁹⁰ Kathmandu Valley had been historically inhabited by the Newars who have their own script, language and culture. Newars have largely been a trading community that had business relations with Tibetans. For details see: David N. Gellner and Declan Quigley, eds. *Contested hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995)

¹⁹¹ John Whelpton, *A History of Nepal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 35.

¹⁹² Ibid, 35.

¹⁹³ See R. Moktan, *Sikkim: Darjeeling Compendium of Documents* (Varanasi: Gopal Press, 2004), 7.

¹⁹⁴ Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, "To be Masters of Distance. Thoughts on State, Middlemen and Riddles of Transportation in the Remote District of Bajhang in Nepal" *Ethnologie im Widerstreit. Kontroversen um Macht, Geschäft und Geschlecht* (1991), 234.

¹⁹⁵ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests of Eastern Nepal and Sikkim* (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2009), 133-135.

However, this lack of administrative coherence was sought to be counterpoised by religion. Hinduism provided the King with a rational basis and ensured popular legitimacy. One of the main goals of the state was the creation of an *Asal Hindustan* (land of pure Hindus) in contrast to the Indian subcontinent which had been defiled and polluted by the Mughal emperors and the British Raj.¹⁹⁶ According to the *Dibya Upadesh* given by Prithvi Narayan in 1774, Dharma was to be the main basis of the Hindu kingdom.¹⁹⁷ This ideology formed the basis of the construction of a Hindu kingdom and the social stratification that was enforced and codified by the Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Ran in the *Muluki Ain* (National Legal Code) of 1854. The *Ain* placed all the groups in a ritual hierarchy where the King placed the Bahun and the Chettri at the top of the moral order. The eventual *Sanskritization*¹⁹⁸ and the spread of Hinduism amongst the non-Hindu population mainly occurred as the leading positions of administration and employment were preferentially given to the high caste Hindus. In order to reap benefits and other material rewards the non-Hindu groups found it beneficial to either imitate or accept the Hindu rituals and traditions (especially the festival of Dasain i.e. Dussehra) in order to find favour with the Hindu overlords leading to the eventual *Sanskritization* of the entire group.

However, the main component that was crucial in the gradual process of Hinduization was the migration of Hindu groups from western and central Nepal to the eastern hills of Nepal. The Gorkha rule in Kumaon (1790-1815) and Garhwal (1803-1815) is widely considered to be an oppressive period in the region's history.¹⁹⁹ However just as there were free flow of people and migration in the eastern Himalayas the region of Garhwal, Kumaon and western Nepal also had a shared

¹⁹⁶ Prayag Sharma Raj, "Nation-Building, Multi-Ethnicity and the Hindu State" in *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom*, edited by David Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 476.

¹⁹⁷ Richard Burghart, *The Conditions of Listening: Essays on Religion, History, and Politics in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 268.

¹⁹⁸ Sanskritization is a specific description of societal adjustment. It defines the process by which caste or tribes placed lower in the caste hierarchy strive for higher mobility by emulating the rituals and practices of the upper or dominant castes. This term was made conventional by M. N. Srinivasan in the 1950s. For details see: M. N. Srinivas, "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization" *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1956): 481-496.

¹⁹⁹ Mathur Nayanika, "Naturalizing the Himalaya-as-Border in Uttarakhand," In *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia* eds. David Gellner (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 74.

history of migration. Moreover, the numerous temples such as Badrinath and Kedarnath in the Garhwal and Kumaon regions had a huge impact on the religious beliefs of the people who were Hindus by their beliefs. They may possibly have been moving to escape the oppressive elites but the movement of these Hindu groups caused a large-scale migration of the various Kiranti groups (Rai, Limboos) from the Kingdom of Gorkha to British India, Sikkim and Bhutan.²⁰⁰It must be noted that the Hindu groups were usually the upper caste Khas Chettri and the Bahuns who displaced the Kiranti groups of Limbuwan in eastern Nepal.

The migration of the *Parbatiya* groups who were the upper caste Bahuns and Chettris into Kirat territory in eastern Nepal also led to change in the land holding patterns. The Gorkha rulers encouraged the *Parbatiyas* to colonise the ‘communal lands (kipat) of the eastern peoples for rice-paddy cultivation and irrigation’.²⁰¹Due to an increasing need for raw materials and labourers to support the military conquests of the Gorkha kings the *Parbatiyas* were allowed to till the land that belonged to the Kiranti groups(Rai, Limboo).At the outset the locals leaders of the Kiranti population were able to profit from the new tributes in cash or kind paid by the *Parbatiya* migrants but over time these Hindu Parbatiya migrants came to dominate the indigenous population socially, economically and politically. The Hindu *Parbatiyas* also imposed their caste system on all of the people living in this region i.e. Kiratis the Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic group who practiced Buddhism and animism. So, the Kiratis who were not familiar with the legal system and the rules of the land ownership were alienated from their lands through various legislation leading to mass migration towards Sikkim, Darjeeling and Bhutan.²⁰²

However, it was not only internal factors such as loss of land, Sanskritization and alienation caused by the Hindu *Parbatiya* groups but also external incentives such

²⁰⁰ Mona Chettri, “Ethnic Politics in the Nepali Public Sphere: Three cases from the eastern Himalaya” (PhD Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2013), 58.

²⁰¹ Lionel Caplan, *Land and Social change in East Nepal: A Study of Hindu-Tribal Relations* (London: Routledge, 2013),3.

²⁰² Bhuvan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal: A Case Study of Political Acculturation* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1966),6.

as the opportunity to work in the commercial or military ventures of the British East India Company, the benefits from working in the tea gardens of Darjeeling that induced the Kiranti communities and the Limbus to migrate to these territories.

MIGRATION FROM THE KINGDOM OF GORKHA TO BRITISH INDIA

The Darjeeling-Sikkim region was an area that was inhabited by the autochthonous Lepcha, Limboo, Bhutia and the Mangar. With the formation of the British East India Company in 1600 and the eventual capture of power in Bengal their trade increased exponentially and Calcutta became their imperial Centre. With the development of trade, came large scale recruitment of Britishers for various occupations. The hot climate and the congested settlement of the plains made it a breeding ground for tropical diseases like malaria. Many of the Britishers longed for the cooler weather of England and a ‘change in climate’ became a popular prescription for those ailing under the sweltering heat of the plains.

The wars with both Nepal (1814-1816) and Burma (1824-1826 and 1852) brought them closer to the Himalayas where they could recover from the heat and disease of the plains. Moreover, these military victories brought them closer to Tibet which was under a lucrative trade route they were determined to tap into.²⁰³ It was around 1828 when the “East India Company dispatched army officers to the Himalayan foothills around Darjeeling that George W. Lloyd declared that the area was well adapted for the purposes of a sanitarium.”²⁰⁴

In 1835, Lloyd negotiated and by some accounts tricked the Chogyal of Sikkim into leasing a ‘narrow strip of land, twenty-four miles long and five miles wide hugging the ride of the highest foothill in the region’. For almost a decade after signing the ‘Deed of Grant’ the British paid a yearly allowance for the use of

²⁰³ The craze for Tibet was so strong that the British expedition to Tibet under the leadership of Francis Younghusband was carried out between December 1903 and September 1904. The result was that they established diplomatic relations in a bid to counter the perceived Russia’s ambitions in the East, killing thousands of Tibetans along the way. It was initiated by Lord Curzon who was in charge of British India Government. For details see: Patrick French, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* (London: Vintage, 2016).

²⁰⁴ Lewis Sydney Stewart O’Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Palamau* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1907), 20.

Darjeeling. They found that the temperature, rainfall and other climatic factors made it an ideal location for sanitarium for British soldiers and also that it was “uninhabited”.²⁰⁵

After the loss to the British in Sigauli, Nepal’s monarch pressed for further reclamation and taxes in from the land in the eastern parts of Nepal, squeezing the lands even more. With the support of the monarch in Nepal the “East India Company recruited these landless workers by the thousands to work as soldiers in the specially formed ‘Gurkha’ regiments and also as woodcutters, road builders and food producers.”²⁰⁶The people lacked the resources to pay the taxes imposed by the monarchy in Nepal thereby leading to the increasing displacement which led to many settlers from eastern Nepal migrating to British India due to the promise of agricultural lands. The first Political Office of Sikkim J. C. White also encouraged immigration from Nepal as the increase in agricultural productivity would expand the tax revenue of the Government.

In Sikkim the migration had begun earlier as during the period of 1788-89 the Gorkhas has expanded their territory to cover large parts of Sikkim and had even annexed the Darjeeling tract for a period of over thirty years. Therefore there was large scale movement and settlement in this region from eastern Nepal and west Sikkim which was sustained even after the territorial demarcation established by the treaty of Sigauli in 1816. Curzon’s forthright statement that: “the idea of a demarcated frontier is in itself an essentially modern conception, and finds little or no place in the ancient world” is applicable here.²⁰⁷There was no fixed territorial demarcations of kingdom and territories so there was large scale movements of people especially Limbus, between what would be demarcated as Sikkim and Nepal after the Treaty of

²⁰⁵ Basant Lama, *Through the Mists of Time: The Story of Darjeeling, the Land of Indian Gorkha* (Kurseong: Bhawani Offset Printing and Publication, 2009),59.

²⁰⁶ Sarah Besky, *The Darjeeling distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013),98.

²⁰⁷ See the introduction of David N. Gellner, eds. *Borderland lives in Northern South Asia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013),5.

Sigauli.²⁰⁸ However the major migration began earnestly in 1871 after the encouragement by the British political officer in Sikkim J. C. White. This was done with the cooperation of the local *kazis* and some influential Newars.

The Limbus however inhabited the western part of Sikkim which was contiguous. They however looked to an ancient Limbu Kingdom, Limbuwan in east Nepal. Thus, they were always looking towards west, which is the eastern Nepal of today and the Limbuwan of the bygone era.²⁰⁹ One can also argue that state consolidation and borders were not that fixed or determined and large-scale migration took place in these regions. With time some of the Limbus were assimilated under Buddhism and the boundaries were slowly shaped. Thus, the Limbus became a part of two countries, India and Nepal.

Thus, we can see how the migrants fleeing from their oppression moved to the colonial empire of British India. In Nepal it was only the Bahun, Chettri, Kami, Damai and Sarki that were identified as Nepali. The other ethnic groups were referred to as Newar(s), Rai(s), Gurung(s), Limbu(s) and Mangar(s). However, when they came to these new places in search for land and jobs these common factors and shared solidarity arising out of a similar background and common suffering dissolved their ethnic differences or hierarchy thereby facilitating the formation of a simple homogenous group. Since they were only confronted by other ethnic groups they came to be identified as Nepali. However, in Darjeeling they were employed in servitude as the lowest strata in the economic hierarchy, mostly working as tea leaves pluckers. Thus, in Darjeeling ‘identity formation was based not on the basis of ethnicity but on the basis of economic class’. While it was only those who had been in the fold of the Hindu caste system like Bahun, Chettri, Kami, Damai, Sarki who till the 1920s identified as the ‘Nepalis’ while the rest maintained their own ethnic language, dress and customs, identifying themselves as ‘Limboos, Gurungs, Magars or Tamangs.’ Campbell “reports of the Khas, Mangars, Gurungs, Lepchas, Bhutias,

²⁰⁸ See R. Moktan, *Sikkim: Darjeeling Compendium of Documents* (Varanasi: Gopal Press, 2004), 4-6.

²⁰⁹ Tanka B. Subba, “Migration and Ethnic Relations in Darjeeling and Sikkim” (2010), 357. (Accessed online 10 January 2018), <http://dSPACE.nepu.ac.in/bitstream/1/2905/1/MIGRATION%20AND%20ETHNIC.pdf>.

Murmis, Limboos and other Kirat groups like Sunwars and Chepangs, living in Darjeeling.”²¹⁰O’Malley records that the distinct “marker of these ethnic groups living in this region was their native dialects.”²¹¹However it was only with the development of the educated and the culturally conscious elite that the Tibeto-Burman speakers began to identify themselves as Nepalis on the basis of the common denominator against all which was language.

In India following the founding of the Indian National Congress by A. O. Hume and under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who strengthened and promoted provincial Congress regions and areas, there was an upsurge of linguistic communities. Therefore, even the making of the ethno-linguistic community called ‘Nepali’ was a result of a conscious attempt and effort by a group of prominent literary people, prominently Parasmani Pradhan, Suryabirkram Gyawali and Dharnidhar Koirala. This process was started in Benares but the movement eventually moved to Darjeeling which became the centre of the Nepali literary movement in India.

Since the king had total grip over the publishing houses inside Nepal a large number of emergent writers published from Benares and Darjeeling. They rued the fact that there were very less readers and literate people who could read what they wrote and this notion of backwardness of the Gorkha *jati* over the other communities in India was prevalent. Since most of them were wage workers in the tea industry or working as Gorkha soldiers, literacy was a privilege which they could hardly afford. Moreover, the advancement of Nepali as the lingua franca can also be attributed to the fact there it became necessary as the link language between the different ethnic group who were recruited in the Gorkha regiment as a well as the propagation of Christianity by the Scottish missionaries in Darjeeling.

²¹⁰ A. Campbell “On the Tribes around Darjeeling” *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 7 (1869): 144.

²¹¹ Lewis Sydney Stewart O’Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Palamau* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot 1907), 47.

Michael Hutt has argued that the emergence of a cohesive ‘Nepali’ identity among ‘Nepalis in India’ dates back to 1924 with the founding of the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (Nepali Literature Association). The Association formally adopted the name Nepali for the language over other names which were used such as Gorkhali, Gorkha and as the chairperson of the inaugural meeting expressed,

“...the word ‘Nepali’ has a broad meaning. It refers to all races(jati) of Nepal-Mangar, Gurung, Kirati, Newar, Limbu and so on- and indicates that these and all the other races here are parts of a great Nepali nation (rastra)...Nepali nowadays is like a lingua franca in the Himalayan region (prades). Although the people living in this region speak different tongues (boli), there is no one who does not understand Nepali... and no race can claim that this language(bhasa) belongs to it alone.”²¹²

As the chairperson argued while the people spoke different languages, everyone knew and could communicate in Nepali. These various ethnic groups had thus begun to speak in a common language known as the Nepali language or the Khas kura.²¹³ It was around the language that their common identity began to be developed. Therefore, this was chosen to be the name of the language which would act as a unifier of all the various jatis. Subsequently the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan guided the order of the grammar structure and the spelling of words with the publications of various books and dictionaries.²¹⁴

Soon the political demarcation of the Darjeeling hills on the basis of ethnicity was put forward before the Morley-Minto reforms in 1907. Ten years later this groups wanted a separate administration for the hill people namely the Hillmen’s association, a conglomeration of the representatives of the Nepali, Bhutia and Lepchas communities presented a memorandum before the Montague-Chelmsford Commission in 1917. They lobbied as a single Nepali community as they believed that unifying as a common community would enhance their position and make the Nepali jati more visible to the colonial rulers. These organisations could not achieve their main goals but it helped to build and solidify a Nepali identity based on the idea of a

²¹² Michael Hutt, *Modern Literary Nepali: An Introductory Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 113-14.

²¹³ For details see, Gokul Sinha, *A Treatise on Nepali Language* (Darjeeling: Uttaranchal Prakashan, 1978).

²¹⁴ For details see, Kumar Pradhan, *A history of Nepali literature* (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1984).

common jati, which was a synthesis of the various groups which constructed the Nepali community. However, the notion of Nepali jati had taken roots in the Darjeeling hills since the early twentieth century, the Nepalis who migrated to Sikkim were living under a Bhutia king and thus they came to be identified as Nepali also.

The “census of 1931 introduced the concept of tribe and listed the various groups like the Gurungs, Mangars, Khas, Newars, Tamangs, Limbu, Kami, Sunuwar, Yakha, Sarki, Gharti, etc. into the category of Nepali tribes.”²¹⁵ The 1931 census thus showed 13,060 Lepchas (11% of the population), 11,955 (10% of the population) and 84,793 Nepalese (77% of the population) in Sikkim.

I argue that this identification of the Limbus also in the category of Nepali eventually led them to be categorised as Sikkimese of ‘Nepali origin.’ With the construction of the ‘Nepali identity’ the Limbus, Newars and the Rais all slowly began to communicate in Nepali and soon over a few generations lost the usage of their own languages, dresses, traditions and religion. Following this amalgamation of the different communities the speakers of the Nepali language came to be identified as Nepalis and even the Limboos lost their distinctiveness. However, the Nepali ethnic group existed in Sikkim vis-a-vis the Bhutia and the Lepcha communities. The inter-ethnic differences and the insecurities of these communities have been at the root of the identity-based politics. However, the general elections in 1994 saw the breakup of the Nepali group as the Rai and Limboo demanded their inclusion in the list of OBCs, thereby fracturing the amalgamation that had subsumed the Limboos under this group. The category of ‘Nepali community’ began to look unsteady as that the different groups began to assert their own identity and began to desist being labelled as Nepali. The upsurge of the *janajatis* in 1980 in Nepal against the higher castes saw them demanding their own language to be taught in place of Nepali in schools and this challenge to the dominance of the upper caste groups also had an impact in Sikkim.

²¹⁵ R. A. Dutch, “Census of India, 1941. Vol. III: Bengal Tables.” (1942)

Moreover, the State and its policies of affirmative action have increased the value of the ethnicity by promoting it as a political tool that can be used by the individual in order to be a recipient of the patronage structure that has been set up by the current government. The State has been active in generating a certain level of ethnic politics by constructing certain structures that promote ethnic identity as a political identity especially amongst the Nepali group. Since poverty persists, while facing identity issues it is more advantageous to be classified as a scheduled tribe, other backward class and most backward class than the simple recognition as a 'Sikkimese of Nepali origin'. Moreover, while the Bhutia and Lepchas were enjoying affirmative action benefits by belonging to the scheduled tribes the Nepalis were lumped together as General and were losing out. When the Mandal commission recommendations regarding OBCs came out in 1991 the Limboos pushed for the reconstruction of ethnic groups according to the new guidelines within the framework laid by the Mandal commission. Ethnic revivalism in Sikkim following the rise of Pawan Chambling was a steady state mechanism under which the State promoted different community languages, cultures, festivals and education. Thus, the different groups refuted their Nepali identity (Sikkimese of Nepali origin) and complained that they were not Nepali and sought hard to prove their distinctiveness from the other communities. We need to perceive the leading role of the state in the process. Initially only the Limbus, Rais, Gurungs were incorporated in the OBCs category which was then opened to the other groups. Subsequently the Limbu and Tamang were incorporated in the scheduled tribes and the Chettris, Newars and Bahuns were notified as the most backward tribes. It is important to recognise that the instrumental use of ethnic identity has been guided by the state thus affecting the selection and manner of ethnic representation.

IV

REPRESENTATION SYSTEM BEFORE THE MERGER WITH INDIA

Since the end of the 19th century to the 1940s the Nepalis who were in the majority faced exclusion as they were made to pay higher taxes than the two communities (Bhutia-Lepcha), forced labour was placed upon them to work as *koolies* (porters) to Tibet or in the construction of roads and bridges within Sikkim and the local feudal lords exercised their power to thrash or jail them for any defiance of authority.²¹⁶The current chief minister Pawan Chambling also mentions an instance of a local Kazi mercilessly battering a local individual during the pre-merger era in his biography.²¹⁷This discrimination was also meted out the Limboos who by now were seen as belonging to the Nepali community. They were under the feudal system until the peasant movement of the 1940s. The pressing demands from the Sikkim State Congress led to a system known as the ‘parity formula’ under which there would be an equal number of seats for the Bhutia-Lepchas and the Nepalis on the other side.²¹⁸Had the king chosen another system of elections, such as free and fair democracy the electoral politics in Sikkim could have taken a different turn. However, the decision of introducing electoral political system in which representative would be chosen from each community: Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali ensured not only competition amongst the communities but also subsumed the Limbus under the Nepali group. This pattern of representative government which had members from every community headed by the king was destined for collapse and breakdown.

In elections to the Sikkim Assembly in 1953 the candidate securing the highest number of votes from the ethnic community he represented had to secure at least 15%

²¹⁶ See Tanka B. Subba, “Making Sikkim more inclusive: An insider’s view of the role of Committees and Commissions,” in *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices*, edited by Uwe Skoda, Kenneth Bo Nielsen and Marianne Qvortrup Fibiger, 138 (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013), 138.

²¹⁷ See Yogendra Bali, *Pawan Chamling Daring to Be Different* (New Delhi: Govt of Sikkim, IPR & Har-Anand, 2009), 29.

²¹⁸ The Bhutia Lepcha community (by now 25 percent of the population) was to have 50 percent of the seats in elections reserved for them. The other 50 percent of the seats were to be reserved for the Nepali community including the Limboos who were about 75 percent of the electorate. This was better than the 33 percent representation that had been given under the previous three secretaries system.

of the votes from the voters of the other community. This way the Limboos were subsumed under the Nepali group when the first elections to the King's Council was introduced. The Assembly comprised of six Nepali seats and six Lepcha-Bhutia seats.²¹⁹This system of representation was not preferred by the Nepali community as they were larger in numbers and the system of representation was unfavorable towards them. The Lepchas and the Bhutias were getting reservation of seats larger than the proportion of their population. Nari Rustomji was the childhood friend of the last Chogyal, Thondup Namgyal and later served as the Dewan in Gangtok from 1954-1959. He has argued that the 'the Crown Prince's nostalgia for the traditional values for of the Sikkim of his forefathers gave rise to an apprehension amongst the Nepalese that they were not only not wanted in Sikkim but that they would be denied full citizen rights.'²²⁰The last Chogyal was also all for protecting the rights of the Bhutia-Lepchas but he was against protecting the rights of the 'immigrants'.²²¹

The Royal Proclamation of 1958 modified the representative system. While the number of seats for Nepalese and the Bhutia-Lepchas remained unchanged, the numbers of councilors were raised from 17 to 20. Two new seats were introduced, for the general and the *Sangha* (Monastery)²²² respectively and the number of nominated members were also raised from six from the previous five. However, it was the year of 1961 when the Sikkim Subject Regulation was proclaimed that the communal discord and the mutual suspicion between the ethnic groups witnessed a sharp rise.

The Indo-China war (1962) resulted in the postponement of the third elections. However, it eventually took place in 1967. The proclamation of 1966 had added four

²¹⁹ Raghunadha Rao P, *Sikkim: The Story of its Integration with India* (New Delhi: Cosmo, 1978),17.

²²⁰ Nari Rustomji, *Sikkim, A Himalayan Tragedy* (Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1987),42.

²²¹ Andrew Duff, *Sikkim: Requiem for a Himalayan Kingdom* (Gurgaon: Birlinn, 2015),59.

²²² The Sangha Assembly Constituency is a unique feature of the Sikkim representative system. The Buddhist clergy of Sikkim is locally known as lamas. "They take a break from their prayers to elect their own representative to the Sangha Assembly Constituency. The Sangha Assembly constituency has no geographical boundary and is a unique one of its kind in the country reserved for the monastic community. There are a total of 2881 Sangha Voters which includes both monks and Anis (Nuns) from the state's 111 recognised monasteries. To ensure the distinct identity of the Sangha, only registered Monks/Nuns can contest the Sangha seat. Political parties can put up their nominee from amongst the clergy. In 2014 the Sikkim's Democratic Front's candidate Palden Lachungpa lost to Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's Sonam Lama." (Accessed 26 February 2018), for details: see http://ceosikkim.nic.in/Files/election%20history/STATISTICAL%20REPORT_GE%202014.pdf.

more seats to the Council, one each for the Scheduled Caste, the 'Limboos', the Nepalese and the Lepcha-Bhutia, thus raising the total number of seats to 24.²²³ Thus we can see how it was only in 1967, fourteen years after electoral systems were introduced in Sikkim that Limboos were finally separated from the Nepali category and given their own seats.

When there was a full flare up in the tensions in Sikkim in 1973 the Chogyal requested the Government of India to restore law and order. When the protestors were pacified the negotiations between the Chogyal, the different local political parties and the Government of India resulted in the signing of the Tripartite Agreement on 8 May 1973. The Chogyal, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India and the five representatives from three major political parties—the Sikkim National Party, the Sikkim National Congress and the Janta Congress were the signatories to the Agreement. The agreement set up the constitutional set up of Sikkim and its relationship with India. There were provisions for a fully responsible government with fundamental rights, independent judiciary and legislative powers for the elected representatives. The most important part of the agreement reads that;

“No single section of the population would acquire a dominating post due to mainly of its ethnic origin and that the rights and interest of the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin and the Sikkimese of Nepali origin, which included Tsong (Limbus) and Scheduled Castes are fully protected.”

By determining that the Sikkimese of Nepali origin would not dominate the electoral politics of Sikkim due to their numerical majority and by including the Limboos in the category of Sikkimese of Nepali origin, the framers of the agreement again put back the Limboos in the group of Nepali community. Thus, the position of the Limboos were always in a flux as sometimes they were positioned outside the Nepali group as in the Sikkim Subject Regulation of 1961 or were given a separate seat in 1967. At other times they were expected pay a rate of revenue which was at par with the Nepali groups and sometimes included in the list of the original inhabitants especially during the Sikkim subject regulation.

²²³ Nirmalananda Sengupta, *State government and politics, Sikkim* (New Delhi: Sterling Publisher Private Limited, 1985), 15.

CHANGES TO THE REPRESENTATION SYSTEM

Before Sikkim went to the polls in April 1974 for the first democratic elections an announcement was made regarding the nature of seat sharing in the Legislative Assembly. It had been decided that as per the agreement there would be 15 seats for the Sikkimese of the 'Lepcha-Bhutia' origin and the 15 seats for the Sikkimese of 'Nepali' origin. Furthermore, one seat was reserved for the scheduled caste from the Nepali community and one for the *Sangha* community which was a compensation for the Bhutias-Lepchas. This pattern of electoral reservation in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim was to ensure that the Nepali community which had a far larger population than the Lepcha-Bhutias would not acquire a dominating position in the Legislative Assembly.

While the Lepchas were anxious that in the new set up they would be dominated by the Nepalis they pleaded that under the new constitutional set up under India bureaucrats and leaders should find ways to provide special safeguards for the autochthonous ethnic minority in the new set up within the Indian Constitution. They also appealed to have their rights and powers safeguarded lest they be made fugitive in their own homeland.²²⁴The Lepchas were apprehensive that while they had already been suffering under the Bhutias for centuries they could become second class citizens under the new system which they believed would be dominated by the Nepalese. They therefore suggested and requested that in the condition of Sikkim's merger with India, they should be included under the category of scheduled tribes in India.²²⁵

In May 1974 when the election took place, Sikkim was an associate state and the agreement in 1973 would be the basis on which the electoral reservations to different communities were allotted. However, after the merger with India in 1975, the rules and regulations pertaining to the elections in Sikkim would have to be fixed according to the rules set in Article 324 of the Indian Constitution. In India the

²²⁴ Brajbir Saran Das, *The Sikkim Saga* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 2002),28.

²²⁵ *Ibid*,29.

Election Commission is the constitutional body which oversees all the matters pertaining to the elections in the different states. Sikkim had joined the Indian Union in 1975 and subsequently in 1979 when the tenure of the erstwhile government ended, the rules of the elections in Sikkim was also directed by the Election Commission. The Representation of People Act,1950(43 of 1950) was amended in 1976(Act 10 of 1976) and Section 7A in the said Act was included with retrospective effect from September 9,1975. Section 7A, clause (1) and (3) provided for a 32 member Legislative Assembly chosen by election from assembly constituencies and continuation of reservation of seats as provided immediately before the commencement of the constitution (Thirty-Sixth Amendment) Act,1975. Similarly Section 25A was inserted validating *Sangha* constituency including the elections held in April 1974 for the purpose. It also provided for the preparation of the electoral rolls for the Sangha constituency in a manner as directed by the Election Commission of India in consultation with the Representation of the People Act,1950 legitimised the Assembly elections, including total number of 32 Assembly seats and seats reserved for various communities, held in April 1974.

The seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly were reserved for the different communities under the 1974 Act. However, the Representation of People Act in 1950(amended in 1976) was not able to clarify the eligibility of the candidates who could contest from reserved constituencies. The same Act was amended and Section 5A was inserted in 1976 with effect from 9 September 1975.

While the amendment to the Representation of the People Act,1951 (as amended in 1976) was simply a legal political formality which sought to legitimise the elections that was held in 1974, it had huge repercussions for the pattern of elections in Sikkim. By upholding the pattern of delimitation of constituencies on the basis of ethnic identity, the Government of India's decision to continue this pattern of ethnic division led to the continuation of communal and ethnic politics in Sikkim. The transition of a monarchy to democracy did not see individuals being recognised as citizens with individual rights but as people belonging to certain groups and communities.

Meanwhile the Government sought to introduce Bill number 79 in the year 1979 in the Lok Sabha on May 18, 1979 which sought to bring further amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1951 to bring in the necessary changes for the readjustment of seats in the Legislative Assembly. However due to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha caused by the fracture within the Janata Dal, the Bill could not be passed. Instead it was passed as an Ordinance issued by the President which sought to amend Section 5A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.²²⁶ It stated that the:

“total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim to be constituted at any time after the commencement of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance 1979, to be filled by persons chosen by direct elections from Assembly constituencies shall be thirty two-of which twelve seats shall be reserved for Sikkimese Bhutia-Lepcha origin, two seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes of the State, one seat shall be reserved for the Sangha and the remaining 17 seats were to be declared as General seats.”

The Sikkimese of Nepali origin were up in arms because they lost their reservation of seats and the people who had migrated to Sikkim from the rest of India, especially the Marwari families would become eligible to contest the elections in Sikkim. After the Lok Sabha elections of 1980, the Union Parliament passed the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 1980 and subsequently section 7(1A) in the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and sub-section 2 in the section 5A of Representation of the People Act, 1951 were inserted as rule governing Assembly elections in Sikkim.

It is also important for us to realise that while the Act ensured reservation of one seat for the *Sangha* it did not reserve any seat for the Limboos. Rather it considered the Limboos to be under the Nepali community. While the Nepalis lamented their loss of reserved seats the Bhutia-Lepcha were unhappy over the end of parity in seat sharing. This significant decision was the prelude of ethnic politics and the social divisions in Sikkim.

JANAJATI ANDOLAN IN NEPAL AND THE SPILLOVER IN SIKKIM

²²⁶ Sikkim State Archives Gazette Number 75, Representation of the People (Amendment), Ordinance, 1979 (Accessed online 25 March 2018), sikkimarchives.gov.in.

In Nepal the Shah dynasty during the Panchayat years of 1950-1990 had discouraged the radical ethnic activism of the *Janajatis*. The monarch sought to impose a one language, one nation, one religion (Nepali, Nepal and Hinduism) stereotype by pressing down on the demands of the various ethnic groups. However, during the 1980s *Janajati* and leftist intellectuals began to question the need for an officially imposed language.²²⁷ Not just language even Hinduism as the official religion became a source of concern especially for some Newars who saw themselves as exclusively Buddhist and resented the state's special recognition and protection of Hinduism.

Many scholars such as David Gellner and John Whelpton have argued that the people's movement of 1990 in Nepal had been a watershed movement in Nepalese history.²²⁸ The authors have argued that there was a new openness about speaking on ethnic issues. The ethnic groups such as the Tamang, Rai, Limbu and the Gurung who had been subjugated under the Hindu caste structure came out against the Hindu Brahmin domination.

During the 1980s in Nepal the *Janajati* groups pushed back against the dominance of the upper caste groups. Various ethnic group began forming associations and began to challenge the homogenous picture of Nepal as a Hindu nation. A federation called the Magurali (a federation of Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu) was formed to bring all the ethnic groups under one major group. There emerged a trend when these groups began to distance themselves from the Hindu caste system and celebrations of Hindu festivals. The Sanskritization that had begun as a result of the movement of the *Paharias* from western Nepal began to be challenged in the face of increasing awareness of their own identity and partly in view of the huge dominance that was enjoyed by the upper castes (Chettris in Bahuns occupied about 79% of government jobs though comprising about 11% of the population) in terms of government positions and employment.

²²⁷ For details see: Kamal P. Malla "Language and society in Nepal," in *Nepalese Perspectives on Continuity and Change* (Kathmandu: CNAS, 1989).

²²⁸ For details see: David N. Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton, eds. *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2008), xix.

During the late 1980s the Newar activists sought out counterparts among Magar, Tharu and Gurung activists to build an alliance against the dominance of the Chettri-Bahun and the Hindu monarch. After 1990s there was an increase of pressure on the issues of mother tongue and the declaration of Nepal as a secular state.²²⁹

This *janajati andolan* in Nepal is consequential as it helps us to understand the growing tribalism and ethnic revivalism in Sikkim. While Sikkimese of Nepali origin are different from the Nepalis of Nepal the open borders, migration history, shared language, intermarriages and even cultural exchanges²³⁰ have made the events in Nepal have an impact on the Nepalis of Sikkim. Thus, the people in Sikkim did get a pushback when the *janajati andolan* in Nepal occurred. That the Rai, Limbus, Gurung and the Newar looked back to their erstwhile ancestral place in Nepal to learn that they are different from the caste Hindus came at a crucial point as they were pushing for the recognition as OBCs in India. The implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations coincided with the resurgence of ethnic identities in Nepal. Thus, the recognition of the various ethnic languages and identities had a spillover effect in Sikkim. For many ethnic groups the shadow of Hinduism had also become one of the greatest challenge to the coveted scheduled tribe (ST) status. This pushback gave them a relief from the Hindu domination. While the Sikkim Limboo Association had always been in existence the ascendancy and the domination of the Nepali language and culture had made their demand weak. The Mandal Commission report along with the *janajati andolan* in Nepal provided them an opportunity to reclaim their identity. They began to push for the reserved category and creating awareness among the people. The demand for recognition as OBCs quickly spread among the ethnic groups who were identified as Sikkimese of Nepali origin and by the mid years of 2000s, the drive for ST status had become a pan ethnic phenomenon, as almost every non-ST of the erstwhile Nepali group began to file for the ST

²²⁹ Michael Hutt, *Nepal in the Nineties. Versions of the Past: Visions of the future*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

²³⁰ I use cultural exchanges to highlight the popular culture such as songs, movies and dances which are produced in Darjeeling, Sikkim and Kathmandu and consumed by the masses in all these regions.

status.²³¹The common perception was that the ST status would be the surest way of getting a job.

While the happenings in Nepal definitively helped the Limboos in Sikkim to assert their own distinctive identity, the government's decision to label them as OBCs did not cancel out the injustice that had been meted out to them. In spite of being one of the earliest groups in Sikkim Limboos had not only lost their reserved seat accorded once in 1967 but were also designated in the General community. Since the notification as STs came in 2003 their denial of electoral reservation in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly had them seeking justice at the doors of Minority Commission and the Ministry of Social justice in India.

V

ETHNIC GROUPS AND THE MANAGING OF SOCIETY

The numerous awards that have been bagged by Sikkim (pertaining to cleanliness and Panchayati raj system) and the declaration as the 'First Organic State in India' have given an enormous boost to the tourism industry. In 2014 Sikkim was tipped as the best region to visit by the *Lonely Planet*.²³²Praising the Government for the development of village tourism and organic farming, the agency emphasised that the new airport in Pakyong would enable tourists to land directly from Indian cities thus cutting away the time travel. Moreover, the incessant bandhs in nearby Darjeeling would also not deter tourists as the only roadway to Sikkim passes through this nearby district. The *Lonely Planet* commended the adventure tourism such as river rafting, trekking, para-gliding, rock climbing and the government's training of the village people in areas of housekeeping, cookery and the various aspects of hospitality for ensuring a comfortable stay for the tourists. The largely crime free state

²³¹ Sara Schneiderman, and Mark Turin, "Seeking the Tribe: ethno-politics in Darjeeling and Sikkim" *Himal South Asian* 19, no. 2 (2006): 58.

²³² "Sikkim named top region to visit in 2014 by Lonely Planet," *Times of India*, (Accessed online 12 January 2018), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Sikkim-named-top-region-to-visit-in-2014-by-Lonely-Planet/articleshow/24936762.cms>.

in addition to the people's warmth has seen tourists flocking to this region.²³³In the Red Panda Winter Festival held in December 2017 the Government of Sikkim invited many Bollywood celebrities to perform in Gangtok. However, it was the cultural festival which showcased the different ethnic attires of the various communities in Sikkim that made for an interesting blend of colours and diversity in Gangtok.

The State government in Sikkim through its policies of positive discrimination have increased the value of ethnicity by making it a political resource that has become essential if a person wants to access the patronage structures that have been operationalised. Thus, following the state-society framework this segment argues that the state has constructed the socio-economic categories such as other backward classes (OBC), most backward classes (MBC), primitive tribe that promote ethnic identity as a political identity. In other words, the state has managed to penetrate the society and regulate social relationships especially among the Sikkimese of Nepali origin. The State in Sikkim has been successful in mobilising the people into specialised organisational frameworks, ethnic associations that have enabled the state leaders (political parties) to build vote banks, support base and complete domination over the population.

Thus, the state has also generated certain policies which ensures that being a member of the scheduled tribe, most backward class or the other backward class is more beneficial than being a member of the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin or the Nepali group. Thus, the general Nepali category which formed the basis of the tripartite agreement began to lose appeal, especially after 1979 when they lose their electoral reservations in the Assembly. There was an effort to reconstruct the society and hence form groups in accordance to the guidelines framed by the state. Thus, this manner of ethnic revivalism has been a state sponsored mechanism through which the people can access the state and its resources. Interestingly this model has been adopted by the government of West Bengal to weaken the Gorkhaland agitation in

²³³ About 13 Lakh tourists' domestic tourist and 50,000 foreign tourists had visited Sikkim in 2017. This is huge considering the population of Sikkim is just 6 lakhs. See Statistics of tourist arrival in the state of Sikkim, (Accessed online 14 July 2018), <http://www.sikkimtourism.gov.in/Webforms/General/DepartmentStakeholders/TouristArrivalStats.aspx>.

Darjeeling.²³⁴This section deals with how the state has made instrumental use of the ethnic identity and guided the different modes of ethnic representation in Sikkim. This segment also addresses the question as to why the different ethnic groups have chosen their specific group identity as means of identification.

In the first section I argue that the falling agricultural returns, shortage of employment opportunities in the government and the increasing competition makes the ethnic categorisation more expedient. The ethnic associations also play a vital role in being the intermediary between the state and the rural people thus creating a symbiotic relationship between the two. In the next section I argue that the state has played the central role in managing the society through the ethnic revivalism of their particular cultures. This has been facilitated through the promotion of ethnic languages, festivals and the different schemes that are announced from time to time.

When the Mandal Commission recommended that the Limboos, Tamangs, Rai, Sunwars, Gurungs, etc. be eligible for reservation under the OBCs in 1994 the then Minister N. B. Bhandari was apprehensive as he believed it would lead to the fracturing of the Nepali group. When they were denied the reservation, Bhandari lost the vote of confidence in the State Assembly in 1994 and the new government recommend the recognition of seven communities among the ‘Sikkimese of Nepali Origin’ for recognition as OBSs. “Thus Bhujel, Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Rai, Sunuwar and Tamang were declared as OBSs in Sikkim.” Consequently, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) victory under the leadership of Pawan Kumar Chambling in 1994 was precisely dependent upon the votes of the ethnic groups who belong to the OBC and the MBC category, making reservation politics in Sikkim an irrevocable reality in terms of the future politics within the state.

STATE OF ECONOMY IN SIKKIM

Away from the development that Gangtok with its high-end buildings projects, there are questions regarding unemployment and development that are being plaguing

²³⁴ Sitlhou Hoineilhing and Sangay Tamang, “Identity, Contestation and Ethnic Revivalism among Nepalese in Darjeeling,” *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 53, Issue No. 1, 06 Jan, 2018.

the lives of the inhabitants in Sikkim. There are about 51,000 people which live below the poverty line.²³⁵ Thus about 10 percent of the population still live below the poverty line. About 75 percent of the people live in rural areas although this is highly regionalised as it is highest in west followed by south and east districts. Most of the people in the rural areas are dependent on agriculture and allied activities for sustenance.

The shift from agriculture to industry and tertiary sector has been relatively slow in Sikkim due to the topography. In 2011-12 close to 62 percent of the Sikkimese workers were employed in agriculture sector, including fishing and forestry. Only 13 percent of them were employed in the secondary sector and the remaining 25 per cent of the workers were employed in service sectors. This therefore projects that a majority of the Sikkimese depend on agriculture for their livelihood. There has however been a decline in the production of major crops due to stagnation, lower productivity of soil, commercial farming, etc.²³⁶

The returns from agriculture has also decreased tremendously. Food-grain production, agricultural productivity and agricultural growth has started decreasing since 2000. While the “share of the agriculture in the Gross State Domestic Product has been decreasing, the population who are dependent on the agriculture have not declined. This has been indicated in the decline in per capita income of the rural households.”²³⁷ Since agriculture is a source of major sustenance for a majority of the people the rising pressure in the cultivable land, limitations of terrace farming in terms of productivity, lack of infrastructure and declining public expenditure²³⁸ has meant that Sikkim is facing food scarcity, unemployment and poverty. Most of the people argue that productivity from agricultural lands have decreased but that

²³⁵ See Sikkim Human Development Report 2014: Expanding Opportunities, Promoting Sustainability Government of Sikkim (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017),21.

²³⁶Anjan Chakrabarti, “A Critical Review of Agrarian Reforms in Sikkim”, *Economic and Political Weekly* (2010): 25

²³⁷ Ibid,25

²³⁸ Ibid,26

inflation has skyrocketed over the years. This has led to many of the farmers switching to cultivation of cash crops such as cardamom, ginger and mandarin orange which have brought prosperity to some villagers.

There is also the trend that many young people are moving away from agriculture, leaving large tracts of land fallow. The older farmers are ageing which is another problem that is emerging. The increase in rapid urbanisation has meant that prices have multiplied and that majority of the people are unable to afford the costs. The State laws also prohibit the Sikkimese from selling the land to the non-Sikkimese via Revenue Order No. 1.²³⁹ Mahendra P. Lama has argued that for people in the region ‘development is government and government is development. ‘Thus, most of the people look to the government for alleviating poverty, building homes and providing employment thus enabling the state to exercise enormous power over the people. This level of dependency by the people has been used for political mileage by the State as it has sought to create vote banks and support structures. This can be seen most blatantly during the elections when most of the people associated with the parties get sops in the form of cows, LPG cylinders, corrugated sheets, blankets, etc.

About 66% of the population of Sikkim lies in the working age group of 15-59 years.²⁴⁰ Since the government is the largest employer in the formal sector and most of the job aspirants especially the youth do not want to take up the profession of their parents who are mostly farmers, it leaves them with very few other avenues. The ambitious few leave Sikkim in search of skilled labour jobs which are only available in metropolitan cities during this time of neoliberalism. Therefore, most of the youth in the state continue to look towards the government for employment opportunities. Since there are very few openings in the private sector jobs in the secondary and the tertiary sector, most of the educated youth scramble for the few openings in

²³⁹ “With reference to the Order dated 2 January 1897, it is hereby again notified to all Kazis, Thikadars and Mandals in Sikkim that no Bhutias and Lepchas are to be allowed to sell, mortgage or sub-let any of their land to any person other than a Bhutia or a Lepcha without the express sanction of the Darbar or Officers empowered by the Darbar on their behalf, whose order will be obtained by the landlord concerned. If anyone disobeys he will be severely punished.” This law was passed by British Political officer C.A Bell, Superintendent, Sikkim State.

²⁴⁰ Sikkim Human Development Report 2014: Expanding Opportunities, Promoting Sustainability Government of Sikkim (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017),9-11.

government jobs. Most of the opposition parties have also highlighted the unemployment problem in Sikkim.

The Sikkim Human Development Index Report (henceforth HDI) 2014 reports that ‘addressing the concerns of the young people has to become an issue of priority’. Thus, due to an increase in population and competitiveness towards decent jobs and employment opportunities, young people are getting restive. Compared to the past days when gaining a coveted government job was easier, the era of cut throat competition has not untouched Sikkim. The Sikkim HDI 2014 report accepts that the new generation of the Sikkimese youth are not being able to compete in the globalised world. Many of the people are also angry that while some jobs may be created, many of these are taken over by people from outside the state. Sikkim has also had considerable investment from companies,²⁴¹ due to the tax incentives under the North-East Industrial Promotion Policy 2007 and additional incentives from the local state government. Some of these companies also have agreements of 100 percent local employment. However, many of the jobs are being given to people from outside the state. A majority of the top managers and executives are always recruited from outside Sikkim. When asked about why they hire fewer locals or prefer to hire outsiders, the owners or executives reply that factories require hard work and labor, which the locals cannot perform.²⁴²In other words the locals are not able to put in hard labor therefore they prefer outsiders. In Sikkim there is also a huge discrepancy and difference between the high economic growth and the creation of jobs. Since most of the jobs being created are for unskilled workers most of the local youths do not prefer these, making the entry of non-locals inevitable. Since these jobs need to be filled up a large number of people from outside the state come inside Sikkim and take up these jobs. The Opposition parties have clamoured about the lack of employment opportunities in Sikkim and simultaneously criticised the practice of extension of services to the retired government officers. Protests and frustrations of the public occur more

²⁴¹ Sikkim had had investment from major pharmaceutical companies over the last few years including Cipla, Zydus Caidla and Sun Pharma. Sikkim Human Development Report 2014: Expanding Opportunities, Promoting Sustainability Government of Sikkim (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017),8.

²⁴² This was pointed out to the author by a Sikkimese lady who worked in the Employment Office in Gangtok. Personal communication to author in December 2017.

frequently in the streets as the educated are unable to get employment inside Sikkim.²⁴³

Thus, the growing frustrations caused by the unfulfilled aspirations has partially led to the youth being tempted by the market and its advertisements. Moreover, it has also contributed to many of them turning to the easily available banned substance like drugs. Some studies have shown that amongst the youths of Sikkim there is a high prevalence of substance abuse.²⁴⁴ For many years Sikkim had the highest rate of suicides across the Indian states.²⁴⁵ The suicide “rate is higher among the youth than in any other age group of people. Between 2001 and 2011, 667 out of the 1,743 victims of suicide were form the age group of 15-29 years.”²⁴⁶ Another scholar has argued that the unusually high rate of suicide is due to the substance abuse, mental illness, high expectation, etc.²⁴⁷

Table 3.2: Demographic Features of Sikkim’s Districts,2011.

DISTRICT	POPULATION	%URBAN	Population density (persons per sq km)
EAST	2,86,583	43	295
SOUTH	1,46,850	14	196
WEST	1,36,435	4	117
NORTH	43,709	11	10

²⁴³ Suman Agarwal, “March for Justice’ mega rally by SKM in state capital,” *Voice of Sikkim*. (Accessed online 25 March 2018), <http://voiceofsikkim.com/2018/03/24/march-for-justice-mega-rally-by-skm-in-state-capital/>.

²⁴⁴ “The results were that 76.7% (only alcohol 55.3%, cannabis 13.6%, opioid 5.8).” Most of the users belonged to the 14-55 age group. See: Amit Goel and Amit Chakrabarti, “Prevalence and socio-demographic correlates of substance use in a rural community in Sikkim, North East India: Results from a pilot population survey” *Journal of substance use* 15, no. 1 (2010): 13-23.

²⁴⁵ One research has found that the suicides were mostly in the rural areas accounting for 82.6% of the total suicides. See: Reshma Chettri, Jiwan Gurung and Bisu Singh “A 10-year retrospective study of suicide in Sikkim, India: Sociodemographic profile and risk assessment” *Indian journal of psychiatry* 58, no. 4 (2016): 448. Also see: Satish Rasaily, “Integrating mental health services in primary health care system in Sikkim” *JMR* 1, no. 5 (2015): 132-133.

²⁴⁶ Sikkim Human Development Report 2014: Expanding Opportunities, Promoting Sustainability Government of Sikkim (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017).

²⁴⁷ Sedem Bhutia and Lhaki Doma Sherpa “Socio-economic perspective of suicide in Sikkim” *International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences* 5, no. 12 (2015): 136.

SIKKIM	6,10,577	25	86
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Source: Census of India 2011.

In the age of neoliberalism in India the informal sector which accounts for 90% of the employment has devastated the lives of workers who have poor working conditions, no perks or protections and earn very low wages. Therefore, many of the youth continue to aspire for employment opportunities in the government sector. Since there are every less opening in the private jobs in the secondary and the tertiary sector in Sikkim, most of the educated youth scramble for the few openings in government jobs.

Meanwhile the chief minister has repeatedly urged the youth to look beyond government jobs and take up employment in the other sectors. He has argued that about 13 percent of the people were employed with the state government in Sikkim while it is only about one percent in the developed countries. He thus advocated seeking self-employment in the agro based activities like diary, piggery, fishery and floricultural activities and tourism.²⁴⁸This is highly unlikely as Sikkim has a high literacy rate of 82.20 percent.²⁴⁹Most of the educated and the unemployed youth are unexpected to follow this advice. The decline in poverty levels and higher levels of education has meant that the youth are no longer interested in traditional agriculture or manual jobs.

From the total number of workers about 62 per cent of the people are engaged in agriculture. The secondary sector (electricity, mining, manufacturing, and construction) accounts for the second largest number of employment. According to the census of 2011 the total number of workers has increased from 263,043 in 2001 to 308,134 in 2011-which is an increase of 17 per cent. While the total number of cultivators in Sikkim had decreased by about 10 per cent between 2001-2011.

²⁴⁸ “Look beyond Government jobs and try other sectors,” *Northeast Today* (Accessed online 25 March 2018), <https://www.northeasttoday.in/look-beyond-govt-job-and-try-other-sectors-sikkim-cm-tells-youth/>.

²⁴⁹ Census of India 2011.

The economic insecurity of the people has only entrenched the political agents, who are supported by the state. Thus, ethnic identity becomes the ends through which one can get tangible benefits. It is in this context that ethnic associations have become the central agency and forum through which the people can approach the state for benefits. Thus, the state has promoted the ethnic associations which help to revive the ethnic identity of the people. One way to understand this phenomenon is also to understand that under neoliberalism people have global dreams but face local constraints. The decreasing employment avenues in the governmental sector has meant that many of the educated in Sikkim would migrate for employment outside the state. For the government it has meant that it would rather employ ethnicity as a means of recognition rather than address the questions of unemployment amongst the youth. Thus, the State in Sikkim would rather shape the politics in the state around issues of identity and ethnicity rather than on issues of distribution of resources and employment. When the chief minister inaugurated the Entrepreneurs Hub and Consultation Sector in Gangtok he reiterated that the youth should not only look to the government as a source of employment but rather look for opportunities in the other sectors. Such rhetoric in the face of growing unemployment in spite of being educated, points to a larger scenario under neoliberalism where the educated youth are exposed to discourse of neoliberal globalisation through modern education and media yet are powerless to seize the benefits of globalisation due to regional isolation of Sikkim and structural constraints within capitalism.

ACCESSING THE STATE

After the removal of monarchy, the Sikkim government took over the charge of modernising Sikkim and being the main distributor of resources, education and employment opportunities. In the post-merger days, the population was divided between the Scheduled tribes (Bhutia-Lepchas) and the General category (Nepali groups). With the introduction of the OBC category in 1994, the fracture among the Nepali group was initiated which paved the way for MBC category. This new distribution system uses the ethnic identity of the people as a guide to assign them the various socio-economic categories and opportunities that have been created by the

state. The role played by the state in Sikkim in determining ethnic boundaries and shaping identities thus can be understood. The State in Sikkim has guaranteed social, economic and political safeguards to the people on the basis of their ethnicity and thus linked the issue of recognition to that of redistribution of resources.

Table 3.3: Socio-economic categories in Sikkim

Socio Economic Category	Ethnic Groups
Primitive Tribe	Lepcha
Scheduled Tribes	Bhutia, Limboo, Tamang, Sherpa
Other Backward Classes (Central list)	Rai, Gurung, Magar, Bhujel, Mukhia, Dewan
Other Backward Classes (State List)	Bahun, Chettri, Newar
Scheduled Castes	Kami, Damai, Sarki
Others	Plains people referred to as 'Madisey' from various parts of the country.

Source: Social Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim.

These various socio-economic categories that have been set up by the state in Sikkim determines the degree, type and the level of benefits that the people in an ethnic group can derive from the government. In other words, the state seeks to redistribute the resources through the various socio-economic categories it has created. Since there are decreasing agricultural returns, increasing economic inflation coupled with escalating unemployment especially in the rural areas have led to the increased dependence on the government. The benefits that are exuded from this extend to the employment sector as there are reservation along with age and marks relation for the different categories of which the maximum benefits are for the St. Moreover, there are also many scholarships that are reserved or the ST/SCs.

Therefore, one can argue that socio-economic incentives are embedded within the categories thereby being the only way that the people can access benefits from the state. However, it also serves as an important base for the party which help them to consolidate their support amongst the people.

Table 3.4: Distribution of Government employees according to different welfare categories

CATEGORIES	SCHEDULED TRIBES	OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES	MOST BACKWARD CLASSES	OTHERS	SCHEDULED CASTES
Percentage of workers	37.22	23.69	23.58	9.17	6.34

Source: State Socio Economic Census, 2006:183

The highest benefits in terms of reservation comes through the ST category as this group has the highest representation in the public sector. Thus, the reason for the scrambling for seeking the tribal status in Sikkim is thus made apparent by this above table. The OBC State list category have certain disadvantages as the category has no value outside the state. The number of groups in the OBC central list however are higher than those in the ST list thus making the completion even more difficult. Most of the groups therefore have demanded that they be included in the Scheduled Tribe list which has the maximum merits.

Therefore, we can see how the ST category has become the most coveted category which is the focus of all the ethnic groups. Therefore, all the groups want to disassociate themselves from their past and focus on their distinctiveness. Thus we can understand why Mark Turin and Sara Schneiderman have argued that there is a craze for the different groups in Sikkim and Darjeeling ‘for learning to be tribal’.²⁵⁰ What is interesting that these groups which earlier used to celebrate the Hindu festivals of Dasai (Dussehra) and Tihar (Diwali) have now sought to detach themselves from any attachments to Hinduism and narratives describing them as backward Hindus as they believe that it was bound to lead to the extinction of their religion beliefs, traditions, culture, and lifestyle and customs. Many of them had to travel to Nepal to learn and understand their specific cultures, languages and traditions. These leaders then came back to Sikkim and showcased it to the Sinha Committee Members (2005) and also taught their own community members what they had learnt.

Thus, whenever there were different Government appointed committees such as the Sinha Committee and the Burman Commission many groups that aspire for the

²⁵⁰ Sara Schneiderman and Mark Turin “Seeking the Tribe: ethno-politics in Darjeeling and Sikkim” *Himal South Asian* 19, no. 2 (2006): 54.

ST status made it a point to present their communities as backward, docile and shy. Since many of the members of these ethnic groups do not follow such lifestyles or religions, their argument of economic deprivation and backwardness because of their cultural practices were seen as shallow. This brings to mind the display of cultural practices carried about by the ethnic leaders in front of the anthropologists who were responsible for evaluating the conformity of these practices to the set criteria for recognition as a tribe. Middleton had conducted anthropologic study in the Darjeeling region and written about the struggle for recognition.²⁵¹ He has argued that the anthropologists visits was precisely prepared by the ethnic activist who based on their knowledge and interpretation of official criteria of ‘tribalism’ informed their members of the ethnic groups which cultural practices they would showcase to the anthropologists such as shamanic rituals involving decapitation of goats and chicken and consumption of food by the priest. Based on his fieldwork Middleton considers this criterion of tribal recognition as a procedure of ‘hyper prescriptive’ and he highlights the ethnographic relation as a space where the ‘cultural material’ is made to conform to state criteria of tribal recognition. This has led to “government anthropologists struggle for the ethnographic truth as communities increasingly turn academic paradigms back upon the state.” In other words, “In the field nothing was raw, everything was cooked.”²⁵²

This trend among the ethnic groups towards the reconstruction of the culture symbols such as language, rituals in order to fit into the image of a tribe that has been created by the central government. This shows that the Nepali ethnic groups are in the process of reinventing themselves as per the socio-economic requirements. While this reinvention be may be spurred by the ethnic groups it has almost been facilitated by the state which values ethnic identity for its vote bank.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL EFFECTS OF CATEGORISATION

²⁵¹ See the introduction in Townsend Middleton, *The Demands of Recognition: State Anthropology and Ethno Politics in Darjeeling* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

²⁵² Ibid.

Since the year 1994 when Pawan Kumar Chambling came to power on the support of the recommended OBCs, the recommendations of the Mandal commission were gradually implemented. On June 2, 1994 the Limboo, Bhujel, Gurung, Rai, Mangar, Sunuwar and Tamangs were added to the State list of OBC and consequently on the May 25, 1995 they were added to the Central list of OB. The next sub-ethnic group to be added to the central list of OBC were the Sanyasi and Thami while the Jogi were subsequently added on April 4, 2000.

The Limbu were also included in the list of OBC in 1994 and they were recognised as Scheduled Tribe in 2003. They were demanding their inclusion in the scheduled tribes' category as early as 1990. The Sikkim government later reclassified the above OBC groups as 'most backward classes' and declared the Bahuns, Chettris and Newars as the OBCs. This however has not yet been enacted by the Central government so while the Newars are OBC in the state they fall under the General category in the central list. Moreover, the move by the Sikkim government to declare the Chettris, Bahuns and the Newars as OBCs has completed the notification of all the sub-ethnic groups of the Nepalese community in various categories entitling them to various government benefits. It would be imprudent to argue that this categorisation by the state government is over. In fact, there may be further changes with the coercion and the pressure from the various groups, communities and the everyday political contingencies.

In 2006 the Sikkim government published a census which broke away with the old convention which enumerated mother tongue but not ethnicity. This Sikkim census in fact enumerated the ethnic groups which promoted the entrenchment of different ethnic identities and also supported the process of reclassification. Henceforth the Sikkim government applied a pattern of reservation for educational institutions at most metric level inside the state with 21% reserved in merit, 33% for scheduled tribes, 21% for Most Backward Classes, 14% for Other Backward Classes, 6% for Scheduled Castes, and 5% for 'Others' (only for locals with Sikkim Subject Certificate/Certificate of Identification).²⁵³.

²⁵³ Gazette No. 251, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 26 June 2004.

The Government of Sikkim has come up with a new vertical and horizontal reservation regarding employment in April 2018. Under the revised policy the 5% reservation policy granted to the Primitive Tribe category is in addition to the 20% already provided to the Bhutia and Lepcha category. Similarly, the 3% reservation provided to the most backward classes (State List) is in addition to the 20% already provided to the other backward classes (Central List). Considering the scheme of the policy, a person falling under both Bhutia and Lepcha category as well as under the primitive tribe shall be entitled to avail of reservation under both Bhutia and Lepcha category as well as under the primitive tribe category. Communities categorised under most backward classes (State List) shall also be entitled to avail of reservation under other backward classes (Central List). As with regard to employment in public offices the reservation are as follows:

Table 3.5: Vertical Reservation regarding employment

SERIAL NUMBER	LIST OF CATEGORIES	PERCENTAGE OF SEATS RESERVED
1	Bhutia-Lepcha	20%
2	Other backward Classes-Central List (Dewan, Gurung, Kirat Rai, Mangar, Sanyasi and Yakha)	20%
3	Other Backward Classes-State List(Bahun, Chettri and Newar)	20%
4	Scheduled Tribes (Limbu and Tamang)	13%
5	Scheduled castes	4%
6	Primitive Tribe	5%
7	Most Backward Classes-State List(Bhujel, Sunuwar-Mukhia, Majhi, Thami and Jogi)	3%
8	Weaker Sections of the Society(Kami, Damai, Sarki not categorised as Scheduled Castes)	2%

Source: Government of Sikkim, Department of Personal, Administrative Reforms, Training and Public Grievances. Notification No; M (14)/55/GEN/DOP dated 21/6/2018.

Table 3.6: Horizontal Reservation Regarding Employment

SERIAL NUMBER	LIST OF CATEGORIES	PERCENTAGE OF SEATS RESERVED
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1	Women	30%
2	Sports Persons and Artisans of Excellence	5%
3	Below Poverty Line Families	5%
4	Ex Servicemen	3%
5	Paramilitary forces and Assam Rifles	2%
6	Physically challenged	3%
	1)Blind and Low vision	1%
	2)Hearing Impairment	1%
	3) Locomotor Disability and Cerebral Palsy	1%

Source: Government of Sikkim, Department of Personal, Administrative Reforms, Training and Public Grievances. Notification No; M (14)/55/GEN/DOP dated 21/6/2018.

HOW IS ETHNIC IDENTITY USED BY THE STATE FOR POLITICAL SUPPORT

In this section I will highlight how the state (through political parties and ethnic associations) uses the ethnic identity not only for representation, recognition and redistribution but also is able to use ethnic identity as a tool for electoral support from the masses. The State supports these various ethnic associations through the supply of goods or through the support of ethnic associations. To the Commission for Review of Environment and Social sector, Policies, Plans and Programmes (CRESP) Report (2008, Annexure F) eighteen ethnic associations submitted their memorandum and ethnographic report. The ethnic groups were: Chhetri-Bahun, Newar, Bhujel, Damai, Tamang, Gurung (Tamu), Kami, Kirat Khambu Rai, Limboo, Mangar, Sannyassi, Sarki, Sunuwar and Thami. In Sikkim there has a been proliferation of different ethnic associations. The ethnic associations not only implement government distributive policies but also demand certain agencies within the guidelines of the state. Therefore, the different associations have slowly increased in numbers and grown in power as the states support has called for registration of the members which are then used for securing benefits for the particular ethnic groups.

The State support is needed for bigger projects like language and script development. In the formative years when the state government promoted the various languages like Newari, Limbu and Rai at the school level, many experts from outside

the state especially from Nepal were called to teach these vernacular ethnic languages.²⁵⁴ Thus while earlier only Nepali or Bhutia was offered in the School as the vernacular language students could now opt for their own ethnic language up to the 12 grades.

Thus, all the ethnic associations require their programs and machinery to be conducted within the framework that is set out by the state. Meetings, memorandums and lobbying through the bureaucracy and the local MLA's have become the most effective way to accessing the state. There has also been the transition from socio-cultural to political demands of political reservation of these associations. Therefore, most of the ethnic associations and especially the Limboo have disassociated themselves from the Sikkimese of Nepali origin community. Even the declarations of ethnic festivals as state holidays is a sign of the recognition by the state of different ethnic groups. The chief ministers always make it a point to wish the people of various ethnic communities whenever they celebrate their different festivals.²⁵⁵ Thus the role of the state in preserving ethnic culture and tradition, must be understood.

Since Nepali has been the dominant language in the hills the development of the languages and literature was seen as an important factor in the set-up of distinctiveness of the ethnic association. The State government in 1995 included Newari, Rai, Gurung, Mangar, Sherpa and Tamang languages as official languages of the state along with Nepali, Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo. Mark Turin has argued that in Sikkim spoken and written competence of ethnic language is not highly prized, therefore raises the question as to why were the students learning their ancestral language in schools across Sikkim? While the medium of instruction across Sikkim is English but Lepcha, Limbu, Newar, Tamang and Rai may be taken up as associational subjects by students who hail from these communities. Turin argues that they are not being taught the language in order to use it, rather they are being taught heritage, culture, history and ancestry. Turin argues that these students are 'learning belonging'.

²⁵⁴ Roma Pradhan, personal communication to author, July 10, 2017.

²⁵⁵ B. K. Roy Burman, "Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESPP)" *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008), 34-44.

He concludes that these languages have emotional and symbolic and importance rather than practical utility.²⁵⁶ Put simply unlike in Nepal where the language issue was one of pride and dignity of the respective communities the performative aspect of learning language in Sikkim which has been praised by anthropologists must be seen as a component of the state support of ethnic communities in order to promote the symbols and metaphors of the ethnic heritage which promote ethnic divide and belonging. It was also reiterated by many people during the course of my field work that these languages had no value outside the state. While even Nepali had failed to make a mark in the international arena the futility of these languages being taught was questioned by some perceptive individuals. This increasing receptivity by the state has led to increase in the demands of the associations from socio-economic benefits to that of political representation (Limboo and Tamang) who seek electoral reservation in the Sikkim Assembly and the demand for the declaration of the MBCs, OBCs category groups as STs. The State has thus penetrated the society and ensured that the demands can only be fulfilled by it, thus making it the dominant association among other associations within Sikkim.

VI

CONCLUSION

In Sikkim ethnic identity has become the means by which people can access the state and its resources. The construction of the Nepali identity in Darjeeling/Sikkim into 1920s due to the historical migration, shared social structure and a similar history in a new territory ensured that these groups came together. Their identification to the language led to the weakening of the differences amongst them and an amalgamation of culture occurred under which they were all subsumed. In particular the Tibeto-Burman speakers especially Newar, Limboos, Tamang, Rai, Sunuwar lost out the use of the language and religion as they came to identify themselves as Nepalis who practice Hinduism. This change occurred over a couple of decades as it

²⁵⁶ Gérard Toffin and Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka eds. *Facing Globalization in the Himalayas: Belonging and the Politics of the Self* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2014). For details on the linguistic survey carried out by Mark Turin see “Results from the linguistic survey of Sikkim: Mother Tongues in Education” (Accessed online 21 June 2018), http://digitalhimalaya.com/projectteam/turin/downloads/Sikkim_Tibetology.pdf.

was facilitated by the Sanskritization in Eastern Nepal and the many devi thans (adobe of the devi)²⁵⁷ that were built by certain elites in villages and towns across Darjeeling and Sikkim. The prevalence of Nepali as the lingua franca came at a time when the Indian National Congress was also being reorganised on the basis of linguistic provinces.²⁵⁸The identification of Nepali as the lingua franca and the subsequent representation to the various communities ensured that Nepali identity was constructed. Soon the census of 1931 also put all the groups under the Nepali category including the Limboos who had a distinct and early presence particularly in western region of Sikkim.

The disadvantages that were meted out to the Nepali groups in the form of higher taxation and forced labour were also meted out to the Limboos. While they were allotted a separate seat in 1967 the tripartite agreement of 1973 subsumed them under the Sikkimese of Nepali origin while the Bhutia-Lepchas who had earlier enjoyed patronage under the Bhutia king now enjoyed scheduled tribe status. The fragmentation of the Nepali group in Nepal due to the *Janajati Andolan* coupled with Mandal Commission in India had a spillover effect in Sikkim. The former groups who had become Hinduized and spoke Nepali now preferred to disassociate themselves from Sikkimese of Nepali origin. They also claimed that they had their own Tibeto-Burman languages which had been lost out to the Indo-Aryan Naxalite even began to discontinue celebrating Hindu festivals like Diwali and Dussehra and looked back to their ancestors or ethnic groups in Nepal to shed light on their own festivals and languages. This ethnic revivalism came at a juncture when the state in Sikkim accepted that the ‘Sikkimese of Nepali origin’ term of the tripartite agreement in Sikkim (1973) was redundant.

²⁵⁷ I believe that this change in religious practices occurred over many decades and that it was facilitated by many factors such as devi thans, hegemony created by the Chettri-Bahunns who were called to perform pujas and funerals and the dominance of Chettri-Bahunns who were the ones who migrated to Kashi to learn Sanskrit and Hindu rituals. Most of the pujas are performed by the upper caste Bahunns (Brahmins) who recite mantras in Sanskrit which majority or all locals do not understand. The language factor also played a key role.

²⁵⁸ See the preface of Papia Sengupta, *Language as Identity in Colonial India: Policies and Politics* (New Delhi, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

Therefore, the State in Sikkim promoted the new ethnic re-categorisation of the former Nepal groups into OBCs, MBCs, STs, etc. As Sara Schneiderman and Mark Turin have argued that there was a rush among the ethnic groups to 'learn how to be tribal'. The reconstruction of the Nepali ethnic group can also be understood as an attempt to change itself according to the current socio-political circumstances. This change in the Nepali ethnic identity has been promoted by the state through the creation of various socio-economic categories and restricting access to it through these categories. The role played by the state in facilitating and promoting this ethnic revivalism and in turn penetrating the society can be understood in the light of state-society framework. Midgal state in society approach where the importance of ethnicity for the sustenance of the state and existing socio politics order is well represented by Sikkim. The State by providing different incentives to the people in engaging in ethnic politics, has changed the nature of the society. Why an ethnic group chooses the political assertion of one identity over another cannot be understood without keeping the larger picture in mind. We must remember that in Sikkim there is strong State that has penetrated deep into the life of the people. It is well accepted that in the modern era the State can generate the sort of politics it wants to create. Thus, in Sikkim the State has created divisions among the people along ethnic lines by favouring and creating structures around which people will make their demands.

The chapter also looked at the denial of representation to the Limboo community due to their amalgamation under the Nepali category during the per merger era. The chapter has also argued that the decrease in agricultural returns, rising costs and fewer employment opportunities has made them the people look towards the government who in turn uses the ethnic identity to support the people through distributive programs. While in India the people need to work around the framework of liberalism, the practice of recognition requires that the subject must prepare themselves to fit within the given framework of difference. This difference in Sikkim has taken the form of the various categories.

This chapter also focused on determining how society and state in Sikkim have created and maintained distinct ways of structuring the everyday life in Sikkim. The State and the society through their negotiation have been able to determine the “rules that govern people’s behaviour, whom they benefit and whom they disadvantage” and how these perceived disadvantages can be mediated through the new structures that get created.²⁵⁹

It is true that State in Sikkim is not the sole movers of societal change in Sikkim. The autonomy of the State in Sikkim, the slant of the government’s policies and the preoccupying issues for the leaders are greatly influenced by the society in which they are operating. While the state is transformed by the internal factors even the society is transformed by the state. The social organisation of Sikkim has been moulded by the opportunities and the impediments that have been presented by the State, just as they are affected by the opportunities and constraints of the world economy. In the era of neoliberalism, the government of Sikkim has failed to provide dignified employment to its educated youth. In lieu of a conclusion I argue the interaction of both the state and social formations in Sikkim is an ongoing process of transformation. States are not fixed entities and as the case of Sikkim shows neither are societies, they have both changed structures, objectives, systems, regulations, jurisdictions over social control in their process of interaction. They are both unfixed entity; it is constructed and reconstructed, invented and reinvented through its interaction of its parts with others. The State may seek to get more intimate with its citizens by linking up the biometrics with their bank and phone numbers, but it remains to be seen how after these processes the state responds to the demands of the people within the society for dignified employment and accountability. It is in this processes that they are both remaking one another. In the timeless words of Migdal, they are both becoming.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Joel S. Migdal, *State in society: Studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001),11.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 57.

CHAPTER 4

DEBATING POLITICAL EQUALITY: THE TRANSITIONAL PHASE AND THE SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR SIKKIM

INTRODUCTION

The tumultuous journey of the young Indian nation has already spanned over seven decades.²⁶¹ The Indian constitution has remained the cornerstone for the nation even as it progresses onwards. The founding fathers and mothers had provisioned Article 2 of the Indian constitution envisaging that in the future there could be States that would be incorporated into the union of India. Thus Article 2 has been invoked for the insertion of many states into the union of India such as Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Pondicherry and Daman and Diu among others.

This chapter attempts to trace Sikkim's integration into the Indian union. Considering that Sikkim joined the union of India at a later date than other territories, special provisions were made for Sikkim taking into account its unique historical and political factors under Article 371(F) of the Indian constitution. These special provisions are a component of 'asymmetry'²⁶² in the constitutional powers accorded to particular states and have facilitated the entry of Sikkim into the union of India. Thus, Sikkim is said to be going through a 'transitional phase'²⁶³ that allows for special provisions some of which are violative of the constitutional principles such as community based electoral reservations and reservation of seats for a religious body *Sangha*. This chapter also traces the petition in the Supreme Court which challenged

²⁶¹ Ramachandra Guha argues that Jawaharlal Nehru's decision of providing for universal franchise in India after Independence was the 'world's largest experiment' in history. For an excellent account of the history of India after the departure of British see: Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2007).

²⁶² I use the term asymmetry to notify the unique provisions that are accorded to individual states in the Indian constitution. Thus article 370 for Kashmir and special provisions for some north eastern states in article 371 has led to some scholars claiming that there are asymmetrical provisions for certain states in the Indian constitution.

²⁶³ In the "RC Poudyal Versus the Union" of India where the petitioners challenged the provision of Article 317(F) which accorded community-based reservation in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for the Bhutia-Lepchas violating certain articles of the Indian institution, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Union of India and dictated that these special provisions for Sikkim could be continued as Sikkim had only recently joined the Union of India and was going through a 'transition phase'. The 'transitional phase' records the journey of Sikkim from its past of feudal monarchy to that of a constitutional democracy.

Article 371(F) as being against the principles of equality and democracy. The leitmotif of this chapter would be the analysis of the special provisions for the state of Sikkim in the Indian constitution which becomes important if one attempts to understand the seat sharing issue that has divided the public opinion in Sikkim. The chapter then looks at the Committees and the Commissions that have been set up by the Government of Sikkim and traces their interjections. The chapter then culminates with a discussion on the contemporary circumstances and some proposed panacea as well as the political contingencies that have stalled and deferred the consensus of the issue of electoral reservation and representation in Sikkim.

I

INDIA'S FEDERAL STRUCTURE

India's constitutional structure under Article 1 affirms that India will be union of states. It also determines that there would be federal structure in which the citizens will have at minimum two tiers of governance with the second tier as the elected state government. Article 2 of the Indian constitution provides for the admission or establishment of new states into the India union. In other words, the Parliament has been given the authority of admitting states which were hitherto existing outside the union of India and were only inserted into the Indian union. The founding fathers and mothers envisaged Article 2 keeping in mind the possibility of India absorbing new territories or States in the future.

Many commentators have described India's federalism as a co-operative federalism (Granville Austin), federalism with a strong centralising tendency (Myron Weiner) or as quasi federal (K.C. Wheare).²⁶⁴ Some have argued that the Indian constitution also has certain asymmetrical features that facilitate unique provisions for Jammu and Kashmir and other states in the north-east India. Louise Tillin argues that:

“India's constitution contains some nods to asymmetry with regard to Jammu and Kashmir and the tribally dominated states of the north-east. But, it has been shown in this article that such asymmetry has (i) not been centrally

²⁶⁴ Subrata K. Mitra and Malte Pehl, 2010 “Federalism,” In *The Oxford companion to politics in India*, edited by Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010) 43-60.

important for India's ability to "hold together" and ii) not entailed special protection for the rights of cultural minorities in India in a manner suggested by the political philosophy that has developed in Canada and Spain around the idea of asymmetrical federalism."²⁶⁵

While Tillan's arguments remain valid for Kashmir and some north east states, I argue that asymmetry in the constitutional powers accorded to an individual state is a key feature which facilitates the entry of new states (article 2) into the union of India by ensuring special provisions for such states. Such special provisions are provided from the constitution under article 2 which states that "Parliament may by law admit new States on such terms and conditions, as it thinks fit." Thus, the Constitution authorises and grants the Parliament to admit new states under 'certain terms and conditions' which may be necessary during the time of the entry into the union of India.²⁶⁶ Article 2 gives an extensive leeway and flexibility to the Parliament in matters pertaining to the terms and conditions when a new territory is admitted to the union of India. A defined set of regulations that come into action to make certain that the new state should be identical to other states in the Indian union is not mandated. There are no such constitutional provisions. This maneuvering space ensures that special provisions in the constitutional powers granted to the particular state has been a key enabler when the Indian union 'absorbs a new state'. Thus, asymmetry in the constitutional powers granted to the particular state has contributed to 'holding India' together by ensuring that the absorbed state receives special provisions without which its entry would have been tumultuous and rocky. Without the special provisions there could have been elements within the absorbed state which would have pushed for a withdrawal from the agreed framework or created hindrances for the smooth integration into the Indian union.

Furthermore, the specific and particular provisions in the constitutional powers accorded to an individual state have also entailed 'protection of cultural

²⁶⁵ Louise Tillin, "United in diversity? Asymmetry in Indian federalism" *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 37, no. 1 (2006): 61.

²⁶⁶ This does not mean that the terms and conditions of the entry can be against the "basic features" of the Indian constitution. In the "*RC Poudyal Versus the Union of India*" the Supreme Court ruled that the Parliament cannot make a rule authorising the state to be a theocratic monarchy because that would mean a discrepancy from the secular and the republican form of government that has been prescribed by the Constitution.

minorities'²⁶⁷ by providing special safeguards and benefits for them. As the newly absorbed State may have had a different set of governmental system, traditional laws, religious practices, land holding and legal system than that of India their entry into the Indian union may require a 'transitional phase' in the political evolution of the new state. The given provisions of the Indian constitution may not be enough or inadequate to protect the minorities of the new state.

The special provisions therefore also protect the rights of territorially concentrated minorities in the newly absorbed state.²⁶⁸The State would thus undergo a 'transitional phase' requiring certain special provisions such as the reservation of seats for communities(minorities) and religion based electoral reservation of a kind which would be normally be violative of the constitution of India. Since the terms and conditions of a State's entry into the Union of India are such that it is not possible for the State to pull out of the Indian union once integrated, the Indian Parliament would make special provisions for the minorities of the state. Thus, the entry of a new territory to the Indian union sometimes require certain special provisions to be made for the new admission in the Indian union by provisioning special benefits in the constitutional powers granted to the concerned state. I will make my arguments on the basis of the integration of Sikkim as the 22 state into the union of India.

SIKKIM'S INTEGRATION TO THE UNION OF INDIA

Sikkim was an independent Himalayan kingdom bordering India, China, Nepal and Bhutan. Following the departure of the British, Sikkim signed a treaty under which the defence, external affairs and communication would be handled by the

²⁶⁷ Tillin's framework may perhaps be true for other states like Kashmir but Tillin does not consider Article 370 for Kashmir as a 'pure' form of asymmetrical inclusion. She argues that these considerations were made as Kashmir was going through a war in its territory and it was meant to be a temporary provision.

²⁶⁸ Will Kymlicka in *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* sees historical discrimination as a justification for special treatment of certain groups. However, a more complex reading of the internal homogeneity of groups and how this relates to institutional structures makes Kymlicka wary of rigid procedures for group representation, rejecting the notion of 'mirror representation' and suggesting that a threshold of representation for certain groups is necessary to prevent exclusion. These theories of group representation share a common concern that legislative representation is an important if not overriding element of democratic representation. There is an acceptance that procedural democracy has struggled to cope with the questions of group representation, particularly where there are groups that have faced a history of discrimination.

government of India while the monarch would be in charge of internal affairs.²⁶⁹ However the democratic movement in Sikkim eventually led to the signing of the tripartite agreement in 1973. Apart from the leaders of the democratic movement in Sikkim and the Chogyal the Government of India was also a signatory of the agreement. Under the agreement Sikkim would be guided by a written constitution, Chogyal would be the constitutional head and the head of administration was to be the chief executive officer appointed by the Government of India.

Sikkim figured in the Indian Constitution because of a clause in the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974 which was basically the new constitution of Sikkim. While the draft was prepared in Delhi the lone bone of contention was section 30 of chapter VI of the draft which provisioned that the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim may petition the Indian government to include the planning of Sikkim within the scope of the Planning commission and offer opportunities for students of Sikkim in Indian Universities and subsequently public services of India. It was this phrase which was the bone of disagreement which stated: “to seek participation and representation for the people of Sikkim in the political institutions of India.” It is baffling as to why the Sikkim Assembly members would seek representation in the Parliament of a foreign country i.e. India and this section was vehemently opposed by the Chogyal and others leaders. After a resolution was passed demanding the same an amendment was made to the Indian constitution under the 35th amendment which accorded to Sikkim the status of an “associate state” of India.²⁷⁰

Accommodating representation to the Indian Parliament was going to be exacting as the Indian constitution states that only an Indian citizen will be eligible to be elected to the Parliament.²⁷¹ Sikkim subjects were not yet Indian citizens then. To ensure the representation of Sikkim to the Indian Parliament Article 2A of the 35

²⁶⁹ Sikkim thus confirmed its international position as an independent state but as a protectorate under India.

²⁷⁰ The status of Sikkim changed from being a protectorate of India to an Associate State of India.

²⁷¹ Article 84 in the Constitution of India states that: Qualification for membership of Parliament. A person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in Parliament unless he:
(a) “is a citizen of India and makes and subscribes before some person authorised in that behalf by the Election Commission an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule”

Amendment provisioned that Sikkim would not be a part of the territory of India but would be 'associated' with it. The tenth schedule was however inserted in the constitution which laid out the terms and conditions of the association and spelt out the solutions to the obstacles posed by articles 84, 102 and other articles. Many Parliamentarians raised doubts regarding the 35 amendment and questioned the move of a simple resolution resulting in an amendment to the constitution. Moreover, they also raised doubts regarding the future where there could be a unilateral withdrawal made by the Sikkim assembly. However, the Government ensured the members of Parliament as well as the international community that there was no question of withdrawal and that the decision was binding on both countries.²⁷²

However, this unique experiment of the Indian constitution was cut short within a period of seven months with the passage of the 36th amendment. The bill for the 36th amendment was introduced by the then external affairs minister Shri Yeshwant Rao Chavan in the Lok Sabha on 23 April 1975. Clause number 5 in the objects and reasons for the proposed amendment spells out the objectives very comprehensively and reads:

“Accordingly, it is proposed to include Sikkim as a full-fledged State in the First Schedule to the constitution and to allot to Sikkim one seat into the Council of States and one seat in the House of the People. *It is also proposed to insert a new article containing the provisions considered necessary to meet the special circumstances and needs of Sikkim.*”²⁷³(emphasis mine)

The bill was passed and the Indian constitution was amended for the 36th time resulting in the insertion of Article 371(F) as the new article containing the provisions essential to bear the specific needs of Sikkim. Sikkim was also absorbed into the

²⁷² Most of the debates in the Parliament show that the members were concerned that if the constitution was amended by a simple resolution, what if another assembly at a later date decided to pass another resolution reversing or rescinding the earlier one. Shri Shyamanandan Mishra, Member of Parliament Lok Sabha, Begusarai who during his speech on the 2 September 1974 questioned: “Are we going to base our constitution on the vicissitudes of political opinion in Sikkim? There might be a particular political constellation prevailing in Sikkim at a particular point of time. But another constellation might come into being again. Should we be asked to amend our constitution accordingly?” The answer was given by Shri Swaran Singh who replied that there could not be unilateral withdrawal from this deal. He reiterated that the decision taken was binding and that once taken, there was no question of withdrawal by both sides. See Biraj Adhikari, *Sikkim, the Wounds of History* (Siliguri: Impact Press, 2010), 34-35.

²⁷³ Biraj Adhikari, *Sikkim the Wounds of History* (Siliguri: Impact Press, 2010), 42.

union of India. Accordingly, the Indian union under Article 371(F) allowed the Sikkimese people to retain their separate identity and their old laws.

INSTITUTIONS TO ACCODOMODATE DIVERSITY

Federalism can be defined as a form of fragmentation of political power. It has been argued that in order to accommodate diversity the conferment of differential rights under the constitution to one or more subunits is necessary. Louise Tillin argues that India's constitution provides some features of "asymmetry with regard to Jammu and Kashmir and some states of north-east."²⁷⁴Tillin has also highlighted that both normative and functional arguments are made in favour of asymmetrical federalism. The normative argument vies that protecting cultural group rights and recognising difference in multinational liberal societies makes asymmetrical federalism necessary.²⁷⁵Under this she further distinguishes between *de facto* and *de jure* asymmetry. By *de facto* asymmetry she alludes to the type of asymmetry found in every federations such as differences amongst the subunits in terms of prosperity, language, dimension and culture. India for instance has Uttar Pradesh which sends 80 Parliamentarians compared to one by Sikkim. By *de jure* asymmetry she refers to the product of conscious constitutional design. Thus, the special provisions for north eastern states are consciously provided in order to protect the cultural rights of the people there. The functional argument on the other hand rests simply on what works during challenging governance situations.

Asymmetrical federal provisions inserted in the Indian constitution have also been important because it has played a key role in protecting cultural group rights. Article 371(A) of the Indian Constitution thus protects the religious and social practices of Nagas as well as their customary laws and land ownership. Similarly, for Mizoram (Christian majority state), Article 371(G) was provisioned which protects the religious customs, social and customary laws, ownership and transfer of land of the Mizos.²⁷⁶It must also be remembered that the tribal areas in other parts of the

²⁷⁴ Louise Tillin, "United in diversity? Asymmetry in Indian federalism" *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 37, no. 1 (2006):61.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*,47.

²⁷⁶ While Nagaland was a Union Territory directly under the supervision of the Central government it was given statehood in 1962.Mizoram was formed by separating it from Assam and accorded full statehood after the Mizoram Peace Accord in 1986.Thus both of these states were already a part of the territory of India when special provisions were made for them.

north-east such as Bodoland were also given autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule. Constitutions, much like business contracts, don't elucidate the rules and mechanism to be followed in every conceivable instance in meticulous extent.²⁷⁷As a result they are sometimes amended and manipulated by political actors who strategise according to the political realities of their times.

When Sikkim joined the Indian union, it was as an Associate state (1974) and then later it was fully integrated into the union of India as a full-fledged state in 1975. However its incorporation within the Indian union also occurred with the granting of special provisions enshrined in article 371(F) of the constitution. I would argue here that article 371(F) which is a sort of mini-constitution for Sikkim represents a type of asymmetrical federal provision inserted in the Indian constitution which has been successful in protecting the separate identity, old laws and special representation of the Sikkimese people. Sikkim's asymmetrical status in the Indian Union also stems from a recognition that its ethnic groups have a special history unique to the state, recognising the spirit of the 1973 agreement which was a precursor to the integration of Sikkim to the union of India and recognising the need for continuity of certain old laws, practices and customs that were prevailing in Sikkim.

Sikkim's case also points to the existence of *de jure* asymmetry which Tillin defines as the "product of conscious constitutional design".²⁷⁸ Thus Sikkim has been allowed different kinds of powers such as the role of Governor to 'maintain peace' along with law and order, continuation of old laws until repealed by the legislative assembly, etc. Clause [k]²⁷⁹ of the Indian Union gives constitutional sanctions to the

²⁷⁷ A. Dixit, *The Making of Economic Policy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997), 20.

²⁷⁸ Louise Tillin, "United in diversity? Asymmetry in Indian federalism" *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 37, no. 1 (2006): 48.

²⁷⁹ Clause (k) reads as: "all laws in force immediately before the appointed day in the territories comprised in the State of Sikkim or any part thereof shall continue to be in force therein until amended or repealed by a competent Legislature or other competent authority;"

old laws²⁸⁰ of Sikkim to continue till some competent authority challenges it or cancels it as per the limitation laid out in the clause 1 of the constitution. Clause 1 provides that if any of the old laws was to be changed to conform to the provisions of the constitution they have to be done within two years from the appointed date of 1975. Since the two-year gap period is over any adoptions and modification aren't possible. Even if the old laws were to violate the provisions of the Indian constitution they cannot be modified any further.

The repercussions of the constitutional sanctions to the old laws have already occurred in Sikkim.²⁸¹ Take the example of Sikkim Employment Rule 4(iv). Surendra Sharma challenged the Rule 4 which is an old law prevailing in Sikkim before its merger in 1975. The rule is an antiquated law which stipulates a non-Sikkimese in Sikkim to give up his job the moment a qualified Sikkimese claims the position, regardless of any considerations like seniority or years on the job. The rule provisions that only when 'an appropriately qualified and experienced Sikkimese is not available' can non-Sikkimese nationals be appointed to government jobs. The petitioner appealed against the Rule 4 of the Sikkim Employment Act on the grounds that it infringed the petitioner's fundamental rights. However the petition was turned down by the Supreme court. The Supreme court upheld the validity of the rule 4 because under clause [k] of Article 371(F) old laws were still operational in Sikkim.²⁸²

We can also comprehend the special provisions that were made for Sikkim in light of the community based electoral reservation for the Bhutia-Lepcha and the religious seat reserved for the *Sanghas*. In spite of being decided during the Constituent Assembly debates not to make provisions for separate electorates and

²⁸⁰ These are the laws which have been operating in Sikkim before the absorption by India. Example can be given of the Revenue Order Number 1 which notified "that no Bhutias and Lepchas are to be allowed to sell, mortgage or sub-let any of their land to any person other than a Bhutia or a Lepcha without the express sanction of the *Darbar*."

²⁸¹ For the old laws of Sikkim see: Old Laws of Sikkim, Sikkim Code Volume IV (Gangtok: Law Department, Government of Sikkim), (Accessed 5 July, 2018), <http://districtcourtsnamchi.nic.in/laws/oldsikkim/sikkimcodevol4.pdf>

²⁸² See *State of Sikkim vs Surendra Prasad Sharma* on 19 April 1994. (Accessed online 10 June 2018), <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/436092/>.

communal representation the Parliament of India did provide for separate electorates for the *Sanghas* which ensures that only a Buddhist monk can be elected from the seat. Furthermore, even community-based reservation was denied in the Constituent Assembly on the grounds that it had led to huge problems in the past and that the vulnerable section of society would have been protected under Article 332 of the Indian constitution. Yet the Indian Parliament did not consider Article 332 to give representation to the Bhutia-Lepchas but rather chose to grant electoral reservation to these communities under clause [f] of Article 371(F). In other words, adequate safeguards in pertaining to the Bhutia-Lepcha were already present in the constitution of India and all that was required was to categorise them as tribals. Thus, special provisions were consciously made for Sikkim thereby confirming the existence of *de jure* asymmetry.

The special provisions were made since Sikkim was already a State being ruled by a monarch and it had a set of political system that was different from the Indian democratic republic. Integrating Sikkim into the Indian union by applying the provisions of the Indian constitution verbatim would have been disastrous for both Sikkimese living there and the Indian union. Rather there was a need for certain special provisions that guaranteed the continuation of the old laws and traditions of Sikkim and also ensured the Sikkimese that their entry into the Indian Union would not result in broad, massive and extensive changes that would be detrimental to their interests. Furthermore, since democracy works by numbers the minority groups (Bhutias and the Lepchas) also needed to be assured that their interests would not be subsumed under the hordes of the majority (Sikkimese of Nepali origin). Thus, we can view Article 371(F) as being included in the constitution of India keeping in mind the state's distinct status. This article also had certain provisions that were in keeping with the agreement signed in 1973 which India had to agree to due to the geopolitical constraint.²⁸³

TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT OF 1973

²⁸³ B. K. Roy Burman "Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESPP)" *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),4.

The May 8,1973 Agreement which was countersigned between the Chogyal, representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the political parties representing the people of Sikkim is of vital importance as its wordings are the genesis of the system of representation in Sikkim Legislative Assembly. The crux of the pivotal agreement can be specified as such:

“The system of election shall so be organised as to make the Assembly adequately representative for the various sections of the populations... care being taken to ensure that no single section of the population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin and that the rights and interest of the Sikkimese of the Bhutia-Lepcha origins and the Sikkimese of the Nepali which includes Tsong and Scheduled Caste are fully protected” (emphasis added).

It may be considered that only a principle is formulated and it does not stipulate any fixed number.

It must be propounded that the agreement provides that no segment of the population would acquire an ascendant standing in the assembly owing to its ethnic origin. This provision was inserted to warrant that the Sikkimese of Nepali origin who were in the majority in the state would not acquire a commanding sway in the Legislative Assembly on the basis of their numerical strength. Furthermore, this agreement sought to safeguard the entitlements and stakes of the Sikkimese of the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali origin, including the Tsong and scheduled caste. We must recall that this agreement provided for the protection of the Sikkimese in light of the coming decades where the state could be inundated and swamped by people from outside the state. Thus, both the groups had been provided not only representation to the Legislative Assembly but their rights and interests as Sikkimese were also preserved.

The first elections to the Sikkim Assembly consequent to the signing of the agreement was held under the Representation of Sikkim Subjects Acts (1974) and saw a parity formula being implemented that ensured equal distribution of seats:

Table 4.1: Seat distribution in 1974

Community	Number of seats
Sikkimese of Bhutia Lepcha origin including <i>Sangha</i>	16 seats
Sikkimese of Nepali origin including Tsong and Scheduled Caste	16 seats
Total number of seats	32 seats

Source: Representation of Sikkim Subjects Acts (1974)

Thus, while even though the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin were in a majority this division of seats was in conformity to the spirit of the May 8,1973 agreement. Upon the completion of the elections the Assembly that had been constituted passed the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974 (gazetted on July 6,1974) which under section '33 of the Act stated that the Sikkim assembly which has been formed as a result of the elections held in Sikkim in April 1974 shall be deemed to be the first Assembly duly constituted under this Act.'

SPECIAL PROVISIONS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS GRANTED TO SIKKIM

When Sikkim was merged with India the Parliament passed the constitution (thirty-sixth) Amendment Act 1975 which had special provisions meant exclusively for Sikkim under 371(F) of the Indian constitution. The provisions meant exclusively for Sikkim under 371(F) states:

1. The Assembly for Sikkim formed as result of the elections held in Sikkim in April 1974 with thirty-two members elected in the said elections (hereinafter referred to as the sitting members) and shall be deemed to be the Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim duly constituted under the constitution.
2. The sitting members shall be deemed to be the members of the Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim duly elected under this constitution.
3. The said Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim shall exercise the powers and perform the functions of the Legislative Assembly of a State under this constitution.

What is very significant regarding the above is that even after the merger with India, Article 371(F) of the Indian constitution upheld the Legislative Assembly that had been elected in 1974 prior to the merger and had been elected based on the parity formula. The above clauses in Article 371(F) entrenched the parity formula that had been decided in the tripartite agreement. While the Indian State could have conducted fresh elections on the basis of one man one vote and ensured the election of a new Legislative Assembly which contained no electoral reservation for any community, after the merger the Indian Government chose to honour the tripartite agreement that had been signed by the representative of the India government. Thus, the Sikkimese of the Bhutia-Lepcha origin were very hopeful that the commitments that were made to them under the tripartite agreement were truly enshrined under Article 371(F) of the Indian constitution.

The other special provision is also pertaining to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Clause (f) of the Article provides that:

“Parliament may for the purpose of protecting the rights and interests of the different sections of the population of Sikkim make provisions for the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State which may be filled by the candidates belonging to such section and for the delimitation of the assembly constituencies from which candidates belonging to such sections alone may stand for election to the Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim.”

This clause therefore empowered the Parliament to make provisions for community based electoral reservations for protecting the rights and stakes of the various segments of the population of Sikkim. Subsequent to Article 371(F) of the Constitution, the Representation of People (Amendment) Ordinance ,1979(No.7 of 1979) was passed which provided for a 32-member legislative Assembly of which-

- 1) Twelve seats were reserved for Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin.
- 2) Two seats were reserved for the scheduled castes of the state.
- 3) One seat was reserved for Sangha.
- 4) Seventeen seats were to be kept open for General.

Thus, while earlier sixteen seats i.e. fifty percent of seats were reserved for the Sikkimese of the Bhutia-Lepcha origin under the Representation of People (Amendment) Ordinance, 1979 the representation of the Sikkimese of the Bhutia Lepcha origin was brought down to twelve seats i.e. 38 percent of the total number of seats in the Assembly. In the statement of Objects and Reasons regarding bill no 79 dated 10 May, 1979 the reasons that were given for ending the parity system and electoral reservation for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin are stated below.

The central Government of India announced that under the existing arrangements the seats in the Legislative Assembly in Sikkim are reserved for Nepalis, the Bhutias, the Lepchas, the Schedules Castes and the *Sanghas* belonging to monasteries. As a consequence of which ‘other inhabitants’ of Sikkim were not eligible to contest elections to the Assembly, thus making it necessary to modify the existing set-up of the Legislative Assembly so as to ensure fair representation to all members of the population. It further contended that if the Bhutias and Lepchas who are the ‘*original inhibitors*’ (emphasis mine) of Sikkim are given representation according to their population ratio their interest may not be properly safeguarded. They made up for 25 percent of the population but were given over 38 percent of the assembly seats (13 percent over). Accordingly, it has been decided that 12 seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly which may be constituted hereafter would be reserved for the Bhutias and Lepchas. The remaining 17 seats in the Legislative Assembly would be the general seats open to all electors.

One fails to understand the logic of giving electoral reservation to the Bhutias and the Lepchas on the rationale of ‘original inhibitors’. It has been argued in the Burman Committee Report (2008) that “if early habitation of Sikkim gives a sacred right to political privileges, Limboos and Mangars are also eligible” to political privileges.²⁸⁴ This line of argument in the statements of Objects and Reasons does not provide any answer to the seat sharing set-up and only exposes the faulty reasoning. Rather they could have justified the electoral reservation to the Bhutia-Lepchas as

²⁸⁴ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESF)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),13

being the prerogative use of power by the union government under clause (f) of 371(F) to protect the interests of certain communities who on the absence of reservation could have less chances of representation in the Legislative assembly.

The President in exercise of his powers under Article 342 of the Indian constitution conferred the status of tribal communities to the Bhutia and Lepcha in 1978 under the Constitution (Sikkim) Scheduled Tribes Order. When the Sikkim elections were held after the passing of Representative of the People Act the incumbent chief minister Dorji Kazi lost out to Nar Kumar Bhandari.

Thus, special provisions in the constitutional powers granted to Sikkim facilitated the community based electoral reservation for the Bhutia-Lepchas and the reservation of one seat for the *Sangha* based on Buddhist monasteries. This special provision granted to Sikkim has facilitated the absorption of Sikkim by ensuring that the minority Bhutia and Lepchas community would get fair share of representation in the Legislative Assembly. These provisions have also been a key enabler when the Indian Union absorbed Sikkim. Furthermore, by ensuring that the Bhutia-Lepchas (who were previously patronised by the Bhutia monarch) were entitled to community based electoral reservation it has helped India to ensure a smooth transition in the political evolution of Sikkim. This has helped India to hold onto the absorbed state without many challenges. Without the special provisions the minority may have started opposing the entry into the union of India and pushed for a withdrawal from the agreed framework. Therefore, India's constitution does have certain elements which supports the authors argument that asymmetrical powers granted to particular states have been significant for facilitating the entry of a new state into the Indian union.

II

TRANSITIONAL PHASE

Electoral reservation in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly on the basis of community can be characterised as a feudal legacy. The more important question is whether this should continue indefinitely. Before we proceed to the next section I

would like to draw the reader's attention to the petition by some individuals of Sikkimese of Nepali origin who had challenged the thirty-sixth amendment Act by which Article 371(F) was incorporated into the constitution. The main argument of their petition was that Article 371(F) was not concurrent with the conventional outlook and philosophy of the Constitution especially secularism and democracy.²⁸⁵

The petitioners in transferred cases Numbers 78 of 1982 and 84 of 1982 challenged the provisions of the 1975 Act and the 1980 Act which provided for community based electoral reservation and religion based electoral seats. They argued against the reservation for the *Sangha* on the basis that the said provisions "fall outside the ambit of Article 371(F) and that they are violative of the provisions contained in Articles 14, 25, 332 and 352. Moreover if Article 371(F) is given a more expansive analysis it would be violative of the 'basic features' of the Constitution."²⁸⁶ The other petitioners in transferred cases Numbers 93 and 94 of 1991 have relied upon clause [f] of Article 371(F) to claim similar reservation of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for Sikkimese of Nepali origin. Furthermore, some argued that the terms and conditions of Sikkim's absorption into Indian union was political and consequently courts do not adjudicate on questions which are political.

The verdict was given by the Supreme Court in the *RC Poudyal Vs the Union of India*.²⁸⁷ In the wordings of the judgement the Supreme Court judges have argued for the continuation of the special provisions for Sikkim on the basis that it is going through a 'transitional phase' in its journey of political evolution. Thus this 'transitional phase' justifies the community-based reservation of seats which "if applied to any existing state of the Union may not pass the Constitutional

²⁸⁵ The petitioners argued that certain provisions of the Article were against the guiding philosophy of the constitution of India.

²⁸⁶ The basic structure doctrine is an Indian judicial principle that the Indian Constitution has certain basic features that cannot be amended, altered or destroyed by the Parliament under Article 368 of the Indian Constitution. The basic features are fundamental rights, rule of law, secularism, welfare state, etc. They have not been explicitly defined by the judiciary.

²⁸⁷ "R. C. Poudyal & Anr V. Union Of India & Ors (10)" India.lawi.asia. 01, 2014.(Accessed online June 5,2018) <http://india.lawi.asia/r-c-poudyal-and-anr-v-union-of-india-and-ors-10/>

muster.”²⁸⁸Therefore “historical considerations and compulsions do justify inequality and special treatment.” The Supreme Court also admitted that the “impugned provisions were added to the constitution” of India as they were “necessary in the admission of the strategic border State into the Union.”²⁸⁹They also justified the “subvention of the legal process to the political contingency of the admission of a border state to the Indian Union and envisaged a peaceful and gradual process of transition.” Thus the Supreme court upheld the legitimacy of the disproportionate reservation of seats in favour of the Bhutia-Lepcha but did not respond to the question of the time frame for the continuation of the feudal legacy.

The judgment by the Supreme Court also argued that Parliament cannot admit a new state into the union of India on terms and conditions which derogate from the ‘basic features’ of the constitution. Thus, the words ‘as it thinks fit’ in Article 2 of the “constitution, cannot therefore be construed as empowering Parliament to provide terms and conditions for admission of a new State which are inconsistent with the basic features of the constitution.”²⁹⁰

In this section I argue that the contentious problem of seat sharing in Sikkim Legislative Assembly can only be understood and an attempt to solve the imbroglio if we accept that Sikkim is going through a transitional phase. Thus, this transitional phase is a period when certain provisions of the Indian constitution must be relaxed for the state of Sikkim. This transitional phase is a period during which inequality is being permitted and allowed. Moreover, special treatment for certain communities are also permitted keeping in mind the political contingency of the decision.

When the Sikkimese of Nepali origin lost their reserved seats, they approached the Supreme court and challenged the community-based reservation for

²⁸⁸ L. M. Sharma while offering a dissenting opinion argued that since the Buddhist monasteries are religious institutions who are the beneficiaries of the reservation and that weightage in the poll in favour of any religion is strictly prohibited by the Indian constitution. Moreover, this may have the potentiality of causing damage and division in the country. It also goes against that basic philosophy of the constitution which disallows the concept of separate electorate in India.

²⁸⁹ R.C. Poudyal & Anr V. Union of India & Ors (10)" india.lawi.asia. 01, 2014. (Accessed May 5, 2018), [http://india.lawi.asia/r-c-poudyal-and-anr-v-union-of-india-and-ors-10/Paragraphs 128,129,131](http://india.lawi.asia/r-c-poudyal-and-anr-v-union-of-india-and-ors-10/Paragraphs%20128,129,131)

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

the Bhutia Lepchas as being violative of Article 14²⁹¹ and fundamental principles of democracy of the constitution of India, reservation of one seat for the *Sangha* (Buddhist Lamaic monasteries) violative of Article 15(1)²⁹² and 325²⁹³ which went against the secular principle of the Indian Constitution. They also argued that reservation of seats without making an equivalent reservation for Sikkimese of Nepali origin is violative of right to equality assured under Article 14 of the Indian constitution.

However, clause (m) of the Article 371 (F) of the Constitution has clearly spelt out the limitation of the legal process. It argues:

“Neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall have the jurisdiction in respect of any dispute or other matter arising out of any treaty, agreement, engagement or other similar instrument entered into or executed before the appointed day and to which the Government of India or any of its predecessor Governments was a part.”

However, delivering the verdict in the *RC Poudyal vs Union of India* the Supreme Court refused to do away with the community based electoral reservation on the grounds that Sikkim is going through a ‘transitional phase’ in its political evolution. Therefore, the above provisions are basically transitional in nature. The Supreme Court further envisaged a harmonious and measured process of passage in the political evolution of Sikkim. Moreover, the Supreme Court was not expected to stipulate the political solution or announce a time period.

This transitional phase that the supreme court referred to, is the period from the date Sikkim joined the Indian Union and is continuing till today. Sikkim is only

²⁹¹ Article 14 deals with equality before law: “The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.”

²⁹² Article 15(1) pertains that: “The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.”

²⁹³ Article 325 states that: “No person to be ineligible for inclusion in, or to claim to be included in a special, electoral roll on grounds of religion, race, caste or sex. There shall be one general electoral roll for every territorial constituency for election to either House of Parliament or to the House or either House of the Legislature of a State and no person shall be ineligible for inclusion in any such roll or claim to be included in any special electoral roll for any such constituency on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or any of them.”

four decades into experiencing democracy. The transitional phase thus justifies inequality and special provisions such as electoral reservation for certain communities.

Therefore, one must understand the imbroglio that is occurring over the seat sharing in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly by considering that Sikkim is going through a transitional phase. Furthermore, the notification of Limbu and Tamang as STs must also be viewed as occurring during this transitional phase. The Sinha Committee and Burman Commission that have been set up by the Government of Sikkim also have been set up during this transitional phase, thereby explaining their limitations inspite of making certain recommendations to solve the seat sharing issue.

In Sikkim we can witness two divergent strands that have both questioned and challenged the status quo. One of the strands is the pull of feudal elements backwards which has championed that community-based reservation and inequality be continued. Furthermore, they have refused to overcome their attachments to feudal legacies and continued to push for the continuation of community-based reservation. Additionally, they have insisted for these special provisions to be continued, they have also emphasised that any increase in the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly should also coincide with the increase in the seats reserved for Bhutia-Lepcha. This is best represented by the electoral reservation for the Bhutia Lepchas who have been given community-based reservation of twelve seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. The Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) has been extremely vociferous in demanding the protection of Bhutia-Lepcha seats and do not wish the termination of community-based reservation. The convener of SIBLAC told the author that political rights ensure social and economic rights. Similar is the case of Limbu Tamang Voluntary Committee (LTVC) who have clamoured that they must be given community based reserved seats in the Legislative Assembly.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ After being notified as Scheduled tribes in 2003 they are yet to get reserved seats in the Sikkim Legislative assembly under article 332 of the Indian constitution which provides for reserved seats for the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes.

However, the other strand represents those who challenged the community-based reservation and the *Sangha* seat in the Supreme Court. The Sikkimese of Nepali origin who had their reserved seats taken away are more attracted by the equalising provisions of the constitution which provides for equality and disallows community-based reservation. They were also influenced by the founding principles of the Indian constitution which does not sanction community based electoral reservation and separate electorates for members of a particular religion. They would like to see the removal of the non-obscurant clause of Article 371(F) which declares “notwithstanding anything which is contained in this constitution” which is the introductory sentence of the article and curtails the amending power of the Parliament. During this transitional phase they have pushed the state towards treating all citizens with equality. They want Article 325 in the Constitution of India to be implemented which guarantees that “no person would be ineligible for inclusion nor claim to be included in a special electoral roll on ground of religion, race, caste or sex.” It also stipulates that “there shall be one general electoral roll for every territorial constituency for election to a state legislature.” Furthermore, they are against being treated unequally on the basis of historical factors and compulsions which are remains of the feudal past of Sikkim. The seat sharing issue can also be understood in this regard of the push and pull that Sikkim is currently experiencing.

This pull and push between the two divergent strands has affected the legislative assembly impasse and has divided the people on the seat sharing issue. While certain asymmetrical powers have been provided to Sikkim in the Constitution which has facilitated the entry of this new state it has during this process also institutionalised and politicised ethnic differences in the state of Sikkim.²⁹⁵In other words the special provisions have entrenched the institutionalised ethnic differences in Sikkim. The disproportionate excessive reservation has created a privileged community which has created unhealthy competition and created hatred and supported divisive forces.

²⁹⁵ Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 40.

During this transitional phase we thus witness the pull of feudal elements and push towards equality with its universal claims of representation. It must be understood that the push towards universal claims of representation are in conflict with community-based representation. This community-based representation which is a remnant of feudal legacy is being facilitated by the special constitutional provisions. In Sikkim we also witness that this nascent democracy will push for equalising mechanisms but the constitutional provisions in this transitional phase will ensure reverse inequality in Sikkim. The Bhutia community which is the most advanced community in Sikkim already enjoy provision of being enlisted as STs.²⁹⁶ Thus the ‘transitional phase’ in Sikkim continues, where there exists a pull by the feudal elements backwards, championing community-based reservation and inequality. On the other hand, there exists an opposing strand that pushes for the discontinuity of the transitional phase and seeks similar provisions for Sikkim that exists in other states of India also.

III

When the Bhutia-Lepcha were notified as Scheduled Tribe in 1979 the Government of India could have ensured representation for them under Article 332 of the Indian constitution which provides for reserved seats for scheduled tribes. According to the 1971 census they constituted 25 percent of the population and should have been allotted seats in proportion to the population but were given 38 percent of seats. Since article 332 provides for reservation of scheduled tribes “nearly as may be the same proportion to the total number of seats in the Assembly”, this provision becomes very useful for our consideration.

In this section I argue that the Burman Commission’s recommendations also seem to favour the push towards ending of community-based reservation. Its recommendations can be seen in the light of pushing the reservation of seats in the Sikkim Legislative assembly more towards Article 332(of the Indian constitution)

²⁹⁶ See the census was carried out by the Directorate of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation (DESME), Government of Sikkim in 2006 barring foreign nationals and inhabitants of military or paramilitary barracks and other areas specified by the army. Altogether 5,81,546 persons were covered by the census. The data were processed community-wise.

which provides for reservation for scheduled tribes(castes) and away from section (f) of Article 371(F) which warrants Parliament to make community based electoral reservation.

A scrutiny of the Burman report suggests that the judicial pronouncements which have upheld the community-based reservation for the Bhutia-Lepcha is accepted by the members. The Burman Commission provides a novel solution to the seat sharing impasse. Considering that certain special provisions have been provided to Sikkim in the constitution and that the state is going through a transitional phase the commission accepts that Bhutia-Lepcha have not yet overcome their feudal legacies. The Burman Commission therefore argues that the indigenous people of Sikkim comprising of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin and Sikkimese of the Bhutia Lepcha origin have “woven themselves as a separate category who are known as the Sikkim Subject Certificate Holders” and their heirs. Therefore, the Burman Commission recommends that their fraternity should continue. It argues that the sanctity of the Bhutia-Lepcha seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly as well as the *Sangha* seat must be seen as concurrent to the sanctity of the scheduling of the entire Sikkimese Nepali communities.

Therefore, it recommends that the entire Sikkimese of the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepali origin be notified as scheduled tribe. Thus, about 85 percent of the seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly would be reserved for the scheduled tribe. They have also recommended that apart from the twelve seats that have been reserved for the Bhutia Lepcha, the people of these communities should also be allowed to contest from the seats reserved for the scheduled tribes too. Thus, if the Lepcha and the Bhutia were to win “sizeable number of seats for the category of scheduled tribes they may in the course of time find it more attractive to overcome their feudal attachments, as in that case their appeal to the relatively more open constituencies will be

enhanced.”²⁹⁷The report calls it the “strategy of non-intervention and providing alternate pole of transcendence.”²⁹⁸

In this section I argue that by scheduling the entire indigenous Sikkimese in the list of STs and by providing an alternate pole of transcendence to the Bhutia-Lepcha to contest from the scheduled tribe seats apart from their reserved seats the recommendations seem to favour the gradual ending of the transitional phase. This is because as the Bhutia-Lepcha would contest from scheduled tribe seats and win a sizeable number it is hoped that in the years to come they would overcome their feudal attachments and increase their appeal to contest from open constituencies. When their confidence is increased it is hoped that the indigenous people of Sikkim would come together and arrive at a favourable consensual arrangement. Furthermore, the recommendations also seem to move the inspiration of the electoral representation in Sikkim Assembly away from Article 371(F) which is an article that deals with certain asymmetrical powers that have been provided to Sikkim to Article 332 which is an article that deals with reservation of seats for the scheduled tribes (castes) across all states and has uniform application across India.

In this last section I will therefore discuss the recommendations of the Sinha Committee and summarise the main arguments of the various chapters of the Burman Committee report and its recommendations. I will then deconstruct some criticism of the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) and offer a critique of Tanka Subba’s chapter in which he discusses the shortcomings of the Burman commission recommendations. My main critique of Subba’s article is that since there is no official government criteria for the enlistment of communities under the list of scheduled tribes and that the Government of India’s updated policy regarding the same was in line with the recommendations of B. K. Roy Burman then the indigenous people of Sikkim have a right to be included in the list of scheduled tribes. The post Burman

²⁹⁷ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESF)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),14.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*,14.

committee recommendations scenario with the suggested workable solutions are discussed and it is followed by a conclusion.

SINHA COMMITTEE REPORT

The elections to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly were held on 2004 without any reservation of seats for the two communities (Limbu and Tamang) which had been included in the list of scheduled tribes the year before. The elections saw the return of chief minister Pawan Kumar Chambling for his third tenure and his party (Sikkim Democratic Front) winning 31 of the 32 assembly seats. It also saw the election of 4 MLAs belonging to the Subba community and 1 MLA belonging to the Tamang community.²⁹⁹In order to counter the pressure that was building up from the Limbu-Tamang community and to deny the opposition any chance of politicising the issue the Government of Sikkim in 2005 issued a notification which declared that a committee under the chairmanship of Professor A. C. Sinha had been constituted. It was to ‘prepare an ethnographic report on Gurung, Rai, Mangar, Dewan, Jogi, Bhujel and Sunuwar ethnic communities residing in the state of Sikkim.’ One of the members of the community T. B. Subba has written that of the members of the committee only the chairman and himself were aware of the society, culture, history and politics of Sikkim.³⁰⁰They were given 100 days to submit the report from the date of notification. Most of the members of the ethnic groups under consideration for inclusion in the list in STs submitted ethnographic reports to the representatives of the committee. The committee mostly carried out the research over libraries, field visits, examined government documents related to the provisions governing SCs, STs and OBCs.

Recalling the previous chapter, we must remember that the rise of Pawan Kumar Chambling and his party the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) were due to the denial of non-implementation of the Mandal Commission report that had recommended the inclusion of certain groups into the list of OBCs. The commission

²⁹⁹ “Sikkim Assembly results,” (Accessed online 12 May 2018), http://ceosikkim.nic.in/Files/election%20history/StatisticalReports_SK_2004.pdf.

³⁰⁰ Tanka B. Subba, “Making Sikkim more inclusive: An Insider’s view of the role of Committees and Commissions” in *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices* (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013), 135.

had recommended the inclusion of Rai, Limbu, Dewan, Yahhka, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Sunuwar, Bhujel and Jogi in the list of OBCs. When N. B. Bhandari had rebuffed the demand, some elected legislators of his own party had left the party (Sikkim Sangram Parishad) and formed Sikkim Democratic Front. He lost a motion of confidence and Sanchaman Limbu was elected as the new chief minister lasting till the remaining tenure of the fourth Assembly. Thereafter the Government of Sikkim included the ethnic groups like Bhujel, Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Rai, Tamang and Sunuwar in the list of OBC in 1994. Hereafter the government also included the above groups as MBCs in 2000 and the Chettri, Bahun, Newar and Sanyasi into OBCs in 2003.

In submitting their ethnographic reports to the Committee, the various ethnic associations expected to be included in the list of scheduled tribes. It must be mentioned that their inclusion into the list of scheduled tribes were mostly in the hope that they would be able to get a better share of the state resources through government jobs, contracts and other provisions that the government metes out mostly for scheduled tribes. In this context we must therefore understand the relative deprivation that these groups face vis-a-vis the Bhutias who not only enjoyed patronage under the monarchy but also were able to receive privileges accorded to scheduled tribes from 1979.³⁰¹ Thus in order to fight their exclusion they demanded OBC status which was granted in 1994 but after two communities from the Sikkimese of Nepali origin got enlisted as scheduled tribes they demanded that they also be included in the list of STs.

The Sinha Committee had recommended that the Rai, Yakkha and Sunuwar (Kiratis) along with the Magar, Gurung and Bhujel be included in the list of STs while Jogi were suited for inclusion under OBC. The Government of Sikkim sent the Sinha Committee report directly to the Central Government for considering the above communities for ST status. However, they did not discuss it in the state assembly nor make it public so that the general population could give their inputs.

³⁰¹ Tanka B. Subba, "Making Sikkim more inclusive: An Insider's view of the role of Committees and Commissions" in *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices* (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013), 141.

The report also mentions that since the “Kiratas (Rai, Yakkha and Sunuwar) are mentioned in the ancient texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Upanishads as Mongoloid people living in the eastern Himalayas they make the most suitable case to be included in the list of scheduled tribes.”³⁰² This seems very improbable that the mention of Kiratas in texts that are considered as ‘myths’ makes them most suitable to be included in the list of scheduled tribes. The report mentions that they practiced animism, were nature worshippers, spoke their own languages and practiced folk oral culture. We must consider such narratives as mainly ethnographic documentation. The Sinha Committee failed to consider the economic and administrative processes while making these recommendations and treated scheduling as an isolated act.

BURMAN COMMISSION

The Government of Sikkim without discussing it in the assembly send the Sinha Committee report to the Union government so that the listed communities could be included in the scheduled tribe list. However, without waiting for the reply of the Union Government they set up a Commission under the chairmanship of B. K. Roy Burman. It was officially called the ‘Commission for Review of Social and Environmental Sector Policies, Plans and Programmes’ (CRESP). Although the original term of reference for the Commission was to examine the current statutory status of the communities in Sikkim and make appropriate recommendations but on the insistence of the chairman the revised terms of reference included:

“Review of the constitutional status of the different castes and communities in Sikkim in historical, cultural-ecological and political-economic contexts and making appropriate recommendations. Review of the policies, plans and programmes in respect of the Scheduled Castes, Schedules Tribes, OBCs and other categories of population. Review of strengthening state plans for Human Development (SSPHD) for recommending measures for improvement in the quality of life of all sections of the population of Sikkim.”³⁰³

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESP” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),6.

The chairman insisted that it be constituted under the Commission of Inquiry Act so that they could obtain the information required from any department or any concerned person. This request was accepted by the Government of Sikkim. It officially started working on 1 December 2005. However on 27 December 2006 the commission was requested to look into the following supplementary terms of reference which were as follows:

- (1) Protection of 12 seats reserved for the Bhutia Lepcha communities in Sikkim Legislative Assembly;
- (2) Reservation of seats for Limboo and Tamang communities in Sikkim Legislative Assembly consequent upon the inclusion of these communities in the list of the scheduled tribes;
- (3) While Bahun, Chettri and Newar communities have already been declared as other backward classes under State Government notification they may be recommended for notification as other backward classes (OBC) in the Central list;
- (4) Recommendation of remaining ethnic communities like Kirat Khambu Rai, Gurung, Mangar, Sunuwar, Thami and Bhujel to be declared as scheduled tribes in Sikkim;
- (5) Recognition of Lepcha as the most primitive tribe;
- (6) Increase in the total number of seats in the State Legislative Assembly;
- (7) Setting up of a Central University in Sikkim.

REVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE BURMAN COMMISSION REPORT

The Burman report was submitted on 30 September 2008. The report has a lengthy introduction wherein it describes the terms of reference and also some of the context for the report while making various suggestions. The second chapter is titled 'physiography and sacred space and time' where the unique ecology of Sikkim with its bio-diversity hotspots, mountains and rivers tie up with the folklores, myths and legends of the people are discussed. The short chapter also discusses the fragile

landscape as Sikkim lies in a seismic zone IV as well as the cohabitation and intermingling of the Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist cultural form. It also argues how the method of food preparation, rituals are borrowed from each other and highlights the community festivals unique to each community that are celebrated.

The third chapter titled 'Political economy of migration and sex ratio in Sikkim' discusses the rapid growth in population that has taken place in Sikkim since the first census that was taken in 1891. The growth rate was highest in 1891-1901 which was recorded at 51.61%. It records that before 1888 the King of Sikkim was encouraging the migration of people from Nepal and others. It has also highlighted that throughout the 20th century (except 1981) in India as a whole the sex ratio (female per thousand male) has shown a declining trend in Sikkim the sex ratio has shown several ups and downs.

The fourth chapter is titled 'ethno-cultural profiles' and lists out the cultural profiles of the twenty ethnic communities that inhabit Sikkim. It lists out their main districts of settlements, migration history, stories of origin, social position, population figures, major groups, languages spoken, occupations, religions, community specific practices, birth, marriage and death rituals, etc.

The fifth chapter is titled 'socio-economic indicators' and it has consulted the socio-economic census data of the entire population of Sikkim carried out in 2006.³⁰⁴ The report has used certain features of the report for each community in Sikkim such as: (a) Distribution by religion, (b) educational level, (c) participation in working force (d) nature of work, (e) type of house by construction material, (f) number of rooms in the house, (g) type of latrine, (h) source of lighting, (i) source of energy for cooking, (j) monthly income range (k) purpose of taking loan, (i) source of loan (m) engagement in contract work.

³⁰⁴ The census was carried out by the Directorate of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation (DESME), Government of Sikkim in 2006 barring foreign nationals and inhabitants of military or paramilitary barracks and other areas specified by the army.

It also describes that the journey of Sikkim from feudal monarchy towards republican democracy has had the depth of just one generation. Thus, Sikkim economically can be described as managerial entity with a tinge of welfarism.

The sixth chapter is titled ‘ethnic entities, ethno-history and ethnic processes’ and lists out the definition of ethnic groups according to F.Barth (1970), Horowitz (2001) and Cohen (1996/2001). In the report definition of ethnic groups as what really “matters is people’s definition of themselves as culturally or physically distant from others” is given precedence.³⁰⁵ The report reiterates that the Sikkimese society can be described as a multi-ethnic segmented society and is not a multi-caste hierarchical society. It also mentions even those people who had converted to Christianity from these ethnic communities continue to members of their respective ethnic associations. Therefore, the report has argued that all the communities belonging to the Nepali group have the historical right to claim special treatment and that they have social structure attributes to be recognised as tribal people. The chapter also justifies the inclusion of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin in the list of scheduled tribes on the two grounds:

Need Right-It is argued that for these sections of the society to be brought at parity and equal footing with the more advantageous section especially the Bhutia who were specially privileged by the treaty of tripartite treaty of 1973.

Justice Right-The Bhutia along with the Lepcha have already been included in the list of scheduled tribes. The Tamang and the Limboo have also been included in the scheduled tribe list. Since the rest of indigenous population of Sikkim also possess the attributes associated with the scheduled tribes they have the justice right to be included in the list of scheduled tribes.³⁰⁶

The seventh chapter is titled ‘political and administrative processes’ and draws a genealogy of the political state apparatus in Sikkim. It provides an overview of the

³⁰⁵ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESF)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),267

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 274-275.

land holding system, taxes to be paid, monasteries, right of inheritance, categories of tenants and the struggle for political change in Sikkim over the past few decades.

The eight chapter is aptly titled ‘dialectics of reverse inequality in Sikkim’. This stimulating chapter traces the immense political and economic privileges that were enjoyed by the Bhutia-Lepcha communities due to which they have performed better in terms of socio-economic indicators. The State socio-economic census data has also shown the Bhutia while constituting only 13.02 percentage of the population of the State held 21.05% of the State government salaried jobs. Thus, there is a need to ensure that the ‘reverse inequality’ does not have an adverse consequence on the socio-political structure of Sikkim. However, the main argument of this chapter is that rescheduling Bhutia community from the list of scheduled tribes would be unwise for two main reasons. The first would be that there exists large differentiation within the Bhutia community and certain individuals of the Bhutia community may still be in need of the scheduling. The second reason is that with the absence of the Bhutia community there would no locals to contend with entrepreneurs from outside Sikkim. The report than lists out the list of class 1 contractors within the Energy and Power sector (2003-2005) and the names and the community they belong to. While the Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali could only bag about 20.74% of the contracts, the rest 79.26% contracts were bagged by outsiders who mostly belonged to North Indian families.³⁰⁷ Thus rescheduling the Bhutias who are the most advanced community in Sikkim would only give an impetus to the outsiders leading to more drainage of capital flows outside Sikkim.

The ninth chapter is titled ‘review of environmental and social sector policies, plans and programmes as prelude to promotional activity for the human development agenda.’ The chapter’s main argument is that when communities are conferred scheduled tribe status the financial costs required by the state exchequer must be examined. Therefore, before any committee makes fresh recommendations on the statutory status of communities it must ensure the appropriate conditions prevail in

³⁰⁷ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESF)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),303.

terms of environment, resource mobilisation and proactive role of the citizens in terms of taking decisions at the grass-root level.³⁰⁸

The tenth and last chapter is titled ‘recapitulation, amplification and recommendations’. This chapter points out the irrelevance of the criteria adopted by the Government of India for identifying scheduled tribes. The chairman prepared a paper and presented it to the Indian Anthropological Society which agreed to the functional approach of the chairman of CRESP. Following this the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India called the chairman for a discussion and also passed a revised tribal policy and accepted that terms such as ‘primitive and backward were pejorative.’

BURMAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Burman Commission has recommended that the entire Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali community of Sikkim be notified as scheduled tribes. In that case around eighty-five percent of the seats in the Legislative Assembly will be reserved for the scheduled tribes. They have provisioned that apart from the twelve seats that have been reserved for the Bhutia and Lepcha, people from these communities should be allowed to contest from the seats reserved for the scheduled tribes too. In the course of time if the Bhutia (including Sherpa) and the Lepcha can win sizeable number of seats they may ‘find it inviting to conquer their attachment to feudal legacies as in such cases their allure to the voters of the open constituencies will be heightened.’ Thus, they would gradually not feel the requirement of Bhutia-Lepcha reserved seats. This is what the Burman Committee report calls the ‘alternate pole of transcendence’.³⁰⁹

As with regard to the number of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly if the recommendation to recognise the entire indigenous population of Sikkim as scheduled tribes is accepted, about 85 percent of the people will be covered. For the 85 percent of the population out of the 17 seats which are left only 14 will be

³⁰⁸ Ibid,315.

³⁰⁹ By this they meant that not only could the Bhutia-Lepcha community contest from the seat reserved for them but also could contest from the seats that were to be reserved for the scheduled tribes as they were eligible to be included under both categories.

reserved. That would be illogical and unjust to the citizens of Sikkim. If only 14 seats are reserved for 85 percent of the population voter participation would be very difficult considering that certain constituencies would be unequally lopsided.

Further the general population constitute about 10 percent of the population and only two seats will be left for them. The report has mentioned that although they constitute 10 percent of the population they actually control major portion of the economy in certain areas.³¹⁰The State socio-economic census data shows that in the educational scenario they have performed better than the indigenous people of Sikkim. They also have bagged many governmental jobs and contracts and thus their economic clout is strong over many sectors.³¹¹In case they only have two seats reserved for them, they will need to persuade other representatives to present their case in the assembly if they are not adequately represented thus having undesirable consequences. Taking all of these factors into consideration the Burman commission had initially recommended that the seats be increased to fifty. However, considering that about 50 percent of the population would be eligible to vote there would be 6000 voters per constituency. The average number of electors in state Assembly electors are about 3,00,000 since 2004.³¹²The report has argued that having 6000 people per constituency was ineffectual and it could easily be turned into constituencies that would be under the sway of influential families or persons with economic clout. Thus, the commission have recommended that the number of seats in the State Assembly should be increased to about 40 seats.³¹³ The distribution of seats should be as follows:

Table 4.2: Burman Commission Recommended Seat Sharing

³¹⁰ B. K. Roy Burman, "Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESP)" *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),17.

³¹¹ *Ibid*,220.

³¹² Election Commission of India, New Delhi, "Statistical Report on General Election,2004 to the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim", (Accessed online May 10,2018), http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/StatisticalReports/SE_2004/StatisticalReports_SK_2004.pdf.

³¹³ B. K. Roy Burman, "Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESP)" *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008), 332.

COMMUNITY	NUMBER OF SEATS
Bhutia and Lepcha	12
Scheduled Tribe	20
Scheduled Caste	2
General	4
Sangha	2
Total	40

Source: B. K. Roy Burman, "Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRES)" *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),332.

SIKKIMESE BHUTIA LEPCHA APEX COMITTEE'S CONCERNS

The Sikkimese Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) has been working for ensuring that the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin get their due share in matters pertaining to Sikkim. They have expressed major differences with the Roy Burman Commissions' report. I list below the main criticism of SIBLAC of the report and attempt to deconstruct some of their expostulations:

One, the Committee has argued that due to his advanced age and unwillingness to travel to various parts of Sikkim his interaction was limited to Gangtok. While his social science credentials are sound, he did not have a familiarity with the history and the people of Sikkim nor was he an expert in the subject he was mandated.³¹⁴This argument can be repudiated because having a person from within Sikkim chairing the Commission could have led to allegation of partisanship being levelled later. Moreover, since it considers communities living in Sikkim in its entirety having a person from outside Sikkim as its chairman should be considered fair. A thorough reading of the report gives one the impression that although at the outset the chairman may not have familiarity with the history, culture and people of Sikkim by the time this report was submitted his thorough grasp of the issues perturbing Sikkim cannot be disputed.

³¹⁴ Report of the review Committee of Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) on Prof Roy Burman Committee's Report, *SIBLAC* (Accessed online May 24,2018),<http://www.siblac.org/report.html>.

Two, the inclusion of members of the cabinet in the committee are questioned as they are required to discuss, debate and examine the committee report once it was submitted to the cabinet after finalisation.³¹⁵This disapproval fails to consider that by being members of the committee they would have a good grasp and comprehension of the specificities and composition of the report by being involved with the preparation of the report and subsequently guide the discussion when the cabinet took it up for consideration.

Three, they have alleged that the members of the Commission were chosen to give validity to a pre-determined agenda.³¹⁶This contention cannot be verified and it would be more productive to look at the contents of the commission's report rather than the nominees in it. The allegation that the report was written under state patronage has also been dismissed by Ravindra K. Jain in his address at the ninth Professor M. N. Srinivas Memorial Lecture. He has countered this suggestion by asserting that the chairman has given a straightforward account of the state of affairs and conditions that were present when he took up the endeavour. Although it was a state sponsored mission there was a total commitment from the chairman towards his autonomy and integrity.³¹⁷

Four, it has been asserted that that the Commission did not seek wider consultations with the public and the members of the civil society.³¹⁸The committee in fact did meet the leaders of the different ethnic associations twice in May 2006 and October 2007 to discuss ethno-history and nature human relations. It also met the leaders of various political parties, Director of Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology and Professor A. C. Sinha among others. A representative of SIBLAC did meet the chairman (Roy Burman) and made available to him a booklet which

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ravindra K. Jain, "Diaspora, Trans-Nation and Nation: Reflections from India" *Sociological Bulletin* 59, no. 1 (2010): 15.

³¹⁸ Report of the review Committee of Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) on Prof Roy Burman Committee's Report, *SIBLAC* (Accessed online May 24,2018), <http://www.siblac.org/report.html>.

consisted of the memorandum that had been submitted to the Prime Minister. It must be admitted that the Commission could have wider discussions with the general public. Nonetheless apart from the ethnic associations the lack of civil society in Sikkim has already been pointed out by many academicians.

Five, the SIBLAC has insisted that they the Bhutia-Lepcha community must be given a proportionate increase in the seats reserved for their community in case of any expansion of the Legislative Assembly. They have maintained that this request has been purposefully ignored.³¹⁹ However the report actually fulfils this request under the structure of “pragmatic non-intervention and providing alternate pole of transcendence”³²⁰ whereby not only the continuation of 12 Bhutia-Lepcha seats are ensured but that they would be permitted to contest against the seats reserved for the scheduled tribe also. This method allows them to contest from more seats that they were previously eligible for. They can now contest from 32 seats as against the previous 12 seats. This solution in a way ensures that they can get elected to more seats as can they contest and win seats from outside the community based reserved seats. This seems to be a fair and logical solution rather than asking for more reserved seats in case of an expansion of Legislative Assembly

Six, the SIBLAC insinuates that it should be the Sikkimese people who should be bestowed the chance to decide their future themselves. While this argument is valid, it also must consider that in Sikkim there are already a plethora of groups asking for seats in the Legislative assembly; none of them are offering a workable formula. The Roy Burman report offers a viable solution that has ensured that the Bhutia-Lepchas seats are continued and also settles the demand of the other Sikkimese of the Nepali origin.

Thus, the concerns of the SIBLAC seem to stem from their attachments to feudal legacies. The SIBLAC has also reiterated that; “the Bhutia-Lepcha of Sikkim are the indigenous minorities of the State. Sikkim is not merely the land of their origin

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESP)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim (2008)*, 13-14.

but has been their homeland for centuries past from the time of their forefathers.³²¹This is the pure and simple reason why they have been repeatedly mentioned as ‘Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin’ in the historic May 8, 1973 Agreement and the subsequent Sikkim Act of 1974 approved by the Government of India.”³²²They have basically elevated the importance of the 1973 agreement as a central commitment and argued for the continuation of the feudal legacies. However most of their critique of the Commission seem to stem from their desire to block any change in the special provisions for the Bhutia-Lepcha and this reflects their attachment to primordial loyalties.

CRITIQUE OF THE TANKA B. SUBBA’S ARTICLE

In this section we will look the critique of the Burman Commission that has been offered by Tanka B. Subba. Since he was a member of the Sinha committee that submitted the report to the Government of Sikkim his analysis has offered an insider’s view on the various Committees and Commissions that were set up by the Government of Sikkim.³²³While he offers an extensive list of critique of the Burman Commission report, his list fails to consider that the Government of India itself does not have an official criterion for listing communities as scheduled tribe. While he does mention this crucial factor, his own admission comes in the conclusion of his chapter.³²⁴Therefore by his own admission the Government of India does not have an official criterion. Thus, for instance Brahmins in Himachal Pradesh have been listed as scheduled tribes. In Uttarakhand Brahmins and Rajputs have been listed as scheduled tribes. On closer observation many of Subba’s own critiques would also be liable to flounder.

³²¹ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESP)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim (2008)*,12.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Tanka B. Subba, “Making Sikkim more inclusive: An Insider’s view of the role of Committees and Commissions” in *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices* (New Delhi: Anthem Press,2013): 135.

³²⁴ Ibid.

One, his argument is that the commission has recommended that the entire “unified indigenous tribe including the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis be recommended as a secondary tribe with its social orbit coinciding with the territory of Sikkim. “His appraisal is that the report does not explain anywhere what is meant by a ‘secondary tribe’. Further he critiques that the report mentions that: ‘unified Sikkimese social entity can also be called a territorial tribe’. The report does not explain the concept of a ‘territorial tribe’.³²⁵

A good reading of the Burman Commission report defines secondary tribes as ones that are of recent origin and have come into existence due to the circumstances and functioning of the State as an institution.³²⁶ Roy Burman highlights one aspect of Fried’s argument that the creation of tribes is a secondary phenomenon which is related to the presence of the state system.³²⁷ Roy Burman provides the example of the Toto tribe in West Bengal which is a secondary outcome of the Bhutanese government’s enforcement of particular behavioural norms on war prisoners brought together from different ethnic groups. Thus, he sees the different ethnic interactions of the communities in Sikkim forming the bulwark of the Sikkim Citizen Regulation of 1961 which distinguished the Sikkimese Citizens as Sikkim Subject Certificate holders. The cascading effects of the Sikkim Subject regulation and the State’s socio-cultural policy has tended to create the indigenous Sikkimese as a secondary tribe. These various communities have carved a special category of themselves as Sikkim Subjects, due to the passing of the Sikkim Citizen Regulation of 1961. Furthermore they all have certain practices which are unique to the people living within the state. If one examines the political history, ethnic processes of the state then the multicultural

³²⁵ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESF)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),320.

³²⁶ Morton Fried has argued that there isn’t a requirement for tribal stage in the evolution of political organisation. Interestingly for Fried tribes are a secondary phenomenon that may be a product of processes prompted by the emergence of a relatively thoroughly organised society amidst other societies that are organised much more simply. See Morton Herbert Fried, *The Notion of Tribe* (California: Benjamin-Cummings Publishing Company,1975) and Morton Herbert Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society: An essay in Political Anthropology* Vol. 7 (California: Random House, 1967).

³²⁷ Sumit Guha, *Environment and ethnicity in India,1200-1991*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

blended socio-cultural entity has emerged which would validate the inclusion of the indigenous Sikkimese as a secondary tribe.

The definition of territorial tribe can be given as ‘communities which have developed compassionate value orientation who are found to be deeply embedded in their immediate natural surroundings.’³²⁸ Thus the indigenous Sikkimese entity can be categorised as a territorial tribe with its social orbit concurring with the territory of Sikkim. This feature is not an innovation for Sikkim. Example can be given of the indigenous inhabitants of the Himachal Pradesh where the indigenous Rajput (Kanet) on the one side and the untouchable Chamang and Damang on the other are notified as a single entity—the Kinnaura. Furthermore, the Chamang (Chamar) and the Damang (Dom) are also notified separately as scheduled caste. Thus, they are allowed to choose their status as either scheduled caste or as a scheduled tribe. Since this concept of territorial tribe is not new, it can also be applied to Sikkim.

Subba’s critique that the various ethnic groups of Sikkim are diverse in terms of language, culture and religion and therefore putting them under a single entity as secondary or territorial tribe fails to see the various factors that are common across these communities such as the lingua franca and community solidarity. Thus, the concept of indigenous Sikkimese as a territorial tribe who inhabit Sikkim stands justified as they prefer to identify themselves as Sikkimese especially outside the state.³²⁹ Furthermore this could be an attempt to stop the fragmentation of the various ethnic groups who have seen a revival of ethnicity. By bringing them under the umbrella term of indigenous inhabitants of Sikkim as a territorial tribe could be a possible step towards uniting the various ethnic associations. The concept of Sikkimese territorial tribe would also unite the different ethnic groups.

Two, Subba’s second critique questions why the Limbu and the Tamang were denied community-based reservation on grounds of ‘changed circumstances’. His

³²⁸ B. K. Roy Burman, “Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESF)” *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008), 320.

³²⁹ This was confirmed to the author by the feedback I received during my fieldwork. Many people argued that the term Newar sounded backward and rural and Sikkimese sounded progressive and pleasant to the ear.

argument is that; ‘changed circumstances’ have been left unaddressed.³³⁰This can be easily discerned as the report in its introduction has mentioned about the historical legacy of the seat sharing issue that had its genesis during the tripartite agreement in 1973, which was a compromise agreement due to geopolitical considerations. Furthermore, following the annexation of Sikkim, the Government of India had passed the Representation of People (Amendment) Bill, 1979 which provided for the electoral reservation of twelve seats to the Bhutia Lepcha on the basis of minority representation. This was further justified by the Supreme Court on the grounds that Sikkim was a border state that was going through a ‘transitional phase’ in its political journey from a feudal monarchy to a democratic state thereby justifying inequality and special treatment. Granting community-based reservation to the Limbu-Tamang would have to be made under provisions of Article 371(F) which provides that the Government of India could reserve seats for certain communities. However, if they were to be granted electoral reservation of seats on the virtue of being listed as scheduled tribe that would have to be granted under Article 332 of the Indian Constitution which provides for electoral reservation for scheduled tribes. Till today there are no provisions of reserved seats for scheduled tribes in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Any changes to the seat sharing issue of the Assembly would lead to further changes in terms of representation of other communities who would argue that the majority have less representation than the minority. It would change the dynamics of representation within Sikkim with the Bhutia Lepcha getting perturbed and the Nepali community getting even more disenfranchised. Many people in Sikkim have also argued that the Limbu and Tamang should be given seats from the 12 seats of the Bhutia Lepcha and that the General seats for the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin should not be touched. Therefore, foreseeing how complicated and unsettling it would be to grant Limbu and Tamang seats without considering the effects of it on the larger seat sharing issue the Burman Commission had to deny Limbu and Tamang community based electoral reservation.

³³⁰ Tanka B. Subba, “Making Sikkim more inclusive: An Insider’s view of the role of Committees and Commissions” in *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices* (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013):140.

Three, the Burman report cautions that before recommending to include the ‘unified indigenous Sikkimese’ in the ST list an assessment should be made of its impact within Sikkim, other states of India and neighbouring countries. Since people belonging to the Nepali constellation of communities live across the various states in India but a significant number of them live in Dehradun (Uttarakhand), Darjeeling (West Bengal), Assam and pockets of north-east. Subba’s reproval is that no such assessment was made before recommending all ‘unified indigenous Sikkimese’ as STs. While this criticism is valid, the Government of Sikkim has maintained that it has looked into the likely impact of including the ‘unified indigenous Sikkimese’ and is ready for commencing structural and administrative changes that are required. The recent notification by the Government of West Bengal has also recommended the inclusion of the various Nepali communities inhabiting Darjeeling to be included in the list of STs.

Furthermore, Subba questions whether it was ethical to recommend all the communities for the list of STs when only seven of the eighteen communities had demanded this. While the other groups had not demanded ST status all of the other communities had been demanding either be included in the OBC central status in the central list or STs. It cannot be denied that once the Limbu and Tamang were included in the list of STs other communities have also demanded that they be included in the same list.³³¹ They have formed various ethnic associations, made petitions and submitted memorandums to the Burman Commission. Furthermore, since enlisting is a matter of state policy, the Commission felt that the other communities had a right to be enlisted the basis of the ethno-cultural, social and economic profiles. Therefore, Subba’s questioning seems to again misunderstand the point that scheduling is a matter of State policy. While the Bhutia community have raised apprehensions, their concerns were more for safeguarding their own interests, entrenching their status as the most advanced community in Sikkim. The other communities in Sikkim have both a need right and justice right to be included in the list of STs vis-a-vis the Bhutia Lepchas.

³³¹ Sara Schneiderman and Mark Turin, “Seeking the tribe: ethno-politics in Darjeeling and Sikkim,” *Himal South Asian* 19, no. 2 (2006): 54.

Four, he questions the report which recommends that all the ‘indigenous Sikkimese’ be included in the list of STs without examining the financial carrying capacity of the state. The report has therefore submitted that the Government of Sikkim carry out a drive to ascertain the financial carrying capacity of the state. This critique is a valid point that should have been done by the Burman Commission.

Subba also argues that there is no rationale for providing ST status to the socially and economically powerful groups like Bahuns, Chettris and Newars. Firstly, there are no official consistent policies of the Government of India regarding enlisting communities as STs. Secondly going by his argument, it can be ascertained that only social and economic criteria should be the two factors that should decide which communities get included in the list of scheduled tribes. By this rationale the Bhutias should definitely be delisted as they have not only enjoyed political patronage under the Bhutia monarch but also hold a dominant position in government jobs and contracts. Not only the Bhutias, the Rai community who form the largest group in Sikkim with about 80,000 people should also be delisted as they have allegedly received huge support from the Chief Minister himself who belongs to the same community.³³² Thirdly the Chettri, Bahuns and Newars are not a monolithic community. During the course of my field work (which will be discussed in my fourth chapter) while there were some opulent Newars that I came across there were also some Newars that were not that financially stable.

Five, he argues that the commission has recommended that all the ‘indigenous Sikkimese’ be extended the status of STs. The Burman commission has recommended that a 40 member state legislative assembly with the following arrangement of reserved seats: Lepcha and Bhutia (12), Scheduled Tribe (20), Scheduled Caste (2), General (4) and *Sangha* (2). Subba’s critique is that this doesn't make sense if all indigenous Sikkimese are to be included in the list of scheduled tribes as

³³² These allegations have been made by an ex-bureaucrat who served as the additional principle secretary to the Chief Minister. See Sonam Wangdi, *The destruction of Sikkim* (Gangtok: Baba Offset Press Works Private Limited, 2015), 212.

recommended by the Burman Commission.³³³As has already been argued, the Lepcha and Bhutia have been given reservation of seats as a protectionary measure and also been entitled to contest from the seats that are reserved for the scheduled tribes. It is hoped that in the future they would contest from the scheduled tribe seats and lose their feudal attachments and that their appeal to the larger constituents would be augmented. Regarding the scheduled caste this same provision would apply as they could also contest the seats reserved under scheduled tribe as they were categorised under territorial tribe and were given the option of contesting from either scheduled caste or tribal seats. The general seats were left for the other communities in Sikkim and the *Sangha* seat was increased to ensure that other monasteries would also be included in the Sangha electoral roll that belonged to the Tamang also. Previously only monasteries that were associated with the Bhutia and the Lepcha were allowed representation in the Sangha. However, the report recommends that that the two seats be reserved for all monasteries irrespective of the ethnic association.³³⁴

POST BURMAN COMMISSION SITUATION

After the submission of the Burman Report the report was passed by the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and sent to the Union Government for consideration. The chief minister of Sikkim Pawan Chambling has been unequivocal about his support for implementing the recommendations of the Burman Commission. However, it is the Union Government which has treaded carefully and made several overtures to the different associations that have approached it.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India had given 3 options vide Letter No-D.O. No IV/11015/1/2015-CSR II dated 30 July to the Government of Sikkim. The first solution was to reserve 5 seats from the existing 17 General seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for the Limbu and Tamang on the consideration that they had been included in the list of STs. The second solution was to increase the

³³³ Tanka B. Subba, "Making Sikkim more inclusive: An Insider's view of the role of Committees and Commissions" in *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices* (New Delhi: Anthem Press,2013): 145.

³³⁴ B. K. Roy Burman, "Human ecology and statutory status of ethnic entities in Sikkim (Report of the CRESPP)" *Gangtok: Government of Sikkim* (2008),333.

Sikkim Legislative seats from the existing 32 to 40 seats and give reservation to the Limbu-Tamang community leaving the 20 seats as unreserved.

The third solution was to increase the seats in the assembly from the current 32 to 60 seats in conformity with Article 171(1) of the Indian constitution.³³⁵The Government of Sikkim chose to go with the second option. However, it must be mentioned that Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly seats have been frozen till 2026 vide the 84th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2002. The next census-based delimitation is expected only in 2031, therefore any solution to the Sikkim assembly seats before the next state elections of 2019 look distant.

In a meeting held under the guidance of Ministry of Home Affairs on 23 April, 2016 on the suggested reservation of seats by the Government of Sikkim in the event of an increase in the number of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly was analysed with reference to the population figures of Sikkim as per census 2001 as follows:³³⁶

Table 4.3: Proposed seat sharing by the Union Government of India

Serial Number	Community	Proposed Number of Seats	Existing number of seats	Population as Per RGI Census 2011 Population	Percentage of Total Population	Number of Seats on Population Basis
1	Bhutia-Lepcha	12	12	1,12,507	18.43	7
2	L i m b u - Tamang	5	-	91,399	14.97	6
3	Sangha	1	1	-	-	1
4	S c h e d u l e Caste	2	2	28,275	4.63	2
5	O t h e r Communities	20	17	3,78,396	61.97	24
	Total	40	32	6,10,577	100	40

³³⁵ Article 171(1) states that the composition of the Legislative Councils will be: “The total number of members in the Legislative Council of a State having such a Council shall not exceed one-third of the total number of members in the Legislative Assembly of that State: Provided that the total number of members in the Legislative Council of a State shall in no case be less than forty.”

³³⁶ Ministry of Home Affairs (N/E-II) Record of Discussion (ROD) of the meeting held under the chairmanship of Shri Mahesh Kumar Singla, Special Secretary (IAS), MHA on 23 April 2016 at 4: 30P.M at New Delhi.

Source: Union Ministry of Home Affairs: (N/E-II) Record of Discussion (ROD) of the meeting held under the chairmanship of Shri Mahesh Kumar Singla, Special Secretary (IAS), MHA on 23 April 2016 at 4:30p.m. at New Delhi.

It must be mentioned that the Limbu-Tamang Voluntary Committee (LTVC) has strongly demanded that the State government withdraw the Burman Commission report as they contend that it creates hurdles for their Limbu Tamang seats. They argue that a solution to the seat sharing impasse is more feasible under the current 32 seats. The State government of Sikkim has asserted to the Union Government that since Sikkim is under the special provision of Article 371(F), this distinguished it from other states. Therefore Article 170 which deals with the Delimitation Commission should not be applied to it.³³⁷The Ministry for Law and Justice has also accepted that while the final order of the Delimitation Commission could not have been challenged by any court the unique special provision for Sikkim would allow the state to make the necessary changes.

It has thus been proposed that the number of seats number of seats in the Sikkim legislative Assembly should be increased from 32 to 40. This proposal has come after the Supreme Court directed the Home Ministry to ensure the Limbu and Tamang who inspite of being enlisted as scheduled tribe have not been given reserved seats in the Sikkim Assembly. They have thus directed the Ministry of Law and Justice to amend the Representation of People Act, 1951 and “that in case of a seat reserved for Limboo and Tamang tribe, he is to be a member of Limboo and Tamang tribe specified in the Representation of Sikkim Subjects Act, 1974 and elector or an assembly constituency in the State.”³³⁸

One must consider whether this directive of the Supreme Court is a provision for the community-based reservation for Limbu-Tamang under article 371(F) or is the seat reserved for Scheduled Tribe under article 332 of the Indian Constitution. If in the future any other community were to be included in the list of STs will they be allowed to contest from the seats reserved for the scheduled tribes or the seats which

³³⁷ Vijata Singh, “More seats for Sikkim Assembly,” *The Hindu*, (Accessed online May 10, 2018), <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/more-seats-for-Sikkim-assembly/article20724838.ece>.

³³⁸ Ibid.

have been called as reserved for the Limbu and Tamang. The Limbu-Tamang inspired by the privileges allotted to the Bhutia-Lepcha have argued that the Limbu-Tamang seats should not be merged with any new community that gets enlisted as scheduled tribe in future. They have reiterated that any move to club Limbu Tamang with the communities that may be enlisted as scheduled tribes would be opposed by the Limbu Tamang communities. Thus, they also seem to demand community-based reservation of seats akin to the Bhutia-Lepcha electoral reservation under clause [f] Article 371(F).

Since the Central Government of India nor the federal states have any consistent policy of its own regarding the inclusion of an ethnic group in the list of STs the issue has become even more obscure.³³⁹ When the Sherpas and the Tamangs were included in the list of STs there was no rationale for not including the Buddhist Gurung. When the Limbus were included in the list, there was no excuse for denying the Rais, Yakkhas and Sunuwars. Furthermore the development analysis and policy makers are also not particularly concerned with inequality per se, but what is referred to as horizontal inequality wherein injustice and partiality that if disregarded and neglected for too long, can be a potential cause for civil strife and altercation.³⁴⁰

Ultimately even the political contingencies cannot be neglected. In the run up to the 2014 national election the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) Prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi promised to include the 11 left out Nepali communities in the list of scheduled tribes. The Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Bannerjee has written to the Tribal affairs Minister Jual Oriam requesting that the 11 communities be included in the list of scheduled tribes. She wrote that the Cultural Research Institute of Calcutta conducted ethnographic studies of all the eleven communities and found that these communities possess distinctive characters found among the tribal communities and suggested that said communities may be considered as scheduled

³³⁹ Tanka B. Subba, "Making Sikkim more inclusive: An Insider's view of the role of Committees and Commissions" in *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices* (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013): 141.

³⁴⁰ Frances Stewart, "Horizontal inequalities: A neglected dimension of development" in *Wider Perspectives on Global Development, Studies in Development Economics and Policy*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

tribes.³⁴¹This could have been overtures by the former political leader to win the Darjeeling Parliamentary Assembly seat for his party which it did. Regarding the latter, apart from the development boards for the various ethnic communities of Darjeeling, enlisting them as STs would give her huge political mileage in the run up to the upcoming elections locally and nationally.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has however objected to the move to enlist the remaining indigenous communities of Sikkim like the “Chhetri, Sanyasi, Newar, Kirat Khambu Rai, Thami, Sunuwar, Dewan, Gurung, Mangar and Bhujel arguing that they did not satisfy the criteria to be enlisted for Scheduled Tribes.”³⁴²What exactly are the criteria is yet to be ascertained and the lopsided implementation has already led to many criticisms. No two tribal groups in different states would have the same characteristics of features. Thus, the issue of enlisting the communities as STs remains in a quagmire that only political leaders with a determined agenda can resolve. Furthermore, the seat sharing issue also remains in limbo considering that Sikkim is preparing to conduct the next assembly elections in 2019 with the seat sharing issue evading any possible solution.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that India’s constitution has provided for special constitutional provisions for the state of Sikkim. This supports the argument that asymmetry in the constitutional provisions provided to particular states has been a significant factor which facilitates the entry of new states (Article 2) into the Indian union. The special constitutional provisions for these states have been a key enabler when the Indian Union ‘absorbs a new state’. Thus, skewness in the constitution in powers granted to such states has contributed to ‘holding India’ together by ensuring that the absorbed state receives unique provisions without which the integration would have been tumultuous and rocky.

³⁴¹ Letter addressed to Shri Jual Oram, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Government of India. No 266-CM/2018 dated February 16,2018 by the Chief minister of West Bengal, Mamata Bannerjee.

³⁴² Vijata Singh, “More seats for Sikkim Assembly,” *The Hindu*, (Accessed online May 15, 2018), <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/more-seats-for-Sikkim-assembly/article20724838.ece>.

This special unique provisions under Article 371(F) allowed the state of Sikkim to make the provision for community-based reservations and religious based representation which were violative of certain provisions of the Indian constitution. Thus, Sikkim's unique position vis-a-vis other states was entrenched with the passing of Article 371(F) which not only facilitated its entry into the union of India but also provisioned for the continuation of old laws in Sikkim. This unique feature was further confirmed by the Supreme Court in the *RC Poudyal Vs the Union of India*. The judgement read that since Sikkim is going through a 'transitional phase' in its political evolution from a feudal monarchy to a constitutional democracy, historical conditions justified inequality and special provisions. Thus, this transitional phase allowed the continuation of community-based reservation even though it ensured the entrenchment of ethnic identities. The Supreme Court's ruling on upholding asymmetrical provisions has also been discussed. In this transition phase there exists both a pull towards feudal elements and a push towards constitutional equality and universal claims of representation between different segments of the Sikkimese population. While certain asymmetrical powers have been provided to Sikkim in the Constitution which has facilitated the entry of this new state it has during this process also institutionalised and politicised ethnic differences in the state of Sikkim. In other words, the special provisions have entrenched the institutionalised ethnic differences in Sikkim.

The Government of India does not have official criteria for the inclusion of communities in the list of scheduled tribes. Example can be given of Brahmins in Himachal Pradesh being included in the list of scheduled tribes. By recommending the inclusion of the indigenous Sikkimese communities under the list of scheduled tribes as a territorial tribe the Burman Commission's recommendation seeks to ensure that the representation in Sikkim would move more towards the provision of Article 332 which provides for reservation for scheduled tribes and away from Article 371(F) which permits community based electoral reservation. It also hoped that in the future the Sikkimese themselves would come together and agree to a common platform to resolve this issue.

This chapter has also shown that while political equality of one man one vote may have been established the principle of one vote one value is still elusive. Thus, political equality between different states, citizens of different states, and even citizens of a state can be contested. The concept of political equality underlying a democratic system is a political value. Political equality in many ways still remains as an ideal.

While the Burman Commission did ask the people their views, apprehensions and so forth, the commission could have been more democratic in its workings. However the wisdom of B. K. Roy Burman who passed away in 2012³⁴³ will have a lasting impact on any decision that is taken on the seat sharing issue. Thus, any solution to this impasse can be only pro-Burman and anti-Burman in the future. Any solution must however seriously engage with the Burman Commission report if it is to do justice to the Sikkimese people. While the founding fathers and mothers envisaged Article 2 keeping in mind the entry of new territory into the union of India the leeway that was given to the Parliament has ensured the smooth entry of Sikkim into the Indian union. However, these special provision for Sikkim are in conflict with fundamental articles of the Indian constitution. Any changes therefore to the status quo in Sikkim would perhaps bring upheavals for the young Indian nation even as it progresses in its discovery of itself.

³⁴³ Special Correspondent, "Roy Burman passes away," *The Hindu*, (Accessed online May 15, 2018), <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/roy-burman-passes-away/article3573771.ece>.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL INCUMBENCY OF SIKKIM DEMOCRATIC FRONT A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

The field of my research was mainly in three major areas which were Sombarey and Soreong (west Sikkim) and Gangtok (east Sikkim) which is also the state capital of Sikkim. The method that I used was mostly interviews and observation. The duration of my field work was about fifteen days in Sikkim during the month of April 2018. I had the opportunity to talk to many individuals such as a government contractor who had served as a former member of the Gram Panchayat, an unemployed women, former additional district magistrate (bureaucrat), convener of the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (former Minister, Government of Sikkim), government school teachers, party members of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), Asha workers, school Principal of the Soreong higher secondary school, a Limbu shaman, a receptionist in a hotel in Gangtok along with many other people that I came across. I also had the opportunity to listen to a public speech delivered by the Chief Minister of Sikkim Pawan Kumar Chambling who gave a five-hour speech in Soreong Public ground.



Source: People walk over this wooden bridge to cross over the West Bengal-Sikkim border.
Photo by author, dated 10/4/2018.

I

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter aims to discern the paramountcy of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) that has constituted the government in Sikkim for the last 24 years. Sikkim joined the Indian union (1975) because the people aspired to abolish feudal monarchy and reside under a democratic system. However, the political incumbency has meant that there is no space given to conflicting and dissenting voices. Only when people are at liberty to criticise the government without fear of repercussions can people genuinely profess that they live in a democratic state. The chapter also aims to comprehend 'organic farming' in Sikkim as an unconventional policy that would strive to enlarge the returns for the farmers and in its second phase provide jobs to the unemployed youth in marketing and packaging 'organic produce'. Sikkim intends and endeavours to become an organic powerhouse that exports 'organic produce' to the different markets in India and abroad. This chapter also aims to understand the managerial state in Sikkim that governs with a tinge of welfarism.

HYDEL PROJECTS

Sikkim cuts across from Rimbick (Lodhoma), a small village in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal by a river³⁴⁴ which can be crossed over by walking through a bamboo bridge. Just at the border crossing large scale construction for building a power project was ongoing. The author was informed that it was a joint venture between the Government of West Bengal and the Government of Sikkim. The destruction of forest cover for the construction of the road that would connect the two states was thoroughly observable. The roads being constructed and the bridge that had already been completed would abate the distress for a great number of people who used the bamboo bridge to cross over for various transactions and social activities.

³⁴⁴ This river swells up during the monsoon season.

I was informed that the hundred-day strike in Darjeeling in 2017 had put a halt to the construction and when the monsoons arrived the river had capsized and swept away all the machines and equipment being availed for the completion of the power project. Construction was just slowly picking up after the strike and the onslaught of monsoons. It must be recalled that dams and power projects have also been hugely controversial in Sikkim.

The state government has set up the “Sikkim Power Development Corporate (SDPC) to tap into the state’s hydropower which has been estimated to be around 8,000 MW.”³⁴⁵Total hydro power potential in the state so far is 5352.7 MW and they are in different phases of implementation. The State power policy delineates that the independent power projects will have to provide employment to the locals as well as create local business opportunities. That there is a power scarcity in this country is well known and the opportunity to earn revenues through the sale of power to the power-starved northern grid of India would not be missed by the Government in Sikkim. Therefore, they have allocated about 35 Hydel power projects over a 175 km stretch of the Teesta river.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ “Energy and Power Department,” Government of Sikkim (Accessed online 26 June 2018), <https://www.sikkim.gov.in/portal/portal/StatePortal/Department/EnergyAndPowerDepartment>.

³⁴⁶ These large-scale constructions, which have seen a phenomenal growth since the year 1994, have been ecologically and economically controversial as they have the potential to dislodge many indigenous Lepchas, especially in North Sikkim. Many of the people have and are vociferously denying permission for the takeover of their land. The planners of these projects have not taken into consideration the social, cultural and the livelihood threat to the affected people who are left at the mercy of the private companies who operate with a single profit motive. For more details see: Affected citizens of Teesta (ACT), “Striving to save Sikkim”, (Accessed online 20 June 2018), www.actsikkim.com.



Source: Construction of a hydroelectricity project at the Sikkim-Bengal border. Photo by author at the West Bengal-Sikkim border, dated 10/4/2018.

There have been many protests about the destruction and displacement of the locals and the Government of Sikkim have shelved projects in certain areas following the local protests.³⁴⁷ Interestingly the author was informed that the Government of Sikkim was not only constructing the road on the Sikkim side but also on the side that falls under West Bengal territory. This fact coincided with the arguments in the third chapter of how Sikkim has the presence of a strong state and the nearby regions have been neglected by their respective Government. Sikkim's yearly budget of over 7,000 crores for a population of just over 6 lakh people had facilitated the presence of a strong state.³⁴⁸ The presence of a managerial state that had provisioned welfare benefits for the people could only have been workable with the inflow of the massive amount of money from the central government.

³⁴⁷ Vibha Arora, "Unheard voices of protest in Sikkim," *Economic and political weekly* (2007): 3451-3454.

³⁴⁸ "CM presented the general budget of Sikkim for the Financial year of 2018-2019," *The voice of Sikkim*, (Accessed online June 1, 2018), <https://voiceofsikkim.com/2018/03/06/cm-presented-general-budget-of-sikkim-for-the-fy-2018-19/>.



Source: A board detailing the work of a contract in Sombarey. Photo by author, dated 16/4/2018.

By crossing over to Sikkim one cannot discern that they have entered a new state. Borders are artificial barriers created by administrators and Darjeeling historically belonged to Sikkim.³⁴⁹Therefore the flora and fauna, the geography and the climate hardly changes as one proceeds from Darjeeling to Sikkim. The resemblance of the language that people speak and the houses across both sides of the border are hard to miss. Although as we moved more inside Sikkim I began to discern the subtle differences. On further careful observation the roads in Sikkim were well constructed with no potholes unlike on the other side of the river.

ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION AND NEPOTISM

Numerous people in Sikkim alleged that corruption was a major problem in Sikkim. They professed that whenever people sat for an interview for a government job there was corruption and nepotism at the appointment level. Many even indicated that most of the appointments were already predetermined. A good deal of people also

³⁴⁹ While the British leased the Darjeeling hills from the monarch of Sikkim, while leaving they should have returned it to the rightful owners. However, this never happened and Darjeeling had been subsumed under West Bengal.

alleged that despite teaching at a government school for the last couple of years in an ad-hoc position on the hopes for a permanent posting many had not been regularised.

Some people also declared that even when governmental contracts were awarded they were fixed by bribing higher officials. While the notifications came out after the tendering process, the awarding had already been predetermined. Unemployment in the state was present and was increasing daily. The Government of Sikkim had segregated the tenders so that co-operative associations could be given a chance for bagging some projects in view of the unemployment amongst the youth. However most of the contracts and the tenders meant for co-operative associations were also bagged by people that were living in Gangtok and had political clout and financial nexus with the politicians. This nexus thus further retrenched the unemployment amongst the youth who did not possess any jobs to provide for their family.

LACK OF DEMOCRACY

One of the recurring themes that was pointed out by a large number of individuals during the course of my field work was the lack of democracy in Sikkim. Many pointed out the irony of Sikkim merging with India in 1975 because the people aspired to eliminate feudal monarchy and reside under a democratic system. A democratic rule of governance they reasoned must give space to opposition and dissenting voices. A democracy must also allow people to criticise the government and its policies. Only when people were free to criticise the government without fear of repercussions can people genuinely profess that they live in a democratic state.

Since the chief minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling has become the longest serving chief minister of an Indian State serving for over 24 years his party the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has also become entrenched in the lives of the people.³⁵⁰ Thus the incumbency factor weighed in heavily to the extent that people were afraid of criticising the policies of the government or the SDF party fearing

³⁵⁰ Ratnadip Choudhary, "Sikkim's Pawan Chamling becomes India's longest serving chief minister" (Accessed online June 1, 2018), <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/sikkims-pawan-chamling-becomes-indias-longest-serving-chief-minister-1844616>.

certain repercussions. During the course of my field work people mentioned that expressing anything against the government or the Sikkim Democratic Front leads to them being labelled as '*virodhi*' (opposition). The term *virodhi* is a strong term in the Nepali language for not only does it signify the opposition but also being labelled as *virodhi* could mean social repercussions and indirect social ostracisation. Once the person was labelled *virodhi* that label would stick with them as a marker of their opposition to the dominant party rule. Therefore, even if they were to offer constructive criticism of any workings of the panchayat or the policies of the state officials it would be seen as a confirmation to their opposition of the Sikkim Democratic Front.

Since the Sikkimese society is considerably communitarian and less individualistic no person would willingly choose to anger the majority of the society members who are supporters of the Sikkim Democratic Front. Thus, the State has penetrated the lives of the people through its powerful position and its widespread acceptance and popularity amongst the community. Therefore, this power and hegemonic position enjoyed by the party has assured its penetration of the society and its members. Since most of the people in rural Sikkim have family members who either are a member of the SDF or supporters of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) any person criticising the works of the government would either be silenced or if the person is of social standing would be indirectly ostracised. Either way the dominance enjoyed by the State through the hegemony of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) in the rural areas has meant that the advent of opposition is nipped in the emerging stage itself. Over seventy five percent of the people in Sikkim live in rural areas and they form the bulwark of the SDF supporters.



Source: The party flag of Sikkim Democratic Front flutters above a house in Somabarey. Photo by author, dated 14/4/2018.

Since Sikkim has had either a non-existent or a weak opposition the term that is used *virodhi* for detractors is full of political connotations. If a government school teacher or government employee spoke out against the government they would be transferred out of the locality. Such transfers were seen as a punishment because they would be transferred to the sparsely populated and underdeveloped northern regions

of Sikkim where the weather conditions are extremely harsh especially during winters. Thus, even when the people had genuine points of criticism they were afraid of speaking out. If the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) chose a candidate as the party nominee all the inhabitants of the constituency had to work towards ensuring the nominee's victory. There was no question of speaking against the candidate or critiquing the choice. The people expressed that although the people were aware of the norm of speaking against injustice they did not want to face the repercussions of their actions. The local members of Sikkim Legislative Assembly were also very powerful. Therefore, political affiliation and being active members of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) mattered if one were to access the state resources, contracts, government jobs and other benefits.

LIMBU TAMANG SEATS

Following the expulsion of the leader of the opposition in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly P. S. Golay there was no Tamang representative in the current assembly. P. S. Golay was convicted of corruption during his previous tenure as a minister and had subsequently been jailed.³⁵¹ Formerly a minister under the Sikkim Democratic Front government his infamous picnic with some members of the bureaucracy and party members has led to his expulsion from the SDF. Following his conviction, the rest of the MLA's belonging to his party had switched over to the Sikkim Democratic Front from his party 'Sikkim Krantikari Morcha'. Some people alleged that that on the promise of funds they had switched over to the Sikkim Democratic Front. A certain section of the people has approached the high court of Sikkim to challenge this defection. Thus, the *Sangha* MLA is the lone opposition member in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. While most of the people were unwilling to talk of the seats for the Limbu Tamang, some of the party supporters of SDF informed the author that they believed in the promises of Pawan Chamling and were hopeful of an early resolution in the matter.

II

³⁵¹ Nirmal Mangar, "Golay gets jail in cattle case," *The Hindu* (Accessed online 24 June 2018), https://www.telegraphindia.com/1161229/jsp/siliguri/story_127311.jsp.

ORGANIC FARMING IN SIKKIM

Sikkim had been declared as an organic state by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a visit to Sikkim in 2016. During the initial periods of organic farming, land productivity decreases due to the withdrawal and stoppage of fertiliser usage. Thus, many farmers complained that they had been suffering losses. While the government had assured the farmers in the villages that their fruits and vegetables would be taken to the cities and towns in government public vehicles this facility had not been commenced yet. During the course of my field work there was a raging controversy because the government of Sikkim had decided to ban the import of fruits and vegetables from Siliguri (West Bengal) leading to skyrocketing of prices and protest from traders. Although the initial ban covered all fruits and vegetables, the Government of Sikkim lifted the sanctions and permitted onion, tomato, carrot and garlic.³⁵² Since Sikkim had already been declared as an organic state they needed to effectively implement the organic mission, thus necessitating this ban. While organic farming was championed as an ecological conservative step in the fragile Himalayas, it has been initiated keeping in mind the economic benefits of producing organic fruits and vegetables. However, some of the people professed that even though Sikkim had been declared as an organic state the Government had not provided supplementary loans to the farmers to increase their produce and subsequently earn more profits. Many farmers also complained that not only has their produce decreased but that the government has not come forward to boost marketing of the organic produce.

³⁵² "Day 04, Sikkim Non-Organic ban trend," *Voice of Sikkim* (Accessed online 23 June 2018), <https://voiceofsikkim.com/2018/04/05/day-04-sikkim-non-organic-ban-trend/>.



Source: Organic produce being sold at the local market in Sombarey. Photo by author, dated 15/4/2018.

CHIEF MINISTER'S 32 DAYS SIKKIM TOUR

Every year the chief minister goes on a 32 days tour of the Sikkim which is known as the '*Jan Sampark Abhiyan*' wherein he meets to people at the grassroots level. During this tour he makes a speech at the public grounds of every constituency in Sikkim. Towards the evening he hears the grievances of the people firsthand and people submit their grievances, letters and petitions. As there are too many people who want an audience with the chief minister over the years he has suggested that

principally sick people should come and visit him. However, this year as I was conducting my field work many people who were not sick also went to visit him when he visited the Daramadin constituency. Usually people who are sick are given funds by the chief minister for their medical treatment. I had the opportunity to hear a speech of the chief minister in Somabarey public ground. Apart from his excellent oratory skills in Nepali and his visionary outlook I list below major themes that he discussed during his speech which lasted over five hours. The chief minister surprisingly did not seem tired but continued his speech with the same passion and intensity through weather of sunshine, heavy rain and light fog. Here are some major themes that he discussed during his marathon speech:

ORGANIC FARMING

Pawan Chambling lauded the farmers for helping make Sikkim the first organic state in India and the world. The principle goal of organic farming was to make farmers who earn their livelihood from agriculture prosperous and happy. Organic produce has a huge demand not just in India but across the world. Thus, by exporting their produce throughout the world farming would again become profitable. Organic products of Sikkim like fruits, vegetables and milk would get sold like hot cakes. Since there are no other state to compete with Sikkim, organic products would be the monopoly of the state who could sell it across India. Under this monopolistic market they could determine the price and earn huge surplus. He thus urged the farmers to grab this huge opportunity before them.

All that the farmers had to do was to work in their farms and produce organic fruits and vegetables. He promised the farmers that they would soon become the richest people in the village. He repudiated that the salaried individuals are not the prosperous individuals as they get their wages only once a month which they have to spend on loan repayment, rations and other expenditures. Unlike them the organic farmers would not have to wait for a month for getting their income. They could sell their 'organic produce everyday' and earning daily was better than earning once a month. Moreover, if the farmers prospered they could give employment to the other local people.

ORGANIC FARMING: SCHEME OF GENERATING EMPLOYMENT



Source: An old lady sells cabbages, spinach and coriander leaves in the *haat* (weekly bazaar) in Sombarey. Photo by author dated 17/4/2018.

Pawan Chambling declared that while the youth sought jobs they needed to orient their education towards getting the jobs in particular areas and industry. He listed out the areas that provided plenty of opportunities for employment: medical field, engineering, dental, health technician, app developer, Information Technology, BSE Nursing, physical therapist, market research analysts, speech language, pathologist, etc. Claiming that in the era of capitalism artificial intelligence and machines were becoming increasingly advanced and replacing the need for humans, he urged the students to evolve and hone their skills to compete in the fast-changing world.

The chief minister also reiterated the importance of not neglecting agriculture. He stipulated that it would continue until human beings were present on earth. Thus, he emphasised the need of not looking down or neglecting agriculture. Dignity of labour should be respected. As many of the youth were getting educated there was a pattern of not going back to farming as a source of livelihood. The chief minister

argued that there was no superior occupation in the world. He urged the people to respect every occupation in the world. He announced that eking a living by lying, cheating people or doing illegal work was disgraceful. Farming on the other hand was a dignified work.

He formulated that two things were constantly increasing. One was the universe as discovered and affirmed by many scientists. The other was man's wants formulated by himself. Thus, human beings would want things even when they were nonagenarians. He argued that for people the following aphorism applied: "Jab samma saas, tab samma aas" which can be translated as "till there is breath, there is wants." Proclaiming that man's wants are never satisfied he urged the people to stop grumbling and being angry. He compared the current situation of Sikkim to that of the state twenty-four years ago, when the opposition parties ruled. The difference in the situation in Sikkim was staggering compared to the earlier years.

SECOND PHASE OF ORGANIC FARMING

The chief minister declared that in the second phase of organic farming the domestic meat production should be increased to satisfy the needs of the state. Thus, he urged the farmers to increase their cattle numbers which would ensure that Sikkim becomes self-sufficient in terms of meat production. He urged the people to increase their productivity of their lands requesting them not to leave their land fallow. He requested the Gram Panchayat members and the educated people to come forward as the marketing assistants. The second phase of organic farming would consist of value addition like packaging and marketing of the produce which can be sold outside the state. This should be done by the locals themselves. The second phase would also include increasing animal husbandry, fisheries for which he urged the youth to come forward. The government wanted to promote agro based industry like jam, juice, bread, pan cakes and mayonnaise which would be made of organic produce.

Stating that coco-cola was an inorganic drink made of sugar, soda and chemicals he urged the youth to make an alternate organic version of Coke. He professed that people around the world nowadays were increasingly health conscious

and choosy regarding their lifestyles thus people of Sikkim should take this opportunity to produce organic drinks in place of aerated soda drinks. He urged the people of Sikkim to produce for the benefit of the world. Urging the youth to start this as a profession he told them that the Sikkimese people were not born to be servants or to be employees. Rather they were born to produce, to provide jobs and to give employment. He reiterated that it was better to be a producer than be a consumer and to live with dignity. He urged the youth to change their mindset and asked them to become job givers and not job seekers.

He stated that there was a huge need for organic manure, organic green manure and organic medicines. If the farmers were to make the organic manure in Sikkim, the government would stop purchasing organic manure from outside. Warning about decreasing soil productivity and increasing contamination of the soil he warned that the earth would not survive if the people did not switch to organic farming. He also urged the youth to be organic leaders, activists and intellectuals that shared this vision of the government. If the vegetables became spoilt the farmers would be given compensation by the government. Middlemen should not exploit the farmers and the government would take every possible step to protect them. He also urged the people to stop burning paper and plastic but rather mix them with cow-dung which would help in making compost.

He also urged the farmers to grow more trees and grass. He urged them to grow banana, oranges, guavas and other fruits. Reiterating about the clean water available in Sikkim he stated that even President Trump did not drink the clean water of the Himalayas that people in Sikkim drank. Blasting America as a dumping ground for fertilisers he stated that American food and water is polluted with the usage of chemicals.

FOOD PRODUCTION

The chief minister informed the listeners that most of the food that was consumed in Sikkim came from outside. He reiterated that the food was distributed by the state government through the Public Distribution System. Estimating that the

population of the world would reach to about 1400 crore by the year 2050 he expressed apprehensions about food scarcity in the world. He estimated that the world would need double of everything that was being consumed by the inhabitants of earth. Thus, water along with consumable food items would become scarce. Fearing that the world will not be producing enough to feed its inhabitants he apprehended that people would die to lack of food and water. Already in the major cities there were daily battles being fought over water and power.

Therefore, he urged the people to not leave the land fallow and slowly grow more food. He encouraged them to implant vertical gardens, kitchen gardens and terrace gardens. He encouraged them to rear cows that would be distributed by the government and contribute to the state dairy industry.

He encouraged the people to work with the government to make the state self-reliant in terms of food grain productions. Exhorting every home to produce food for itself he foresaw that Sikkim would only need import salt in the future. Encouraged the masses to eat rice made of corn he urged people to eat the vegetables that were grown in Sikkim. He envisaged a time in the future when there would be no import of food from outside the state and the people's money that they spent on procuring food grains would also not flow outside the state. Promoting the idea of self-reliance such that the state would be economically independent he exhorted the masses to make Sikkim self-reliant in terms of food-grains. Explaining that Sikkim had land to cultivate he urged that the money that was flowing to Siliguri would flow towards the villages of Sikkim. Thus, the village farmers would become prosperous.

To this end he announced that the Government would be setting up *Kisan* bazaars in Gangtok, Namchi, Soreng and Jorethang. *Kisan* bazaars would be exclusive markets with proper infrastructure, meant for village farmers who could sell their organic produce in these towns for earning some income. The middlemen would earlier buy the produce from the farmers and sell it at the towns for profits would thus be removed thus ensuring a higher income for the farmers. Urging the youth to take up the set-up of orchids that could export flowers he appealed to them to take up entrepreneurship for such projects.

GOVERNMENT JOBS

Claiming that the into advanced countries 99 percent of the people prefer to work in the corporate sector and only 1 percent of them preferred to work in the government sector. He contended that this was opposite in Sikkim and India. In the western nations most to them did not prefer to work in the government sector as it was constrained their skills and chances of promotion was limited. The government sector never gave them the opportunity to work to their maximum potential and to use their brains and skills to the optimum. The people therefore preferred to work independently and be innovative to contribute to the own fields.



Source: The chief minister gives a speech during his “Jan Sampark Abhiyan” in Soreong. Photo by author, dated 11/4/2018.

Appealing to the youth to learn from the likes of Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs that there were no superior profession and work but that every work should be seen within the confines for human dignity. Therefore, the people should choose their work according to the level of independence, self-sufficiency, choice and qualification. Just as academicians sell their mental labour so the workers sold their physical labour. There were no superiors between the two and the there exists dignity

of labour. This phenomenon of hierarchy of professions and stigma of touch only exists in India and not in the West. In India the IAS officers feel that they are superiors to the rest of the workers. Arguing that India was a caste and a varna based society he acknowledged the need of a knowledge-based society.

Sikkim is aspiring to become a knowledge society that is characterised by three significant characteristics. These are innovative talent, creative capacity and ability to bring about sustainable development. Skilled workers that have the capacity to analyse, innovate and transform people's life would be promoted. "This will require promoting opportunities for knowledge-intensive businesses, enhancing the ability to absorb new technologies, continuously upgrading the skills of workers, and effective networking to tap into new thinking and new ways of organising businesses."³⁵³ Establishing this knowledge society was important for Sikkim if the state wanted to generate jobs and employment opportunities for its educated youth especially as many were moving away from traditional agricultural practices.

Under the knowledge society production was to be "organised in innovative ways if the potential of organic farming, horticulture and fruits, floriculture, and other sectors have to be tapped for securing livelihoods for young people."³⁵⁴ In India people are considered low by their caste and cannot rise up but in the West people were improving their intellectual skills and were ahead of the third world countries.

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIC FARMING

Analysing the speech of the chief minister along with the available data of agriculture in Sikkim, we can conclude that organic farming has been projected as a novel solution to the growing unemployment and decreasing agricultural productivity of Sikkim. Anjan Chakrabarty has argued that the food grain production and agricultural productivity of Sikkim has been falling since 2000.³⁵⁵ Agriculture is a

³⁵³ Sikkim Human Development Report 2014: Expanding Opportunities, Promoting Sustainability Government of Sikkim (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017), xxxiii.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Anjan Chakrabarti, "A critical review of agrarian reforms in Sikkim." *Economic and Political Weekly* (2010): 23.

major source of sustenance for a majority of the people. Many farmers were incurring losses as they were not only facing decreasing agricultural returns but also not getting a fair price for their organic produce. The lack of pesticides also meant that their crops were facing pest and disease attacks. The rising pressure from non-organic vegetables that were imported from Siliguri, West Bengal meant that the poor farmers also had to lower their prices in order to compete with the imported non-organic vegetables and fruits. The organic produce was not fetching a higher price than the inorganic produce from Siliguri as the local people opted for the cheaper non-organic imported vegetables and fruits. Therefore, the ban on non-organic fruits and vegetables was meant to ensure that the people only purchase organic vegetables to support the local farmers.

Further the growing education amongst the people of Sikkim meant that the youth sought alternative avenues of employment apart from the traditional occupations of agriculture. These factors contributed to increasing pressure on land and government jobs and also decreasing agricultural returns. One way of understanding the switch to organic farming is that the government has banned the import of vegetables and fruits from outside the state which gives an impetus to the farmers to grow more produce and also sell it at a higher price as there are no competition. When Sikkim becomes food sufficient in a few years, it is expected that the youth would take the lead in packaging and marketing the organic produce of Sikkim outside the state. This would not only generate employment but also bring in profits for the people leading to self-employment and people would not be expecting employment from the state.



Source: Public meeting of the Sikkim Democratic Front in Sombarey being addressed by chief Minister Pawan Chambling. Photo by author, dated 11/4/2018.

If the youth were to take up entrepreneurship projects in agro based industries like producing juice, jam and pickles this would not only generate employment but also help the farmers who were facing losses from food crops. The monopoly enjoyed by Sikkim in ‘organic food production’ in India meant that there was a huge opportunity for the people of Sikkim to take advantage of. The chief minister’s vision was to make the people of Sikkim job givers and not job seekers. This would solve two problems that were currently being faced by Sikkim, unemployment and decreasing agricultural returns which was a source of income for majority of the people. Since Sikkim is a hilly state it is difficult for many factories to be set up at high altitudes. Furthermore, the fragile ecosystem has also meant that large scale industries cannot be haphazardly set up.

EVIDENCES OF A WELFARE STATE

The chief minister Pawan Chambling argued that his government had brought prosperity to the people and that the youth of today didn’t even know the meaning of ‘*anikal*’ (famine). The people of Sikkim had sufficient food to eat, one storey homes

to live in and proper amenities for garbage collection. All these had been provided by the government of Sikkim for its inhabitants. The government run schools provided school uniforms and books to the students' complementarity. The author visited the government higher secondary school in Sombarey and was impressed with the infrastructure, academic performance record of the school and the discipline of the teachers and principal. The education in state run colleges were also free of charge. Two colleges have been opened in Soreong and two for Geyzing. The people had been provided burners for every home and there was no caste-based discrimination in Sikkim.

Gender equality was extremely advanced in Sikkim and women had been provided equal opportunities in employment and education. A survey has found out that Sikkim was the best place to work for women.³⁵⁶By promoting female work participation the government had ensured that women were no longer depended on their husband. These changes were signs of progress. For the women to live with respect, freedom, peace and a sense of empowerment were a sign of advancement in Sikkim. The current government has ensured 50 percent reservation in Panchayats for women. 50 percent of administrative positions have also been given to women. These principles were the hallmarks of the SDF party. He promised to stop gender discrimination and vowed to give women seats in the panchayats and Legislative Assembly. Hailing the state as peaceful, clean and organic he urged the people to be happy. Urging the people to enjoy life and be happy he reminded them that the government had provided all of these facilities for them.

Claiming that the women in Sikkim had respect and honour in Sikkim he reiterated that women had been given the number one position in the state.³⁵⁷He avowed that the for the prevention of cervical cancer, the best vaccine from Australia had been imported. Promising to make Sikkim cervical cancer free state he declared

³⁵⁶ This was according to a study carried out by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies(CSIS).See Wadhvani/Nathan Breakthrough Index: Women in the Workplace, (Accessed online June14, 2018), https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160913_Breakthrough_Index_2.pdf.

³⁵⁷ "The female work participation rate, 40 per cent, is much higher than the national average of 26 per cent." See Sikkim Human Development Report 2014: Expanding Opportunities, Promoting Sustainability Government of Sikkim (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017), xxiv.

that this was the first initiative of the kind in India, Nepal and Bhutan. He also promised to make the state free of tuberculosis and goitre by 2022. For the uplifting of the sick the government would also be providing additional money for their nutrition. He also attested that in 24 years the life expectancy in Sikkim had shot up from 63 to 73 years.

All of the arguments by the chief minister seem to point towards a welfare state in Sikkim. Between 2001 and 2012 the Government of Sikkim had stepped up investments in the social sectors particularly health and education. In 2012-13 the Government of Sikkim allocated 37 percent of its total expenditure to the social sector up from 27 percent in 2001. “This resulted in nearly a sevenfold increase in nominal per capita social sector spending—from Rs 4,810 in 2001 to Rs 28,661 by 2012. Between 2001 and 2013, there was, on average, an annual increase in budget allocations by 12 per cent and 18 per cent respectively for education and health.”³⁵⁸ Not only were these claims made by the chief minister himself but the numerous people also reiterated that the state played a huge role in the lives of the people in Sikkim. They look to the state for welfare provisions and were recipients of a proper education system, healthcare and gender equality.³⁵⁹ It is these welfare provisions that have ensured the interrupted reign of the Sikkim Democratic Front.

BUREAUCRATIC CONCERNS

Not every person however shared the elatedness of the chief minister. Some of the people argued the promise of scheduled tribe status for the eleven Nepali community in Sikkim was a political gimmick. A few for them also insisted that the Limbu Tamang community should be given seats in the Legislative assembly from the twelve seats reserved from the Bhutia-Lepcha. Many alleged that the chief minister had himself come to power on the backing of certain ethnic communities and had divided the people into different categories. Subsequently the people had also become

³⁵⁸ Ibid, xxv.

³⁵⁹ The increase in social sector spending has meant that there is significant improvement in health. “For instance, by 2009, over 85 percent of children bellow two were fully immunised—the highest proportion across Indian states. Female literacy rated have gone up from 22 percent in 1981 to 76 percent in 2011.”

more aware of their own ethnic communities and that of the others. Due to the divisive politics of the chief minister many people chose their ethnicity over the political party during elections.

A bureaucrat informed the author that the State had no money for the various projects that had been sanctioned by the chief minister. They also professed that for populism the chief minister kept announcing welfare schemes when the state exchequer had no funds for the announced schemes. The bureaucrat also attested that unemployment was rising within the state, offices were overcrowded and the financial crunch was paralysing the governmental machinery. The government had also build numerous schools that in many places there were either very less students or no students at all.

III

APPREHENSIONS OF SIBLAC

The last interview was conducted occurred in the capital city of Gangtok. The author had the chance to discuss the concerns of the Bhutia-Lepcha community and the seat sharing issue with the convener of the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex committee (SIBLAC) Mr. Tashi Tseten Bhutia who had earlier served as a Minister in the Government of Sikkim.

His line of argument went as follows. After the 1950 Indo-Sikkimese friendship treaty Indian citizens could come to Sikkim to trade but they did not enjoy any political rights. In the year 1975 Sikkim merged with India. Following the merger, the other communities of Sikkim who were mostly the people from the plains who were living in Sikkim (Non Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali origin) went to the Governor's house which was earlier known as Bharat Bhavan. They appealed to the Governor for political representation. As only Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali origin had the rights to be elected to the legislative assembly of Sikkim the people from the plains felt they were denied any chances of representation. Their grievance was expeditiously picked up by the Indian Government as 'blood is thicker than water', suggesting that the Indian Government wanted to ensure representation to

the non Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali community who had settled in Sikkim from the plains of India.

Following the rebellion against the monarchy the Government of India had stepped in and ensured that 16 seats would be reserved for the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha and 16 seats would be reserved for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin including Tsong and scheduled caste. The government of Sikkim Act of 1974 was passed which procured the monarch as the constitutional head. Following the line of argument used by Datta Ray in *Smash and Grab: The Annexation of Sikkim*³⁶⁰ about the work of RAW agents in Sikkim Tashi Tseten narrated the incident when the Indian army attacked the private guards of the last monarch and held the king and his son hostage under house arrest all the while proceeding with the resolution in the Legislative Assembly which requested India for merger along with a referendum that was announced and conducted within four days (10-14 April, 1975) respectively. This referendum did not have any international observers and as maintained by many it was mostly participated by outsiders. Malay Krishna Dhar, I.P joint director in his book *Open Secrets: India's Intelligence Unveiled*³⁶¹ has acknowledged that the referendum held in Sikkim in 1975 was tampered, rigged and manipulated.

³⁶⁰ Sunanda K. Datta Ray, *Smash and grab: Annexation of Sikkim* (New Delhi: Westland Limited, 2013).

³⁶¹ Malay Krishna Dhar, *Open Secrets: India's Intelligence Unveiled* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2005).



Source: The convener of SIBLAC discussing the concerns of the Bhutia-Lepcha with the author. Photo by Balchand Pradhan, dated 26/4/2018.

In 1975 those who had Sikkim Subjects became Indians. However special promises under Clause k of 371(F) were made to Sikkim. Even the Governor has special powers with respect to Sikkim. The representation of People Ordinance of 1979 also brought changes to political representation under which the Bhutia-Lepchas were not given the parity in seats but were only given 12 Bhutia-Lepcha seats. Arguing that in a democracy that there cannot be reservation for the majority they recalled the electoral reservation of the Sikkimese of the Nepali origin.

It was interesting that the government through the Representation of People's Act of 1980 did not touch upon Article 371(F) because that would have led to discussions about the merger and certain preconditions that prevailed. While R. C. Poudyal challenged the community based electoral reservation for the Bhutia-Lepchas he should have instead challenged the taking away of the seats reserved for the Sikkimese for Nepali origin. Tashi Tseten also accused all the political leaders of not fighting for the protection of the Sikkimese of Nepali origin seats. Instead all the political leaders in Sikkim were running after materialistic gains.

Tashi Tseten also ridiculed the idea of increasing the legislative assembly seats arguing that Sikkim with its population of 6 lakh had 32 MLAs while nearby Darjeeling district with its population of about 2 lakhs had just three MLAs. He also demanded that in case of an increase in the number of seats the Bhutia should also be given proportionate increase of seats. He asserted that India was their country and Sikkim was their state and they would never accept a seat sharing formula that does keep their interests in mind. He rhetorically asked that if the seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly were to be increased to 100 seats, should the seats reserved for the Bhutia-Lepcha be kept constant at 12?

Even if one were to go by the 2001 census by the time the delimitation will be completed how will the Limbu and Tamang get their seats it would take 5-6 years to get their community-based seats. The future of Sikkim was very uncertain. He also alleged that in Sikkim the Sikkim Democratic Party (SDF) extracts party fund especially from the contractors. He also alleged that inequality in Sikkim had increased and that the rich have gotten richer and poor have become even more poorer.

Tashi Tseten argued that SIBLAC had led marches in Jantar Mantar of Delhi in 2003 and 2007 where about 400 Bhutia Lepcha people staged a dharna claiming the restoration of the political rights of the people of Sikkimese origin. Their political rights are slowly being eroded. He also insisted that while he had been called communal and anti-Nepalis, he reiterated that: “we don’t want to another Kashmiri Pandits. We don’t want to be refugees in our own land.” Professing that the politicians in Sikkim were only interested in earning money, Sikkim had been made into a gambling den.³⁶² He also asserted that the political leaders all had investments abroad and that the environment was getting destroyed through the pharmaceutical companies.

³⁶² He was referring to the Casinos in the state. ANI, “Sikkim welcomes New Year with yet another Casino in state,” *Business Standard* (Accessed online 25 June 2016), https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/sikkim-welcomes-new-year-with-yet-another-casino-in-state-117012500809_1.html.

In 2007 UNESCO declared the Khanchendzonga National Park as a world heritage site under the culture and nature category.³⁶³ He expostulated that the power projects in Sikkim had destroyed the places of worship and local ecology. Tashi Tseten calmed that after the merger with India money flowed in like water in Sikkim making the people who were hard working into lazy brutes. He compared the people of Sikkim to the monkeys who live near the national highway of Teesta and Malli who wait for the people to throw items at them. Similarly, the people of Sikkim have become lazy and simply waited for the government to throw money at them.

He pointed out that the last Chogyal has not signed the agreement that abolished the institution of Chogyal or the agreement to the absorption, pointing to legal lacunae. Lambasting the corrupt bureaucrats for corruption and having spoilt Sikkim for their greed he also poked fun at the organic mission in Sikkim pointing that the Government was still allowing tomato and onions which were inorganic inside Sikkim.

He argued that the fight which had been spearheaded by the SIBLAC was a struggle for survival. Claiming that the so-called peace in Sikkim was a ‘peace of graveyard’ he deposed that there was no democracy in Sikkim and that employees were easily transferred when they dared to speak against the government. He also raised the point about Sherpas being Sikkimese of Nepali origin. Claiming that they belonged to the majority community he reiterated that they should remain as scheduled tribes but they should not be included as Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin. Claiming that the revenue order number 1 made by the British did not include the list of communities included in the Bhutia, and that the Government officials had admitted to the mistake he argued that no one wanted to clear this issue as it was helping certain parties to retain their vote bank.

To understand the concerns of the SIBLAC convener it should be recalled that his concerns were mostly for the special provisions for the Bhutia-Lepcha. Perhaps the fact that they are in a minority in the state of Sikkim heightened his

³⁶³ “Khanchendzonga National Park”, *UNESCO*, (Accessed online 24 June 2018), <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1513>.

apprehensions. However, his comparison of the people in Sikkim who wait for goods and welfare benefits to be thrown towards them is a unique metaphor as it symbolises the power of the state to provision benefits and the people as recipients of a huge welfare mechanism. The State in Sikkim has truly ensured compliance of the people through the managerial state apparatus, although the concerns of the Bhutia-Lepcha should be considered.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that the state has been able to penetrate the society in Sikkim through the huge incumbency factor of the Sikkim Democratic Front. The incumbency factor weighs in heavily to the extent that people are afraid of criticising the policies of the government or the SDF party fearing certain repercussions. Voicing opinions against the government or the Sikkim Democratic Front leads to the detractor's being labelled as '*virodhi*' (opposition). Being labelled as *virodhi* could mean social repercussions and indirect social ostracization's government employees in Sikkim are afraid of speaking out as it could mean transfers out of the locality. Such transfers were a means of punishment because they were transferred to the sparsely populated and underdeveloped North Sikkim where the weather conditions are extremely harsh especially during winters.

The local members of Sikkim Legislative Assembly were also very powerful. They worked alongside the members of the Sikkim Democratic Front in developing their constituency. Therefore, political affiliation and being active members of the Sikkim Democratic Front mattered if any person were to access the state resources, government contracts, government jobs and other benefits. There were repercussions and punishments for taking an opposing stand but welfare provisions, sops, employment opportunities for supporting the Sikkim Democratic Front and the government in power. Since the party had been in power for almost two decades it has become difficult to imagine a government outside of the SDF.

Organic farming in Sikkim was seen as an opportunity to encourage the farmers who mostly depended on agriculture for their livelihood. However, the

inorganic produce from Siliguri (West Bengal) had meant that the locals preferred to purchase the cheaper vegetables from outside the state. Banning the inorganic produce meant that the local farmers would be encouraged to produce more. Organic farming was also seen as a novel solution to the unemployment and under-employment amongst the youth. By engaging the youth in marketing and entrepreneurship projects like agro-based industry, fruit and food processing to sell the organic produce of Sikkim outside the state the government sought to expand employment opportunities keeping in mind the need to conserve the natural resources of the state. High value organic farming produce, floriculture and fruits have the capability to become feasible livelihoods for the youth to operate in an industry model. Sikkim is also yet to completely make use of the potential of “micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).”

Between 2001 and 2012 the Government of Sikkim had increased its investments in the social sectors particularly education and health. In 2012-13 the Government of Sikkim allocated 37 percent of its total expenditure to these sectors. This has led to Sikkim becoming a welfare state. The people look to the state for welfare provisions and were recipients of a proper education system, healthcare and gender equality. It is these welfare provisions that have ensured the uninterrupted capture of state power by the Sikkim Democratic Front.

One must also consider that the electoral reservation for the Bhutia-Lepcha that has contributed to ensuring harmony and peace to the lives of the people in the state. Therefore, Sikkim has remained peaceful despite many provocations on the contrary. Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian union in 1975 and its integration is still fresh in the memory of the people. This finds reflection in the popular imaginations of a certain sections of the elite stimulating powerful emotions at times. However, many individuals and leaders have worked for the emotional integration of the Sikkimese people with the national mainstream. The improvements in the human development indicators have also shown that the people of Sikkim have benefitted greatly from the absorption by India.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The imbroglio of the seat sharing in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly has yet to see a solution. The Government of India despite making many assurances to the Limbu-Tamang community has not taken any concrete steps to make the necessary amendments in the Parliament.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'S PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Government of India's proposed solution to the seat sharing imbroglio has been to make electoral reservation for Limboo and Tamang community in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim following a directive of the Supreme court dated 4 January 2016. They have decided to make amendments to increase the seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly from 32 to 40 and to provide 5 seats for Limboo and Tamang tribals communities of Sikkim. With this the composition of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly of Sikkim would be as follows:

Table 6.1: Government of India's proposed seat sharing in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly

SERIAL NO	COMMUNITY	SEATS IN SIKKIM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AT PRESENT	SEATS IN THE PROPOSED SIKKIM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
1	Bhutia-Lepcha	12	12
2	Limboo-Tamang	-	5
3	Sangha	1	1
4	Scheduled Castes	2	2
5	Other communities/General/Open	17	20
6	Total	32	40

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, NE Division, Govt of India. A draft proposal for increase in the number of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly from 32 to 40 and reservation of 5 seats for Limboo and Tamang community, Accessed online June 13, 2018, <http://pibphoto.nic.in/documents/rlink/2017/may/p201752604.PDF>.

The above proposal would require amendments to Section 7(1A) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, where the number of seats would be increased to forty from the present thirty-two. The second schedule to the Representation of the People Act 1950 will also be changed whereby the total seats in the Sikkim Assembly will be increased to 40 and “five seats will be reserved for Limboo and Tamang while retaining the existing reservation for Bhutias, Lepchas, scheduled castes and *Sanghas*. Section 5A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 will be amended to provide that in case of a seat reserved for Limboo and Tamang tribe he is to be a member of Limboo and Tamang tribe specified in the Representation of Sikkim Subjects Act, 1974 and elector in an Assembly constituency in the State.”

The solution provided by the Government of India is problematic as it seeks to provide reservation to the Limbu and Tamang as community based seats under clause [k] which permits the Parliament to reserve seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for members of a particular community under Article 371(F). However if any group were to be included to the list of scheduled tribes in the future then they would also start making demands for community based reserved seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. This could create an all too familiar problem in the future. Therefore, the electoral reservation to Limbu and Tamang should be given under Article 332 of the Indian constitution which provisions seats for the scheduled tribes. This will ensure that instead of gaining community based electoral reservation they will get electoral reservation as scheduled tribes. Thus, if any other community gets included in the list of scheduled tribes in the future they can be subsumed under the scheduled tribe seats.

We should also take heed to the arguments of Thomas Sowell. If the Supreme Court of India had prescribed the continuation of community based electoral reservation as a ‘transitory phase’ then a pertinent question is till when will this system continue? In his work on preferential policies across the world, Sowell has ‘argued that preferential policies even when defined as temporary have not only persisted but also continued to expand in scope.’³⁶⁴ This argument is applicable for

³⁶⁴ Thomas Sowell, *Preferential policies: An international perspective* (New York: William Morrow, 1990).

Sikkim because by consenting to provision community based seats to the Limbu and Tamang they are not only expanding electoral reservation but also encouraging preferential policies when the endeavour should be towards arriving at a consensual arrangement that are within the provisions of the ‘basic features’ of the constitution. These ‘basic features’ provision political equality amongst the people. It should be asserted that the proposal to the seat sharing in the Sikkim Assembly decided at a particular juncture in 1979 has resulted in a period of peace in the state of Sikkim. However, with the passage of time the Government of India should also seek institutional changes as well as alternative frameworks to solve the seat sharing imbroglio in Sikkim.

Secondly Sowell warns that “within the groups designated by government as recipients of preferential treatment the benefits have usually gone disproportionately to those members already more fortunate.” While preferential policies have always created an elite class, we should recall that this proposal has never been a solution to the ending of inequality. Liberal policies therefore have always had limitations and constraints. The Government of India’s solution to the imbroglio has been to stick to a framework that has run its course. The geopolitical constraints of 1973 and 1979 are also absent. It would be prudent to seek alternative institutional arrangements for the seat sharing issue.

This preferential policy has also tended to polarise the different ethnic communities in Sikkim and already the Bhutias are the most advanced community in Sikkim. There are certain sections within the Bhutia-Lepcha who have reaped the benefits of the preferential policies and thus a balance needs to be ensured so that proportional development of communities occur. If this disproportionate treatment is continued then it could lead to adverse repercussions in the future. Furthermore, the Supreme Court in the *R. C. Poudyal Versus the Union of India* had also forewarned that favouring certain groups inevitably leads to polarisation of the society and that it could hamper the peace if allowed to ferment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To gain a better understanding of Sikkim it would be prudent to recall Article 170 of the Indian constitution which embodies the principle of effective and fair representation. While democracies across the world espouse the idea of ‘one person one vote’ it is a proclamation of a political ideal, rather than an acceptance of the mathematical accuracy in the delimitation of constituencies. India follows the first past the post system in which the variations in the size and the population of the constituencies is different across every constituency.

The push for a change in the representative system in Sikkim by the different groups can be seen as push for political equality. Since all people of Sikkim are the citizens of India the special provisions for Bhutia-Lepcha community has only fermented ill feelings and grievances. It is this aspiration for political equality which is an underlying principle of democracy that spurs on the other community members to challenge the special provisions. However, many scholars have argued that perfect political equality is only ideological.³⁶⁵

Many people who live in democratic countries strongly feel that the principle of one man one vote should be enforced to ensure the parity in the value of votes during every election. This parity is actually an ideal and in reality, many representative democracies do not fulfil this arithmetical symmetry. Thus, while two constituencies may elect their own representatives the value of the vote of the elector in one constituency may be more if it has less population than the value of the voter in the constituency having a larger share of population. Many have questioned seat allocation in Great Britain also and argued that while the principle of one man, one vote had been accepted the corrective principle of one vote, one value had not.

However, the issue in Sikkim is more about community based electoral reservation. The possible solution is to enlist all the communities in the list of scheduled tribes according to the recommendations of the Burman commission as that would put an end to the ethnic resurgence in Sikkim. Most of the groups demanding OBC central status have shifted their demand towards asking to be included in the list

³⁶⁵ For details see: Brazier Rodney, *Constitutional Practice: The Foundations of British Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

of scheduled tribes. During my field visit some individuals have expressed to me that their children do not suffer much till the time they are in Sikkim during their school days. However, when they go to cities like Calcutta, Delhi or Mumbai for their higher studies and have to compete in the general category or OBC category with students from across India and thus face many hardships. They argued that for the benefit of their children they should be listed as scheduled tribes. Thus, the recommendations of the Burman commission to include all the communities in Sikkim in the list of scheduled tribes should be implemented. Furthermore, there should be an increase the seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly to 40 and the provision for the continuation of the Bhutia Lepcha seats should be continued till the time they are confident to contest from the open electorates. Simultaneously allowing them to contest seats from the scheduled tribe seats seems to be a plausible solution to the imbroglio in Sikkim as with the passage of time their popularity amongst the non-reserved seats would lead to them eventually overcoming their feudal attachments. Efforts should be made to ensure accountability of representatives and the representation of women should also be increased.

OBSERVATIONS

At every 'care group' meeting where we sit and read the scriptures, someone shares their thoughts on a particular passage. It is followed by discussions and towards the end someone inevitably pops the questions, 'so what?' The question is meant to steer the hearers and the speaker to think about why the content of the sharing matters and what changes are necessary in the lives of the listeners. This question perhaps intends to question the relevance of the contents. Likewise, one can also reflect on certain takeaways from this dissertation.

Firstly, since ethnic identities are fluid and contested (Sikkimese of Bhutia Lepcha origin do not see the Sherpa and Yolmo as belonging to this category) an arrangement that seeks to provide representation on the basis of ethnic identity is certainly volatile. Also, this system of representation takes into consideration ethnic identities as rigid and unchanging whereas in reality ethnic purity is difficult to maintain. This system of representation also does not take into consideration that

there are a significant number of inter-group marriages in Sikkim-approximately 75 percent of couple are from mixed ethnic backgrounds. The category that two individuals(couple) in one generation are placed into may not be the category that their children will be placed into, in case of inter community marriages. This categorisation therefore is erratic and uncertain and may be disadvantageous for certain families.

This system of understanding people and their culture through the lens of their ethnic identity needs to be challenged. Thus, we must question the rationale behind basing a structure of representation and redistribution on ethnic identities which are fluid and changing and could be unreliable and unsettled in the future. We therefore must reject the very basis of the rules which make ethnic purity a difficult and almost impossible category to identify. Nepal which is experimenting with ethnicity as a fundamental feature of its new constitution is facing challenges pertaining to this model. If Sikkim were to continue with this system of representation it could have repercussions in the future as ethnic identities become even more flexible and contested.

Secondly, all the groups in Sikkim have focused on ‘mirror representation’. By clamouring for electoral reservation on the basis of ethnic community they have taken away the focus on accountability of the representatives. In Sikkim there has been an over focus on ‘politics of presence’. While there has been “provision of 30 percent reservation for women in posts and services in the state government and public-sector undertakings. The percentage of women in panchayats has also increased from 36 percent in 2005 to 42 percent in 2010-11 and has gone up to 52 percent after the 2012 elections.”³⁶⁶However women continue to be under represented in the highest levels of bureaucracy and most importantly the political representation of women members in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim has remained more or less static at around 3 percent over the years. Thus, this example of women in the elected bodies and bureaucracy shows that women are significantly underrepresented in Sikkim. Yet

³⁶⁶ Sikkim Human Development Report 2014: Expanding Opportunities, Promoting Sustainability Government of Sikkim (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017), xxvii.

these issues are never brought to limelight as in Sikkim ‘ethnic mirror representation’ has trumped over every other claims of representation. It would be prudent to ask the officials in the SDF party and other lobbying groups why such under representation of women occurred and continues to transpire in Sikkim.

Thirdly, there is a presence of a strong state in Sikkim that has penetrated the society and regulated social relationship. It has also mobilised its people into specialised organisational frameworks that has enabled the state leaders to build vote banks and support base. This dominance of the State has come about due to a weak if not absent civil society. This begs the question as to why civil society in Sikkim is relatively weak and ineffective?

In Sikkimese society people are extremely community oriented and have strong social ties. However, since there are very few private employment opportunities majority of the people seek employment in the state government jobs or pursue government contracts. The government employees who are the highest income earners in Sikkim do not willingly take up matters that would be against the dictates of the state government. Due to the incumbency factor and the fear of being targeted as ‘*virodhi*’ most of the educated government employees toe the party line. This influential educated class of people therefore do not take the lead in imparting knowledge and information to the people about the various schemes, policies, achievements and failures of the government. There are no large impactful non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that debate and discuss the schemes and policies of the government with the masses in Sikkim. Thus, the lack of leadership by the educated people in Sikkim to scrutinise the activities of the government is missing in Sikkim. This has been aggravated by the dependence of the local newspapers on state advertisements. Since a majority of newspapers in India and also in Sikkim run on the funds generated through advertisements in the papers, the threat or the severance of government advertisements means a stoppage of major portion of income for the newspapers. This factor has also played a crucial role in blocking any criticisms in the newspapers regarding the government in power. Thus, a healthy civil society dialogue through the dissemination of views and opinions is lacking in Sikkim. The state in

Sikkim remains extremely powerful while the civil society is weak, fractured and ineffective.

The rest of the people in Sikkim who are employed in the agriculture and service sector are too disorganised and weak to form an effective civil society. Rather than resorting to form civil society groups they accept their dependence on the state which is managerial and provides primary and secondary education, healthcare and welfare benefits. Thus, the hegemony of the state in the lives of the people continue unabated.

Fourthly, the state and its policies of affirmative action and reservation have increased the value of ethnicity by promoting it as a political tool that can be used by the individual in order to be a recipient of the patronage structure that has been set up by the government. The State has been active in generating a certain level of ethnic politics by constructing certain structures that promote ethnic identity as a political identity especially amongst the Nepali group. While facing identity issues it is more advantageous to be classified as a scheduled tribes, other backward class and most backward class than the simple recognition as a Sikkimese of Nepali origin. It is important to recognise that the instrumental use of ethnic identity has been guided by the state thus affecting the choices and modes of ethnic representation. Thus, this has played a crucial part in managing the resources of the state.

Fifthly, while certain asymmetrical powers have been provided to Sikkim in the constitution under Article 371(F) which has facilitated the entry of this new state it has during this process also institutionalised and politicised ethnic differences in the state of Sikkim. In other words, the special provisions have entrenched the institutionalised ethnic differences in Sikkim. The disproportionate excessive reservation has created a privileged community which has created unhealthy competition and created animosity and supported divisive forces.

EPILOGUE

The Government of Sikkim's strategy of organic farming attempts to increase the revenue for the farmers in Sikkim who constitute over sixty percent of the

workforce and also seeks to generate jobs for the unemployed youth by engaging them in the marketing and processing of 'organic produce'. They want to switch the agriculture to the industry mode, with a priority on high value organic produce. However, the state should ensure that capitalist market forces should not reap the benefits of the 'organic produce' in the marketing and packaging phase and that the majority of the income should go back to the farmers. This should be considered by the state government of Sikkim.

Sikkim has come a long way in its aspect of modernisation and development. This dissertation has traced the central role of the state in the ethnic categorisation of the communities living in Sikkim. It is true that state in Sikkim is not the sole movers of societal change in Sikkim. The autonomy of the state in Sikkim, the slant of the government's policies and the preoccupying issues for the leaders are greatly influenced by the society in which they are operating. While the state has been transformed by the internal factors even the society has transformed the state. The social organisation of Sikkim has been moulded by the opportunities and the impediments that have been presented by the State, just as they are impacted by the possibilities and constraints of the world economy. In the era of neoliberalism, the government has failed to provide dignified employment to the youth. However, the government has come up with organic farming as a novel solution to ensure that the farmers earn more from their produce and also employ the youth in entrepreneurship projects that will generate employment.

In lieu of a conclusion I argue the interaction of both the state and social formations in Sikkim are a relentless activity of transformation. States are not fixed entities and as the case of Sikkim shows neither are societies, they have both changed structures, objectives, jurisdictions, regulations over social control in their course of interaction. It is in these interactions that the state has managed the system of representation. While the groups have focussed excessively on mirror representation, one needs to emphasise more on ensuring accountability from the representatives. The question of under representation of women to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly should also be highlighted. The Indian constitution makes provision for citizens to be

treated with equality irrespective of their race, gender or ethnic identity. However, in Sikkim ethnic identity has played a key role in accessing the benefits offered by the state. It will be riveting to see how the organic mission in the Himalayan State of Sikkim plays out for the inhabitants of the state. This could play a huge role in the livelihood and employment opportunities for the people in the region. However, for now the central role of the state in the imaginations and lives of the people does not seem to be making a departure. It will perhaps be prudent to conclude with the words of Hegel that; 'State is the march of God on earth'.

APPENDIX 1

LHO MON GTSONG AGREEMENT

“Please take heed, Please observe, Please listen! From Dharmakaya Samanthabadra, who from the beginning, was the protector [to] the root Guru [and] the highest dharma protectors, who have been bound by vow are requested to form a great assembly (2) and without body, speech or mind distracted elsewhere, arise in your wrathful form and observe [this event]; and with the Male and female dharma protectors and the personal deities of the father and the son, the Mchod yon and the Chos royal are requested to (3) form a great assembly, without your body, speech or mind distracted elsewhere and having [appeared] in your wrathful form please observe [this event].

The glorious protector Mahakala, the supreme Ma Ning nag po (4) the protectors who have been motivated by the dharma and who possesses the precious qualities of the Body, speech and mind; Ra hu la, the eight classes of gods and demons of the phenomenal world and without your body distracted elsewhere please observe [this event].

The Chos rgyal chen po, all his consorts, ministers and the subjects to whom Guru Rinpoche gave his commands (5) and his retinue of the three classes of earthly gods [btud btsan and klu], rdo rje shugs ldan, rdo rje dgra ‘dul, pe har rgyal po, the rgyal po of recent and accent times and the eight classes of violent deities being assembled together, without body speech or mind (6) distracted elsewhere appear in wrathful form and please observe [this event].

The great treasure holder of this supreme hidden land, Mdzod lnga stag rtse, Thang lha, Ga bur Gang btsan, the twelve local goddesses, the female processor(7) bdud lcam dral, the *sri* in this [land], the protectors of the teachings: Ekajati, the female guardians, the guardians of the middle valley [of] Dpa’ bo hum ri and the hundred housed armies of Lha, btsan, bud and klu(8) may also appear in their

wrathful form and without their body speech or mind distracted elsewhere, please observe[this event].

The guardian deities of Sgrub sde gsang sngags rdo rje ldan holding the lineage of Rdzogs pa chen po, (9) the armies of bdun, btsan, and klu residing in the mountains, valleys, trees rocks, lands and pastures, The guardian deities and treasure holders of Theg chog yang rtse [, Padma yang rtse, Ran ldan rtse [sic], Brag dkar bkra shis sdings and so forth (10) should assemble together, in this hidden land of Guru Rinpoche, in their wrathful forms and observe [this event].

All the deities and guardians worshipped by us the people of four parts of Bkra shis steng kha, and all the districts[of this land such as] ‘Bar spungs, (11) Ling dam, and the protector deities and patrons of the religions of the Gtsong and Mon without their minds distracted elsewhere, please observe[this event].Henceforth confirming to the command of his majesty, the humble (12) ministers and leaders of Lho, Mon and Gtsong have met here with the desire for unification and solidarity and hereby make the statement that there shall not be separate governments of Lho, Mon or Gtsong. During the previous Mon pa war (13 [people] people from all the different ethnic groups intentionally rebelled and this has been remembered. Henceforth from this year of the Water Hare year take hold [of this order] and in accordance with the orders of the Lord the Chos rgyal [lit. The lord who is the aggregates of the mchod yon, father and son] laid down the affirmation and grasped the solution [unclear text] and so the humble and the dedicated minister Dag shar [affirmed his] seal.

The eight clans of the Tibeto-Sikkimese (14) and the [people] of the Lho Mon and Gtsong will have one destiny without operate governments. And so great benefits will come to those people who are united. If [the Lho Mon and Gtsong cause] misery from the exterior to come within and the unregistered enemies, (15) who do not abide by this agreement, cause the disturbance of this exterior to come into Sikkim and oppose the dharma etc. the Lho Mon Gtsong will act from this point of view of a single government. The actual deities [as mentioned above] will see the truth (16) and appear in their wrathful form and shout Hum phat and they will see, and they are

requested to eat the flesh, blood and heart etc. without delaying for a year, month or day and cause them to overcome with madness. (17) Kha ram Kha yi!

The Lho Mon Gtsong, who are without separate government, should respect what is contained within this document and respect the deities mentioned in accordance with the command. (18) [If] the humble ministers fulfil this statement and [act] in accordance with the wishes and intent of the Chos rgyal and serve whatever arises(whether peaceful, physical or war) and (19) also fully serve in accordance to the single unity[of this land], whoever need arises; The above mentioned deities will see this and are requested to bestow upon this longevity, wealth and glorious merit [i.e. those who fulfil the obligations of this agreement] like the waxing moon.(20) In particular if this agreement is broken it will be done like this. Having followed the unofficial rules [i.e. rules which are not sanctioned by the government], if anyone from the Lho Mon or Gtsong follow the illegal laws or act in this way, whoever they are (21) will, if they have the ability to pay three measures of gold to the legal official, be released from the violation, otherwise the punishment [for breaking this law] is death or [in the case of] small [violations] physical torture. With no doubt at all, each individual must keep this in their mind!

The representatives have signed and affixed their seals in accordance with this agreement.(22) The seal of the Sikkimese Minister Gra shar [Tibeto-Sikkimese]; The seal of the leader of Bkra shis steng kha, the chamberlain [Gron] Bde chen nam rgyal [probably Tibeto-Sikkimee though the people of Bkra shis steng kha are in fact Lepcha]; The seal of the leader the representative,[Gron mi]Thar 'thing [sic probably mthing and so this individual is probably Lepcha] of 'Bar sprung; The seal of the leader of the representative, Rdo leg. (23)The seal of Bstan chos from Ling dam[Tibeto-Sikkimese], the seal of the representative Chos 'grug[sic]; The seal of the representative 'Gu ru [sic], from 'Grang sdod; the seal of Snag po the representative of Bod 'grong; The seal of 'Bang she hi from the Gtsong shu spu [Limbu can name]; The seal of the Limbu 'Yug shugs.(24) The seal of Mo nang; The seal of Brtsa Itas; The seal of Sig brtse; The seal of Spo king; The seal of Ma brtse rta; The seal of the Sde she hang[Limbu]; The seal of Mig yam; The seal of A dzam [Probably Lepcha];

The seal of Mo ldan pa [Lepcha]; The seal of Pad kha.(25) The seal of 'Bo lo 'bir [Limbu]; The seal of Rta sa A rgod of Ra thong chu; the seal of Rta sa Shu phang of Ring 'bigs chung[sic. Should read chu]; The seal of Rta pa [sic] mgon sba bus, who was summoned from Ga lad chung[sic];(26) The seal of Pad lo. Thus on the [x] day of the [x] month of the water hare year, In the marvellous new house of Sikkim[this agreement] was made.”

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