



MAXFORD DYNAMIC SERIES OF TRIBAL STUDIES

The Tribes of SIKKIM & TRIPURA



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The Tribes of SIKKIM & TRIPURA

The tribes in Sikkim have contributed a lot in the transformation of the state of Sikkim into one of the most demand tourist destination in the country. The tribal folks of Sikkim are basically of the most demure and simple nature and they take a lot of pride in their glorious culture and beliefs. One main similitude that lies between the tribes across Sikkim and other hilly people is the fact that all of them are quite soft-spoken and simple.

Tripura is mostly inhabited by the tribal people. They have their own distinct culture, traditions, languages, cuisines and attires. Every tribal community has their unique lifestyle. Tribal people mostly live in the lush green hilly and forested areas. Forests are the major source of their livelihood. This book explores all of the tribes of the two states and brings out the beautifulness lying hidden so far.

Editors:



Dr. M.C. Arunkumar is not only known of his critical observation of the North East Societies but also of his creative works expressing his ideas of the people of this region. During his long career of anthropologist in Manipur University, he carried out many projects ranging from tribal studies to social problems relating with political culture and HIV/AIDS. His political plays are staged at state and national festivals by different theater groups. His doctoral work on Women's Crime in Manipur opens a new insight to the women's studies in the region. He is teaching Social Anthropology at present. To his credit, there are a number of academic papers as well as popular articles, number of books.



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VOLUME VII
THE TRIBES OF SIKKIM AND
TRIPURA



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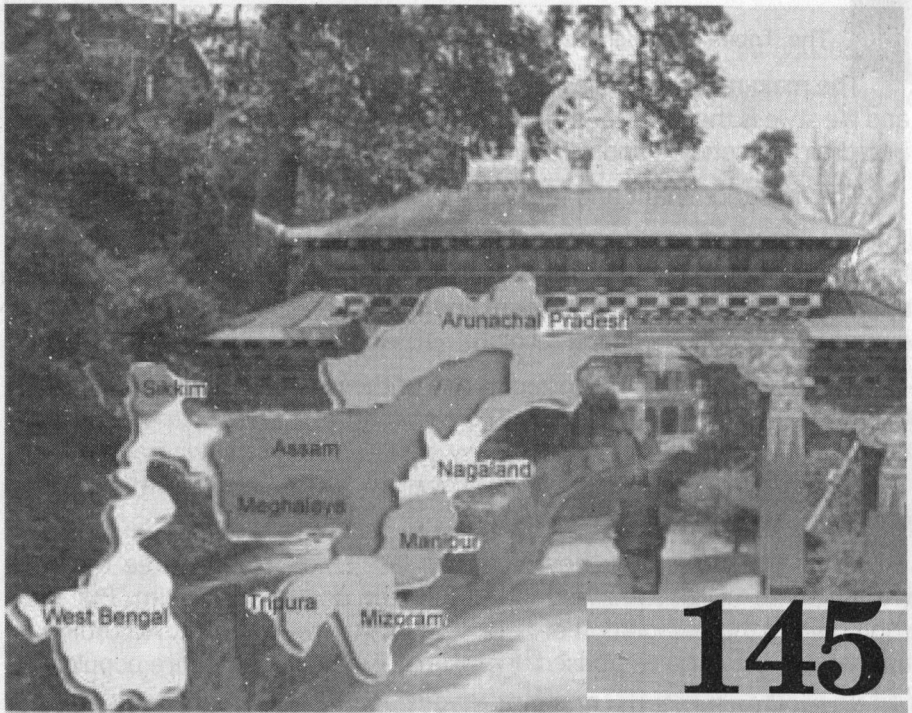
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INTRODUCTION

Sikkim is a landlocked Indian state nestled in the Himalayas. It is the least populous state in India and the second-smallest state after Goa. This thumb-shaped state borders Nepal in the west, the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China to the north and the east and Bhutan in the southeast.

The Indian state of West Bengal borders Sikkim to its south. Despite its small area of 7,096 km² (2,740 sq mi), Sikkim is geographically diverse due to its location in the Himalayas. The climate ranges from subtropical to high alpine. Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak, is located on the border of Sikkim with Nepal.

Sikkim is a popular tourist destination owing to its culture, scenic beauty and biodiversity. The tribes in Sikkim have really contributed a lot in the transformation of the state of Sikkim into one of those state in India that are recurrently visited by the tourists.

The tribal folks of Sikkim are basically of the most demure and simple nature and they take a lot of pride in their glorious culture and beliefs. One main similitude that lies between the tribes across Sikkim and other hilly people is the fact that all of them are quite soft-spoken and simple.

The main reason that lies behind their extreme down to earth behaviour and life style is the fact that the worm of consumerism had not yet penetrated into their households and most importantly their lives.

The most dominant and famous tribes of Sikkim are mentioned below:-

Lepchas - It has been speculated by most that it was the Lepchas tribe that had first started inhabiting in the land of Sikkim. Their main religions that are followed by them are Buddhism and Christianity. Prior to that they were ardent followers of the Mune religion.

Bhutias - They are recognized as one of the very few tribes within Sikkim that bear a rich Tibetan heritage. The early part of the 15th century saw the dawn of the era of the Bhutias. As they are bifurcated into two parts, known as Lachenpas and Lachungpas respectively with reference with the fraction of Sikkim they are inhabiting.

Nepalese - Although they were the last amongst the three tribes in chronological order to have entered into the domain of Sikkim. But they soon gained the recognition of being the most powerful tribe. According to the census, they also comprised approximately 80% of the entire population.

Legend has it that the Buddhist saint Guru Rinpoche visited Sikkim in the 9th century, introduced Buddhism and foretold the era of the monarchy. Indeed, the Namgyal dynasty was established in 1642.

Over the next 150 years, the kingdom witnessed frequent raids and territorial losses to Nepalese invaders. It allied itself with the British rulers of India but was soon annexed by them. Later, Sikkim became a British protectorate and merged with India following a referendum in 1975.

Sikkim has 11 official languages: Nepali (*lingua franca*), Bhutia, Lepcha (since 1977), Limbu (since 1981), Newari, Rai, Gurung, Mangar, Sherpa, Tamang (since 1995) and Sunwar (since 1996). English is taught at schools and used in government documents. It is the only state in India with an ethnic Nepalese majority.

The predominant religions are Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism. Gangtok is the capital and the largest town. Sikkim has a booming economy dependent on agriculture and tourism, and has the only open border between India and China.

The most widely accepted origin of the name Sikkim is that it is a combination of two words in the Limbu *Su*, which means "new", and *Khyim*, which means "palace" or house, in reference to the palace built by the state's first ruler, Phuntsog Namgyal.

The Tibetan name for Sikkim is *Denjong*, which means the "valley of rice". The Lepchas, original inhabitants of Sikkim called it *Nye-mae-el* or *paradise*, and the Bhutias call it *Beyul Demazong*, which means *the hidden*

valley of rice. In Hindu religious texts, Sikkim is known as *Indrakil*, the garden of Indra.

HISTORY

The earliest recorded event related to Sikkim is the passage of the Buddhist saint Guru Rinpoche through the land in the 8th century. The Guru is reported to have blessed the land, introduced Buddhism in Sikkim, and foretold the era of monarchy in the state that would arrive centuries later.



Fig. 145.1: Sikkim-people

In the 14th century, according to legend, Khye Bumsa, a prince from the Minyak House in Kham in Eastern Tibet, had a divine revelation one night instructing him to travel south to seek his fortunes. His descendants were later to form the royal family of Sikkim.

In 1642, the fifth-generation descendant of Khye Bumsa, Phuntsog Namgyal, was consecrated as the first Chogyal (king) of Sikkim by the three venerated Lamas who came from the north, west and south to Yuksom, marking the beginning of the monarchy. Phuntsog Namgyal was succeeded in 1670 by his son, Tensung Namgyal, who moved the capital from Yuksom to Rabdentse.

In 1700, Sikkim was invaded by the Bhutanese with the help of the half-sister of the Chogyal, who had been denied the throne. The Bhutanese were driven away by the Tibetans, who restored the throne to the Chogyal ten years later.

Between 1717 and 1733, the kingdom faced many raids by the Nepalese in the west and Bhutanese in the east, culminating with the destruction of

the capital Rabdentse by the Nepalese. In 1791, China sent troops to support Sikkim and defend Tibet against the Gurkhas. Following Nepal's subsequent defeat, the Qing Dynasty established control over Sikkim.

Following the arrival of the British Raj in neighboring India, Sikkim allied with them against their common enemy, Nepal. The Nepalese attacked Sikkim, overrunning most of the region including the Terai. This prompted the British East India Company to attack Nepal, resulting in the Gurkha War of 1814.

Treaties signed between Sikkim and Nepal resulted in returning of the territory annexed by the Nepalese in 1817. However, ties between Sikkim and the British weakened when the latter began taxation of the Morang region.

In 1849 two British doctors, Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker and Dr. Archibald Campbell, the latter being in charge of relations between the British and Sikkim Government, ventured into the mountains of Sikkim unannounced and unauthorised.

The doctors were detained by the Sikkim government, leading to a punitive British expedition against the Himalayan kingdom, after which the Darjeeling district and Morang were annexed to India in 1853. The invasion led to the Chogyal becoming a titular ruler under the directive of the British governor.

In 1890, Sikkim became a British protectorate and was granted more sovereignty over the next three decades. In 1947, a popular vote rejected Sikkim's joining the Indian Union, and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru agreed to a special protectorate status for Sikkim.

Sikkim came under the suzerainty of India, which controlled its external affairs, defence, diplomacy and communications, but Sikkim otherwise retained autonomy. A state council was established in 1955 to allow for constitutional government under the Chogyal.

Meanwhile, the Sikkim National Congress demanded fresh elections and greater representation for the Nepalese. In 1973, riots in front of the palace led to a formal request for protection from India.

The Chogyal was proving to be extremely unpopular with the people. In 1975, the Kazi (Prime Minister) appealed to the Indian Parliament for a change in Sikkim's status so that it could become a state of India.

In April, the Indian Army took over the city of Gangtok and disarmed the Palace Guards. A referendum was held in which 97.5% of the voting people (59% of the people entitled to vote) voted to join the Indian Union. A few weeks later, on 16 May 1975, Sikkim officially became the 22nd state of the Indian Union and the monarchy was abolished.

In 2000, the seventeenth Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorje, who had been proclaimed a tulku by the Chinese government, escaped from Tibet to the Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim. Chinese officials were in a quandary on this issue, as any protests to India would mean an explicit endorsement of India's governance of Sikkim, which the Chinese still regarded as an independent state occupied by India.



Fig. 145.2: Women of Sikkim

China eventually recognized Sikkim as an Indian state in 2003, on the condition that India accepted Tibet Autonomous Region as a part of China. This mutual agreement led to a thaw in Sino-Indian relations.

New Delhi accepted Tibet as a part of China in 1953 during the government of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. On 6 July 2006, the Himalayan pass of Nathula was opened to cross-border trade, further evidence of improving relations in the region.

The process of obliteration of Sikkim and its people was initiated by the British in the late nineteenth century. Sikkim left with the Chhogyal was conquered by the British in 1888 and was partitioned in 1890 by entering into a convention with Imperial China.

This was done all for obliteration of the ethnic Sikkimese Bhutias. The British plotted changing Sikkim demographically with their Gorkha ally. The

territories of Sikkim north of Nathula range was ceded to Tibet. The territories in the south, comprised of the present day Darjeeling District of West Bengal, which the British had annexed as early as 1850 was turned into Tea Estates and Nepalese were cultivated there.

All the cultivable lands of Sikkim were appropriated and divided into blocks and leased out to Thikadars (Contractors) for a fixed sum of rent. The Thikadars imported the Ryots or tillers from Nepal. The Lepcha chiefs who were hostile to the Chhogyal were appointed as Kazi. The kazi may be understood in the sense of the present day Revenue officer with Magisterial power.

Among the Lepcha chiefs the Khangsa brothers were in the forefront. The kazi is a derivative of Mughal judicial system burrowed by the Gorkha ruler of Nepal. The Gorkha ruler appointed some of the Lepcha chiefs as kazi in the tract of Sikkim they annexed as reward for their help. There was one Mondal in each Block as representative of the kazi.

This system of land tenancy came to be known as zamindari. In short the British agents were referred as kazi-Thikadars. This way the British plotted complete extermination of the Sikkimese Bhutia as they did to the Carib Indians.

The native Indian inhabitants of Caribbean Islands group in the West Indies were wiped out and the left outs were transported to distant lands. The British friendly black people were resettled there. How they did it in Sikkim, H.H. Risley may be quoted as under 'The Future of Sikkim' in the introduction to the Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894 –

"... Most of all will our position be strengthened by the change which is insensibly but steadily taking place in the composition of the population of Sikkim. The Lepchas as has been stated, are rapidly dying out; while from the west, the industrious Newars and Goorkhas of Nepal are pressing forward to clear and cultivate the large areas of unoccupied land on which the European tea-planters of Darjeeling have already cast longing eyes. The influx of these hereditary enemies of Tibet is our surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence. Here also religion will play a leading part. In Sikkim as in India, Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism."

It was not exactly the Lepchas who were dying out. It was the Sikkimese Bhutias who were dying out due to their involvement in the malaria and kala-azar infested terai region. Chhogyal Sidkeog Tulku himself was a victim of malaria.

He contracted malaria when he camped in Jalpaiguri for construction of winter residence in 1911. Most of the people involved in the construction mostly from south and west Sikkim died of malaria and kala-azar. A Sikkimese settlement still exists in the area.

The decimation of Sikkim and Palestine was started by the British at about the same time. There is a striking parallel between the two. The state of Israel was raised out of Palestine. Similarly a Gorkha state is being raised out of Sikkim.

In Sikkim, it is believed that some good hearted English man might have advised Chhogyal Thutob Namgyal to plead for a restriction on the sale of lands by Bhutia Lepcha people and also to save them from dispossession and displacement.

Chhogyal Thutob Namgyal pleaded this from a prison. The Chhogyal was much concerned with the plight of the Sikkimese Bhutia who were targeted for being his clan-men. In Palestine the unsuspecting Palestinians sold their arid lands to the Jewish people at premium.

The overseas Jewish people remitted money to their fellow Jews in Palestine for purchasing as much land as possible. By 1930 almost 60% of lands in Palestine were in the hands of Jewish people. In Sikkim it was the Zamindari system which indirectly took away the lands from the natives.

All cultivable lands were appropriated by the Zamindari regime. Had the Zamindari regime been not abolished in 1949, they might have acquired title over whole of Sikkim. Today 60% of the cultivable lands of Sikkim are held by the Nepalese, 30% by the Lepchas including their Kazis. The size of the land holdings of the Sikkimese Bhutia household explained the history.

The above said commission analysed the community wise distribution of land in Sikkim on the basis of data pertaining to the period 1978-83. The commission found as in Annexure 'A' to the Resolution No.9 – "...It is to be noted that contrary to general impression Lepchas have proportionate more land than that of Bhutias during the period under referenced."

Today Sikkim has no reserved revenue land for allotment to the landless Sikkimese Bhutias. It is anticipated that 90% of the Sikkimese Bhutias would be landless by 2025 AD. In order to suppress the fact about this, the holdings of the Kazi Lepchas (Zamindars) and eight ethnic groups of multi-national origin have been shown under Bhutia block.

The Sikkimese Bhutias suffered worst of subjugation under British regime as the kingdom was turned into a serfdom. What economic condition the Sikkimese Bhutias attained today, was achieved during the short respite of twenty years, that was from 1950 after the end of serfdom to 1970. They partially succeeded in recovering the lost ground.

The fortune of the Sikkimese Bhutias eclipsed once again when their home land was annexed by India in 1973 bringing the process initiated by the British into culmination. Sikkim was invaded simultaneously from within and outside in April 1973. The Chhogyal (king) of Sikkim was dethroned. A Treaty was forced upon Sikkim on 8th. May 1973.

This Treaty is better known as the Tripartite Agreement 1973. But the hostility against the Sikkimese Bhutias continued. They faced pogrom. Their leaders and elders were hunted and hounded. They faced execution, arson, looting. Their houses were ransacked and set on fire.

The hostility against Sikkimese Bhutias partially subsided only when Sikkim was formally declared as the 22nd. State of India on May 16, 1975. However the hostility of the Nepalese continued who opposed the safeguards that the native Bhutia Lepcha enjoyed in the form of parity.

The parity was abolished in 1979 by a Presidential ordinance pending passage of the Representation of Peoples (Amendment) Bill, 1979 by the Parliament of India in violation of the Treaty of May 8, 1973. The mandated Bhutia Lepcha reservation was downsized from 16 to 13 in a house of 32.

The Nepalese under the leadership of Mr. Ram Chandra Poudyal moved the Supreme Court of India for repeal of the Bhutia Lepcha reservation including the Article 371F of the constitution of India which provided for the safeguards. In simple language the Nepalese wanted total obliteration of the existence of Bhutia Lepcha people from the soil of Sikkim as had been planned by Great Britain.

The majority bench of Supreme Court of India dismissed the writ petition of Mr. Poudyal in 1993. He was shown to have lost the case. In reality what he succeeded in getting was not highlighted. Mr. Poudyal won two things from the writ – the dilution of the mandated Bhutia Lepcha reservation and its transformation into a transitional arrangement which would go any time.

A complicity of Government of India is suspected in this episode. The Government of India too was not in favour of the mandated Bhutia Lepcha reservation to be permanent. The Indian rulers were wary about such special provisions in their constitution. They had one already in the form of Article 370 which gave special status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

The process of obliteration of the mandated Bhutia Lepcha reservation was done very ingeniously taking advantage of the helplessness of the people. First as vanquished people the Bhutia Lepcha people were declared as Scheduled Tribes of India vide the Constitution (Sikkim) Scheduled Tribes Order in 1978.

This Order placed the Sikkimese Bhutia in the category of multinational people viz: Chumbipa, Dophapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa and Yolmo. A new genus of Bhutia was created. A Bhutia language was also notified for the genus in supersession of the language Notification of 1958. The diluted or the enlarged definition of Bhutia was surreptitiously inserted in the Representation of Peoples (Amendment) Bill, by way of a footnote definition. The Bill was passed into an Act in 1980 almost a year later.

There was no Sikkimese Bhutia in the Parliament of India to defend their case. Thus was made a mockery of the mandated safeguard of the native Bhutia Lepcha people of Sikkim. The above stated people derived their name from the places or countries they came from. Thus, Chumbipa means people living in Chumby valley of Tibet China.

Tromo and Doptha are regions within Chumby valley. Tibetan represented whole of Tibet. The Kagatey, Sherpa and Yolmo are ethnic Nepalese. The Dukpa is a national of Druk or Bhutan. What is left of BL-reservation after the dilution of the definition of "Bhutia"?

The ethnic identity and entity of Sikkimese Bhutia was destroyed as above. The people of stated origin are made eligible for election to Legislative Assembly from seats reserved for the Bhutia Lepcha. Besides any one can identify himself as member of one or the other community by affidavit.

In other words, the ethnic Sikkimese Bhutia or the Denjongbo stand technically exterminated. The Nepalese being in majority they can get elected a Nepali from the Bhutia Lepcha-seats. In this manner a mechanism was evolved for sabotaging the interest of Sikkimese Bhutia from within.

BHUTIA LEPCHA –RESERVATION

This is not to be understood in the ordinary sense of reservation. This is not a statutory reservation as provided under Article 332(1) of the constitution of India. This is a measure intended for relocation and rehabilitation of the native Sikkimese people comprised of the Bhutia Lepcha when Sikkim was conquered by India in April 1973.

It is mandated by International convention that when a member state of the UNO conquered a territory, the interest of the natives of the conquered territory or in other words the vanquished people are duly protected and they are not placed at disadvantage.

The Bhutia and Lepcha people constituted one nationality that of Sikkim. This is how the Bhutia Lepcha came to be clubbed together in the Treaty signed on May 8, 1973 and subsequently in the Mandated Reservation.

Ironically the mandated BL-reservation was rendered almost defunct as stated above. The Bhutia Lepcha people could never defend their rights. In other words their fate was decided without being given an opportunity to be heard.

SANGHA-RESERVATION

Sangha in the context of Sikkim is Lha-dey and Lha-dey is not Sangha. The misnomer cropped up due to official fauxpass of the regime in the erstwhile Sikkim. The official in charge of the affair might have understood

the Lhadey as Sangha. Sangha is called "Gey-dUn" in Sikkimese which is a body of celibate monks (Gelung) who have renounced the worldly life.

Whereas Lhadey is a council of monks (Dharma Sansad) who are engaged in worldly affairs. A monk need not necessarily be a celibate in Sikkim as in other Buddhist countries. Sikkimese monks live by themselves. They are not supported by the state. They led the twin life of a monk and a laity.

As laity they were the soldiers, police, doctor and administrator. Very few took to celibacy. The best of the son who bore no marks on the body was admitted in the order. There are six great Gumpas called Gön-chhen – three nyingma and three Kagyu. The nyingma are Pema Yangtshi, Tashiding, Fensang and the Kagyu are Ralang, Fodong and Rumtek.

They functioned as the District collectors of present day. For this reason the Sikkimese Gumpas do not admit non-Sikkimese origin people in their order. On top of that there are the criteria of the clan. This is how the Sangha that is Lhadey is intertwined with the Sikkimese life and polity.

Revenue Order No.1

The Revenue Order was first issued in January 1897 and in bit enlarged form in 1917. It was a directive issued to the British agencies called Kazi-Thikadars by the British Political Officer at Gangtok who also functioned as the Superintendent of Sikkim affairs till 1917 for restriction of sale of lands by the native Sikkimese Bhutia Lepcha people.

The Order specified two categories of land as the title or the freehold land held by the natives viz the Bhutia Lepchas and the lease hold land held by the Kazi, Thikadars, Mondals and their Nepali tillers (Ryots).

Most of the land leases were renewed or fresh ones granted illegally in 1925 for another 25 years. The Revenue Order remained redundant and the land was turned into serfdom. The young Chhogyal Sidkeong Tulku opposed the British system of governance but to his own peril.

He was done to death in 1912. He was suffering from malaria. It is alleged that he was assassinated by injecting rum into his artery by engaging a British quack in the pretext of treating malaria. The ryots (tenants) were the charge or the subjects of the Thikadars and not of Chhogyal.

They were the bonded labourers of the Thikadars because they were brought to Sikkim by the Thikadars acting directly under the Political Officer. The ryots paid the lease rent to their respective Thikadar which included the commission of the Thikadar.

This rate was higher than the normal Land revenue rate paid by the Bhutia Lepcha to the Government. The winds of change blowing from the plains influenced the tillers to revolt against the bondage of kazi-Thikadari.

It was finally abolished in 1949. But the status of ryots of the Kazi-Thikadars was not settled. They were living as before as mere tenants. It was settled only in 1961 by India as protector of Sikkim when Chinese threat loomed large in the Himalayan frontier of India.

Parity And Ethnic Voting

Much insinuation is made out of the parity system of power sharing without going into the background. The situation of parity and ethnic voting developed due to the status of the former ryots (tenants) of the kazi Thikadars and secondly the India-Nepal Treaty of 1950.

The ryots were mostly the subjects of Nepal. India as protectorate of Sikkim worked out the formula when the natives protested. The Nepalese were allowed dual status in accordance with the clause-6 & 7 of the Treaty.

Under the parity irrespective of the size of the population, the Nepalese were given 50% only. The ethnic voting was abolished by India after annexation. The Representation of peoples (Amendment) Act of 1980 which is the Bill of 1979 downsized the Bhutia Lepcha reservation to 13 from 16 in the house of 32.

How obliteration of Sikkimese Bhutias plotted:

1. That the aim and object of the commission is the abolition of the mandated Bhutia Lepcha reservation. This is the fourth attempt. The first attempt was made by moving the Supreme Court of India in 1979 and as stated above it succeeded in diluting the reservation and turning it into a transitional arrangement. The second attempt was made in 1993. The present commission was instituted immediately after the third one. The resolution was passed hastily on 10th. June 2008 without giving the usual statutory notice to the Assembly secretariat even.
2. That the composition of the Commission is highly unconstitutional and biased against Sikkimese Bhutia. The commission comprised of the following main stream Indians, Nepalese and Lepchas who openly opposed Sikkimese Bhutias.
3. That neither a copy of the Bill nor the report is circulated for the information of general public and specially the Sikkimese Bhutias. Venerable Acharya Lama, the lone opposition member in the Assembly was not allowed to speak on the bill.
4. That the Commission brought shocking facts to light. The Commission alleged that the little safeguards that the native Bhutia Lepcha people of Sikkim enjoyed in the form of the mandated reservation caused "reverse inequality" in the socio-economic profile of the people. The Commission reported that in this situation, if the

balancing measures were not taken quickly, the reverse inequality may have an unsettling effect on the socio-political structure of the state.

5. That the Government of Sikkim granted the Lepcha the recognition of "Primitive Tribe" in 2005 much ahead of the institution of the commission. It proposed to upgrade the recognition to the "Most Primitive Tribe" in 2008 as evident from the report of the commission. This is submitted to the Government of India for inclusion in the central list. Though consensual it was aimed at dissolution of the mandated Bhutia Lepcha reservation.
6. That the observations of the commission coupled with the statement of Dr.Pawan Chamling, chief Minister that the Bhutia Lepchas would not be safe unless the Nepalese are safe, raised a question that India as the conqueror of Sikkim alone could address. A situation of this nature was anticipated in 1973 only when India annexed Sikkim. That the situation warranted relocation of the Sikkimese Bhutia for self determination.
7. That one of the terms of reference of the commission is shown as protection of the Bhutia Lepcha reservation. In reality it was used as shield for implementation of larger agenda. This is revealed when the Commission noted in the last paragraph of the Para-3.18.6 of the Executive Report which is Annexure 'B' to the Resolution – "... Erasing the opportunities of original Scheduled Tribes by whatever means will not stem the tide. If anything, it will remove whatever check is there against the tide."
8. That the commission has not been very fair and clean about information used for justifying its recommendations. What bothered the Sikkimese Bhutia most is that the Chairman of the commission is an important person who drafted policy matters for Government of India.
9. That the commission literally crafted out the recommendations for inclusion of non-tribal Nepali population in the Scheduled Tribes in the most extraneous manner. The commission adopted new yard sticks such as – The Historical Right, Justice Right, Need Right and Social Structured attribute. A tribe in Indian context meant those people who are still in the early stage of evolution, who still lacked the sense of property, sense of material value, sense of self determination. They still lived in early mode of life and held a myth of genesis which is always rooted to the soil.
10. That the commission attempted to mislead the nation and the international community into making them believe that the Nepali population as a whole is a tribe and indigenous to Sikkim.

11. That the commission distorted the facts about territorial tribe as found in Kinnaur of Himachal Pradesh and Jaunsar of Uttaranchal Pradesh. Sikkim can not be compared with Kinnaur and Jaunsar which are mere sub-divisions. Sikkim is a state and it is not fair to compare the tribes of Kinnaur or Jaunsar with the Nepalese who are the rulers of Sikkim.
12. That the commission suppressed fact about Indo-Nepal ties and their impact particularly on the Bhutia Lepcha people. The Clauses – 6 & 7 of the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950 has been one way traffic with exemption of visa/passport etc. No cut off year is fixed by the Treaty for granting citizenship right to the people.
13. That the commission distorted facts about the Sikkim Subject Regulation, 1961. This is citizenship rule of erstwhile sovereign Sikkim. How can the commission compare Sikkim at the relevant time with other Indian states which were governed by Indian regulation. The Sikkim subject Regulation, 1961 fixed 1946 as the cut off year for the Ryots (tenants) of the British agencies to be Sikkim Subject.
14. That the commission projected the Nepalese as underprivileged and suffering masses. Nowhere it is indicated that the Nepalese have been ruling over the state since the day one of the conquest in 1973. Instead the commission projected the Bhutias as the ones who are still the ruling elites and most privileged ones and held them as the root cause of the growing reverse inequality in the socio-political structure of the state. Given the rate of influx, can it be rectified? But the game plan is to destroy the Sikkimese Bhutias economically as well. Thousands of Crores of rupees have been ploughed into the state since 1973. Where is the money gone? Who is responsible for the reverse inequality? The economic plight of the Sikkimese Bhutia, who mostly live in villages, has gone down deplorably. The member of Bhutia community embracing Christianity speaks volumes about their economic plight. It is deteriorating day by day. The cash crops like the oranges, ginger and cardamom have stopped growing. Their land holdings have fragmented which did not sustain livelihood.
15. That in order to justify the recognition of Bahun, Chettri and Newar (upper caste Hindus) as ST, the commission distorted facts. It is stated in para-3.20 of the Executive Report –“.. .. Here we have taken note of an interesting fact. Each ethnos like Bahun, Chettri, Rai has a good number of persons who have been converted to Christianity. But they continue to be members of the original ethnos”. This is sinister. The Christian society took special care that

the converts did not revert back. They are not allowed to take part or mingle in social functions of the Hindus. They are forbidden to take Hindu puja prasada (food offerings to god). The nation can not be bluffed like this. If Bahun, Chhetri and Newar become ST, what would the genuine ST become?

16. That the commission suppressed facts about dilution of the definition of Bhutia. The Bhutia Lepcha reservation was turned infructuous by including in the Sikkimese Bhutia eight Multi-national tribes viz: Chumbipa, Dophthapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa and Yolmo. Of which the Kagatey, Sherpa and Yolmo are Nepali: the Chumbipa, Dophthapa, Tibetan and Tromopa are Tibetans and Dukpa is Bhutanese. The kazi community is also included in the Bhutia. Whereas the commission showed only Bhutia and Sherpa hiding the rest.
17. That the commission suppressed facts about the Revenue Order No.1of 1917. The land holding of the Sikkimese Bhutia is skewed by the holdings of other people included in it. The land holdings of the Sikkimese Bhutia needed reassessment against the background of Revenue Order No.1.
18. That the commission used a questionable Historical sources for establishing the historical Right of the Nepali people. The commission has not established the rights conclusively. The commission spoke about the seven given tribes. The commission itself admitted at the same time that influx from outside is alarming as at pg.-7 of Annexure 'A1'-'.. ..The transition has been retarded by an important demographic fact. Compared to the rest of India large scale immigration of population is taking place in Sikkim creating thereby a seize psychosis among indigenous local population."

More of tribes/castes will join in course of time which is a continuous process. Nearly eighty thousands of them were granted Indian citizenship only in 1989. Dr.Chamling proposed 1975 as the cut off year for identifying people for Land Bank facilities. This way the cut off year is being moved forward.

How The Relocation Is Necessary:

1. That the ethnic Sikkimese Bhutias are basically apolitical. They are thoroughly imbibed in the philosophy of Buddhism. They strove for self excellence. They lived by the "Live and let live" philosophy of life. They treated the life just as a transience. They looked at people very compassionately irrespective of caste and creed. They shared what ever they have with others. They performed pujas day and night for the welfare of all sentient beings which included all people.

2. That they bought peace sacrificing everything. For this reason their well wishers cynically compared them with the animals which were standing in the backyard of a slaughter house waiting for their turn to go in. Those animals are least perturbed by the activities that are taking place inside the house. They ate gleefully from the same hand which took their lives the very next moment. This is the case with the Sikkimese Bhutia people since the day one of annexation of Sikkim by India in 1973. Tragically their spirit of tolerance has been misjudged and they are taken for granted.
3. That Sikkim is considered as the most peaceful state of India. The natives alone knew at what cost and pain the peace is propped up in Sikkim. They alone knew at what cost and pain the "shabstens (pujas)" are performed individually at home and collectively in the Gumpas for the peace and prosperity of Sikkim. They alone knew why they thronged places of worship for spiritual solace and rushed to the Rimbuchhis (precious Guru) off and on for guidance. Because there is no Government for them. The Commission Report also confirmed this. How long will they live at the discretion and pleasure of some body?
4. That the atrocities of the conquerors of Sikkim since April 1973 onwards are there for all to see. They are taking place in ever growing scale. They faced sustained campaign of hatred and contempt. That the campaign of hatred and contempt for anything that is Bhutia is carried out through printed medium as well. Such insinuations have found place in the vernacular school Text Books too. Emboldened with the silence of the Sikkimese Bhutias the campaign is carried out publicly through PA system. Canards are spread at home and abroad that Nepalese are being chased out of Sikkim. Indeed the Nepalese are chased out of the trouble torn north eastern region of India. Incidentally most of them are resettled in Sikkim. This canard was first cultivated in Sikkim by a paranoid man called L.B Basnet in a book titled "The Political History of Sikkim" that he published in 1973 after annexation of Sikkim by India. He alleged in the book that every house of Bhutia contained arsenals of firearms. The Bhutias were plotting a Uganda like operation against Nepalese in Sikkim. The Bhutias were taken aback by the allegation. What worried them most is that it is placed in a printed medium where it will live on. A classic example of how written text could incite passion of hatred in one community against other is testified by the Bible. The people who wrote Bible could not have imagined that the story of crucifixion of Jesus Christ would threaten the lives of millions of Jewish people.

5. That the canard cultivated by the paranoid person has been a tool in the hands of the leaders ever since. It is planted across Nepal. The Sikkimese Bhutias going to Nepal on pilgrimage came across with people who inquired from them whether Nepalese are really being chased out of Sikkim. Upon little inquiry it was found out that the canard was used in furthering their vested interests. It helped them in gaining the sympathy of unsuspecting fellow country men for acquisition of properties there. The canard is used to whip up sub-national communal passion among the people as and when situation demanded and especially during election times. That the threat of reenacting the pogrom of 1973 is repeatedly issued. The canard assumed alarming proportion in March 1994 when a certain party spread the rumour that Nepalese are being wiped out in Gangtok. In response to the call thousands of fully armed Gorkha militia from Nepal and different parts of India thronged Gangtok. The militias were flabbergasted when they found nothing of the sort in Gangtok. Sikkim police had tough time in disarming them. The BBC reported this supported by file pictures of different sources which amounted to insinuation.
6. That the places of worships are defiled, vandalized and encroached upon. Not a single Chhoten and Mendangs (Buddhist stupas) are left undefiled. There was systematic attack during 1980 and 1990. Thereafter it has been sporadic. The sacred lake of Khe-cho-pelri was defiled by a self styled Baba in 2003. He came all the way from Nepal. He was seen washing himself in the lake holding a National flag of India by the other as if he was conquering a virgin territory for India. This could happen due to the privilege accorded to national of each country in the territory of other by the clause- 6 & 7 of the India-Nepal Treaty of 1950. The case went right up to the Supreme Court of India. The Baba vanished to Nepal. He reappeared in August 2008 to address a convention on Gorkhaland in the heart of Gangtok. More of such unpleasant incidences are anticipated to take place with the change of political culture in Nepal.
7. That Gumpa (Buddhist Temple) estate lands are targeted. They are encroached upon and transferred fraudulently. The Lamas are coerced or induced to the fraud. The estate lands of three prominent Gumpas viz. Pema-Yang-tsi, in the west Sikkim, Ralang in the South and Rumtek in the east are in the vortex. Raking up the matters means innumerable court cases against the state, concerned Gumpa, and the individuals and parties acquiring the lands.
8. That the Sikkimese Bhutias can not get what are entitled to them by right or merit. The discrimination was worst in the employment. The Sikkimese Bhutia children have become highly prejudiced. They

hesitate to apply for job. They have developed a preconceived notion that they would be denied. Those in employment are equally aggrieved. The vacancies are advertised with implied condition that non-Nepali need not apply. At times it is done indirectly. The main deciding question is about writing an essay in Nepali.

9. That the native Sikkimese Bhutia anticipated the worst with the cultivation of the so called Central University in Sikkim. This is seen to be a central design. A young Lecturer/Professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University of New Delhi and an advocate of Gorkha state is cultivated as the Vice-chancellor of the said university. He is known for his contempt for anything that is Bhutia. His article published in the editorial of Times of India published from New Delhi, a few years ago, evidenced this. Many people saw the university against the backdrop of the Roy Burman Commission.
10. That Sikkim as a whole is being turned into a Twenty Thousands Megawatt composite hydro-electric power house. The scheme is accorded priority by Government of India. Accordingly the Government of Sikkim proposed a number of Hydro-electric power projects under the scheme. Of which 70 (seventy) have been sanctioned. This is stated to be the initial phase. An alternative high way via Bhutan is being proposed under scheme. The vast stretch of the existing national highway which runs along the course of Teesta River is expected to be submerged in later stages when the height of the dams on the river and its tributaries shall be raised for stepping up the generation.
11. That two thirds of Sikkim is uncultivable, uninhabitable and inhospitable Rocky Mountains. The remaining one third is also strewn with rivers, cliffs and rocks. The total geographical area of Sikkim is 7096sq.km. Mount Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak of the world is situated there. Most of the proposed hydro-electric projects are coming up within the habitable and the settlement areas. The population figure supplied by the Directorate of Census, Government of India as 6,00,000 is suspicious. The population of people living in Sikkim at any time is not less than 20,00,000 Lakhs as of today. The census of India just showed the population of Nepalese living in India as 28,00,000 lakhs. Whereas the Nepalese claim it to be to the tune of 3,00,00,000. The population density of Sikkim can not be calculated in same manner as being done in the plains of India. Sikkim is already over-populated. It is in seismic zone. It may burst any time. The immigrants will go back to their respective countries or mother lands after making good business.

12. That Sikkim falls within defense zone of India and is kept blacked out from media. The Indian media does not give coverage of the developments in Sikkim. The marathon hunger strike staged by the Lepchas in protest against the Power projects since June 2007 did not find place in the English or the Hindi medium national papers of India. Seven of the power projects are located in the Lepcha Reserve land called Zongu in North Sikkim. There is no remedy or relief if the people are asked to vacate lands.
13. That the top brass of the bureaucracy comprised the members of Indian elite services called Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Forest Service. They are paid an additional allowance of 15% for the extraordinary role they played. They functioned more as party activists than as watch dog of the state administration. The fate of the native people is all but understandable in this situation. The absence of civil society in the state is acknowledged by the commission. It is very unsafe for the natives.
14. That Sikkim is invaded by influx of low degrade people, criminals, fugitives and economic refugees from mainland India and neighbouring countries. The commission placed the fact on record as – “. .. The transition has been retarded by an important demographic fact. Compared to the rest of India large scale immigration of population is taking place in Sikkim creating thereby a seize psychosis among indigenous local population.” Only in 1989, the domicile of 75,000 of such influx people was settled by granting them Indian citizenship. Regularization of the domicile status of influx people would continue under the Land Bank and free Housing Schemes. Heartless and landless people are provided land and a dwelling house under the schemes with financial supports. Sikkim is turned into Eldora do.
15. That the Nepalese have been persistent about realization of Gorkhaland. A Gorkha Apex Committee is constituted in Sikkim to pursue the matter. The committee openly attacked the natives. The issue of Gorkhaland has gone to the highest level. Ironically, both the Nepali leaders and the Government of India are silent over the fate of the native people of Sikkim. Numerically insignificant, they are helpless and remain blacked out from Indo-Nepal agenda.
16. That the statement of Dr. Chamling, the chief Minister, that Bhutia Lepchas will not be safe unless Nepalese are safe warranted relocation of Sikkimese Bhutia. He made the statement in his address to the Sikkim Government employees in Paljor Stadium Gymnasium on 28th. June and also on 26th. July 2008. The meeting was anchored by the Chief Secretary to the Government of Sikkim. This is not a

political stunt. This highlighted the harsh reality of Indo-Nepal ties. The statement of Dr. Chamling implies that the Government of India should formally declare Sikkim as a Nepali state. Indeed India is placed under obligation by the India-Nepal Treaty of 1950 and the Tripartite Treaty between Nepal, Great Britain and India, 1947 regarding use of nationals of Nepal as Gorkhas in the British and Indian Armies respectively.

17. That the hostility of the Nepalese towards anything that is Bhutia is not just pathological. It is imbedded in the psyche and quite genetical. The hostility will not end even if the Bhutia Lepcha-reservation, Sangha-reservation including Article 371F are abolished. The Bhutias have not lived in peace in the neighboring Darjeeling hills of West Bengal where no Bhutia Lepcha-reservation or 371F existed.
18. H.H. Risley noted about this ethnic hostility in the Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894 as – “.. .. The influx of these hereditary enemies of Tibet is our surest guarantee against revival of Tibetan influence”. Indeed Nepal is the only country in the world where the Bhutia people are forbidden to identify themselves as Bhutia. If a Bhutia wants to live in Nepal he has to change his alias. The king of the Bhutia enclave of Mustang in Nepal is forced to change his name to Bista Chhetri. The identity of the Bhutias of Manang is changed into Gurung. That the commission makes it clear that the mandated Bhutia Lepcha reservation must go. The commission noted in the Para-2.11 of the Executive Report which is Annexure 'B' – “.. .. Supreme Court speaks of the subvention of the legal process to the political contingency of admission of a border state to the Indian Union; but at the same time the Court envisages a peaceful and gradual process of transition. By the nature of things, the Court is not expected to prescribe the political process and to indicate a time-frame.

We do not think that CRESP is qualified to lay down a road map for the elimination of the feudal residues, except to note that in the recent years the geo-political environment seems to have moved in favour of completion of the transition in a quicker pace. We should note here one aspect of the political process which does not appear to have been adequately explored.”

The commission viewed the growing Chinese tantrum in the Sikkim sector of the Indo-China border, the Gorkha land issue and the Maoist take over of Nepal as the geo-political environment which warranted early completion of the transition. The early completion of transition meant the obliteration of the Sikkimese Bhutias at the earliest.

The Lepcha tribe is obliterated out by granting it the recognition of the Most Primitive Tribe. The commission proposed turning Sikkim into a compact Gorkha state. Accordingly it recommended turning entire Nepali population as territorial tribe indigenous to Sikkim.

That roads, streets and places are renamed after Indian and Nepali leaders. The statues of Mahatma Gandhi and that of Nepali father figure known as Bhanu Bhakta Acharya are erected all over the state in a systematic manner.

19. That the existence of Sikkimese Bhutia is already wiped out at the village level. No Bhutia Lepcha-reservation is provided in the Panchayat in terms of the Tripartite Agreement of 1973 and Article 371F of the constitution. The Panchayat is state subject. This is nothing but ethnic cleansing which has parallel only in the Israel-Palestine tangle.
20. That India had formally declared Sikkim as its 22nd State on 16th May 1975. Since then the 16th May has been celebrated as the victory day. The occasion witnessed the conquistadors making speeches vilifying and belittling the Sikkimese and giving away of awards to the people who contributed to the annexation. The natives are forced to attend the celebration and listen to innuendos of insult and humiliation. This is viewed as a policy of the victor state for breaking the self pride and individuality of the natives and degrades them.
21. That it is not possible for any community to fight court cases for restoration of their rights endlessly and live in a state of seize psychosis. The BL-reservation case in Supreme Court took nearly thirteen years for a decision. Fighting a case is not an easy proposition. No people can sustain financially when they faced litigations one after another. If the violations of rights are not contested, it is treated as acceptance. The relocation alone resolved the issue.
22. That The Sikkimese Bhutias have not been compensated for the injuries they suffered during the period from April 1973 to May 1975. The Sikkimese Bhutias are entitled to compensation for the injuries and losses they suffered. Much of the losses can not be compensated without being relocated for self determination.

Why Relocation For Self Determination:

That the Sikkimese Bhutia mooted the relocation in 1973 only at the time of annexation by India. It was held up due to the wishes of the Chhogyal who wanted to die in Sikkim only.

1. That Sikkimese Bhutia preferred self determination to reservation and concessions. They aspired to rise up to higher level of humanism and self excellence. They required an assured future for their children and conducive atmosphere for excellence which is possible only by self determination.
2. That the influx of immigrants coupled with the Indo-Nepal ties severely impacted the survival of the Sikkimese people. It is not possible for them to live indefinitely in a state of seize psychosis under the subjugation of Gorkha warriors. This affected the psyche and intellectual growth of the people.
3. That the Clause-5 of the Tripartite Agreement of May 8, 1973 provided for self determination for attainment of higher level of humanism. It read as –“.. .. The system of elections shall be so organized as to make the assemble adequately representative of the various sections of the population. The size and composition of the assembly and of the Executive Council shall be such as may be prescribed from time to time with care being taken to ensure that no single section of the population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin and the rights and interests of the Sikkimese of Bhutia Lepcha origin and of the Sikkimese of Nepali, which includes Tsong and Scheduled Caste, origin, are fully protected.”
4. India is mandated to protect the interest of Sikkimese Bhutias by providing them the opportunity of self determination. As conqueror of Sikkim, India is mandated to free them from the subjugation of Indo-Nepal ties. India can not obliterate out the Sikkimese from Sikkim for promotion of the India-Nepal ties.
5. That the Sikkimese Bhutias have not been compensated for the injuries and losses they suffered during the period from 1973 to 1975. Much of the losses can not be compensated without being relocated for self determination.
6. That over 90 % of the Sikkimese Bhutias will be landless by 2025AD which the commission confirmed. A most productive and enterprising people being turned stateless and unproductive is a crime against humanity and the world which is predicting food shortage by 2030. A family required minimum 10 hectares of fertile land for subsistence and 200 hectares for supporting the country and the world.
7. That the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, Government of India has written to the Government of Sikkim for appraisal of the facts about the threat faced by the Bhutia Lepchas of Sikkim from the Nepalese and measures taken thereof. It is imperative that the commission desires that the state Government move a proposal

for the relocation of Sikkimese Bhutias. Perhaps the perception of the commission is that it is more sensible to relocate 50,000 or so souls of Sikkimese Bhutias than reverse the situation.

8. That Great Britain is equally guilty of the crime if not more. It was Great Britain which initiated the process of obliteration of Sikkim and the Sikkimese Bhutias. It was Great Britain who created the entity of Gorkha and cultivated in Sikkim and Darjeeling hills.

The agitation of the Gorkhas for a Gorkha state in India is said to be a legacy of the British. It is not by coincidence that the Gorkhas are demanding for a Gorkha state which is comprised of Sikkim and the Darjeeling hills of Bengal.

The British Gorkhas were also resettled in the region. May refer to Nepal-Britain-India Treaty of 1947. The violation is continuing. The Great Britain is still recruiting the Gorkhas in its armed force. Therefore, in view of the continuing violation, the Great Britain is mandated to save the Sikkimese Bhutias and help them realize self determination.

GEOGRAPHY

The thumb-shaped state is characterized by wholly mountainous terrain. Almost the entire state is hilly, with an elevation ranging from 280 metres (920 ft) to 8,585 metres (28,000 ft). The summit of the Kangchenjunga is the highest point which falls on the border between Sikkim and Nepal.

For the most part, the land is unfit for agriculture because of the precipitous and rocky slopes. However, certain hill slopes have been converted into farm lands using terrace farming techniques.

Numerous snow-fed streams in Sikkim have carved out river valleys in the west and south of the state. These streams combine into the Teesta and its tributary, the Rangeet. The Teesta, described as the "lifeline of Sikkim", flows through the state from north to south. About a third of the land is heavily forested.

The Himalayan ranges surround the northern, eastern and western borders of Sikkim in a crescent. The Lower Himalayas in the southern reaches of the state are the most densely populated. The state has 28 mountain peaks, more than 80 glaciers, 227 high-altitude lakes including the Tsongmo Lake, Gurudongmar and Khecheopalri Lake, 5 hot springs, and more than 100 rivers and streams. Eight mountain passes connect the state to Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal.

Sikkim's hot springs are known for medicinal and therapeutic values. The most important hot springs are at Phurchachu (Reshi), Yumthang, Borang, Ralang, Taram-chu and Yumey Samdong. They have high sulphur

content and are located near river banks. Some also emit hydrogen. The average temperature of the water in these hot springs is 50 °C (122 °F).

Geology

The hills of Sikkim mainly consist of gneissose and half-schistose rocks, making their soil brown clay, and generally poor and shallow. The soil is coarse, with large amounts of iron oxide concentrations, ranging from neutral to acidic and has poor organic and mineral nutrients. This type of soil tends to support evergreen and deciduous forests.

Most of Sikkim is covered by Precambrian rock and is much younger in age than the hills. The rock consists of phyllites and schists and therefore the slopes are highly susceptible to weathering and prone to erosion.

This, combined with the intense rain, causes extensive soil erosion and heavy loss of soil nutrients through leaching. As a result, landslides are frequent, isolating the towns and villages from the major urban centres.

Climate

The climate ranges from sub-tropical in the south to tundra in the northern parts. The tundra-type region in the north is clad by snow for four months a year though the temperature drops below 0 °C (32 °F) almost every night. The peaks of north-western Sikkim are perpetually frozen. Most of the inhabited regions of Sikkim, however, witness a temperate climate, with the temperatures seldom exceeding 28 °C (82 °F) in summer or dropping below 0 °C (32 °F) in winter.

The mean monthly temperature in summer is 15 °C. The state has five seasons: winter, summer, spring, and autumn, and a monsoon season between June and September. The average annual temperature for most of Sikkim is around 18 °C (64 °F). Sikkim is one of the few states in India to receive regular snowfall. The snow line ranges from 20,000 feet in the north to 16,000 feet in the south.

During the monsoon, heavy rains increase the possibility of landslides. The record for the longest period of continuous rain is 11 days. In the northern region, because of high altitude, temperatures drop below -40 °C (-40 °F) in winter. Fog also affects many parts of the state during winter and the monsoons, making transportation perilous.

Subdivisions

Sikkim has four districts, each overseen by a Central Government appointee, the district collector, who is in charge of the administration of the civilian areas of the districts. The Indian army has control of a large territory, as the state is a sensitive border area.

Many areas are restricted and permits are needed to visit them. There are eight towns and nine subdivisions in Sikkim. The four districts are East Sikkim, West Sikkim, North Sikkim and South Sikkim.

The district capitals are Gangtok, Geyzing, Mangan and Namchi respectively. These Four Districts are further divided into Subdivisions. "Pakyong" and "Rongli" are the subdivisions of the East District. "Soreng" is the subdivision of the West District. "Chungthang" is the subdivision of the North District. "Ravongla" is the subdivision of the South District.

Flora and fauna

Sikkim is situated in an ecological hotspot of the lower Himalayas, one of only three among the Ecoregions of India. The forested regions of the state exhibit a diverse range of fauna and flora. Owing to its altitudinal gradation, the state has a wide variety of plants, from tropical to temperate to alpine and tundra, and is perhaps one of the few regions to exhibit such a diversity within such a small area.

Nearly 81% of the area of Sikkim comes under the administration of its forest department. The flora of Sikkim include the rhododendron, the state tree, with a wide range of species occurring from subtropical to alpine regions.

Orchids, figs, laurel, bananas, sal trees and bamboo grow in the Himalayan subtropical broadleaf forests of the lower altitudes of Sikkim, which enjoy a subtropical-type climate.

In the temperate elevations above 1,500 metres (4,900 ft) are Eastern Himalayan broadleaf forests, where oaks, chestnuts, maples, birches, alders, and magnolias grow in large numbers, as well as Himalayan subtropical pine forests, dominated by Chir pine.

The alpine-type vegetation is typically found between an altitude of 3,500 to 5,000 metres (11,500 to 16,000 ft). In lower elevations are found juniper, pine, firs, cypresses and rhododendrons from the Eastern Himalayan subalpine conifer forests. Higher up are Eastern Himalayan alpine shrub and meadows, home to a broad variety of rhododendrons and wildflowers.

Sikkim has around 5,000 flowering plants, 515 rare orchids, 60 primula species, 36 rhododendron species, 11 oak varieties, 23 bamboo varieties, 16 conifer species, 362 types of ferns and ferns allies, 8 tree ferns, and over 424 medicinal plants.

A variant of the Poinsettia, locally known as "Christmas Flower", can be found in abundance in the mountainous state. The orchid *Dendrobium nobile* is the official flower of Sikkim. The fauna include the snow leopard, the musk deer, the Himalayan Tahr, the red panda, the Himalayan marmot, the serow, the goral, the barking deer, the common langur, the Himalayan Black Bear,

the clouded leopard, the Marbled Cat, the leopard cat, the wild dog, the Tibetan wolf, the hog badger, the binturong, the jungle cat and the civet cat.

Among the animals more commonly found in the alpine zone are yaks, mainly reared for their milk, meat, and as a beast of burden. The avifauna of Sikkim consist of the Impeyan pheasant, the crimson horned pheasant, the snow partridge, the snow cock, the lammergeyer and griffon vultures, as well as golden eagles, quail, plovers, woodcock, sandpipers, pigeons, Old World flycatchers, babblers and robins. Sikkim has more than 550 species of birds, some of which have been declared endangered.

Sikkim also has a rich diversity of arthropods, many of which remain unstudied even today. As with the rest of India, the most studied group is that of the butterflies. Of approximately 1438 butterfly species found in the Indian subcontinent, 695 have been recorded from Sikkim. These include the endangered Kaiser-i-hind, Yellow Gorgon and the Bhutan Glory.

ECONOMY

This is a chart of trend of gross state domestic product of Sikkim at market prices estimated by the *Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation* with figures in millions of Indian Rupees. Sikkim's gross state domestic product for 2004 is estimated at \$478 million in current prices.

Sikkim's economy is largely agrarian. The British introduced terraced farming of rice, in addition to crops such as maize, millet, wheat, barley, oranges, tea and cardamom. Sikkim has the highest production and largest cultivated area of cardamom in India.

Because of the hilly terrain, and lack of reliable transportation infrastructure, there are no large-scale industries. Breweries, distilleries, tanning and watchmaking are the main industries. These are located in the southern reaches of the state, primarily in the towns of Melli and Jorethang. The state has a high growth rate of 8.3%, which is the second highest in the country after Delhi.

In recent years, the government of Sikkim has extensively promoted tourism. As a result, the state revenue has increased 14 times since the mid-1990s. A fledgling industry the state has recently invested in is gambling, including online gambling.

A casino was opened in March 2009, the Casino Sikkim, and seven further casino licences are being considered by the state government. The Playwin lottery has been a commercial success and operates all over the country.

In October 2009 the government of Sikkim announced plans to offer three online sports betting licences. Among the minerals mined in Sikkim are

copper, dolomite, talc, graphite, quartzite, coal, zinc and lead. The opening of the Nathula Pass on 6 July 2006 connecting Lhasa, Tibet to India is expected to give a boost to the local economy, though the financial benefits will be slow to arrive. The pass, closed since the 1962 Sino-Indian War, was an offshoot of the ancient Silk Road, which was essential to the wool, fur and spice trade.

TRANSPORT

Air

Sikkim does not have any airports or railheads because of its rough terrain, however, the first airport of the state is expected to be ready by 2011 in Pakyong, 30 km (19 mi) away from Gangtok. The closest airport, Bagdogra Airport, is near the town of Siliguri, West Bengal. The airport is about 124 km away from Gangtok.

A regular helicopter service run by the Sikkim Helicopter Service connects Gangtok to Bagdogra; the flight is thirty minutes long, operates only once a day, and can carry 4 people. The Gangtok helipad is the only civilian helipad in the state.

Rail

The closest railway stations are Siliguri and New Jalpaiguri. New Sikkim Railway Project has been launched to connect Rangpo town of Sikkim with Sevoke which is expected to complete in 2015.

Road

National Highway 31A and National Highway 31 together link Siliguri to Gangtok. The Sikkim National Transport runs bus and truck services. Privately run bus, tourist taxi and jeep services ply throughout Sikkim and also connect it to Siliguri.

A branch of the highway from Melli connects western Sikkim. Towns in southern and western Sikkim are connected to the northern West Bengal hill stations of Kalimpong and Darjeeling. The state is connected to China by Nathu La.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of Sikkim's residents are of Nepali ethnic-national origin who arrived in the 19th century. The native Sikkimese consist of the Bhutias, who migrated from the Kham district of Tibet in the 14th century, and the Lepchas who are believed to have migrated from the Far East.

Tibetans reside mostly in the northern and eastern reaches of the state. Migrant resident communities include the Biharis, Bengalis and Marwaris who

own most of the shops in South Sikkim and Gangtok. Hinduism is the major religion in the state, followed by Buddhism. Sikkim has 75 monasteries, the oldest dating back to the 1700s.

The Christians are mostly Lepcha people who were converted by British missionaries since the late 19th century. Among other minorities are Muslims of Bihari ethnicity and Jains. Though tensions between the Lepchas and the Nepalese escalated during the merger of Sikkim with India, there has never been any communal violence, unlike most other states.

Nepali is the lingua franca of Sikkim. Bhutia and Lepcha are also common. English and Hindi are also spoken and understood in most of Sikkim. Other languages include Dzongkha, Groma, Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Majhi, Majhwar, Nepal Bhasa, Rai, Sikkimese, Sherpa, Sunuwar, Tamang, Thulung, Tibetan, and Yakha.

Sikkim is India's least populous state. In 2001 it had 540,851 inhabitants, with 288,484 males and 252,367 females. It is also one of the least densely populated states with only 76 persons per square kilometre. Its growth rate is 32.98% (1991–2001).

The sex ratio is 875 females per 1000 males. With 50,000 inhabitants, Gangtok is the state's only significant town. The urban population in Sikkim is 11.06%. The per capita income stands at 11,356, which is one of the highest in the country.

CULTURE

The Sikkimese celebrate all major Hindu festivals such as Diwali and Dussera. Nepali festivals like Tihar and Bhimsen Puja are common. Losar, Loosong, Saga Dawa, Lhabab Duechen, Drupka Teshi and Bhumchu are Buddhist festivals.

During the Losar (Tibetan New Year) most offices and educational institutions are closed for a week. Muslims celebrate Id-ul-fitr and Muharram. Christmas has also been promoted in Gangtok to attract tourists during the off-season.

Western rock music and Hindi songs have gained wide acceptance among the Sikkimese. Indigenous Nepali rock and Lepcha music are also popular. Common sports in Sikkim are Football and cricket. Hang gliding and river rafting have also been introduced in order to promote tourism.

Noodle-based dishes such as the thukpa, chowmein, thanthuk, fakthu, gyathuk and wonton are common in Sikkim. Momos, steamed dumplings filled with vegetable, buff (buffalo meat) or pork and served with a soup, are a popular snack. Beer, whiskey, rum and brandy are widely consumed. Sikkim has the third highest per capita alcoholism rate amongst all Indian states, behind Punjab and Haryana.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Like all states of India, the head of the state government is a governor appointed by the Central Indian Government. His/her appointment is largely ceremonial, and his/her main role is to oversee the swearing in of the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister, who holds the real executive powers, is the head of the party or coalition garnering the largest majority in the state elections. The governor also appoints the cabinet ministers on the advice of the Chief Minister. Sikkim has a unicameral legislature like most other Indian states.

Sikkim is allocated one seat in each of both chambers of India's national bicameral legislature, the Lok Sabha, and the Rajya Sabha. There are a total of 32 state assembly seats including one reserved for the Sangha. The Sikkim High Court is the smallest high court in the country.

In 1975, after the abrogation of Sikkim's monarchy, the Congress Party got the largest majority in the 1977 elections. In 1979, after a period of instability, a popular ministry headed by Nar Bahadur Bhandari, leader of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad Party was sworn in.

Bhandari held on to power in the 1984 and 1989 elections. In the 1994 elections Pawan Kumar Chamling from the Sikkim Democratic Front became the Chief Minister of the state. The party has since held on to power by winning the 1999 and 2004 elections. It won all the 32 seats of the state assembly in 2009.

Infrastructure

Although roads in Sikkim are often exposed to landslides and flooding by nearby streams, the roads are significantly better than the equivalent roads of other Indian states. The roads are maintained by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), an offshoot of the Indian army.

The roads in South Sikkim and NH-31A are in good condition, landslides being less frequent in these areas. The state government maintains 1857.35 km of roadways that do not fall in the BRO jurisdiction. Sikkim receives most of its electricity from 19 hydroelectric power stations. It has achieved 100% rural electrification.

Power also obtained from the National Thermal Power Corporation and Power Grid Corporation of India. However the voltage is unstable and voltage stabilisers are needed. Per capita consumption of electricity in Sikkim is 182 kWh.

The state government has promoted biogas and solar power for cooking but these have received a poor response and are used mostly for lighting purposes. 73.2% of the total households have access to safe drinking water, and the large number of streams assures sufficient water supply.

Media

The southern urban areas have English, Nepali and Hindi dailies. Nepali language newspapers as well as some English newspapers are locally printed, whereas Hindi and English newspapers are printed in Siliguri. Important local dailies are Hamro Prajashakti (Nepali Daily), Himalayan Mirror (English Daily), the *Samay Dainik*, *Sikkim Express* (English), *Sikkim Now* (English), Kanchanjunga Times (Nepali Weekly), Pragma Khabar (Nepali Weekly) and *Himalibela*.

The regional editions of English newspapers include *The Statesman* and *The Telegraph*, which are printed in Siliguri and available in the same day, as well as *The Hindu* and *The Times of India*, printed in Kolkata, which are received with a day's delay in the towns of Gangtok, Jorethang, Melli and Geyzing. *Himalaya Darpan*, a Nepali daily being published from Siliguri is one of the leading Nepali dailies in the region.

The *Sikkim Herald* is an official weekly publication of the government. Online media covering Sikkim include the Nepali newspaper *Himgiri*, the English news portal *Haalkhabar* and the literary magazine *Tistarangit*.

Avyakta, *Bilokan*, *Journal of Hill Research*, *Khabar Khagaj*, *Panda*, and *Sikkim Science Society Newsletter* are the registered publications in Bengali, Nepali, and English published out of Sikkim in weekly, quarterly, half-yearly, and annual periodicities.

Internet cafés are well established in the district capitals, but broadband connectivity is not widely available. Satellite television channels through dish antennae are available in most homes in the state.

Channels served are the same available throughout India along with Nepali language channels. The main service providers are Dish TV, Doordarshan and Nayuma. The area is well serviced by local cellular companies.

EDUCATION

Literacy in Sikkim is 69.68%, which breaks down into 76.73% for males and 61.46% for females. There are a total of 1157 schools, including 765 schools run by the State government, 7 central government schools and 385 private schools. Twelve colleges and other institutions in Sikkim offer higher education.

The largest institution is the Sikkim Manipal University of Technological Sciences, which offers higher education in engineering, medicine and management. It also runs a host of distance education programs in diverse fields.

There are two state-run polytechnical schools, Advanced Technical Training Centre (ATTC) and Centre for Computers and Communication Technology (CCCT) in Sikkim which offer diploma courses in various branches of engineering.

ATTC is situated at Bardang, Singtam and CCCT at Chisopani, Namchi. Sikkim University a central university began operating in 2008 at Yangang, which is situated about 28 km from Singtam. Many students, however, migrate to Siliguri, Kolkata, Bangalore and other Indian cities for their higher education.

