

## CHAPTER – III

### TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN SIKKIM

#### INTRODUCTION

The large spectrum of tourist destination in Sikkim can be studied well by segregation and putting them into four major districts. Owing to variations in climatic condition, vegetation, soil, topography, unique tradition and religion, Sikkim offers (Fig 3.1) wide variety of tourism product ranging from natural to cultural and religious.

In simple, tourism products in Sikkim can be classified into natural, cultural and religious. Attempt has been made to explain district wise tourist hotspot in the state.

#### 3.1 EAST SIKKIM

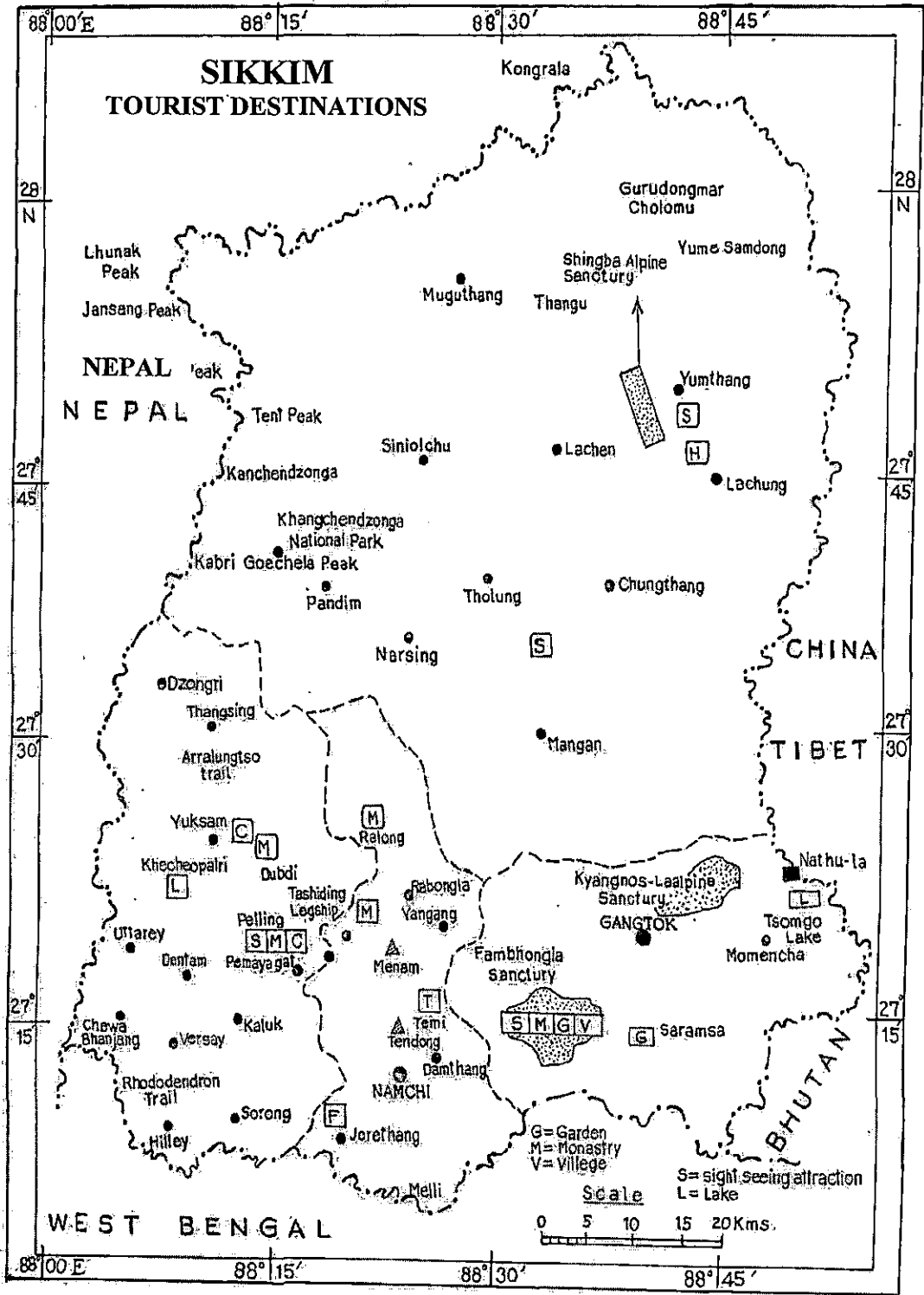
##### ***Tsomgo or Changu lake, Baba mandir and Nathula***

The *must see* destination lies at 3700 meters, just 38 kms from the capital town of Gangtok. As "Head of all Lakes", is the literary meaning and believed to be one of the holiest lakes for Sikkimese people. The famous Nathula Pass at an altitude of 3779m is located just 20 kms from this point.

While ascending up from Gangtok, kaleidoscope and magnificent aerial view of the valley and water divide add to the natural beauty of this grandeur landscape. To the geographer, Botanist and Zoologist sharp changes in topographic landscape with luxuriant wide varieties of plants and animals are witnessed along the way to Changu lake. The road to Nathula pass where Changu Lake is located is maintained by GREF, BRO. Except for monsoon rainy season frequent landslide, rest of the season exhibit fair weather and well maintained transportation network.

The lake has been the place of worship for native people, even the kings of Sikkim used to perform their religious *pujas* in this site.

Fig. 3.1 Sikkim-Tourist destinations



As the lake is treated sacred, no water sports have been introduced in the lake and no elements of polluting agents are noticed. The lake is perennial and derives water mainly from melting of snow. Though the area falls under the zone of Restricted Area Permit, yet it has been made simple to obtain permit either from tourism office or from the travel agents.

Beyond Changu Lake lies Baba Mandir, covered by snow and especially during cold winters, tourists visiting Changu do not forget to visit Baba Mandir. Further 20 kms travel from Changu, famous Nathula pass is located. It remained a major trade route in the past and presumably a major trade route to Lhasa is 400 kms from this point. The trade between India and China is virtually reopened. It is therefore studied that the area holds tremendous significance in the field of trade and tourism.

The available transportation systems include Maruti Omni Van and Jeeps at any point of time. Besides natural destination, Changu attracts local and domestic tourists for recreation, picnicking and day-trippers as well.

### **Memencho lake**

Little away from Changu Lake, there is yet another lake named Memencho. The lake is the source of Rangpo-khola and usually remains frozen during cold winter season. The lake is considered sacred and fish population is tremendous in this lake. Except for few locals, no tourists are permitted to visit this lake till date.

### **Tashi view point**

Little ascend from Gangtok towards northern Sikkim for about 8 kms a scenic hilltop is situation with the name Tashi viewpoint. As the name suggest this spot provides magnificent view of Mt. Khangchen-Dzonga and Mt. Siniolchu. However, sunshine plays a vital role in viewing the scenery. Though garbage disposal pits were kept in the proper place yet few scattered plastic covers were found in the spot. It showed minor threat to natural ecology.

### **Ganesh tok**

It is situated at a distance of nearly 7kms from Gangtok. The point is noted for having a glance of Mt. Khangchendzonga and Mt. Siniolchu. The temple of Lord Ganesha is located on top of the hill. This belt is fairly developed as picnic spot for the local tourists. Other places of importance are The Bulbuley zoological gardens, Smriti Van and superb view of Phodong area of North Sikkim, Gangtok and Rumtek town.

### **Hanumn tok**

Situated at higher altitude from Gangtok, there exists a Hanuman temple therefore the place is called Hanuman Tok. Being located on the hilltop, wide view of surrounding area can be had from this point.

### **Government institute of cottage industry**

It is located at an arms length from zero point and state archives. This institute was established in 1957 by Maharaja of Sikkim. The visitors halt here mainly for shopping tibetan painting, *thanka*, wood craft and woolen items

### **B2 waterfall**

At a distance of 18 kms lies a river that demarcates the boundary of North and East Sikkim. The beautiful river and bridge lies over river Rate-Chu. The natural waterfall descends nearly from 20m above the cliff.

### **Fambhong-Iho wildlife sanctuary**

The sanctuary is located at a distance of 25kms from Gangtok with an area of 51.76 Km<sup>2</sup>. As per the data, vegetation is dominated by Oak, *Katus*, Champ, and bamboo forests and ferns family. The variety of orchids, rhododendrons etc. are abundant. Besides, faunal diversity of Serow, *Ghoral*, Deer, Himalayan Black Bear, Red Panda and Pheasants like Tragopan, *Kalij*, etc. have their shelter at this sanctuary.

### **Kyangnos-la alpine sanctuary**

The sanctuary is located along the Gangtok-Tsomgo road. Total geographical area covered under this sanctuary accounts to 3,100 hectares. The sanctuary is known for diverse species of Rhododendrons and alpine vegetation. However tourist attraction to this spot is negligible.

### **Flower show at white hall complex**

The flower show is an annual event in Gangtok which is organized at White Hall complex in the vicinity of Gangtok. The flower lovers take part in the annual competition. Wide varieties of orchids are displayed perpetually in this place.

### **Saramsa / ipecac garden**

The nearest garden for Gangtokians, is located at a distance of 14kms from Gangtok, total geographical area covered by this garden is 2.4 ha. The Saramsa garden is famous picnic spot for the domestic and local visitors. Some cases of environment pollution resulting from plastics and eatables are found scattered specially during picnicking.

### **Nehru botanical garden**

The garden is located on the way to Gangtok-Rumtek road. It is located nearly 22kms away from Gangtok but just two kms from the world famous Rumtek Monastery. It is built over the geographical area of 36 hectares and exhibit rare and endemic varieties of plants and trees. Some species of rhododendron and orchids are well preserved in this garden.

### **Tourist village Rumtek**

With a view to develop village and ethnic tourism, the concept of tourist village has been introduced in Sikkim. The cottage depicts special features of the three communities inhabiting Sikkim. The tradition and culture of the Sikkimese people are exhibited in these houses.

### **Rae/ray khola**

With the target to cater the recreational need of local populace, the Rae Khola water complex has come up at the distance of 15kms from Gangtok town. The place is best for daylong visitors and picnickers.

### **Bulbulay himalayan zoological park**

In the vicinity of Gangtok, there lies a huge chunk of land developed as zoological park over 205 hectares of land. The place is an ideal for the peace seekers and nature lover. All modern amenities and well preserved flora and fauna is being proposed to be housed in this zone.

### **Rumtek monastery**

The big hall can accommodate nearly 100 people at a time. The art and architectural design of the monastery is magnificent and well painted. The annual dance called *Kagyal* is the main attraction during 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> day of the tenth month of the Tibetan Calendar. The main dance festival called 'Tse Chu Chaams' is held during the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the tibetan calendar which falls sometimes in the month of June every year.

### **Enchey monastery**

The monastery was built in 1909 and located at a distance of 3 kms from Gangtok. It is narrated that the lama in the past had supernatural power to fly to Mainam near Yangang in South Sikkim from this point. The cultural festival including 'Chaam' or religious masked dance is performed annually in winter season.

### **Do-drul chorten (stupa) & the research institute of tibetology**

This Institute is the center of Buddhism learning in Sikkim. It is located within a kilometer from Gangtok amidst deep jungle covered with luxuriant growth of vegetation ranging from oak pine to tall trees of varied families. The center is rich in exhibiting vast collection of rare Lepcha, Tibetan and Sanskrit manuscripts.

## **Ropeways**

The breath taking experience of rope way can be had from this point. Till today the ropeways are functional up to secretariat complex. But there are plans for extension up to Ganesh and Hanuman Tok.

## **Aritar lake**

It is located at a distance of nearly 12 kilometers from Rhenock in East Sikkim. An artificial and natural lake especially designed to cater the need of water sport lovers. Luxuriant vegetative growth and tall trees surround the lake. There is a Dak bungalow near the lake for accommodation.

## **3.2 WEST SIKKIM**

The west district is endowed with rich natural, cultural and historic treasure. The first capital of Sikkim, Mt.Kanchendzonga, Dzongri trek and some religious institutions are few attractive showcase located in this region.

## **Khechopalri lake**

The lake is known as 'wish fulfilling lake'. It is located at a distance of 30 kilometers from the headquarter of West District. The lake has been notified by the Government as a sacred lake. It is located at an altitude of 1829m(6000 ft.) along the Gyalsing and Yuksum roadways. It is narrated that the leaves fallen from surrounding trees are picked up by the birds and hence the lake remains clean throughout.

## **Water falls**

### **1. Changey**

It lies on the way to Uttaray in West Sikkim, the white water fall is located at a distance of 12 km from Pemayangtse monastery. The Changey Fall is the main source of drinking water for the people of Pelling and nearby areas.

## **2. Famrong**

On the Yuksum Tasiding route there lies a fascinating waterfall named as Famrong. The area in this belt has been put to paddy cultivation and some picnic spots have come up in the nearby areas.

## **3. Rimbi**

Another waterfall located at 13 kms. from Pelling along the Kheocheopalri road. The fall descends down from 91m (300 ft.) height and perennial in its flow.

## **Sinshore bridge**

Uttaray is situated at the extreme western plank of Sikkim's mainland. It could be one of the highest span bridge in Asia having a total stretch of 193m and a height of about 200m. It is really an ultimate destination in West Sikkim. Owing to its remoteness, many visitors fail to visit the place.

## **Uttarey**

This region fairly demarcates its boundary with Nepal. Owing to its proximity to Singalila range, it would be the best eco-tourism trek route.

## **Karthok Lake**

The lake is located at the vicinity of historic Yuksam site and located very close to the Norbugang Chorten at Yuksam. All these lakes add to natural fragrance in cultural set up and the surrounding areas are naturally rich in landscape.

## **Pemayangtse Monastery**

The Pemayangtse monastery is the splendor of West Sikkim. Located at an altitude of 1975m, this monastery has been recorded as the second oldest monastery in Sikkim. It is situated at the distance of about 6 kms from Gyalzing and was founded by Lhatsen Chempo in 1705 for pure Tibetan monks and celibate. Various Buddhist sculpture, paintings and art is well

knitted in the monastery. In the monastery campus, dance festival is observed annually during the month of February.

### **Tashiding monastery (lasso)**

Literally it symbolizes "the most devoted central glory". This was built in 1717 by Lama Sempa Chembo and affiliated to the Nyinma-pa sect. The distance from Gyalzing is about 40 kms by road. It is believed that the Tashiding Chorten contains ashes of Lord Buddha and wash away sins. The monastery is commonly characterised by prayer flags, Chortens, tibetan art and architecture. Well-carved Tibetan script and sculpture are found in the site. The festival of 'Bumchu' or religious congregation is the center of attraction, which is held on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of Tibetan calendar every year. The holy water is kept for a year and during the festival of 'Bumchu' the pot containing water is opened and sprinkled to the devotees. Simultaneously, the holy pot is refilled with fresh water and again kept safe to be opened up in the coming year festival.

### **Sanga choling monastery**

Often argued for the oldest monastery in Sikkim, Sanga Choling monastery was built by Latsun Chembo in the year 1697. Similar architecture with that of Pemayangtse, it is one of the oldest and well maintained monastery of Sikkim.

### **Rabdanste palace**

Rabdanste was the second capital of Sikkim during the reign of Tensung Namgyal. It is located very near Gyalzing at a distance of 2.5 kilometers from Pemayangtse and 130 kms from Gangtok. Due to constant raid from the Gurkhas of Nepal, the capital was subsequently shifted to Tumlong from Rabdanste. The view of Mt. Khangchen-Dzonga is seen clear in sunshine. Archaeological Survey of India looks after the maintenance work.

### **Norbugang chorten**

It may be mentioned that the first king of Sikkim Phuntsog Namgyal was consecrated in the year 1641 and the coronation throne Norbugang Chorten are just located 2 km away from Yuksam. The Archaeological Survey of India has considered the site historic

### **Yuksam-dzongru khangchen-Dzonga adventure trail**

As mentioned in the pre page, West Sikkim comprises of several historic and natural sites for all section of tourists. In terms of adventure tourism, this trek and trial route is the most popular route. Having its potentials in its connectivity with Dzongri and Goecha-la this area serves as a base camp for the travellers. The number of trekkers in a season is estimated at around 2000 which is ample for the sustainability and carrying capacity of this spot.

### **The Rhododendron Trail**

The Hilley-Barsey rhododendron belt is located in the southwest part of this District. During season, blossomed flower and its fragrance further add to its natural glory. Secondly, Nayabazar-Hilley-Soreng-Versay-Dentam Pemayangtse trail lies at an altitude of 305m. Hilley to Versay forms a gentle trek amidst diverse flora including Silver Firs, Hemlocks, Mangnolia and Rhododendrons.

## **3.3 SOUTH SIKKIM**

The South District of Sikkim consists of important places like Jorethang, Namchi, Ravangla, Temi and Yangang. Important hotspots are Valeydhunga and Tendong. The administrative headquarter is Namchi and Ravangla serves as the sub-divisional center.

### **Tendong nature reserve**

The Tendong peak rises up from the Damthang-Namchi landscape and reaches the summit at about 2591m to become Tendong. As legend goes this

peak is the guardian deity for the Lepcha community of Sikkim. Therefore the Lepchas consider this peak sacred and also observe a grand festival named "Tendong Lho Rum Faat" meaning "Worship of Tendong". During *Ram Navami* the Tamangs and other Nepali community from Sikkim and Darjeeling perform annual puja at the summit.

The magnificent view of Chola range, Paunhari peak to northeast, Singalela range to the west, Darjeeling, Gyalzing, parts of Gangtok and Mt. Khangchen-Dzonga can be seen from the summit of Tendong. The Tendong Nature reserve is synonyms to Tendong. The belt is endowed with rich vegetative cover, forest reserve exhibiting variety of flora including *Kharani, Katus, Champ, Malingo, Buk, Malato, kalo siris, okhar*, Rhododendrons etc. The faunal diversity include butterflies, birds and mammals species such as *Ghoral, Badel, Chitwa*, monkey, bear, wild boar, wild cat leopard etc.

Important trek route of Sikkim (Sirwani-Temi Dak Bungalow-Temi Tea Estate- Damthang Base Camp-Tendong-Phalidara-Namchi) touches this spot. It is observed that few tourists from Assam, West Bengal and northeastern states visit this place.

### **Maenam wildlife sanctuary**

The sanctuary is located at a distance of 67 kms from Gangtok and 27kms from Namchi. The sanctuary covers the total geographical area of 3435 hectares and demarcates its boundary with the adjacent reserved forest of Barmalley, Ralong, Ravong, Khop, Lingmo, Dorath, Borong, upper Yangang etc. The road distance to this point is 68 km from Gangtok and 27 kms from Namchi. From the summit panoramic view of Rabongla, Yangang, Khangchendzonga range, Darjeeling side and plains of Siliguri, Fambhang-Lho wildlife sanctuary etc. can be clearly seen. There lies a small monastery called Mainam *gumpa* with the idol of Guru Padmasambhva. The Maenam trek route is often visited by tourist, the route connects Damthang-Rabongla-Maenam Hill-Yangang-Singchuthang-Sirwani. The spot height of Maenam is 3200m. This sanctuary reserves high value medicinal plants and rare species of flora and fauna. The important animal species found are Musk Deer, Blue

Sheep, Red Panda, Clouded Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear, Blood Pheasants, Partridges etc. The Rhododendrons are abundant followed by Bucklenea, Castanopsis, Bamboo, Teak, Sal, species.

The Tourism Department of the State has identified the Maenam circuit (connecting Damthang-Rabongla-Maenam Hill-Yangang-Singchuthang-Sirwani) to be developed for tourists.

### **Bhaleydhunga, mahadevthan**

Within the Mainam sanctuary, Bhaley dhunga forms the Summit of Yangang, Borong, Ravang, Lingi and Lingmoo areas, there are twin jutting out stone cliffs known in local parlance as *Bhaleydhunga and Potheydhunga*. Two stone cliffs facing each other have historic significance for the people in the vicinity. The folklore suggests that the cooing of a cock and hen in the Bhaleydhunga and Pothidhunga invariably followed with the passing away of one of the denizens of the nearby villagers. But those who perform obeisance on the top of the peak are blessed with prosperity in health and bring good news throughout life. During Nepali month (*Bhadau*) and english July-August, the cliffs are treated auspicious and worshipped by the nearby villagers. Below the peak lies a hoary Mahadev (Shiva) Than (Sthal) known as Mahadevthan, which is believed to be the bestower of all human desires whenever supplicants pay their visits there and perform puja.

### **Borong hot springs**

This is a most visited hot spring in Sikkim and located below the Ralong monastery at a distance of around 5 Kms down the trekking route. Around hot spring there are caves and old monasteries. During winter this place is overcrowded due to flock of visitors and tourists from nearby districts of Sikkim, Bhutan and Darjeeling.

### **Temi tea estates**

The tea gardens are the ornaments for hill stations. Similarly Temi Tea estate provides an excellent view of the landscape and surrounding area.

From this point, the meandering Tista river can be clearly seen. The area spread over 174 hectare of total geographical area and situated along the Highway to Namchi, South Sikkim. The distance from Gangtok is 75kms .

### **Sirwani bridge garden**

It is the boundary between South and East Sikkim. The bridge is build over Tista river, a small halting place and a garden is maintained along the highway.

### **Namchi town**

Namchi, the District headquarters of South Sikkim is 88 kms away from Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. There are helipad, monastery, rock garden, statue of Guru Padmasambhava and village tourist centers. It lies at an approximate distance of 1400 m and exhibit marvelous natural and cultural tourist destination. Of all the destinations, the tallest statue of Guru Padmasambhava, the finest in Asia is worth visiting.

Around Namchi major attractions are Tandong Maenam, Bhaleydhunga, Jorethang, river Rafting in river Rangit, Sirwani, tea of Temi, Phurchachu hot spring, Doling monastery, Namchi monastery, Tirikhola fall, Rock garden, Sainotar, etc.

### **Jorethang**

It is situated at a distance of 19 kilometers from Namchi, Jorethang is the gateway to West Sikkim. It is a market center with Important shopping place for food grains and construction materials. It shares its border with West Bengal and South and West Districts of Sikkim.

It is developed on the floodplain of river Rangit. The climate is hot and humid and suitable for water sports along the Rangit river.

### **Ravangla**

Ravongla is the Sub-divisional town of South District. It is nearly 26 kms from Namchi. The proximity to Mainam wildlife Sanctuary, Tendong,

Ralong and Borong hotspring, Yangang, Sainotar, Temi, makes this place a hottest destination in Sikkim. There are few cultural and religious destinations in the region such as Gumpa, Manilakhang etc. in the vicinity of Ravangla.

### **Bon monastery**

Historical event shows that bon monastery of Kewzing was built in the year 1984. The coloring and painting in the monastery is worth viewing.

### **Sainotar**

Located on the off side of Singtam-Yangang highway, Sainotar is also named as Mangley and Sinchuthang. It is a major picnic resort in Sikkim developed with river rafting starting point along the bank of river Tista.

## **3.4 NORTH SIKKIM**

The northern district of Sikkim is largest in geographical area but smallest in habitation. Owing to harsh climatic condition set by high altitude, most of the rugged mountains remain in the remote corner. However the government has taken serious thought in the field of infrastructure development. In recent years road and buildings are constructed in a massive way. The remote areas of Hee Gyathang and Zongu are well connected by roadways. Further, hydropower project has been initiated in this district very recently.

This district is situated in the ecologically fragile area, where habitat and entire ecology is delicately balanced. Due to rugged terrain and steep slope, infrastructure development is difficult therefore constant erosion, landslide, and land transformation is rapidly taking place. As a result mass environmental degradation is going in the entire region of north Sikkim. There is a dire need to develop symbiotic relationship between man and environment.

### **Yumthang valley**

The distance from Gangtok to Yumthang is nearly 135kms. It is located in the bank of river Yumthang and the entire valley region is known as Yumthang valley. During peak season of April-May, varieties of flowers blossom to add to the fragrance of Yumthang valley. The valley falls at an altitude of 3,657m and present a showcase of untouched and virgin flora and fauna. Often compared with Switzerland of the East, the melting of snow during the season really makes it worth visiting.

### **Yumthang hot springs**

With a view to develop health tourism, hot spring is being developed near Yumthang. The hot water through fissure gushes out and people take a dip or bath to cure their illness.

### **Yumthang flower valley**

The entire landscape of the valley is beautiful, from the valley, high range is seen on the top from where white melted snow descends down under the gravity. Besides, interlocking spurs and hanging valleys form magnificent scenery. This area is located in a flat surface at the height of 3,962m. The area is devoid of congestion from over population.

### **Shingba alpine sanctuary**

The sanctuary spread over 4300 hectares area. During May – April the rhododendrons and flowering plants present spectacular perfume and natural beauty. Further, green grass and scrub of alpine climate is found in abundant. Due to over exposure of this area owing to tourist demand, massive deforestation is taking place. Hence environmental problems are serious in this region.

### **Yume samdong hot springs**

The hot springs at Yume Samdong or Momay Somdong lies at a distance of 23 kilometers from Yumthang. The height of this destination is

4,877m. The river Seba-Chu at the foot of the mountain is the important spot. Besides, this area is close to Donkiala Pass in north Sikkim. Along the green pasture yak herders are ubiquitously found.

### **Chuba**

Literally means an area bounded by two streams (Sebu and Lachung ). Located near Lachung, Chuba is believed to be a religious place for the people inhabiting this region. The destinations are Sibu-la Pass and the surrounding landscape covered by magnificent alpine vegetation. The local people do not clear or disturb the surrounding environment with the fear of punishment from god.

### **Chungthang**

It is situated at the distance of 101 kilometers from Gangtok with a township developed at the confluence of Lachen and Lachung rivers. Located at the height of 1981m, it has been developed as a sub divisional administrative center. From this point, the main road bifurcates towards Lachung and Lachen. This place being the junction of two important tourist destinations has well developed infrastructure facility. As myth goes, there lies a rock where Guru Padmasambhava halted and marks or imprints are clearly visible. It is further believed that Guru Padmasambhava sprinkled some grains while sitting on the rock, as a result a large paddy field came up in the locality.

### **Lachung valley**

The Valley of Lachung is situated at a distance of 22kms from Chungthang. Located along the bank of river Lachung, tall mountains look rising above from this point. This region makes the continuation of Chola range". Besides, green pasture and hanging cliffs are seen standing high from the bottom of the valley. People in this region grow potato and apple.

For accommodation, there exist few lodges chiefly, Apple valley resort, Snowline resort, Yakshey Resort, Forest Bungalow and a PWD guesthouse.

People bank upon firewood for cooking and hence threat to nature is alarming. It is seen that the rate of deforestation is massive in this region.

### **River Bakcha**

Located 30kms from Gangtok, lies a scenic reverine along the flood plain of Bakcha river. This road runs from Gangtok to Lachen, Lachung and maintained by BRO. The climate is hot and humid in the summer season. While traveling through this route landslide, sink and subsidence are found everywhere. The nearby destinations from this point are Phodong monastery or Labrang monastery, Kabi and the third capital of Sikkim 'Tumlong'.

### **Waterfalls along the riverside**

While traveling from Mangan to Lachen - Lachung and Dzongu belt, white water falls are conspicuous. The falls derive water from melting of snow and some falls have perennial source of water. Important waterfalls are found hanging in B2, B3, and B5 bridge areas.

### **Tarum hot springs**

This area has tremendous potential for the development of health resort by harnessing thermal water.

### **Yak race at Muguthang**

Due to suitable climate prevailing in this region, Yak is found here for transportation and meat supply to the local population. The traditional Yak race held here can be dated back to 300years.

It is organised during the festival of Drukpe Tseshe, other tourism promotional fairs and festivals are also organized from time to time.

### **Khangchendzonga national park**

Located at an elevation ranging from 1829-8585m the Khangchendzonga National Park is the only park of this kind found in Sikkim. It is situated in the North District of Sikkim and spread over the total area of

850 Sq.Km. Though it falls under North District yet it occupies a small forest area of West District of Sikkim. The area is a botanical paradise for the researchers. The floral and faunal diversity is beautifully adjusted in the natural environment. The important mountains such as mount Narsing, Pandim and Siniolchu partly or wholly falls under the zone of this park. The summit of this park is characterized by Zemu Glacier and endangered species of wild grass of medicinal values are found in plenty in the deep jungle, virgin forest.

### **Kanchendzonga-the third highest peak**

The study area Sikkim is synonyms to mount Khangchendzonga the third highest peak of the world. Located at an altitude of 8585m it literally symbolizes the five treasure houses and believed as the guardian deity of Sikkim. The associates of other mountain in this belt are Mount Narsing (5835m), Mount Pandim (6691m), and Mount Kabur on the southern side, the twins, (Nepal Peak, Tent Peak) on the northern side and Mount Simvo (6811m) Mount Siniolchu (6888m) on the eastern side. Among all these mount Simvo, Siniolchu, and Narsing offer magnificent view of snow-clad mountain ranges.

### **Singhik**

At a distance of about 70kms from Gangtok lies Singhik spot. This point is famous for natural scenic beauty and natural environment.

### **Tung**

It is known as a check post where tourists are halted for a while for security checking. Situated along the way to Yumthang, the check post is located at a distance of 85 kms. from Gangtok, 8kms from Chungthang and 22kms from Mangan. The whole region being landslide zone, journey to Tung from Mangan is breathtaking. The foreign tourists Protected Area Permit (PAP) is a must to march beyond this point.

### **Kabi longtsok**

Historically, this place holds a symbolic importance. As the legends go, this was a place where treaty of historic blood brotherhood was signed between the two communities of Lepcha and Bhutias. The statue of which can be seen in the main town of Gangtok. Those visiting North Sikkim can visit the spot, as it is located on the Highway to Mangan-Chungthang.

### **Phodong monastery**

The famous Phodong Bazar lies at 38 kilometers on Gangtok-Mangan highways. It situated at an altitude of 1,737m from Gangtok. The monastery is 2 kms drive from the Phodong township. The name Phodong monastery, means- "The Royal Chapel" and it can be dated back to more than 200 years.

### **Labrang monastery**

It is located just further two kilometers from Phodong and symbolizes as "The lama's dwelling" and built in 1844, immediately after the 3<sup>rd</sup> capital of Sikkim was shifted to Tumlong. It is noted that the monastery is located on a hillock, which faces the ruins of Tumlong palace, the third capital of Sikkim. Most of the lama's of Labrang Monastery as per local information were Ladakhi farmers.

### **Tumlong palace**

The historic Tumlong was the 3<sup>rd</sup> capital of Sikkim. The then Chogyal of Sikkim Tsudphud Namgyal established his capital at this point. It is very near Phodong and Labrang monastery. These palaces have been completely dilapidated and only the ruins are intact.

## **3.5 LAKES OF TOURIST INTEREST**

In Sikkim lakes act as a catalyst of tourist movement. The lake Changu in East District is synonym to Sikkim tourism. Similarly other lakes listed in the table 3.1 are of great significance in terms of tourism attraction.

TABLE 3.1: LAKES AS TOURIST DESTINATION IN SIKKIM

East	West	North	South
Memecho	Majur Pokhari	Guru-Dungmar	Tshang-Dupche
Tsomgo	Laxmi Pokhari	Cholamu	
Bidang Cho	Khecheopari		

Source-Statistical Profile, 2002

The important feature of tourism is that it offers environment as a part of its product. Therefore, the quality of tourism product depends on quality of environment to a large extent. Consequently, there are marked imprint of impact of tourism on the environment, which can be summed up by both positive and negative way.

### 3.6 FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Festivals in Sikkim can be classified into commercial, religious and tourism promotional. Other than table 3.2 there are festivals of flower show, Namchi *Mahotsav*, Handicraft mela, *Mangey mela* etc.

TABLE 3. 2: IMPORTANT FESTIVALS OF SIKKIM

Sl.No.	Name of Festivals	Festival months
1	Maghe Sankranti	January
2	Lossar/Sonam Lhochhar	February
3	Guthor Chaam	February/March
4	Bhumchu (Tashiding)	February/March
5	Saga Dawa	May
6	Sakewa	June
7	Tendong Lho-Rum Faat	8th August
8	Pang-Lhabso	August/September
9	Dasain (Durga Puja)	October
10	Tiwar (Depawali)	October/November
11	Teyongsi-Shrizunga-Sawan Tongnam	December
12	Christmas	December
13	Tamu Lochar	December
14	Losong	December/January

Source-Statistical Profile, 2004

## CONCLUSION

The study showed a variety of tourism product with its cultural, historic & natural significance. The natural tourism product like lake, mountain, passes, wildlife sanctuaries and tracking routes are located in the highly elevated landscape of Sikkim Himalayas. In such spots, road and infrastructure connectivity with modern amenities facilities are provided to lure tourists. With the growing popularity of tourist spots there will be further acceleration in tourist growth. This situation invariably results in growth of vehicle, miscreants and encroachment. As a result, problem of pollution, congestion, contamination and waste accumulation becomes common in the tourist destinations. The trekkers, excursionists, picnickers often disturb habitat and temper vegetation. The demand for firewood in the site for campfire etc. encourages illegical collection of firewood from the nearby forest. Hence the tourist destinations are ecologically degraded.

Mountains are diversified area and this diversity is mapped mainly in terms of geological, biological and climatic conditions. Human beings are ancient dwellers in this area. Those inhabiting this belt have to confront with multifaceted hurdles. The plainsmen are mal-adjusted in the mountain environment and tend to suffer from symptomatic, accelerated breathing etc. On the contrary, mountain inhabitants are well adjusted with harsh climatic condition of nature. The mountain lands being located in rugged terrain, several problems are associated with it. As a result not all people are adopted in mountain area and this adoptive strategy of these people has been the subject of interest in ecology and other discipline as well. The Himalayan tourist sites have certain characteristics such as inaccessibility, marginality and fragility of mountain environment. Despite of difficulties the ecological niche can promote the adoptive response to such environment best suited for tourists. There is a complex distribution of biotic communities due to contrasting geographical and climatic characteristics. The tourism products are diversified across the length and breadth of rugged and hostile environment. The areas not suitable for human habitation have been devoted

for tourism activities. It is an established fact that environment is deteriorating in Sikkim Himalayas due to various development process for prosperity.

To know the process of environment degradation, the next chapter highlights the various agents directly or indirectly responsible for environmental degradation in Sikkim.