

POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND SIKKIM DEMOCRATIC FRONT: A STUDY

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (ARTS) IN POLITICAL SCIENCE UNDER
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

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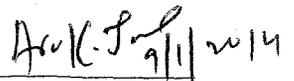
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*In loving memory of my Father:
the cheerleader of my life.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACT	:	Affected Citizen of Tista
ASDFC	:	All Sikkim Democratic Front Committee.
ASSPC	:	All Sikkim Sangram Parishad Committee
BAC	:	Block Administrative Centre
BDO	:	Block Development Officer
BJP	:	Bharatia Janata Party
B-L	:	Bhutia – Lepcha
BLC	:	Block Level Committees.
BLC	:	Block Level Committees
CCS	:	Concerned Citizen of Sikkim
CLC	:	Constituency Level Committee
CLC	:	Constituency Level Committees
CPI	:	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	:	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CRPF	:	Central Reserve Police Force
CWC	:	Central Working Committee
CWC	:	Central working Committees
DC	:	District Committees
DWC	:	District Working Committee
DWC	:	District Work Committees

GPU	:	Gram Panchayat Unit
HRDD	:	Human Resource Development Department
INC	:	Indian National Congress
INC (I)	:	Indian National Congress (I)
JAC	:	Joint Action Committee
JP	:	Janata Party
MBC	:	Most Backward Classes
MLA	:	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	:	Member of Parliament
NREGA	:	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NCP	:	Nationalist Congress Party
NHPC	:	National Hydroelectric Power Corporation
NGO	:	Non Governmental Organisation
OBC	:	Other Backward Class
PSLA	:	Proceedings of Sikkim Legislative Assembly
PWD	:	Public Work Department
RDD	:	Rural Development Department
RMDD	:	Rural Management and Development Department

SC	:	Scheduled Caste
SCR	:	Sikkim Congress Revolutionary
SDF	:	Sikkim Democratic Front
SGPP	:	Sikkim Gorkha Prajatantrik Part
SHRP	:	Sikkim Himali Rajya Parishad
SIBLAC	:	Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee
SJC	:	Sikkim Janata Congress
SJEP	:	Sikkim Jan-Ekta Party
SJP	:	Sikkim Janata Parishad (Confusion)
SJP	:	Sikkim Janata Party (Confusion)
SLA	:	Sikkim Legislative Assembly
SNC	:	Sikkim National Congress
SNC	:	Sikkim National Congress
SNP	:	Sikkim National Party
SPC	:	Sikkim Prajatantra Congress
SSC	:	Sikkim State Congress
SSCL	:	Sikkim Scheduled Caste League
SSP	:	Sikkim Sangram Parishad
WCPL	:	Working Committee at Panchayat Level.

Preface

I have been fortunate to have Professor Soumitra De, Department of Political Science, North Bengal University as my supervisor who never imposed his decisions on me and always allowed me to be on my own. I express my heartfelt gratitude to him for teaching me most of what I know about research work today and for all of the time and effort he has spent not only on this research work, but in shaping my outlook as a scholar. His profound knowledge and expertise have been invaluable for my present work. I thank him for his understanding and support in my testing time and indeed in getting me on to the doctoral programme in the first place. I hope someday to be as valuable as an advisor to someone as he has been to me.

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I thank Mr. Padam Bahadur Chettri, President, Sikkim State Unit, BJP, Mr. A.D. Subba, President, Himali Rajya Parishad Party, Mr. Biraj Adhikari, President, Sikkim National People's Party, Mr. Pal Man Subba, Ex M.P. Lok Sabha, Mr. Nakul Das Rai, Ex M.P., Lok Sabha, P.T. Gyamtso, Ex M.P. Rajya Sabha, Mr. T.T. Bhutia, Ex- Minister, and Convener, Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee, Mr. Sonam Dupden, Ex-Minister, Mr. K. N. Upreti, Ex-Minister Mr. Pradeep Yonzon, Ex-MLA, for sparing their invaluable time for me and providing me support and suggestions in collecting primary information.

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I shall remain deeply indebted to all the respondents from all four districts of Sikkim who consented to be interviewed and shared their thoughts, perception and vision with me. This thesis simply could not have been completed without them. In this connection, I sincerely thank Norden Sherpa (Daju) for walking long hours on foot in the dense, sloppy cardamom fields to help me in my field survey. Laxmi Daju, Yenden Sherpa, Sonam Rinchen Sherpa and Simon Gurung deserves special thanks for their unconditional assistance in my field survey in different areas of Sikkim.

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Special thanks is also due for the staff and officials of Community Library, Gangtok and Namchi, the Information and Public Relations Office, Gangtok, the Election Commission Office, Gangtok, Department of Law, Gangtok, Rural Management and Development Department, Gangtok, and my sincere thanks to Block Development Officers, Councilors, Zilla Panchayats and Gram Panchayats of different districts of Sikkim for their cooperation.

I extend my sincere thanks to the staff and officials of Calcutta University Central Library, Presidency University Library, Alipur Campus Library, Calcutta University, National Library, Kolkata, American Library, Kolkata and British Council Library, Kolkata

I cannot remain without thanking Shah Sir, my Political Science teacher in High School for teaching me the basics of the subject; it is because of his way of teaching, efforts and endurance I opted Political Science for higher studies. I would also like to extend my warm thanks to Mr. D.R. Chhetri, Mr. Binay Pradhan, Mr. Manoj Kr. Basnett, Mr. Wangchuk Lepcha and Mr. Anjan Dey (NBU) for helping me unconditionally in different ways to complete my thesis.

Mr. Binod Rai, M.L.A, Government of Sikkim deserves special place for being there to help me whenever I approached him. Even in

his tight schedule he never once declined my request and was ever ready to help me in all possible ways.

One of the most gratifying aspects of this research work is that it has introduced me to many extraordinarily helpful people. I have incurred many debts of gratitude from them in the preparation of this work that I cannot formally acknowledge here. I would like to stress here that the ultimate responsibility of any conclusions or errors in this work remains mine alone.

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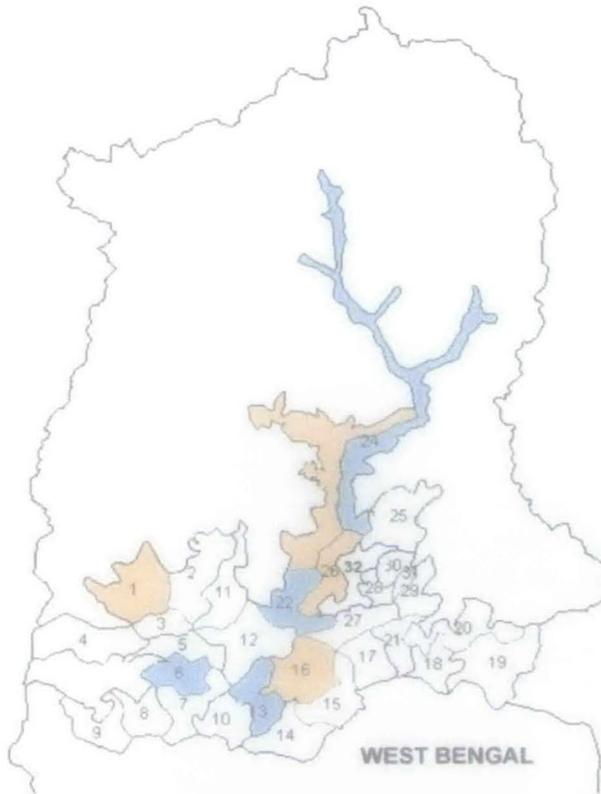
Dated NBU

Sapna Gurung

The 9th January, 2014

MAP

Sikkim Assembly Constituency Map Before General Assembly Election, 2009.



Numbered Assembly constituencies in color represent areas of field studies.



Constituencies with higher skewness or greater anti-incumbency character.



Constituencies with little or moderate skewness or pro-incumbency character.

Photographs of Chief Ministers of Sikkim



Researcher with Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari,
Former Chief Minister of Sikkim
(1979-1984, 1985-1994)



Researcher with Mr. B.B. Gooroong,
Former Chief Minister of Sikkim
(11 May 1984-24 May 1984)



Researcher with Mr. Sanchaman Limboo,
Former Chief Minister of Sikkim
(18 May-11 December 1994)



Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling
Chief Minister of Sikkim

Some Political Leaders in the Previous and the Present Legislative Assembly of Sikkim



Researcher with Mr. Padam Bahadur Chettri,
President, Sikkim State Unit, BJP



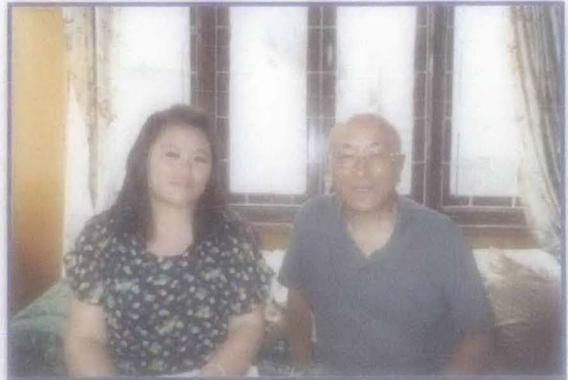
Researcher with Mr. A.D. Subba, President,
Sikkim Himali Rajya Parishad Party



Researcher with Mr. K.N. Upreti, Ex- Minister

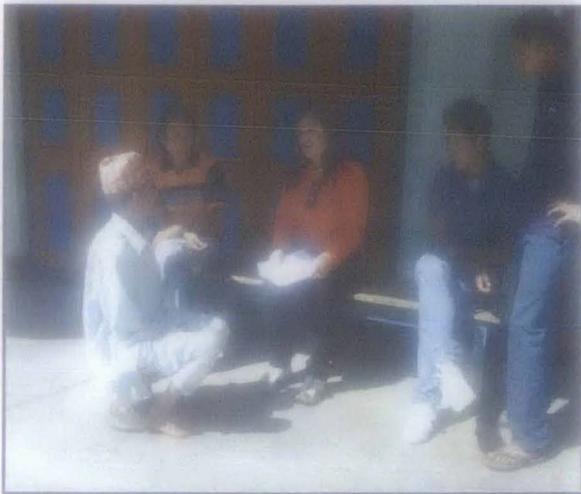


Researcher with Mr. Biraj Adhikari, President,
Sikkim National People's Party



(1) Researcher with Mr. C. D. Rai, retired Bureaucrat and Editor. (2) Researcher with Jigme N. Kazi Eminent Journalist, Editor and Writer.3. Researcher with Mr. Nakul Das Rai, Ex M.P.Lok Sabha. (4) Researcher with Mr. P.T. Gyamtso, Ex M.P. Rajya Sabha. (5) Researcher with Mr. Sonam Wangdi, retired Chief Secretary of Sikkim. (6) Researcher with Mr. Manoj Gupta, a Sikkimese-Indian Businessman.

Glimpses of Locales with People Being Interviewed



1. Researcher with a respondent at NREGA site.
2. Researcher with a Lepcha lady in a village.
3. Researcher with an Octagenerian locally known as Kaka-Tak.
4. Researcher with respondents at Rinchenpong Constituency.
5. An Octagenerian who belonged to Chogyal Era.
6. An Octagenerian locally named as Pala who belonged to Chogyal Era.

CHAPTER – 1
I N T R O D U C T I O N

CHAPTER

1

Introduction

1. Preliminaries

On the May 8th 1973, an agreement was signed at Gangtok between the Chogyal, the leaders of the political parties representing the people of Sikkim and the Government of India. The Agreement provided for a Legislative Assembly for Sikkim elected on the basis of adult franchise, an Executive Council responsible to the Assembly and safeguards for minorities. Under the Agreement, India was to provide the head of the administration (Chief Executive) to ensure democratization, communal harmony and social development. The Assembly was to be elected every four years on the basis of adult franchise under the supervision of Election Commission of India.

Following the Tripartite Agreement, elections were held from April 15 to 19, 1974, under the supervision of the Chief Election Commission of India. According to the parity formula, fifteen seats were allotted to the Bhutia- Lepchas and the remaining fifteen to the Nepalese including one for the scheduled caste. Soon, both sides demanded separate seats for the monks. As a result thirty-two member Assembly was provided with two reserved seats one for the scheduled caste and other for the monasteries (Sangha). The sangha constituency is a unique feature of not only Sikkim but also for the whole of India. It is reserved seat for the representation of the monasteries of Sikkim as a whole and their Lamas. This maintained parity, the scheduled caste being of Nepali origin and the monk coming from the Bhutia-Lepcha group. Kazi Lhendup Dorjee's party Sikkim Congress swept the polls by winning thirty-one seats out of the thirty two seats. He was sworn in on the 23rd of July as the Chief

Minister of the State. And thus, the Country passed on from autocracy to democracy.

The Government of Sikkim wanted to have closer ties with India and on 5th September 1974, the Constitution (Thirty-fifth amendment) was passed in the Parliament of India to up-grade the status of Sikkim from a protectorate to an associate state of the Indian Union. The 'Associate State' idea was a unique constitutional arrangement.

The Chogyal did not like the new set up. He was also dissatisfied with his status as a constitutional head of the state of which he was an absolute ruler till the other day. He initiated an attitude of confrontation with the popular ministry headed by Kazi. The difference between the Chogyal and the Assembly got aggravated to such an extent, that the Sikkim Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on 10th April, 1975, abolishing the institution of the Chogyal and declaring Sikkim as a constituent unit of India. The Assembly also resolved to submit its resolution to the people of Sikkim by way of a general referendum. Majority of votes were cast in favor of the resolution. Consequently, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha passed the Thirty-Sixth Constitution Amendment Bill, which received the assent of the President on 16th May 1975 and made Sikkim the 22nd state of the Indian Union.

A new chapter was added in Sikkim's history bringing to an end more than three hundred year old monarchy headed by Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal the last ruler of the Namgyal dynasty. In the last 38 years many unexpected changes altered the basic character of Sikkim's unique personality as one knew it in 1973. The very nature of Sikkim policy began to be viewed de-linked to its past and a new content was added to it. The post merger era brought about a painful process of conversion to the political and economic

culture of an Indian state. The merger brought in a system of governance and institutions which were foreign to the Sikkimese tradition. Immediately after the merger, Sikkim adopted unicameral legislative system in the name of Sikkim Legislative Assembly. It also got one seat each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The members of Sikkim Legislative Assembly are directly elected by the people on the basis of 'one man- one vote' and universal adult franchise. It was much in contrast with the traditional communal voting system.

Following the resignation of Kazi's ministry on 17.8.1979 due to defection in the ruling party and subsequent failure of constitutional machinery, President's rule was imposed for the first time in Sikkim in 1979. Immediately after the imposition of President's rule, since the Houses of the Parliament were not in session, the election was to be held on the 12th October, 1979.

More than seven political parties and independent candidates were in fray. National parties such as Indian National Congress (U)(INC), Janta Party (JP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI (M), regional parties viz; Sikkim Janta Parishad (SJP), Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary)(SCR), Sikkim Prajatantra Congress (SPC), Sikkim Schedule Caste League (SSCL) and other independents contested the 1979 election. SJP founded and led by Nar Bahadur Bhandari was able to secure majority and formed a new government for the first time based on a regional party. In 1981 the SJP joined the Congress (I) and became the Sikkim Pradesh Congress (I). In the midst of healthy political signs in Sikkim under the leadership of N.B. Bhandari, there occurred the most unfortunate and undemocratic dismissal of Bhandari as Chief Minister of Sikkim in May 1984 by the then Governor of Sikkim H.J. Taleyar Khan on the ground that he had lost the support of the M.L.A's. B.B. Gurung from Congress (I) was installed as the third Chief Minister but his ministry lasted for only 13 days. As a result of the failure of the

constitutional machinery, Sikkim was once again brought under President's rule for the second time in the year 1984.

No sooner Bhandari was dismissed; he left Congress (I) in disgust along with his majority of legislators. He hoisted his own red and white flag and founded a new regional party namely Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) with elephant as its election symbol which won 31 of the 32 seats in the general elections in 1984. In the election to the State Legislative Assembly held in the year 1989, Congress (I), two regional parties namely SSP and the SCR and many independent candidates contested. In all the constituencies Bhandari's SSP was declared elected securing all 32 seats in the State Assembly. This was a record in the government and politics of not only Sikkim but also in the country.

On 17th May 1994, dissidents toppled the Bhandari Government on the controversial issue of income tax concessions to the tribals. Mr. Sanchaman Limboo was installed as the Chief Minister as head of the party called the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (Sanchaman). In the Assembly election held on 17th November 1994, a regional party, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) came to power and its leader Mr. Pawan Chamling was installed as the Chief Minister of Sikkim. In 1999 the SDF was returned to power and again in 2004 and 2009.

During Bhandadri's regime, the opposition confronted with the government on matters of policies and functions even at least in the first term. In the second and third terms although there were no strong opposition parties, there were oppositions within the Party which later wrecked the very foundation of SSP and Chamling's SDF gave a tough competition for power to SSP in the 1994 elections. But in Chamling's regime, which is from 1994 till date, not a single strong party has formed which can compete with SDF and give voters

an alternative nor there does opposition force within the Party. SDF has in fact out ruled the SSP. If we look at the performance graph of SDF in four consecutive elections, it has improved from better to best. In April 2004 his party won with unprecedented verdict both in terms of percentage of votes polled and the number of seats won. In 2009 election too, the party won all the 32 Assembly seats. The party is ruling in Sikkim with absolute majority. The entire nation is debating on anti-incumbency factors, whereas in Sikkim there is nothing but pro-incumbency trend.

One reason for this pro-incumbency factor and one-party rule in Sikkim can be attributed to the lack of strong opposition. Opposition in Sikkim is weak because they tend to grow and decay like mushrooms particularly at the time of elections. They always play politics outside the Legislature. This is one reason why they mostly fail to gain people's confidence. Even national political parties play a seasonal role. Both national and regional parties except the ruling party utterly lack in organizational structure. Above all, opposition financial condition is also too poor to run the party office. The phenomenal feature of politics of Sikkim is that opposition has been virtually non-existent both from the regional as well as national political parties although opposition has to be there to play a constructive politics of checks and balances. But it has to be kept in mind that Sikkim is too young to be equated with party politics and oppositions of other states.

2. Research Objectives

The primary objective of the proposed study is to make an intense study for deeper understanding of political democracy in Sikkim. It is to understand whether political democracy has taken its root in Sikkimese society and to analyze how it has evolved in Sikkim over the years. It is also to analyze political development in Sikkim

under the leadership of different political leaders in post merger era and in this connection, it is to analyze a peculiar system of one - party -system and one - man - rule in Sikkim for almost 38 years. The objective is also to analyze the reason behind the political domination of the SSP and the SDF for a long period in the politics of Sikkim and the impact of their rules on the state policies and politics. The other related objective of the proposed research work will be to compare and contrast the ruling of these two prominent political parties.

These areas have not been covered and received adequate attention from research scholars and the academia working on Sikkim earlier. The study on these particular areas would help us to understand the state of the State after the merger till present day. More particularly the study will try to understand the performances, governance and achievements of the SSP and the SDF as a regional party and their role to bring about political democracy in Sikkim.

3. Statement of the Problem

SJP led by Bhandari swept the 1979 elections with 17 Assembly seats including 1 Sangha seat and formed the government. Since then, from 1979-1994, Sikkim's politics was almost dominated by Bhandari and his party, SJP (1979-1984) and SSP (1984-1994). Thus for 15 years Bhandari was the uncrowned monarch of Sikkim (Chakravarti, 1994). After the end of Bhandari's regime, SDF led by Pawan Chamling swept the polls by winning 19 out of 32 seats and formed the government in 1994. In the same manner like SSP, SDF also dominated the Sikkim's politics from 1994 till date. The victory of SJP and later the SSP and SDF without much resistance means that there was and still is a one - party -system and one - man - rule in Sikkim for almost 38 years.

Though both the parties ruled for not less than fifteen years, there is reported difference between the rules of these two parties. Sikkim became democratic and democratic structures were established since 1975, but it was only in name-sake. The percentage of illiteracy was very high, and the Sikkimese did not know what political consciousness was. With this background, Kazi was sworn in as the first Chief Minister of Sikkim. Kazi's term was basically characterized by trials and errors. Neither the leaders nor the public were conscious about democracy and were incompetent about democratic norms and principles.

After Kazi's rule, Bhandari came to power. His rule was dictatorial and he is termed as despot. Bhandari demanded complete submission to his authority. State terrorism was rampantly active everywhere against which nobody dared to raise a voice of dissent as it was repressed for good. He did not tolerate any criticism from both within and outside the party. (*Kazi, 1993*) Not a single organization had been granted recognition by the Parishad government even if there were some social organization and political parties; they had to either join him or were silenced. The press was also asked to behave properly or face consequences (*Kazi, 1993*). It was alleged that the administration, the bureaucracy and the police force tortured public to no end. Bhandari wanted to control all the people by coercion and physical torture. He tried to establish hegemony of one reign, one leader, one party and one language in Sikkim (*Bhutia, 1999*). This is how one - party system, one-man-rule and reign of terror began in Sikkim (*Kazi, 1993*).

Other political parties could not survive as opposition parties. There were assaults, threats, intimidations and constant pressure over the press media and use of force and commandos over the opposition parties. As a result there was an absence of a strong and effective opposition and this led to an absence of democratic

atmosphere in Sikkim. The undemocratic rule in Sikkim by Bhandari resulted in his and SSP's downfall and led ultimately to the emergence of Pawan Chamling and SDF in 1994 who talked about political right, freedom and restoration of democracy in Sikkim. SDF Government claim to have ended the reign of terror and political oppression and the return of the rule of Law. Chamling's government can be remembered for bringing pluralism and dissent into the political system of Sikkim. Today in Sikkim, opposition parties are operating in a far liberalized political environment. (*Telegraph, 17 Dec 1996*)

Keeping the above facts, some questions arise in the mind. These are i) what were the reasons behind the domination of SSP from 1984-1994 and SDF from 1994 - till date in the politics of Sikkim? We shall have to analyze the problem in depth manner to answer this question. ii) How are these parties different in their policies, programs and strategy? Though SSP and SDF were dominant parties in Sikkim, there is a need of proper explanation of reasons of dominance of these parties and difference of dominance or rule of these parties. This may justify our interest in proposed research work since these areas have not been touched by previous researchers.

4. Review of Literature

Literatures on Sikkim are not very well documented. One can lay hands on a very few published literature. The literature available on Sikkim can be divided into different categories. Risley's "*The Gazetteer of Sikkim*" (Risley, 1928/1993) is one of the earliest publications which gives an account of early history, physical features, vegetation, population, religion and custom and tradition etc of Sikkim. It gives a sketch of different rulers of Namgyal dynasty of Sikkim and the nature of their governance, their relation with

Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and British India. It also provides the account of British policy towards the East Himalayan States, its intention of intervention in Sikkim and its different policies and strategies to retain political control over Sikkim. Similar early historical accounts on Sikkim can be found in the writings of J.D. Hooker, (*Hooker, 1854*), J.W.Edgar (*Edgar, 1874/2005*), Richard Temple (*Temple, 1875*) Colman Macaulay, (*Macaulay, 1885/1977/2005*) J.C.White, (*White, 1909/1999/2007*) Coelho (*V.H.Coelho, 1971*) and other works on history of Sikkim can be found in the writings of P R Rao (*Rao, 1972*) Bhattacharya, (*Bhattacharya, 1984*) Bhanja, (*Bhanja, 1993*), Wangyal (*Wangyal S. , 2002*) Wangchuk and Zulca (*Zulca, 2007*)

Although there were 'social' organisations in Sikkim prior to Indian Independence but the actual political awakening started only in late 1940's after the birth of first political party, Sikkim State Congress on 7th December, 1947. This event is regarded as the first cockcrow of political movement in Sikkim. There are very few literatures which deal with political developments in Sikkim since 1940's and the emergence and growth of different regional political parties and development of party- politics in Sikkim.

The pioneering work in this field is the work of Basnet "A *Short Political History of Sikkim*". (*Basnet, 1974*) The work is divided into two parts. Part I discusses the geography and demography of Sikkim. Part II deals with the emergence of political parties, agitation launched by the different political parties and sections of the society and intervention of the Indian Government in the political affairs of Sikkim. However, this book has certain limitations. It deals with the interplay of political parties, the Chogyal and the Government of India from 1947 to May 1973. It does not cover the political aspects of Sikkim from 1973 onwards.

Sinha, in his book "*Politics of Sikkim - A Sociological Study*" (Sinha, 1975) provides an analysis of the political development in Sikkim and evolution of the significant social forces. He identifies sets of the elite, the patricians, Kazis, the neo-rich plebeians, pro-palace bureaucrats, the political leaders and the youth leaders leading various social forces. He regarded the lamas, categorized as religious elites are responsible for proliferation of communal feelings in the society. He evaluates the political process and development in Sikkim in the post 1947 period in terms of institutional accomplishment and development, transformation of theocracy and finally the merger of Sikkim to the Indian Union. The book although very useful with valuable information of politics of Sikkim covers only the period till 1975 and it investigates the politics of Sikkim from sociological perspective.

Rao (Rao P. R., 1978) discusses about the struggle of the people of Sikkim for democratization of their administration, awakening of the political consciousness of the people of Sikkim culminating in the making of modern Sikkim as the 22nd state of India. To some extent, it also deals with the political development in Sikkim in the pre-merger period. It also deals with the influence of Indian Independence in Sikkim, democratic aspirations and urges of the people of Sikkim. The problem with this account is that it covers the political aspects of Sikkim till the pre-merger period. It does not throw light about the political process, organization and administration and other aspects after 1973.

Das, who was appointed as Chief Executive in Sikkim from 1973-1974 during the agitation had been one of the prime actors in the merger. He in his book (Das, 1983) provides the first-hand report of the period of turmoil in Sikkim from 1973 till its merger with India in 1975. He tried to show in his book how merger of Sikkim with India became inevitable. Although tiny, this Himalayan

kingdom was very sensitively placed that it could not be ignored by India in terms of her security. Das in his book tried to show how India took the first opportunity to bring Sikkim under its fold when such situation arose and shows how this could have been avoided if the Chogyal had played his cards well but he committed some mistakes which India had been waiting for years and in this context he accounts the key role played by the three dominant and powerful women-Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India; Hope Cook, the American wife of the Chogyal; and Elisa Maria, the Belgian wife of the Kazi. He attempts to answer a number of questions. The questions are like (i) was the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union necessary? (ii) Was there really a popular uprising against the Chogyal in 1973? (iii) What was the role of Delhi in it? (iv) Was the May 1973 Agreement not adequate to meet the requirement of a democratic set up? (v) Did the Sikkimese give up their identity happily? And (v) what has India ultimately gained? He also talked about uncertainties of Sikkim's future as an Indian state. This book although very informative with valuable appendices is just an interpretation of facts and events and is limited to these questions only.

The work of Kotturan George, *"The Himalayan Gateway: History and Culture of Sikkim"* (George, 1983) underlines the political, administrative and economic set up of the people of Sikkim while S.K. Jha and Mishra in their work *"Sikkim-Government and Politics"* (Jha, 1984) highlights on development of different organs of the government in Sikkim in the new democratic set up under the aegis of Indian Union.

Datta Ray in his narrative *"Smash and Grab Annexation of Sikkim"* (Datta-Ray, 1984) recounts how Sikkim was taken over by India in a smash and grab raid. He argues that Sikkim was not merged but annexed in 1975. He sought to present a detailed

account and analysis of the events leading to the annexation of Sikkim to the Indian Union, converting the Protectorate into an Indian state. He gives the detailed account of controversial “special poll” held in 14 April, 1975 which was held to seek opinion of the Sikkimese people on the merger of Sikkim with India. The documentary evidences, interviews and eye-witness accounts provided in the book are very useful and provoke any researcher’s thoughts to revisit Sikkim’s pre-merger period. The limitation of this book is that it is somewhat like a biography of the last Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal. Since the author was a close friend of the Chogyal, his stand was against the merger. Besides, the book largely deals with the events and political development in Sikkim just before the merger and accounts how it was smashed, grabbed and finally annexed by the Indian Union.

Sengupta’s “*State Government and Politics of Sikkim*” (Sengupta, 1985) is a comprehensive work on Sikkim’s politics and government. He traces the political development in Sikkim especially after 1947, conflict between the old monarchical system and the new political forces that came up after the Indian independence which aspired for Rule of the People, their revolution for democracy in 1973 that led to the merger of Sikkim with India. The author gives an account of the political process and electoral system prevalent till 1973 and the changes that took place since 1974 till 1984. He also gives in depth accounts of the working of political parties, pressure groups and governmental organizations like Legislature, Executive and Judiciary through different stages of development in Sikkim. Moreover, the book provides the comparative study of electoral process and the role of political parties in the old and the new system of governance and the changing trends of political dynamics reflected through the electoral process, political parties and pressure groups before and after the merger. However, even though it is a systematic

and comprehensive work, it is limited to the political aspects of Sikkim up to 1984.

Like Datta Ray, Rustamji was also a close friend of Chogyal P T Namgyal. Hence, his work "*Sikkim – A Himalayan Tragedy*" (Rustamji, 1987) was also somewhat like a bibliographical account of Chogyal. Chube in his article "*Ethnicity and Politics in Sikkim*" in M. K. Raha edited "*The Himalayan Heritage*" (S.K, 1987) gives a valuable account of political development in Sikkim after 1947. He discusses about the factional politics in Sikkim in the post merger era as an effect of various ethnic and social forces.

Bhadra's "*Sikkim: Democracy and Social Changes*", (Bhadra, 1992) discusses the factors and forces that led to the transformation of Sikkim from a theocratic monarchy to democracy. In this context the author analyzes the factors that break up traditional societies and moves them towards modernization, the models of transition and the hurdles of modernization. The author also focuses on the different aspects of political development in the new state, determinants of political development and the functions of different agents of political development like education, mass media and the role of different social classes in the political development of Sikkim. She analyzes the transition of socio-economic condition of Sikkim from monarchy to democracy and also analyzes the evolution of political parties, their changing roles and transition in electoral process in the new set up. The author emphasizes more on social forces than political organizations.

Kazi's "*Inside Sikkim Against The Tide*" (Kazi, 1993) discusses the issues at stake in the tiny Himalayan state and exposes the hollowness of the democratic system and values which was thrust on the Sikkimese people at the time of the merger in 1975. The book largely focuses on how Nar Bahadur Bhandari became the Chief

Minister in 1979 promising to restore Sikkim to the Sikkimese and remained in power for 14 years. It argues that after the merger of Sikkim, instead of democracy there was dictatorship in a democratic set up under Bhandari's rule. It brings into focus the supremacy of 'one-man rule and one-party system' during Bhandari's rule where all the democratic principles were trampled especially how press media was suppressed and attacked. It gives an account of how Bhandari managed to remain in power for 14 long years and also gives a brief account of formation of a new political outfit- Sikkim Democratic Front as a counter to Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad. Although the book is well articulated and resourceful in terms of politics in Sikkim after the merger but it is more a journalistic report and an interpretation of personal events and experience which lacks the systematic approach and gives only a general idea of party politics of Sikkim from 1979 to 1992.

Chakraborty in an article "*Government and Politics of Sikkim*" in Lama's edited book "*Sikkim: Society, Polity, Economy and Environment*" (Chakaravathi, 1994) focuses on the development of party-politics in Sikkim since 1940's. It also analyses the constitutional position of Sikkim, political structure, Sons of the Soil Policy, Electoral Politics of Sikkim from 1979 to 1989 and administration in the state. It also discusses the domination of regional political parties in the state. In this article the author shows the non-existence of strong opposition political parties unlike other states of the Indian Union as phenomenal characteristics of the politics of Sikkim.

Like Kazi, Subba's "*Sikkim, Who Ruined It?*" (Subba P. , 1998) also gives an account of Bhandari's 14 years rule. He highlights how democratic values and principles were tempered under the misrule of Bhandari. Chakravarti's "*Political Development of Sikkim*", (Chakaravathi, 2003) deals with the emergence, growth and

governance of SSP to some extent. By and large, the book focuses among other things on development of Sikkim in the socio-economic field.

Thapa's "*Ethnicity, Class and Politics in Sikkim*" (Thapa, 2002) examines how class and ethnic factors influence the political process in the tiny Indian state and how these identities of the Sikkimese are maintained and reproduced in the political and social life of the people. The work attempts to assess the relative significance of these two factors in understanding the political process in the State. This thesis is however limited in its focus and looks only at the role of classes and ethnic groups in the politics of Sikkim.

Sinha's work "*Sikkim, Feudal and Democratic*" (Sinha A. C., 2008) analyses how Sikkim has increasingly been exposed to the wind of change as a result of the new sense of political identity under the Indian Union. The book is divided into three parts. Part one deals with the background and social history of emergence of ethnic plurality in the Sikkimese society. Part two deals with the feudal and democratic elites, their roles in two different phases of Sikkimese history. Part three describes the forces and forms of political development, the transition of Sikkim from feudal to democratic set up. The book focuses on Sikkim's past and present and reports as to how the Tibetans, Nepalese, and the British dealt with Sikkim leading to eclipse of its autonomous entity. However, this book is limited to an extent that it focuses only on social classes especially the elites of Sikkim.

Kazi's book (Kazi J. N., 2009) is a collection of his articles published in different publications. His articles largely focuses on the unique and distinct identity of Sikkimese people within Indian Union promised under Article 371(f) of the Indian Constitution during the time of merger in 1975. He talks about the gradual distortion and

dilution of the article by the petty politicians and urges India to honour its commitments and assurances made to the Sikkimese people during the merger period. The articles covers the important political events and issues in Sikkim from 1982-2008 and provides a record of Sikkimese people demanding the preservation of their distinct identity within the framework of the Constitution of India. The collection of articles in the book provides a good source of reference, but it lacks systematic approach as it is just a compilation of journalistic write up.

Gurung's "*Sikkim: Ethnicity and Political Dynamics-A Triadic Perspective*" (Gurung, 2010) provides a very comprehensive and systematic work which focuses on ethnicity oriented political mobilization in Sikkim and tries to analyze why and how ethnic identity consciousness becomes the mechanism of political action and how it influences politics. It tries to examine the relation between political organizations /institutions and ethnic politics and how they use each other for mutual benefits. In this context the book analyzes the history and identity of major ethnic groups in Sikkim, their condition and the state policies on ethnic groups before the merger. It reveals that contrary to the general expectation that democratic set up after the merger of Sikkim with India would put an end to the prevailing ethnic politics, it has become more prominent where even the smaller communities started to assert separate political identities. It shows the growth of ethnic politics under different leaders and organizations after the merger. Although this book is developed very systematically and there is not much research gap but the book's primary focus is only on ethnic politics in Sikkim. There is no denying that the book covers the interplay of politics since its inception till the recent politics but its focus is purely on ethnic politics.

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Apart from these books there are other books which deal with other aspects of Sikkim. The work of T.B. Subba "*Dynamics Of A Hill Society*" (Subba T., 1989) is a sociological analysis on the Nepalis of Sikkim and Darjeeling. In his another work "*Politics of Culture*" (Subba, *Politics Of Culture*, 1999) he seeks to analyze the emerging identity consciousness among the three kirata tribes-Limboos (Tsongs), Khambus (Rais) and Yakhas (Dewans) in Nepal and Sikkim. Another study on castes and communities of Sikkim is carried out by K.S. Singh edited "*People of India –Sikkim*" (Singh, 1993) It is an Anthropological survey which provides the detail profile of three major ethnic communities of Sikkim and other sub-cultural groups.

The work of Wangyal "*Sikkim and Darjeeling–Division and Deception*" (Wangyal, 2002) provides a historical account of transfer of portion of Sikkim (Darjeeling) to the British East India Company. He argues that the grant of Darjeeling by the Chogyal of Sikkim to the British was not done officially. He focuses that Sikkim and Darjeeling are historically inseparable with contiguity of borders and common language, culture and religion. He believes that because of this peculiar relationship and strong bonding shared by the people of these two places arouses apprehension and fear among the majority of the people that these two areas will one day amalgamate to form a bigger and more a viable state. Relevant documents and quoted verbatim regarding Darjeeling and Sikkim are provided for further research in this book. Such relevant documents on Sikkim and Darjeeling can also be found in Moktan's "*Sikkim- Darjeeling: Compendium of Documents*" (Moktan, 2004).

The work of Geoffrey Gorer "*The Lepchas of Sikkim*" (Gorer, 1938/1996) "*Himalayan Village: An Account of The Lepchas of Sikkim*" (Gorer, 1938) throws light on the way of life of Lepcha

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Community of Sikkim, their religion, law and order, rules of kinship and marriage, education and economic backwardness etc .Such account can be found in the writings of C.J.Morris (*Morris, 1938*) Fonning's "*Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*" (*Fonning, 1987*) traces the cultural history of the Lepchas and the influence of outsiders like Buddhists and Christians on Lepcha Culture. K.P. Tamsang in his book, "*The Unknown and Untold Reality about the Lepchas*" (*Tamsang, 1983*) talks about the distortion of history of evolution of Lepchas made by the different writers. R.K.Sprigg's recent work "*Shedding Some Light on the History, Language and Literatures of the Lepchas*" (*Sprigg, 2005*) provides valuable knowledge with documentary evidence about history and life of Lepchas in the early 19th century. Jha's "*Ethno-Ornithology of Lepchas of Sikkim*" (*Jha V. J., 2012*) analyzes the relationship between people and birds. It makes an in-depth study of ethno-ornithological traditions of the Lepchas an aboriginal group of people of North-East India and describes the importance of birds in Lepcha myths of origins and their importance in the day-to-day lives of the Lepcha people. The works of Chie Nakane (*Nakane, 1966*), Bhasin (*Bhasin V. , 1989*), Subba (*Subba J. , 1999*) deals with tribes and other ethnic groups of Sikkim.

Rahul's "*The Himalaya as a frontier*", (*Rahul, 1978*) Sharma's "*History Geography and Travels of Sikkim and Bhutan*", Choudhary's "*Sikkim: Geographical Perspectives*", (*Choudhury, 2006*) deal with geographical aspect of Sikkim. Bhasin's "*Sikkim Himalayas Ecology and Resource Development*", (*Bhasin, 1995*) deals with ecology while Dasgupta's "*Sikkim: Problems and Perspective of Development*", (*Dasgupta, 1992*) focuses on socio-economic aspect of post- merger Sikkim. He provides a valuable discussion on land reform and problems, agricultural problems, mixed farming, forest management, industrial growth and resource generation in Sikkim. Another such work on socio-economic aspect of Sikkim is provided by Kharel in his

“*Socio-Economic Condition of Sikkim under Colonial Domination (1889-1947): An Authenticity Discourse.*” (Kharel, 2002) But his work is based on socio-economic condition of Sikkim before 1947. Likewise, Dutta’s “*Sikkim since Independence: A Study of Impact of Education and Emerging Class Structure*”, (Dutta, 1991) attempts to understand the process of modernization in Sikkim since 1975 by taking education as an index. He traces the history and growth of education and analyzes the availability of education facilities. He also analyzes the role of education in bringing change in traditional social system whereas Mahajan, Majumdar & Agnihotri’s work “*Educational Administration in Sikkim Structures Processes and Future Prospects*”, (Mahajan, 1995) covers different aspects of education in Sikkim in a comprehensive manner. It gives description of legal basis of education, educational policies of the state and roles of different governmental and non-governmental bodies towards education in Sikkim. It also highlights the problems and prospects of education for future development.

Since Sikkim is a tourist hot spot for its natural beauty many books and travelogues are written which explores this aspect of Sikkim. Among them, the work of Sattar “*Tourism in Sikkim (India): Impact on Economy, Society And Environment*”, (Sattar, 2010) and “*Growth of Ecotourism in North Bengal and Sikkim*”, (Karmakar, 2011) by Karmakar is noteworthy for academic pursuits. There are many other handbooks, guidebooks and travelogues which give general information about Sikkim.

Among the other edited books on Sikkim mention must be made of “*The Himalaya: Aspects of Change*” edited by F.S. Hall, (Hall, 1981) “*The Himalayas: Profiles of Modernization and Adaptation*” Edited by S. K. Chaube, (Chaube, 1985) “*Eastern Himalayas: Environment and Economy*” edited by R.L. Sarkar and M.P. Lama, (Lama, 1986) “*Religion and Society in the Himalayas*” edited by T.B.

Subba & Karubaki Dutta, (*Dutta T. S., 1991*) series of M.P. Lama (ed.), "*Sikkim study series Geography and Environment Volume -1*", "*Sikkim study series culture (part I) Vol. 3*", "*Sikkim study series Food and culture Volume - 4*", "*Sikkim study series Language and Literature Volume - 5*", (*Lama M. , 2004*) "*Human resources, culture, amenities, and quality of life in Sikkim : a critique*" edited by Choudhari, (*Choudhari, 2005*) and "*Sikkim Past and Present*" edited by Joshi (*Joshi, 2004*) etc. which deal with multi-disciplinary aspects and provides valuable information about the land and its people.

Apart from the edited books there are some published articles which speak volumes about Sikkim. Rose, (*Rose, 1969*) gives an account of relation of India with China, Tibet and Sikkim and especially focuses on the relation of India with Sikkim since 1950's. He analyzes Sikkim as an important border state for India considering the proximity of China. R. Rahul in his article "*The System of Administration in the Himalaya*" (*R.Rahul, 1969*) highlights on the administrative system of North Eastern Frontier Area: Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Likewise, N. Ram in his article "*Sikkim Story: Protection to Absorption*", (*N.Ram, 1974*) highlights the British interest over the Kingdom for trade and border security. It also focuses on Nehru's policy on Sikkim, unequal treaty of 1950 between Sikkim and India and the popular movement in 1973. Ranjan Gupta's article "*Sikkim: The Merger with India*" (*Gupta, 1975*) stresses on the merger of Sikkim with India and traces the history of political development in the kingdom and the changing relations between Sikkim and India since 1950's which ultimately paved the way for the merger of Sikkim with India.

Urmila Phadnis in her article "*Ethnic Dimension of Sikkimese Politics- The 1979 Election*", (*Phadnis, 1980*) gives valuable information about Sikkimese politics since its inception till 1979.

She especially highlights the role of ethnic forces in the 1979 election and in this context traces the evolution and growth of different ethnic groups in Sikkim. In the same vein Jyotirmoy Chakraborty in his article *“Elections and Castist Politics”* (Chakraborty, 2000) also highlights the role of castes and ethnicity in determining election results. He analyzes the trend since 1979 till 1999 Assembly elections. He makes an important observation that the credibility of the candidate and the ethnic balance play a key role in candidate selection. Therefore, while selecting the candidate, a leader has to consider the ethnic composition of the electoral area and candidate’s acceptability. Banasmita Bora in her article *“Pro-incumbency Factor”* (Bora, 2004) provides an interesting analysis of pro-incumbency factor and dominance of a single party in Sikkim. She highlights the trend of replacement of dominance of one party by the dominance of another party and the absence of competitive party politics in Sikkim since 1979. Mukund Giri in his article *“Sikkim: Politics of Inclusiveness and One-Party Dominance”* (Giri, 2009) also discusses about the system of one-party dominance in Sikkim. He argues that because of history and social composition of Sikkim, competitive politics and multiparty system is yet to make its way into Sikkim’s politics unlike other states in the country. The peculiar history and geography of Sikkim has led to a politics of inclusiveness instead. In this context, the author examines the Assembly elections of Sikkim from 1994 to 2009. Other articles like *“Roots and the Routes of Secularism in Sikkim”* by Vibha Arora, (Arora, 2006) presents a discussion over whether Sikkim has transformed successfully from feudal theocracy into a democratic polity or represents the ambiguities of a secular democratic polity. She also focuses on political history and ethnic profile of Sikkim to understand ethnic competition in modern Sikkim. Articles like *“Unheard Voices of Protest in Sikkim”* by Vibha Arora, (Arora, 2007) her another article *“Gandhigiri in Sikkim”* (Arora, 2008) *“Including Vulnerabilities in a*

Fragile Landscape” by Kanchi Kohli (Kohli, 2011) discuss about the protest against the Hydel power projects on the Teesta river.

5. Research Gap

From the literature reviewed and analyzed above, it is clear that there are both descriptive and analytical works present regarding Sikkim. Most of the work focused on the evolution and history of Sikkim. There are some books on geography, economy and culture of Sikkim but there are only few books on politics of Sikkim. These books basically focused on the development of politics in Sikkim, the factors that led to the formation of political parties in Sikkim and the role of social and democratic forces in its formation. Some books entirely focused on the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union. The limitation with the literature is that it provides only a general idea and information about the establishment and growth of democratic politics in Sikkim. They are not adequate to throw light on certain political, social and economic developments in Sikkim after the merger; especially political development in Sikkim after Nar Bahadur Bhandari led SSP came to power. Although there are some articles which provide an account of politics in Sikkim after the merger but systematic works narrowly specialized on the political development in Sikkim after the merger is rare.

It is necessary to make an intense study for deeper understanding of political democracy in Sikkim. It is also necessary to analyze the reason behind the political domination of the SSP and then after the SDF in the state policy of Sikkim since 1979 till date and the impact of such trend on Sikkim’s politics. It should be analyzed whether these political parties could ensure democracy and social justice and should examine their roles to uphold democracy in Sikkim. It is important to understand the state of the state since merger till present day. More particularly, it is necessary to evaluate

the performance, governance and achievement of different political parties that came to power after the merger and their roles to bring about political democracy in Sikkim. Our literature review shows that these areas have not been covered and received adequate attention from research scholars and the academia working on Sikkim earlier.

6. Research Questions

Keeping the gap in mind the following research questions have been selected to undertake the present study. The questions that we are interested in are:

- 1) What are the reasons of two phases of dominant one party rule that is Bhandari's SJP (1979-1984)) and SSP (1984- 1994) and Chamling's SDF (1994 till date) in Sikkim?
- 2) Why is there an absence of effective opposition from both national and regional level in Sikkim?
- 3) What are the strategies adopted by these two parties to maintain their domination over the politics of Sikkim? How these two parties are different in their policies, strategies and rule?
- 4) What are the factors behind the decline of SSP? Why did the SSP could not come back to power after 1994? and
- 5) What are the factors that led to the emergence of SDF in 1994?

7. Theoretical Framework

Sikkim, it seems, requires a different perspective to understand succession of dominant one party rule since its tryst with democracy from those associated with different, primarily Western, trajectories of democratic becoming and functioning of

political parties. Below we present the case for such a fresh approach.

Political parties dominate the real world of politics in all political systems. They are as says Neumann, "the life - line of modern politics". They are an indispensable part of the democratic system, in particular. "As long as representative government endures, parties will continue to perform certain roles that may be described as primordial" to quote Prof. S.E.Finer. In almost every modern democracy, whether bourgeois or socialist, developed or developing, government by the people becomes in fact government by party. Though the written Constitution of India, like many other written constitutions of the world do not acknowledge the existence of political parties, yet they are central to our political process. They are both inevitable and necessary. They are inevitable because they are the only means whereby power can be obtained and exercised in an organized way. They are necessary because they have been, to adopt Bagehot, the hyphen joining the electorate to government, the main transmission belt- through which the demands of the people are communicated to the rulers of the state.

Party has been looked at from different perspectives. Edmund Burke, Benjamin Constant and others conceived party as an ideological group. According to Burke 'a party is a body of men for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed". Duverger in his *"Political parties - Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State"* (Duverger, 1954) argues that often geographical proximity or the desire to defend one's profession or personal interest leads to the formation of parties; doctrine comes afterwards. Schumpeter in *"Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy"* (Schumpeter, 1950) contradicts Burke by saying 'a party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political

power'. He observed, "The first and the foremost aim of each political party is to prevail over the others in order to get into power or to stay in it." It is in fact this very goal of attaining political power that distinguishes political parties from other groups in the political system.

Max Weber's definition in "*The Theory of Social and Economic organization*" (Weber, 1950) also supports this contention. According to him, a political party is 'an associative type of social relationship devoted to secure power within a co-operative group for its leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages for its active members "which" may consist in the realization of certain objective policies or the attainment of personal advantage or both. Sartori, in his "*Parties and Party System*" (Sartori, 1976) perceives political party as a political group that contests at election, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public office. We may therefore quote Bernard Hennessy who in his "*Approaches to the study of party Organization*" (Hennessy, 1968) combines the elements of both power and ideology in his definition of political parties. He writes: Political parties are social organizations that attempt to influence 1) the selection and tenure of the personnel of government by putting forward candidates for elective office, 2) the policies of government according to some general principles of proclivities upon which most of their members agree.

According to the Marxists, a political party is the most organized and active section of any class or part of that class or coalition of classes in a society. Every party speaks in terms of nation and social interest. But in a society based upon class divisions, the struggle between parties for political power is nothing but a struggle between classes for determining the character of the government, for determining government policies in their own class interest. Engels described parties as "the more or less adequate

expression of classes and fractions of classes". Marx and Engles in the "*Manifesto of the Communist party*" (Karl Marx, 1848) wrote, "In its struggle against united power of the owning classes the proletariat cannot act as a class unless it constitute itself into a political party distinct and opposed to all the old political parties created by the owning classes", and that "This constitution of the political parties is indispensable to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate goal; the abolition of the classes". They opined that the working class must form a party to seize political power and establish its dictatorship without which the emancipation would never be possible. In his "*Civil War in France*" (Marx, 1871 / 2012) Marx clearly stated that the chief cause of the failure of the commune was workers' inability to form a party. It is through the party, they opined, which would take humanity to a classless society that is a communist society.

Lenin felt the necessity of a united party, because only such an organization could succeed in capturing political power and bring about socio-economic transformation in society and change the world. To him without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. Only a well organized party can preach and propagate it among the workers. He observed that the history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness. To him the party was 'the incarnation of the ties that unite the vanguard detachment of the working class with the masses'. The role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party with an advanced theory. It will make workers conscious of the fundamental opposition between their class as a whole and the existing social system. Lenin states that the party must be small so that it can function swiftly and quite effectively. The party must be an "iron party" that it must enforce discipline and principles among the members. He envisaged party as a combat organization, a kind of ideological- military army.

In *"The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement"* (Lenin, 1900/1964) he emphasized that the party must consist of people 'who will devote to the revolution not only their spare evening, but the whole of their lives'. Lenin states that the party will consist of professional revolutionaries we will take revolutionary activity as the profession. He emphasized that the allegiance of these persons to both ideology and party shall be beyond all sorts of doubt and suspicion and stressed that the basis of party should be "democratic centralism"

Mao Zedong understood party in terms of the Marxist – Leninist revolutionary theory and style. He states that a party is indispensable for revolution. Without a revolutionary party, he believed, it was impossible to lead the working class and broad masses of the people to defeat imperialism. Like Lenin he also stressed upon party. But he says a mere party organization is not enough for the success of revolution, it must adopt a correct line. He said- "to lead the revolution to victory, a political party must depend on the correctness of its own political line". Mao advised democratic centralism to be practiced in the organization of party to stimulate the initiative of the party members, to eliminate corruption and factionalism and to solidify the party. He emphasized the importance of education in democracy, especially within the party to help members understand the meaning of a democratic life, the meaning of the relationship between democracy and centralism, and the way in which democratic centralism should be practiced.

To Gramsci, the revolutionary party alone had a total conception of the world and the commitment needed to instill in the masses what he described as critical self- consciousness which would lead them to overthrow the existing order and develop a new hegemonic socialist culture. Gramsci did not believe in the pure spontaneity of the working class- it needed the direction of the Communist Party. At the same time, he demanded far greater mass

involvement in the formation of party policy. To Gramsci, four points are important to construct party, first, the party's ideology. The communist party, according to Gramsci, needs complete ideological unity in order to be able to fulfill its function as leader of the working class in all the situation. And the basis of ideological unity is the doctrine of Marxism and Leninism. Secondly, the party must be a centralized organization and an iron proletarian discipline must reign in its ranks. The centralization and cohesion of the party require that there should not exist organized groups within it which take on the character of factions. Thirdly, the party must be organized in such a way that it can function in contact with the masses, whatever the conditions may be. Fourthly, Gramsci is concerned with the strategic and tactical capacity of the party, .i.e. the capacity to organize and unify around the proletarian vanguard and the working class all the forces necessary for revolutionary victory; and to lead these towards the revolution.

Behavioral theorists like Samuel J. Eldersveld in his "*Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis*" (Eldersveld, 1964) suggests a framework of the structure of political parties that is quite contrary to the Robert Michel's thesis of 'oligarchical' control over the party. Eldersveld advances the concept of stratarchy (having borrowed the phrase from Lasswell and Kaplan's *power and society*), discusses the structural styles of parties, and suggests four theoretical constructs or dimensions about political parties. Firstly, the party is a clientele-oriented structure and is always 'potential clientele'- conscious. It is open at its base to new recruits for party work as well as to non activist supporters. It is often open at the higher level also, and indeed, at the elite apex, if such a strategy will profit the party's power aspirations. Thus it is permeable and adaptive and reflects structurally an inherent tendency towards joint advantage. It is joined by those who would use it and it mobilizes for the sake of power those who would join it. Secondly, the party is an alliance of

substructures or sub coalitions. It is adaptive and its character is coalitional. The party is a structural system seeking to translate or convert (or be converted by) social and economic interests into political power directly. In this image, party exists as a conflict system. Eldersveld point out that as a power- aspiring group the party does not settle conflict. It defers the resolution of conflict, but it seeks to stabilize sub coalitional relationships so that the multi interests will remain committed to the organization. Thirdly, a special type of hierarchy obtains in parties namely, 'stratarchy'. Rather than centralized unity of command 'strata commands' exist. Eldersveld reasons that the heterogeneity of membership and the sub coalitional system make centralized control difficult and even unwise. The party is to be visualized as a 'reciprocal deference structure'. Contrary to the bureaucratic and authoritarian models of social organization, the party does not have ordered system of authority and influence from top to down. Rather, the basis of the authority of party leaders is rapport with the cadres. The party is thus characterized as a 'rapport system', rapport between the top elite, middle- level cadres and local activists. Finally, Eldersveld sees a 'career system' within the party. He sees the party elite as consisting of the pluralized sets of separable 'career classes' or 'career categories', with considerable differentiation in communicative interchange and self consciousness. The tenure of the party cadre is unstable, and personal relationships are uncertain. But there are career groups of individuals for whom the party means 'status', not 'power' and the continuity of their commitment contributes to stability. The party structure thus gives rise to a peculiar career system, which because of the continuous renewal of career categories, contributes to the stability and fulfillment of party goals.

Lijphart classifies party according to three principal dimensions. The first dimension relates to the form of organization

which distinguishes between 'mass and cadre party. The Mass parties, Lijphart points out, have relatively many formal members and are centralized, disciplined and highly oligarchical. It is designed to involve the rank- and- file members in the decision making process of the party. The organization structure of the party is both articulated and detailed. The cadre party on the other hand has a much smaller formal membership and lower degree of centralization, discipline and oligarchy. Voters in the cadre party have no formal ties with the organization nor are they heavily involved in the decision making process of the party. Control of the machinery of the party rests largely in the hands of elite. The second dimension is concerned with the parties' programs which may be ideological or pragmatic, and which may reflect a leftist, centrist or rightist outlook. The third dimension is about the parties' supporters who may be defined in socio-economic and other terms.

There is a difference between one-party, two party and multi-party systems. In the one-party system the people have no choice of parties, since only one party exists, the government party. Other parties may exist but they are unable, due to their organizational weakness, to exert any significant influence upon the functioning of the major party. One party system is usually regarded as being typically communist phenomenon. The party is placed at the heart of the political system, while the organs of the state are reduced to a dependent position. The policy process and political leadership function almost exclusively through the framework of a single party. Examples of single party systems are like in China, erstwhile Soviet Union until 1991 and North Korea

In two-party system there may exist within the country several parties but the third parties become unable to prevent two major parties from governing alone. In practice two parties obtain close to fifty percent of the votes in elections, and either of the two forms the

government. There is no party monopoly but “party duopoly”, there is party competition but it is between two main parties. Sartori points out that under the two-party system one party govern alone but not indefinitely. Thus alteration in power is the distinguishing features of two partism. The two party systems are found in western liberal-democratic political systems, such as The United States, Great Britain, New Zealand etc.

In multi party system more than two major parties exist and coalition governments are formed. In multi-party system, Huntington points out, ‘no party by itself is able either to form a government or to stand head and shoulders above its rivals’. Creation of government in multi-party system is possible only with a coalition of several parties. And the stability of government depends on the strength of ideological differences among the parties. If the difference of ideology is strong the government is extremely unstable. Parties may move back and forth from government to opposition in multi-party system.

India, in the words of Morris Jones is not a ‘one party state’ but it is a ‘one dominant party system’. In it numerous parties exist and compete for power, and all have equal chance to capture political power through elections. But it was a single party, the Congress that had managed to remain almost continuously and consistently in power both in terms of the number of seats it held in the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies, and in terms of its immense organizational strength. Kothari coined the term the ‘congress system’ to categorize such a party system. To him the Congress party was based on a broad consensus and was able to accommodate diverse interest and factions. (*Kothari, December, 1964.*) Jones also felt that it was a ‘Congress dominated system’. The Congress to him was a dominant party in the Parliament, which helped in the development of the Indian Parliament. Morris Jones in “*The Government and politics of India*” (*Asian Survey, Dec 1964 (W.H,*

1964) defines dominance in terms of dominance of the government. According to him it is a system in which other parties exist but find themselves unable to challenge effectively the dominant party's hold on political power.

The concept of dominance was popularized in the sixties by Morris Jones and Rajni Kothari (1964). But it was Maurice Durverger who used the expression as early as 1951. Stanley Kochanek in his "*The Congress Party of India: The Dynamics of One Party Democracy*" (Kochanek, 1968) agreed with Kothari and Jones regarding the nature of the party system in India but argued that with the general election of 1967 the party system in India underwent significant changes. The general elections of 1967 seemed to bring to an end the system of one-party dominance. With the decline of the Congress and the loss of monopolistic power, we have developed in India a competitive multi-party system. The Congress was replaced as the governing party in about half of the Indian states. At the Centre, the Congress retained power only with the smallest majority (54% of the seats). This proportion was further reduced in 1969. In the light of these developments even Rajni Kothari referred to the change from one party dominant system to a system of competitive dominance. The works of Gassah (1992), Jana & Sarmah (2002), Mehra, Khanna and Kueck (2003) Hasan (2004) Yadagiri (2007) and Ziegfeld (2012) describe the transition from one party dominant system to a multiparty system while focusing on the rise and role of regional political parties.

Apart from these books, there are number of articles which trace this transition. An article "*Transformation of the Indian Party System The 1996 Lok Sabha Elections*" by Sudha Pai (Pai, Dec, 1996) is note worthy. In her article she argues that it was not the late 1960's but the 1980's that witnessed the breakdown of the Congress party both at the centre and in the states. She highlights two

important developments in the Indian party system following the breakdown of the Congress System. Firstly, it led to the shift from a hegemonic to a competitive multiparty system and an era of unstable coalition governments at the national level. Secondly, the emergence of distinct state party system, separate from but closely linked to the national party system, one in which a regional party is dominant and another in which all India and state parties compete for power. Ramesh Thakur's "*A Changing of the Guard in India*" (Thakur, 1998) also deals with the same issue.

Political analysts have given various reasons for the emergence of regional parties in the states. To many it has been the decline of the party system that has led to formation of state parties in the various regions. Not a few have attributed this political phenomenon to the excessive centralism and monopolistic politics of the Congress and also because of ambitious regional leaders with political skills. The regional parties have now become a part of the Indian political system. They have come to play an important role in the national, state and local politics. There is growing evidence that they can ensure stable government in the states. In the North- East India several studies have been undertaken on the regional parties, particularly Assam Gana Parishad. (Kunda, 2007) However no major work has been undertaken on parties like Sikkim Sangram Parishad and Sikkim Democratic Front in Sikkim although both of these parties have ruled Sikkim for a long period. SSP has ruled Sikkim for 15 years and SDF has been in Sikkim's politics for more than 19 years and has been winning elections for four consecutive terms with absolute majority. Under the rule of these two parties, Sikkim has undergone a sea change but no research work has been undertaken which underscores these two political parties and their rules in Sikkim.

Democracy is a complex phenomenon. The concept of democracy is impossible of definition in a way acceptable to everyone. It has a multitude of meanings and no one is generally accepted. What one person would regard as democracy another would deny was a democracy at all. However, there is broad agreement that democracy involves the sharing of power among different groups of a national society, including a common right to express views and to compete for the opportunity to make or influence decisions. This is not precisely "consent of the governed", as groups may be bound by decisions they oppose. Rather, contemporary democracy represents what Robert Dahl has called "polyarchy" and other writers "pluralism" -a *system* that gives legal recognition to more than one organization of interests. Democracies can differ profoundly, then, with respect to the number and kinds of groups that are recognized and the design of the competitive process. The essential *element* is the *existence* of some kind of feedback and adjustment mechanism that forces governments to respond and adapt to other viewpoints. (Brash, 1992). In his classic work "*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*", Schumpeter defined democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the- people's vote" (Schumpeter J. , 1950, p. 250)

Democratic system of government is regarded as the best form of government in the modern world. Many non democratic countries had adopted this system in the past and some countries are still in the process of democratization. Like democracy, democratization also has multiple meanings. In the broadest sense, democratization refers to any change in the direction of more democracy, no matter how small. Democratization can thus refer to a minimal improvement in an authoritarian regime, but also to the further democratization of an existing democracy, what scholars like Schedler labels

"completing democracy" or "democratic deepening." In the narrow sense, democratization is synonymous with a democratic transition; the notion of a democratic transition implies a change of category of a country from authoritarian or totalitarian to democratic system. Munek defines a democratic transition as "the critical step, when a country passes a threshold marked by the introduction of competitive elections with mass suffrage for the main political offices in the land." (*Bogaards, 2010*) The global "democratic revolution" was termed the wave of democratization by Huntington in the modern era. According to him, wave of democratization is a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occurs within a specified period and that significantly outnumbers transitions in the opposite direction in the same period. Huntington identifies three distinct waves of democratization. The first wave began in America in the early nineteenth century and culminated at the end of World War I with about thirty countries having democratic regimes. (*Huntington, 1991-1992*) The end of the First World War was a temporary victory for democracy in Europe, as it was preserved in France and temporarily extended to Germany. Likewise, the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 inaugurated a few months of liberal democracy under Alexander Kerensky until Lenin took over in October Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922 began a reverse wave. The 1930s became a decade of dictators in Europe and Latin America. And in 1942 there were only twelve democracies left in the world.

World War II was ultimately a victory for democracy in Western Europe, where representative governments were established that reflected the general will of their citizens. The Allied victory in World War II and decolonization started a second movement toward democracy which, however petered out by the early 1960s when about thirty-six countries had democratic regimes. This was then followed by a second reverse movement towards authoritarianism,

marked most dramatically by military take-overs in Latin America and the seizure of power by personal despots such as Ferdinand Marcos. (*Huntington, 1991-1992*) Many countries of Central and Eastern Europe became undemocratic Soviet satellite states. In Southern Europe, a number of right-wing authoritarian dictatorships (most notably in Spain and Portugal) continued to exist. Japan had moved towards democracy during the Taishō period during the 1920s, but it was under effective military rule in the years before and during World War II. The country adopted a new constitution during the postwar Allied occupation, with initial elections in 1946. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy)

World War II also planted seeds of freedom outside Europe and Japan, strengthening anti colonial sentiment worldwide while many restive colonies/possessions were promised subsequent independence in exchange for their support for embattled colonial powers during the war. Most of the former British and French colonies were independent by 1965 and at least initially democratic. In 1948, the state of Israel declared independence and thus was born the first full democracy in the Middle East. India became a Democratic Republic in 1950 after achieving independence from Great Britain in 1947. After holding its first national elections in 1952, India achieved the status of the world's largest liberal democracy with universal suffrage which it continues to hold today. The process of decolonization created much political upheaval in Africa and parts of Asia, with some countries experiencing often rapid changes to and from democratic and other forms of government. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy)

The third wave according to Huntington began in the mid 1970s in Southern Europe, as a number of right-wing nationalist dictatorships fell from power. Then, in the early and mid-1980s it spread to Latin America and to Asian countries like Korea, Thailand

and the Philippines and then in the late 1980s and early 1990s to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. (*Huntington, 1991-1992*) The communist states in the USSR sphere of influence were also replaced with liberal democracies. Much of Eastern Europe, Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, and several Arab, central Asian and African states, and the not-yet-state that is the Palestinian Authority moved towards greater liberal democracy in the 1990s and 2000s.

In the 21st century, democracy movements have been seen across the world. In the Arab world, an unprecedented series of major protests occurred with citizens of Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Syria and other countries across the MENA region demanding democratic rights. This revolutionary wave was given the term Tunisia Effect. The Palestinian Authority also took action to address democratic rights. In Iran, following a highly-disputed presidential vote, Iranian citizens held a major series of protests calling for change and democratic rights. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq led to a toppling of Saddam Hussein and a new constitution with free and open elections and democratic rights.

In Asia, in Bhutan, in December 2005, the 4th King Jigme Singye Wangchuck announced that the first general elections would be held in 2008, and that he would abdicate the throne in favor of his eldest son. Bhutan is currently undergoing further changes to allow for a constitutional monarchy. In Nepal, 2006 saw the final collapse of 240-year-old monarchy after decades of protest against monarchy to embrace democracy. In the Maldives protests and political pressure led to the government reform which allowed democratic rights and presidential elections in 2008. The country of Burma (Myanmar) had long been ruled by a military junta, however in 2011; the government changed to allow certain voting rights and released democracy-leader Aung San Suu Kyi from house

arrest. However, Burma still has major human rights problems and not full democratic rights. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy).

Democratization may be influenced by many factors such as history, culture, economic conditions etc. In "*Political Man; The Social Bases of Politics*" (1958), Seymour Martin Lipset hypothesized that democracy was a product of social factors and economic preconditions, and in particular, the emergence of strong middle class. While some scholars argue that democracy results from universal strivings for freedom. In the nineteenth century, many political theorists noted the relationship between a market economy and democracy. Glassman has documented, "Marxists, classical capitalist economists, even monarchists accepted the link between industrial capitalism and parliamentary democracy." Schumpeter held that "modern democracy is a product of the capitalist process." Moore concluded "No bourgeois, no democracy." Market economy including a substantial independent peasantry produces a middle class that can stand up against the state and provide the resources for independent groups, as many twentieth century scholars such as Weber, Schumpeter, Moore, Skocpol and Berger have also concluded.

Scholars like Therborn, Rueschemeyer and Stephens are of the view that while the movement toward a market economy and the growth of an independent middle-class have weakened state power and enlarged human rights and the rule of law, it has been the working class particularly in the West that has demanded the expansion of suffrage and the rights of parties. As John Stephens noted, "Capitalist development is associated with the rise of democracy in part because it is associated with the transformation of the class structure strengthening the middle class." Berger from the conservative side noted that while there has been no case of political democracy that has *not* been a market economy..... There have been numerous cases of nondemocratic market economics." Diamond held

that capitalism has been a necessary but not sufficient condition. (*Lipset, 1994*)

Przeworski et al argues that modernization-specially, an increase in per capita GDP-is *not* a causal factor in the process of democratization. Rather, they argue, the positive association between income and democracy results from the reduced likelihood of more modern countries sliding back, as it were, into undemocratic forms of government once having (randomly) become democratic. (*Epstein et al, Democratic Transition*) Epstein and his colleagues refuting Przeworski opine that higher per capita incomes increase the likelihood of a movement away from autocracy as well as decrease the likelihood of a movement away from democracy. (*David L.Epstein, 2006*).The Asian cases provide a good deal of support for the importance of sustained economic growth as the basis for social and ultimately political transformation. In South Korea and Taiwan, authoritarian, developmentalist regimes obtained some degree of legitimacy from sustained economic growth for many decades. Eventually this growth produced a broad middle class that grew increasingly uncomfortable with paternalistic elites. When these middle classes joined with other regime opponents that democratic reforms occurred.

Democracy requires a supportive political culture, the acceptance by the citizenry and political elites of principles underlying freedom of speech, media, assembly, religion, of the right of the opposition parties, of the rule of law, of human rights and the like. (*Almond, Lipset, Dahl, Diamond*) such norms do not evolve overnight. The process has been the gradual one. Democracy has never developed anywhere by plan, except when it was imposed by a democratic conqueror, as in post World War II Germany and Japan. From the United States to Northern Europe, freedom, suffrage, and the rule of law grew in a piecemeal, not in a planned fashion. (*Lipset,*

1994). Lipset, Huntington, Dahl and others are right to analyze that cultural factors appear even more important than economic ones. More particularly having once been a British colony is the variable most highly correlated with democracy. As Weiner has pointed out, beyond the experiences in the America and Australia in the nineteenth century, "every country with a population of at least 1 million (and almost all the smaller countries as well) that has emerged from colonial rule and has had a continuous democratic experience is a former British colony." For instance, North America before the revolution or India and Nigeria in more recent times. (Lipset, 1994)

Historical factors, particularly the history of colonial legacy has influenced transformation to democracy in many countries. India's independence was an epic struggle for democracy, freedom and liberty not only for her own people, but also for people all over the world who were suffering from the yoke of colonialism, imperialism and fascist rule. Africa's transition to democracy is in fact the continent's long history of struggle against slavery, colonialism and post-colonial misrule.

Huntington says that the religious tradition also has been a major differentiating factor in transformations to democracy. He views that historically there have been negative relationships between democracy and Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Confucianism; conversely Protestantism and democracy have been positively interlinked. These differences have been explained by (1) the much greater emphasis on individualism in Protestantism and (2) the traditionally close links between religion and the state in the other four religions. Tocqueville and Bryce emphasized that democracy is furthered by a separation of religious and political beliefs, so that political stands are not required to meet absolute standards set down by the church. Scholars from Tocqueville's time to the

mid-1970s have observed that among European countries and their overseas offspring Protestant countries have been more likely to give rise to democratic regimes than Catholic ones. (*Lipset, 1994*)

Apart from the internal factors like levels of economic development and education, size of the middle classes, history of colonial legacy, political culture like the nature and vibrancy of civil society, religious factors and the role of specific leaders, observers also stress on the role of external forces in determining transformation to democracy. Although there seems to be a consensus among scholars that the so-called Third Wave of democratization has been determined primarily by internal factors, scholars are of the view that external factors played a significant role in democratizing a nation. Of course, many factors, both internal and external may contribute to transition to democracy but in the contexts of economic bankruptcy, external support in the form of financial aid played a key role. It is particularly relevant to countries where transitions were launched in response to mass mobilizations calling not only for political reforms, but also for economic improvements. In these cases foreign aid is crucial, particularly in the early stages of democratization when the states' internal capacities have collapsed. Foreign aid encourages and helps solidify the domestic sense of confidence and support for the democratic process. It can also help new regimes gain social peace, stability and prevent military coups or popular uprisings. (*Gazibo, 2005*)

In Africa, democratization was not supposed to happen. It had too little of what seemed necessary for constitutional democratic politics. African countries were too poor, too culturally fragmented and insufficiently capitalist: they were not fully penetrated by western Christianity and lacked the requisite civic culture. Middle classes were usually weak and more bureaucratic than entrepreneurial, and they were often co-opted into authoritarian

political structures. Working classes, except in a few cases such as Zambia and South Africa were embryonic. According to the main theories about the prerequisites or favorable conditions for democracy, most African countries constituted infertile terrain. Scholars like Huntington, Dahl and Di Palma considered prospects of democracy in Africa as a whole to be bleak but by the end of 1991 there was the return of competitive party politics to many of the African countries which scholars found 'stunning'.

By 1995, almost all sub-Saharan African countries introduced some measure of political liberalization, and a majority permitted competitive elections. This transformation can be traced to three significant factors: the weakening of most African states by a prolonged fiscal crisis, the increasing control of international financial institutions and the allied bilateral agencies of the industrialized nations in determining economic policy, and the shift of western powers (especially the United States) after the end of the cold war from tolerance of an alliance with authoritarian regimes to liberalization of their systems.

"By the late 1980, according to van de Walle more than half the nations in sub-Saharan Africa were effectively bankrupt. This eventually obliged them to accept highly conditioned loans from the IMF and World Bank. Larry Diamond rightly concludes, the power of external donors to press for both economic and political reforms was nowhere greater than in Africa. Moreover, the power of these donors "to induce democratic change through aid conditionality is directly proportional to the dependence of the aid recipients or debtors upon them and to the unity of the donor community. (*Joseph, 1997*)

Scholars who stress the primacy of internal factors behind the democratic transitions in African countries tend to underscore the strength of domestic political protests and pro- democracy

movements. The failures of development, the economic crisis of the 1980's and 1990's pauperized middle and working classes and the disintegration of the postcolonial state's legitimacy and capacity started democratic movements in Africa. They also highlight the demonstration effects of regional transitions, such as Benin in Francophone West Africa, Zambia in southern Africa. The impact of the end of the Cold War, the demonstration effects of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, and the imposition of structural adjustment programmes and political conditional ties by Western bilateral and multilateral financial institutions acted as the external forces in Africa.

The routes of transition to democracy were diverse, as were the democratic structures adopted by the countries. Some are presidential, some are parliamentary, some embody the Gaullist mixture of the two; so also some are two-party, some are multiparty, and major differences exist in the nature and strength of the parties but the common denominator appears to be a moving away from an authoritarian to a participatory system. Of greater importance is that in all democratic regimes the principal officers of government are chosen through competitive elections in which the bulk of the population can participate.

India's transition to democracy in 1940's is mainly due to a legacy of British colonialism. But democracy has not fared as well in so many other former British colonies including Pakistan. Therefore, as a contrast to this emphasis on colonial legacy, other scholars emphasize the role of the Indian nationalist elite and nationalist movements in the birth of Indian democracy. (*Sarkar, 2001*) Scholars like Sumit Sarkar while acknowledging some British role emphasizes the role Indians played in shaping their own version of democracy. India inherited a number of political traits from British rule which were significant for India's democratic evolutions but it was the

nationalist leaders who adopted the federal structure for India. The structure that India adopted after its independence in 1947 was quite distinct from what the British had in mind. When the British left India, they maintained that after the lapse of British paramountcy in 1947, all the states were free to join either Indian Union or Pakistan or remain independent. As a result, these states became the part of Indian Union. They gave up their identities of princely states and kingdoms and became the unit of Indian federal structure. In this way the process of democratization started in these states too. However, this was not the case with Sikkim as it did not become the part of India along with other states and kingdoms. It joined the Indian Union only in 1975.

The path of democratization in one country is different from that in another. However, democratization in Sikkim took not just a different but an unusual path. It was not effected through national conferences or through military regime nor it was similar to the process of its neighbouring country Nepal, where after several popular movements for decades to establish democracy people finally succeeded in putting an end to the powers of the King in 2006 nor like Bhutan, where instead of people demanding for democracy, it was gifted by the king out of benevolence. While different factors played a determining role in bringing about transition to democracy in different countries in the world at different phases; most of those factors like colonialism, economic development, rise of the middle classes, political culture and external factors like role of international financial institutes were not relevant in this tiny kingdom.

In Sikkim, one of the factor to foster democratization was structural condition. The State was devoid of properly planned communication network. It lacked comprehensive infrastructures of heavy and light industries, the very geography of this tiny state being at a disadvantage. It was a thoroughly backward state with

insurmountable mountains and inaccessible terrains as its natural heritage. The bulk of the state's population was riddled with illiteracy and superstition. Only a handful of people were aware of the concept of democracy and there was no civil society. Yet there were some ambitious leaders who had the confidence of ruling Sikkim as a state in a better way. The role of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee, the first Chief Minister of Sikkim is worth mentioning in bringing about democracy in Sikkim.

More than any other factor external threat and role of outsiders played an important role in Sikkim's transition. Sikkim was spurred by very real external threat. She faced hostile neighbors from all directions. This threat put pressure on elites who saw both state capacity and economic growth as key strategies to maintain independence from external, existential threats. In the early years Sikkim's foreign contact was entirely with her northern neighbor Tibet. Both the countries shared matrimonial relations too but the attitude of Tibet was uncertain. With her Himalayan neighbor, namely, Bhutan to the east and Nepal in the west, her experience had been none too healthy. Bhutanese forces in history invaded Sikkim and occupied the capital Rabdantse and Kalimpong was snatched from Sikkim. Nepal was no less on the western border. They made frequent attacks into Sikkim's territory in their expansionist pursuit. They almost succeeded in annihilating it and would have perhaps permanently done so had it not been for the British who came to the scene well in time.

British had its own intention regarding Sikkim. Its policy was to extend its influence into Sikkim. In that way they hoped not only to check the Gorkha expansion but also to establish contact with the Tibetans for the expansion of trade. Political scene in Sikkim was none too healthy. The authority in Sikkim was also threatened by the forces from within. Because of these circumstances, Sikkim could ill-

afford to shirk off the protection of the British. But when the British left India in 1947 they explicitly refused to transfer paramountcy to the new government in New Delhi. An independent Sikkim placed herself under India's protection in 1950, entrusting only certain aspects of her governance to New Delhi while retaining the essence of sovereign authority in Gangtok. The Indian security umbrella provided important benefits to Sikkim. It also made possible the Sikkimese Constitution.

Sikkim's transformation was clearly the result of local conditions for instance after the independence of India and the establishment of popular government in some states encouraged some of the organizations to come together for similar movements in Sikkim. They started demanding for democratic form of government. As a result, political parties and elections were authorized during 1950s but the parties were based on communal lines and there was no uniformity of the procedure of elections in Sikkim. It kept changing according to the discretion of Chogyal.

By the beginning of 1970s there already existed multiple political parties in Sikkim and these parties started demanding democratic system of government. At first, these protests were not taken seriously, which was responded with both repression and reform. But the general upsurge of 1973 affected both the countryside and the capital of the state. The situation became serious which later on in 1975 paved the way for advent of democracy in Sikkim. The Chogyal with his dynastic history of 333 years was bundled off to become a part of history. In Sikkim, the transitions occurred quite rapidly following the onset of internal protest and external threat on the incumbent autocratic regime. Although it was ultimately up to local actors to initiate democratic movement; but outsiders played a role by providing resources, ideas and strategies. In this sense, India has played an important role by

providing technical assistance to newly emerging democratic structures even if it had nothing to do with the democratic movement itself.

The popular dissent and demonstration of 1973 in Sikkim was to abolish monarchy and to establish democratic form of government but Sikkimese had to pay handsomely for democracy. Transition to democracy occurred in Sikkim with heavy condition: it had to lose its sovereignty and become a part of India for democracy. Although Sikkim became a part of India in 1975 through a 'Special poll' which was held on 14 April, 1975 to seek public opinion on the issue: the abolition of the institution of Chogyal and Sikkim's merger with India and the result went overwhelmingly in favor of the merger; some Sikkimese admitted that they did not want the Chogyal but they wanted even less to be a part of India. They were allowed no choice." (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 308-309*) Hence, Sikkim became a part of India by default. A liberated country often adopts democracy as the best form of governance the outgoing century has known but what happened in Sikkim was just the opposite. Sikkimese had to exchange the country for democracy. A merger with India was the price the Sikkimese was to pay in exchange for democracy. Probably Sikkim's is the dearest democracy in the world.

On the basis of the above discussion we may hypothesize that neither political party in Sikkim nor the political democracy in Sikkim have been institutionalized in the real sense of the term. The hangovers of monastic-feudalistic past are still strong and political leaders cash on the subject culture of the region. The geo-strategic factors, particularly China's proximity has eased cash flows from the Center that do also help in maintaining status quo in every sense of the term. Political dominance of regional political party is an inseparable aspect of this process.

8. Methodological Consideration

Methods, techniques and research designs appropriate for any given enquiry are controversial not just as to their relative merits and demerits but in view of their epistemological as well as ontological aspects, the study of which is the purpose of methodology. In the present work we propose to adopt a constructivist methodological position. There is an aspect of our Constructivist methodological position that needs some elaboration. Commonly the methodological textbooks set up a debate between relative importance of words vis a vis numbers, or the relative merits respectively of quantitative research and qualitative researches while leaning closer to words or qualitative tools such as participant observation, interview, PRA techniques etc. The present study has a thrust towards qualitative research in its methodological orientation in the proper sense of qualitative research (*Babbie, 2004*). It does not foreclose use of statistical tools wherever necessary. It may be stated in this context that recalcitrance of qualitative methods in regard to standards of validity is taken into account. But for this study validity and for that to rely on quantitative research may not be a realizable goal in view of the present level of information that we have been able to assimilate so far. We intend to use the direct sources or personal sources of information as well as documentary sources of information would be collected to address the research problem of the proposed research work. In the personal sources or direct sources of information, interviews will be taken with the party leaders of SDF, party workers, bureaucrats/retired civil servants, senior citizens and the people belonging to different social classes.

The documentary sources of information include primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include both official and non-official documents. The official documents are Sikkim Government Gazette notifications, circulars, official letters, Assembly

and budget proceedings, memorandum of understanding signed during the tenure of the government. These official sources can be obtained from various departments, State library, Community libraries, District libraries and library of Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Non-official documents include party documents, such as party literature, election manifestoes, leaflets/pamphlets, biographies, etc. which can be obtained from the party office as well as from SDF leaders and party workers. The secondary sources are books, journals, articles, newspapers etc. related to the study.

9. Gathering and Analyzing Data

I here provide an account of data collection and my approach to analysis of the data. I start with an account of my several trips to meet the leaders of different political parties and non-political organizations and proceed to provide an account of data collection through interviews and observations as well as documentary research and secondary research.

Interviews with the Leaders

After I got registered for Ph.D program in mid- 2009, I spent a year for collecting documents, literatures and some more books on Sikkim. The books which dealt with my subject were rare and there was not a single book related to my research work. My mentor had already told me about the pros and cons of treading the unbeaten track and after going through the few books available, I knew that I had to start from the scratch. Since there are not many full fledged libraries in the state for academic purpose, I basically relied on Sikkim Legislative Assembly Library. In fact, I spent most of the time of my initial year in the library. I went through all the proceedings of Sikkim Legislative Assembly (SLA) from the first Assembly session to the most recent ones to get some clues about politics in Sikkim in democratic set up. There were not less than 150 books all full of dust

and healthy silver fishes. Perhaps I was the first person to lay hands on those books. Those books benefitted me a lot in finding the names of legislators, their party affiliations and most importantly, their roles in the House. I visited other libraries like Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok and small community libraries too but those libraries did not provide me much needed literatures on my topic. The recent history of Sikkim, post 1970 is not well documented. Although there are few books but these books deal with only the agitation of 1973 up till merger. I had no choice other than relying on interpretation of people. For this purpose, I zeroed in on taking interviews of people belong to three generations: kingship under Chogyals, new born democracy under Kazi and nurturing democracy under Bhandari and Chamling.

I decided to take interviews of two types. One was intensive one- on- one interview of conscious, educated citizens and the other was random interviews of laymen across the State. For intensive interviews I selected the leaders of all existing political parties, ruling and opposition both; leaders of different associations based on caste, religion, profession and some issue based associations like Concerned Citizen of Sikkim,(CCS) Affected Citizen of Tista, (ACT)Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee(SIBLAC), leaders of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) working for child care, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS.I had chosen the Ex-MLAs, Ex-MPs, retired bureaucrats, journalists and the members of left out business community of Sikkim for my interview. For the random interviews, I had chosen respondents from all the four districts of the state which will be discussed in greater detail as we progress.

I contacted minimum 60 leading personalities of different fields. Firstly, I noted down the names of some of the political and apolitical leaders that I had heard and known. Secondly, I tried to get hold of their contact numbers and address. Once the ice was broken

and I met the first respondent, meeting others became lot easier for me. I asked each respondent to suggest some other names and asked for their contact numbers and addresses. Out of 60 people that I had approached, most of the people especially women turned down my request diplomatically. With a handful, I could not coordinate because of their circumstances, some moved out of the State and two persons died while in the process of coordination. Finally, I ended up taking interviews of 33 people. It took me 18 months to take the interviews of all these leaders and common citizens. Accessibility, availability and coordination with the leaders were very difficult as they all were leading personalities with tight schedule due to their share of responsibilities.

For me there was nothing called targeted field for interviews, I went around the length and breadth of Sikkim and sometimes outside Sikkim in West Bengal for interviews as they were settled in different places. The interviews with these people were not taken at once nor there different phases. I had to meet each of them at least three times to take their interviews. Sometimes, I have been lucky that some leaders suggested my name to another leader and gave me the contact numbers but sometimes I literally had to find out their residence and stand outside their bungalows for hours for appointment. Once I had to stand so long outside one person's bungalow that I had to take off my sandal and stand barefoot.

The first two meetings with the respondents were just to get familiar with them. In fact, it was to make them comfortable and win their confidence which was a very tough task. Most of them kept analyzing me and viewed me with suspicion. In one way, they were right to think so. I approached them with a questionnaire which had 24 questions; most of the questions addressed sensitive issues of Sikkim which made them quite curious. They later confessed that they thought that I was some paid agent or a questionable person

since nobody before me came asking such daring and sensitive questions. In Sikkim, politics is very congested and even if the political parties, ruling or opposition does not harm a citizen, there is a kind of voluntary terror in the minds of people. And in such a political atmosphere when I approached them with my questionnaire, I scored kudos from some of them and some just shrugged me off. The manner and feeling of being shrugged off was a confidence killer. It would take some time for me to digest and regain my confidence to approach the next bigwig.

Whereas most of the probable respondents lived in and around Gangtok, some lived far off from the busy life and settled in some remote corner of Sikkim. Gangtok town and its surrounding is relatively at high altitude, the roads and foot paths are escalating. I cannot forget the day I visited Mr. Sherab Palden, former Finance Minister's house. The way to his house was very sliding. I thought of using a taxi but I didn't know the exact location therefore, I had to walk down searching for the place. While walking down the sliding road, I had a great fall on the way with my face down. Luckily, I fell on the small heap of sand. With my laptop and a sling bag occupying both the shoulders, I had to struggle to stand on my feet.

Taking interviews were really a learning experience, both academically and personally. Each interview taught me a new lesson of life. I used to start at 6.30 in the morning from Namchi by a shared taxi and would reach Gangtok by 10.a.m. travelling almost 79 km. I used to have breakfast on the way to Gangtok and meet 3-4 persons back to back and would return at 3.30 p.m. by the last taxi to Namchi. In one of such trips, while having breakfast on the way side restaurant, I left the bag which contained my laptop along with camera, mobile phone and pen drive on the table of that restaurant. I realized it only when I reached Gangtok. It would have cost me around sixty thousand to buy those things again but the contents in

the laptop and pen drive were priceless. I then made a 'U' turn from the taxi stand and travelled 2 hours towards Namchi. Luckily, an honest man in the restaurant found it and kept it safely. After recovering my bag, I again travelled all the way back to Gangtok and reached around 3 P.M and took interview of Ex-Chief Minister and SPCC President, Nar Bahadur Bhandari. The trouble was worth it.

In eighteen months, I had to go through thick and thin of life. Being the first child, like any other parents; my parent's endless pampering made me feel like a small girl even at the age of 26. But when I had to get down in the real business all alone, I was met with different new and difficult situations. I have always been exclusive and reserved in nature and I realize that I was insensitive to other's problems too but this research work has transformed me completely. This I felt very strongly when I met a person with HIV positive, a recovering addict, and a great lady, recipient of Padma Shree, Ms. Keepu Lepcha who ran an orphanage. I literally broke down when I went to take an interview of a person with HIV positive who ran an NGO for such persons. Since it is regarded as social taboo, we found no suitable place for interview. Finally, we ended up taking the interview in the car itself. Similar case happened with the recovering addict.

During monsoon, heavy rain pours down in its madness in Sikkim. I was accompanied by my friend MJ in the entire monsoon as travelling alone would be risky in the rainy season due to uncertain landslides and roadblocks. In one of such monsoon in 2011, I had fixed up the first appointment with a person. We had to look for his residence. It was raining cats and dogs outside and the umbrella was of no use. Since it was the first meeting I could not cancel it and cut a sorry figure, I had to reach there somehow. To make the matter worse, we went to the wrong direction and by the time we found out the place we were totally drenched and were in no

position to sit down and talk. Sympathizing our condition, the person himself fixed an appointment the following week. We returned home in wet cloths. Again, in one of the monsoon days, we were walking hurriedly along the road going to take an interview of a person in the morning. A vehicle speed passed us splashing a pool of rain water of the sizeable pothole all over our bodies. Our cloths were all soiled. We went to a showroom, bought new dresses for ourselves and went for an interview.

This phase was a mixed bag full of funny and pathetic situations but each situation was a stepping stone for me. Once I went to meet Mrs. Kalawati Subba, the former Assembly Speaker regarding my work. I didn't know her residence and somebody showed me her residence from distance. I went to a wrong place. The actual place was just above that building. It was such an embarrassing moment to have come to the wrong place and enjoy the hospitality not meant for us. In the rainy season, we had to face many such problems. Fearing falling boulders and leeches we met the respondents. Sometimes because of land slide we had to cross over the heap of boulders to go to other side of the road so as to catch a cab and sometimes we had to take uncarpeted and slippery kutcha long road to reach home. If monsoon is rude, winter is no better in Sikkim. It is really challenging for anybody to wake up at 5 in the morning and catch a first service taxi at 6.30 in the winter morning. The tap water runs to hurt and the wind bites in winter in Sikkim.

Being a lady researcher, sometimes I had to face awkward situations too. Initially, it was quite embarrassing at times when the personal secretaries and security guards of the political leaders used to look at me quizzically when I used to meet their bosses frequently. As time passed their remorseful and respectful attitude said it all. Sometimes, the politicians used to try manipulating my opinion and

sometimes tried to pressurize me to write things according to their views but I did not let them affect my work. The most torturous part was to listen to them whole day to know their views and get answers to my questions, which would have taken hardly an hour had they been précised to answer and not kept talking about their glorious past.

Observation

In my field work, the answers to most of my questions were found in observation. As already mentioned, my questionnaire included some burning issues which people wanted to avoid as much as possible and even if they answered, they either answered in paralanguages or their answers had lots of what we call 'reading between the lines'. Amongst these respondents, I found most of the politicians mysterious in nature. Their responses were varied. Sometimes they were satirical, critical and sometimes free wheeling and genuine. I had to observe their reactions, body languages and stress in the words and pitch in the voice etc. while answering the questions. Luckily, I have video recorded the interviews of each of the respondent in my camcorder. Although it was very taxing but I could refer to it when and where I had confusions.

I found the leaders in Sikkim take politics personally, there's no segregation between political and personal relations. A party is projected as a domain of a single leader. Any party is known by an identity of a single individual. More than constitution and ideology of any party, the face value of the leader of a particular party matters. This is one of the reasons for failure of political parties to come to power once voted out as these political parties do not groom alternatives or future leaders. A party is not viewed as an organization for social welfare but as an organization whose sole aim being capturing the seat of power as soon as it is formed. Most

parties are formed by the dissident members of existing political parties. Once the party is formed, it either forms the government or if it loses in the election, its members joins the ruling bandwagon or the party disappears from the political scene till the next election but it does not function as an opposition party.

The opposition leaders reasons, it is very expensive in Sikkim to run a party. People in Sikkim do not bother about policies and ideology of the political parties but expect financial gains from the political parties. If these parties do not form the government it becomes very difficult for them to maintain their organization and fulfill people's expectation. That's why they join the ruling party or disappear. On the other hand people have different views on opposition. They do not vote opposition parties because the opposition parties do not stick to their principles and stands and get sold off. Along with the party they sell off people's trust, expectations and aspirations too and simple people are left in cold to face the consequences for supporting the opposition parties. Thus, in the elections people make sure not to vote the opposition parties unless the ruling party is dictatorial and there is huge wave of revolution against the Government.

I found most of the political leaders loaded with egos. They are some what pompous and liked to discuss about their achievements only. Although nobody likes to hear about one's failure, that's a human nature but these issues were extra touchy for them. I had to be very careful not to bruise their egos while asking certain questions as they can be at times cheeky and cocky. These leaders are relentless to criticize their rivals. But one strange thing that I have noticed is that no body talked about and criticized the rival party, its organization, polices programs and ideology etc. Their attacks were directed to a particular leader of the party. It was very

difficult to remain somber when the leaders called their rivals 'a tiger without teeth', 'a paper tiger', 'a wet cat' etc.

It was equally difficult to get value-neutral opinions from retired bureaucrats and MPs. These people were the ones who served the Government in both Bhandari's and Chamling's regime. They had personal choices of political parties. But since Bhandari's SSP no longer existed as a regional party, in absence of strong rival political party, their choices were limited to either pro-SDF or anti-SDF. Now the third force Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) led by dissident MLA of SDF, Prem Singh Golay has just started to mark its presence in Sikkim's politics, these anti-SDF forces are now getting expressions in and coming under the new banner-SKM

I have come to know that the bureaucrats and MPs have to perform under pressure and are made to act as per the dictum of the Government no matter whichever party comes in power. The legislature exerts tremendous pressure on executive. Legislature or executive, the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union is still a burning issue amongst them. Although the actors of the merger hold that it was necessary firstly, to fulfill high aspirations of the people of Sikkim for development. Secondly, Chogyal was already a hurdle to the people. He never wanted people of Sikkim to be educated because he thought if they get educated then they might challenge monarchy. So the only alternative was to join India for Sikkim's development. Had there been any other option, Sikkim would not have merged with India. But a large section of people feel it was an outright usurpation. They are against the way it was merged and as per the International Laws, it was regarded illegal.

I found the word 'merger' is used officially and in public, but in private it is generally called 'Annexation'. They say that Sikkimese people were unaware about the development and argue that no

enlightened citizen would have loved to undergo a transformation of a nation to a statehood of another nation. For them, the merger was anyway unnecessary as the people of Sikkim had started the process of assimilation with India by signing the 8th May Agreement. According to the agreement, Sikkim was already a part of India, its external affairs, communications, defence and even the internal administration was guided by India. Although it is now the accepted fact that Sikkim lost its distinct identity for development by adopting democratic form of government and now it's a fait accompli but section of people still feel that Sikkim could not reap much benefits of the merger. The mindset of people could not change. There is still a gap between Bhutia-Lepchas and Nepalis and the communal politics still plays a vital role. We could not integrate emotionally with India either. The Sikkimese - Indian difference is very much in force. The latter regarded as outsiders are looked down upon as second class citizens and are contemptuously referred to as Madesi (plainsman) and 'Dhoti Ghathey (Dhoti clad or Dhoti Knotted) different from paharey (hillmen).

A sizeable percentage of people think there's no democracy in Sikkim although we have merged for democratic form of government .But at the same time they hold that there's no democracy not because of lack of principles, provisions and set up; it is because of lack of consciousness and inability of people to utilize it. Democracy ushered in Sikkim too early, people were not ready for it and still are not educated regarding democratic practices and still have a feudal mindset. For effective functioning of democracy it is necessary to have a strong opposition. In absence of opposition in Sikkim, its democratic status was highly debated. Few respondents think that even in absence of opposition Sikkim is democratic because even if there's no opposition political party, opposition comes from other sectors like civil society, NGOs, intellectuals etc. So there's opposition outside the Assembly which makes a balance.

While most of the respondents think that there is space for opposition in Sikkim but people have not utilized it. There's no opposition inside or outside the Assembly mainly because whether the opposition comes from the political parties or social organization or from the media in a democracy people have to participate. People of Sikkim are fokotes (useless people who always look for free rides). They expect the opposition to speak up in everything. Where opposition gets in trouble people do not come to their aid. When the social organizations speak on behalf of people, they keep mum. When media writes in favour of people and gets in trouble, people don't do anything. Therefore, in Sikkim's democracy people are not participating. They keep quiet and expect A, B, C to do the dirty work. That's why opposition does not flourish in Sikkim nor does democracy.

I am told that the best democracy we have experienced was before merger, after merging its all fake democracy. Before merger there was one Chogyal but after the merger there are 32 Chogyals ruling Sikkim. They admit that to large extend there was some sort of democracy in Bhandari's as well as in Chamling's time but what democracy should be, what people aspire for is absent. I asked a person his view on democracy in Sikkim without opposition, he replied, "As long as you talk to people good thing about the government or neutral issues, people will be there to listen to you, but the moment you do the opposite, people start looking over your shoulders and even disappear from sight. What does that mean?" As mentioned above, some respondents had an opinion that even in absence of strong opposition parties in Sikkim, opposition comes from outside the Assembly namely, NGOs and other social associations. Many respondents refuted this and argued that there are many non-political associations: professional, issue based, caste based or religion based which can exert pressure on the Government but barring few, they are run by government patronage. They cannot

keep themselves outside the purview of politics and remain non-political. There is a covered pressure of the government on them which handicaps the active functioning of these associations. They cannot oppose the government policies even if there is necessity and desirability to do so. Talking in this connection, one of the respondent stated, "There is no meaning of civil resistance, it can be purchased." I have realized that there can be paid politics and paid protests too.

One of such associations is the association of HIV positive people. When I met them, I could realize that these people still get stigmatized and are treated as a social taboo. They fear that the rate of positive people are increasing day by day of which 50% remains unreported because of the unsupportive attitude of the people. There is an inter relation between the rise of percentage of drug addicts and HIV positive people as because most of the time the virus is transmitted through sharing of needles among the addicts. More than anything else they are worried about their children being segregated and stigmatized by the society. They want them to be treated at par with the rest of the citizen and want government to take stringent steps for this. They argued that if they have the right to vote, they have every right to lead a respectable life for, being positive is not a crime. They argued that when they form the part of the populace and their votes matter in forming the government, why should not their grievances matter the Government? They further added, in fact these are the matters of grave concern which is weakening our society and the State as a whole from within.

Drug addicts and recovering addicts also had the similar grievances. I realized that most of them had dark phases of life which led them into this trap. They do not enjoy using drugs and be the victim of substance abuse. They are helpless and struggle each day to come out of it and seek moral support from the family and friends.

They want the Government and the society to support them rather than segregate them. Rather than sending them to the rehabilitation centers they want the Government to pass strict laws against the drug peddlers to stop easy availability of drugs. I have come to know that most of the suicide deaths in Sikkim are because of substance abuse and not because of HIV/AIDS.

When I approached the Women's Associations and some leading women in Sikkim, I found women avoided politics as they feel it's a male domain. They are not much bothered about political affairs in the state unless it affects them directly. By interviewing all these respondents, I have observed one more thing in common that most of the people barring few in power are of the view that like in any other Indian states, money plays important role in Sikkim's politics and determines election results but the difference is in Sikkim because of its size and population it is easy to manipulate votes. There is a strong belief among the people that the first election of any party is fought and won genuinely, once the party comes to power it manipulates the rest of the election to stay in power. Moreover, people are still doubtful about secrecy of ballot boxes and Electronic Voting Machines. They feel it is somehow revealed. This is the main reason why people deter to vote against the Government fearing its consequences even if they are unsatisfied with it. As a result, people cannot express their choices in the elections freely which leads to continuity of the same party in power.

10. Tour Narration

For field survey and sample collection, I have taken 8 out of 32 constituencies from all four districts. Of those 8 constituencies, two are taken from each district –one, where SDF remained most stable for the last three consecutive terms and the other, most unstable. Since taking samples from entire constituency would have been very

difficult; therefore, I have made further division of the constituencies into Gram Panchayat Units (GPU) and wards. As a result, I have 8 wards; 4 most stable and 4 most unstable for field survey. To pinpoint these 8 wards, I have first analyzed one stable and one sensitive constituency of SDF party from each district. For this, I have compared performances of the political parties in the three General Assembly Elections that is 1994, 1999 and 2004. I took 1994 Assembly Elections as a benchmark as SDF party formed the government in 1994 for the first time and continuously won in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 elections. Although it continued to be in power even after 2004, I restricted it to 2004 general election as because there was delimitation of boundaries of constituencies in 2009. Since then, there had been only 1 election.

On the basis of three general elections' results, I have classified such constituencies as the most stable where SDF has won in all the general elections with thick margin and such constituencies as the weakest where it has lost with high percentage of votes. However, in the 2004 general election, SDF had a landslide victory winning almost all the seats but one. Therefore, in such a case, I have classified such constituencies as the strongest where SDF has won with a very high margin and classified such constituencies as the weakest where SDF has managed to win but with slender margins. Each constituency consists minimum of 5 and maximum of 10 GPUs. I have further determined the strongest GPUs from each of the strongest constituencies and the weakest GPUs from each of the weakest constituencies by considering the poll percentage of SDF party in the Gram Panchayat Elections. Each GPU has minimum of 5 and maximum of 6 wards. GPUs where SDF could manage to win in all or in most of the wards were considered strongest and those where SDF lost in all or most of the wards, as weakest. In some constituencies, SDF has won in all the GPUs and wards. To classify the weakest ward, again the least vote percentage

of the SDF is taken into consideration as was in classifying the constituencies.

I had a tough time to classify the constituencies. All that I knew was that there were 32 constituencies in Sikkim. I had no idea about the location and boundaries of these constituencies. I had no such document in my possession which would have been handy to find it out. I browsed for the Report of Election Commission of India in the internet but it addressed my problem partially only as the report included only the names of the constituencies. I then visited the State Election Commission Office, Gangtok but there too, I was met with disappointment. The gain was a booklet of Gram Panchayat Election, 2007 handed over to me after much pleading and persuasion. An official curtly said that the office did not have such leisure time to help me and called my endeavor a leisurely pursuit. I felt very low and dejected. The booklet that I had collected contained names of Gram Panchayat Units and Wards. The district wise name of the constituencies was nowhere to be found. The names of GPUs and wards written there were alien to me.

I then decided to approach the Block Administrative Centers (BAC) and I first started from my own BAC at Namchi. The Block Development Officer (BDO) there was also not in possession of such documents. He suggested me to have a talk with every BDO as he confirmed that every BDO knew his area well. He handed me the list of BACs in Sikkim with the mobile number of respective BDOs. But all the BDOs would not have entertained my call, even if they did; they would not have answered my queries over the phone. Again I came to the dead end.

In my pursuit of document providing me the details of constituencies and GPUs, I tried to locate each BAC and tried to get hold of people working in those BACs. I called up all my relatives and

friends scattered all over Sikkim and requested them to visit their respective BDOs to get information about the document but there was no mention of such document. My network fed me with reliable verbal information about the location of constituencies, GPUs and wards but I wanted a document. I got hold of one Panchayat Directory which had the contact numbers of Panchayats, Zilla Panchayats, BDOs and other important offices. I then started calling all the Presidents of GPUs and asked them questions about their constituencies and wards and enquired about such document. I called up almost 150 numbers from that directory.

I usually rang them in the evening because in the day time, some were found to be travelling, some attending meetings etc. In the evening also a smooth conversation could not be established as some were found to be too tired or intoxicated with alcohol. It was very difficult to connect people in the extreme north part of Sikkim. Most of the time there was no network. When I rang up some Panchayats in the evening around 7.30, they were already asleep. Since it is cold there and the place is remote and people have nothing much to do in the cold; they usually go to sleep by 7.p.m. I felt very awkward to disturb them with my questions. Therefore, I introduced myself and asked for their permission to ring them in the morning.

After talking to so many people over the phone for a week, I collected different information from different constituencies. Some were correct, some were not. Some people were ignorant like me. Some were knowledgeable but as they say, an ignorant person makes a knowledgeable confused, same thing was true here. My ignorant cross questions made them confused and later they were unsure about their previous confident answers too.

Finding the document which contained information about the constituencies was like a wild-goose-chase. I was hopping from one

office to another, I checked the Party Offices, called up politicians but in vain. In one of such conversation, somebody suggested that such document might be available in the office of Rural Management and Development Department (RMDD). I went to the district office of RMDD and I was told that such document does exist but they did not have a copy. This led me to the RMDD office in the Head Quarter, Gangtok and met the Joint Secretary and repeated the same story all over again. In response, she informed me that they had a single copy of that document and that too they were about to send it to someone who had filed an RTI. She suggested me to file an RTI too through which I could get the document after a month or so. I requested her with all the skills I possessed to help me. She in return, told me that she would have it photo copied for me provided if the Secretary who was supposed to go for a long holiday the next day, gives the green signal.

The book lying elsewhere on the table suddenly became very rare and important. I would not be allowed to even have a look at the book and copy unless I had an authorization. Finally the Secretary allowed me to photocopy the book and I got my copy. It was a eureka moment for me as though I had finished my research work. The document proved to be really handy. Besides, I had a booklet of Gram Panchayats and wards provided by the Election Commission Office. This made my work easier. Soon, I had 8 wards selected for my field survey.

Field Trips

I first started my field survey from Damthang constituency in the south district which happened to be Chamling's constituency for 24 years and it goes without saying that this constituency was the most stable constituency of the SDF party. Damthang is well connected and is at a distance of 13 km from Namchi. I thought of

starting with the nearest targeted area and since the constituency was purely SDF's stronghold I assumed it to be the easiest. But my assumption about the place was wrong. I ruled out many possible problems in my assumption. In fact, I had the toughest time to convince the people at Damthang in my entire field survey experience. My questionnaire included some sensitive and burning issues of Sikkim; besides Panchayat election was also approaching. These people being pro-SDF did not quite like my questionnaire. This posed a problem for me. People there were very apprehensive. They asked too many questions regarding my motive and intension behind visiting them door to door. I was accompanied alternatively by my brother, uncle, cousin and a friend in my entire tour.

The households in this ward were far below the road. We walked down a sloppy, muddy path which ran through a cardamom field for almost half an hour and came across a small hut. We approached them, explained our motive of visit and took an interview of the head of that family. I was very excited about this survey as it was for the first time I was approaching and interacting with the common people regarding Sikkim's politics. The houses were all scattered. We had to foot slog the cardamom field for another half an hour to find the next respondent. I had made it a point not to take two respondents from the same family, extended family or from relatives as in such cases, the response of one respondent may get influenced by the other or we may not get variety of opinion as a particular family and relatives may hold the same opinion. Since I wanted to take random samples from the selected area we moved in all ways vertically, horizontally and diagonally to get hold of different respondents.

Most of the adults went out for their daily work in the day time. Luckily, majority of them were either farmer or laborer which ensured that they were around. We went to the fields to meet the

farmers and also visited NAREGA sites to meet the laborers. It was at times fun and a new experience till our stomachs were full, after that was another experience-to walk and slog empty stomach and to approach and convince the respondents with smiling face. Most of the respondents claimed to have a very good relation with Chamling but regretted on their inability to meet him. They accepted the fact that there were many shortcomings in the Government. Some respondents were such that they did not receive any developmental scheme and benefit from the government even in twenty years. But they did not deny their love for Chamling and wanted him to be in power even in the next election. The weaknesses in the Government, they believed was not because of Chamling but because of bureaucrats who were responsible for distribution of schemes and implementation of policies of the Government. Bureaucrats were termed as '*Daru Puneu*' meaning ladles and spatulas. These *daru puneus*, according to them had been partial and biased in ladling out and distributing these schemes.

The senior citizens were either too old, unaware or least bothered about Sikkim's political situation, let alone Nation's to answer my questions. The few who agreed to answer also did not speak up their minds. They relied on their children's nod to answer the questions. Youth were reluctant to answer out of fear psychosis of losing something valuable if they answer such questions. Everybody -young and old in that ward had the same thing to say, "It has already been informed to our Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats about your visit by now. They will interrogate us about this." After the interviews were over, we had to walk uphill to reach the main road. Walking down the cardamom field was still all right in spite of my heavy tumble in the cardamom field while coming down considering the fear of snake bite and other poisonous insects in the dusk and the nettle shrubs being very rude to us when we grasped them mistakably for support while climbing up.

The next trip was at Chuba, the most unstable GPU of the most unstable constituency, Temi-Tarku in south district. It is approximately 25 km from Namchi. We were quite worried about visiting the place as there was a clash between the ruling and opposition camp few days before our visit. Lower Phong, the ward which I had zeroed in was also inaccessible by road; we had to go by foot leaving the main road. After a fifteen minutes walk we reached our spot. On reaching the location we found the place was remote and hence we did not expect a very good response. But it was very surprising and pleasing to find that the people there were very outspoken. At first they were suspicious about us as the situation there wasn't peaceful but once they were convinced about my intention, they were more than willing to answer my questions. In fact, they appreciated my endeavor and found my questions to be factual and much needed one. First, I met one 'Daju' (Nepali term for brother) Luckily, he was quite interested in politics and contested many a times in the local and state level elections as an independent candidate although he lost every time. I took his interview first. By the time the interview was over, I took him into my confidence and made him agree to guide me through the village. He helped me leaving Durga puja ceremony at his home.

The village was quite big in size with scattered hamlets. Daju insisted me to visit an octogenarian who had not only seen transition of Sikkim from kingdom to democratic state but had served in the democratic set up as a panchayat in all three regimes viz., Kazi, Bhandari and Chamling. He was very informative and people relied on him for latest local and national news. Hence, he was given a name 'Aaj Tak Kaka' shortened as 'Kaka Tak' (Aaj Tak is a leading news channel, Kaka-a Nepali term for uncle. Since it was Dushera, I had little difficulty in finding people who were not drunk. One or the other of the family member was drunk. Even when I got hold of sober respondents, the interviews were disturbed by those drunken

members. Their acts were so funny that at times it was really challenging for me to maintain serious attitude. Except this difficulty, people's responses were higher than my expectation. People spilt out their grievances and pointed out the weaknesses of the government especially its failure to distribute developmental schemes and benefits impartially. They complained that they did not receive any benefit from the government in nearly 20 years. As opposed to my expectation, these people were well informed about Sikkim's actual population, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita income and foreign and central aids, loans etc.

Most of the female respondents were illiterate or had just attended primary schools. But they were very outspoken and wanted to contest in the election if given a chance no matter which party that may be. These women had made some interesting observation. As against the views of most of the urban and educated women who showed strong tendency to vote for female candidate, women from this GPU did not want to vote for female candidates. They reasoned, firstly, women are very egoistic and are not negotiable and therefore, they cannot easily come to consensus of any matter. Secondly, in most of the cases, female candidates get married and go to their husband's house. Even if a woman is married she may sometimes have extra marital affair and get married. In both the cases chances are that the female representatives of a particular constituency might change her residence after marriage and cannot attend to people's day to day problems by staying in another constituency. But if it is a male candidate, even if he marries many women, chances are that he may not change his residence

In comparison to Damthang constituency, people in this constituency were very outspoken and most of them knew all the facts and figures of Sikkim. I was quite surprised and got little suspicious too. Different thoughts ran through my mind, jostling

with one another. I was evaluating whether they really were conscious citizens or I approached some informers of some political parties; pretending to be dissatisfied with the government to know my intention. Politics in Sikkim is very congested, not just at present but since the very beginning of party politics. Barring few towns in Sikkim, people here go gaga over even at a sight of 'a snake swallowing a frog'. This may be attributed to its size, population and laid back attitude of the people as they are dependent and spoon-fed by the government. Because of fear of losing freely earned luxury, one cannot afford to be outspoken no matter how educated or how strong one's social position is. An unintentional and mundane comment can also become of great importance. But here, people did speak up freely and frankly.

My third targeted area was in the east district. I had picked up two GPUs from two constituencies of the east district: Khamdong and Rakdong Tintek-one most stable and the other most unstable respectively. Khamdong GPU of Khamdong constituency is situated above Singtam which is approximately 75 km from Namchi. Sumick Lingzey is adjacent to Khamdong constituency towards the east. I was accompanied by my cousin and a friend and we started at 6.30 in the morning. We got down at Singtam (one of the small town en route to Gangtok) and tried to find vehicles plying to our destination. But we were told that the place was not well connected and the cabs, not easily available because of the condition of road. We decided to hire a local taxi for whole day so that we can get plenty of time to spend with people. The taxi driver was very demanding, he charged us very high because of the road condition and made it clear in the beginning itself that his lunch, snacks and refreshment should be taken care of. Since it was during Dushera, it was very difficult to get a taxi driven by a sincere and sober driver. He was not sincere but was at least sober. Therefore, we complied. The driver was local to that place which was his plus point. Khamdong, as told earlier was

a not well connected remote village. It was very difficult for a small car to ply on the uncarpeted road. In some places, we had to get down and push the car to let it move. In some places like Dhanbari, it was impossible to take the vehicle. We had to leave the car and walk uphill through the paddy fields on foot to reach our destination.

Khamdong was a Scheduled Caste concentrated area. They were basically Hindus. They usually visited their relatives during Dushera. Why I find this worth mentioning is because in some places we were misunderstood as their long -ago- seen far off relatives. We were almost welcomed by them. But once they came to know our true selves, like in other places, here too people were skeptic about our visit. They suspected our affiliation to some political parties. Naturally, they were not ready to answer my questions. It took some time for us to convince them too.

Although the area was SDF's stronghold, some educated people had pent up grievances against the government and wanted change in the government for better governance. But majority of them were not much educated and therefore, not very conscious and interested in political affairs. All that they knew was that they had to support the ruling government. I had a tough time with the senior citizens as most of them were illiterate and belonged to the generation of monarchy. It was very difficult to make them understand my mission and placing my questionnaire to them was like throwing a pearl to the pigs. They belonged to the generation where kings were worshipped, questioning the king's supremacy and criticizing his rule was a sin.

In one of such cases, I asked an old man to score Chogyal's rule out of 100, he did not understand my question. I simplified the question and asked, "Suppose you had 100 rupees, how much will you have given to the king considering his work?" The old man

laughed out loud and made mockery of me saying, "Have you gone mad? Was king a servant? Could anybody tip the king?" I again used another tactic and said, "Ok, if you had 100 oranges, how many would you have given to the king willingly considering his rule?" He again came up with his crazy reply, this time weirdly, "Why would the king take oranges from me? Not just 100, he could have thousands and thousands of oranges himself." The old man got irritated with my weird questions and in return, he was making me drive up the walls with his crazy answers. The only difference was that he could manifest his anger while I could not. I used many other examples like cow, milk, cock, eggs, gold, land etc with endurance to make him understand my questions. To complete his interview was an achievement in itself.

One peculiar thing about the respondents at Khamdong was most of them preferred to vote for the candidate of their own caste whereas in other constituencies people preferred to vote for candidate of the favorite party or from local area. Since it was during Dushera festival, there was no dearth of food. We got to eat whichever house or hut we entered in. Some were very sympathetic towards us and were wondering how stern our professor was that he did not spare the children even during festivals. We made a long face and enjoyed their sympathies. We left the place around 2.30 p.m. and moved towards the next constituency, Rakdong Tintek which was adjacent to Khamdong constituency.

Our next stop was Sumick Lingzey GPU which fell under Rakdong Tintek constituency, 8 km from Khamdong Constituency. One interesting thing about this area was that this GPU was just next to Khamdong GPU. The boundary was such that, of the one hamlet, half belonged to Khamdong-the most stable constituency and the other half to Rakdong Tintek-the most unstable one. The boundary had not just divided the constituencies but also people's

views and attitudes. Their views towards the government and politics were different from each other. Whereas Khamdong's people were pro-government, pro-SDF or I would rather say pro-Chamling (politics in Sikkim is mostly a one man's show), they blindly supported the government; people in Sumick-Lingzey were critical and judgmental about the government and its policies.

The area was Tribal concentrated area majority of which were Bhutias. I found their way of life different from other small towns although the place was not very far from towns. People there were not influenced by western fashion and were mostly seen in traditional Bhutia attire, 'Bhaku'. They generally spoke Bhutia language though they could understand Nepali but were not very fluent in speaking. Here I faced a communication problem as they could neither speak in English nor in Nepali. I sought the help of a gentleman who understood both Nepali and their local language, Bhutia but English. I translated my questionnaire to him from English to Nepali. He then translated it to Bhutia language. The responses were again translated to me from Bhutia to Nepali.

Most of the respondents were interested in contesting in the elections from any political party; ruling or opposition. They would also like to vote for any candidate who is promising regardless of caste, location or party affiliation. But the government employees especially ladies denied responding to my questionnaire. At first they agreed but later when I asked questions on sensitive issues, they called it a quit. Most of the women were guided by their male associates to answer the questions; hence their answers were influenced by their partners. Luckily, as compared to other GPUs, we did not have to put extra effort to convince them. People were politically very forward, conscious and were willing to place their views. They were not constrained by pre assumed political

repercussion. We completed our work by 5.30 p.m. and took a halt in Gangtok.

The most exciting and adventurous trip in the entire tour was going to Yuksam constituency in the west which happened to be one of the most unstable constituencies in Sikkim. We hit the Khichudpalri ward which fell under Tingle Khichudpalri GPU of Yuksam constituency. We started at 5.30 a.m. in the morning from Namchi. Khichudpalri is approximately 95 km from Namchi. We woke up at 3 a.m. in the morning, got the food ready to take along as we knew that we were heading to one of the off track location and every thing that we needed had to be carried along. Besides, it was very early in the morning and the few road side restaurants would have remained closed. It was a different experience to travel in the dawn. It is very refreshing to see the snow capped mountains in October shining brilliantly when touched by the morning sun rays with the chirpings of birds at the background.

We reached Pelling at 8.30 a.m. The second capital of Sikkim, Rapdense was on the way and I promptly decided to visit that historic place although it was difficult to convince my companions as we had to walk through a forest for almost half an hour to reach there. We were scared of bears and other wild beasts on the way as we were the first ones in the morning to tread that path. Besides, the bear attacks on human beings even around the towns had occupied the front pages of newspapers in Sikkim during that time. In some places, trees were so dense that even the sun rays could not penetrate. When we reached there, the risky walk was worth taking. The ruins of the palace of the second capital of Sikkim, Rapdense were reminiscence and a witness of many important events of the past when Sikkim was a kingdom. It was great to be in the place where history was made. The events of the past related to the place seemed more vivid and expressive than the limited words in the

books. We could not stay there for long as we had to go further and we were just the half way through.

After a short break for refreshment at Pelling, we continued our journey to Khichudpalri. It was about 26 km from Pelling. The condition of the road to the west was already horrible, and the road to Khichudpalri was even more horrible. The road was literally vertical and so slender that it could hardly manage a truck. Yet we kept moving uphill until we reached Khichudpalri GPU. I was familiar with the names of the GPUs and wards there, thanks to the books from Election Commission Office.

Khichudpalri is a famous pilgrim place for Buddhist. On reaching there, we found the place crowded and cheerful with tourists, especially foreigners. We approached the nearby police outpost to know the exact location of my survey area, Tingle Khichudpalri. I was told that the area I was talking about would take 30-40 minutes uphill for regular commuters to reach there and for amateurs, 45minutes to 1 hour on foot. We had an option to hire a mule and ride on it. I found the option quite funny considering our weights-one no less than the other. We ultimately decided to walk up the muddy foot path to reach our destination at the hill top.

It was already noon when we started our journey from Khichudpalri Lake. The pathway was so uphill that after a bare ten minutes walk, the police outpost and the road seemed far below. Leaving the hustle bustle of that place behind, we penetrated a dense jungle where we could see and hear nothing but the forest and the unusual sounds of insects. In some places the jungle was so dense that the sunrays could not penetrate even in the noon and the dew drops trickled down upon us from the tree leaves. The more we climbed, the more we found the pathway ascending. We soon became thirsty and were gasping; our shirts all wet due to perspiration and

dewdrops. We perspired even more because of fear of bears. Looking at the jungle, I am sure that there must have been some cute looking hairy creatures to give each of us a bear hug. We were lucky to have not encountered them.

After climbing uphill for almost 20 minutes, we found some pieces of Sail Rotis (traditional Nepali snacks) lying on the ground which gave us a hope that the settlement was nearby. We kept climbing up with no sight of hamlets. After another 10-15 minutes, we had an encounter with a Dog. Now we were sure that we had almost reached. After a walk of bare 5 minutes, we had a glimpse of hamlets and could hear the cock's crowing assuring us the presence of people around. After a rigorous 45 minutes walk uphill, there was a beautiful tableland with a Gumpa (monastery) at the hill top.

There were approximately 30 scattered households, all of them were Buddhists. Their main source of income was providing home stay facilities and meditation centers for tourists. I did not expect the hamlet in the midst of jungle would be used so brilliantly. At the hill top, far from the hustle-bustle of towns, rested a hamlet which had its own world, different from the rest of the world. We could see a huge snowy mountain range at the backdrop and the holy Khichudpalri Lake down below from there. No wonder most of the cottages and huts were mainly occupied by the tourists from different parts of world like Germany, Italy. The households used mules as a mode of transportation and for carrying burdens.

There I met an interesting octogenarian addressed as '*Pala*' by everyone (meaning father in Bhutia language.) who was well known among the tourists for his home stay. He had witnessed many events and development in the erstwhile kingdom of Sikkim and was one of the participants in 1973 agitation who saw the transition of Sikkim from a kingdom to a state of Indian Union. He enlightened me with

the tradition, custom, people and politics of Sikkim during Chogyal's rule. He shared his experience of being a subject of the king and a citizen of the democratic nation and shared how difficult it was for them to shift their allegiance from their king to some unknown power and get accustomed with unaccustomed set-up overnight. His experience was noteworthy as such experiences are not written in the books. Not just in the past, he was active in politics even after the merger. He contested in the general elections as an independent candidate from the Sangha seat until the last elections but lost every time with a slender margin. He was therefore, very well informed about the present day politics of Sikkim. The important thing was he could compare and contrast between kingship and democracy and also the ruling of each government viz., Kazi, Bhandari and Chamling.

People in this constituency were very docile. They did not want to give any interview as such. But once they were convinced, they were willing to speak up and place their grievances. They did not hesitate to say that they got nothing from the SDF government even in almost 20 years. When they were asked about the regimes of other rulers-Kazi and Bhandari, they opined that Kazi did nothing remarkable as the democratic form of government was new to Sikkim and it took sometime for the Sikkimese leaders and people to adjust with the system. His regime was basically of 'trial and error'. Most of them thought that SSP government was the best and credited it for infrastructure development. They said that most of the roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and office buildings were built during Bhandari's rule. It was during his time according to them, their villages were connected by roads, provided water, electricity, schools and dispensaries. Chamling's developmental policies and programs for them was just a carry forward of what Bhandari had initiated.

Since it was a Tribal area, they spoke either Bhutia or Lepcha. They could not communicate properly either in Nepali, Hindi or in English language. I, on my part could only understand Bhutia but could not speak. Luckily, Pala was a blessing in disguise. He had a strong command over Bhutia and Lepcha language, but could not understand English. I, therefore, translated my questions to Nepali language; Pala translated them to their local language, either in Bhutia or in Lepcha and again translated the responses of the respondents to Nepali language. The process was taxing but I thoroughly enjoyed the chain of translation. It took me nearly three hours to get their responses.

The place was lovely and we did not want to return back for two reasons. For one, it was not called 'the meditation point' by the tourist for nothing. With the Himalayas in front of one's face, green pasture and bright October sun was really mesmerizing. Their way of life was different from the town dwellers. They were self-sufficient for every thing they needed – cereals, meat, dairy, vegetables, fruits etc. They got their daily food from their kitchen gardens and orchards and sometimes exchanged it with their neighbors. The neighborhood was indeed like their extended family. The spirit of competition, ego and class maintenance which have now become a prominent feature in Sikkimese modern society, especially with the middle class families was missing in this village. The society was very well – knitted and each household knew the inside-out of their neighbor and sincerely stood by one another.

Second reason, why I did not want to come down was because of the sloppy and slippery way back. Climbing up was still manageable, coming down was more challenging holding the entire weight of the body with two legs and the fear of bears in the evening will apparently make one's knees go weak. Yet we managed to come down. It was already dark around 6 p.m. when we reached the main

road. Not wasting a single minute, we left for Pelling where we stayed for the night and returned home the following day.

My last field trip was at Rinchenpong constituency which was the most stable constituency in the west district. Rinchenpong is 59 km from Namchi. My area of field survey was lower Takothang ward. The condition of road was horrible and miserable; horrible for the first timers and miserable for regular commuters. After reaching the spot somehow, we climbed up the road to penetrate the hamlets. As I had always tried to cover the entire ward by choosing respondents from different hamlets, we had to walk up and down the road to find the respondents of different categories.

People there were very welcoming but they showed their reservations after reading or hearing my questionnaire. The Panchayat election in few days to come was to be blamed to some extent for this. They had two thoughts in their minds when we approached them with such questions. Firstly, they thought that we were sent by opposition political parties for canvassing. Secondly, they assumed that we were sent by the ruling party itself to smell a rat in the eve of Panchayat elections. Therefore, out of mistrust, they could not be sincere with their answers. Hence, I again took a local gentleman in my confidence. Although it took lots of hard work to make him agree to help us, he guided us to the hamlets around which would have taken longer without him and people gave us familiar looks because of his company.

Although the area was SDF's stronghold, the respondents strongly wanted change in the government in every five year or at least in ten years. They said that they got fed up with the same party in power with the same policies for a long time. They suggested that the government should be alternated in every election so as to get benefits by the people for they believed that a new party comes to

power with new policies and programs. They viewed that chance should be given to all who wants to serve the state. Most of the respondents preferred local candidate to the candidate of their favorite party or of their caste in elections provided that the local candidate is promising enough.

The villagers led a Spartan life. Most of them were engaged in agricultural farming, some reared cattle. In one of the houses that I visited, I was surprised to see the piglets left loose in the house which followed the family members front and back. Those piglets were so adapt to stay with human beings that when we were offered piras (a handmade mat made of corn's dried cover which is used only in remote villages) to sit they almost jumped on our laps as though they were pets. One thing that I have noticed is that people in villages are very welcoming. They leave everything to attend their guests. At Rinchenpong too, they plucked fresh fruits from their orchard and offered them to us. Some offered us curd, corn etc.

11. Documentary Research

Apart from the field work, I have collected a lot of primary documents from different sources. The documents of correspondence between India and Sikkim since the Indian independence till the merger of Sikkim with India, a letter dated 7.4.1973 signed by the different political leaders requesting for the Indian intervention during 1973 agitation, a press release of the Chogyal's visit to Delhi dated 26.6.1974 which enclosed a detail discussion between the Chogyal and the officials of the ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India on the draft "Government of Sikkim Bill 1974", a text of address of the Chogyal dated 2.7.1974 to the Sikkim Assembly regarding the implications of the draft "Government of Sikkim Bill 1974", the text of telegram dated 9.9.1974 from the Chogyal of Sikkim to the Chief Minister, Kazi regarding illegality of

the draft bill ,1974 and the text of telegram dated 10.9.1974 of the Chief Minister replying the Chogyal, a copy of a letter dated 11.9.1974, to the Chief Executive by the Sikkimese students questioning Sikkim's status as per the draft bill, 1974, have been collected from different sources. Another rare and important document is the opinion of M. Hidayatullah, retired Chief Justice of India on the merger of Sikkim with India.

Many documents during Bhandari's rule have been collected such as Petition to the Parliament of India for citizenship to all the people of Sikkim, 1988, petition for seat reservation in the Assembly for Nepalese of Sikkimese origin. Most important among them are the documents of series of correspondence between the Finance Minister of India, the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Nar Bahadur Bhandari regarding the imposition of Direct Income Tax Laws in Sikkim, text of statement of the Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha on exemption of Income Tax, document of correspondence between the Chief Minister, B.B. Gurung and the Centre after forming his government in 1984, and the document of correspondence between the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling and the Centre after forming his government in 1994.

Relevant Assembly proceedings since the first Assembly session till the recent ones have been collected, other government documents like white paper on the direct tax laws in Sikkim, Reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Government of Sikkim, State Government Notification on Gram Panchayat Election, 2007, State Election Commission Report on General Election to Gram Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats, 2007 and State Government Notification on Reorganisation of Gram Panchayat Units have been collected from official and unofficial sources. Apart from this, party literatures, documents and manifestos of different political parties particularly of SSP and SDF and relevant older

newspaper clippings from different sources have been collected. All the documents mentioned above have been collected and analysed to authenticate and enrich the present work.

CHAPTER – 2
THE BEGINNING OF POLITICAL
DEMOCRACY IN SIKKIM

CHAPTER

2

The Beginning of Political Democracy in Sikkim

1. The Chogyals and Their Reigns

The history of Sikkim prior to the 17th century is not well documented. It is all blurred and scattered in bits and pieces. It is said that Sikkim was covered densely with forests, mostly uninhabited, remote and inaccessible. The Lepchas are considered to be the real autochthones of Sikkim. They call themselves as Rongkup which means "the son of the snowy peak." They call themselves so because the Lepcha tradition says that the first and the foremost primogenitors of the lepchas were created by the God from the pure snows of Kanchanjunga peak at its pinnacle. They were sent down to the fairy land which lay on the lap of Mount Kanchanjunga, assumed to be Sikkim. (*Risley, 1928*), (*K.P.Tamsang, 1983*)

One may wonder that although Lepchas are the indigenous inhabitants of Sikkim yet it was ruled by Bhutia kings from the very beginning to the end of monarchy in Sikkim. But the confusion clears as the story unfolds. Tradition tells that somewhere in the thirteenth century a prince named Guru Tashi in Tibet with his five sons proceeded towards south-west to seek his fortune in Denzong "the valley of rice" as directed by his divine vision. They came across the Sakya kingdom where the hierarch was engaged in building a great monastery. The workers there had not been successful in erecting pillars for the monastery. Guru Tashi's eldest son succeeded in erecting the pillar and came to be known as Khye Bumsa meaning "the superior of ten thousand heroes."

Khye Bumsa married the daughter of Sakya king. After the death of his father, Khye Bumsa settled in Chumbi valley. Being issueless, his lamas advised him to take the blessing of the Chieftain and religious head of Lepchas. This is how he came in contact with Lepcha chieftain Tetong Tek in Gangtok. With his blessing; Khye Bumsa was blessed with three sons. Thereafter, the two chieftains entered in a treaty of blood brotherhood at a place called Kabi Longtsok which bound the Lepchas and the Bhutias as brothers. Khye Bumsa was succeeded by his third son Mipon-Rab. His fourth son Guru Tashi shifted his family and tribe to Gangtok. The great grandson of Guru Tashi was Phunstok. He was born in 1604 who later became the first Chogyal of Sikkim.

The reason behind his becoming the first Chogyal of Sikkim is it is believed that there was split between the Yellow Hat Sect and the Red Hat Sect of the Buddhist in Tibet. This event led the three celebrated lamas of latter sect to flee from persecution towards southwards. After many wanderings they met in a place called Norbugang, which was later named as Yoksum meaning the meeting place of the three superior ones. They had a mission of converting the Lepcha tribe to Buddhism by installing a Buddhist monarchy in Sikkim. With this intention they searched for a person named Phunstok, the same person who was the great grandson of Guru Tashi and consecrated him as the king of the whole country in 1642 with the title of Chogyal which means the king who rules with righteousness. Phunstok was also conferred the surname Namgyal. The Capital of Sikkim was established in Yoksum itself. (*Risley, 1928*), (*Bhanja K. C., 1993*), (*White, 1909*)

Very little is known of Phunstok Namgyal's reign. He was succeeded by his son Tensung Namgyal in 1670. He shifted the capital from Yoksum to Rabdenste near present day Gyalshing. His reign was not an eventful one. His son Chakdor Namgyal succeeded

him in the year 1700. During his reign there were fratricidal wars between members of the royal family which resulted in the loss of territory of the Kingdom. Chakdor Namgyal's son succeeded him in 1717. Gyurmed Namgyal's reign was uneventful. He was succeeded by his illegitimate son Phunstok Namgyal in 1733. His reign was marked by an increase in the Lepcha influence in the Sikkimese Court and the Nepalis frequent attacks on the western borders of Sikkim's territory. Phunstok Namgyal was succeeded by his son Tenzing Namgyal in 1780. During his reign Sikkim faced the threat of invasion from her aggressive and expansionist neighboring countries; Bhutan and Nepal. Nepal invaded Sikkim several times and occupied large chunks of Sikkimese territory. They attacked Rapdenste, the capital and the Chogyal had to flee to Tibet. The Chogyal died in Lhasa and his son Tsudphud Namgyal was sent to Sikkim in 1793 to succeed him as the monarch. He shifted the capital to a place called Tumlong as Rabdanste was considered too insecure because of its proximity to the Nepali border. (*Risley, 1928*)

Tsughud Namgyal had the longest reign.(1793-1864) His power and responsibilities were greatly reduced as a result of the penetration of the British power into the Himalayas. It was during his reign the treaty of Titalia was signed between Sikkim and British on 10.2.1817. With this treaty Sikkim lost her independent status as British India by the treaty assumed the position of lords paramount of Sikkim and a title to exercise a predominant influence in Sikkim. Thus the treaty marked the beginning of British interest in Sikkim. It was again during the reign of Tsugphud Namgyal, Darjeeling was gifted to British India in 1835, following a lot of pressure from them. In his reign the Anglo-Sikkim relation worsened. Because of the continuous misconduct of the officers and subjects of Maharaja and his failure to provide solution for this led to the tarnishing of harmonious Anglo-Sikkim relation which led to invasion and conquest of part of Sikkim by a British Force. To obviate future

misunderstanding and to continue friendship and alliance with the British Government a new treaty was signed on 28th March 1861 at Tumlong. (*Risley, 1928*) (*Kotturan, 1983, pp. 62-66*) (*S.K. Sharma, 1998, pp. 5-9*) The treaty cancelled all the previous treaties between the British and Sikkim Governments. Sikkim in fact became a protectorate of India through this treaty. (*Wangdi, 2011, p. 95*) (Appendix II) Tsugphud Namgyal was succeeded by his son Sidekong Nmagyal in 1863. He ruled for a very brief period (from 1863 to 1874). But in his rule the Anglo-Sikkim relations was perhaps at its best. After the death of Sidekeong, his half brother Thutob, son of the fifth wife of Tsudphud Namgyal became the ninth ruler of Sikkim.

Thutob Namgyal's rule was characterized by uncertainty. During his reign the British Government encouraged the Nepalese to settle in some parts of Sikkim which even led to the large-scale riots between original Sikkimese and Nepali settlers at Rhenock in 1880. The British intervened and settled the matter which went in favour of Nepali settlers. The Maharaja was displeased with the British for its decision and he became more inclined towards Tibet. (*Kotturan, 1983, p. 72*) In the meantime, the Tibetans occupied the Sikkim territory of Lingtu. The British Government warned the Tibetan Military Officer that the British Army would occupy Lingtu if it was not vacated. The Tibetans instead fortified their positions, claiming the area as part of Tibet. When it was asked to the Maharaja Thutob, he divulged about an agreement which he had signed in 1886 in Galing according to which Sikkim was subject to only China and Tibet. This was a terrific blow to the British. In March 1888, the British Indian Army under the command of General Graham, occupied Lingtu and Tibetans were expelled from Sikkim. The members of the Sikkim Royal family were moved to Kalimpong and kept under confinement. The British-India Government appointed Claude White as the first political officer in Sikkim in 1889 with

powers of a de facto ruler. Meanwhile the British initiated an open negotiation with the Chinese Government to sort out the confusion on the status of Tibet and Sikkim in relation to China. As a result on 17th March 1890 the Anglo - Chinese convention was signed at Calcutta. In this treaty China acknowledged Sikkim as a British Protectorate and clearly defined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet and recognized British India's direct control over the internal and external affairs of Sikkim and prohibited Sikkim to have direct links with any other country without the permission of the British. The Maharaja was allowed to return to Sikkim only in February 1891. But then he found that he was virtually under the supervision of the British Political Officer. (*Risley, 1928*), (*Kotturan, 1983, pp. 73-75*), (*Wangdi, 2011, pp. 95-96*)

Sir Thutob Namgyal was succeeded by his son Sidekong Tulku in 1914. Unfortunately he did not live long and died in the same year. He was succeeded by his half brother Tashi Namgyal, the youngest son of Thutob Namgyal who initiated many reforms in the state. He began his reign under the tutelage of Charls Bell who had replaced Claude White as the Political Officer. He had a long reign of about fifty years spanning the periods of British Raj and independent India. It saw many social, economic and political developments in the kingdom.

Indian independence in 1947 brought new dimension to the course of history in Sikkim. The British maintained that after the lapse of British paramountcy in 1947, all the states were free to join either Indian Union or Pakistan or remain independent. However, whether this was pertinent in case of Sikkim was not clear as because Sikkim was never a feudatory "Native State" in the precise meaning of that term in British India, but neither was it independent or even internally autonomous. The British were under no great compulsion to clarify the situation in the absence of effective

challenges to their predominant position throughout the eastern Himalaya. (Rose, 1969)

Perhaps the British had allowed a special status to Sikkim different from that of Bhutan and Nepal because of its most strategic and exposed position in the complex and volatile frontier region between South Asia and China and also because Sikkim was the major channel of communication between India and Tibet and it was also the connecting link between the predominantly Hindu culture of the central Himalayas and the Buddhist and animist communities in the eastern Himalaya. (Rose, 1969) But that had not prevented them from bringing Sikkim under the purview of the Government of India Act of 1935. In fact, by that Act Sikkim had been allotted one seat in the council of state of the Federal Assembly. It is interesting to note here a letter stating the status of Sikkim in this regard, quoted in George Kotturan's *The Himalayan Gateway; History and Culture of Sikkim*, written by Sir Olaf Caroe, who was secretary in the external affairs department of the Government of India under Lord Linlithgow and Lord Wavell, published in the "Daily Telegraph" of London on November 8, 1975, He wrote: "*This protectorate status does not alter the fact that for decades prior to 1947 Sikkim had been a part of India, its external frontiers being a sector of India's frontiers.*" He further said that the Indian Government representative in Sikkim was a political officer equivalent to a resident and not an ambassador. (Kotturan, 1983, pp. 91-92)

A controversy arose almost immediately after independence over whether India automatically inherited the paramount rights the British had enjoyed in the Border States. India argued that as the successor government, it enjoyed all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of the British. The Sikkim court disagreed and argued that independent India was "new juristic person" which could not "claim to be subrogated to the rights and obligations of the

British Government.” (Rose, 1969) The Sikkimese insisted that the Paramountcy had lapsed with British withdrawal from India.

The new Indian government quickly signed “stand still” agreements with Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. The agreement with Sikkim stipulated that all existing agreements, formal or informal, in operation on August 15, 1947, would be retained until a new treaty could be negotiated. The Indian authorities had first submitted the “Instrument of Accession” form signed by the rulers of the Indian princely states on their merger into the Indian Union. But when Sikkim objected to this format, New Delhi agreed to use the “stand still” terminology which had been suggested by the Sikkimese. This constituted an implicit recognition by India of Sikkim’s special status as well as providing an early indication that India would not insist upon Sikkim’s full accession. (Rose, 1969) Jawaharlal Nehru while moving a resolution on Sikkim in the Constituent Assembly in January 22, 1947 said, “Sikkim is an Indian state but different from others.” (Kotturan, 1983, p. 93) Sikkim signed a standstill agreement on 27th of February 1948 as an interim arrangement till the new one was worked out. (Kotturan, 1983, pp. 93-94), (S.K. Sharma, 1998, p. 65)

This agreement was opposed by local parties like Sikkim State Congress (SSC) which was formed as a result of inspiration given by the Indian independence and the establishment of popular government in some states. Meanwhile, a new rival political party was also launched by the name of Sikkim National Party (SNP), which was pro Maharaja, SSC being people’s party. The SSC wanted a democratic setup and accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union. In fact this party got the Maharaj to agree to install a five member interim government including two nominees of his own. The first popular government led by Tashi Tshering was therefore installed on 9th May 1949. But there was a problem over functioning of the

ministry. The Maharaja was unwilling to part with his power whereas the ministry wanted to run a full-fledged government with the Maharaja as a constitutional head. Anticipating the tough situation ahead, the Maharaja invited central intervention and the popular ministry was dissolved by the Political Officer on 6th June 1949 at the request of the Maharaja of Sikkim. (*Interview with C.D.Rai, 2012*) Dr. B.V. Keskar, the then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs after visiting Sikkim and investigating the matter came to the conclusion that the state needed a capable administrator to restore normalcy. As a result Mr. J.S. Lall, a senior civil servant was appointed as Dewan on 11th August 1949. (*Kotturan, 1983, p. 97*) (*1949 with a Difference, 1973*)

On 5th December 1950 a new treaty was signed between India and Sikkim according to which all previous treaties between British Government and Sikkim which were still in force between India and Sikkim were cancelled. The treaty provided for the status of Sikkim as a Protectorate of the Indian Union with Chogyal as the Monarch. Defence, Foreign Affairs, communication, maintenance of good administration and law and order of Sikkim was to be looked after by India. The Postal system and Currency would also be Indian. The complete internal administration would be looked after by the Chogyal. An Advisory Council representing all the interest to be associated with the Dewan (Prime Minister), sent by India and institution of a village panchayat system on an elective basis within the State was also proposed. (*Kotturan, 1983, pp. 97-98*) (*S.K. Sharma, 1998, pp. 66-69*)

The 1950 Treaty had not entirely removed the ambiguity as to Sikkim's inter-national status. In most Indian official documents, the question of whether Sikkim is an "independent" political entity with only certain treaty obligations had been carefully and, presumably, deliberately obscured.' Anything that tends to clarify this situation

was best avoided. New Delhi refused to designate the Indo-Sikkimese border as an international boundary on official Indian maps, despite strong and repeated protests from Sikkim. New Delhi was even reluctant to address the ruler of Sikkim by his traditional Buddhist title, Chogyal (Tibetan for "Religious King" or "Defender of the Faith"), reportedly because this emphasized the non-Indian origin of the ruling dynasty in the state. The result had been an exaggerated sense of frustration in Sikkim. (Rose, 1969)

Another important reform in the reign of Maharaj Tashi Namgyal was the introduction of famous parity formula in which the Nepalese who constituted more than 70% of the total population were equated with Bhutia-Lepcha (B-L) in the distribution of seat in the proposed state council. This formula was very peculiar which will be discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs. Tashi Namgyal died in 1963 and was succeeded by his son Palden Thondup Namgyal on 6th December 1963.

The last Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal, the second son of Maharaja Sir Tashi Namgyal and Maharani Kunzang Dechen, was born in 1923. The Chogyal had his elementary education at Saint Joseph's Convent, Kalimpong at the age of six. He had to discontinue his education from 1931 to 1935 to train himself for monkhood to fulfill the qualification of his being the incarnation of late Maharaja Tulku Sidkeong Namgyal. In 1935 he continued his studies at Saint Joseph's college, Darjeeling, and completed his studies at Bishop Cotton School, Shimla in 1941. He had to change the course of his life because of the untimely demise of Prince Paljor, the heir apparent who was then serving as an officer in the Royal India Air Force. His demise made Palden the heir apparent. Consistent with the changed situation, he underwent the Indian Civil service training course at Dehra Dun in 1942 and returned to his country.

The young Crown Prince started taking an active interest in the administration of his country. Maharaja Tashi was old and never fully recovered from the shock of the untimely death of his eldest son and after Maharaja's estrangement with Maharani Kunzang Dechen. Maharajkumar Palden Thondup had been called upon to increasingly attend to the matters of state on behalf of his father, whose interest in official as well as other matters had steadily declined. It was he who was able to impress Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India and was instrumental in getting the "Standstill Agreement" signed with a government of India. It was he again, who had led the Sikkimese delegation which negotiated with the Government of India ending up with the treaty of 1950. He ably kept the different political forces in check and initiated many social, economic and political reforms keeping with the changing time.

Palden Thondup had married Sangey Deki, a Tibetan beauty, from one of the noble families of Tibet. She died in 1957, leaving behind two sons and a daughter. After six years as a widower, the Maharajkumar married Miss Hope Cooke, an American in March, and 1963. On the 2nd of December, 1963, Maharaja Tashi Namgyal died after a short illness and Palden Thondup Namgyal took over the functions of the ruler. However, the actual coronation took place only on the 4th of April, 1965, coinciding with his forty-second birthday. He discarded the title of 'Maharaja' which was imposed by the British Raj as in India and adopted his fore father's title of Chogyal. Thus became the twelfth consecrated Chogyal of Sikkim. (*Sikkim Coronation Souvenir, 1963*), (*Kotturan, 1983*) During his brief period of reign, the Chogyal had to face series of political development and many challenges; challenges that wrecked the very existence of the monarchy in Sikkim.

2. Impact of Indian Independence on Politics of Sikkim

Like other small under-developed countries clamoring and struggling for political emancipation, Sikkim too became restless and became aware of their political objectives. The birth of SSC (SSC) on 7th December, 1949 which was the antecedent of political movement of Sikkim was the immediate result of Indian independence in 15th August 1947. The party was an amalgamation of some 'social' organizations having three points demands i) Abolition of Landlordism ii) Formation of interim government as a precursor for a democratic form of government iii) The accession of Sikkim to the Union of India. The SSC was persistent with its demand of forming the interim government and succeeded to form a popular government. But the Government lasted only for 29 days because of the tension between Maharaja and the interim Government. (*Rai, 2011*) (*Kotturan, 1983, pp. 94-97*)

Although the Tashi Tshering led popular government was short lived yet its impact was far reaching. The experience of this short lived government led to the signing of treaty of 1950 between India and Sikkim which in turn necessitated the introduction of a system of government, associating the representatives of the people through the Advisory Council chosen through election, hitherto unknown in Sikkim.

To maintain a balance between two communities: B-L and Nepalese in the proposed State Council which would be the representatives of the people chosen through election, a system of parity was evolved i.e., equal distribution of seats to the two communities. Apart from political rights, this parity system became the basis of distribution of other social and economic opportunities between the two communities (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 69*) The system was of peculiar kind where the Nepalese who constituted 70% of the

total population were equated with B-L. In March 1953, a proclamation was issued, postulating the composition and functions of the Legislative Council and Executive Council. The constitutional proclamation envisaged a council of seventeen members of which twelve would be elected by the people. Of these twelve elective seats, six were reserved for Sikkimese B-L people and the rest for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin. The remaining five members were to be nominated by the Maharaja at his discretion. The principle of universal adult franchise was adopted as the mode of election. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 70*) The Nepali candidates were to be directly elected by the voters during the elections. But the B-L candidates were required to be elected first in a primary election by B-L voters. The candidates so elected would then contest in the general election to finally qualify where they would be voted by all the B-L voters only. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 72*)

Sikkim was divided into four territorial constituencies: Gangtok, North-Central, Namchi and Pemayangtse for the election of twelve representatives. Each constituency was to elect three representatives. Out of three representatives, Gangtok and North-Central would elect two B-L and one Nepali representatives, Namchi and Pemayangtse would elect two Nepali and one B-L representatives. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 71*) The SNP, the SSC, Sikkim Rajya Praja Sammelan and the Sikkim Scheduled Caste league took part in the election. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 72*) All the six Bhuita-Lepcha seats were secured by the SNP and all the six Nepali seats were secured by the SSC. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 73*) Five other members were nominated by the Maharaja and the first Sikkim Council was formed and commenced its session from 7th August, 1953. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 75*)

The tenure of the Council was fixed to be three years but the next election was held only in 1958. The seats in the council were

raised from 17 to 20 in this election. The number of nominated members in the Council became six. Two new elective seats, one reserved for Sangha, the representative of which would be elected by an Electoral College constituted of the lamas and one general seat with the whole territory of Sikkim serving as a single constituency was introduced. Article 2 (b) of the 1958 royal proclamation introduced a peculiar system of voting which was complicated. According to this system, the candidate in order to get elected not only had to secure the highest number of votes from his community but also a minimum of fifteen percent of votes from the other community. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 76*) Despite this system, the SSC secured eight seats which included all the 6 Nepali seats, one Bhuita-Lepcha seat and the General seat. The SNP secured five B-L seats. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 80*)

The next election was due in 1961 but it was held only in 1967. The State Council as constituted was allowed to continue in the office till the next election. In this election Sikkim was divided into five territorial constituencies. These were:

- 1) Gangtok Town Constituency- 1 B-L and 1 Nepali Seat.
- 2) East Constituency- 1 Nepali and 2 B-L Seats.
- 3) South Constituency-1 B-L and 2 Nepali Seats.
- 4) West Constituency-1 B-L and 2 Nepali Seats.
- 5) North Constituency-1 Nepali and 2 B-L Seats.

One general constituency and one Sangha constituency was maintained as before. The membership of the Council was increased from 20 to 24 of which 14 members were to be elected by the territorial constituencies. Of these fourteen seats, seven were reserved for B-L and the remaining seven for the Nepalese. Three members were to be elected from general constituency, of which one

was a general seat, one was reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the other was reserved for the Tsongs (Limboos). One Sangha seat remained as before. The remaining six members were to be nominated by the Chogyal. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 82*)

The SNP, the SSC, Sikkim National Congress (SNC) (which was emerged through the amalgamation of L.D.Kazi's Swatantra Dal, the dissident group of SSC and the dissident group of SNP in 1960), the Scheduled Caste League participated in the elections. The SNC came out as the major party in the Council by securing eight seats out of eighteen elective seats. The SNP secured five seats and the SSC secured only two seats. The other three seats were secured by the representatives of the Tsongs, the Sangha and the Scheduled Caste people who did not adhere to any distinct political organization. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 84*)

The fourth Council Election was held in April 1970. (*Sengupta, 1985, p. 86*) No new change in the electoral system was introduced this time. The same pattern of 1966 was followed. Apart from the existing political parties, a new political party formed by Lal Bahadur Basnet in the name of Sikkim Janata Party (SJP) also contested in the election. SNP secured 7 seats, SNC-5, SSC-4, Sangha-1 and General (Tsong) Independent. The newly formed Sikkim Janata Party could not secure any seat. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 87*)

From the very first election the voting pattern was basically on communal lines. By the second election the fact that the SSC and the SNP belonging to two distinct communities, the former considered as the party of the Nepalis and the latter of B-Ls was established. By the third general elections held in March 1967, the SNC had become the biggest party in the state. This party led by Kazi again came out as the largest single party in the enlarged State Council in the 1970 general election.

The next election of the State Council was held in January 1973. The political conditions of the State were gradually becoming complex on the eve of the elections. The pro-Darbar forces including the SNP were consolidating their position on the one hand, while the other political parties were struggling to achieve the long cherished goals of democratic government, fundamental rights, written constitution, one man one vote, etc. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 90*), (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 159-160*). In October 1972, the SSC and the Sikkim Janata Party merged together and thus the Sikkim Janata Congress (SJC) was born. The SSC and the Sikkim Janata Party merged together and thus the SJC was born. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 164*) Against this background of differences and discord, three parties, the SNP, the SJC and the SNC contested in the election. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 90*) The SNP secured all the seven B-L seats as well as two Nepali seats. The SNC secured three Nepali seats, one general and the Tsongs seat. The SJC got only two Nepali seats. 1 seat went to the independent Scheduled Caste constituency and 1 to Sangha. (*Sengupta, 1985, p. 91*), (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 166*) For the first time in this election SNP secured two Nepali seats.

The aftermaths of this election was a wave of unrest in the country. There was widespread allegation in the state of the Sikkim Darbar having rigged the 1973 polls to the advantage of the SNP. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 93*); (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 167*) The leaders of the political parties demanded re-polling in the rigged constituencies but the Election Commission bluntly rejected the joint request of the political parties. They then decided that the only alternative left for them under the circumstances was intensive popular agitation. The Sikkim State Congress, SNC and the SJC came to the same conclusion and decided to join forces and formed the Joint Action Committee (JAC). (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 175*)

The Sikkim Darbar precipitated the crisis by arresting one leader, K.C. Pradhan on a charge of sedition on the 26th of March, 1973. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 173*) The JAC condemned the arrest and submitted to the Chogyal a memorandum containing the resolutions passed by the Committee seeking K.C Pradhan's release, changes in the electoral system and demanding administrative changes in the electoral system and demanding administrative and political reforms. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 174*)

This was followed by a general upsurge in the Kingdom. Law and order completely broke down. The demonstrators were amuck creating complete chaos in the capital. In such a situation, the Chogyal was desperate and invited the central Government's intervention to establish law and order in the state and save the situation. He also asked for the senior officer of the Government of India to be appointed as head of Sikkim's administration. The Political leaders of the movement also requested the Prime Minister to intervene quickly and fully before they were massacred. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 183*)

In order to restore law and order throughout the Kingdom, the Chogyal handed over his government to the Political Officer, K.S.Bajpai who was the representative of Indian Government. He took charge of entire administration of Sikkim on 8th April 1973. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 185*) In response to the request of the Chogyal and the political leaders, the Government of India therefore, deputed a senior officer Mr. B.S. Das as a Chief Administrator to Sikkim. (*Das, 1983, p. 1*) The imposition of Section 144 of the Indian Penal Court was one of the first actions taken by him to restore law and order in the kingdom. (*Of Courtiers and Colonists, 1974*) Das initiated talks between the political parties on the one hand and Chogyal on the other hand. After a series of negotiations to bring about compromise agreeable to the Chogyal and all parties involved,

it concluded in an agreement envisaging a democratic reform with closer ties with India. It was the famous Tripartite Agreement of 8 May, 1973. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 197-200*) (*Das, 1983, p. 24*)

3. Road to Democracy: The Tripartite Agreement

On 8 May, 1973, an agreement was signed at Gangtok between the Chogyal, the leaders of the Political parties representing the people of Sikkim (five representatives each of three main political parties of Sikkim, viz., The SJC, the SNC and the SNP) and the Government of India. The agreement provided the basis for future constitutional set up of Sikkim and its relation with India. It sought to establish a responsible Government in Sikkim with a more democratic constitution, guaranteeing fundamental right, rule of law, independent judiciary and greater legislative and executive powers for the representatives of the people elected on the basis of equitable representation of all section of people. The Agreement, most importantly provided for a Legislative Assembly for Sikkim elected on the basis of adult franchise, an Executive Council responsible to the Assembly and safeguards for minorities. Under the Agreement, India was to provide the head of the administration (Chief Executive) to ensure democratization, good administration communal harmony and social development. The Assembly was to be elected every four years on the basis of adult franchise under the supervision of the Election Commission of India.

The new Assembly was to be set up on a "One man, one vote" franchise, but with a provision that no single group from the Bhutia, the Lepcha or the Nepalese will hold a dominant position. The Assembly was empowered to legislate and adopt resolutions on fourteen enumerated Subjects namely : (a) Education (b) Public health (c) excise (d) press and publicity (e) transport (f) bazaars (g) forests (h) public works (i) agriculture (j) food supplies (k) economic

and social planning including state enterprise (l) home and establishment (m) finance and (n) land revenue. The Assembly could not discuss or ask questions on the following four topics, namely, the Chogyal and the members of the ruling family, matters pending before the court of Law, the appointment of the Chief Executive and members of the Judiciary, and any matter which concerns the responsibilities of the Government of India. The Government of India was to be solely responsible for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim and was to be responsible for the consult and regulations of the external relations of Sikkim whether political, economic or financial

A Chief Executive nominated by the Government of India was to be appointed by the Chogyal. An Executive Council would be constituted of the elected members of the Assembly. They would be appointed by the Chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive was to preside over the meetings of the Executive Council. The Palace establishment and the Sikkim Guard remained directly under the Chogyal.

The Agreement has been summarized by L.B. Basnett, in his unpublished book *'The Merger of Sikkim'* as *"The May 8, Agreement was short, vague, and equivocal on many important issues. Within its short compass, however, 'the special interest' of the Government of India was amply safeguarded. It shifted power from the Chogyal to Delhi and confirmed New Delhi's right to take a direct interest in the Kingdom's internal affairs. The predominant position of the Chief Executive, who had to be a Government of India nominee, ensured Indian control in all spheres of the Government. He was not only to be the Chief Executive, but also the President of the Sikkim Assembly. 'The Chief Executive shall have all the powers necessary for the discharge of his functions and responsibilities,' said clause 8 of the Agreement, This ensured unfettered powers to the Chief Executive."*

“The Chogyal’s powers were so curtailed as to reduce him to the titular Head of State. The Chief Executive was to keep the Chogyal informed and no more. He was supposed to obtain the Chogyal’s approval of the “action proposed to be taken” on all important matters, “except where immediate action was required.” In such a case the Chief Executive could take action and obtain the approval later. This effectively reduced the Chogyal’s power of approval to mere courtesy on the part of the Chief Executive. In case of any difference of opinion between the Chogyal and the Chief Executive, the matter was to be referred to the Government of India, through the Political Officer in Sikkim and the Government of India’s decision was to be binding.”

He further writes, “The Chogyal’s loss of power was sought to be cushioned by allowing his privileges and prerogatives to remain intact. Whatever powers the Chogyal lost went to the Government of India’s appointee. The Assembly, under the May-8 Agreement, as under the 1953 Constitutional Proclamation, could not discuss or ask questions on the Chogyal and the members of the ruling family. The Palace establishment and the Sikkim Guards remained directly under the Chogyal but along with it, it was also stated that he would perform his functions in accordance with the Constitution, his role was nowhere spelt out.”

“The legislative power contemplated by the Agreement for the people’s representatives fell far short of the ones granted under the 1953 Proclamation. The Assembly was to have the “power to propose laws and adopt resolutions for the welfare of the people of Sikkim “on a given set of matters, but not to enact them.” On the Executive power of the Executive Council, he writes, “The Executive Council under the Agreement was to fare no better than the one under the 1953 Proclamation. Here again, the Chief Executive was to dominate.” He writes, “One net gain from May 8 Agreement was the one man one vote system. The words “equitable representation” (in the Assembly)

was confounded by "no section of the population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin" (Basenett.) (Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 200-202) (Das, 1983, pp. 116-117)

Although all three parties representing the people of Sikkim had demanded responsible government, the May 8 agreement said nothing about a party system or the majority group's legislative rights. (Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 202) The Sikkimese people did not profited from their rising. As soon as the text of the agreement was proclaimed, a wave of discontent swept over Sikkim. "Was it for this that the people had risen against the Chogyal?" was the question everyone asked. It took some time to pacify the matter. Pending the Assembly election, an Advisory Council was formed with effect from the 1st of August, 1973. It was composed of fifteen members with five members taken from each of the three main political parties, the SNC, the SNP and the SJC. The election to Sikkim Assembly, as per Tripartite Agreement, was scheduled to be held in April, 1974. (Basenett.)

4. The 1974 Election: A New Approach

The Agreement envisaged that the elections be held under the aegis of the Chief Election Commissioner of India. The Agreement provided for a thirty member Assembly. The new Assembly was to be set up on a "One man, One vote" franchise, but with a provision that no single group from the Bhutia, the Lepchas or the Nepalese will hold a dominant position. According to the parity formula, fifteen seats were allotted to the B-Ls and the remaining fifteen to the Nepalese including one for the Scheduled castes. Soon, both the sides demanded separate seats for the monks, the Scheduled Castes and a caste called the Tsongs, who though Nepalese in origin, claimed to be a distinct ethic groups. As a result, the new Assembly of thirty- two members instead of thirty was provided with two

reserved seats, one for the Scheduled Castes and the other for the monasteries. This maintained the parity, the Scheduled Castes being of Nepalese origin and the monk coming from the Bhutia-Lepcha group. The offer was finally accepted by all the parties. The claim of the Tsongs was rejected as they had always been a part of the Nepalese. The Sangha (monasteries) constituency is a unique feature of not only Sikkim but also for the whole of India. It is reserved seat for the representation of the monasteries of Sikkim as a whole and their Lamas. This constituency was to elect one member through an electoral college of the Sanghas whose members were not eligible to vote for any other constituency. Election to the 31 territorial constituencies of the Assembly was to be held on the basis of adult suffrage. A candidate, in order to be a member of the Assembly, had to be a subject of Sikkim and of 21 yrs of age. The Government of Sikkim was to form rules for the conduct of election in consultation with the Government of India. (*Das, 1983, pp. 39-40*), (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 208*), (*Sengupta N. , 1985, pp. 93-94*)

The one man one vote system only partially met the people's demand for 'non-communal' and democratic system of election. The communal character of voting remained strongly entrenched. In fact the retention of 'parity' between the B-L and the Nepali communities aggravated the communal character under the one man one vote system. Under the previous system the voters of a community largely determined the election of candidates of their own community. Now, in an overwhelmingly large number of constituencies, the Nepalese voters by virtue of their numbers were bound to determine the election of B-L candidates. And yet the Nepali voters' had limited advantages, for they had no choice but to elect B-L candidates of their own community in a large number of constituencies where they were in a clear majority (*Basenett.*)

This new arrangement was however opposed and criticized by some political leaders who apprehended that this arrangement would embitter the relations among the communities and would lead to political polarization on the basis of race. Tsong were disgruntled when they were deprived of separate representation and lumped with the Nepalese. Lepchas were also dissatisfied because they were still bracketed with Bhutias. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 208*) The parity formula itself was contradictory because on the one hand it promised to ensure that no single section of the population acquires a dominating position and on the other hand, it assured of "equitable representation to all sections of the people on the principle of one-man one vote" which would mean a Nepalese majority as they were large in number. The communal parity granted was illusory that gave rise to deep dissatisfaction, which however remained muted for simple reason that there was no independent forum or party that could take up the issue.

120 candidates filed nomination papers for election to the 31 territorial constituencies, one being Sangha constituency. Eventually there remained only Eighty-one candidates in the field. Three SNC candidates Kazi Lhendup Dorji being one of them were declared elected uncontested. Of the 81 candidates, there were only 5 belonging to the SNP, the SNC had one candidate for each of the remaining territorial constituencies, and the rest were independents. (*Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 94*)

Sikkim went to the polls in April, 1974. Voters turned up in unprecedented numbers. The SNC swept the poll outstandingly by winning 27 seats out of 28 contested of 31 territorial constituencies. One seat went to the SNP which in the previous election captured half of the 18 elective seats and one Karma Campo Lama who won the Sangha seat was also a SNC candidates. For the first time since the inception of the Sangha seat, the SNP, whose preserve it had

always been failed to win this seat. As such, the Sikkim Congress won all the seats but one. (Sengupta N. , 1985, p. 95) This made Kazi the leader of highest stature on the scene. B.S Das in his book 'The Sikkim Saga' writes, "The results were a clear indication of the mood then prevailing. The Chogyal was both the secular and the religious head. But, even the monks ditched him by electing a Sikkim Congress candidate." (Das, 1983, p. 43)

5. Formation of Popular Government and Deformation of Namgyal Era

The Sikkim Assembly held its inaugural session on the 10th and 11th of May 1974. The first President or speaker of the new Assembly, B.S. Das administered the oath of all the members in the Assembly after which the Chogyal delivered his inaugural address as a Constitutional head. Kazi was formally designated as Leader of the House. On 11th May while moving the motion on the vote of thanks, Kazi moved one formal resolution for consideration which had a far-reaching implication on the future events in Sikkim. Section C of the resolution requested the Government of India to depute immediately a constitutional advisor for i) giving a legal and constitutional framework for Sikkim ii) defining the powers of the Chogyal, the Chief Executive, the Executive Council and of the Assembly and iii) recommending to the Indo-Sikkim relationship and for Sikkim's participation in the political and economic institution of India. (Das, 1983, pp. 45-46), (S.K. Sharma, 1998, pp. 103-109) The resolution, particularly Section C was in violation of May 8 Agreement. Firstly, it dealt with the question of the Chogyal which as per the Agreement was outside the purview of the Assembly. Secondly, it sought Sikkim's participation in the political and economic institutions of India. This would make any mentally equipped person to speculate as to how this could be possible without Sikkim becoming a part of

India? Nevertheless, the Assembly considered and passed the resolution unanimously. (*Das, 1983, p. 46*)

Accepting the request of the Assembly, the Government of India deputed C.R. Rajgopalan, a constitutional expert who visited Sikkim, met different groups and sections of the people and the Chogyal and discussed about proposed Constitution for Sikkim. After his return to Delhi, the Government of India's draft Constitution which was called the Government of Sikkim Bill, 1974 reached Sikkim in June, 1974. (*Das, 1983, p. 48*), (*Basenett.*)

The Bill instantly became the centre of controversy, and met with vehement protest from the people. It was found to be full of loopholes and giving so little to the representatives of the people. The objectors demanded that the Constitution Bill be drafted by a Constitutional Committee comprising Sikkimese intellectuals with the help of a constitutional expert of India. They also insisted that the portfolios of Finance, Home and Establishment Departments be placed under the people's representatives and not under the Chief Executive, Sikkim should have a Prime Minister and not a Chief Minister. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 219-228*) The objectors, particularly, the members of the SNP and other pro-Chogyal groups appealed Kazi and other elected members of Sikkim Assembly to meticulously weigh the provisions of the Bill with regards to the peoples' aspiration for a full-fledged democratic rule and not a merger. Section 30(c) of the Bill which enabled legislators to "seek participation and representation for the people of Sikkim in the political institution of India" was looked upon with great suspicion as a prelude to Sikkim's ultimate merger with India. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 218*), (*Basenett.*)

The Assembly was summoned on 20th June to consider the draft constitution but it was vigorously protested by a crowd of

demonstrators which included all sections of people from all walks of life. The demonstrators including Government officials and students, women and children gheraoed the Assembly hall to prevent the Assembly session and in the process braved the lathi charge and burst of tear gas of C.R.P.F. R.C Poudyal and N K Subedi, the elected members of the Sikkim Assembly went a step forward to begin a protest fast against the bill further boosted the atmosphere. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 219-228*)

The Assembly met in the evening and suggesting certain amendments approved the draft constitution. (*Das, 1983, pp. 50-51*), (*S.K. Sharma, 1998, pp. 110-113*)(*Appendix V*) The resolution was then forwarded to the Chogyal for his approval on June 24th. But the Chogyal opined that since the contents of resolution had far reaching implications on Indo-Sikkim relations, he wanted to discuss it with Delhi first. He had three demands as spelt out in his letter to the then Prime Minister of India. The demands were: the setting up of a democratic institution ensuring the maximum participation of the people in the Government of Sikkim; safeguarding the legitimate interests and responsibilities of Government of India in Sikkim and guaranteeing the separate identity of Sikkim. He advised against calling the Assembly to session in view of the prevailing tension in the Kingdom regarding the Bill. (*Appendix-VI*) The Chogyal's visit to Delhi was unsuccessful. The Assembly was summoned on 28th June in deference to Kazi's demand and the Chogyal's views and reservations about the Bill were conveyed to the members. In response to this, Kazi rumbled, "*This Assembly and the entire people of Sikkim are shocked at the tactics adopted by the Chogyal and his ill- advised advisers to delay adoption of this Bill.*" "*The proposed Bill is entirely in conformity with the Agreement of May 8, 1973 to which the Chogyal is a party.*" He alleged that the aspirations of people for enjoyment of basic and fundamental freedom was threatened by nefarious activities of the Palace and the Assembly could no longer

wait for the Chogyal to stop his dilatory tactics to prevent the enactment of the Bill. Therefore, the Assembly approved the Bill unanimously. (S.K. Sharma, 1998, pp. 114-117), (Das, 1983, p. 52) (Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 231),

The special session of the Assembly was fixed for July 2, 1974, whereby, the Chogyal wished to address the session and discuss and exchange their views on the Bill. The Assembly boycotted this session and held that they did not see any reason for any further Assembly session as the presence of the Chogyal with his revolutionary stand would have proved detrimental to the SSC. (Basenett.) The Assembly met at 3.45 P.M on July 3 to consider the comments of the Chogyal on the Government of Sikkim Bill, 1974, prepared by the legal experts which were read out in the Assembly on behalf of Chogyal. Having heard the comments, Kazi stated, "We do not understand what is to be gained by further delay. Every hour that passes is only increasing resentment among the people of Sikkim and making more difficult the task of reconciliation and development of cooperative functioning amongst us all, which is so urgently needed." The Assembly again endorsed and adopted the Bill in the form in which it was passed on June 28 and again called for the Bill to be given effect immediately. (Proceedings of the SLA, July 3 1974, Document) The frustrated Chogyal also finally put his seal to the Bill on 4th July and it became an act which sealed the fate of Sikkim as a separate entity. (Das, 1983, p. 53), (Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 231-237)(Document--The Government of Sikkim Act)

The act provided for a democratic setup with the Chogyal as its constitutional head. The ministry was formed which was due since April 1974 due to unusual circumstances on July 23rd 1974, with Kazi Lhendup Dorjee as the Chief Minister. (Das, 1983, p. 54) The first step of Kazi Lhendup Dorji on assuming office was to request Delhi to take suitable action fulfilling the objectives laid down under

clause 30 of the new Constitution, entitled "Association with Government of India", to accelerate Sikkim's closer ties and representation in the Indian Parliament. This meant the amendment of the Indian Constitution as Sikkimese representation in the Parliament could only be possible if Sikkim's territory became a part of India. (*Das, 1983, p. 55*) Delhi as a result, sent a draft constitutional amendment bill (Thirty- fifth Amendment Act of 1974) which stated:

"After Article 2 of the Constitution, the following shall be inserted, namely:

2A-Sikkim, which comprises the territories specified in the Tenth schedule, shall be associated with the Union on the terms and conditions set out in that schedule" (*S.K. Sharma, 1998, p. 98*) (*35th Amendment Act-Document*) The Bill was introduced in the Parliament and was passed with an overwhelming majority and Sikkim became in September 1974 an associate state of India providing her representation in the Indian Parliament. (*Das, 1983, p. 56*)

While the Constitution (35th Amendment) Bill was being considered by the state legislature of India, opposition to it continued in Sikkim. The opposition conducted by students was one of the several symptoms of resentment. It organized school boycotts and rallies against associate statehood and demanded restoration of the Chogyal's power. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 264-65*) They wrote letter to the Chief Executive, Government of Sikkim to clarify certain points of the bill. Their main point was whether the word 'association' preserves and maintains the 'separate identity' of Sikkim. Though almost all of Sikkim's intelligentsia, government officials, a sizable number of the members of the Sikkim Assembly, and the general public were inwardly sympathetic to the opposition to the grant of

associate status to Sikkim, this sympathetic attitude however remained passive. (*Basenett.*)

According to the Government of India, Sikkim still retained its 'autonomy' or 'personality' for all that had been done was to bring Sikkim closer to the Union by giving it 'associate' instead of 'protectorate' status. (*Ram, 1974*) N. Ram in his article, "*Sikkim Story: Protection to Absorption*" writes, "If the treaty of 1950 was 'a grossly unequal One', by the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974 and the 35th Constitution Amendment Bill, the Government of India has bound Sikkim hand and foot. By the provisions of the Government of Sikkim Act. 1974, the head of the administration in Sikkim is the Chief Executive nominated by the Government of India and appointed by the Chogyal [Section 28 (I)] The Chief Executive has been vested with all powers to ensure "compliance with any decisions taken or orders or directions issued by the Government of India in the due discharge of its responsibilities" [Sec 28 (3)]. In the event of a difference of opinion with the Chogyal-in respect of any matter., the decision of the Government of India shall be final" [Section 29 (2)1. The Chief Executive is the President of the Assembly and performs all the functions of the Speaker [Section 13(1)]. The Chief Minister and the other Minister.; are appointed by the Chogyal "on the advice of the Chief Executive" [Article 23 (1)1. The Chief Executive has the power to veto legislation covering finance, home, minorities and relations between the Chogyal and the Sikkim government. The subjects on which the Assembly may "discuss, make recommendations or make laws" are carefully specified so as to exclude the effective management of even Sikkim's internal affairs. (*Ram, 1974*)

The Chogyal, had not reconciled himself to the new arrangement. He became a figure head linking the constitutional arrangement in the new system. He was dissatisfied with his status

as a constitutional head of state of which he was an absolute ruler till the other day. He tried to wreck the new arrangement by initiating an attitude of confrontation with the popular ministry headed by Kazi Lhendup Dorji. He sought to erode the credibility of the Sikkim Congress by creating internal dissention. (*Das, 1983, p. 59*) Kazi, on his part made several representations to the Indian Government alleging that the Chogyal's activities were unconstitutional, illegal and anti-Indian and stated that the Sikkimese would not tolerate any anti-democratic activities and alleged that the Chogyal was unnecessarily trying to internationalize the Sikkim issue. Kazi then decided to take an extreme step to put an end to the Namgyal Dynasty. (*Basenett.*) But it was the Chogyal who finally provided the opportunity to do so.

In March 1975, the Chogyal was invited in his personal capacity to the coronation of King Birendra by the royal family of Nepal. Delhi cleared his visit, but had second thoughts in the eleventh hour realizing that with all the foreign delegations attending the coronation, the Chogyal would do mischief. But it was too late to prevent his departure. He met Chinese delegation and gave a press conference in Kathmandu criticizing Delhi and the SNC leader. There was an immediate reaction in Delhi and Gangtok. Kazi came out with a counter-attack on the Chogyal stating that he had not reconciled himself to the democratic aspirations of his people and had been playing a destructive role. It was alleged that the Chogyal had been the greatest obstacle in the smooth functioning of the democratic government, he and his agents had been doing everything in their powers to discredit and weaken the ruling party so that they may regain their lost powers. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 294*), (*Das, 1983, p. 61*)

The ruling party thereupon began a campaign for the removal of the Chogyal. The Assembly met and passed a resolution on April

10, 1975, demanding removal of the Chogyal as having observed the harmful activities of Chogyal designed to restore his autocratic rule in Sikkim, stifle democracy, frustrate the establishment of responsible government in Sikkim and impede the orderly political and economic progress of the people of the Sikkim. It also demanded Sikkim's merger with India, enjoying a democratic and fully responsible government. It was decided that the aforesaid resolution be submitted to the people for their approval. The resolution was put to vote and unanimously passed. (*Das, 1983, p. 61*), (*Basenett.*) (*S.K. Sharma, 1998, pp. 124-125*)

On April 14, 1975, the 'Special poll' was held to seek public opinion on the issue: the abolition of the institution of Chogyal and Sikkim's merger with India. Sunanda k Dutta-Ray writes, "*The morning of 14 April dawned crisp and clear. Two battalions of armed CRP troops, as well as Khorana's (the then police commissioner) 450 policemen, manned 57 polling booths for an estimated 97,000 voters.*" "*The resolution was printed in English, Nepalese and Sikkimese on slips of pink paper. In each polling booth stood a box in the identical shade of pink marked "for" and a white one labeled "Against". Inevitably, people objected that the same colour had deliberately been chosen to mislead the simple into believing that since ballot papers were pink, they were meant for the pink boxes supporting the resolution. The Sikkimese were not allowed any opportunity to discuss the procedure, or digest what was being perpetrated in their name.*" He further states, "*The resolution's wording was also loaded. Some Sikkimese admitted that they did not want the Chogyal but they wanted even less to be a part of India. They were allowed no choice.*" (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 308-309*)

The result went overwhelmingly in favour of the merger. According to the Government gazettee there was 63 per cent of voters turnout. 61,133 numbers of votes were cast, 59,637 favoured the

resolution and only 1,496 opposed it. But the ground reality was different. Dutta Ray writes, *“Only a thin trickle of voters could be seen in Gangtok where the presiding officer told me at the end of the day that a mere 453 out of 2,200 registered voters-not even 20.6 percent – had bothered to turn up. Attendance must have been considerably lower in the distant countryside which had scarcely been touched by controversy, where the complicated resolution would have been unintelligible, and where Kazi’s party had no base.”* Nar Bahadur Khatiwada gave an interesting statement on the so called special poll. He states, *“The events of the 1973 uprising were fresh in the minds of the people when elections to the Sikkim assembly in April 1974 were announced. After months of electioneering, the elections were held on 15 April, but barely 37 per cent of the total electorate exercised their franchise. Yet when the “special poll” was held within 72 hours of announcement surprisingly enough it was claimed that over 65 per cent of the voters voted.*

It is an open secret that in a difficult and hilly terrain like ours, it would be next to impossible to even reach some of the polling booths in the interiors in such a short time. Yet even in the far flung-areas voting is said to have taken place. The results of the poll were indeed fantastic, because the whole affair had been so very well stage-managed that even though ballot boxes did not reach some of the polling booths, there was no difficulty in announcing the results.

All polling booths were managed by Indian personnel assisted by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The polling for the few that turned up at the booths was done by the CRPF on duty. Those of the voters who tried to be smart and tried to cast their votes themselves were beaten up in the booth itself, and ordered to cast the vote in the “red” box-the so called box of the people.”He further added, *“The “special poll” took place under the auspices of the Sikkim election commission which had not been vested with any*

authority to conduct such polls under the Government of Sikkim Act 1974 or under any other law of Sikkim. The “special poll” was, therefore, unconstitutional and illegal, and forcibly imposed on the Sikkimese people. In fact, it was conducted merely to hoodwink some of the Hon’ble members of Parliament (in India) who had demanded for a “referendum” in Sikkim in course of the debate on the thirty-fifth amendment Bill in parliament in September 1974.

At the time of the “special poll” the authorities informed the people that the poll was being held to find out the people’s wishes as to whether they still wanted the autocratic rule of the Chogyal or full democracy under Kazi. At no stage were the people told that the “opinion poll” was taking place to settle the merger issue. The Sikkimese were thus befooled and deceived, and so were the hon’ble members of Parliament and the people of India as a whole.” (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 310-311*)

Nevertheless, accepting the verdict of populace expressed in the controversial “special poll”, the Indian Parliament introduced the Constitution (36th Amendment) Bill to convert the kingdom into India’s twenty-second State. (The cynical rationalization offered for the engineering of the ‘merger’ of Sikkim into the Indian Union was that India was extending ‘democracy’ into an admittedly feudal principality. (*Hypocrisy Unbound, 1978*) The Lok Sabha adopted the Bill by 299 votes to 11 on 23 April and Rajya Sabha by 175 to 3 on 26 April. Finally the President of India affixed his signature on the Bill on May 16, 1975, thus, making Sikkim the 22nd State of Indian Union. (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, p. 319*), (*Basenett.*)

With the merger, the historical era of the Chogyal also came to an end. The affair of the new State passed on to the Home Ministry from the Ministry of External Affairs. B.B. Lal, the Chief Executive, took over as the first Governor of Sikkim on May 16 and the India House,

formerly a Residency, became Raj Bhawan. (*Das, 1983, p. 62*), (*Dutta-Ray, 1984, p. 321*) Thus, 16th May of 1975, saw the disintegration of Sikkim as a separate entity and became the twenty-second State of the Indian Union, bringing to an end 333 years old “Chogyal Regime”.

CHAPTER – 3
POLITICS IN SIKKIM AFTER THE
MERGER

CHAPTER

3

Politics in Sikkim after the Merger

1. Transition

Change through the passage of time occurs in every society in some or the other way but change in Sikkim from Kingship to democracy came abruptly in Sikkim and people were not really prepared for the system. Many unexpected changes altered the basic character of Sikkim's unique personality as one knew it in 1973. (Das, 1994) The post merger era brought about a painful process of conversion to the political and economic culture of an Indian state. (Das, 1994). The system of governance and institutions introduced by the merger were hitherto unknown to the Sikkimese. B.S.Das writes in his book *"The Sikkim Saga"*, *"The transfer of governance from the Ministry of External Affairs to the Home Ministry of India Government itself brought about a big change in style of dealing of India Government with personalities and problems of Sikkim. This was the first noticeable impact on the Sikkimese."* (B.S.Das, 1983, p. 103)

The currents and cross-currents of the political life, the intra-party squabble, intra-community and inter-community contradictions, working of the democratic government, and the economic development of the state and disappointment of the people, all were the features of the politics in Sikkim during the time. Several factors generated disappointment both among the elite and the common mass. Communalism, which had been a permanent feature of the Sikkimese politics, assumed an undesirable form. Distrust, a sense of insecurity flowing from their feeling of becoming aliens in

their own land, gripped the minds of a section of the people, while the flow of outsiders in Sikkim made others uneasy. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 98*) . It appeared that the merger of Sikkim had always been a burning question in the minds of many. However, a huge amount of fund for development, people's aspirations for freedom and other advantages of merger struck a balance and made Sikkim's transition a smooth one.

L.B. Basnett, in his unpublished book titled: "Merger of Sikkim" writes, "*The ruling coterie, the privileged classes and the Bhutia community were shocked during the first few days, but soon adapted themselves to the changed circumstances and addressed themselves to protecting their own class interests to the extent possible under the new dispensation. The Lepchas, who had hitherto been down-trodden, looked forward with great expectations to a pampered treatment on account of their community having been officially recognized as the aboriginal community of Sikkim. The Nepalese of Sikkim, who had been used as the 'people' of Sikkim throughout the period intervening between the April-1973 movements and the merger of Sikkim in India, did not lose anything by the ouster of the Chogyal.*"

2. Mergers after the Merger

Soon after the merger in 1975, the Congress Party of India began pressing on the Kazi to merge the SNC with the Congress. As a result, it ceremonially merged with the INC in December, 1975 and became a state unit of the Congress and came to be known as Sikkim Pradesh Congress. The lone National Party representative in the Assembly also joined the Congress, making the House single party affairs. Practically there was no other party in Sikkim during this time. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 166*)

Very Soon, Congress leaders from Delhi had direct involvement in Sikkim Pradesh Congress affairs. The Kazi's leadership of the 1973 movement against the Chogyal was very different than as a Chief Minister and leader of the ruling party in 1975. The heterogeneous organization of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress could not develop any integrity within the party. The internal contradiction within the Sikkim Pradesh Congress already started surfacing. Inner party conflict, clash of interest, and impact of communalism all these found their way in Sikkim's politics. N.B. Khatiwada parted company with the Kazi's party along with three other MLAs and formed the provincial unit of the Congress for Democracy which later became the Sikkim Prajatantra Congress (SPC) in 1977. Khatiwada criticized Kazi as a man completely dependant upon the "imported bureaucrats" who knew nothing of Sikkim and felt nothing for Sikkim. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, pp. 166-167*)

In the midst of all these, the old anti-merger forces were reviving and gaining grounds. They depicted Kazi as Delhi's stooge, with no mind of his own. Kazi's credibility was eroded considerably because of his complete dependence on Delhi even on matters which concerned the local administration. The Sikkimese civil servants resented kazi's act and maligned him as the Chief Minister. Serious rifts on ethnic lines started raising its ugly heads in the Cabinet too. (*B.S.Das, 1983, p. 104*)

During this time a series of public demonstrations all over Sikkim took place in order to protest against the working of the Government which culminated in the formation of Sikkim Janata Party (later changed its name and became Sikkim Janata parishad) by Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, a prominent leader of the United Independent Front in the 1974 elections in the 22nd March, 1977. In the meantime, the Janata Party came to power at the centre.

(Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 167) Being totally dependent on Delhi Kazi was left with no choice than to merge with Janata Party. The Sikkim Congress once again joined Janata Party with the exception of one woman MLA Mrs. Hemlata Chettri, who remained the lone member of Congress. Thus the second merger of the Sikkim Congress occurred. Kazi was dubbed as “a man of mergers”. *(Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 167), (B.S.Das, 1983, p. 105)*

The lone Congress member in the House, Mrs. Hemlata Chettri later joined the SPC. The SPC gradually went on increasing its strength in the House and later demanded to be recognized as the opposition party in the House. Its demand was fulfilled on 23rd September 1977 although it was opposed by the ruling party initially. *(Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 168)*

After the second merger of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress with the new Sikkim Janata Party, Khatiwada promptly joined with the anti-merger *(Sikkim's merger with India in 1975)* forces. He became not only a bitter critic of Delhi, but also demanded that Sikkim be restored to the status prior to 1974. He, the strongest supporter of the merger, now accused Delhi of subterfuge and colonialism. *(B.S.Das, 1983, p. 105)* Kazi Lhendup Dorji who had been the undisputed leader of the people, lost his position considerably from all sides by this time.

3. Parity Rejection and Political Resentment

In such a political situation, the question of Sikkim's first election after the merger came into lime light. With the prospect of the election round the corner, the issue of seat reservation for different communities in the forthcoming election also came up and created apprehension in the already disturbed political atmosphere of Sikkim. The Government of India contemplated to do away with

parity formula of seat reservation between the Bhutia-Lepchas (B-L) and the Nepalese and proposed to reserve 12 seats for the B-Ls, one for the Sangha and two for the Scheduled Castes. The remaining 17 seats would be general. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, pp. 99-100*)

The equal representation of electoral seats between the two major communities in Sikkim, the B-L and the Nepalese was known as the parity system evolved in 1974 in accordance with an agreement between the Chogyal and the political parties. (*B.S.Das, 1983, pp. 39-40*) This parity had been maintained even in the Chogyal's time in whose State Council six seats were reserved for each of the two Communities in the 24 member Council. Even in the State Assembly elections of 1974, 15 seats were reserved for Nepalese, 15 for the B-Ls, one for Schedule Caste and one for Sangha. The parity was again maintained in the cabinet, which had four Nepali Ministers and four B-Ls, including the Chief Minister, who was a Lepcha. Under the new arrangement, however, no seat was reserved for the Nepalese even though 12 were reserved for B-Ls. Although the amendment also reduced the seats reserved for the B-Ls from 15 to 12, the B-L seats, it may be noted were now not reserved exclusively for the B-Ls but included other tribals in the State too. B-Ls reserved seats were decreased from 15 to 12, while their population increased substantially. (*Kazi, 1993, pp. 228-229*) Nepalese were the worst affected. They could now contest the elections only through the 17 general seats.

The new arrangement evoked criticism not only from the opposition Party, SPC but also from a section of the ruling Janata Party. The majority of the Nepali leaders whether of the opposition parties or of the ruling party became agitated and apprehensive of the future of the Nepali people in Sikkim. The Nepalese lost the benefit of reservation, while the people from the plains were granted

right to contest the general seats. The Bill was introduced in the Parliament in the month of May, 1979. A section of the Sikkim Janata Party leaders, under the leadership of R.C Poudyal (the then Minister in Kazi's Government) became vocal against the Bill and called it a Black Bill. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, pp. 175-176*)

With the inclusion of the Indian settlers as Sikkimese citizen, the general seats under which the Nepalese were to contest, had been practically reduced to equality in numbers, if not less with B-L who secured an advantage of twelve reserved seats having been notified as scheduled Tribes. It was worse than parity for the seventy-five percent who were Nepalese. (*B.S.Das, 1983, pp. 106-7*) The reservation for B-Ls in the Legislative Assembly should have been commensurate to their numerical strength (22%) vis-a-vis the rest of the population. By this yardstick they should have been allocated, at best, 6 or 7 seats, and not 12 as stipulated in the bill. The Nepalese contention was that if the Bill was passed as it was it would reduce the majority community in the State to a minority in the Assembly and elevate the minority community into an effective majority. They also apprehended that the right of the Indian business community from the plains to contest in the elections would mar the chance for Nepalese of bagging all the general seats (*Phadnis, 1980*)

Mr. Bhandari, President of the SJP, who was opposed to the merger with India, also said that anti-Indian feeling would grow if the new bill were adopted by the Parliament. (*Statesman (Calcutta), 25 August 1979*). He said that the Centre must remember that the Indian Nepalese and Sikkimese Nepalese were not the same. The latter had contributed a great deal towards the merger with India. But now they were being suspected of having dual loyalties. Bhandari further said that the Nepalese had maintained 50:50 parity

in the State Council although the centre had turned the scales completely against them. The resentment reached such a height that certain leaders started demanding reservation of seats for the Nepalese also and demand for disfranchising the plains people was getting a momentum. Thus, for the first time the issue of plainsmen vs. hill people seemed to surface in the Sikkimese politics which is now becoming a prominent issue day by day in Sikkimese politics .

Poudyal had been very vocal against the Bill but by the middle of June, 1979 Poudyal was removed from the state cabinet. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 176*) He with his supporters started publicly criticizing the leadership of the ruling party. The crisis within the party gradually precipitated. Poudyal held, *"It was necessary to have reservation of seats for the Nepalese as they were likely to be reduced to minority in near future, unless some safeguard were immediately provided."* (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 176*) On July 31, 1979, Poudyal circulated a petition to the Members of the Parliament where he stated that the Bill was brought to the "Parliament without the knowledge of the Sikkim Assembly or that of the State Cabinet." It was held that the Bill was an attempt to invalidate and nullify the sacred commitments given to the Sikkimese people prior to the merger. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 177*) In the mean time, the political developments at New Delhi led to the resignation of Desai government, whereupon the Charan Singh government was installed. There was a sense of uneasiness in the ruling party circles in Sikkim. The dissidents tried to utilize the change in their favor. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 177*) The new Prime Minister was urged upon to undo the injustice committed on the Sikkimese through the Bill introduced by the Desai government. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 177*)

Due to the new formula of seat reservation, there were two groups within the SJP. They gradually drifted apart in spite of the fact that possibilities were there to bring about a compromise and to patch up the differences. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 177*) Instead, the dissidents mustered a considerable strength to table a no-confidence motion against the Kazi ministry. Kazi with only ten MLAs in a 32 member house advised the Governor B.B. Lal to dissolve the Assembly on the ground that it had already completed its tenure on the 26th April before the dissidents tabled the No-Confidence Motion against his ministry. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim, 1985,p.178*)

It may be recalled that the life of the Assembly had expired in April 1979, the last elections in Sikkim having been held in April 1974 when it was not a part of India. On the merger of the kingdom with the Indian Union in May, 1975 the original assembly became the assembly of the state of Sikkim under the Constitution of India. The Governor pre-empting a reported move by a large group of MLAs to table a motion in the House to countermand the merger of Sikkim with India dissolved the Assembly on 13.8.1979, evoking a sharp criticism from the dissident group. (*Chaudhuri, 1979*)

The Kazi Government continued for some days and on 17.8.1979 it resigned. President's Rule was promulgated in Sikkim for the first time on 18.8.1979 under Article 356 of the Constitution. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 178*) The Sikkim Janata Party finally suffered the split when Mr.B.B.Gurung, the Speaker, Mr. Dorji Tsering and B.P. Kharel the ex-Ministers and Mr. N.K. Subedi and K.C. Pradhan, both MLAs, resigned the primary membership of the party. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 178*) In the month of September 1979, they came up with a new party called Sikkim

Congress (Revolutionary) (SCR) with 'the rising sun' as its symbol. R.C. Poudyal was elected as President of the party, Mr. Dorji Tsering and Adhiklal Pradhan as Vice Presidents, Mr. K.N Upreti and Jagat bandhu Pradhan as General Secretaries and Mr. Katuk Lama as the Treasurer. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 179*)

Meanwhile at the Centre, the proclamation of President's Rule in Sikkim could not be approved by the Parliament since it was adjourned sine die following the resignation of the Charan Singh Government. With the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, the holding of the Assembly election in Sikkim became imperative. Therefore, the Election Commission fixed the date of election to be held on the 12th October, 1979 (*Sengupta N., State Government and Politics in Sikkim, 1985, p. 179*) so that the new ministry could be formed before the expiry of the term of President's Rule.

4. Parties in 1979 Election

It was the first time that an election in Sikkim was being held under the Constitution of India. Viewed in the context of psychological typologies, the October 1979 election in Sikkim could be classified as a critical one in which the depth and intensity of electoral participation was higher than ever before and the socio-political imperatives of its pre- election politics led to new groupings and alignments. The President, before the election issued an Ordinance, called the Representation of the People (*Amendment*) Ordinance, 1979. It stated that the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim should be thirty -two, of which twelve seats were reserved for B-L, two seats for the Scheduled Caste of the State, one seat for the Sangha¹ and seventeen seats were kept general. No Assembly seat was reserved for the Nepali

¹ Sangha seat can be counted as B-L seat as its electoral college comprised of monks coming from B-L group.

Community whereas the plains people were given the right to franchise. (Sengupta N. , *State Government and Politics in Sikkim* , 1985, pp. 100-101)

Seven political parties and independent candidates were in fray. National Parties such as INC, Janata Party, (CPI(M) , state parties viz, SJP, SCR,SPC , Sikkim Scheduled Caste League (SSCL) and other Independents contested the 1979 election. 244 candidates from different political parties and independents contested the election. The following table shows the number of candidates who contested on behalf of the political parties.

Table 1: Name of Political Parties and Number of Seats Contested in the 1979 Election.

Name of Party	No. of Seats Contested
1. Sikkim Prajatantra Congress	32
2. Janata Party	30
3. Sikkim Janata Parishad	31
4. Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary)	27
5. INC	12
6. CPI (M)	2
7. SSCL	2

(Statistical Report on the Elections to Sikkim Legislative Assembly , 1979)

Different political parties had different stand during the 1979 election. SCR made Bill No. 79 (*placed in the Parliament in May 1979 which they called as 'Black Bill'*) their main election issue. On the question of citizenship, the party demanded that all the people living in Sikkim till 1970, be given citizenship. It sought the recognition of the Nepali Language and its inclusion in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. The SCR could muster the support of a sizable number

of Nepali Youths and others who came to Sikkim mainly from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Doors area in the wake of its merger with India. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 103*)

The SJP tried to convince the people that the Kazi Government functioned more tyrannically than the Chogyal. It brought into limelight different lapses of the Kazi Government. The Party made the anti- democratic activities of the Kazi Government, corruption, and merger of Sikkim the main issues of their campaign. The party promised to establish real democracy in Sikkim. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, pp. 103-4*) The leaders of the SJP, SPC and the SCR were branded as 'desh bechuwas' (persons who sold their country). The slogans "Sikkim for Sikkimese" and "Sikkim Farkhaunchu" (Shall bring back Sikkim) were the main slogans used by the party in the electioneering. (*Source: Interviews of senior politicians*)

SPC also pinpointed the different lapses of the Kazi Government. The party made the issue of Bill No. 79 and the question of land reform as its main election issue. The party promised to give maximum representation of the Sikkimese people in the administration of the State, if voted to power. It also promised to provide better education facilities, improve agriculture, and introduce land reforms and to fight for the inclusion of Nepali Language in the 8th schedule of the Constitution. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 104*)

Kazi Lhendup Dorji and his Sikkim Janata Party had been the main target of attack of all the opposition parties. The ruling party had to counter the accusations leveled against it. The party mainly propagated its contribution to Sikkim's developmental activities in social, economic and other spheres. The party also condemned the

use of the issue of Bill No 79 to create a division among the Sikkimese people and the attempt to fan communalism of race, religion and caste. The party made anti-communalism the primary plank of its election campaign. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, pp. 104-105*)

The C.P.I (M), which for the first time participated in the election in Sikkim, stood for the protection of the peasantry and the toiling mass. The party opposed the reservation as undemocratic and stressed upon the unity of the ethnic groups. It introduced a new element in the electioneering demanding trade union rights for the workers and village artisans. The party pledged to exempt all agricultural loans of the farmers, to introduce free education up to class XII and to implement land reforms as speedily as possible. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 105*)

Barring Kazi's Sikkim Janta Party, the election campaign of all the local parties and groups were basically anti-Kazi, anti-1979 Ordinance, anti-merger and anti-plainmen. Son of the soil policy was also very common slogan used by most of the political parties in this election.

5. Sikkim Janata Parishad : First State Party in Power

The Sikkim Janata Parishad won 16 seats and thereby became the single majority party in the Assembly. Except the SPC no other party contested the Sangha seat. An independent candidate won from the Sangha seat who was supported by both the Janata Party and the SJP. The elected Sangha candidate having joined the SJP, its total strength rose to 17. The SJP, therefore, gained the absolute majority in the Assembly. The SCR secured 11 seats, of which Mr B.B. Gurung won two seats, one from Chakung and the other from Jorethang – Nayabazar constituency. The SPC secured 3 seats. The Janata Party was completely routed in the election. It could not

secure a single seat in the Assembly. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 108*) (*B.B.Gurung, 2011*)

The following table shows the party performance in the 1979 Assembly election.

Table 2: Party Performance in the Assembly Election, 1979

Name of Party	No. of seats secured.
1. SJP	16
2. SCR	11
3. SPC	3 ²
4. SJP	Nil
5. INC	Nil
6. SSCL	Nil
7. CPI(M)	Nil
8. Independents	1

(*Report on Election to SLA, 1979*)

The election in the Scheduled Caste constituency, Khamdong could not be held on the same date due to the death of a contesting candidate. Mr. B.B. Gurung of Sikkim Congress (R) having retained his MLA-ship from Jorethang constituency and resigned from the Chakung constituency, the seat in that constituency was declared vacant. (*B.B.Gurung, 2011*) (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 108*)

Of the 12 B-L seats, the Sikkim Janata Party secured eight seats, the SCR secured 3 seats and SPC secured 1 seat. Out of 17 general seats, the Sikkim Janata Parishad secured 8 seats, SCR secured 7 and the SPC secured 2 seats. One scheduled caste seat, in which election took place, was won by the SCR. Thus Sikkim Janata

² The election in Khamdong constituency could not be held on the same date due to the death of a contesting candidate. It was held later in 1980 with the Lok Sabha election which was won by SPC. Hence, its strength rose to 4

Parishad secured the majority of the Bhutia- Lepcha and the general seats. (*Statistical Report on the General Election to the State Legislative Assembly, 1979*)

The election result of 1979 was quite interesting to take note of. Only three local parties attracted much support from the electorate besides, one Independent candidate for the Sangha seat. The national parties such as the INC and the CPM also drew a blank and fared badly in the poll. The number of their candidates lost security deposits. Even in terms of percentage of votes polled, its performance was unexpectedly poor. The ruling party was totally wiped out. It was a unique case where the ruling party lost every single seat and an unregistered party called the Sikkim Janata Parishad under Bhandari's leadership fighting the election as "independent" emerged as the new ruling group. (*B.S.Das, 1983, p. 107*)

The result was a clear indication that Kazi's credibility was reduced to zero. Kazi who was elected uncontested and who won 31 out of 32 seats in the 1974 Assembly elections lost all 32 seats. He could not even retain his own seat although he being Lepcha contested from reserved B-L constituency in North Sikkim for his election. It signified his unpopularity among the masses.

The causes of the rout of the Janata were manifold. No doubt development activities were undertaken during Kazi's regime but there was corruption and nepotism at various levels. Coupled with this was a gradual disenchantment of the local bureaucracy with the Kazi regime particularly because of the influx of a large number of officers from the Centre who held the top positions in the administration. Also, the party's merger with the Congress and subsequently with the Janata had proved rather costly in the political terms. Besides, the very symbol of Janata (a man wearing

dhoti with a plow) reminded the electorate of the plainsmen who for them were “dhotiwallas” about whom many had misgivings characteristics of the pattern of interaction between hill people and plainsmen. (*Phadnis, 1980*)

The 1979 Ordinance for seat reservation also influenced the election results to great extent. The Ordinance which reduced the number of Bhutia – Lepcha seats from 15 to 12 and which did away with the seat reservation for the Nepalese who comprised about 75 percent of the population was opposed by all except Kazi’s Sikkim Janata Party. As Kazi was regarded as ‘Delhi’s Stooge’, he was made responsible for keeping the 17 seats open to all communities to help the Indians to contest. Consequently, the popular mood was reflected in election results. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 112*) If the Centre had not brought last minutes changes on the Assembly seat arrangement in 1979, the Parishad could definitely have got more than 17 seats. But because of the new arrangement, the Sikkimese people were divided on ethnic lines. (*Kazi, 1993, p. 217*)

Although, it is said that the SJP was better organized in comparison to other parties in Sikkim but what kept the Sikkim Janata Parishad ahead of other state parties was its propaganda ‘Sikkim for the Sikkimese’ and ‘bring back Sikkim’ which had helped the party to secure a good number of votes. It heavily banked on the people’s sentiments of de-merger. With this slogan the party could also mobilize the votes of supporters of Chogyal. One may relate this with the Sikkim Janata Parishad’s victory of 8 out of 12 B-L seats. It could not secure a good number of Nepali votes because these votes were divided among other political parties led by Nepali leaders.

The election results indicated that the popular mood was against the merger. The entire voting was anti-Kazi voting, the

majority of which went to the Sikkim Janata Parishad. Another indicator of the election results was the strong preference to the state parties. Apart from the Sikkim Janata Parishad's impressive win, the other parties which shared the vote were local parties. The national parties' performances were very poor in the elections.

Hence, Sikkim Janata Parishad founded and led by Bhandari became the first regional party to secure majority and form the Government. The Sikkim Janata Parishad leaders viewed the election results as a victory of the Sikkimese people who wanted to establish their rights and dignity lost during the rule of the Kazi Government. It was, they believed, a verdict against corruption and dictatorship of the Janata Government. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics in Sikkim , 1985, p. 110*)

CHAPTER – 4
STATE PARTY DOMINANCE:
CASE OF SIKKIM SANGRAM
PARISHAD

State Party Dominance: Case of Sikkim Sangram Parishad

1. Merger of Sikkim Janata Parishad

Immediately after the assumption of office on 18/10/1979, Bhandari found Sikkim politically, economically and socially backward. There was no planning process for rapid development of Sikkim and there was no communal harmony. His government first took steps to meet the basic needs of the general public and refurbished the entire administrative set up in accordance with the change needed (*Nar Bahadur Bhandari, 2011*).

The Parliamentary election took place in Sikkim on the 3rd January, 1980. It was the first such election in Sikkim. In 1977 there was no election, since the candidate was returned uncontested. The bye-election to Sikkim Legislative Assembly (SLA) for Khamdong and Chakung was also held along with Sikkim Parliamentary constituency election in 1980. (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics:Sikkim. , 1985, p. 113*) Sikkim Janata Parishad won all the seats and at the centre, Congress (I) returned to power with overwhelming majority. (*ECI, Statistical Report on the Elections to the Lok Sabha, 1980*)

Politics in Sikkim assumed an interesting shape after the change in leadership at the centre. All the major political parties were in the rat race over the issue of getting recognition of the Congress (I). Whereas the opposition parties- SPC, a section of SCR as well as Janata Party wanted to join hands and come to power by getting support of Congress(I). The ruling party, SJP wanted Centre's

recognition to secure its power position and ultimately it was recognized by the Central leadership in July 1981. Thus shedding its 'separate identity of State Party' the SJP merged itself with the Congress (I) (*Sengupta N. , State Government and Politics: Sikkim. , 1985, pp. 181-183*) Bhandari thus became the second Congress (I) Chief Minister of Sikkim despite the fact that he was against the Congress at the time of merger. Bhandari held that since merger of Sikkim was *fait accompli*, in order to achieve demands and development in Sikkim, his party had to compromise with the Congress at the centre and took a bold decision to merge on 14/07/1981 and became the state unit of Congress (I). (*Nar Bahadur Bhandari, 2011*) But the fact is that the local ruling parties in the smaller states are vulnerable to such absorption due to the pressure exerted by the centre.

2. The Arbitrary Dismissal

In the midst of this growing healthy political signs in Sikkim under the leadership of N.B. Bhandari there occurred the most unfortunate and undemocratic dismissal of Bhandari as Chief Minister of Sikkim in May 11, 1984 by the then Governor of Sikkim H.J. Taleyarkhan supposedly under article 164 (1) of the Constitution stating that Bhandari ceases to command his pleasure. (*Chakaravarti, 1994*) It was the most unexpected and surprising move taken by the then Governor. The very event once again changed the political scenario in Sikkim.

In his press statement of 11th May 1984, Bhandari stated that the tussle between him and the Centre was already brewing for quite some time regarding Bhandari's three demands: seat reservation for Nepalese in the Assembly, grant of citizenship to "stateless persons" and recognition of Nepalese language. (*Bhandari, 1984*) His confrontation with the Centre reached its peak and surfaced during

his party Convention at Karfectar, Jorethang, and south Sikkim where he openly challenged the Centre to yield to his three demands and invited Centre to take immediate action against him which compelled Centre to do so.

It is said that on 10th May, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, P. Venkatasubbaiah and the State Governor asked him to give up his demands on reservation of seats for Nepalese in the Assembly and grant of citizenship to “stateless persons” or else resign. When Bhandari did not compromise with his demands, he was dismissed with no reason. (*Bhandari, 1984*)

Some seasoned politicians hold that Bhandari’s dismissal was because of his continuous defiance against the norms and directives of the party high command. By this time Bhandari was said to have become autocratic in his functioning and dealings with his colleagues and corruption had reached a new height. As such centre was looking for an opportunity to arm twist Bhandari and clip his wings, the Karfectar Convention served the purpose. (*B.B. Gurung, 2011*) (*C.D.Rai, 2012*) The Centre justified its stand thus: “Bhandari was removed as a majority of the State Legislators had lost confidence in him against whom several corruption charges had been leveled.” (*Kazi, Sikkim for Sikkimese Distinct Identity within the Union , 2009, pp. 63-64*) He was asked to step down from chief minister ship and when he refused, he was dismissed by the Governor. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 145*)

The dismissal of Bhandari government did not evoke any resentment from the people or the political leaders. The opposition parties in the state welcomed the exit of Bhandari Government. It is said that Bhandari himself wanted to be dismissed rather than resign. His open confrontation with the Centre was viewed as his ploy of winning back the support and sympathy of the people to

come back to power in the next election as he had lost credibility among his colleagues and people by this time. Rift within the party was already created regarding the issue of merger of SJP with Congress (I) in 1980. The rift was further widened because of Bhandari's arrogance and autocratic style of functioning. He had no hope with the minority Bhutia-Lepcha electorate too after he failed miserably on his slogan, "bring back Sikkim" and "Sikkim for Sikkimese". Therefore, he was banking on majority Nepalese by appealing to their sentiments. There were other factors like corruption charge against him and uncertainty of victory of national party like Congress (I) in the coming Assembly elections. (*B.B. Gurung, 2011*), (*C.D.Rai, 2012*) Hence, it is assumed that this dramatic exit was most desired and welcomed by Bhandari.

Although Bhandari by then had lost the respect and support he enjoyed before the merger of SJP with the National Party, Congress (I), people cannot ignore Bhandari's struggle and sacrifice in the pre-merger era. He had to suffer a lot and was beaten almost to death for his pro-Sikkim, anti-merger stand. Bhandari gained sympathies from the people for his arbitrary dismissal. His dismissal was; therefore, regarded unprecedented and undemocratic in the annals of constitutional democracy.

3. 13 Days Wonder

After the unfortunate dismissal of Bhandari on May 11, 1984 the same Governor under the same provision of the Constitution of India appointed Mr. B.B. Gurung from Congress (I) who had defected into the ruling party from the Congress (R) and who was the Finance Minister in the Bhandari Cabinet as the Chief Minister of Sikkim on the same day. Thus, B.B. Gurung assumed the office as the Third Chief Minister of Sikkim. (*Chakaravarti, 1994, p. 102*) Gurung stated

that he became the Chief Minister by an accident as no body could dare say no to the party High Command then. *(B.B. Gurung, 2011)*

After coming to power, Gurung stated that his Government would continue to fight for the just demands of the people, but stated that his approach with the centre in dealing with various problems of the state would be of “co-operation and consultation and not confrontation”. *(Kazi, Sikkim for Sikkimese Distinct Identity within the Union , 2009, p. 76)*

But Bhandari was not a silent spectator. He started to mobilize his supporters and threatened to quit the Congress (I). It was alleged that Mr. Bhandari was spending huge amount of money to win over some of the MLAs to destabilize B.B.Gurung’s Ministry. Unfortunately, due to constant changes of loyalty and unpredictable moves by the MLAs, 17 MLAs defected from the ruling Congress Party. *(Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 145)* This made a situation in which the Government of the State could not be carried on in accordance with provisions of the Constitution. As a result, Assembly was dissolved on 25th May. Gurung’s Government hardly survived for a fortnight owing to lack of support and instability. Due to the failure of the constitutional machinery, the then Governor of Sikkim recommended for imposition of President’s Rule in the State under Article 356 of the Constitution of India on 25th May 1984 till the next State Legislative Assembly elections which were held on 5th March 1985. *(B.B. Gurung, 2011), (Chakaravarti, 1994)*

4. The Birth of Sikkim Sangram Parishad

Bhandari’s dismissal from the chief minister ship acted as a mid-wife for the birth of new state political party. No sooner Bhandari was dismissed; he left Congress (I) in disgust along with his majority of legislators. The toppling of duly elected government was not only considered undemocratic and unconstitutional by

Bhandari, but considers it as 'the closure of Congress' political career in Sikkim.' (*Nar Bahadur Bhandari, 2011*) After this event, the need for the regional party was strongly felt. In an interview with Bhandari, he stated that small state like Sikkim get submerged in the ocean and as such their existence in such ocean becomes insignificant. The central government will be more interested promoting the interest of the bigger states with larger number of MPs. Sikkim suffered the same fate of a smaller state. But sections of people were convinced that the local interest and the local sentiments could best be promoted under a strong regional party government. As a result, Bhandari came out with a new state political outfit called SSP with his own red and white flag and an elephant as its election symbol in 1984 (*Nar Bahadur Bhandari, 2011*)

5. Aims and Objectives of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad

According to the constitution of SSP, the party pledged to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by Law established and to the principles of Socialism and Secularism and Democracy and would uphold the Sovereignty, Unity and Integrity of India. It believed in de-centralization of administration through the Institution of Panchayati Raj and adhered to the Gandhian philosophy. The Party was committed to fight against all anti national activities to uphold the Constitution of India. It was also committed to fight against any policy of Exploitation, Suppression and Oppression and always endeavor to preserve unity and national integration of the country. It sought to endeavor for peace, progress and communal harmony and give priority to the preservation and promotion of backward communities and particularly the ethnic scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It believed in equality of opportunity to all and fight against all forms of discrimination on grounds of caste, creed, gender and religion. It sought to foster unity,

friendship and harmony amongst all sections of the people in Sikkim and sought to give priority to the welfare of youth, women and children. It also sought to preserve, protect and promote the age-old customs, traditions and the cultural heritage of the people of Sikkim and preserve Sikkimese identity and pursued the 'son of the soil' policy.

6. Organization of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad

The SSP had two types of membership – Primary and Active membership. Primary membership was given to persons who were above the age of 18 having firm belief and faith in policies, aims and objects of the Parishad and who was not a member of any political party and think of interest of the organization above anything else. Persons fulfilling those above qualifications were considered eligible for Primary Membership of the party and had to fill up the membership form and pay Rs1/- minimum as annual membership fee. Membership had to be renewed every year failing of which his membership was automatically terminated. Active Membership was given to primary members who must have remained primary member of the Parishad at least for two years and must have been actively involved in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the SSP. Such persons had to fill up Active Membership form and pay an annual membership fee of Rs.125/- which had to be renewed every year. But the President of SSP had the power to grant Active Membership to any primary member who may not have fulfilled above conditions.

The SSP had the following Committees:

- a) The All Sikkim Sangram Parishad Committee (ASSPC)
- b) The Central Working Committee (CWC)
- c) The District Working Committee (DWC)
- d) The Working Committee at Panchayat Level.(WCPL)

The All Sikkim Sangram Parishad Committee consisted of all the office bearers and members of the CWC, the District Working Committee and all the Party MLAs and MPs. The strength of this Committee should not have exceeded more than 151 members. The Committee elected the President for three years term. It met once in a year at a time decided upon by the President. The meeting could have been called by the President at short notice if he so desired to discuss some very important and urgent matters. The meeting of the Committee could also have been requisitioned by one third of its members by sending a signed one month's notice to the President. The Committee deliberated on many important issues included in the agenda for discussion by the CWC. Members could ask for inclusion of any item in the agenda by sending a request to the General Secretary of the CWC at least fifteen days in advance from the date of the meeting. All decisions of the committee were taken either unanimously or by majority opinions of the members present and voting.

The CWC of the SSP was a high power body consisted of one President, one Vice President, Four General Secretaries, two Publicity Secretaries, one Treasurer and four Joint Secretaries. Beside these, one Office Secretary and all Party MLA's and MP's were the members of the Committee. The strength of the committee should not have exceeded forty-five members. The CWC deliberated on all the matters and take decisions regarding the activities of the SSP. It met at least once in two months. Decisions of the Committee was either unanimous or by majority opinion of the members present. The Committee kept in touch with District and Panchayat Committees of the Sangram Parishad and guided them in all their activities. The quorum was one third of the total membership of the Committee.

The President of the Party was placed at the top of the Committee. He presided over all the meetings of the All SSP

Committee and the CWC. He appointed the Vice President, the General Secretaries, the Treasurer, the Joint Secretaries and the Publicity Secretaries of the CWC. He appointed the Presidents of the DWC and the Committee at Panchayat level. He also had the power to remove any office bearer and suspend or remove any member from the party. He called the meeting of the All SSP Committee once in a year and the meeting of the CWC at least once in two months or any time he found necessary. The President had the power to constitute any committee for any specific purpose; he guided and directed all the activities of the SSP and nominated persons to fill up the vacancy in the All Sikkim Sangram Parishad/CWC.

The President could submit his resignation on grounds of ill health or voluntarily without assigning any reason. He had to resign if 2/3 majority of members of the SSP adopts a motion of no confidence against him at a special meeting convened for the purpose. He had to submit his resignation to the Vice President. The President was automatically removed if he/she was mentally unsound, he/she was declared insolvent by a Court of Law and if he/she was convicted for murder. In the event of death, resignation or removal of the President, the Vice President acted as the interim President for a period not more than forty days and within this period, a special meeting of the All SSP had to be held to elect a new President.

Under the supervision of CWC was DWC. It consisted of President, Vice President, 2 General Secretaries, 1 Treasurer, 2 Joint Secretaries, 1 Publicity Secretary and 14 other members. The President at the District level was appointed by the President of SSP. The Committee met at least once in two months. It deliberated on all matters and take decision regarding the activities of the SSP in its district. Decisions of the Committee was either unanimous or by majority opinion of the member present. The decision of the

Committee received the approval of the President of the SSP before implementation. The quorum was half of the total membership of the Committee. The Committee had to be in constant touch with the head office of the SSP and the Panchayat Committees of the Organization. It had to guide the Panchayat Committee in their activities. The term of the Working Committee was for three years. Under DWC was the Panchayat level Working Committee. It had the same functions like District Level Working Committee at the village level and was smaller than DWC in terms of membership.

There was a Parliamentary Board for the selection of candidates for elections or by-elections to the State Assembly and Parliament. The meeting of the Board was presided over by the President. The President nominated 4 members in the Board. In case of any difference of opinion about the selection of candidate or candidates, the decision of the President was final. There was Youth Wing and Women's Wing to harness the enthusiasm of the Youth and Women for the welfare of the people of Sikkim. These Wings discharged such functions as were assigned by the President. They functioned Constituency-wise and Panchayat-wise under the direction of the President. The President nominated 4 representatives each from the Youth Wing and the Women's Wings in the All Sikkim Sangram Committee. There was a legal cell to look after legal matters pertaining to the Party. There was a Secretary who was in charge of the Legal Cell. There was also a Disciplinary Committee to look into anti-party activities by any member of the Organization. The Committee consisted of not more than 5 members. The Committee gave show cause notice to any member including in anti-party activities to explain in writing within 15 days. If no explanation came his membership was terminated in consultation with the President. The President of the SSP could also take disciplinary action on his own against any member including in anti-party activities.

There was no place for any rival /splinter group in the SSP. The ASSP and the CWC was considered relevant organs/bodies by the Election Commission for the determination of the relative strength of the rival splinter groups of the party in the event of a dispute or split taking place in the party. The ASSP had to decide on the merger of the organization with another party in its session to be specifically called for this very purpose. One month's notice was given to all members by the Head Office Secretary about the agenda of the session. The decision regarding merger was taken by 2/3 majority of the members present and voting. The Constitution of the SSP had to be amended if any amendment moved at a special meeting called for the specific purpose was adopted by 2/3 majority of members present and voting. To move any amendment one month's notice had to be given in writing by one third of the members of the ASSP. Notice for the amendment had to be addressed to the President of the SSP. (*The Constitution of Sikkim Sangram Parishad, 1984*)

The newly founded SSP contested both December 1984 Lok Sabha election and March 1985 Sikkim Assembly election with a new manifesto. (*Nar Bahadur Bhandari, 2011*) In the opening line of its election manifesto it stated, "The SSP was born at a time when the whole fabric of democratic institutions and constitutional norms was endangered following the undemocratic and illegal dismissal of Nar Bahadur Bhandari's Government in May, 1984." (*Election manifesto of SSP for Lok Sabha Election, 1984*) It contested the 1984-85 elections on the following five main issues.

- i. Restore parity and maintain reserved seats for Sikkimese Nepalese as originally contained before merger and under article 371 F (f) of the Constitution of India.
- ii. Citizenship for people rendered stateless in Sikkim and to fix the cut off year at 1970.

- iii. A son of the soil safeguard: to preserve local identity to give all government jobs and trade license to the Sikkim people.
- iv. Constitutional recognition to Nepali language under VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- v. To alter Centre-State Relations: for demanding more financial and political freedom for the States of the Indian Union.

Moreover, the SSP with a promise to protect and preserve the interests and rights of Sikkimese pledged itself to foster communal harmony, national integration, secularism and development of Sikkim with a focus on safeguarding the edifice of the hard won freedom and democracy. (*Election manifesto of SSP for Lok Sabha Election, 1984*)

7. Ticket to Dominance: The 1985 Election

In the one day poll of March 1985, four national political parties such as Congress-I, Janata Party, CPI, CPI(M) and two regional parties viz., SSP and SPC, an unregistered political party in poll alliance with Himali Congress and the Gorkha League and a number of independent candidates contested the election. Congress -I had 32 candidates, JP -20, CPI-2, CPI (M)-1, SSP-32, SPC -14 and there were 94 Independents. All together there were 195 candidates in the fray. In the most prestigious Gangtok Constituency, 12 candidates including Smt. Dil Kumari Bhandari (SSP) who was the first lady of Sikkim were fighting election. Besides there were three former Chief Ministers, 14 ex-ministers, an ex-IPS officer, an ex-Chairman of Gangtok Municipal Corporation, 2 ex-Secretaries of Government of Sikkim and 10 Women candidates who contested from various constituencies. (*Chakaravarti, 1994, p. 104*)

As compared to 1979 and other previous elections, the 1985 elections demonstrated sophistication in campaigning and a distinct political maturity of both the people and political parties. The SSP led

by the former Chief Minister N.B. Bhandari swept the polls by winning 30 out of 32 seats. He was the only former Chief Minister to win this fiercely contested election. All the ten women candidates, an ex-IPS, two ex-Secretaries and eight ex-ministers had to bite the dust. (*Chakaravarti, 1994, p. 104*) There were 1, 55,041 numbers of electors but only 99435 numbers of electors voted in the election. The number of valid votes were 97057 and 2378 (2.39% of total votes polled) number of votes were rejected.

Table: 3 Electors and Their Votes in the Assembly Election, 1985

No. of electors	No. of electors who voted	No. of valid votes	No. of votes rejected
155041	99435	97057	2378

(*Statistical Report on General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim, 1985*)

Out of these votes, SSP bagged 60371 votes which constituted 62.20% of the total votes polled. It helped SSP to sweep 30 out of 32 seats in the Assembly election leaving its rivals far behind. The performance of political parties which contested in the 1985 elections is given below:

Table 4: Party Performance in the Assembly Election, 1985

Party	No. of candidates	No of candidates elected	No. of votes	%
CPI	2	0	25	0.03%
CPI(M)	1	0	336	0.35%
INC	32	1	23440	24.15%
Janata Party	20	0	913	0.94%
SPC	14	0	438	0.45%
SSP	32	30	60371	62.20%
Independents	94	1	11534	11.88%
Total	195	32	97057	

(*Statistical Report on General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim, 1985*)

A noteworthy feature of the election of 1985 in Sikkim was the victory of a plainsman Balchand Sarda (ex-Chairman of Gangtok Municipality) from the prestigious Gangtok constituency. The voters in the constituency were equally divided among the Nepalese, tribals and the plainsmen. There was also some humiliation and embarrassment for Bhandari, who claimed himself to be the undisputed leader of the people of Sikkim. Sarda an influential businessman from the Marwari community in Gangtok, fought as an independent candidate and defeated the SSP candidate Smt. Dil Kumari Bhandari, a first lady of Sikkim and one of the strong architects of Bhandari's SSP. This was the first time that the member from a community, other than the three basic ethnic groups (Bhutia, Lepcha, Nepali) had been elected to the State Legislative Assembly. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 155*) There were 8 males and 4 females candidates who contested from Gangtok Constituency. The number of electors were 9321 (3605 females and 5716 males) but the electors who voted dropped to 4727 which was only 50.71% of total electors.

Out of 4727 votes polled from Gangtok Constituency, 4656 were valid votes and 71 votes (1.50% of total votes polled) were rejected. The independent candidate Balchand Sarda was able to secure 2010 votes while SSP candidate Mrs. Dil Kumari Bhandari secured second position by winning 1749 votes. Hence Balchand won the prestigious Gangtok constituency by the slender margin of 261 votes which was 5.61% of total valid votes.

Table 5: Votes Polled in Gangtok Constituency in the Assembly Election, 1985

Constituency- 31 Gangtok	
Number of candidates	12
Number of electors	9321
Number of electors who voted	4727
Number of valid votes	4656
Number of votes rejected	71
Number of votes secured by independents	2010
Number of votes secured by SSP	1749
Margin	261

(Statistical Report on General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim, 1985)

The Congress (I) which toppled the Bhandari Government in May 1984 suffered a humiliating defeat with just one candidate, Kalzang Gyatso returning from Kabi-Tinda, Scheduled Tribe Constituency of north Sikkim. There were 6 male and 1 female candidates and 3644 electors. Of those electors, 2408 electors voted in the election but only 2263 votes were valid and 145 votes (6.02% of total votes polled) were rejected. Congress (I) secured 1102 votes leaving behind its primary contender SSP by 339 votes (14.98% of Total valid Votes)

Table 6: Votes Polled in Kabi Tingda Constituency in the Assembly Election, 1985

Constituency-25 Kabi -Tingda	
Number of candidates	7
Number of electors	3644
Number of electors who voted	2408
Number of valid votes	2263
Number of votes rejected	145
Number of votes secured by Congress(I)	1102
Number of votes secured by SSP	763
Margin	399

(Statistical Report on General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim, 1985)

Except these two constituencies SSP won all the seats. Bhandari for the second time assumed office as fourth Chief Minister of Sikkim with his 11 members' cabinet team. There were many factors why Bhandari's newly formed SSP captured 30 of the 32 seats in the House. Bhandari's triumphant return was as much due to his own popularity as to the totally confused and disorganized state of the Congress (I). *(Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 155)* The SSP depended on Bhandari's popularity and the party's "pro-Sikkimese" propaganda, which was based on the three basic demands-seat reservation in the State Assembly for all the three ethnic communities in Sikkim – Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese; grant of citizenship to state less person in Sikkim with 1970 as the cut-off year and inclusion of Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and the 'sons of the soil' policy. Bhandari projected himself as the sole spokesman of the Sikkimese people, whose rights were trampled down by the Centre. He could garner the support and sympathy of the masses by projecting that he was thrown out of office because of his uncompromising stand on the three demands of his party. *(Gyamtsso, 2011), (B.B. Gurung, 2011), (C.D.Rai, 2012) (Pradeep Yonzon, 2012)* SSP's emergence to power with landslide

victory proved his allegation of unjustified dismissal of his government just a couple of months back.

Due to the untimely assassination of the Congress President and Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi who knocked down Bhandari led to the taking over of his mother's place by Rajiv Gandhi who was a naïve leader. His attitude towards Bhandari and Sikkim's politics was uncertain which proved to be beneficial for Bhandari and harmful for the Congress (I) unit in Sikkim. The situation could have been different had Indira Gandhi not been assassinated as Rajiv Gandhi did not play any political card with Bhandari. In a way he had been lucky. *(C.D.Rai, 2012) Jigme N Kazi in his book Inside Sikkim Against the Tide writes, "Bhandari won because he had no opposition in the State united enough to ensure that he did not make a comeback. He won because he had the necessary resources to defeat his adversaries." (Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 158)*

Allegations were also made of grave irregularities in the revised voter's list of the Assembly elections. The voters list had increased from 1.18 lacs in 1979 to 1.55 lacs prior to the Lok Sabha by-elections in December 1984, showing an increase of about 37,000 names in the period of five years. Many of those listed in the revised list were alleged to be "bogus voters" which voted for SSP and helped Bhandari to come to power. *(Kazi J. N., 1993, pp. 158-160)* Apart from the basic reasons, Bhandari's comeback was also because the majority of Nepalese, irrespective of whichever party they supported wanted anyone from their community to take the top post than someone from the minority Bhutia-Lepcha community because in the erstwhile Kingdom under the Bhutia rule, Nepalese were to play secondary roles. *(C.D.Rai, 2012)* The last hour propaganda of the polling was that if the Congress (I) came to power, the next chief minister would be from the Bhutia-Lepcha community, *(as most of the defected MLAs who toppled the Bhandari Government were*

Bhutia-Lepchas) and if the SSP formed the government, the chief minister would definitely be a Nepali. This type of communal and emotional appeal sold well to the Nepalese electorate, particularly in the rural areas. This was one of the main reasons why many BL leaders including Kazi lost in the elections. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 162*)

The defeat of prominent tribal leaders, some of them ex-ministers and office bearers of the Congress (I), in the March 1985 Assembly elections, justified the apprehension that though 13 seats in the Assembly, including the lone Sangha seat, were reserved for the BLs, genuine tribal candidates, who had some standing amongst the people, could not be voted as the majority of the voters in the reserved constituencies of the tribals were Nepalese. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 164*)

Bhandari after coming to power in March 1985 emerged as a new politician. He was more powerful, confident, authoritative and somewhat cocky. He demanded complete submission to his authority, and he got it. He did not tolerate any criticism from both within or outside the party. Political parties and social organizations had to either join him or face being silenced forever. The press was told to behave or face the consequences. The opposition parties in Sikkim completely disappeared from the political scene after their debacle in the Assembly elections. By then, it was clear to everyone that the era of "one-man-rule and one-party system" had begun. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, pp. 163-164*)

The charges of corruption against Bhandari by his own Congress (I) legislators took an interesting turn after he came back to power in March 1984. Although the CBI had already registered several corruption cases against Bhandari soon after his ouster from chief minister ship in May 1984, the Centre failed to take appropriate action against him during the President's Rule in Sikkim which

lasted till his comeback in March 1985. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 173*) During the entire term Bhandari had to live under the shadow of CBI scare.

The 'sons of the soil' policy formulated and propagated by the Bhandari Government did not make much development. Selling of reserved seats for Sikkimese students non-locals, indiscriminate allocation and distribution of building sites and trade licenses, discrimination regarding grant of scholarships to students, refusal to allot work for local contractors on tender basis, favoritism and red-tapism concerning jobs in the Government service, and back-door leverage for non-locals to share in the State's administrative and economic development plans were a few examples of the Bhandari Government's various activities, which did not reflect the 'sons of the soil policy' they so passionately propagated before coming to power. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 201*)

By the time the 1989 election approached, Bhandari gradually lost the support of his own party colleagues. They claimed that they were Bhandari's genuine supporters, who were with him 'through thick and thin' during his political wilderness experience when he was constantly harassed by both the Central and State governments for his anti-merger stand (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 201*).

8. The Sweep: Sikkim Legislative Assembly Election 1989

In the election to the SLA held in the year 1989, Indian National Congress (I), two regional parties namely SSP and the Rising Sun Party of R.C. Poudyal and many independent candidates contested. It was therefore, a four cornered contest. SSP and the Rising Sun Party (SCR) were the main rivals as both were regional parties. There were altogether 118 candidates who contested in the 1989 elections. Rising Sun Party had 31 candidates, SSP-32, Denzong peoples Chogpi-4 and there were 20 Independent

candidates. There were minimum 2 and maximum 6 contestants contested from different constituencies. The total registered voters were 1, 92,619 (1, 00,942 males and 91677 females) and 139227 (76874 males and 62353 females) number of electors voted in the election. The polling was 72.28%. The number of valid votes were 133619 and 5608 (4.03% of total polled) were rejected.

Table 7: Electors and Their Votes in the Assembly Election, 1989

Number of Electors	Number of electors who voted	Number of valid votes	Number of votes rejected
192619	139227	133619	5608

(Statistical Report on General Election to The Legislative Assembly of Sikkim, 1989)

All political parties in the state of Sikkim contested elections more or less with the same programs based on the basic issues of Sikkim such as seat reservation, recognition of Nepali language and to promote cordial Centre – State relations. But in all the constituencies, Bhandari's SSP was declared elected securing all 32 seats in the State Assembly. This was a record in the Government and politics of not only Sikkim but also in the country. *(Chakaravarti, 1994, p. 105)* Though the Rising Sun Party tried its best under the leadership of Poudyal but all efforts went in vain. It could not secure a single seat. It secured only 11472 votes which is 8.59% of votes. SSP secured 94078 votes which was 70, 41% of the total votes polled. Following table explains the performance of different political parties in the election.

Table 8: Party Performance in the Assembly Election, 1989

Party	Number of Candidates	Number of elected	Number of votes	%
1)INC	31	0	24121	18.05%
2)SCR	31	0	11472	8.59%
3)SSP	32	32	94078	70.41%
4) DPC	4	0	298	0.22%
5)Independents	20	0	3650	2.73%
Total	118	32	133619	

(Statistical Report on General Election to The Legislative Assembly of Sikkim, 1989)

An interesting feature to note in this election was absence of National parties other than Congress. In the 1985 election, there were as many as four national parties viz, CPI, CPI (M), Janata Party and INC contested the election but in 1989 election these parties were absent. In 1985 election there was as many as 195 candidates but in 1989 there were only 118 candidates although the number of total registered voters were increased by 37,578 members. Yet another important feature of this election was the sharp decrease of Independents from 94 to 20. Whereas in 1985 election an independent candidate Balchand Sarma was able to win from the prestigious Gangtok constituency from amongst 12 contenders including the first Lady Dil Kumari Bhandari. In 1989 election independent had no place in Sikkim's politics. It could not secure a single seat and could win only 3650 votes which was 2.73% in total number. The number of women candidates also slashed down from 11 to 5 but this time one women candidate could secure her position by winning from Gangtok constituency.

SSP's soaring victory in the 1989 Assembly election was once again because of lack of effective opposition parties. Although R. C. Poudyal, after several year of political hibernation made a comeback and emerged once again, as the number two contender for the race

to Mentokgang in 1988 but his party, the Rising Sun¹ could not capture even a single seat in the election. Though the RSP had a large number of staunch and dedicated supporters, due to financial constraints, the party's organizational work suffered a lot. . (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 235*)

The Congress (I) on the other hand had better candidates for the polls, many of whom were ex-ministers and MLAs, and had the needed political experience and base as compared to the RSP and the SSP but the party could not turn this into an advantage. Financially too, Congress (I) was in better position than the RSP but due to internal dissension and squabbling within the party leadership and lack of direction hampered the party's poll prospects. (*Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 235*) The identity of Congress (I) which was otherwise weak was completely smashed in the 1989 election.

During the elections of 1989 all the political parties had raised the issue of seat reservation along with others of ethnic sentiments and of social significance. Bhandari projected himself as pro-Nepali leader and demanded seat reservations for the Nepalese of Sikkimese origin. At the same time he was in favour of keeping the reserved seats for the BL intact. In this election, R.C. Poudyal also projected himself as pro-Nepali and demanded more reserved seats for the Nepalese at par with their numerical strength. As a result he lost the faith of the BL community. The third political force the Congress remained as a party of the plainmen. Bhandari emerged as the only choice for his non-communal image appealed to the large section of the Nepalese as well as Bhutia-Lepcha people of Sikkim. (*Chakraborty, October, 2000*)

Though the SSP had a well knit party unit, its victory in the election was as much because of the power-money power, manpower

¹ It was basically a revival of his old party, the Congress (Revolutionary) which actually merged with the Congress (I) in 1984.

and the government machinery at its disposal as because of the various weaknesses of the opposition parties. Both the Congress (I) and the RSP leaders complained about the misuse of official machinery and intimidation of their supporters by the ruling party. (Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 244)

Allegations were also made about the massive rigging of the election and the opposition's main complaint was that none of the ballot boxes had the seal marks of the Congress (I) and RSP candidates. The Congress even boycotted the counting and walked out of the counting hall in protest. (Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 245) Most of the senior politicians and the senior bureaucrats are of the view that Bhandari won the 1989 election because of rich resources, muscle power and due to the strong emotion created by the Sikkim merger issue which was successfully campaigned. (Pradeep Yonzon, 2012) (Sonam Wangdi, 2012) (Subba, 2012)

Nevertheless, the SSP set a new record by capturing all the 32 seats in the Assembly. The SSP candidates won the election by huge margins in almost all the 32 constituencies in the State. The lone Lok Sabha seat also went to the SSP candidate, Nandu Thapa who defeated his rivals with convincing margin.

A paragraph from Jigme N Kazi's *"Inside Sikkim Against the Tide"* speak volumes about the election and after. He writes, *"Despite the opposition's humiliating defeat, the ruling party found it difficult to convince the people that their spectacular victory was because of the party's popularity in the State. Instead of joy and excitement over the outcome of the elections, there was gloom and disappointment everywhere. The streets of Gangtok bore a deserted look and were devoid of the spirit of jubilation and excitement one normally witnesses after the elections."* (Kazi J. N., 1993, p. 247)

9. Sikkim Sangram Parishad and the Opposition Parties

SJP (SSP was known as SJP then) won 16 out of 31 seats. (one Khamdong constituency being vacant due to the death of contesting candidate) in 1979 election. In 1985 Assembly election, SSP came to power winning 30 out of 32 contested seats. 2 seats, one from prestigious Gangtok constituency and one from Kabi-Tingda constituency went to Balchand Sarda an Independent candidate and Kalzang Gyatso an Indian National Congress candidate respectively. And in the third Assembly election which was held in 1989, SSP came to power with soaring victory, sweeping all the 32 seats.

SSP formed a government in 1985 taking the support of the independent Sangha candidate with which the total strength of Parishad rose to 17.14 members remained in the opposition. Opposition was rather strong in the SJP Government. It was in fact the strongest ever in the democratic history of Sikkim. Opposition then in Sikkim consisted of two political parties those are SCR with B B Gurung as its leader and SPC with N.B. Khatiwara as its leader. They had the strength of 11 and 3 respectively. These parties maintained their distinct identity as an opposition and did not form a coalition but they were united in their stand as an opposition.

There was a presence of healthy opposition at least in the first term of the SJP Government which criticized the Government not just for the sake of criticism but their criticisms were objective criticisms. As an active opposition they provided some suggestions and alternative to Government's actions and policies where appropriate (*PSLA, 1981, pp.81,91*) and sought to hold them accountable for their decisions. They constantly questioned the Government's actions, reasons for slow implementation and non-delivery of policies and plans. (*PSLA, 1981, pp.100,260*) They put the spotlight on serious issues by moving calling attention notice and had them resolved quickly. (*PSLA, 1981, p.434*) The opposition parties debated legislation vigorously in the house to ensure the

legislation receives careful consideration. Although no bills in this term was ever rejected or sent to Select Committee but some bills were not voted by all the members and most of the bills were put to vote only after long and intensive discussion about the particular bill so that the public gets the benefit by causing government to adopt positive policies.

Being in opposition is not just about opposing the government. The then opposition parties thoroughly understood this responsibility. They did not fail to appreciate the good works of the government. (PSLA 1981 pp. 64-65,74,263) There were occasions when oppositions agreed with the Government when there was wider public interest in the proposal of the Government and when it had wide support of the public. The opposition was strong as well to create a furor when one of the ministers, Sherab Palden while replying the opposition member, Mr. N B khatiwara stated that "*Till the Article 371 F is there, according to clause (k) the Indian Constitution is not applicable to Sikkim unless and until these old rules are repealed or changed by the competent legislature or competed authority.*" (PSLA,1981, pp.331-332) The opposition leader Gurung charged the minister as the statement meant that the Chapter III pertaining to Fundamental Rights were also suspended for Sikkim. Therefore, he was asked to give clarification and was asked to withdraw the statement he had made as it was found to be misleading the house. (PSLA,1981,pp.348,499)

The opposition leader B.B. Gurung from SCR also put forwarded the motion of No Confidence against the Government after only 10 months of formation of Government in the Autumn Session of Assembly on September 9, 1980. It was based on three main grounds. First, the failure of Parishad Government to fulfill the pledges given to the people of Sikkim during election. The Government had pledged that in case of their coming to power, it

would bring about efficiency in every department by uprooting corruption, nepotism and favoritism but the government had failed to do so according to the opposition party.

The second issue was that the Parishad Government had demonstrated corruption and misuse by encouraging favoritism and nepotism in the administration. The opposition alleged that ever since the Parishad Government came to power, monopoly and misrule had been perpetrated by the Government. There was an allegation of misappropriation of the wealth of Sikkimese people. The opposition cited some of the case of corruption to prove their allegations. Gurung pointed out that not only opposition but the members from the ruling party itself were not satisfied with the Government. This was made clear from the different resolutions and questions placed before the House by them. He also stated that the Parishad leader used to say that favoritism and nepotism was rampant in the Kazi's Government and if voted to power, the parishad Government would not allow any form of nepotism and favoritism but it was alleged that those pledges were never translated into action. Many backdoor appointments had been made by the Parishad Government even after coming to power. The opposition leader also provided proofs of such nepotism and favoritism and stated that this issue had become so large that provided topic in the newspapers.

Another allegation made by the opposition leader, Gurung against the ruling government headed by N.B. Bhandari was that the Government was responsible for various omission and commission resulting in complete breakdown of law and order in the state. He stated that crimes had so much increased that had been reported in the "*Eastern Express*" daily and also in the crime report. People were being murdered, children were being raped and robberies committed and no enquiry had been made. It was also pointed out that the

crime were committed by police themselves and cases of beating by the police were countless in the Parishad Government.

Another opposition member Mr. N B Khatiwara from SPC also added in the failure of the Government to fulfill its promises made to people during election speeches. He stated that the Parishad Party used to declare that *"Our beloved mother Sikkim and the Sikkimese people have been sold out by battisays². In order to restore the lost rights, dignity and the self respect of the Sikkimese and to bring back the lost identity of Sikkim, help us with your mandate etc."* (PSLA, 1980, p.169) Those promises according to him had completely vanished.

Both the leaders of the opposition parties, that is, B B Gurung and N B Khatiwara however admitted that the motion of No-Confidence was not against all the members of SJP nor it was against the Parishad Party. It was due to irresponsible work by some of the Ministers and the motion was intended to create an ideal Government. The motion was put to vote. Ten members voted in favor and nineteen against. The motion was defeated and passed in negative.

Unlike the first term, in the second term, the opposition party in Sikkim was very weak. There were only two opposition members; Katuk Bhutia from Indian National Congress and Balchand Sarda, an Independent candidate in the Sikkim Assembly. Katuk Bhutia won from Kabi Tingda, a Scheduled Tribe constituency of North Sikkim despite the fact that he did not have much strong local political support as the party he was associated with and contesting from was not a regional party and did not have strong political base. He secured 1102 votes leaving behind his primary contender SSP by 339 votes. Balchand Sarda won from the prestigious Gangtok

² Referred to 32 legislators of Kazi's Government who passed the resolution to merge Sikkim with India

constituency. The victory was quite remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, it was a victory of a plainsman; secondly, his primary contender was the SSP candidate Smt. Dil Kumari Bhandari, a first lady of Sikkim. He secured 2010 votes leaving behind the SSP candidate by the slender margin of 261 votes.

In the previous term the opposition members were almost equal in number with the ruling one. They were only one member weaker to the ruling government at least in the beginning*. In this term it was almost opposite. Although weak, the opposition leaders did not stay away from their roles and responsibilities to hold the government answerable for their actions and performed their usual duty to ask questions and hold government responsible to people. They did not shed away their duty to point out the weaknesses and the failures in the working of the government and provided alternative policies and suggestions to the Government. In one of the sessions in 1985, the opposition member Balchand Sarda raised question on the misuse of VIP lights. He asked the Chief Minister to clarify the House as to why the nominated chairmen who were not the elected public representatives were using VIP lights. His argument was that those chairmen were not the voice of people and if the VIP lights were used in that manner by all the chairmen of corporations then Sikkim would be called red light city with nearly 200 VIPs. (*PSLA, 1985, pp.24-28*) There was a long discussion on this matter. Another opposition leader, Kalzang Gyatso in the same session suggested for establishment of Sikkim University for the educational benefit of Sikkimese students. He also suggested that for good results and quality education, training for teachers should be mandatory. 'Son of the Soil' policy should be followed in the appointment of teachers. (*PSLA, 1985, pp.60-64*) He reiterated the same point in the next Assembly session of 1986. He stated that teachers were being appointed from the plains for the lower primary schools who studied in Hindi medium. Instead of teaching students,

they end up learning local languages. This acted as a handicap in education system. Therefore, appointment of local teachers was suggested. He also suggested for facility of staff quarters so that the teachers posted at the interiors may not have difficulty of accommodation. A play ground and toilets in each school was a must, he suggested. (*PSLA, 1986, pp.80-82*). Another important area he discussed while showing the weakness of the Government and offering some valuable suggestion was the Health department. He discussed about lack of beds in the hospitals and power failure at operation table etc. He opined that if the old and senior compounders and nurses were sent to Public Health Centers in the villages, local patients could be treated there which in turn would lessen the rush at main hospitals and the problem of scarcity of beds could be taken care of. (*PSLA, 1986, pp. 160-161*) Thus, the Assembly sessions were held as usual but the demanding attitude of the opposition members which was remarkable in the 1st term was missing in this term. They were more polite and compromising. This however could be attributed to the size of the opposition.

Comparatively, the opposition in this term was very weak but considering their size, they played their part well. Although they were too weak to make a remarkable difference, they endeavoured to make their presence felt. In the third session of Assembly in 1985, all the questions and supplementary questions in question hour were asked by the opposition members. The opposition member, Kalzang Gyatso asked the minister-in-charge of Food and Civil supply as to why there was scarcity of essential items like rice, edible oil, kerosene, sugar, petrol etc. at the time of Durga Puja when they were most required. He demanded the ministry concerned to keep sufficient stock for at least 2/3 months to meet up emergency needs. (*PSLA , 1985 , pp.5-6*) He also highlighted the weakness of the government by pointing out incomplete work of the rural water supply schemes sanctioned and works started during the previous government's time.

He stated that the commitment given to cover entire state with drinking water scheme in each speech had not been materialized. (PSLA,1985,p.9) He also pointed out that there was lack of essential items like a generator in the state hospital for emergency purpose and made the House realize the consequence of lack of arrangement for power failure during operation and emergencies. He demanded that there must be one by the next session. No other member, ruling and opposition raised questions in the question hour. It was also remarked by the Speaker and stated "*Only Hon'ble Kalzang Gyatso has got questions.*" Gyatso in turn requested the members from ruling party to start bringing questions from next session and lend their co-operations in question hours (PSLA,1985.pp.20-21)

The budget session of 1986 did not have question hours. In the discussion on the 'Motion of Thanks to the Governor's Address', the opposition member Kalzang Gyatso could not place his view as the discussion was declared over by the Speaker when he desired to speak. He then staged a walk out in protest. (PSLA,1986.pp.40-41) Since one of the opposition member walked out, other members, both ruling and opposition did not participate on discussion on general budget. Other affairs of the session remained as usual. No major activity which could be termed important from the researcher's point of view occurred. In the next session of the year opposition members asked questions related to Health, Education etc. For instance, the reason for poor performance of students in examination and the steps taken by the Government to improve it were asked. Questions were also asked to Health minister as to whether there were enough beds available for patients in the government hospitals and whether qualified personnel and modern equipments for diagnosis and treatment of major illness available in the hospitals. (PSLA,1986,pp.10-11,18)

But from 1987 onwards, the opposition started declining, slowly shedding their responsibilities and making only lukewarm efforts. Most of the grants in budget session of 1988 were passed without any discussion and there were not much to comment in the budget too. Even for the important departments like that of Education, Agriculture and Finance, the demands for grants were passed without any discussion whereas in the previous year these departments were discussed intensively. In the question hours, few questions were asked by the opposition members. Those questions were nothing but a usual exercise. There was nothing important in their arguments to take note of. In some sessions, there were no questions at all. Even if there were some, they were raised by the members of ruling party only. In the latter part of the term, the opposition member B.C. Sarda often remained absent from the Assembly Sessions. And in the last day of the session, both the opposition members were absent. They were not present even to give their consent in the important matters like election of committees. Their consent were sought later. (PSLA, 1988, pp. 146-150, 157-158, 203, 221)

The August session of 1988 lasted hardly for half-an-hour. The members both from ruling and opposition did not take part in any of the Assembly business. All the 10 bills except one, introduced in the House were passed unanimously without discussion. The situation became such that in one of the session, the speaker urged the members to speak and participate in the budget discussion to keep the Assembly affairs going. He said, "*If you do not discuss on the Budget, what should be the reply from the Finance Minister?*" (PSLA, 1989, p. 73). As there was nothing much to discuss the sessions were very short they lasted not even for 1 hour.

In the third term, since SSP captured all the seats, there was no place for opposition. The party members themselves played the

dual role of opposition and ruling group. The assembly sessions were healthy with debates and discussion. In the previous term, especially from 1987, the members both from ruling and opposition showed a much laid back attitude towards the assembly affairs. They did not take part in many of the debates and discussions. Surprisingly in this term, we find more involvement of members in the affairs of the house. The absence of opposition did not handicap the assembly affairs and did not end within an hour. The sessions were very busy with intra-group questions and discussions in effort to keep different departments in check and to hold them accountable. Unlike the previous term, almost all the members took part in the question hours and discussions of the Assembly. The progress and performance of all the important departments like that of Education, P.W.D, Animal Husbandry, Health, Forest and Transport etc. were discussed in the Assembly. The members pointed out the faults and weaknesses of one another and offered suggestions for improvements. For instance, one of the member in 1990 Assembly Session complained about the total negligence of P.W.D. He stated that in some of the constituencies, link roads were not constructed even in ten years of formation of the government although those people had equal contribution to form the government, build the party, ministers and MLAs. He also suggested that fund should be used for needful purposes and should not be misused. (PSLA, 1990, pp.203-205) While discussing on Education department, one member pointed out that there were no basic amenities like better school buildings, laboratories, play grounds, latrines and even teachers in many of the schools. It was also pointed out by another member that in one of the school no examination was held for more than four years. It was suggested that serious action was to be taken by the concerned ministry to solve those problems. (PSLA, 1990, pp.347,364) Likewise in the Health ministry, many important suggestions were made by the members. One of the

members suggested that in Primary Health Centres, out of two doctors, one has to be a female doctor for the check-up and treatment of female related health problems. It was also suggested that experienced doctors should be sent to remote areas so that the poor people might be treated there instead of coming all the way to district hospitals. *(PSLA, 1990, p.403)*

The successive Assembly sessions of 1990 were also very active and busy. All the members participated in the Assembly affairs. Various ministries like Education, Tourism, Information and Public Relations, PWD and Forests etc. were discussed in this session. In the field of education, one of the members suggested that in schools, vocational education should be given importance. In his view, once the student passes out school and completes degree college, he should be able to earn his living and be self-dependent with the help of vocational education even if he does not get a government job. Therefore he suggested that such education must be given priority to tackle unemployment problems. *(PSLA, 1992, p.302-303)*. In the Tourism department, questions were asked whether the profits earned by the hotels under the department were satisfactory and steps taken by Minister-in-charge to improve it. *(PSLA, 1992, pp.36-40)* The members were strict enough to keep various departments in check. The minister-in-charge of Information and Public Relations was questioned and charged when his department failed to cover the winter session of 1991 in the Government journal 'Sikkim Herald'. It was pointed out by one of the member that it was the duty of department in question to inform the mass about different policies and programs adopted by the Government in the Assembly for the welfare of people. *(PSLA, 1992, pp.416-417)* A fuss was created when the minister-in-charge of Mines and Geology could not answer precisely to the questions raised by the members. *(PSLA, 1992, pp.347-348)*. However in this term also no bill was rejected. They were passed unanimously without discussions. The

demands for grants of some of the ministries viz. Health, Family Welfare and Social Welfare; Sikkim Nationalized Transport and Motor Vehicles; Land Revenue Survey and Settlement; Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Welfare and the Chief Minister's own ministries, that is, Home, Finance, Establishment, Planning and Development were passed without discussion.

The year 1992 was a very eventful year indeed. Quite a few events occurred which had strong impact on Sikkim's politics. These events were the precursor for change as politics in Sikkim never remained the same then after. Pawan Kumar Chamling, who held the portfolio of Information; Public Relation and Printing department was removed from the SSP cabinet on 16 June 1992 and also from the party on the ground of ideological differences between him and the Chief Minister and SSP Supremo Nar Bahadur Bhandari. Chamling's expulsion gave birth to the opposition in the Assembly which was non-existent in this term till then. He became the lone opposition member against all others in the 32 member Legislative Assembly.

A dramatic moment followed after his expulsion in one of its session which underlined the fact that the real opposition was an essential organ in democracy even if there was just one in the entire House. It was the Zero hour in the Assembly Session of September 9; Chamling was vocal from the very start of question hour and demanded time to express his views. He rose to his feet, took out a candle from his pocket and lighted it. The Speaker said that it was unacceptable by the Assembly norms but Chamling charged that 'there was utter darkness and confusion in Sikkim, there was no democracy and that he was constrained to search out any leftovers in the Assembly Hall. He walked around with the candle and finally stopped, facing the then Chief Minister. Turning to the Speaker, he said, *"I am looking for democracy, Sir, in this august gathering. Does it exist here? Or is it in the pocket of Chief Minister!"* Then, he said, *"I*

will go to every nook and corner of Sikkim in search of democracy and I will search till I find it.” He then walked out of the house with the candle still aflame. (*The Statesman*, 6 April 2001), (*Bali*, 2003, p. 116)

The 1993 Assembly sessions remained calm. The lone opposition member remained absent in all the sessions. The sessions witnessed short question hours as compared to previous years. The question hours had barely two to four questions of which some of the questioners were absent. In fact from 1993 onwards many members started remaining absent. The demands for grants of important departments like Health, Family Welfare, Social Welfare, Tourism, Education, PWD and Finance where large amount of grants were earmarked were discussed as usual but the intensity and length of discussion as found in previous years was lacking. But the sessions in 1994 were equally contrasting to 1993. It was dramatic and disturbed. Chamling, who abstained himself from attending the 1993 Assembly sessions after the zero hour episode of 1992 made his comeback in 1994. From the beginning of his journey as an MLA in 1985, he displayed an impression of a man of few words. He hardly raised any question in the question hours and hardly participated in the debates and discussions in the House in his political career of almost a decade. But it was a different Chamling in 1994. There was a complete transformation in his attitude and approach after his expulsion and formation of his political party called Sikkim Democratic Front on March 4, 1993. A silent listener once he was, flooded the question hours with many questions. As a lone but responsible and strong opposition member, he put the spotlight on every faults and failures of SSP Government and brought in front of the House.

Chamling was very vocal from the beginning of the session. He expressed his dissatisfactions and accused SSP with many allegations. The main reason for opening of this Pandora's Box was

on February 28, 1994 when the SDF party had called a peaceful all Sikkim strike to protest against the unusual price hike in the entire nation and also against corruption, decline of democracy and human rights in Sikkim. The then Chief Minister, Nar Bahadur Bhandari declared a shootout order to those who observed and participated in the strike. The statement of instructions given by the then Chief Minister to his party workers was published in one of the leading daily of Sikkim on February 27, 1994 and was also recorded. Chamling read out the statement in the zero hour of the Assembly session. Bhandari stated, *"Whoever does not go to their duty, I will terminate him. Sikkim is just one, no body except I have the right to call on strike. Open the shops and offices; burn them with kerosene and petrol if they do not comply. For the first time in Sikkim's history I am giving the shootout order to my party workers. Police, do not arrest my party men."* (PSLA, 1994, pp.71-73). Chamling regarded it a black history of Sikkim and destruction of democracy. When Chamling was confronted and asked to stop by the members of ruling party, he claimed his right to explain in the Assembly. He asked, *"There is terrorism in the state already, has it started in the Assembly too?"* (PSLA, 1994, p.72). He continued that there was failure of law and order in Sikkim and urged that legal action should be taken against Bhandari. He again pointed out that police force was replaced by Military in Sikkim, many illegal arms and ammunitions were supplied and demanded that the Chief Minister should be answerable and there should be an enquiry commission. He also stated that SSP Government could not secure life and property of Sikkimese and that it was proved that the Government was a terrorist Government which was to be dismissed immediately. (PSLA, 1994, pp.74-75)

A silent listener who used to listen while others spoke became very outspoken opposition member. In this session others listened to him while he spoke. In the discussion of Governor's Address, he

ridiculed and made the mockery of the contents of the Address. He regarded it misguiding and illusionary to the people of Sikkim. In the Address it was stated *“The Animal Husbandry has assured an important role in raising living standard of the people especially in the rural areas. There has been specific increase in production of milk and other Livestock products during the year.”* Chamling refuted the statement and alleged that the existing government could not progress in this sector even in fifteen long years. He pointed out that there was a home market of seven crores of animal products per year which the government failed to tap. Instead, the market demands were fulfilled by bringing stock from outside. This was regarded as a greatest failure of the government. Next was the Forest department. It was stated in the Governor’s Address that *“massive a forestation program has been carried out in order to increase the forest covers in the state. Special attention has been given to rejuvenation of degraded forest areas, social and rural fuel wood plantation including a wasteland development effort.”* Chamling rejected it. He regarded it totally false and stated, *“Today, there has been deforestation, not forestation. Here is ministry of deforestation not forestation.”* (PSLA, 1994, pp.78-79) It was also mentioned in the Address that *“In order to bring democracy to the grassroots, steps were taken by the Government.”* Chamling asked, *“Where is democracy? How can we take it to the grassroots when the Panchayats as per the rule of SSP is busy working on how to make SSP win the election, construct gates to welcome the Chief Minister wherever he goes, pasting posters and to gather public for party meetings?”* He said, *“Panchayats in Sikkim are used only for keeps and convenience of the Government. Today, Panchayats are weak so is the society of Sikkim.”* (PSLA, 1994, pp.80-81)

Another statement of the Governor which stated, *“Special attention has also been given to rural sanitation with the construction of household and institutional latrines in order to improve village*

sanitation.” Chamling criticized it and ridiculed the policy of the government which according to him was just opposite. He said, *“Today in Sikkim, the Government should provide food and improve economic condition of Sikkimese. People are starving and struggling for their hand-to-mouth but the Government has provided the latrines first. What is the use of latrines when their stomachs are empty?”* He argued that people in Sikkim were still below poverty line which meant that Sikkim and Sikkimese did not progress in real sense. Government had failed to increase purchasing power of the people. The government was only for handfuls in power but the mass was living under poverty line with difficulties. The statement of the Government on giving special emphasis on employment generation and employment generating programs was also refuted by Chamling. He argued, *“If there is any development in Sikkim, it has been the development of ‘unemployment’ ‘corruption’ and ‘terrorism’.”*

He argued that Government talked big and blew own trumpet about the progress in education and distribution of free text books but the government did not even have its education policy. *“Distribution of books does not mean distribution of education.”* He said. He further stated that it was very saddening not to have the state university even in fifteen years. Because of lack of education policy, the Government could not develop competitive attitude and could not give quality education. All that the Government could give was unemployment. The statement of the then Governor in the concluding part of his budgetary speech *“My Government’s commitment to maintain communal harmony and peace, promote and protect the interest of the weaker section, women and children and to work assiduously for the development of the state,”* was ridiculed and criticized by Chamling. He argued that in the SSP Government, communalism was rampant and casteism was encouraged by asking people to form associations based on castes. He also highlighted that the very government had sent a memorandum to Delhi on 21

October, 1993, stating that Christians should be punished. (PSLA, 1994, pp.81-89) Other members of ruling party also participated over the discussion of the Governor's speech. Few supported Chamling and others condemned his remarks. The question hours were active with healthy and constructive discussions. Different problems and demands of public were placed by respective MLA's. The lone opposition member, Chamling came up with many questions. His questions were related to almost all the departments. He held every minister-in-charge accountable for their actions and pointed out their weaknesses. Unlike other sessions, not a single demand for grants was passed without discussion. The party members themselves discussed and assessed different departments when opposition member was absent and when the opposition member was present he burdened the role and responsibility of opposition group by himself. He stood to represent the entire opposition party in the house not just theoretically but practically too.

In the discussion over the demands for grants of different department, he placed his views and pointed out the weakness and failure of different departments. In the discussion over Industries, he stated that the department was not concerned about how to increase industrialization in Sikkim so that its economic condition could be improved and people could be employed. He stated that the department could not make industries viable to produce and grow because of its failure to provide home market for the industrial products even though there was potential home market in Sikkim. (PSLA, 1994, pp.378-379) Next, he asked the Minister-in Charge of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Welfare whether the fund allotted for tribes were actually used for progress of tribe. He also, placed his view that tribal could not be progressive and wealthy just by giving donations and sympathies by the Government. They should be given their rights and privilege which the Government had denied

for fifteen years. He pointed out the condition of Scheduled Caste were even worse in Sikkim. They were the victims of evils of untouchability still practiced in Sikkim. He stated, they should be given social justice, economic and political rights not just sympathies (PSLA, 1994, pp.378-379) In the Agricultural department he suggested that Government should give primary importance to agriculture as Sikkim was an agricultural state where 80 per cent of population was dependent on agriculture. The Government should endeavor to make Sikkim and Sikkimese self-dependent in agricultural sector. (PSLA, 1994, pp.378-379) Chamling stated that there was nothing productive in the budget and that the budget was in fact beggar budget which had more expenditure and loss than income and benefits. He pointed out that the financial discipline and economic discipline was lacking in the Government .The budget was in fact not in favor of poor Sikkimese but in favor of handful riches and businessmen of plains. (PSLA, 1994, pp.143-146)

He also tabled a resolution in favour of government employees which read: *"The government has miserably failed to constitute Pay Commission for the last eight years or more which needs to be done every five years to safeguard the economic and social condition of the government employees of different categories. The wages of the different categories of labors also need to be raised and revised in the wake of unusual hike in prices of essential commodities and very high cost of living. It is therefore resolved that the government takes urgent necessary step in this direction to ensure relief to those sections of the employees and labors which is long overdue."* The resolution was put to vote. 2 votes were in favor and 23 against. The resolution was defeated and passed in negative. (PSLA, 1994, pp.475-480, 485)

The Assembly session of 1994 was indeed most dramatic and disturbing since the inception of State Legislative Assembly. Events followed one after another in the House. Question hours and

budgetary discussions were not enough for Chamling to point out faults and failure of the Government and place his ideas in the House. He used Zero Hour of the house to point out that because of corruption, gift racket and misdeeds of some of the people of Sikkim, the centre government had decided to impose income tax on Sikkim from 1.4.1995. He argued, because of those irresponsible people the entire public of Sikkim was made to bear the brunt for whole life. (*PSLA, 1994, pp.501-503*) The members of ruling party did not remain quiet either. They said that Chamling should not have kept quiet. The members argued that when Chamling knew all the weaknesses of the Government he should have been responsible enough to highlight and bring the issue when he was in the treasury bench, a year and a half back. They again questioned Chamling about his responsibility as a representative of the people. The budgetary discussion went berserk and turned into chaos. The Speaker had to request the members to be seated in their place, calm down and confine themselves within budget discussion (*PSLA, 1994, pp.535-538*). This was the last Assembly session of SSP. By the next session of the 1994, SSP was voted out. A new government by the SDF Party led by Pawan Kumar Chamling was formed.

Hence, in the SSP Government, the opposition was very strong in the first term. The roles played by them in the Assembly which any active opposition party in a healthy democratic government should, we can definitely say that a strong opposition was present in the first term of SJP Government which played the role of 'watchdog', 'check and balance' and 'government in waiting' in real sense of term. But with the passage of time, the SSP continued strengthening its position and opposition continued to decline till it became non-existent. In the first half of the first term, the opposition was strong enough to provide an alternative government that it tabled a motion of No-Confidence against the Government. But later in the second half, many opposition members shifted allegiance and joined the

ruling SSP by way of floor crossing. By the end of the term, that is, 1985, the SSP's strength rose to 29.

In the second term, there were two opposition members amongst the 32 members Assembly. For not more than two years, they performed their responsibilities and made their presence felt, later they became non-functional and ornamental, performing only those tasks which were mandatory and in the third and last term, there was not a single opposition member in the House initially. However, the sessions were active with healthy debates and discussions but were a one party show. The one party show however soon ended in June 1992, when Pawan Kumar Chamling, who was the cabinet minister of SSP Government was removed from the cabinet and the party. He became the lone opposition member amongst the 31 odd ruling members in the Assembly. After this event, politics in Sikkim took a different course. Assembly sessions once again became lively and dramatic with the presence of real opposition which had been missing since early 80's. In terms of number, the third term of SSP had the weakest opposition. There was just one but in terms of strength it was perhaps the strongest. It could not have provided an alternative government then in the Assembly but it replaced the Government soon after its formations.

10. Winds of Change

For the three consecutive terms that is from 1979 to 1989, the SSP's rule in Sikkim was unchallenged. In fact, with each term, it became stronger. In 1979, it came to power with 17 seats; in 1985 with 30 seats and in 1989 it gained absolute majority with 32 out of 32 seats. With the unchallenged power of SSP, came challenging problems too. The first and second terms of SSP's rule in Sikkim remained comparatively peaceful than the third one. Although there were murmured dissatisfactions and passive oppositions earlier, the

disturbance in the party started becoming intense towards the end of 1980's to the early 90's culminating in the important event in 1992 when Pawan Kumar Chamling who held the portfolio of Information, Public Relations and Printing department was removed from the SSP party. With this event the wind of change started blowing in Sikkim's politics which was otherwise calm.

The wind of change was strongly felt in Sikkim's politics when it started blowing in the opposite direction. Its strongest blow which had a far reaching effect not only in Sikkim's politics but also at the Centre was when the 15 MLAs of SSP who constituted more than one third of the original strength of the SSP Party had unanimously decided to split and formed the SSP (Sanchaman) headed by Sanchaman Limboo who was also a minister in the Bhandari cabinet till a month earlier. The confidence vote was scheduled for May 17, 1994, in which Bhandari was voted out.

The grievances of defected members were many. Their pent up anger and matters of dissatisfaction were expressed in their speeches in the Assembly Session of 17 May, 1994. One of the reasons of dissatisfaction was that Bhandari was alleged to have a dictatorial attitude. He was said to have ruled undemocratically. There was a widening gap between himself and with his ministers and MLAs. They could hardly get appointments. Their suggestions were never taken into consideration and their grievances, never redressed. (PSLA, 1994, p.137) His rule was alleged to be one man autocratic rule. Bhandari was alleged of ruling the state on a divide and rule policy. By his double speak and his double standard policies, he instigated one community against the other. By playing communal cards, the three communities, that is, Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalese were pitted against each other for his personal political benefit which led to communal tensions and clashes among the people of Sikkim (PSLA, 1994, p.127). Because of this very attitude of his and his

policies, allegations were made that Sikkimese people were never integrated and united as one.

His Government was alleged to be characterized by lawlessness, injustice and oppression. Bhandari had suppressed law and order, rules and regulations to ensure his monopoly in the government. Any dissenting voice was not permitted and any step to oppose his misdeeds and misrule was faced with dire consequences. Dharmadatta Sharma, a front ranking leader of the Congress (I) in Sikkim unit who opposed Bhandari's government had to lose his life in 1988 (*PSLA, 1994, p. 102*)

The members also alleged that SSP was an institution of corruption. Bhandari would choose the so called influential members from different communities and together indulge in widespread corruption and exploitation of the state's resources. These kind of activities according to the dissenting members, provoked the imposition of Central Income Tax Act, Wealth Tax and Gift Tax etc. (*PSLA, 1994, p. 48*). The introduction of proposed finance Bill by the then Finance Minister, Dr. M.M Singh in 1994 became the immediate cause of defection.

The genesis of Direct Income Tax issue started long time back in 1983 when the then Governor Homi J.H. Taliyarkan wrote to Minister of Home Affairs for extension of Direct Tax Laws (covering Income, wealth and Gift Taxes) to Sikkim to supposedly address some anomalies in paying income tax under the state Act. (*White Paper Vol.I on the Direct Tax Laws in Sikkim, 1998*) The issue kept cropping up from time to time since then. It was alleged by opposition leaders that "Bhandari Government indulged in series of economic crimes including cigarette scam, gift racket and money laundering committed by some unscrupulous people in Sikkim further compounded the issue and hastened Center's decision to

extend the Central Income Tax to Sikkim” (*Telegraph, I-T Bills upsets Sikkimese, 29 March, 1994*). In a letter dated 4.11.1986 of the Department of Revenue, it was mentioned that one of the reason of extension of Direct Tax Laws was that the non application of Indian Income Tax Act 1961 in the State of Sikkim had provided means to unscrupulous tax payers to introduce their unaccounted money in India in the name of bogus concerns located in Sikkim.

Although efforts were made by Bhandari Government to resist the implementation of the Indian Direct Taxes in Sikkim in various forums in spite of its extension and enforcement since 1989-90. (Annexure-19) However on account of pressure from Government of India, all the members of SSP had to concede for its implementation from 1, 4, 1995. As a result the Finance Bill 1994 was introduced, which proposed enforcement of the tax laws to Sikkim granting exemption to Bhutia and Lepcha communities of Sikkim. But this bill had caused great agitation and resentment in the minds of all Sikkimese of Nepali origin. Nepali members of both ruling and opposition parties were of the view that they were discriminated by leaving out one of the tree ethnic communities including schedules caste from the provision of the Bill. The opposition, CPI (M) was of the view that taxes should not be introduced on communal lines. They stated “Nepalis here are just as poor as any other community. Therefore, there should be economic criteria for implementation of Income tax”. (*Telegraph, withdrawal of Sikkim I-T Bill fans discontent, 13, May, 1994*). Both ruling and opposition parties opined that the proposed Bill had violated the 1973 (pre-merger) Tripartite Agreement. As in the agreement, Nepalis and Bhutia-Lepchas were treated as par. And therefore they called for equal treatment and protection of all the communities under Article 371(F) of the Constitution. (*Telegraph, I-T Bill upsets Sikkimese, 1994*), (*Telegraph, withdrawal of Sikkim I-T Bills fans discontent, 1994*)

Things became unmanageable for Bhandari when some of his key Nepali aides, comprising former senior bureaucrats and SSP leaders floated the Sikkim People's Forum to demand tax exemptions for their community. Sensing growing resentment among other ethnic communities, Bhandari Government in his letter dated May 3, 1994 to the then Prime Minister, Shri P.V Narasimha Rao made a fresh request to treat Nepalese of Sikkimese origin in an equal footing with other ethnic communities on the basis of Article 371 (F) of the Constitution of India.

As the finance bill was at the consideration stage, Mrs. D.K Bhandari, M.P (Sikkim) also made a representation on May 4, 1994 requesting for some amendment in the bill which would be conducive in the interest of the people of Sikkim and of Nation as a whole.

As a result, the Union Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, kept the Bill in abeyance for it needed closer scrutiny following "a fresh request" made by the Sikkim Government for exemption for all Sikkimese. It was also made clear that the proposal seeking to exempt tribals would also be withdrawn for the time being.

This immediately provoked the ruling tribal MLAs, who held Mr. Bhandari and his MP wife responsible for the Bill's withdrawal. Bhandari was accused of snatching away the rights and special privilege granted by the Central Government to Bhutia and Lepcha communities as also of failing to secure similar concession for other ethnic communities living in Sikkim. He was accused of playing with sentiments of Bhutia-Lepcha minority which constituted only 25 percent of voters. Despite the center's clarification that there was no political motive in his decision, the Sikkimeses still continued to be suspicious. Bhandari was accused to have played communal politics for his personal gains. Implementation of Income tax exempting only the Scheduled Tribes would have meant securing only 25 percent of votes and losing 75 percent majority votes of Nepali and therefore he

was accused to have made a 'U' turn and again opposed the bill to which he gave his consent earlier. (PSLA, 1994, p.87-88)

There was a vertical split in the ruling SSP because of this touchy issue of Income Tax as all tribal MLAs and their supporters deserted the Chief Minister under the leadership of Sanchaman Limboo, the then cabinet minister of SSP. The ruling SSP was divided into two groups: SSP and SSP (Sanchaman) the latter with the strength of 16 MLAs. (Old Tactics, 1994) Bhandari was to face a trial of strength on May 17, 1994 when the Motion of Confidence in favour of the Chief Minister, N.B Bhandari was brought in the Assembly to put to vote. 16 members voted against the motion and 1 member Pawan Kumar Chamling abstained from voting. Bhandari lost, as the motion was rejected by the House. (PSLA, 1994, pp.154-156) On that fateful day, Bhandari's absolute dominance received a death blow. It was his Waterloo. This change in politics of Sikkim was however not a sudden development but was an outburst of volcano, long simmering.

Once Bhandari lost, his one-time protégé Sanchaman Limboo occupied his chair and became the fourth Chief Minister of Sikkim on May 18, 1994. The then Governor, Admiral (retd) R.H. Tahiliani administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly elected Chief Minister and seven of his cabinet colleagues. Since his ministry was in minority and as election to the Assembly was announced Sanchaman Limboo remained a caretaker Chief Minister from September 1994 to December 11, 1994.

CHAPTER – 5
EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION
OF SIKKIM DEMOCRATIC FRONT
AS A POLITICAL PARTY

CHAPTER

5

Emergence and Evolution of Sikkim Democratic Front as a Political Party

1. Dissent within Sikkim Sangram Parishad

It has already been discussed in the last part of the previous chapter about the feud between Chamling and Bhandari and the former's expulsion from the party on the ground of ideological differences. In this chapter, we will try to assess the reason behind the dissent and the emergence of a new state political outfit, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) and its role in the state politics.

Pawan Chamling, a son of a farmer from Yangang, south Sikkim had first started his political career as the President of his village Yangang Gram Panchayat Unit in 1982 and became an MLA of Damthang Constituency in 1985. He slowly climbed up the political ladder to become a Cabinet Minister in SSP Government in 1989 and was the Minister- in-charge for Industries, Printing and Information & Public Relations. (*Commemorative issue:25 years of Statehood*) On his days as the SSP minister for two and half years, there started growing a discord on principles and practices of politics between him and the then Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari. The differences between him and the leadership of the SSP were neither petty nor personal. There were substantial differences on issues of principle and ideology. (*B B Gurung, 2012*) (*Bali, 2003*)

It was alleged that during Bhandari's rule, he ruled as a monarch without a crown. The fundamental rights of speech and expression granted by the constitution to its citizens became

imprisoned within the bounds of Mintokgang. It was also alleged that tyranny, repression and corruption knew no bounds during Bhandari's regime and press was completely muzzled. Chamling was dissatisfied with the functioning of the then government and was not willing to compromise with his principles. Therefore, he openly expressed his disagreement and discontent over every wrong policies of the then Government of which he was himself a minister. (*B B Gurung, 2012*) (*Pahalman Subba, 2012*) (*Wangdi, 2012*) His open defiance of the then government put them at loggerheads. The main issues of contention being tribal status to Limboo and Tamang communities, issue of implementation of Mandal Commission Report and most importantly, the proposal for extension of Central Income Tax in Sikkim. (*SDF Dastabej-Khanda-I, 2002*); (*Bali, 2003, pp. 107-109*)

Meanwhile, Chamling, who was projected as an OBC leader, along with Chamla Tshering, Tourism Minister and a tribal leader, were reportedly coming together to oust Bhandari. The two reportedly had at least 20 of the MLA's with them. Tribals and OBCs, two of the State's most powerful groups which constituted at least 80% of the State's population were coming together and joining hands to pave the way for Bhandari's downfall. These developments were viewed as a direct threat to Bhandari by the section of the ruling party. (*Kazi J. N., Inside Sikkim Against The Tide, 1993, p. 299*)

2. Removal of Chamling from Bhandari Cabinet.

The Chamling-Bhandari hostility soon erupted into political clashes and became media headlines. Bhandari's own minister, Chamling opposed every step of Bhandari, with which he could not reconcile. Stories of blame and condemnation against each other were woven. Chamling obviously had no quarrel with Bhandari but he fought against his political philosophy and culture which seemed

anti-people to him. Chamling's performance and his activities certainly did not gain much favour with the CM. His links with ethnic groups and off-the-cuff remarks against the administration and the ruling party made him one of the most controversial men in the Cabinet. Unlike others, Chamling was a popular politician and did not depend on Bhandari to get elected to the Assembly. Therefore he was quite independent in his thinking and people appreciated this. Reacting to the Bhandari's autocratic style of functioning he stated to the media, "*I'm a democrat, not a sycophant.*" (Kazi J. N., *Inside Sikkim Against The Tide*, 1993, p. 307)

When their differences on principle deepened, Chamling openly started defying the working of the then Government which brought only wrath to him. As expected, on 16th June, 1992 Bhandari finally dropped Chamling from the SSP Cabinet and later he expelled him from the party. (*SDF Dastabej, Khanda II*, 2005) Thus, the battle lines were drawn between Bhandari and Chamling. The event did not come as a surprise for those who took deep interest in Sikkimese politics. Chamling's expulsion came as a blessing in disguise for him. In fact he was waiting for this very event. His removal from Bhandari's cabinet and later from SSP opened new doors for him—a door to a new political journey.

3. Candle in the Darkness: The Search for Democracy.

With Chamling's sacking from the Government and expulsion from the ruling SSP, he was now the lone opposition member in the 32 member Vidhan Sabha. In a democracy, difference of opinion is not peculiar and dissent not a crime. There is a room for parties and leaders with different ideologies and approaches to play their role in the policymaking and governance of a democratic society. Impatience and intolerance to divergent ways and views of people leads to failure of democracy. Pawan Chamling made use of the space provided for

dissent on September 9, 1992 in the famous zero hour episodes in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly which left its mark in the annals of democratic history of Sikkim.

It was reportedly the one-day Assembly session in Sikkim. Chamling the opposition legislator took out a candle from his pocket and lit it in the House and marched slowly up to the seat of the chief minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari. The speaker reported to have said it was unacceptable by Assembly norms but Chamling charged that there was utter darkness and confusion in Sikkim, there was no democracy and that he was constrained to search out any leftovers in the Assembly Hall and he angrily thundered that where was the democracy of the people and whether it existed there or was in the pocket of the Chief Minister. Then Chamling reportedly staged a walk out with the commitment that he would go to every nook and corner of Sikkim in search of democracy and would search till he found it. (*Statesman*, April 6, 2001) (*Bali*, 2003, p. 116)

Chamling claimed that he had been a victim of Bhandari's dictatorial rule and alleged that the Indian Constitution including its democratic principles guaranteeing freedom of speech and expression and human rights had been given an "indecent burial" in Sikkim. He alleged that he was not allowed to speak during the zero hour and further added that the one-day session was called just to meet the constitutional requirement of Assembly meeting at least once in every six months. (*Sunday Mail*, 27 September-3 October, 1992)

"The Fire inside the House" episode echoed all over Sikkim. Later the question often arose whether Chamling had played the opposition for the sake of opposition or stood for it as a matter of principle and belief. The answer was soon found when Chamling floated a new political party, SDF, fought the election and formed the

government. "Fire inside the House" incident in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly underlined forever the fact that the opposition was an essential organ of democracy even if there was just one in the entire house.

4. A Party Was Born: Birth of Sikkim Democratic Front Party

The expulsion of Pawan Chamling from the SSP had already triggered a state wide wave of activities. Events that unfolded after his expulsion from the SSP Government and the party were precursor to some major events which became the milestone in Sikkim's political history. Distanced from the corridors of ruling power, he had an opportunity to come closer to the poor and underprivileged section of society in Sikkim. As time passed a new political outfit by the name Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) was born on 4th March 1993.

SDF was founded by Pawan Chamling on March 4 1993, registered under no.56/42/93/JS/II/29II dated the 13th May 1993 with a recognition no.56/95(4) dated the 14th January 1995 by the Election Commission of India. Chamling was unanimously elected the President of the new party. The party had a cover line "*Sikkim Democratic Front because Sikkim deserves better.*" The symbol of the party was an open umbrella with red, yellow and blue sections. The flag of SDF was of a tricolor and of rectangular size. The color of the flag was Sky Blue at the top Golden Yellow at the middle and Blood Red at the bottom, all of which were of equal size. The Sky Blue at the top symbolized determination, progress and national integration. The Golden Yellow symbolized purity, sacrifice and humanity. The Blood Red symbolized auspiciousness, social change, courage and liberty. Hence the party was formed with a clear and open commitment to uphold democracy, justice and developmental

aspiration of the people. (*Constitution of Sikkim Democratic Front, translated from Nepali*)

5. Ideology of the Party

Concise Oxford Dictionary defines ideology as “a system of ideas and ideals forming the basis of an economic or political theory.” In Social Studies a political ideology means the doctrines that political parties and other organizations are committed to, or which they used in their endeavors to get power and influence. A political ideology largely concerns itself with how to allocate power and to what ends it should be used. In this sense, it is deliberately formulated and exploited.

Many political parties base their political action and election program on an ideology. Political parties in India as elsewhere are never tired of proclaiming their faith in ideology. Political battles are fought on ideological stances. If we look at the major national parties in India like Congress, BJP, they adhere to different ideological beliefs. While INC stands for populism, Indian nationalism, social liberalism, democratic socialism, social democracy and secularism, BJP stands for progressivism, Hindutva, integral humanism, nationalism, economic liberalism and free market. Integral Humanism has been its core philosophy and identity ever since its inception.

The ideology of most of the parties are influenced by the prevailing situation of that particular time and place when the party was formed and where the party belongs. Same is true and relevant with SDF's ideology. It is alleged that in Sikkim of yester years there was intense injustice, tyranny, suppression and exploitation on public. With a pledge to bring changes to that situation SDF came into being. The party believes that it is formed by the oppressed, harassed and neglected people to liberate themselves from the

shackles of bondage and to safeguard their political, economic and social welfare including their interests. Therefore, the party has a revolutionary ideology to transform the society to give justice and right to the Sikkimese people by removing the oppressors and handing over the political power to the oppressed poor people, as the party ardently believes in the principle, "In popular regime, people themselves are the rulers."

As the party upholds Socialism as its guiding principle, it works towards maintaining unity among people. The party has a slogan which runs like this –Barefooted, Rubber Booted, We are one. In Sikkim, the bare footed represents farmer and rubber booted represents Mazdoor. Without the unity among them, the Party believes that it is impossible to bring about any change in the society, to mobilize the vast population and build a "*Naya ani Sukhi*" (a new and happy) Sikkim. (*Party Literature of Sikkim Democratic Front*)

As opposed to 'Old Sikkim',¹the new and happy Sikkim would be a society where a man cannot exploit his fellow being and inflict injustice or discriminate each other. The state would have a democratic atmosphere where the people could express their views and opinions without any fear or favor. The "*Naya and Sukhi*" (*newer and happier*) Sikkim as visualized by the party would be "a haven of peace and tranquility, where every citizen is safe and secure and conscious of his or her rights and duties, where the poor and the deprived get equal opportunities to grow and prosper." Where every family has a roof over its head and each member is assured of two square meals everyday, where everyone can live with dignity and without fear or discrimination."

¹ The period beginning from the monarchy and even the long spell of Bhandari's reign after merger with India is termed as old Sikkim by the Party.

The party wants to establish a “*Naya ani Sukhi*” by bringing about “*Kranti*”(revolution). But this *kranti* is different from that of political procession, agitation and violence. The party wants to bring revolution in the mental setup of the people in general, to change their mental attitude and make them self-reliant. The welfare of the people and the country is considered as party’s top political agenda. Since, SDF party branded itself as a party of the poor, the policy and programs of the party remained pro-people, pro-worker, pro-youth and pro-poor, to make Sikkim strong economically and every Sikkimese economically self sufficient. The party is committed to make every Sikkimese a Lakhapati and Crorepati. The party pledged, no one below the poverty line and Roti, Kapda aur Makan for all Sikkimese. (*Party Literature of Sikkim Democratic Front*) (*Pawan Chamling -Man of the Masses*) (*Bali, 2003, pp. 179-185*)

6. Aims and Objectives of the Sikkim Democratic Front Party

According to the constitution of SDF, the following are the aims and objectives of the party:

- 1) To bear true faith and allegiance to the sacred Constitution of India as by law established and to the principles of Socialism and Democracy and to uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the Indian Union.
- 2) To uphold the political, social and economic rights and privileges of the people of Sikkim as provided under the Indian Constitution and to work for the progress of socially and politically backward people of Sikkim.
- 3) To work ceaselessly to promote peace, progress and communal harmony amongst the people of Sikkim and make utmost endeavour to promote fraternity, tolerance and harmony with all other communities of the country.

- 4) To give equal opportunity to all the sections of populace and also to work for the emancipation and upliftment of Sikkimese women giving due honor and dignity to women.
- 5) To fight against all forces that threatens to disturb the unity and integrity of the nation.
- 6) Giving due recognition to the principle of human dignity, the party pledge to fight against all kinds of injustice and inequality perpetrated on ground of caste, creed, colour, religion and gender.
- 7) To promote and safeguard the economic interest and well-being of the deprived sections of the populace; to work for the safeguarding constitutional rights of the scheduled Tribes and other backward classes.
- 8) To foster unity, friendship and harmony amongst all sections of the people in Sikkim and to preserve, protect and promote the age-old customs, traditions and the cultural heritage of the people of Sikkim
- 9) To hold enduring faith in the “son of Sikkim” policy and sincerely safeguard the interests of the Sikkimese people.
- 10) The party is also committed to wage struggle against poverty, illiteracy and internal backwardness in the state.
- 11) To bring upon improvement in the existing situation in Sikkim and resort to all possible means to raise the average conditions of Sikkimese of all levels so as to make them educationally, socially and above all, economically self reliant and self-sufficient. (*Constitution of Sikkim Democratic Front, translated from Nepali*)

One of the foremost objectives of SDF party is to give justice, right, peace and happiness to the Sikkimese people. It is alleged that Bhandari's Government was dictatorial. Therefore, the aim of SDF

was to remove the oppressors and hand over the political power to the oppressed poor people. It is also the essence and basis of party president's slogan, "*In popular regime people themselves are the rulers*". It is to create a system bereft of injustice and oppression, to create "A newer and happier Sikkim. Restoration of democracy was therefore one of the priorities of the SDF Party. Sikkim which had merged into the Indian union now had a democratic set-up. Yet, it is alleged that power mongers had long monopolized the new freedom. The new party was committed to restoring and strengthening the principles of democracy in the State. Other aims included decentralization of power to make people stronger so that democracy could be practiced at the grassroots level. (*Party Literature of Sikkim Democratic Front*)

7. Organization of the Party.

The SDF constitution distinguished between the party's primary Membership and Active Membership. The Primary membership is given to person having firm faith and belief in the rules and regulations, policies, aims and objectives of the SDF and has attained the age of 18 years and who is not guilty of any kind of social, political or economic offence or associated with crime. The person should not be enlisted member of any other political party. The person who fulfills these qualifications is considered eligible for primary Membership of the Party irrespective of sex, caste, creed and religion. He shall have to pay membership fee of Rupees Five per year and have to renew their membership by 31st January every year.

Active membership is given to person who must have been a primary member of the Party for a period of at least one year. He/ she must have been actively involved in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the party. The President of the Party can in the interest of the Party, use his discretionary power to confer

Active Membership to such Party workers who are committed to the objectives of the Party and who are working sincerely as per the directives of the President. Active members of the Party shall have to pay a membership fee of Rupees one hundred fifty one per year and have to renew their membership by 31st January every year.

The President of the SDF Party on his own or the Central working Committee can terminate the membership of a person if he or she is found engaged in anti-party activities or guilty for serious breach of discipline. On receipt of any complaint against any member, Primary or Active or office Bearer/ bearers of Various committees of SDF and if the President finds the person or persons guilty of the offence reported upon President will have the power to demand resignation or terminate him from party membership. Members can also resign from the party membership by giving the President a 30 day's prior notice in writing.

S.D.F has the following committees to look after the smooth functioning of the organization:-

- a) All Sikkim Democratic Front Committee. (ASDFC)
- b) Central working Committees. (CWC)
- c) District Committees. (DC)
- d) Constituency Level Committees. (CLC)
- e) Block Level Committees. (BLC)

All Sikkim Democratic Front Committee(ASDFC) has sixteen hundred members including the President, Vice President, General Secretary, Office Bearers, 50 members each from different constituency besides office Bearers of the Central working Committee. The Committee meets at least once in a year and the meeting is convened, conducted and presided over by the Party President. The meeting, besides self-analyzing the role of the Party,

also makes necessary amendment or improvement in its policies. The Party President may also convene an emergency meeting of the Committee.

The Most important committee is the CWC which consist of President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Joint Secretary, Publicity Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, two Representatives from each district and Executive Members. Its total strength is 58. The members are from among the members of the All Sikkim Democratic Front Committee. The President is the head of the Committee and have the special power to nominate members for the CWC and the meetings are convened presided over by him. The Committee meets at least once in three months however emergency meeting can be convened by the President under special circumstances. CWC has the responsibility of formulating all policies of the Party and accomplish its aims and objectives. It has the power to make necessary amendments to the prevalent rules and regulations of the party and to provide necessary guidance to the working of the party and to prepare Annual report of ASDFC. It conducts the affairs of the party and ensures its smooth functioning. The CWC holds office for a term of 5 yrs. The President can also make additions and alteration or prematurely dissolve the Committee in the greater interest of the Party.

The CWC is a highly powerful body. But more powerful is the party President who is placed at the top of the Committee. He is elected in the General Convention held once in every five years by the ASDFC. He has the power to cast a vote in case of a tie in the meeting of the ASDFC and CWC. He not only nominates the office bearers of the CWC but also has the power to appoint or withdraw appointment of office bearers of the Committee or any other Committees when occasion demands. He can also constitute any Committee or Committees in addition to the existing ones. The

president can tender his resignation without assigning any reason. In such situation he shall hand over his resignation to the vice president of the party. However he will be eligible for reelection to his post if he so desires. He may be removed from his office by the ASDFC by tabling a motion of non-Confidence at the voting.

Below CWC there are District Work Committees. (DWCs) These Committees hold office for a period of three years. The total strength of each District working committee is 32. Below DWCs there is CLC. The total number of member of this Committee will be based on the number of BLC of each Constituency. Lastly, there is BLCs throughout the rural areas of Sikkim. It has the strength of 30 members and holds office for a term of 2 years. These Committees can be dissolved prematurely by the president in consultation with the higher level committee for valid reasons. These Committees look after the functions and organizations of the party falling under their jurisdiction.

Apart from working Committees at different levels, SDF Party has the following frontal organizations under the direct control of the Party President:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a) Women's wing | (Cheli Morcha) |
| b) Youths' Front | (Yuva Morcha) |
| c) Students' Front | (Vidhyarthi Morcha) |
| d) Labours' Front | (Mazdoor Morcha) |
| e) Farmers' Front | (Kishan Morcha) |
| f) Scheduled Tribe Welfare Front | (Jan Jati Kalyan Morcha) |
| g) Businessmen's Front | (Vyapari Morcha) |
| h) Scheduled Caste welfare Front | (Anusuchit jati Kalya Morcha) |

These frontal organizations will act as the bridge between the masses and the party and present the demand and views of public before the party and convey the policies and programs of the party to the people.

8. Sikkim Democratic Front: An Alternative to Sikkim Sangram Parishad ?

With Chamling's dismissal from the Cabinet in June 1992, and his subsequent ouster from the party, political climate in Sikkim changed dramatically in favour of the opposition. For the first time in many years, public expectation of an alternative to Bhandari was high after Chamling's dismissal. They saw in Chamling a man capable of mobilizing the masses and making a bid for the highest seat of power. (*Kazi J. N., Inside Sikkim Against The Tide, 1993, p. 349*)

Corruption in high places became one of the SDF's major issues. The party soon emerged as a viable force, pulling along with it not only supporters from other parties and organizations, but from the minority Bhutia-Lepcha and Bahun Chettri (Brahmin-Kashtriya) communities as well. This was seen as a great blow to the ruling party, which depended on the vote bank of these two minority communities. (*Kazi J. N., Inside Sikkim Against The Tide, 1993, p. 349*)

While Bhandari, being a Chettri, expected support from his own Bahun-Chettri community, he was also quite confident that the Bhutia-Lepcha tribals would also back him as they had done in 1979, when he first came to power. However, within a short span of less than two months since its first public meeting in Jorethang, the SDF's popularity in Sikkim began to trouble Bhandari. The anti-Bhandari movement, spearheaded by the SDF was gaining ground all

over the State. (Kazi J. N., *Inside Sikkim Against The Tide*, 1993, p. 350) This indicated that SDF was not just a 'Rai party'.²

People started speaking openly against the government and Bhandari. The pro-democracy and anti-Bhandari slogans became common. June 22, 1993 was an important day in Sikkim's recent history. Jigme N Kazi in his book "*Inside Sikkim Against The Tide*" sums up the event thus: "It was indeed a day when the Sikkimese people, fed up of the long years of repressive regime of the Bhandari Government, stood up and openly defied the 'dictator' in a manner which took everybody by surprise." (Kazi J. N., *Inside Sikkim Against The Tide*, 1993, p. 350) Anti-government public rallies, demonstrations, anti-government placards and sloganeering which were absent for nearly one and a half decade suddenly became common. Retaliation, repression, raids and arrest by the government also became common. The State was swept by anti-Bhandari wave.

9. The First Plunge: Assembly Election of 1994

In this atmosphere, a newly formed SDF participated in the election to SLA which was held in 16 November, 1994, after 22 months of its formation. The Party stated in its election manifesto that "*It is important for the party to form the government with pro-poor ideology to serve the people. By remaining in opposition, the party can only raise voice against injustice and fight for the right of the people but the party cannot fulfill the long cherished dreams it has dreamt for the poor, deprived and exploited lot.*"

Following are some of the important issues of the SDF Party in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly elections, 1994:

- 1) Local Protection Act to be enacted for the protection of Sikkim and Sikkimese people.

² One of the castes of Mongoloid Nepalese. Chamling belonged to this caste.

- 2) Sikkim's special constitutional provision and character to be fully utilized and maximum benefit from the centre for Sikkim as a backward state with special status to be availed.
- 3) Remove the "immigrant tag" put to the Sikkimese Nepalese.
- 4) OBC's like Rai, Limboo, Tamang, Gurung, Mangar, Sunwar and Bhujel to be accorded Tribal status and Chettri, Newar, Jogi and Thami to be accorded OBC status.
- 5) Provide social, economic and political justice to Sikkimese.
- 6) Safeguard of democratic institution; provide corruption less clean governance.
- 7) Democratic values, culture and tradition to be institutionalized, democratic right, unbiased benefits to be given to people.
- 8) Women empowerment, women to be entitled to enjoy 50% of the total developmental benefits in each district and female education to be taken as social revolution.
- 9) Schools, books and teachers in every nook and corner of Sikkim, college in each district and state's university to be provided.
- 10) 10. Daily wage of Rs.50/- to the labourers and equal wages for man and women laborers to be given.
- 11) Safeguard the spirit of secularism and Foster national integration. (Election Manifesto of SDF for the Assembly Election of 1994)

Six political parties and independent candidates were in fray. National parties such as Indian National Congress, Communist Party of India (Marxist), regional parties viz, Revolutionary Socialist Party, SSP, SDF (registered unrecognized) and independent candidates were in fray. Out of 276 candidates who filed their nominations, the

number of actual contesting candidates became 186. The following table shows the number of candidates who contested on behalf of different parties.

Table 9: Number of Candidates of Different Political Parties in the Assembly Election, 1994

Sl. No.	Name of Party	Number of candidates contested
1	Bharatiya Janata Party	03
2	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	02
3	Indian National Congress	31
4	Revolutionary Socialist Party	11
5	Sikkim Sangram Parishad	31
6	Sikkim Democratic Front	32
7	Independent	76

(Report on the Elections to SLA, 1994)

10. Sikkim Democratic Front in Power

The election result of 1994 in Sikkim forced everyone to lend their attention and take note of. It was neither Congress (I) nor SSP but a third force - the Sikkim Democratic Front led by Pawan Kumar Chamling, swept the poll. December 12, 1994 was a historic day for Chamling, SDF and the people of Sikkim. The people gave a massive mandate to Pawan Chamling and his party. SDF swept the poll by winning 19 out of 32 seats. Chamling again won convincingly from Damthang and retained his traditional seats. Bhandari's SSP came a distant second with ten MLAs. The Congress (I), which never had much of presence in the state, fared poorly and managed to win just two seats. The following table shows the party positions in the election-

Table 10: Performance of the Political Parties in the Assembly Election, 1994

Name of Party	Number of Seats secured
1.) Bharatiya Janata Party	Nil
2.) Communist Party of India (Marxist)	Nil
3.) Indian National Congress	02
4.) Revolutionary Socialist party	Nil
5.) Sikkim Sangram Parishad	10
6.) Sikkim Democratic Front	19
7.) Independent	1

After 15 years of Bhandari's rule (SJP from 1979-1984, SSP-1985-1994) and the brief interregnum of the Congress (I), led by Sanchaman Limboo, the Sikkimese opted for a new party. Chamling, a former minister in the Nar Bahadur Bhandari ministry, sacked from the cabinet by Bhandari in June 1992, worked at cultivating the people to finally emerge a clear winner in the volatile politics of Sikkim. He adopted a very simple strategy to highlight the rampant corruption during Bhandari's decade-long regime and promised to usher in a clear government. The SDF was also helped by the fact that Congress (I) had a very weak presence in the State. 81 % of voters, the highest in the state history, voted in this election which also benefited the SDF as a three ways split in the vote allowed the party to emerge winner in many marginal seats. The Sikkim voters, tired of Bhandari's politics and the ineffectual Congress (I), sent a clear message by defeating two heavyweights, 1 each from the SSP and the Congress (I) Sanchaman Limboo, the outgoing Chief Minister, lost the Yoksom seat by a slender margin of 145 votes while SSP candidate, Dil kumari Bhandari, wife of Nar Bahadur Bhandari, was defeated from Jorethang. (*Report on the Elections to SLA, 1994*)

During Bhandari's tenure the higher caste Nepalese dominated every sphere of governance. The pradhans captured higher echelons of the administration and representatives of the bahun and the chettri communities dominated Sikkim's political scenario. These upper castes were referred to as the NBCs (the newars, the bahun and the chettris) or the non backward classes. A large section of the Nepalese especially the other backward classes (OBC) among them remained neglected. However, when Chamling broke away to form a new party, he projected himself as the leader of the downtrodden. The SDF emerged as the representative of backward classes. The tribals, especially the bhutias and the Lepchas who were earlier loyal to Bhandari initially, deserted him believing he had ignored them. (*Chakraborty, October, 2000*) Therefore, the support of a large section of OBCs and tribals to the SDF party paid off well in the election.

11. The 1999 Election

Unlike the previous election, in 1999 Assembly election, there were only two national parties: Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI (M), Indian National Congress (INC), two regional parties: SDF, SSP and Independents. There was a sharp fall of the independent candidates. In total, there were 105 contesting candidates. It was a triangular contest among INC, SSP and SDF.

The Sikkim Democratic Front was swept back to power with a two-third majority in the 32-member Assembly. The SDF also won the lone parliamentary seat, forcing the Bhandari - led SSP and the Congress to bite the dust once again. The SDF, led by Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, which contested 31 seats, won 24 seats. The Congress (I) and the SSP contested all the 32 seats but the SSP was left to contend with seven, three less than in 1994 and the INC failed to capture even a single seat. The country's only non-territorial seat, the Sangha (monasteries), was won by an independent, Palden

Lama, who was backed by the SDF. In 1994 the SDF won 19 seats but its tally was increased to 25 when it admitted six SSP deserters. In this election, the SDF excelled its 1994 tally. The following table shows the number of candidates of different parties contested and the performance of parties in the election.

Table 11: Performance of the Political Parties in the Assembly Election, 1999

Party	Number of candidates	Number of elected	Number of votes	%
Communist Party of India(Marxist)	2	0	398	0.19
Indian National Congress	31	0	7512	3.67
Sikkim Democratic Front	31	24	107214	52.32
Sikkim Sangram Parishad	32	7	85827	41.88
Independents	9	1	3976	1.94
Total	105	32	204927	

(Report on the Elections to SLA, 1994)

The SDF's dual victory not only shattered the hopes of SSP chief Nar Bahadur Bhandari to regain power but also reaffirmed the domination of regional forces over a national party, the Congress (I). The Congress (I), which was responsible for the State's merger with the Indian Union 24 years ago, has never been elected to power in the State. It ruled Sikkim thrice in the past by co-opting a ruling regional party into its fold.

Chamling was elected from his home constituency of Damthang for the fifth time in a row with the highest margin of 72 percent of valid votes. However, two of his ministerial colleagues, D.P. Kharel (Health) and Ram Lepcha (Finance), lost to the SSP in the Central Pendam and Pathing constituencies' respectively. Bhandari, who ruled the state for almost 15 years until 1994, made

it to the House from Rhenock, a constituency dominated by upper-caste Nepalis.³ However, he was defeated in his native Soreng seat by the SDF's R.B. Subba, by 66 votes which was the biggest victory for SDF. His wife and former Member of Parliament, Dil Kumari Bhandari, lost to State Tourism Minister Garjaman Gurung in Temi Tarku by more than 1,300 votes. The key Gangtok seat in East district went to the SSP's Narendra Pradhan for a second time. (*Report on the Elections to SLA, 1994*)

The results of the 1999 Sikkim Assembly elections reveal that caste factors did not play a significant role favouring the opposition SSP. Only in constituencies like Central Pandem, Rhenok, Loosing Pancheykhani, Pathing and Rakdong-Tintek where the upper caste Nepalese (the NBCs) were dominant, the SSP was able to maintain its stronghold. But in most of the other constituencies across the state, the Sikkim Democratic Front swept the polls. This result confirmed that the SDF had further consolidated its OBC and the tribal base which helped to an extent by the pro-poor, pro-rural and pro-tribal image of Chamling and his party. Bhandari was unable to maintain his hold on the NBCs of the east district where the SDF captured six seats, two more than 1994 election. Votes in these two constituencies exercised their choice that went beyond caste boundaries.

The election result: came as a great setback for the Congress too — the third political force in Sikkim politics. None of its candidates figured in the list of elected candidate. The party lacked a firm stand on any issue. Also it failed to find the right candidate. Congress stalwarts like former chief minister Sanchaman Limbu, the former power secretary L. P. Tiwari could not resist the SDF wave at

³Bhandari belongs to upper-caste Nepalis.

all. Electorates' apathy toward: the Congress (I) was clearly discernible in its performance at Rakdong-Tintek where its candidate secured less votes than the CPI (M) and the independent candidates. In Dzongu constituency, the Congress candidate got only 17 votes, a mere 0.36 per cent of the valid vote. The party had lost its support in the tribal base. Most of its candidates could not even save their security deposits. (*Chakraborty, October, 2000*)

12. The 2004 Election:

In the 2004 Sikkim Assembly election, three national parties: BJP, CPI (M), INC, three regional parties: SDF, SSP, Sikkim Himali Rajya Parishad (SHRP) and Independents were in fray. SHRP was a new party, contesting election for the first time under the leadership of Dr. A.D. Subba. There were in total 91 candidates contesting the election, lesser than the previous two elections. The SSP contested only one seat from Gangtok constituency this time as Bhandari had left his party and joined INC and was also one of the contenders from the Gangtok constituency.

The Sikkim Democratic Front almost had a clean-sweep winning 31 of the 32 seats in the state. Chamling led his party to victory in the Assembly election for the third consecutive time in 2004. The verdict showed that electoral support for his party had increased over the years. Even before the state went to the polls, a pre-poll advantage to the SDF was clear. It started with a clear edge over its rivals, winning four out of the 32 assembly seats uncontested. These were the Damthang constituency of the chief minister, Kabi Tingda (North Sikkim), Melli (South Sikkim) and Wok (South Sikkim). In three of these constituencies, nominations of the opponents were rejected, and in the reserved Kabi Tingda seat, there was no one to file papers against the SDF candidate. The election was held in 28 constituencies. Thus, while SDF started its campaign

on a winning note, a breakdown of the opposition parties was evident even before the race had begun.

The SSP, which ruled Sikkim for two consecutive terms under Nar Bahadur Bhandari had almost become non-existent by this election. In the 1999 election it had secured seven seats but over the years, all SSP legislators except Bhandari defected to the ruling SDF. Later, before the 2004 election Bhandari himself joined the Congress (I) to become the lone opposition member in the assembly. Weakened by Bhandari's departure, the SSP contested only one assembly seat winning only 0.05 per cent of the vote share in 2004 election. In the Lok Sabha election, its candidate Rajendra Upreti won only 1 per cent of the votes. *(Bora, December, 2004)*

On the other hand, Bhandari's appointment as the state Congress (I) president, which was considered to be a boost for the party, actually weakened the Congress internally. His appointment was highly resented by senior Congress leaders in the State and a total realignment took place just before the election. Many senior Congress leaders and about 200 primary members left the party and joined the SDF in protest of Bhandari's appointment. These developments had affected Congress (I)'s performance in the election. Its vote share in assembly election was 26 per cent and that in the Lok Sabha election it was 27 per cent. The party contested 28 assembly seats and managed to win only the Sangha seat reserved for the monks & nuns of Sikkim's many monasteries. *(Bora, December, 2004)*

Bhandari could not make it to the House this time. He had contested from Central Pendam and Gangtok and lost in both places. In Central Pendam, SDF newcomer Somnath Poudyal won by a comprehensive margin of 3,455 votes, and in Gangtok, N.K. Pradhan defeated him by 3,123 votes. The BJP contested four assembly seats,

gaining a meagre vote share of only 0.34 per cent. The party didn't contest the Lok Sabha election in the state. The following table shows the number of candidates of different parties contested and the performance of parties in the election.

Table 12: Performance of the Political Parties in the Assembly Election, 2004

Party	Number of candidates	Number of elected	Number of votes	%
BJP	4	0	667	0.34%
CPI (M)	1	0	144	0.07%
INC	28	1	51329	26.13%
SDF	32	31	139662	71.09%
SHRP	9	0	1123	0.57%
SSP	1	0	90	0.05%
Independents	16	0	3450	1.76%
Total	91	32	196465	

(Report on the Elections to SLA, 2004)

In spite of the poor performance of all these parties, an important point to be noted is that the number of political parties and independents in the electoral arena this time was greater than ever before. The huge victory of the Sikkim Democratic Front in both the assembly and Lok Sabha elections could be attributed to a pro-incumbency wave. The party took strict measures to avoid any anti-incumbency sentiment that the Congress was hoping to take advantage of. Nearly 50 per cent of the sitting MLAs (including four ministers) were not given tickets, and more than a third of the

contestants on the SDF ticket were completely new faces. The SDF is a well-organised party with strong electoral support in the rural areas. Over the years, devolution of power to the panchayats has greatly contributed to this. (*Bora, December, 2004*)

The pattern of voting in the upper caste dominated east district, one of the four sub-regions of Sikkim, revealed that the SDF had won over Bhandari's vote bank in a striking manner. In this region Bhandari, an upper caste Nepali kshatriya, always had an overwhelming influence. In the 1999 assembly election, his candidates won six of the 12 seats from this region. Earlier, in 1994, his party had won eight seats from this district. But in this election Bhandari could not manage a single seat.

On the other hand, Chamling, who himself belongs to the OBC category, which constitutes the largest section of the electorate, kept his OBC vote bank intact. Even in the 1999 assembly election, his hold over the Nepalis of mongoloid origin was dominant as he won all the 16 seats in the south and west districts. With time the SDF garnered support from a sizeable section of the upper caste Nepalis—the NBCs and the jogis and sanyasis by supporting their demand to be included in the list of OBCs. Elections 2004 saw considerable support for the Sikkim Democratic Front across all castes and communities. (*Bora, December, 2004*)

13. The 2009 election

The Assembly election of 2009 in Sikkim took place in April 2009, concurrently with the Indian general election, third phase. The elections were held in the state for all 32 Assembly seats. In this election, the number of contesting political parties was the highest. There were as many as eight political parties and Independents contesting in the election. It was therefore, an eight cornered contest. There were altogether 167 candidates who contested in the 2009

election. A national party called Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), two regional parties called Sikkim Gorkha Prajatantrik Party (SGPP) and Sikkim Jan-Ekta Party were new in this Assembly election. The following table shows the name of the parties and the number of their candidates contesting in the election.

Table 13: Performance of the Political Parties in the Assembly Election, 2009

Party Name	Number of candidates	Number of Elected
Bharatiya Janata Party	11	Nil
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	3	Nil
Indian National Congress	32	Nil
Nationalist Congress Party	11	Nil
Sikkim Democratic Front	32	32
Sikkim Gorkha Prajatantrik Party	27	Nil
Sikkim Himali Rajya Parishad	20	Nil
Sikkim Jan-Ekta Party	6	Nil
Independents	25	Nil
Total	167	32

(Report on Election to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, 2009)

The SDF swept back to power for the fourth time, winning all the 32 seats in the Assembly elections. The SDF went from strength to strength and this time won even the single seat that had eluded them in 2004. The lone Lok Sabha seat from the State also went to the SDF's P.D. Rai vanquishing his Congress rival K N Upreti by a massive 84,868 votes. Not only did the anti-incumbency factor not work in Sikkim, but the party was able to win in most constituencies by a greater margin than in the previous election. Majority of SDF

candidates won by over 1000 votes with only its nominee from the Sangha assembly seat, exclusively reserved for Buddhist monks, having a narrow margin of 65 votes. Chamling, who secured a record sixth term in the state legislature after being first elected from Damthang assembly constituency in 1985, also won handsomely from both his assembly constituencies - Poklok-Kamrang and Namchi-Singithang in South Sikkim. Chamling won by an impressive margin of 5,956 votes from Poklok-Kamrang assembly constituency with over 70 per cent of the votes and inflicting defeat on BJP nominee Padam Prasad Sharma, who secured only 167 votes and from Namchi-Singithang assembly constituency by a margin of 5644 votes. All the four women candidates of the ruling party -Chandra Maya Subba (Maneybung-Dentam), Neeru Sewa (West Pendam-SC), Tulshi Devi Rai (Melli) and Tilu Gurung (Namthang-Rateypani) made it to the state legislature. Chamling was sworn in for his fourth consecutive term as Chief Minister on 20 May 2009. This Government included Neeru Sewa and Tilu Gurung who became the first ever women Cabinet ministers in Sikkim. (*Sikkimese legislative election, 2009*)

The electoral performance of the SDF in 2009 elections was the result of series of policies pursued by the party in the past. Right from 1994, the party has been focused on finding ways and means for the economic development of the state. Given the geographical setting of the state, this quest was difficult. Topographical factors limited the development of heavy industries, leaving only a few choices such as developing agro-based industries, eco-friendly tourism and hydro-based industries although the last strategy came under scrutiny and invited much criticism. In addition, the opening up of the Nathu La trade route on 6 July 2006, and an announcement on 16 October 200 that an airport will be constructed at Pakyong have worked in favour of the SDF. The party appeared to be pro-youth in many of its activities. To encourage the youth, it

declared a *Yuva Kranti Barsh* in 2005, and many schemes launched by it were suited to the needs of unemployed youth. In the educational field, its soft loans to students going abroad for studies and its success in getting the Central University for the state have endeared it to the youth. Using state resources to the advantage of most sections of society, the SDF has managed to create an atmosphere favourable to it and its government. The SDF's policy is all-inclusive: there is no Sikkimese now who does not fall within state-sponsored categories such as scheduled tribes, scheduled caste, most backward classes and Other Backward Classes. There are reservations for all these categories in the posts and services of the state government and public sector undertakings. What remains to be explained is the low support among Lepchas for the SDF. This is probably due to the opposition of the Lepcha community towards the setting up of hydel projects in Dzongu.⁴ (*Giri, 2009*)

14. Sikkim Democratic Front and Opposition Parties

When SDF formed a government in 1994, its strength was 19.13 members; SSP -10, INC- 2 and Independent 1, remained in opposition. Sikkim's politics witnessed strong opposition yet again after fifteen years. The opposition was the strongest in the first term of Bhandari Government in the democratic history of Sikkim in 1979 with its strength of 14. In SDF Government too opposition was quite strong in the first term. The House businesses were healthy and very active. Many opposition members were veteran politicians, they were

⁴ From 20 June 2007, various organisations led by the Affected Communities of Teesta, along with concerned Lepchas went on a hunger strike in Gangtok. Their contention was that the hydel projects in Dzongu were defiling the sanctity of their sacred land, and that the influx of labourers would change the demographic profile of the area to their disadvantage. The government did not flinch and went ahead with its projected plan, pointing out that the project was for the greater good of the state and that the protestors represented only 10% of the Lepchas in the area. In course of time, the protest lost its intensity but it keeps resurfacing time and again.

very well accustomed with the democratic institutions and its principles and practices which proved to be beneficial for healthy politics. The Assembly affairs in this term were healthy as opposition in this government too was strong and active to hold the Government accountable and answerable for its every action. Question hours were flooded with questions; there were many members participating in the House. In the very first budget session of the new SDF government in March 1995 itself, Bhandari, who was now the opposition leader, in the discussion on the motion of thanks on Governor's Address said that the Address was nothing but bureaucratic approach and total repetition of the budget speeches of SSP government and hence the politician's policy was nil in the Budget. He said that the infrastructure development more or less was completed during his government and the present government would just complete the work initiated by his government (PSLA, 1999, pp 72-77)

There was a strong presence and participation of opposition members in the question hours and budget discussions. They very well knew that those Assembly sessions were their chance and privilege to nudge the Government once in six or eight months therefore they made the most of the opportunity. They asked questions on almost all important social sectors and other sectors which were very crucial for public. Discussing on the Demands for Grant of Education Department, an opposition member expressed his sadness over victimized transfer of teachers as a result of their affiliation with the opposition members. It was suggested that such blunt action would affect the studies of students and should be stopped by the ruling government. He suggested that quotas for higher studies should be awarded to poor and deserving candidates. (PSLA, 1995, pp. 225, 229) As it was committed by the Government to provide free text books and exercise books, it was asked in the question hour whether text books of session reached all the school in

time, and whether the policy of SDF government to supply free exercise books and uniforms to students will continue. It was also asked whether mid-day meal were being provided to the students of primary classes of Government school, if so, how often. (PSLA, 1999, p.38)

The education sector remained very important and was discussed intensively in almost all the sessions. An opposition member and ex- Education Minister K.N. Upreti placed his views and observation before the House in 1999 session which was very important to take note of. He stated that facilities of free education up to college level and free text books were nothing new, it was there since the previous government. The SDF Government went a step forward and decided to provide free exercise books and uniforms. His point was that if the concerned department cannot provide these facilities in time that is before the session starts, the main motive of providing these facilities will not be accomplished. He highlighted that education budget had increased fourfold; accordingly the quality of education should also be increased fourfold. The ruling government had claimed that there had been increase in literacy rate in the state from 56% to 78%. In this connection the opposition member argued that the Government should focus on quality education and not just in quantity. He went on further and said that no doubt there had been expansion and up gradation of schools but he had not found any particular criteria of the Government towards education. There had been mushrooming of primary schools and up gradation of junior high schools to secondary schools and so on but many of those schools were run without teachers, especially math and science teachers, lab facilities, lab equipments, libraries etc. (PSLA, 1999, pp.323-326)

In the discussion of Health Department, opposition members demanded that the hospitals in the state and districts should be fully

equipped and prescribed scheduled drugs should be made available for free so that the poor people can be treated in the state itself. There should be facility of modern technologies like computerized blood tests, pathology test, CT scan and dialysis. There should also be a cancer hospital in the state. They also stressed on educative programs on AIDS and its precautions, Hepatitis, mass education on health, mobile medical facilities for remote areas etc. (PSLA, 1999, pp. 409-410, 414-415)

Power projects were also discussed intensively in the Assembly. Opposition leader Bhandari questioned the delay in completion of Rangit power project which had been under construction for quite long time then. Government was held answerable for why there was no national tender on such big project like Nathang Hydel Project. He asked the reason for short tender notice which was supposed to belong. One of the opposition member charged and opposed strongly the action of minister-in-charge of Rural Development Department (RDD) when he violated the prescribed norms for awarding contracts by awarding such public work to selected few without the recommendation of the area MLAS and concerned Panchayats. This had created an issue in the Assembly and there was quite a long debate about this matter. (PSLA, 1995, pp. 183, 154-157)

Opposition was very strong and demanding about their rights and privileges in this term. A commotion was created in one of the Assembly session when some of their questions put up for question hour which seemed unpleasant for the Government to answer were removed from the list. They stated that some of the resolutions were also censored forcefully from the list. They called it undemocratic and against the rule and accused the Government that they want to conceal fact from the public that was why they cancelled the questions. (PSLA, 1995, p. 225) Opposition again created a huge issue

when one of the ministers replied in English in question hour. They argued that all members might not understand English therefore there should be system of translation as there used to be in the previous government. The argument between the two groups was aggravated to extend that the Speaker and the Leader of the House had to settle the matter. (PSLA, 1995, pp. 15-19)

In the zero hour of 1995 September Session, opposition member K N Upreti drew attention of the House regarding law and order situation of the state. He stated, "*Speaker Sir, in this zero hour I would like to draw the attention of the House regarding particularly the law and order situation in the state. I want a statement from Hon'ble Chief Minister. Everyday there are assaults and ransacking of shops and various incidents of beating. Why is the action not being taken? So, I request through Hon'ble Speaker a statement from the Hon'ble Chief Minister in this respect.*" The Speaker said that there should be prior notice before bringing the new topic but the opposition member refuted that in the zero hour he had every right and privilege to bring the topic in the house. (PSLA, 1995)

Another instance of strong opposition was in August Session 1997 when they brought to the House the weakness and naivety of the ruling party when the Cabinet had approved the Employment Exchange Act and requested the Centre to extend the Act to Sikkim without analyzing its consequence. It was also highlighted that according to Article 371(f) of Indian Constitution, any Act of this kind can be extended to state only by legislature or competent authority. But the Government did not place it in the Legislative Assembly and requested directly for Presidential Notification. This was regarded against the law and breach of privilege by the opposition members. (PSLA, 1997, p. 50)

The Opposition did not allow the ruling party to circumvent the rules and regulations of Assembly. It always acted as a 'watchdog'. The ruling party could not have taken opposition for granted. They always raised their voice when necessary. The opposition member K. N. Upreti demonstrated his opposition in respect of the conduct of business of the House. He pointed out that as per the rule of the House all the bills and demands of grants should be placed in the House at least 4-5 days before it is passed to allow the members to read, analyze and move amendments, if any in the bill. But the SDF Government placed the bill on the spot for approval and given only an hour to decide. The opposition members opposed that no sufficient time was given to them to discuss such important matters. They also stated that there was no democracy; the democratic principles of the House had been blemished by the ruling Government and they were forced to work against the rule. Opposition member K.N. Upreti staged a walkout in disagreement from the House. *(PSLA, 1997, pp.63-68)*

Not just the opposition, questions were asked equally by the ruling party members also. But there seemed to be a conflict within the party from 1997. The Deputy C.M. and Minister-in-charge of Finance P.T. Luksum was the black sheep amongst them. He was very active in the question hours and asked many questions like what steps were being taken by the government to make judiciary accessible to general masses particularly in regard to court fees which were very high for the litigant public to seek redressal? *(PSLA, 1997, p.27)* And what step was taken by the Government to normalize abnormal price rise of commodities? Etc *(PSLA, 1998, pp.27-28)* The Leader of the House said to have replied contemptuously and did not take the questions seriously in both the occasions. In another occasion the Deputy C.M. accused Chamling of having double standard in the issue regarding the inclusion of Sikkim in North Eastern Council. The Chief Minister also replied mockingly

saying, "A person with double standard mind finds everyone like himself." (PSLA, 1997, pp. 33-38)

There is no democracy without opposition, but the role of opposition in democracy is not just to oppose every policy of the government. This was very well understood and followed by the opposition. They did not oppose all the policies of the Government; they appreciated the Government's good works too and extended their cooperation when necessary. They made it clear that if there was question of Sikkimese interest and benefit they would always extend their cooperation but wanted Government to inform them, wanted a forum or a meeting to discuss various issues of Sikkimese interest. (PSLA, 1997, pp. 181-182) The opposition member K.N. Upreti in the Eleventh Assembly Session stated, "*Let there be no place for opposition and public to point out the weakness of the Government, that is our aim. Let us use the public fund properly which is meant for four lakh poor public of Sikkim. Let us invest it wisely and not waste it uselessly.*" He further stated, "*Let us not expect revenue from social sectors like education and health because Government is not for business. We must invest in social sectors with no return and we have nothing to say about that. But in other sectors where we can expect returns and do not get it and when the Government invests mindlessly in those sectors, the opposition is compelled to oppose.*" He continued, "*We discuss and speak in favor of people in the Assembly so as to suggest and alert the Government. In these four and a half years, no matter how big we talk in the Assembly, at the end when it comes to passing a budget we have always raised our hands in favor like the Government does. The opposition has never walked out against the budget.*" (PSLA, 1999, pp. 234-235, 238)

Although opposition was strong in number and in practice in the House, many a times they complained about and opposed the misleading answers of the ruling party members, unparliamentary

practices and contempt of the house. A commotion was created when the starred question of opposition member K.N. Upreti was converted into unstarred without any reason. According to the rule, if particular question needs to be explained with long answer that can be converted into written answer. He argued that the answer of his question was supposed to be short still he was denied oral answer by the concerned minister. He demanded, *"Why and what is the reason? I want to know from the chair, Hon'ble speaker Sir."* He stated that not a single question of his had been admitted for oral answer whereas the ruling members had four- five questions which were in advantage of the Government and whose answers were all manipulated. He shouted in anger, *"This is not somebody's party office, this is state Assembly and we have our privilege to get proper answer."*

He pointed out the unparliamentary procedure of passage of supplementary budget in 1998 to which he exhibited his vehement opposition. According to the procedure, a budget is placed before the House at least a day before its passage but that had not happened in Sikkim Assembly. The members were not even provided a budget book. Therefore, in his protest he argued, *"How can we discuss this on the same day, unless I get reply I sit will not seat. I will stand up and I will not allow this house to continue."* *"This is the mockery of Parliamentary system. You cannot break the rule. Government needs money, an Assembly of one day, the session of two hours is called for passing of supplementary budget? Where is the budget book? How can we discuss?"* He argued. The opposition member also stated that there cannot be monopoly in the Assembly. He brought to the notice that the opposition members' vehicles were not allowed in the Assembly premises but any vehicle bearing government number could enter the Assembly premises. (PSLA, 1998, pp.1-7)

Again there was an issue of breach of privilege in the Eleventh Session, 1999. One of the opposition members from SSP asked

question to minister-in-charge of Food and Civil Supplies about the central food subsidy and in reply the minister asked the member to ask his party president Bhandari and not him. The opposition members argued that to ask questions in the question hour was their privilege, denial of correct answer from the Government was their breach of privilege. (PSLA,1999,pp.215-222)

In its second term in power, SDF had to deal with comparatively less stronger opposition. In the Assembly election held in October 1999, SDF, which contested 31 seats, secured 24 seats. The Sangha (monasteries) seat which was won by an independent, Palden Lama, was backed by the SDF. Hence, SDF was voted back to power with 25 MLAs in total to its side in the House of 32. Since the INC failed to capture even a single seat, the House had seven opposition members from SSP in the beginning.

The Assembly sessions were very active and busy in this term also. The sessions were fairly longer and busier than the previous terms. Debates and discussions were very lengthy and intensive. Each department's performance was discussed and evaluated. They were held accountable and answerable for their performance and also their non- performance, delay and slackness. Though less in number, opposition members were responsible enough to perform their duty well.

In the discussion and adoption of the motion of thanks on Governor's Address of 2000 session, the opposition leader Bhandari while appreciating and supporting the Governments policies, questioned and suggested on some of their policies. He specially focused on power projects. He asked the reasons of handing over the project to National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) in spite of nine global tenders. He asked whether the Government had agreement with the NHPC regarding employment generation, whether

it was discussed what percentage of tax of power project would be given to state etc. In the education sector, he opined that upto class XII is the foundation of education, if foundation is not strong, implementation of education polices in the higher level would be useless. He also asked the reason for very poor performance of junior level students in the examination and inquired whether the text books are distributed in time or not. He also drew attention of the House to the poor condition of roads and bridges and drinking water. He stated that the State is very poor in the health sector too. The Cardio machines, CT scan machines in the hospitals were out of order and thus people could not take benefit of such expensive equipments.

In discussions on grants in aids, unlike the previous term, opposition members rather than pointing out the weaknesses and faults of the government suggested them in different fields wherever and whenever they found it necessary. In fact, the members showed more maturity in the House. The social sectors like Education which is very vital, finance which is the backbone of administration, Health, Public Work Department (PWD) etc were discussed at length as usual.

As already mentioned, education is a huge and vital department with a very high budget allocation it was in the fore front of discussion and debate in the Assembly. It was pointed out by the opposition that degree colleges had very poor performance with only 20-30 percent of pass performance. The condition of schools was no better. There were number of schools cited by them which were in a very dilapidated condition in all over Sikkim. Students had to study on the ground because of lack of furniture. The opposition members requested the Government to fulfill at least minimum requirement of each school. It was suggested that teachers should get their salaries and allowances on time so that they do not loiter around education

department to chase after their money instead of teaching in schools. The shortage of teachers in many schools was also brought to light. In some schools, they cited there were only one or two teachers and some schools were closed down because of lack of teachers. *(PSLA, 2000, pp. 246,248,253-256) (PSLA,2001, pp 334)*

For many years the issue of poor quality of results in education kept on surfacing frequently in the House. The Governor in one of his Address attributed this to absenteeism of school teachers and high dropout. In this context, an opposition member requested the Government to appoint an Expert Committee to formulate a comprehensive report on improving the existing education system. Other suggestions like distribution of text books on time, avoidance of teachers' transfer in the middle of session as this would ensure undisturbed learning to students, surprise inspection of schools etc were also suggested by opposition members. *(PSLA,2002,pp.44,156,158)*

The opposition members had much to complain on Roads & Bridges Department this time. Although, problem of bad roads and bridges and incomplete, uncarpeted road had always been a topic of the House since its inception. This could however be partially attributed to hilly topography of the state. In this term too, issue of poor condition of roads and bridges, incomplete construction of roads and demands for approach roads, jeep able roads in remote areas surfaced very often in the House. *(PSLA,2000, pp.176-187) , (PSLA,2001,pp.,276-281).*

One of the opposition members placed in the House that he had been given assurance in the previous year that a road in his constituency would be carpeted. But he informed that the road had not been carpeted till then. He referred from the book "Vision-2000", which contained recommendations to the Government in various

aspects of development. In the road sector it was recommended that new roads have to be very carefully planned and should be sanctioned only after rigorous environmental impact analysis. They cannot be built based on short term goals such as employment generation or saving fund. Such an approach could prove more expensive in the long run as poorly built road get washed away and have to be entirely replaced. The opposition member asked the concerned minister whether the department had complied with the recommendations voiced in the book, cited by him. He also referred to the vision 2000 recommendation wherein it said, "*Much of the road network is a relic from the past, they are narrow, have numerous blind curves.*" The opposition member asked whether there was any priority given to that aspect of the roads where reconstruction or cutting down of the curves and drainage as recommended were to be taken up on priority basis in the forthcoming financial year. (PSLA, 23rd -30th March, 2002)

The question hours were hectic with many questions targeted to almost all the departments. Opposition members put the spotlight on the ground reality and asked offensive questions in the House. One of the members, for instance asked minister-in-charge of Power Department as to why there was irregularity of electricity in Singtam Bazaar (one of the main bazaars in East Sikkim) whereas the electricity bills were regular. Questions like what steps were taken by the Finance Ministry to bring about financial discipline, whether the department was successful in its endeavor etc. In many schools, till the mid-term session and half yearly examination, teachers were not sent to fill up the vacant posts where necessary, the opposition asked the Education Department as to who were teaching those students and if they were not taught, then how did they write their examination and how did they fared etc. (PSLA, 2000, pp. 155, 160, 470)

The Central Tax was regarded as 'black burden' to public by SDF and

opposed it. But when it imposed Sales Tax on 199 commodities, the opposition asked whether it was 'a white burden.' (PSLA,2000,p.140)

Although opposition members were not many, they did not let the ruling government to circumvent their privileges by tempering the rules and procedures of the House. Nevertheless, unlike the previous term there were very few events where opposition raised their voice against breach of their privilege, but whenever there was any, the opposition was quick to raise their opposition. In one of the session, an opposition member expressed his regret over cancellation of his question placed in the Secretariat of the Assembly. He stated, "*Rule 46 of the Procedure and Conduct of Business of Sikkim Legislative Assembly says 'that a question may be asked for the purpose of obtaining information within the cognizance of the minister to whom it is addressed.'* And I find that my question has been dropped but I have been given no ground for rejection. I want to hereby put on record that my right of privilege has been suppressed and would like to appeal to the hon'ble chair that my question which was dropped may be taken into consideration in this session." Other complains of cancellation of questions by opposition members followed then after. (PSLA,2000,pp.17-18)

Nevertheless, unlike the previous term this session was not dramatic and chaotic. The previous session was full of arguments and chaos. Opposition members even staged a walk out from the Assembly session. There were issue of breach of privilege, unparliamentarily procedures etc. But in this session, there was not a single instance of chaos. The sessions were smooth; more than argument, there were healthy discussions and debates.

In the 2004 assembly election, since SDF almost had a clean sweep by winning 31 seats out of 32, the opposition in this term was the weakest as compared to previous two terms. An INC candidate

Acharya Tshering Lama who won from Sangha seat reserved for the monks & nuns of Sikkim's monasteries was the only opposition member in the assembly. But this did not hamper the assembly sessions. The sessions were more active and busier than usual. This term witnessed busy question hours, discussions on grants in aids and proposed bills were lengthy and intensive. In fact, the sessions in this term was perhaps more busier and active as compared to previous terms.

Apart from opposition, the party members themselves were very active in the assembly affairs. In the question hours, questions were asked to different departments which were significant. For instance, tourism department was asked as to what steps were taken by the department to attract the maximum tourist in Sikkim. Human Resource Development Department (HRDD) was questioned about the recent rate of drop out students in Sikkim, the recent ratio of students and teachers in Sikkim, whether there was any action plan or program for improvement of quality of education, for employment generation and any mechanism adopted by the Department for assessment of quality of education. (PSLA,2004 ,pp.146,160). Assembly sessions are replete with these instances. In each question hour of every session, questions related to social sectors, industries, agriculture were inescapable.

In discussions too, party members put the spotlight on delays, weaknesses and failures of different departments. Members provided suggestion to augment efficacy of different departments. A party member suggested that developmental work at the grass root level should not be generalized and implemented from the top as different blocks and units have different necessities. Therefore, there should be change in the policy to implement development work in the grass root level on priority basis. (PSLA,2004,pp.79-80) Most of the members suggested on further augmentation in quality of education.

Some members opined that there should be counseling programs for dropout students. Some suggested that there should be career counseling from the higher secondary level, moral education and kitchen-garden class should be included in curriculum, some also suggested for publication of monthly educational journal. (PSLA,2004,p.164,376-378). In the same manner, many suggestions were offered by members for augmentation of various departments like Health, Tourism, Agriculture, PWD, Power etc.

There was just one opposition member amongst 31 odd members in the assembly. This however does not imply that opposition was non functional. The opposition member did his best to discharge his responsibility as an opposition according to his capability. In the discussion on Motion of Thanks on Governor's Address, he criticized the State Government's move to grant the Most Primitive Tribe status to Lepchas of Sikkim. He argued that during the Chogyal's Regime, number of firm laws and proclamations were enforced to protect the Lepcha culture and traditions whereby no outsiders, including the people of Sikkimese origin could enter and settle in Dzongu, the Land of Lepchas. Such Laws have been provided under article 371 (F) of the Constitution when Sikkim merged with India. However, he pointed out with implementation of NHPC Projects, acquisition of lands for different schemes etc have not only diluted these laws but also caused reasons of displacement of Lepchas from their native lands. The people of Dzongu have also objected to the NHPC project. He argued, *"If it is really committed to the protection of the Lepchas while proposing grant of the Most Primitive Tribal status to Lepchas, the State Government has to bear in mind the most important and sensitive issue of protecting the political rights of the Lepchas. The proposal of the State Government is silent on this issue."* (PSLA,2005,p.56), The opposition member also pointed out in one of the sessions in 2007 that for Sikkim and its people's secured future, article 371 (F) should be given priority. But he

stated, neither the Governor nor the Chief Minister have ever mentioned the article even once in any of the assembly session. (PSLA,2007,p.76)

He raised questions and made his dissatisfaction known in the assembly over the Government's step of victimized transfer of teachers affiliated to opposition Congress Party. He accepted the fact that Government servants should not get involved in politics, but his question was why did only Congress supporters were victimized and why not the ruling party supporters? This had created an issue in the Assembly. He again created a commotion when he was not given time to speak in the assembly and when one of the ruling member said opposition has no work in the assembly. (PSLA,2005,pp.63-65,195)

Although the opposition was active and unfaltering, many a times the opposition member showed his helplessness of being a lone member. In the discussion on the demands for grants of PWD department in February session, 2005, he welcomed the demand and said, *"I have also welcomed the budget because my opinion alone will not prevent the budget from passing. Therefore, my work is to welcome all the sanctioned budget."* He also stated, *"When public come with complains and grievances, opposition member has to speak, but when I speak, ruling members do not appreciate it and get angry."* (PSLA,2005,pp.184-185)

In number of sessions, opposition member placed his grievances of taking him for granted. In the zero hour of February session, 2005, he argued that the Government always stress on transparency and accountability but it could not even provide a simple list of names of people belonging to Below Poverty Line in spite of his repeated requests. He also pointed out that most of his questions were never answered in the question hour. It was always

put to the back seat and said it will be answered later. Even if they were answered later, they were always incomplete and unsatisfactory. Hence, for him attending assembly sessions were useless. He urged the ministers-in-charge of different departments to take and follow his suggestions seriously instead of considering it as a radio broadcast. (PSLA,2005,pp.226,204). He brought to light that he had been requesting for White Paper on grant of the Most Primitive Tribe status to Lepchas of Sikkim since the 2004 assembly session but he was not provided one till 2007. (PSLA,2007,p.77)

From 2004 till 2007 Assembly sessions were very busy with long question hours, debates and discussions over demands for grants and proposed bills. Both ruling members and the lone opposition member participated in the affairs of house. But towards the end of the term, there was a decline in participation from both the parties. Moreover, the lone opposition member Acharya Tshering lama won the election from Sangha seat. He was basically a Buddhist monk before stepping into politics. In number of assembly sessions we find him encountered with language problem. He was not well versed with commonly spoken Nepali language and had command over Tibetan and Lepcha language spoken by section of minority in Sikkim. This acted as a handicap to otherwise handicapped opposition member.

Hence, in this term, the opposition was the weakest. Although very weak in strength it put its best effort to fulfill its responsibility and represent itself in the House. The opposition could not perform such roles as performed by the former opposition in the previous terms due to its strength, but its role was not ornamental and it was not a liability in the House.

SDF's second term, as we shall see later, was favored by a majority of population and the key to this success lay in

manipulating different sections of population in identity terms under the provisions of Article 371 (F) in The Constitution of India 1975 that reads as follows:

(f) Parliament may, for the purpose of protecting the rights and interests of the different sections of the population of Sikkim make provision for the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim which may be filled by candidates belonging to such sections and for the delimitation of the assembly constituencies from which candidates belonging to such sections alone may stand for election to the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim;

Bhandari's regime rose and fell with the issue of income tax exemption. SDF's trump card was accommodation and recognition of ethnic diversity through reservation provisions. The coinage that SDF wanted to seek 'democracy within democracy' stood for this. The second term of SDF government guaranteed 23% reservation to the Brahmin, Chettris, Newars and Sanyasis by including them in the list of state OBC categories. In the same vein SDF granted 23% reservation to the Most Backward Classes, 38% to ST, 7% to SC and kept 9% unreserved. Sikkim also reserved for the first time 40% of panchayet seats for women. Similarly, SDF took special care of recognizing linguistic identity of different groups. Time and again SDF leader refers to Article 371(F) in order to allay the fear of the original Bhutia and Lepcha communities of losing their special status by proposing that without disturbing their position other Sikkimese too could be given benefit of protection and reservation under Article 371F. This assurance of retaining the balance has been one of the most stabilizing factors for SDF.

CHAPTER – 6
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER

6

Summary and Conclusion

As we noted in chapter 1, the primary objective of the proposed study was to make an intense study for deeper understanding of political democracy in Sikkim. SJP led by Bhandari swept the 1979 elections with 17 Assembly seats including 1 Sangha seat and formed the government. Since then, from 1979-1994, Sikkim's politics was almost dominated by Bhandari and his party, SJP (1979-1984) and SSP (1984-1994). Thus for 15 years Bhandari was the uncrowned monarch of Sikkim (Chakravartti, 1994). After the end of Bhandari's regime, Sikkim Democratic front led by Pawan Chamling swept the poll by winning 19 out of 32 seats and formed the government in 1994. In the same manner like SSP, SDF also dominated the Sikkim's politics from 1994 till date. The victory of SJP and later the SSP and SDF without much resistance means that there was and still is a one - party -system and one - man - rule in Sikkim for almost 30 years.

The objective was also to analyze the reason behind the political domination of one party, first SJP/SSP and second SDF, for long phases in the state policy of Sikkim till date and its implications for Sikkim's politics. The other related objective of the proposed research work will be to make way for a better understanding SDF as a regional party. These areas have not been covered and received adequate attention from research scholars and the academia working on Sikkim earlier. The Study on these particular areas would help us to understand the state of the state from 1994 till present day. More particularly the study was undertaken to understand the

performance, governance and achievement of the SDF as a regional party and its role to bring about political democracy in Sikkim.

The path of democratization in one country is different from that in another. However, democratization in Sikkim took not just a different but an unusual path. It was not effected through national conferences or through military regime nor it was similar to the process of its neighbouring country Nepal, where after several popular movements for decades to establish democracy people finally succeeded in putting an end to the powers of the King in 2006 nor like Bhutan, where instead of people demanding for democracy, it was gifted by the king out of benevolence. While different factors played a determining role in bringing about transition to democracy in different countries in the world at different phases; most of those factors like colonialism, economic development, rise of the middle classes, political culture and external factors like role of international financial institutes were not relevant in this tiny kingdom of Sikkim. As it has appeared, More than any other factor external threat and role of outsiders played an important role in Sikkim's transition. Sikkim was spurred by very real external threat. She faced hostile neighbors from all directions. This threat put pressure on elites who saw both state capacity and economic growth as key strategies to maintain independence from external, existential threats. In the early years Sikkim's foreign contact was entirely with her northern neighbor Tibet. Both the countries shared matrimonial relations too but the attitude of Tibet was uncertain. With her Himalayan neighbor, namely, Bhutan to the east and Nepal in the west, her experience had been none too healthy. Bhutanese forces in history invaded Sikkim and occupied the capital Rabdantse and Kalimpong was snatched from Sikkim. Nepal was no less on the western border. They made frequent attacks into Sikkim's territory in their expansionist pursuit. They almost succeeded in annihilating it and would have perhaps permanently done so had it not been for the

British who came to the scene well in time. The popular dissent and demonstration of 1973 in Sikkim was to abolish monarchy and to establish democratic form of government but Sikkimese had to pay handsomely for democracy. Transition to democracy occurred in Sikkim with heavy condition: it had to lose its sovereignty and become a part of India for democracy. Although Sikkim became a part of India in 1975 through a 'Special poll' which was held on 14 April, 1975 to seek public opinion on the issue: the abolition of the institution of Chogyal and Sikkim's merger with India and the result went overwhelmingly in favor of the merger; some Sikkimese admitted that they did not want the Chogyal but they wanted even less to be a part of India. They were allowed no choice." (*Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 308-309*) Hence, Sikkim became a part of India by default. A liberated country often adopts democracy as the best form of governance the outgoing century has known but what happened in Sikkim was just the opposite. Sikkimese had to exchange the country for democracy. A merger with India was the price the Sikkimese was to pay in exchange for democracy. Probably Sikkim's is the dearest democracy in the world.

As the subsequent chapters have shown, the hypothesis that we put forward was largely borne out by our study. In Chapter 2 we have tried to analyse the beginning of political democracy in Sikkim. For analyzing this, firstly, we have tried to trace the evolution of Sikkim as a kingdom. We have tried to examine how the land of Lepchas came to be ruled by Bhutias. We have tried to discuss the reign of all the twelve Chogyals of Sikkim, underscoring the important events that occurred in Sikkim under each Chogyal in the perspective of internal administration and external relations with its neighbouring countries. The chapter also tried to examine the impact of its proximity with Tibet and British India and tried to explore the implication of Indian independence on this tiny Himalayan kingdom. The chapter attempted to study as to how people in Sikkim like in

many other princely states also became restless and conscious of their political rights after 1947 which resulted in formation of some political parties for the first time in Sikkim and demanding for political rights and democracy. In course of time more political parties came into existence and they started pressurizing the Monarch from time to time for political rights and democracy which culminated into the popular agitation of 1973 for democracy. Since Sikkim was India's protectorate after the 1950 Indo-Sikkimese treaty, the Chogyal sought the Indian intervention to control the situation. As an outcome of the agitation, a Tripartiate agreement between India, the Chogyal and leaders of different political parties was materialized. This was viewed as Sikkim's road to democracy but the agreement could not meet the aspirations of people and also the Monarch. This further led Sikkim becoming an "associate state" of India and later a full-fledged state of the Indian Union. The quest for democracy ultimately led to the merger of Sikkim with India in 1975. The chapter tried to evaluate in detail the state of affairs in Sikkim after the Indian Independence till the merger of Sikkim with India and tried to place the conflicting views and opinions of the then political leaders and people on the controversial merger and its unusual approach.

The third chapter focused on the immediate events in Sikkim after its merger with India. It highlighted the difficulties faced by Sikkimese people to accept and adept to the new changed circumstances and tried to underline the insecurities faced by different communities of Sikkim in their own homeland. The naivety of the political leaders in hitherto unknown democratic setup coupled with dissatisfaction and insecurities of different communities of people in Sikkim made this phase quite grim and hazy which has been tried to highlight in this chapter. The chapter also highlighted the emergence of different regional political parties after the merger and most importantly focussed on the volatility of

Kazi's approaches which became the main factor of attrition of his credibility. The chapter also evaluated the first ever democratically contested election of 1979 after Sikkim became an Indian state and discussed different stands of political parties in the election, giving special emphasis on the emergence of SJP led by N.B. Bhandari which captured the seat of power in the 1979 election and tried to analyze how Bhandari could use the predicament in his favour.

Chapter 4 focussed on the period after 1979 in which we see the domination of state politics by a regional party SJP (later changed its name to SSP) The chapter is entirely focused on 15 long years rule of Bhandari in Sikkim during whose time Sikkim underwent a metamorphosis. The chapter consecutively examined and evaluated the events that proceeded after Bhandari came to power. Bhandari's dismissal from the post of Chief Minister in his first term, his bouncing back to power with even more popularity and power has been discussed. The chapter also evaluated the performance of SSP vis a vis other political parties in the elections that followed after 1979 which shows SSP becoming stronger with each election. We have in this chapter tried to study how with absolute power Bhandari Government became corrupted and dictatorial in course of time and which later proved to be one of the main reasons for his downfall. The chapter also tried to assess the challenges faced by Bhandari Government to retain its position and in this context the role and position of opposition political parties in Bhandari's rule has also been assessed. The focal point was to assess growth of democratic politics and safeguarding of democratic values and principles under Bhandari rule.

Chapter 5 focussed completely on the SDF Party. It tried to map out the background and emergence of SDF led by Pawan Chamling. Chamling was a cabinet minister in Bhandari's Government who was expelled from the Cabinet. His expulsion was a

watershed in Sikkim's political history. The chapter tried to examine the reasons of dissention and expulsion of Chamling from SSP and has outlined the development in Sikkim's politics after his expulsion. It discussed in detail about the origin of Sikkim Democratic Front whose policies and programs were pro-poor and pro-people which was the demand of the day. The chapter summarized the Assembly elections in Sikkim after 1989 and tried to assess the performance of different political parties in the election while stressing on the performance of SDF as an alternative to SSP. It examines the issues and policies that SDF banked on to win the popular mandate in the 1994 election. The chapter also focussed on all the Assembly elections that followed after SDF came to power in 1994 and tried to stress on how SDF went from strength to strength with each consecutive election. It provides an assessment of performance of SDF Government comparing and contrasting with that of SSP and also the role and function of opposition parties in the SDF rule. The chapter in fact attempted to trace the journey of SDF from its origin till the last Assembly election in 2009. On the basis of this chapters we can find support to our main hypothesis that neither political party in Sikkim nor the political democracy in Sikkim have been institutionalized in the real sense of the term. The hangovers of monastic-feudalistic past are still strong and political leaders cash on the subject culture of the region. The geo-strategic factors, particularly China's proximity has eased cash flows from the Center that do also help in maintaining status quo in every sense of the term. Political dominance of regional political party is an inseparable aspect of this process. Therefore, political parties founded and controlled by one charismatic leader and their absolute domination of state politics when in power are the natural outcome of such a state of politics.

Discussion on SDF in chapter 5 was supported by interviews and survey where we wanted to find out the reason behind long spell

by SJP/SSP in the first phase and SDF in the second phase. We also wanted to assess the future prospect of SDF as the dominant regional party. Before we make some general comments along this line let us make some observations from our interviews.

Most of the male respondents were literate even among the age group of above 60 years but female respondents of this age group were illiterate. Even among the age group of 40-60 years only 50% of females were literate. Among the 20-40 years age group, 90% of them were literate. The overall percentage of people who have stayed outside the State for more than 1 year is dismal. Among them, the percentage of females is lesser than that of males. Most of the males of all age group do not want to contest in the election if given a chance. Some would contest only if the ruling party gives them tickets. They were not sure to contest from the opposition party, only a section want to contest in the election from any of the party and those were especially from unstable constituencies. 90% of females above 60 years do not want to contest in the election. Remaining 10% would contest only if the ruling party gives them tickets. None of the female respondents of age 40-60 want to contest in the election from any of the party. But More than 50% of female respondents of age 20-40 would like to contest in the election from any of political party.

In selection of candidates for elections most of the male respondents above 60 years gave first preference to the candidate projected by their favorite party. 50% male respondents of age group 40-60 and 20-40 years also gave preference to the same criterion but the equal percentage of respondents were experimental and opted for independent candidates who are promising about bringing development. Second preference was given to local candidates by all of them. The female respondents of all age group were not sure about their preferences.(I felt that their choices are influenced by

their family heads) Although the female respondents of 20-40 age group were also not specific about their choice of candidates but the candidates from their favourite party, and the candidates from local area were their preferences. Among all the respondents caste was not a determining factor in selecting candidates. Most of the respondents, both male and female of all age groups agree with the view that the word 'Sikkim' may be dropped from the names of either SSP or SDF without any consequences provided that the party does good work for the State. But the female respondents above 60 years were unsure and had no insight about its consequences.

Most of the respondents (approx. 80%) both male and female of all age groups agree that there should be change in the government every 5 years. The percentage was higher among the young respondents. Rest of them disagreed or were not sure. Most of the respondents have worked together informally with someone or some group to solve a problem in a community they lived. They were socially active. The participation was less from among the female respondents of 20-40 age group. All the respondents of all age group have always voted in all the local and national elections.

Both male and female respondents above 60 years rarely followed government and public affairs; even if they did, they followed only those affairs which affected them directly. Some followed what's going on in the government most of the time but they failed to do so due to the lack of communication. A high percentage of male respondents from other age groups followed government and public affairs most of the time. Quite a few followed sometimes. Female respondents were less interested in these affairs and kept track of only those affairs which affected them directly. Small section of people never followed governmental affairs. But almost all males and females were aware about which party was controlling the Assembly. General awareness about India was least among the male

respondents above 60 years. It was higher among the other two groups, the age group of 20-40 being the highest. Among the female respondents, almost all of them except the age group of 20-40 had no general knowledge about India. They were not well informed about Sikkim either but they had some idea about Sikkim as compared to India. Most of the females of 20-40 age groups were aware about general knowledge of India as well as Sikkim.

Looking at three successive governments formed by the regional parties in Sikkim, 50% of the male respondents and 100% of female respondents above 60 years feel that life of common man has become better. Most female respondents above 60 years do not find much difference in their social status due to change of governments. Only some women found some differences but not drastic changes. Most of the females of 40-60 age group find some change in their status in the society and only small percentage feels there is not much changes. Most of the females of 20-40 age groups find great deal of changes and some find some changes.

Most respondents both male and female above 60 years think that during SDF's rule there has been much development in their local area and in the state. Some think it was during SSP's rule instead of Kazi's and Chogyal's. These people had mixed views in scoring the two regimes they have seen. They scored them randomly. A handful of them scored Chogyal rule 100 out of 100. Most of their answers were irrelevant. But SDF's overall score was higher

Most respondents both male and female of the age group 40-60 are of the view that during SSP's regime most of the developmental work had taken place. They feel if it was not more than the SDF government it was not less either. They are of the view that infrastructural development had taken place in SSP Government and it is continued in SDF government too. These respondents of 40-60

age group could not make rational and relevant comparison between SSP and SDF government yet they viewed that there has been much development in SDF government. The male respondents of 20-40 age group also have varied views regarding the development in their local area. 50% of them feel it is SDF and the rest feel it is SSP. Whereas All the female respondents of this age group feel that most of the development work in their local area has been done during SDF rule and scored SDF more than SSP.

Both male and female respondents between the age group 20-40 had diverse views towards the work of SDF government. Most of them feel that this government is doing good or fair job but not the excellent job. Some feel that the government is going on a right track , some says it depends on policy to policy and few of them feel government is going towards wrong direction. Among the male respondents between the age group 20-40, landslides and earthquake, the building of large residential complex and high rises, lack of effective opposition party followed by construction of dams for hydroelectricity generation, corruption in high places and promotion of economic growth were very serious issues. Although the females had diverse views about these issues, construction of dams for hydro-electricity generation and landslides and earthquakes were very serious issues. For 50% of both male and female of this category, the entry and presence of outsiders in Sikkim is somewhat serious or not too serious. 98% of female respondents taken together strongly agree with the view that 50% of our leaders should be women and they all were most likely to vote for women candidate in the election. Only a handful who were above 60 years were not sure or find no difference between men and women. Some are more likely to prefer men candidates as they find women candidates may change their residence after marriage.

Most male respondents gave their opinions on the absence of effective opposition party in Sikkim. Their views were diverse. Some opined that it was the weakness of opposition leaders that they join the ruling party or support them for their personal benefits. Some viewed that it was because of lack of political awareness among the people and absence of strong opposition party to make them aware and some opined that it was because people are pressurized by the ruling government in terms of their job and other benefits. Therefore even when they know the weaknesses of the ruling government they do not take risks and opt for opposition parties and bend towards the ruling party at the time of voting.

Among the female respondents, 90% of them could not give any reason of lack of opposition. Only in one of the stable constituency reasoned that the good work and good quality of the leaders in power does not necessitate other political parties. Below we present some of our data in the forms of tables and charts to arrive at some general observations.

Table 14 : Distribution of Age Groups in the sample

District	Age		
	20-40	40-60	>60
East	40	40	40
%	33.33	33.33	33.33
West	40	40	40
%	33.33	33.33	33.33
North	40	40	40
%	33.33	33.33	33.33
South	40	40	40
%	33.33	33.33	33.33
Total	160	160	160
%	33.33	33.33	33.33
Male	80	80	80
%	33.33	33.33	33.33
Female	80	80	80
%	33.33	33.33	33.33

Table 15 : Domicile of Sampled Population

District	Staying In this place			
	<5 Yrs	5-15 yrs	15-25 yrs	>25 yrs
East	0	0	20	100
%	0.00	0.00	16.67	83.33
West	0	20	20	80
%	0.00	16.67	16.67	66.67
North	0	0	10	110
%	0.00	0.00	8.33	91.67
South	0	20	20	80
%	0.00	16.67	16.67	66.67
Total	0	40	70	370
%	0.00	8.33	14.58	77.08
Male	0	10	10	220
%	0.00	4.17	4.17	91.67
Female	0	30	60	150
%	0.00	12.50	25.00	62.50

Table 16 : Distribution of Religious Grouping

District	Religion			
	Buddhism	Hindu	Christian	other
East	60	50	10	0
%	50.00	41.67	8.33	0.00
West	70	50	0	0
%	58.33	41.67	0.00	0.00
North	120	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
South	40	60	20	0
%	33.33	50.00	16.67	0.00
Total	290	160	30	0
%	60.42	33.33	6.25	0.00
Male	140	70	30	0
%	58.33	29.17	12.50	0.00
Female	150	90	00	0
%	62.50	37.50	0.00	0.00

Table 17 : Social Composition

District	Category				
	Gen	SC	ST	OBC	MBC
East	0	10	100	10	0
%	0.00	8.33	83.33	8.33	0.00
West	0	0	70	20	30
%	0.00	0.00	58.33	16.67	25.00
North	0	0	120	0	0
%	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
South	0	0	50	50	20
%	0.00	0.00	41.67	41.67	16.67
Total	0	10	340	80	50
%	0.00	2.08	70.83	16.67	10.42
Male	0	0	180	30	30
%	0.00	0.00	75.00	12.50	12.50
Female	0	10	160	50	20
%	0.00	4.17	66.67	20.83	8.33

Table 18 : Literacy

District	Literacy	
	Literate	Illiterate
East	100	20
%	83.33	16.67
West	80	40
%	66.67	33.33
North	120	0
%	100.00	0.00
South	70	50
%	58.33	41.67
Total	370	110
%	77.08	22.92
Male	220	20
%	91.67	8.33
Female	150	90
%	62.50	37.50

Table 19 : Functional Literacy Profile of Districts

District	When Literate			
	Read & Write	Read	Only Sign	Read & Write Other Language
East	20	0	30	50
%	16.67	0.00	25.00	41.67
West	70	0	0	10
%	58.33	0.00	0.00	8.33
North	90	10	0	20
%	75.00	8.33	0.00	16.67
South	30	0	0	40
%	25.00	0.00	0.00	33.33
Total	210	10	30	120
%	43.75	2.08	6.25	25.00
Male	130	0	20	70
%	54.17	0.00	8.33	29.17
Female	80	10	10	50
%	33.33	4.17	4.17	20.83

Table 20 : Schooling

District	School Attendance	
	Yes	No
East	100	20
%	83.33	16.67
West	80	40
%	66.67	33.33
North	110	10
%	91.67	8.33
South	70	20
%	58.33	16.67
Total	360	90
%	75.00	18.75
Male	220	00
%	91.67	0.00
Female	140	90
%	58.33	37.50

Table 21 : Level of School Education

District	Among the School Goers					
	Primary	J. High	Secondary	Sr. Secondary	UG	Graduate & above
East	40	20	20	00	10	10
%	33.33	16.67	16.67	0.00	8.33	8.33
West	60	10	00	00	10	00
%	50.00	8.33	0.00	0.00	8.33	0.00
North	80	10	10	00	10	00
%	66.67	8.33	8.33	0.00	8.33	0.00
South	30	00	10	10	00	20
%	25.00	0.00	8.33	8.33	0.00	16.67
Total	210	40	40	10	30	30
%	43.75	8.33	8.33	2.08	6.25	6.25
Male	150	20	30	10	00	10
%	62.50	8.33	12.50	4.17	0.00	4.17
Female	60	20	10	00	30	20
%	25.00	8.33	4.17	0.00	12.50	8.33

Table 22 : Mobility of Population

District	Staying outside Sikkim	
	Yes	No
East	40	80
%	33.33	66.67
West	10	110
%	8.33	91.67
North	10	110
%	8.33	91.67
South	10	110
%	8.33	91.67
Total	70	410
%	14.58	85.42
Male	50	190
%	20.83	79.17
Female	20	220
%	8.33	91.67

Table 23 : Political Orientation

District	Like to contest as member of ruling party		
	Yes	No	Not sure
East	50	70	00
%	41.67	58.33	0.00
West	50	70	00
%	41.67	58.33	0.00
North	40	50	30
%	33.33	41.67	25.00
South	50	60	10
%	41.67	50.00	8.33
Total	190	250	40
%	39.58	52.08	8.33
Male	110	100	30
%	45.83	41.67	12.50
Female	80	150	10
%	33.33	62.50	4.17

Table 24 : Political Preference

District	Like to contest as member of Opposition party		
	Yes	No	Not sure
East	40	70	10
%	33.33	58.33	8.33
West	40	80	00
%	33.33	66.67	0.00
North	00	90	30
%	0.00	75.00	25.00
South	40	80	00
%	33.33	66.67	0.00
Total	120	320	40
%	25.00	66.67	8.33
Male	70	150	20
%	29.17	62.50	8.33
Female	50	170	20
%	20.83	70.83	8.33

Table 25 : Attitude to Regional Label

District	Drop the word SIKKIM from the name of SDF & SSP				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Comment	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
East	60	10	20	30	0
%	50.00	8.33	16.67	25.00	0.00
West	90	20	00	10	0
%	75.00	16.67	0.00	8.33	0.00
North	50	40	20	10	0
%	41.67	33.33	16.67	8.33	0.00
South	80	0	0	0	40
%	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	33.33
Total	280	70	40	50	40
%	58.33	14.58	8.33	10.42	8.33
Male	130	40	20	30	20
%	54.17	16.67	8.33	12.50	8.33
Female	150	30	20	20	20
%	62.50	12.50	8.33	8.33	8.33

Table 26 : Incumbency

District	Justification regarding Holding of Office for more than 5 years				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Comment	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
East	100	20	0	0	0
%	83.33	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
West	100	10	0	10	0
%	83.33	8.33	0.00	8.33	0.00
North	70	10	30	10	0
%	58.33	8.33	25.00	8.33	0.00
South	100	0	0	20	0
%	83.33	0.00	0.00	16.67	0.00
Total	370	40	30	40	0
%	77.08	8.33	6.25	8.33	0.00
Male	200	20	20	0	0
%	83.33	8.33	8.33	0.00	0.00
Female	170	20	10	40	0
%	70.83	8.33	4.17	16.67	0.00

Table 27 : Community Participation

District	Effort to solve problem in the community where you live			
	Last 12 months	Less than 12 months	Not yet done	Refused
East	50	30	40	0
%	41.67	25.00	33.33	0.00
West	70	20	30	0
%	58.33	16.67	25.00	0.00
North	50	50	0	20
%	41.67	41.67	0.00	16.67
South	50	40	30	0
%	41.67	33.33	25.00	0.00
Total	220	140	100	20
%	45.83	29.17	20.83	4.17
Male	120	90	20	10
%	50.00	37.50	8.33	4.17
Female	100	50	80	10
%	41.67	20.83	33.33	4.17

Table 28 : Voting

District	Casting Vote in elections					
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Other	NA
East	120	0	0	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
West	120	0	0	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
North	120	0	0	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
South	120	0	0	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	480	0	0	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Male	240	0	0	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Female	240	0	0	0	0	0
%	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 29 : Public Orientation

District	Follow Government and Public affairs				
	Most of time	Some of time	Rarely	Never	NA
East	20	30	0	70	0
%	16.67	25.00	0.00	58.33	0.00
West	40	30	10	30	10
%	33.33	25.00	8.33	25.00	8.33
North	20	40	0	20	10
%	16.67	33.33	0.00	16.67	8.33
South	30	40	0	30	20
%	25.00	33.33	0.00	25.00	16.67
Total	110	140	10	150	40
%	22.92	29.17	2.08	31.25	8.33
Male	60	70	0	80	30
%	25.00	29.17	0.00	33.33	12.50
Female	50	70	10	70	1
%	20.83	29.17	4.17	29.17	4.17

We tried to check the nature of political orientations with reference to following question :

[(whom would do prefer to vote (indicate your order of preference, by putting number 1-5)]

- Question No.1 : A candidate from your local area
- Question No.2 : Candidates from your own caste/tribe
- Question No.3 : A candidate put up by your favourite parity, regardless of caste or tribe consideration.
- Question No.4: A candidate who is local, from the same caste/tribe of your own and put forward by any political party.
- Question No.5 : A candidate who is local, from the same caste/tribe of your own and contesting independently.

The way they ranked their preferences were as follows :

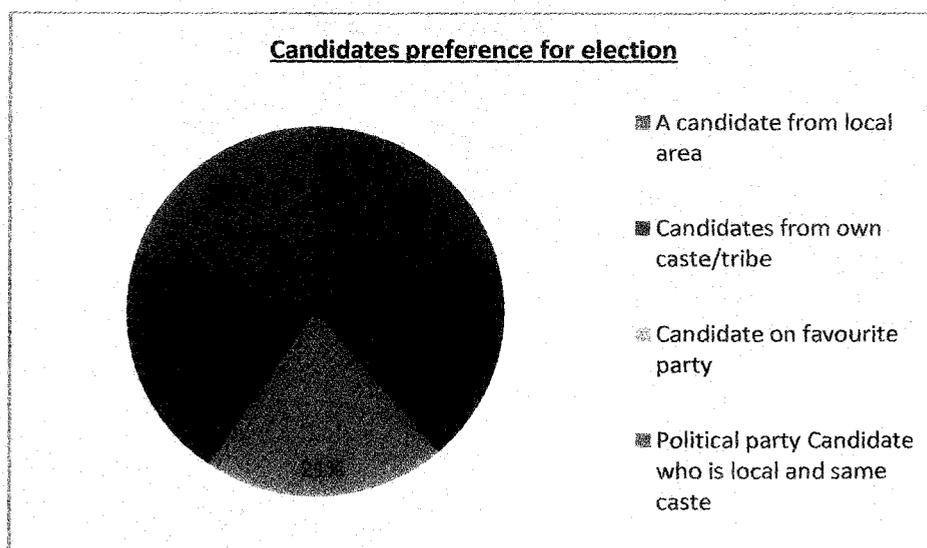
Table 30 : Preferred candidate

Rank	Question No.1	Question No.2	Question No.3	Question No.4	Question No.5
1	160	30	150	70	50
2	140	50	120	50	50
3	120	130	50	140	30
4	10	100	80	170	100
5	20	140	50	20	220
Total	450	450	450	450	450

The computed preferences can be seen in the following table. The results were not significant.

Table 31: Preference of Candidates

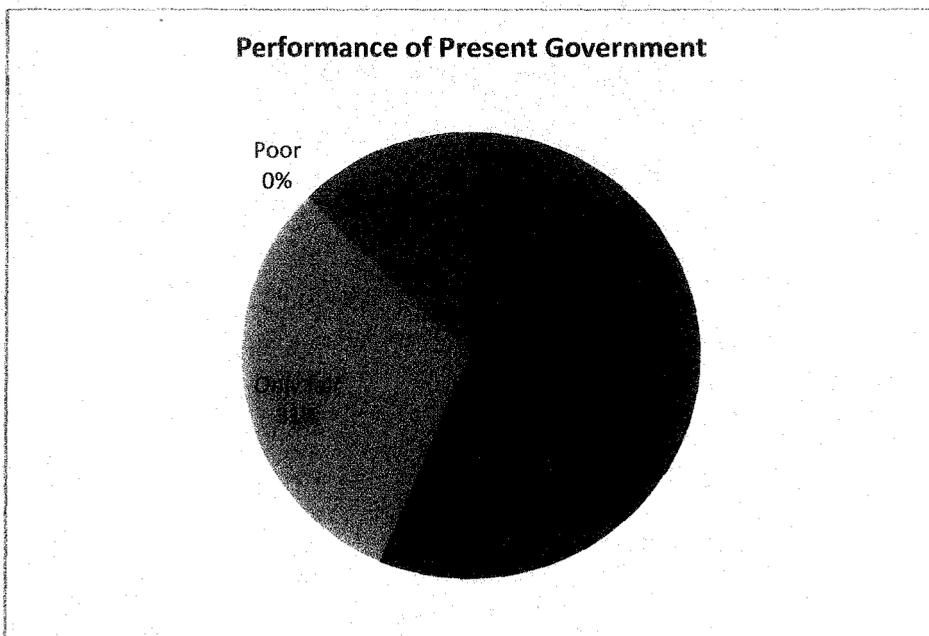
Question Type	A candidate from local area	Candidates from own caste/tribe	Candidate on favourite party	Political party Candidate who is local and same caste	Independent Candidate who is local and same caste
450	160	140	120	10	20
450	30	50	130	100	140
450	150	120	50	80	50
450	70	50	140	170	20
450	50	50	30	100	220
Total	460	410	470	460	450
%	20.44	18.22	20.89	20.44	20.00



The respondents when asked to evaluate present regime responded to the following question positively: Would you say that the Present government is doing an excellent, good only fair or poor job?

Table 32: Regime Performance

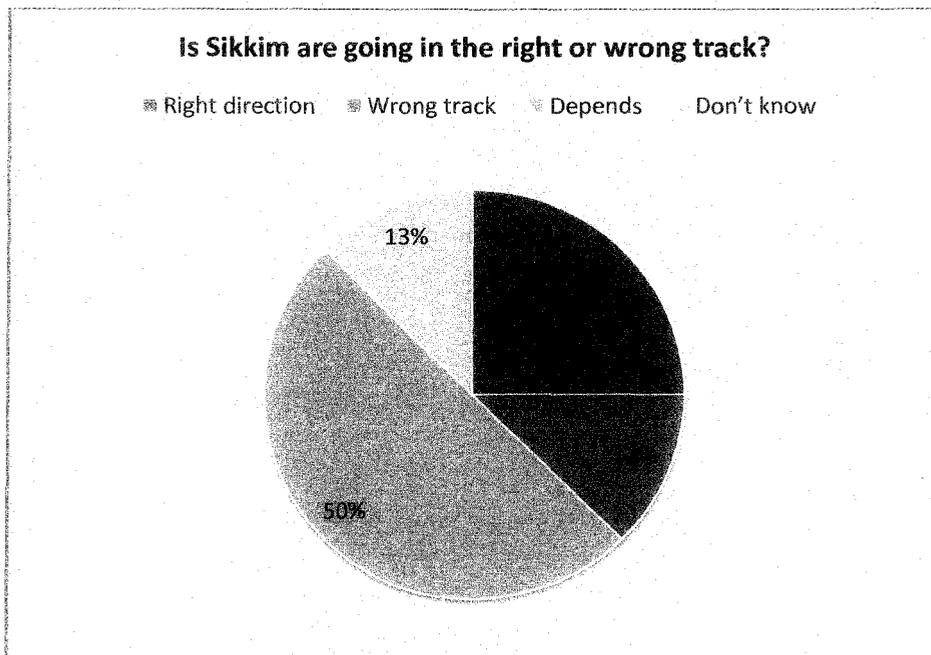
Excellent	Good	Only fair	Poor	Don't know
20	70	50	00	20
12.50	43.75	31.25	0.00	12.50



This positive assessment was checked with another question: Would you say things in Sikkim are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track? The result was the same

Table 33 : Regime Evaluation

Right direction	Wrong track	Depends	Don't know
25.00	12.50	50.00	12.50
40	20	80	20

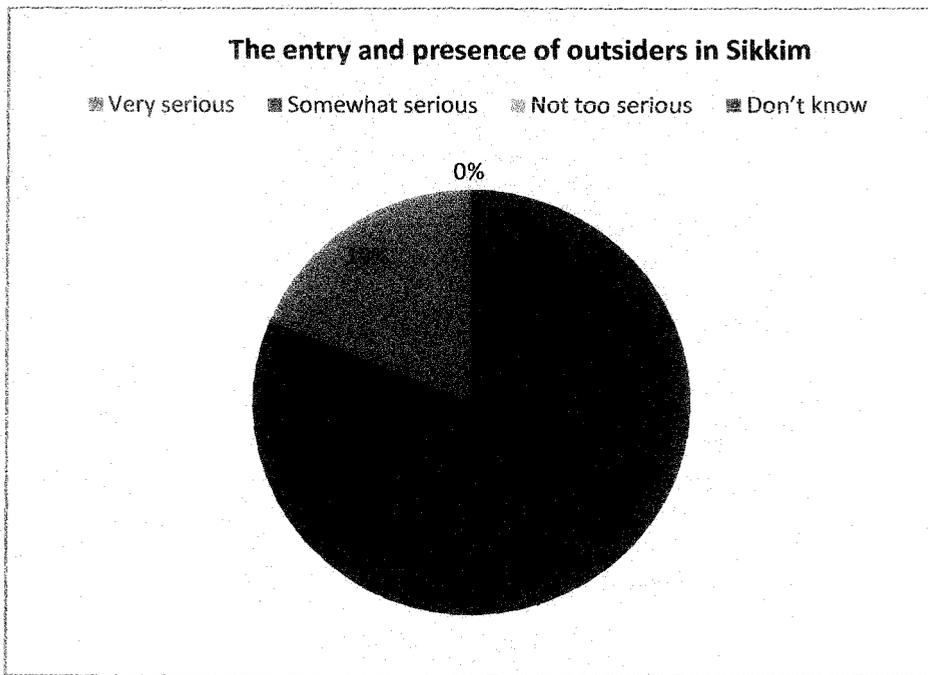


The sensitivity to outsider's presence was found to be high.

Table 34: Nativism

Attitudes to the entry and presence of outsiders in Sikkim

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Don't know
100	30	30	00
62.5	18.75	18.75	00



Certain local issues were identified for respondents' reaction by asking them how serious the issue they would consider. Below we present them.

Table 35 : Attitude to construction of dams for hydroelectricity generation)

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Don't know
140	10	10	00
87.5	6.25	6.25	00

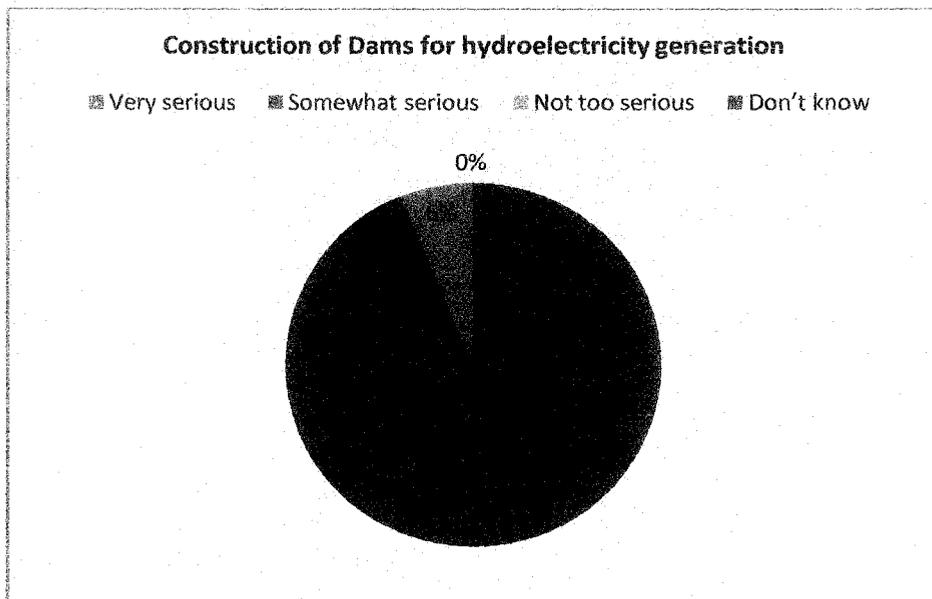


Table 36 : Attitude to Landslides and earthquake

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Don't know
150	10	00	00
93.75	6.25	00	00

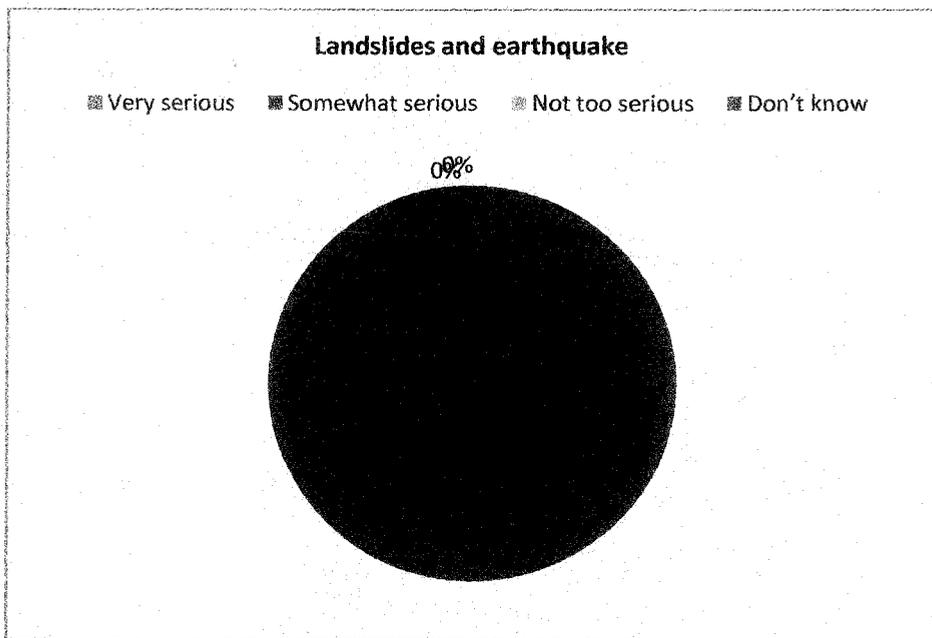


Table 37 : Attitude to Corruption in High Places

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Don't know
130	20	10	00
81.25	12.5	6.25	00

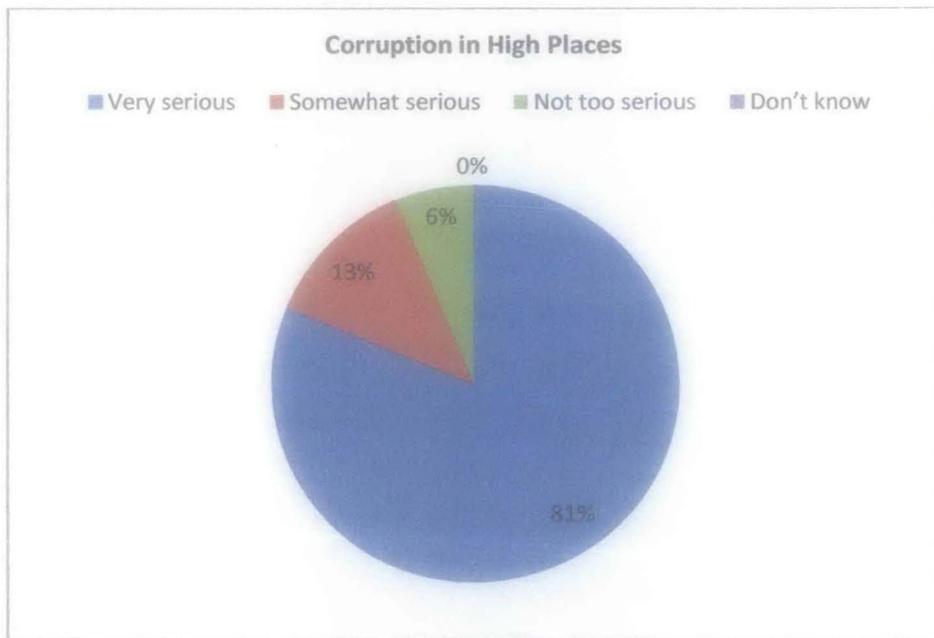


Table 38 : Attitude to building of large residential complexes and high rises

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Don't know
130	20	10	00
81.25	12.5	6.25	00

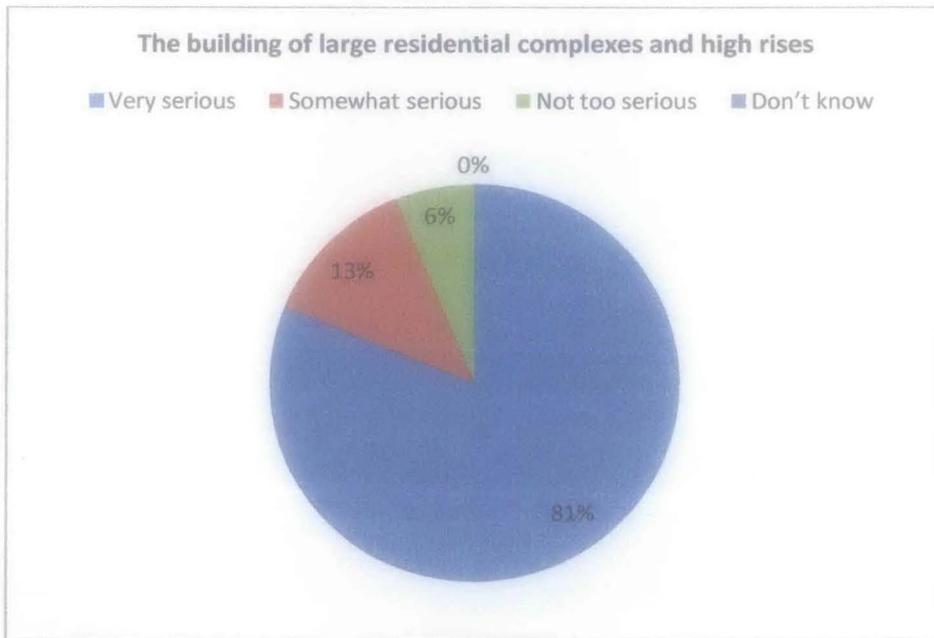


Table 39 : Attitude to lack of effective political opposition

Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Don't know
100	10	30	20
62.5	6.25	18.75	12.5

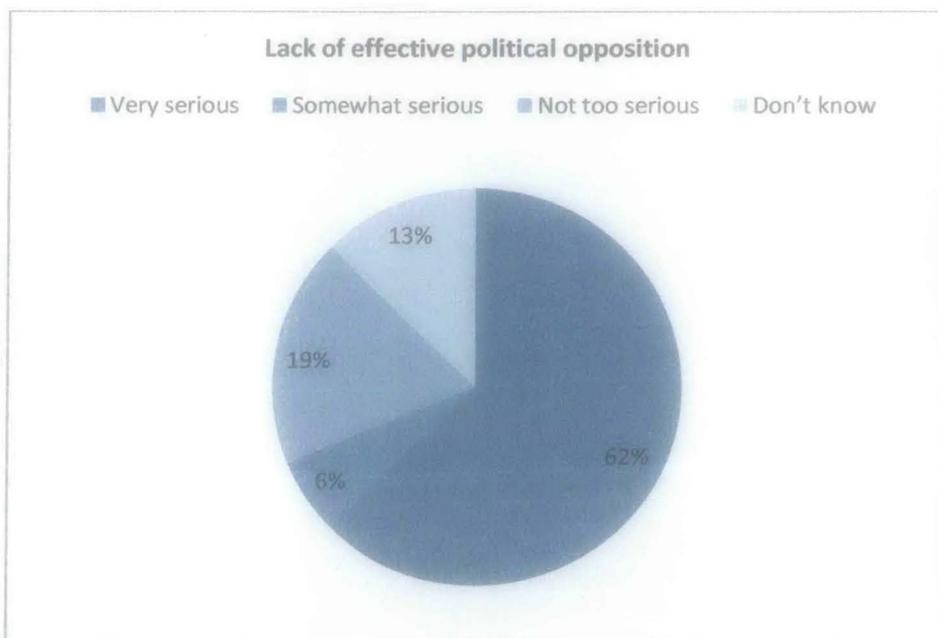
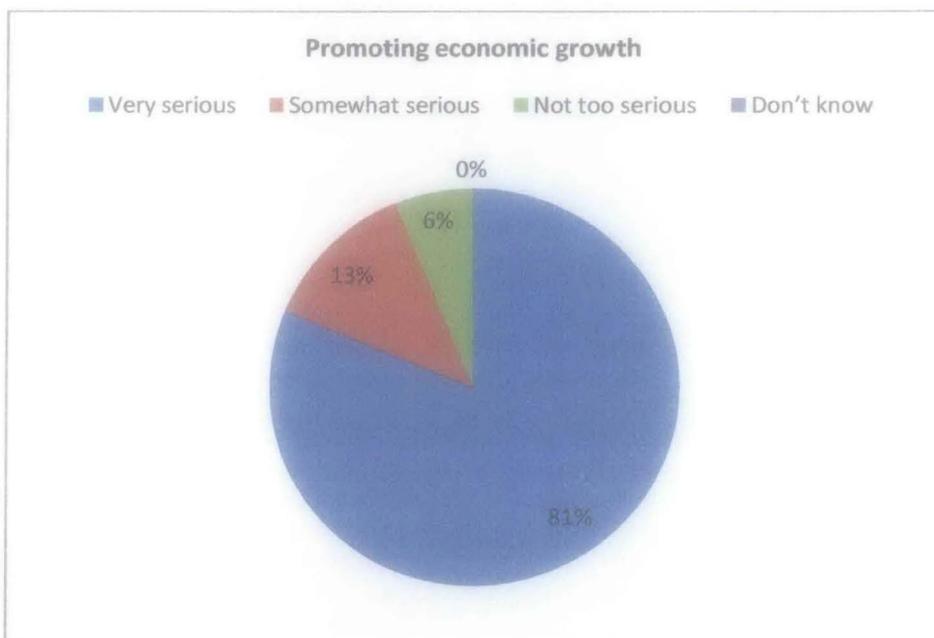


Table 40 : Attitude to promoting economic growth)

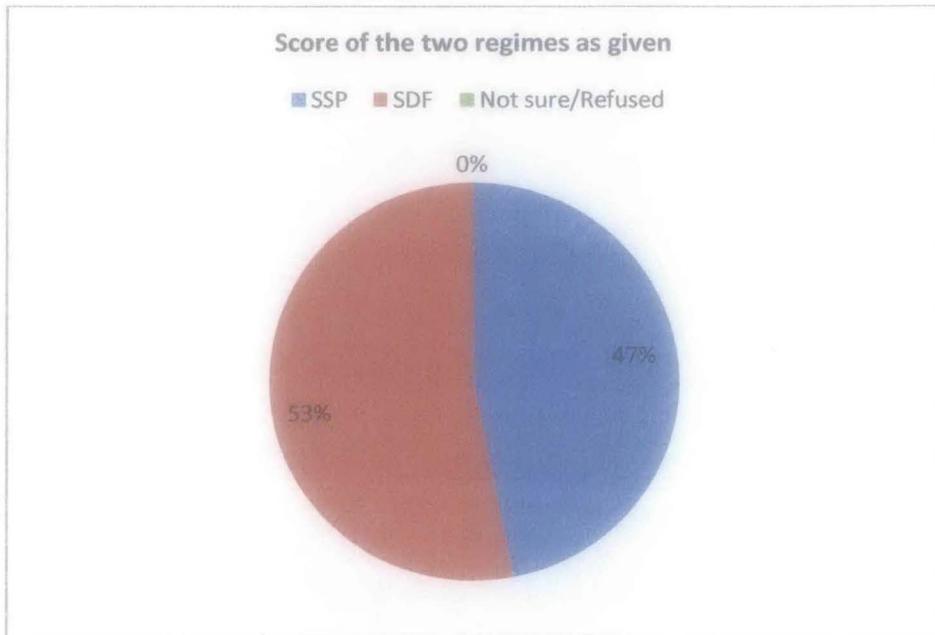
Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Don't know
130	20	10	00
81.25	12.5	6.25	00



The aged respondents who experienced both the SJP/SSP and SDF regimes were asked to score each regime out of 100 and SDF received higher cumulative scores :

Table 41: Regime Scores

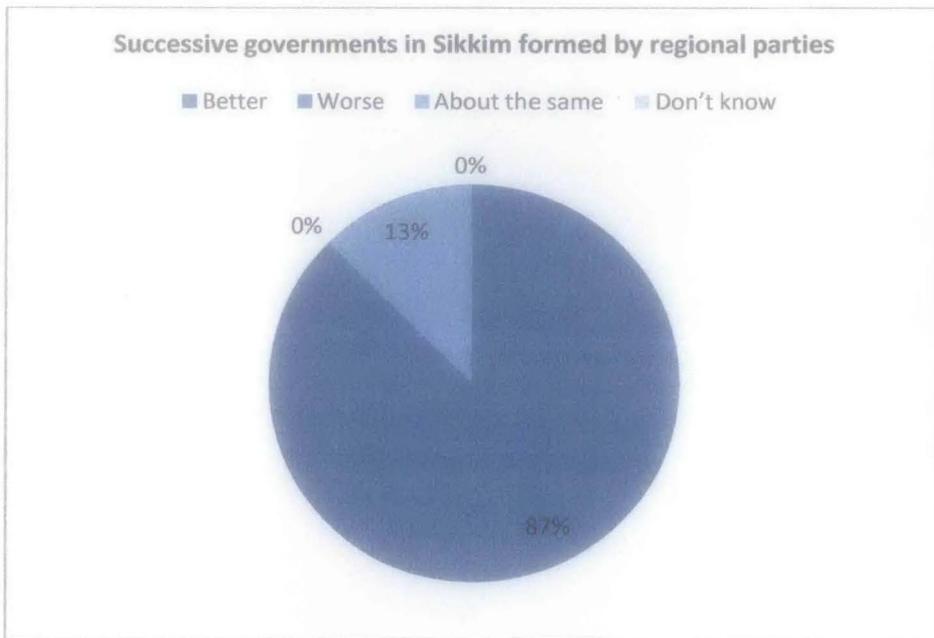
SSP	SDF	Not sure/Refused
750	850	00
46.88	53.13	00



This was not the random thing. Other questions also fetched the same kind of responses. For instance they were asked the following question: Looking at three successive governments in Sikkim formed by regional parties in Sikkim would you say that life of common man has become better or worse or about the same. The responses were generally positive.

Table 42 : Evaluation of Regimes

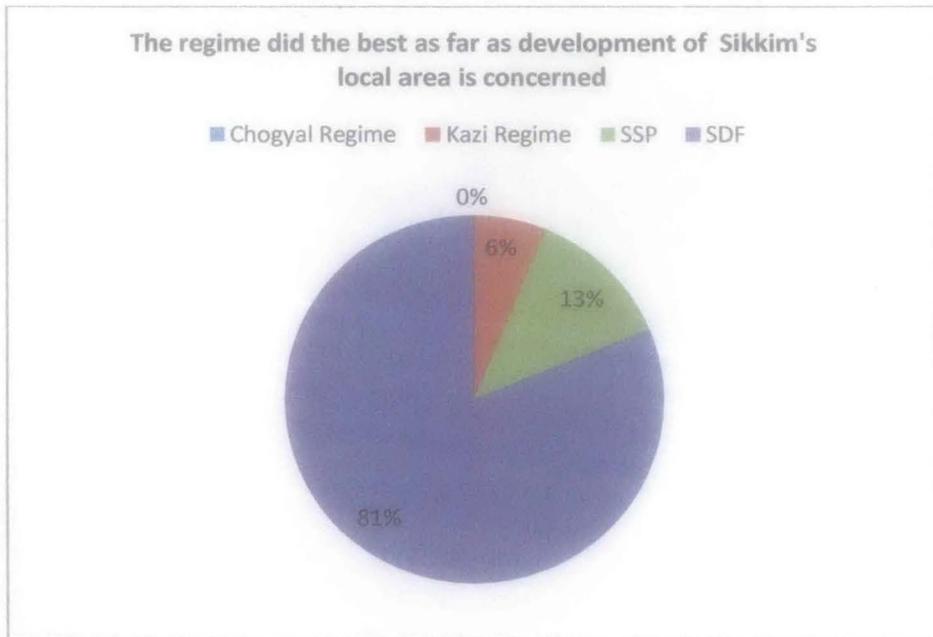
Better	Worse	About the same	Don't know
140	0	20	0
87.5	0	12.5	0



SDF was preferred comparatively too by persons who were old enough to have witnessed the three successive regimes. The question was: Which regime did the best as far as development of your local area is concerned? The answers were as follows:

Table 43 : Assessment of successive regimes

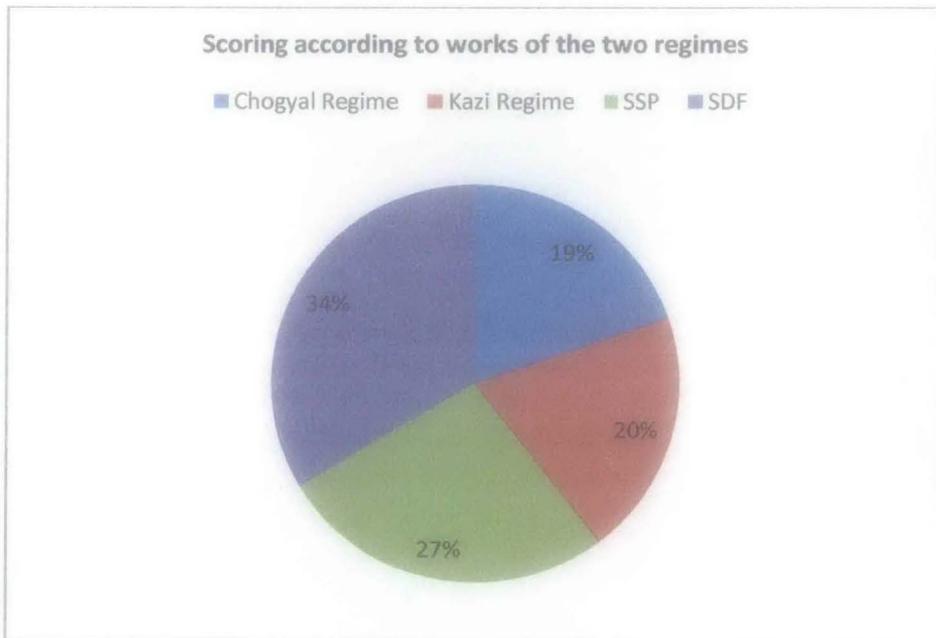
Chogyal Regime	Kazi Regime	SSP	SDF
0	10	20	130
0	6.25	12.5	81.25



The same trend was shown when the respondents were asked to distribute 100 marks according to works of the two regimes that they had seen.

Table 44 : Comparative regime scores

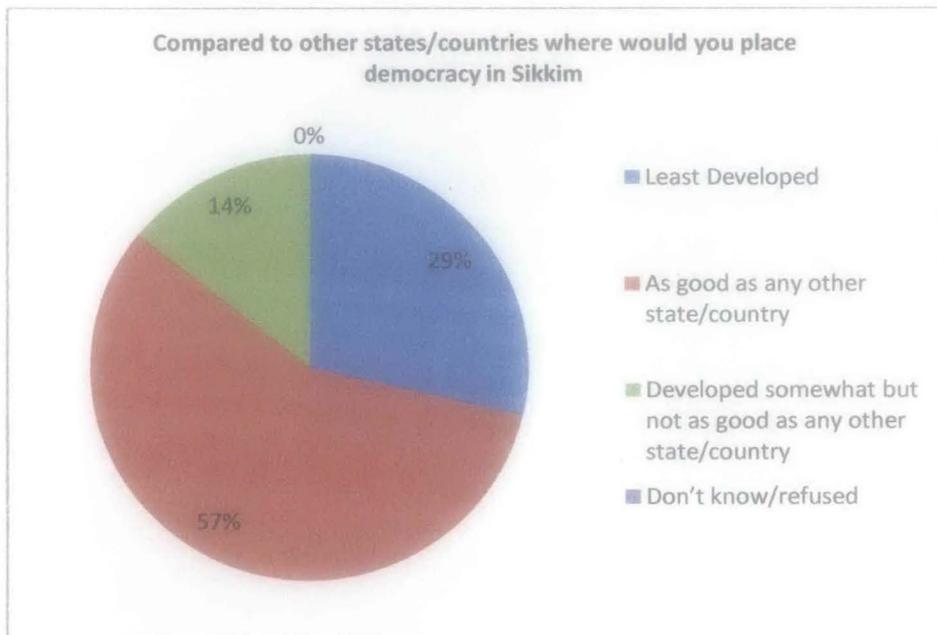
Point	Chogyal Regime	Kazi Regime	SSP	SDF
Total	445	452	605	763
% of point	19.65	19.96	26.71	33.69



Sikkim's population has low mobility. Very few have stayed outside Sikkim. Those who did, however did not feel the Sikkim situation was bad when they were asked to compare. Only 14.58% of the respondents stayed outside for a period not less than a year. They assessed Sikkim in this manner:

Table 45 : Sikkim in comparison to other states

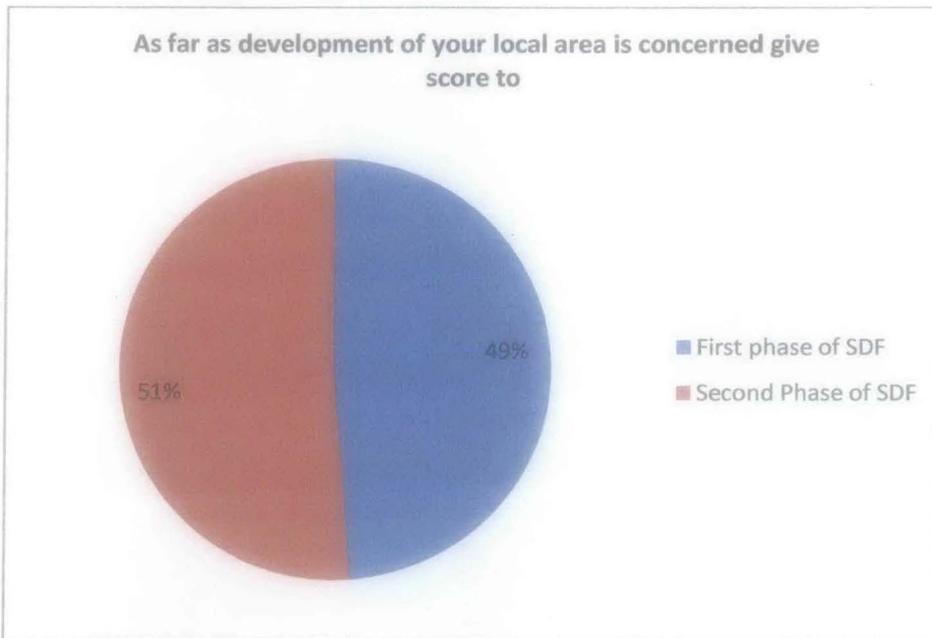
Least Developed	As good as any other state/country	Developed somewhat but not as good as any other state/country	Don't know/refused
2	4	1	0
28.57	57.14	14.29	0.00



Asked to compare the two successive governments by SDF the respondents gave higher scores to the second phase of SDF

Table 46 : Two phases of SDF

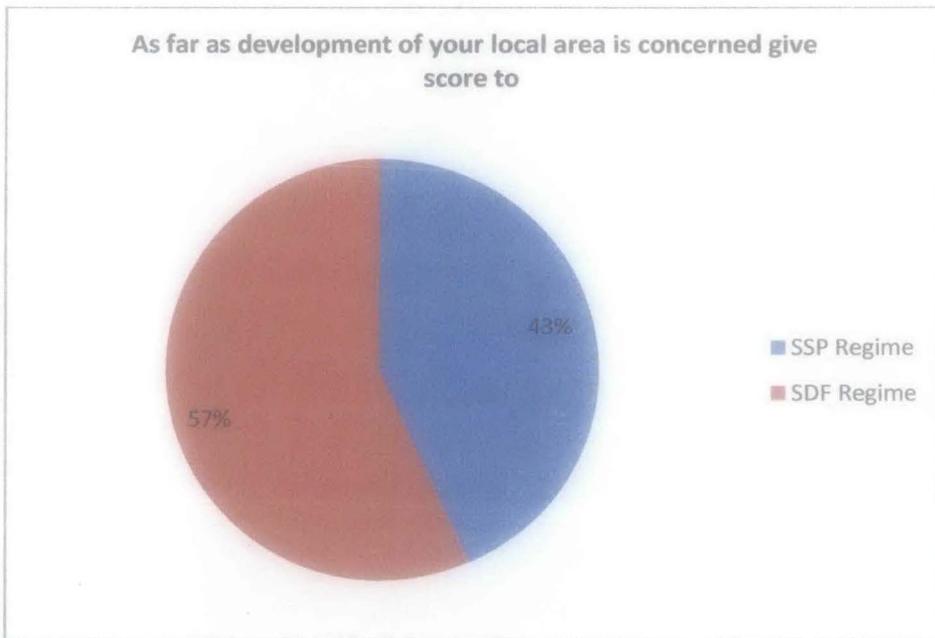
Score	First phase of SDF	Second Phase of SDF
Total	195	205
%	48.75	51.25



To those who saw both the SSP and SDF regimes SDF scored better on developmental work.

Table 47 : Attitude to lack of effective political opposition

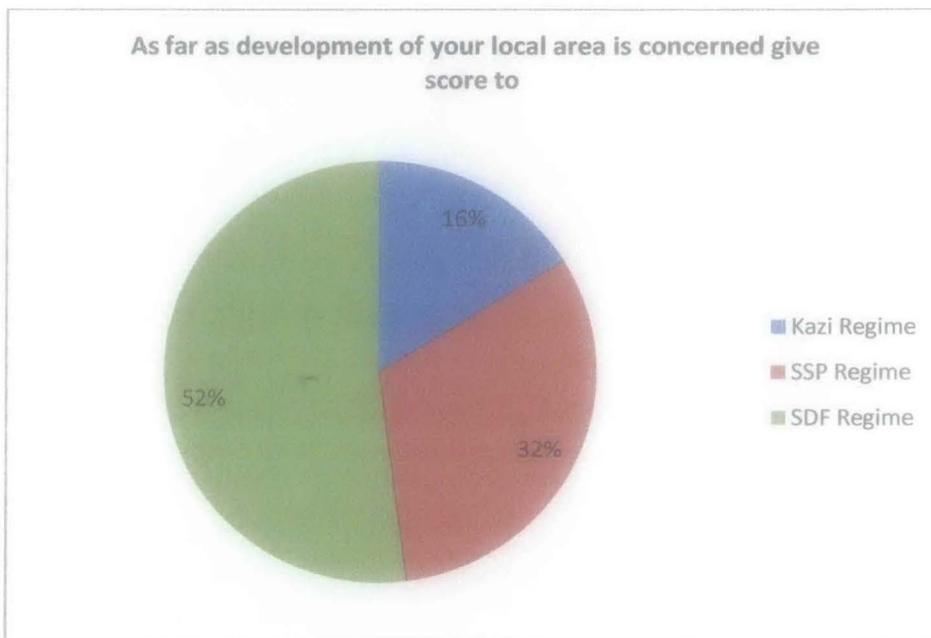
Score	SSP Regime	SDF Regime
Total	370	485
%	43.27	56.73



The oldest of the respondents were asked to compare all the three major regimes that they had experienced and give score to each of them on the basis of local area's development. The result again went in favor of SDF

Table 48: Comparison of three regimes

Score	Kazi Regime	SSP Regime	SDF Regime
Total	605	1193	1950
%	16.14	31.83	52.03



As the above data have revealed regional party's hold is going to stay in Sikkim and strong opposition is unlikely to emerge. In fact SDF may actually have a third term of government. When we look at the strategies of SDF government we begin to understand that this kind of support has something to do with a sure and steady turn towards consociational politics, something which Article 371F introduced and which was extended by SDF through Manifestos and Acts (vide last two appendices). In our survey the younger section of population expressed greater support for SDF. This has a great electoral significance. Because, in terms of age pyramid, this section's support makes the crucial difference between retaining and losing power. The following data shows the predominant role of this age group.

Table 49 : Population distribution across age groups from RCHS (Round 2) and Census 2001

State	5 to 9 years		10 to 19 years		20 to 35 years		35 to 49 years		50 to 59 years		60 years & above	
	RCHS round 2 (2003-04)	Census (2001)										
Sikkim	13	13	24	28	29	29	17	18	4	6	3	6
India	12	10	22	24	25	32	16	21	6	7	8	6

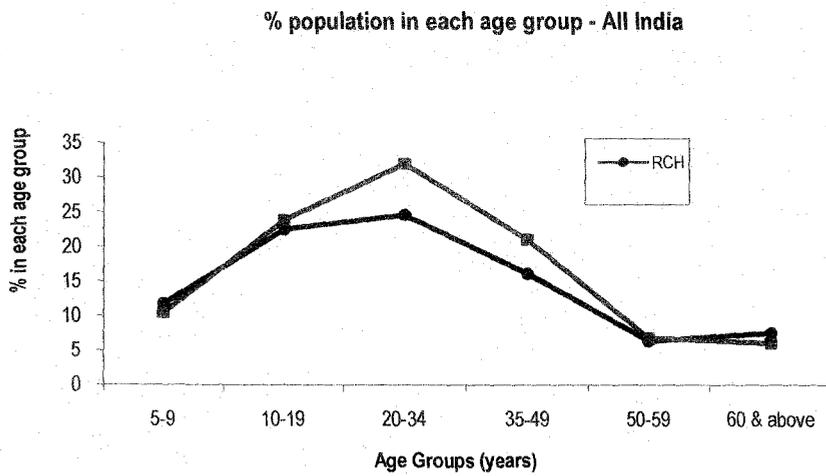
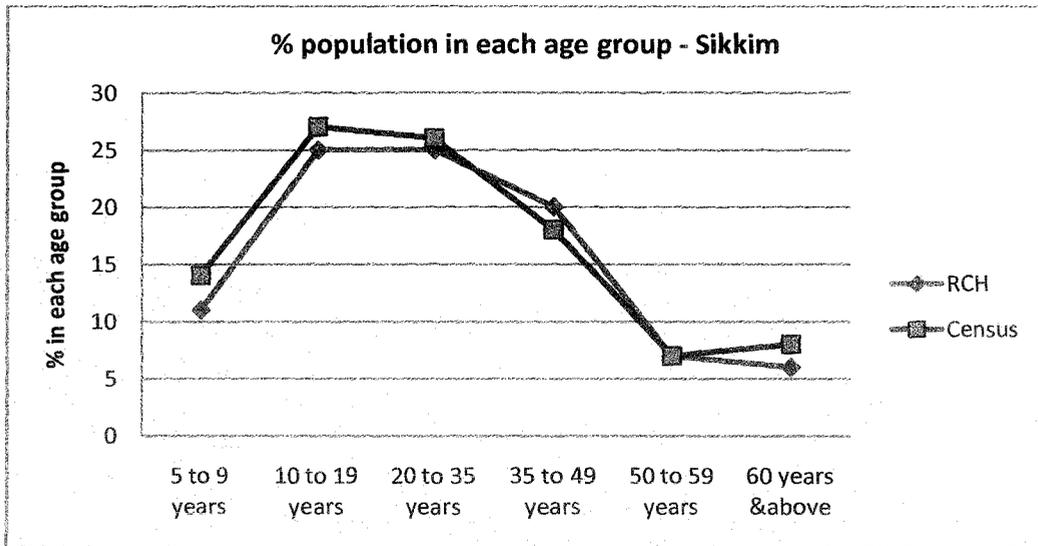
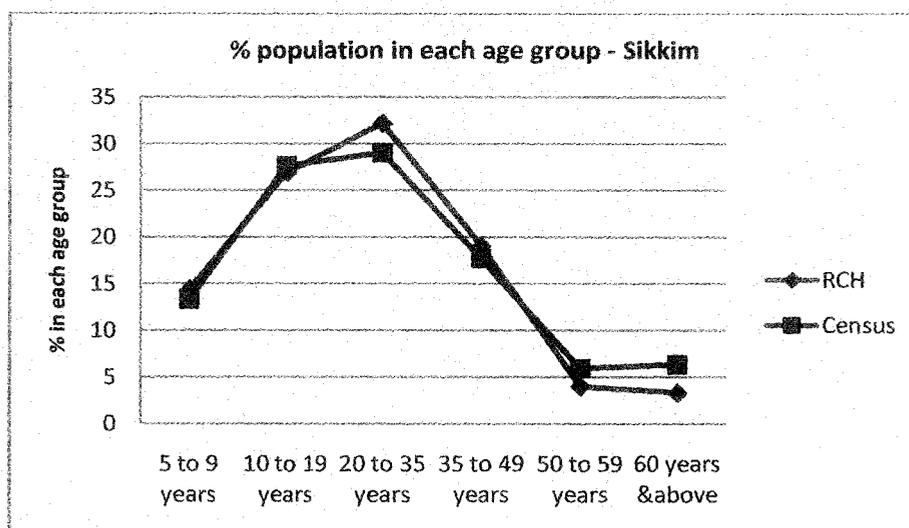


Table 50: Population distribution across age groups from RCHS (Round 2) and Census 2001

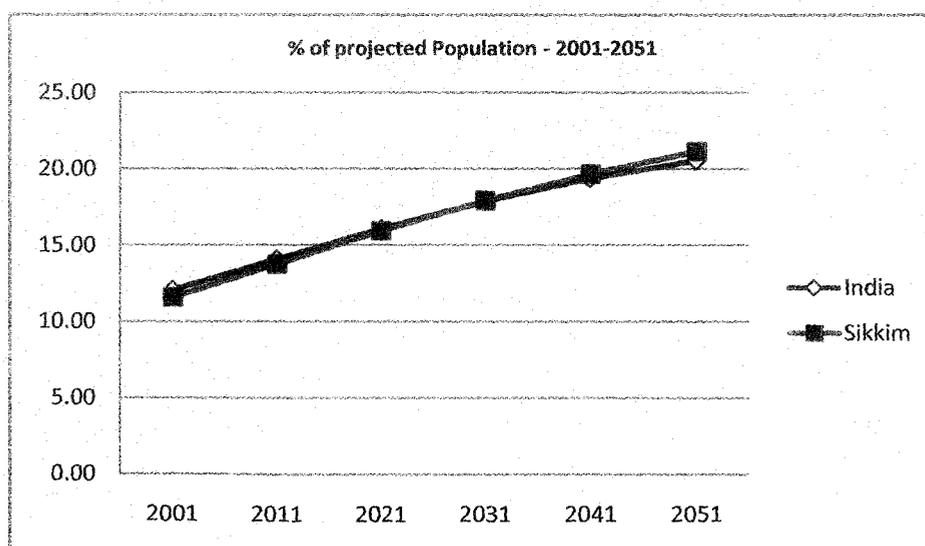
State	5 to 9 years		10 to 19 years		20 to 35 years		35 to 49 years		50 to 59 years		60 years & above		Total RCH	Total Census
	RCHS round 2 (2003-04)	Census (2001)												
Sikkim	2,736	64,970	5,122	135,112	6,111	141,876	3,622	86,690	762	28,956	630	30,978	18,983	488,582
%	14.41	13.30	26.98	27.65	32.19	29.04	19.08	17.74	4.01	5.93	3.32	6.34		
India	408,456	128,338,542	777,446	225,065,627	848,919	247,525,068	556,190	173,765,697	219,771	64,258,049	260,098	79,381,779	3,070,880	918,334,762
%	13	13.98	25	24.51	28	26.95	18	18.92	7	7.00	8	8.64		



One can see that with the solid support of the young-middle age groups, say 18-35 SDF can secure future support. Further, if we assume that politics of recognition under Article 371 F can continue to consolidate the communities such politics will not allow any viable opposition party to grow. We may reason like that because Sikkim has shown a demographic growth trend not different from the rest of India. Following Table may be noted:

Table 51 : Percentage of projected population (000's) during the period 2001 to 2051

	2001	2011	2021	2031	2041	2051	Total
India	1028591	1201029	1370054	1522575	1650817	1751077	8524143
%	12.07	14.09	16.07	17.86	19.37	20.54	100.00
Sikkim	541	642	743	835	917	986	4664
%	11.60	13.77	15.93	17.90	19.66	21.14	100.00



Keeping the above facts, we seem to have reasonable answers to our research questions. We found that income tax issue sustained the domination of SSP from 1984-1994 and a mental shield against the fear of being marginalized that was crafted under Article 371 F secured, inter alia, domination of SDF from 1994 – till date in the politics of Sikkim. At the end we may remark that political and social aspects of Sikkim's democratic experience furnish an interesting lesson for the efficacy of consociational politics for India in general. It also reveals that political stability achieved through careful balancing of social and cultural identities need not automatically enhance the prospect of wider choice to the citizens or a competitive or turnover political system.

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Appendix - I
Speech of H.H. Chogyal

2/7/74
3/7/74

ADDRESS OF THE CHOGYAL OF SIKKIM TO THE SIKKIM ASSEMBLY.

I have come to address the Hon'ble Members as we are faced with the sacred task of framing a Constitution for the country which will have far reaching effect on Sikkim, her people and her very close relationship with India, our protecting power. This is undoubtedly a historic measure which the Hon'ble Members, as the elected representatives of the people, and The Chogyal have a responsibility to study and understand very carefully before adopting the proposed Bill. There have been differences of opinion between different sections of the people on the Bill which is inevitable in a democratic process and we must learn to accept and tolerate these in the larger cause of our country and our people. Our duty is to ensure that these differences do not ultimately bring unhappiness and sufferings to the people at large.

Since the Hon'ble Members had endorsed the draft "Government of Sikkim Bill 1974" and had proposed amendments through the resolutions passed in the House on 20th June 1974, it was incumbent upon me not only to discuss the proposed Bill with the Government of India but also to seek legal advice and other consultations so that the Hon'ble Members may have a fuller appraisal of the various implications in the Bill. A Constitution should be in consonance with the aspirations of our people and the Hon'ble Members for establishing a full responsible and democratic Government and to safeguard Sikkim's separate identity under the 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty which would be affected by Clause 30 in Chapter VI of the Bill.

It is on this account that I went to Delhi, only after the Hon'ble House have had the opportunity of taking up the Bill on 20th June 1974 and returned last night at the earliest opportunity, after my last meeting with the Prime Minister of India on 30th June evening. I have, therefore, not tried to delay or obstruct the Assembly for taking up the Bill.

I am placing before the House my detailed comments on the Bill in its original form and further comments on the eight amendments proposed by the Hon'ble House on 29th June 1974. These comments prepared with legal advice could show the important lacuna and anomalies as has been noticed. While placing these comments before the Hon'ble House I would like to repeat once again that I do not seek any reservations for myself personally. The three basic principles I have kept in mind, which also have been conveyed to the Prime Minister of India on 15th June 1974 and the Hon'ble Members through my note of 24th June 1974 to the President of the Assembly and to which I am irrevocably committed are -

1. the maximum participation by the people of Sikkim in the governance of our country which means the establishing of a full responsible and democratic Government of Sikkim.
2. respecting the legitimate rights and responsibilities of the Government of India in Sikkim, and
3. ensuring the separate identity and internal autonomy of Sikkim guaranteed under 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty.

My view points have now been laid before the Hon'ble House for considering the Bill in the larger interest of Sikkim, her people and Indo-Sikkim relation.

Appendix - II
Letter of Finance Minister Mr. B.B. Gurung



FINANCE MINISTER OF SIKKIM

50/-
Phone 312 (off)
399 (Res)
Tashiling
Gangtok
Sikkim

18th April, 1984

Thank you very much for your most welcome letter. It is my humble privilege to inform you that I have peruse your letter and accepted your proposals as desired.

Regarding public gathering and resolutions adopted during the Convention at Karfeet-tar, Jorethang, South Sikkim about 20,000 delegates mostly from Darjeeling dist. attended the Convention. If I am given an opportunity to form my Government, it will be my earnest endeavour to withdraw the so called Demands and Rights of Sikkimese people by Shri Bhandari in his seven hours' speech. I am well aware, our progress will be made all along with the assistance and encouragements of the Central High Command and I hope that I may receive such assistance and encouragements even greater measure.

I hope that I shall be able to come Delhi soon in order to pay my respects to you in my role as and to apprise you of the situation here.

I ask for your blessing and support for the success.
With warm regards,

B. B. Gurung
(B. B. Gurung)
Finance Minister, Sikkim

Shri Rajivji, M. P.,
General Secretary
A. I. C. C. (I) New Delhi - 1100 11.

फोन ३१२ (कार्यालय)
३९९ (आवास)
टाशीलिंग
गान्तेक
सिक्किम
१८ अप्रैल १९८४

सरकारी बोर्ड

सिक्किम का वित्त मन्त्री,

तपाईंको आनन्ददायक पत्रको निमित्त तपाईंलाई धेरै-धेरै धन्यवाद ।
तपाईंलाई यो सुचित गर्नु मेरो विनम्र अधिकार हो कि मैले तपाईंको पत्रको प्रत्येक अनुच्छेद पढेँ । तपाईंको ईच्छा अनुसारका प्रस्तावहरू स्विकार गरेँ ।

दक्षिण सिक्किम स्थित जोरथलको कर्फेकटारमा भएको अधिवेशनमा गृहण गरिएका प्रस्तावहरू र जनताको जमघट विषयमा विश्लेषण गरी टाज्जिलिङ जिहलाबाट प्रायः २०००० प्रतिनिधिहरू अधिवेशनमा आएका थिए । यदि मलाई मेरो सरकार गठन गर्ने पल्टा मौका दिइए श्रो सङ्घर्षको आफ्नो झल पल्टाको मागणमा सङ्घका सिक्किम जनताका तथाकथित मागहरू र अधिकारहरू फलान्तिन म मागर्थ परिश्रम गर्नेछु ।

मलाई पूर्ण विश्वास छ कि सङ्घलाई कर्मचारीको सहयोगिता र प्रोत्साहन संवसंगै हाम्रो अघि बढ्नेछौं । अहिलेको सहयोगिता अझ बढ्ने मात्रामा पार्नेछु मन्ने आशा राख्छु ।

म का स्वप्नमा तपाईंलाई सहकार गर्न तथा यहाँको स्थिति बारे जानकारी दिन चाँडै दिल्ली आउन समर्थ हुन्छु होला मन्ने आशा राख्छु ।

सफलताको निमित्त तपाईंको सहारा र आशिर्वादको म बाटो हेरिरहेको छु ।

हार्दिक आदर सहित

श्री राजीवजी, एम० पी०,
मूल सचिव
ए० आई० सी० सी० (आई०) नयाँ दिल्ली - ११००११

सही/बोर्ड
(श्री. बी. बी. गुरुङ)
वित्त मन्त्री सिक्किम

Appendix - III
Letter of Mr. L.D. Kazi

The Editor,
'Hindustan Times',
New Delhi.

Ref: Kazi Explains Sikkim stand.

Dear Sir,

We are neither surprised nor amused but disgusted to read Mr. Khatiwada's 'cabled' letter (Kazi explains Sikkim stand, Hindustan Times dated 11th September '74), on instructions from Mr. L.D. Kazi.

Mr. Khatiwada is not only one of the youngest members of the Sikkim Assembly but electorally underage also! Besides being Mr. Kazi's adopted son he is also the official private secretary (we fail to understand this appointment in a Democratic set-up).

It is understandable that in his scathing criticisms Mr. Kazi has avoided to tackle the Chogyal's three basic principles namely;

- 1) Maximum participation by the people of Sikkim in the governance of the country which means the establishment of a fully responsible and democratic government of Sikkim;
- 2) Respecting legitimate rights and responsibilities of the Government of India in Sikkim;
- 3) Lastly, ensuring separate identity and internal autonomy ~~status~~ of Sikkim guaranteed under the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950.

Mr. Kazi and his fanatics have been crying against semi-autocratic rule and yet is strangely silent on the role of the Chief Executive, a bureaucrat, appointed by the Government of India. Besides being the Chief Executive, he is also the speaker of the Sikkim Assembly and wields more veto powers than the Chogyal ever exercised.

Appendix - IV
Press Statement of Chief Minister Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari

Press Statement

The action of Governon Taleyarkhan in dismissing the elected Chief Minister having a majority in the state assembly without showing any reason except his pleasure to do so is unprecedented in the annals of constitutional democracy. A great constitutional issue has arisen through this action and I leave it to the people of the country to judge it. The Governon's ^{act}, however, did not come to me as a surprise. I was asked to compromise number of times with the hopes and aspirations of the people of Sikkim. This, throughout I refused. How can I compromise with the demand of seat reservation for the three ethnic communities - Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalese -, grant of citizenship to stateless persons and recognition of Nepali language. I am prepared to stake everything but not these legitimate demands of the people. Only last night, the request for compromise was repeated by the Union Minister of State Shri Venkata Subbatah but I politely refused to accept his suggestion. I have always been with my people and I shall ever remain so, what-ever be the sacrifice. It pains me to say that some of my friends and colleagues have compromised on these basic issues of the people.

The elections are not far off. The electorate will give their verdict. We will then be judged who are with the people and who are not. One thing has always been there and this is that the people has never forgiven those who have gone against their interest.

I know the reaction of my people at this development. I would request them to remain calm and peaceful. This will be in the best interest of the people of Sikkim. I would only ask them to remain alert against the machination of those who are against the wishes, hopes and aspirations of the Sikkemese people.

Gangtok;
11-5-1984


N. B. Bhandari

Appendix - V
Letter of Chief Minister Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari



CHIEF MINISTER OF SIKKIM

Phone: 2575 (Off.)
2504 (Res.)

Tashiling
Gangtok
Sikkim

D.O.No...../CMS/SECTT/
May 3, 1994

Respected Prime Minister,

This is regarding exemption of Indian Income Tax to the Nepalese of Sikkimese origin which has now become the talk of each nook and corner of the State. I have not failed in my duty to bring to the notice of the Central Government all issues, which directly or indirectly affect the lives of the people of Sikkim and would further do so when the proposition to impose the tax falls more severely on the poor ethnic Nepalese including the Scheduled Castes.

2. Today several thousands of people of the State gathered at Gangtok and held a massive rally against the imposition of Indian Income Tax. The Sikkim Peoples' Forum which has organised the rally submitted a memorandum which I enclose herewith. While strongly recommending the memorandum I reiterate that the Nepalese of Sikkimese origin be treated in an equal footing with other ethnic communities on the basis of Article 371 (F) of the Constitution of India.

With deepest regards,

Yours sincerely

Nar Bahadur Bhandari

(NAR BAHADUR BHANDARI)

Shri P.V.Narasimha Rao,
Hon'ble Prime Minister of INDIA.
Delhi.

Appendix - VI
Election Manifesto of SDF, 2007



PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS 2007
Sikkim Democratic Front
ELECTION MANIFESTO

PARTY PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The SDF party was formed on the 4th of March 1993 in order to bring an end to the dark and draconian Sikkim and to transfer the people's power in the hands of the people. The unprecedented support of the people of Sikkim helped the movement to restore the democracy in the state. It was democratic pattern that allowed us to elect the government through popular mandate ever since we joined the national mainstream in 1975, but as a stunning fact the voice and aspirations of the people of Sikkim seldom get reflected in the government during the first two decades of the 'democratic rule'. It was all about we raised the voice of dissent on behalf of the whole electorate of the State. We had to seek democracy within democracy. Those politicians who wanted to snatch the rights, liberties, equality and democratic values of the people could not, even for two years, stand against the rising tide of Sikkimese people mobilized under the SDF flag. But even today those vanquished and exposed feudal lackeys are still in existence in different forms and shapes to weaken the united force of the people : to fulfill their selfish end their dwarfed and stunted form still lives on to incite the people.

These vestiges of feudalism, whose political present and future are in shambles are still the biggest obstacles for the well being of

the people. The episode of September 1997 amply proves the level of their ignorance and their opposition to democracy, women empowerment and fraternal relation among the people of Sikkim. Dear people, you are well aware of the fact that in spite of their humiliating defeat in every election, these divisive elements and their anti people activities still persist. By being vigilant to such elements and their characters we can reach the goal of our movement. It was not easy for us to reshape the Sikkimese society, which had been tampered with for years together. It was certainly not easy for us to mould the Sikkimese society with a new value system. We struggled a lot to transfer a society from that condition into a stage respected by all the people of the nation. We have struggled day and night to change the economic, social, political, cultural and educational sphere of the Sikkimese people. For years we have struggled to bring it back to the track of development and progress and to turn it into a society which respects the ideals of the modern world. The people have always supported us in our endeavor. Because of your unfailing support, today we have been able to achieve historic successes in establishing the rights of citizens in Sikkim. Because of our honesty and dedication towards the people and the state; because of our political and ideological commitments, we have been able to gain many valuable achievements for Sikkim. The previous government was also elected by the people and so is the SDF government, but the all-round development of Sikkim has been possible only under the SDF because of its policies and able leadership. This proves that the right decision of the people is always necessary for providing justice to the people; this type of right decision at the right time has enabled us today to be the

1st state in the country that has taken the decision to reserve 40% panchayat seats reserved for the women. To implement social justice we have shown our political commitment and honesty. In consonance with our political commitment, the second term of SDF government guaranteed 23% reservation to the Brahmin, Chettris, Newars and Sanyasis by including them in the list of state OBC categories. In the same vein we have granted 23% reservation to MBC, 38% to ST, 7% to SC and kept 9% unreserved. Sikkim has become the 1st state to grant reservation in proportion to its population in the whole country.

After the re-establishment of democracy, for the third time Panchayat elections are being held on party basis. The people are enjoying the fruit of decentralization, village administration at the village level as per the principles of Panchayati Raj. Today the common people are sensitized regarding their rights. This election is a step forward in the exercise of the rights of the people for the sake of the reconstruction of their own state and society by themselves. This election is a move towards carrying on the duties and responsibilities which go hand in hand with the rights given to the people for the development of their villages, state and the country.

The SDF party is committed to make the villages self reliant and empowered by devolving powers to them through the panchayats. The elected panchayat now should not only distribute benefits to the people, but they should also function as the vanguard of the people in their economic, social and intellectual development. We wish this election to be a move towards making the villages independent. We wish to change the thought patterns of the people which would subsequently play an active

role in the creative transformation of the society and in heralding the advent of a new era.

We would like to transform our dream of village administration through this election. Our dream of village administration would be possible only with the participation of the people. We shall be able to fulfill this dream only when people from all the classes are represented through the instrument of proportional representation.

Unless Sikkim attains full development, its villages and its people can neither develop nor become self sufficient. In the same way unless the people of Sikkim as a unit become alert regarding its rights, its all round development would not be possible. Development and people complement each other. The people should manage and direct development, then and then only would development raise the life standard of the people. Hence to ensure the widest representation of the people we have devised to hold this panchayat election in consistent with the principle of proportional representation.

We would like to further democratize the process of development. I feel development should gather momentum even at the remotest corner of the state. When the remotest village is linked with the district headquarter and the capital then only will the most backward individual stand in the forefront of development. Today it is necessary to remove the hurdles of development to bring about equality. When the villages are fully equipped with the infrastructure of development then a new era of progress would dawn over Sikkim, and then onwards Sikkim will turn into a city state. A city is a place which is equipped with all facilities and urban amenities. Hence the panchayat should strive for-

ward in providing the villages with the amenities of urban areas. And to fulfill this dream the effort should come from the villages. We have to move forward preserving peace, amity and unity of the society. In the process we will also have to struggle against the distortions which visit a developing society. I appeal to the new panchayat members to exercise their rights and duties keeping in view the gravity of the aforementioned goal. The intention of the party in devolving power to the panchayat is to ensure the all-round development of Sikkim through peoples' participation at the village level and through their decisions there. Hence we expect the panchayats to function selflessly and with honesty to realize the goal.

In the 14th year of the SDF government, Sikkim has been projected as the best state in all spheres viz. Social, Economic, Educational and Political. To keep intact these achievements and to achieve still epochal goals, the panchayat and common masses should move forward unitedly. The slogan "Janta Rajma Jantai Raja" should be transformed into reality by giving Sikkim in the hands of the Sikkimese.

The development of infrastructure shall be completed in a few years time. In consistent with this plan, the state is being connected with the rest of the country through rail and air ways within the coming two-three years. Within two to four years, roads will reach every village. The move to widen the national highway has begun and the construction of other roads of the state to connect the villages has already started. We have completed the task of establishing a central University in Sikkim. We have still more plans in store for the development of the state in future. In future services like supply of drinking water and uninterrupted supply

of electricity will be further strengthened.

The party has visualized long term policy that would keep the state vibrant in the path of development for the next 100 years. For the economic development of the state, the state shall utilize its own natural resources. Such important principles of economic development are being thought over. I am certain that Sikkim would become a rich and prosperous state but I want prosperity to result in a comfortable and well administered state; may our economic prosperity result in the blossoming of humanity, morality and democratic values. I do not want prosperity to engender distortions, which are prevalent in the advanced western countries and many of our metropolises. The essence of development for us is a morally strong society where upright method of earning money exists and where strong character persists.

Our bitter experience in the last 14 years of our struggle for development was that the so-called oppositions were not healthy political competitors, but the enemies of the people. They blindly opposed every epochal steps taken by the government without any concrete reason, these immoral politicians and exploiters forge political grouping to oppose our move out of sheer jealousy. This you all know.

But our party takes even such people constructively. We value more our link with the people and our policy of development, which is dependent upon the participation of the people. We care less for the anti people support and compliments of the so-called opposition. The very link of ours with the people and their rising consciousness has sidelined our enemies. They have no alternative than to be a vehicle of rumors. We want to lead Sikkim towards new ideas and trends but these anti people activists wish

to take Sikkim back to the age of feudalism.

We have provided a strong and timely leadership, we have worked hard. We visited foreign lands in order to gather technical know how and to increase investments to free ourselves from the limitation of central grant and limited resources. Through our various contacts, seminars and workshops we have gathered enough experiences to open up areas in the state where external investments are possible. Our works are painful to those who have failed in the eyes of the people but the same work provides a new dream, new reality to the people of Sikkim. We are sending village representatives and panchayats to study various infrastructures at the national and international level to understand and implement them at the village level. We shall continue this program because in the 21st century, knowledge is power.

Therefore this panchayat election is an election for eradicating the mafia elements and the revisionists. It is an election to establish the foundation of reconstruction-a decisive moment of your participation. I am confident that you will be a part of the reconstruction program of Sikkim by making our ideology victorious.

With Revolutionary Salute,

Pawan Chamling

President (SDF)

PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS 2007
Sikkim Democratic Front
ELECTION MANIFESTO

1. GRAM SABHA SHALL BE ALL-INCLUSIVE, TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIBLE.

The Gram Sabhas shall further be strengthened. It will take all decision pertaining to the village and the villagers. Gram Sabhas shall be transparent, people centric and all inclusive to further deepen the root of participatory democracy in the grass-root level.

2. GRAM SABHAS TO FRAME ALL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES.

Since village level development activities are meant for the villagers of a particular area, the decision making process should also be handed over to the villagers of the same area. While taking decisions in regard to the developmental activities of a village, the Gram Sabha shall represent the voice of all classes

ensuring the participation of every class of villagers in the process.

3. PEOPLE WILL HAVE POWER TO REJECT THE DECISIONS OF GRAM SABHAS.

The Gram Sabha will be as important as the State legislature for a village. Hence all the meetings of the Gram Sabha shall be conducted following the existing norms in strict manner. If the procedures are not followed and the meetings are held only to meet formalities, then the people will have the collective power to reject such decisions in the greater interest of the villagers as a whole.

4. INCREASED ROLE OF PANCHAYATS IN THE PROCESS OF FRAMING POLICIES.

The role of panchayat in the decision making process at the village level shall be increased. The panchayat members will be imparted with administrative training to ensure their effective participation in the decision making process.

5. PANCHAYAT WILL BE MORE RESPONSIBLE AND VIGILANT TOWARDS VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT.

The panchayats have been empowered with the right to frame plans for the development of their respective villages. They should also act as a watchdog of the developmental activities. From now on, the panchayat should compulsorily submit their reports to the government on regular basis. The panchayat members, apart from framing developmental plans for their villages, will

have to manage and utilize the infrastructure created in the area while strengthening the process for the economic development of the village.

6. THE PANCHAYATS WILL BE FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PEOPLE.

The panchayats will be the true servants of the people; their responsibility to the people will be further widened. The exploitation of the people in any form on part of the panchayats will not be tolerated. Strong legal action will be taken against anyone found involved in such practices.

7. THE PANCHAYATS WILL BE THE TRUE SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE.

The panchayats are the link between the people and the government. Apart from developmental activities the panchayats will also fight actively against the communal and casteist forces to safeguard the social fabric of the Sikkimese society at the grass-root level.

8. INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYATS.

The SDF government has provided 40% reservation to women in the Panchayats. This is a unique opportunity for the women not only in our country but in the whole world. Nowhere in any democratic nation have the women been given so much of reservation in local administration. This trend will be continued to ensure the participation of women in other spheres of socio-political activities.

9. ZILLA PANCHAYAT TO BE MORE ACTIVE.

To make the Zilla Panchayat more active, effective and participatory, the Zilla Panchayat representatives will be imparted with additional training. The area of operation of Zilla and Gram Panchayats will be clearly defined to discern their respective power and rights.

10. THE PANCHAYAT MEMBERS WILL BE MADE MORE COMPETENT.

To make panchayat members conversant with their areas of operation, they will be trained in the Block Administrative Centres for six months immediately after panchayat elections.

11. THE PANCHAYATS TO CONTROL THE MIDDLE MEN'S ROLE in the agricultural marketing

The panchayats will be entrusted with the responsibility of removing the middle man and to help the poor agriculturists to sell their products in proper marketing zones. For this, panchayats will be given the task to manage the markets.

12. NO TAX SHALL BE IMPOSED ON THE RURAL PRODUCTS.

The produce of the villagers will not be taxed.

13. MARKETING CENTRES AND COLD STORAGE FACILITIES AT GRAM PANCHAYATS.

To enable the Sikkimese peasant to receive the right price for

their produce like ginger, cardamom, fish, meat, pulses vegetables etc. a market place will be set up in the gram panchayat area. To preserve the produce a cold storage will also be set up in the area.

14. AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK INSURANCE.

To make the village economy strong and sustainable, a system will be devised to insure agricultural products and livestock. This task will be done by the panchayat.

15. ORGANIC FARMING WILL BE ENCOURAGED FROM VILLAGE LEVEL.

In view of the rising demand for organically produced agricultural products, the panchayats will be given the responsibility to encourage peoples' participation in the organic farming at village level. Special programmes will be initiated to enable people to attain the goal of transforming the state into an organic state.

16. FARMERS TO BE GIVEN SUPPORT PRICES

To encourage the farmers of the State, support price will be given to their agricultural products.

17. INDUSTRIALISATION OF AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE AND FLORICULTURE SECTORS.

Agriculture will be given the status of industry in order to increase the economic power of the local people. In developing agriculture as an industry the panchayats will act as guides to the villagers. Further, every household will be encouraged to adopt

horticulture and floriculture activity. In doing so, green house technology and other modern methods of farming will be introduced at the panchayat level.

18. MARKET MANAGEMENT

The Panchayat will be entrusted with the task of ensuring necessary market for the products produced by the villagers.

19. INDUSTRIAL STATUS TO LIVESTOCK.

To boost the rural economy of the state, the livestock activity will be modernized and developed as an industry. In this task the panchayats will be entrusted with more responsibility.

20. COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT OF THE STATE WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE MOVEMENT OF THE PEOPLE.

The co-operative movement will be bolstered from the village level. The co-operative movement will be organised and managed with greater participation of the village people making it an economic, social and ideological movement of the society.

21. VILLAGE PRODUCTION TO BE LINKED WITH TOURISM

The link between tourism and cottage industry will be strengthened. The panchayat will be given the responsibilities to utilize all the locally available resources such as horticulture and floriculture along with local heritage for the development of village tourism. It will be made compulsory to utilize the local products in the hotels, cafes and other tourist establishments to help the growth of economy. Further it will be made compulsory to plant flowers

and orchards in village tourism locales. It will be the primary responsibility of the panchayats to ensure the employment of local people at the local level. The Panchayat will also be entrusted to manage and implement developmental and tourism related activities in the villages.

22. ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

The panchayats will be trained to deal with various environment protection measures. They will also work towards sustainable development through joint forest and non timber forest wealth management. At the village level, panchayats will initiate massive awareness programmes in respect to garbage disposal and solid waste management.

23. TOURIST SPOT AND PARKS

The panchayats will establish and manage gardens and tourist spots in their respective gram panchayat wards.

24. CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

In many areas, the resources of the state are not being properly utilized because of lack of capacity among the people. Having understood this, capacity building programmes are being implemented as one of the major programme of the Govt. Our government has launched various programmes creating ample opportunity to every individual to have capacity building training. The panchayats will organise such programmes in each ward and unit.

25. RESOURCE MAPPING AND CARRYING CAPACITY ASSESSMENT.

At the village level, mapping of diverse natural resources will be carried out and panchayats will also be given the task to chart a road map for village development duly assessing the carrying capacity under their respective jurisdiction.

26. CREATING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Employment programmes to provide more opportunities for the local youths have been initiated. The panchayat will be entrusted with the responsibility to provide employment to the local people in respective organizations.

27. EMPLOYMENT OF LOCALS IN ALL INDUSTRIAL UNITS.

The direction of the SDF party and Govt. to employ local people in all service sector, industrial units and factories will be extended upto the panchayat level.

28. SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING.

From now onwards, skill development programmes will be held at the Sub-Divisional level with the active participation of the local panchayats.

29. SIMPLIFIED TENDER PROCEDURE FOR CONTRACTS

To enable villagers to take up village level works the tender procedure at the village level will be simplified. To amend the present norms suggestions will be taken from the panchayats.

30. CONTRACTOR'S COOPERATIVE ORGANIZATION.

The panchayat will play meaningful role in establishing cooperative contractors Associations at the panchayat level.

31. EASY LOANS TO VILLAGE COTTAGE INDUSTRIES.

To set up cottage industry, village level entrepreneurs will be given loans. The process of acquiring loans will be simplified.

32. SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND DIFFERENCES WILL BE ERASED.

The Panchayat will play a vital role in removing the socio-economic differences and inequalities prevalent in the society.

33. AWARENESS CAMPS FOR JOB ORIENTED ACTIVITIES.

From time to time the panchayat will hold camps to sensitize the masses regarding time-specific jobs in the agricultural and other productive sectors.

34. ESTABLISHMENT OF LABOUR WELFARE FUND

After the SDF Govt. came to power the workers of the state have reaped a lot of benefits. Their wages have increased at an unprecedented scale. Today the Govt. has increased the daily wages from Rs 100 to Rs. 150/-. Henceforth at the district level labour welfare fund will be created to look after the interest and welfare of the labourers. This task along with the task of making them responsible citizens will be done by the panchayat by holding special training programmes.

35. PANCHAYATS TO SUPERVISE ALL LAND TRANSACTION.

To prevent Sikkimese from becoming landless, the government has framed a policy of barring people having less than five acres of land from selling their plots. This decision of the government can be made successful only if the panchayat remain vigilant in their respective areas regarding land transaction.

36. PROTECTION OF THE LANDLESS

Henceforth, the landless will be given land only through the panchayats. The panchayat will act as a facilitator towards the economic, educational and intellectual development of those landless who have received half an acre of land.

37. PANCHAYAT IN THE FOREFRONT OF DEVELOPING PEOPLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS.

There will be peace in the state if there is continuity in developmental activities. Without developmental activities the economy of the state remains stagnant. For the sake of peace and prosperity developmental projects are essential. The panchayat should sensitize the people regarding the necessities for developmental activities in the village and the State as a whole.

38. PANCHAYATS TO CHECK THE USE OF INTOXICANTS AND DRUGS.

To keep one's area clean, in all respect, is the elementary duty of the panchayats. So the panchayats will take up the task of eradicating all social evils including gambling, drug abuse and trafficking.

39. ANTI CORRUPTION MOVEMENT WILL BE INITIATED FROM THE PANCHAYAT LEVEL.

Stem legal actions will be taken against panchayat representatives involved in corrupt practices. Likewise the panchayats shall check corruption in all government and non-governmental organizations falling within their jurisdiction.

40. PANCHAYATS AGAINST REACTIONARIES.

The reactionary elements try to spread rumors among the villagers every now and then. The panchayat will now work against such reactionary elements and control their activities and take action against them.

41. MANAGEMENT OF RURAL LIBRARIES.

Libraries have been opened in every Gram Prasaran Kendra. This is an important step towards making the Sikkimese society a knowledge based society. The Panchayat will play an important role in managing these libraries to transform the village into an ideal knowledge based village.

42. RURAL LIBRARIES.

In the village, libraries will be provided with facilities like community information centre to enable the people to be informed about the local, national and global happenings.

43. STAFF APPOINTMENT IN THE LIBRARIES.

The panchayat will appoint necessary staff to properly manage

the established libraries.

44. PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AT THE PANCHAYAT LEVEL.

Facilities will be provided to protect and preserve all ancient, religious, natural and cultural sites (like old forts, caves, temples etc.) and artifacts of the area through the initiatives of the panchayats. The government policy to protect and preserve the language, literature, culture and their traditions will be carried on right from the panchayat level.

45. COMPUTER INFORMATION CENTRE WILL BE ESTABLISHED AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL.

Today is the age of information technology, hence information should reach from nation and states to the villages. To ensure this, computer information centres will be opened in each gram panchayat units.

46. PANCHAYATS WILL SENSITIZE THE PEOPLE REGARDING DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES.

The panchayat shall clearly make known among the people the policies, declarations and the various programmes taken by the Government in favour of the people. The panchayat should inform the people regarding government policies and programmes.

47. ESTABLISHMENT OF MINI-HYDEL PROJECTS,

The panchayats will establish mini-hydel projects in their respective villages with the help of the local people.

48. ROAD CONNECTIVITY TO EACH VILLAGES.

Village panchayats which are already linked with roads will have carpeted link roads. Those villages which do not have link road will have road connectivity. The panchayat itself will carry on the task of looking after the roads, construct link road and footpaths with the fund available to them.

49. CREATION OF NATURAL CALAMITY FUND AT VILLAGE LEVEL.

There will be a natural calamity fund under the gram panchayat to provide immediate relief to the victims of landslide, fire and other natural calamities. From this fund the panchayat will provide relief to the victims immediately.

50. CONTROL OF EPIDEMICS AND OTHER MISHAPS.

The panchayat will provide immediate primary treatment to the victims whenever there is sudden outbreak of epidemics and any other mishaps.

51. PANCHAYATS TO CONTROL ENCROACHMENTS IN THE VILLAGES.

To preserve peace and amity in the village and also to stop encroachment of various types the panchayat will play an important role. The panchayat will ever remain alert to check encroachments of drains, channels, school properties and forest areas. The panchayat will provide alternative arrangement to check illegal encroachments.

52. PANCHAYATS TO SEARCH RURAL TALENTS.

In the field of creative arts and sports there are many talented youth but they are being wasted owing to the lack of facilities. The government has been providing enough encouragement and extending help to these youths.

The panchayats will be entrusted to search out such hidden talents. Besides this the panchayat shall also honour every year the contributions of social activists of different spheres at the village level. Apart from this, the panchayat shall hold regular programmes to whet the talents of the underprivileged.

53. PRESERVATION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL HERITAGE.

The panchayat will be entrusted with the task of codifying folk song, folk tales, folk stories, and idioms, and other traditional folklores of different ethnic groups. The panchayat shall also take up the task of preserving traditional medicine and the tradition of spiritual healer like Bongthing, Mangpa, Theba, Negum, Pao, Fedangba, Bejuwa, Homay, fue, Jhankri, Baidang, Dharni, janapa etc.

54. OLD AGE PENSION.

The government has been giving old age pension to 14,868 old persons of the State till date. Keeping in continuity this important policy of the government, the panchayat in future shall recommend the names of the beneficiaries.

55. ERADICATION OF CHILD LABOUR

The panchayat will eradicate completely the system of child la-

bour from every village. The panchayat shall also take legal action against those who aid and abet this crime.

56. COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.

The panchayat will be goaded to provide secure environment and social protection to all Sikkimese children. They will also provide them with basic health facilities and compulsory education.

57. EXPECTING AND LACTATING MOTHER TO BE LOOKED AFTER.

The panchayat will look after expecting women and lactating mothers. They will provide necessary psychological help, medicine and nutritious food. The panchayat will also honour the traditional midwives of the villages to recognize their services.

58. PROTECTION TO WOMEN, PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED AND AGED PEOPLE.

The panchayat will be made responsible to look after the women the aged and the physically challenged members of the society. The panchayat will protect them from denigration and exploitation.

59. EXTENSIONS OF GOVERNMENT HELP TO THE POOR AND MERITORIOUS STUDENTS.

Whenever the guardians of meritorious students are unable to finance their studies the panchayat should take the initiatives to

provide the benefits of the government to the students.

60. RECOGNITION OF SENIOR CITIZENS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Senior citizens and social workers of the village will be annually honoured. For this, congregations will be arranged with the active participations of the villagers.

61. MEMOIRS OF HONOURABLE ELDERS TO BE PRESERVED.

To preserve the memories of honourable elders the panchayat shall have the power to christen the C.C.Footpaths, rural bridges, and Panchayat bhawan after their names.

62. MOBILE HEALTH SERVICES IN THE DISTRICTS

Mobile Health Services will be started in every district.

63. PANCHAYATS TO MANAGE ADULT EDUCATION.

Adult education will be initiated from the panchayat level. The education of the illiterate rural masses will be conducted by the panchayat in a routine manner. This task will be managed by the panchayats in every village.

64. SOCIAL FENCING

The panchayats will be given the power and responsibility to take stern action against those who indulge in anti-social activities such as drug peddling, black marketeering, adulteration etc.

65. TRANSPARENCY IN THE DISBURSEMENT OF DEVELOP-

MENTAL AIDS/GRANTS.

Within the area of their operation, the panchayat shall maintain transparency in the distribution of Government benefits. The panchayat has been given the power to make micro plans through the Gram Sabhas. The panchayats should ensure the holding of Gram Sabhas at least once a month.

66. SECURITY MEASURES AGAINST DAMAGES CAUSED BY DOMESTIC AND WILD ANIMALS

The panchayats shall look after the menace caused by wild and domestic animals. The panchayat shall take strict security measure whenever the animals run amuck.

67. DOCUMENTATION OF ASSETS FALLING WITHIN THE PANCHAYAT WARD/UNIT.

The panchayat shall:

- i. Keep record of government properties.
- ii. Document details regarding different types of agricultural product, fruits and vegetables.
- iii. Keep record of livestock.
- iv. Keep records of biodiversity including medicinal plants and trees.
- v. Keep record of flora and fauna including aquatic animal.
- vi. Keep record of all religious institutions, ceremonies, festivals, dresses and ornaments usually worn by the various communities of the area.
- vii. Keep record of various social, cultural and natural attractions.

viii. Prepare a data base for each village.

68. RECORD OF ALL WORK FORCE IN THE VILLAGE DIRECTORY.

The Panchayat will keep the record of all helpers, tenants and other forms of workers who are being used by the individual houses. The details of these workers will be registered in the nearby police station alongwith their photographs. If the panchayats fail to keep such information/data, the panchayat and the concerned household shall be held responsible in case any untoward incidents.

69. PRESERVATION OF PEACE AND HARMONY.

The panchayat shall function as a watchdog against all those individuals working within the panchayat area and it will take action against any body indulging in anti social propagations.

70. KEEP TRACK OF NEW COMERS IN THE VILLAGE

The Panchayat shall immediately report to the nearby police station if any suspicious new comers are found prowling in the village. The panchayat shall work in tandem with the villagers to bar such individuals from remaining within the village.

71. DETAILS OF OUTSIDER TO BE RECORDED.

The panchayat should enquire about the background of all tenants and lease holders appointed or working under land owners. Panchayat shall keep a record of such seasonal workers.

72. PROPER UTILIZATION OF GOVERNMENT BENEFITS.

The panchayats will not only ensure the proper distribution of government grants and benefit to the people but shall also ensure the proper utilization of the benefits.

73. SIMPLIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT RULES.

The government rules and regulation are meant for the common people. Hence suggestions would be sought from panchayats in simplifying government rules and norms.

74. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

The task of people's awareness with regards to intellectual property rights will be initiated at the village level.

75. PANCHAYAT HONORARIUM TO BE INCREASED

The SDF government was the pioneer in giving honorarium to the elected panchayat members. In the coming years the government has planned to raise the existing honorarium.

PEOPLE REIGN SUPREME IN DEMOCRACY!

- Dr. Chamling



SYMBOL OF

**Equality, Prosperity,
Justice & Social Harmony!**

Appendix - VII
Election Manifesto of SDF, 2009

OUR PROMISES TO THE PEOPLE.



SDF's Manifesto

**15th Lok Sabha and
8th Assembly Elections, 2009**

..... because Sikkim deserves the Best!

31st March 2009

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Party President's Message to the People of Sikkim

Respected Citizens of Sikkim,

Let me extend warm greetings to you in this bright spring month even as buds sprout and new leaves take shape in our forests and fields heralding a new beginning.

It is election time once again signifying another new beginning. We are here to seek your mandate for another term. Therefore, it is crucial to reflect on our own achievements.

What and how much work has been achieved during the last 15 years? How many promises given to the people before 1994 have been kept? What kind of changes have come up in the material and mental development in the Sikkimese people especially the youth? How much capacity and capability of our people, especially the youth, have been built? How easy, contended, and healthy have the lives of the Sikkimese people become? How much happiness and welfare have the poor received? Where kind of lifestyle the Sikkimese people have attained thus far? What kind of protection the people of Sikkim have received from our Government? How many people have got jobs and employment opportunities? How good are our roads, electricity and water supply? These and other such critical questions need to be answered at this point.¹

In a democracy we are answerable to the people. We are accountable.

We appeal for your involvement to seek answers from the SDF Party so they become an important part of the democratic institutionalization process thereby ushering in a progressive and responsible tradition in Sikkim.

For seventeen years now the Sikkim Democratic Front Party has withstood all the trials and tribulations of leading the Sikkimese people without compromising the principles on which the party is founded. Much more, we have not let down the trust reposed on us by you the people. We have not strayed in any other direction, constantly upholding our pro-poor policies and worked toward the overall development of Sikkim.

Unlike other parties and leaders we have not changed our party, our principles, our colour or our flag. We are still a Sikkimese Party, a regional Party. We have remained steadfast in the principles on which we are founded and will continue to do so for generations to come. We recognize that keeping politics free from undesirable, criminal and anti social elements is a huge responsibility. In fact it is a major problem in other parts of India. We have been able to do this thus far with the support of the people.

We have devoted ourselves to fulfill the aspirations and expectations of the people through well thought out development programs constantly upholding democratic ideals and empowering our people, both young and old, men and women and from all walks of life.

We have restored the true spirit of democracy and allowed it to flourish in the best possible and dignified manner.

¹ Please see our Document on Achievements

We are still struggling against those elements who do not value the principles of the SDF party. In a Parliamentary democracy the power of the people is paramount. People have handed this power to our party to run the Government for the last fifteen years. We have done so unflinchingly. We have been able to lay the foundation of a new Sikkim against all odds through deep struggle. It is not easy to build and develop a modern, peaceful and prosperous Sikkim and yet we have persevered against all odds.

On the one hand we have been toiling day and night for ushering sustainable development and on the other hand our ideological struggle is on against anti democratic and anti people forces.

Sikkim is poised today on the threshold of attaining comprehensive development. We will attain this by 2015. Thus, the developmental pace generated is not to be delayed or derailed. This pace has to be sustained and continued. Above all, we in Sikkim must be delighted that we are above the economists' narrow definition of development via per capita GDP. We have built strong social capital through our process of development and vision. We have happiness related indicators and there is equity inbuilt in every process of development. We will continue to have a broader meaning of development in the years to come keeping the happiness content of our citizens upper most in our minds. Central to human happiness and well being is good health.

It is our mission that every citizen of this State will become healthy, aware, capable, wealthy, wise and above all happy.

In the field of hydro power projects, in promotion of responsible tourism, organic farming, industry, floriculture and horticulture we have spared no effort. The results are there for everyone to see. We have also prepared the capacity and human resources to commercialize these sectors that have begun in all earnest. The people of Sikkim should benefit from all the opportunities that are being created through the development process. Accordingly we have framed stringent laws and guidelines toward this end which we are administering strictly.

Changes in professionalism due to globalization are taking place rapidly and we need to take cognizance of this. Capable people are highly valued and their demand grows. In addition to giving a huge thrust to good education we have created the Directorate of Capacity Building to enable our youth to take advantage in this scenario. They have been tasked to conduct sufficient and effective training programs to ensure that our youth build the capacity to soak up the opportunities that arise due to the rapid pace of development.

Our womenfolk have been emancipated from drudgery and traditional hardships. They are now empowered and given enough opportunity to grow in their own right. Women are encouraged to do all creative work and develop opportunity with self respect and indeed their golden era has started. We are also satisfied that we have achieved this because now the Sikkimese women are free to attain their social, economic and political aspirations through this empowering process.

Decentralization and devolution of power and the empowerment of the rural people which we had started in the 20th century has now been fully achieved. We have set an example for the

country by institutionalizing the Panchayati Raj System. We have received accolades in this regard. However, we still have to promote decision making power to be taken at the grassroots level. We have to free the people from the clutches of the anti people and anti social elements who do not allow the grassroots people to take decisions. Sikkimese rural people are now participating in every project. 70 percent of the annual State budget is being spent in the rural areas. This is now a norm.

When we took over the governance of the State in 1994 the State was fully dependent. Sikkim was not even able to run for two months from the annual budget. The finances were so poor. We started working hard to make Sikkim a self reliant state. From our own and natural resources and utilizing it we proudly announce that our revenue will be by Rs. 1,200 Crores by 2014.

Thus, we become self reliant on one hand and on the other hand in the national tourism map we will become number one. And we will be able to provide 5,000 MW to the nation. The people of Sikkim will supply fruits and flowers to the national and international market.

We have been successful in making Sikkim a member of the North Eastern Council. We have been successful in keeping Sikkimese free from Income Tax. The Limboo Tamang communities are now part of the Scheduled Tribe. We have recognized Newar, Bahun and Chettri communities as OBC in the State and recommended them to be on the Central List as well.

We have constituted the Burman Commission which has recommended that all Sikkimese be brought under the scheduled tribe category. The Legislative Assembly has passed the Burman Commission recommendations and we have sent it to Centre for giving due recognition. This process has started on a strong note.

In every field Sikkim's name has become a house-hold one. National leaders, administrators and eminent national intellectuals appreciate the development achievements of Sikkim. Thus naturally Sikkim has been conferred with many national and international awards for economic, social and political development of the people.

In the present scenario there are many administrators and managers but principle centered leadership is very scarce. The kind of leadership that is needed is one which gives vision, opportunity and hope to the people. Appropriate guidance is absent. Principled centered leadership is absent.

My respected fellow citizens, it is important for the people of Sikkim to get the right leadership. We say with confidence that the SDF Party will continue to provide exemplary leadership. Our past has indeed improved the economic and social condition of the people.

We have to admit that the Sikkimese people have supported us fully to fight against undesirable elements. Their unstinted support has enabled us to carry on with our creative grassroots politics to attain massive milestones in our march toward full development.

I therefore salute the people's awareness, wisdom and whole hearted support.

As is clear to all, I have kept the promise of not having a single member of my family joining in politics and will continue to do so. We know from the past deeds of others and as is evident even

in the national scene, grooming of family members by those in position of power is all pervasive. This in politics is another form of corruption.

Now, we have arrived at a decisive moment at this time. We are confident of your vote and we will win with thumping majority. However, we have to translate this victory into a decisive one. The revolution we have started is not merely to form the government but to eradicate the obstructions that are posed by anti people and anti democratic forces. This will enable us to give good governance and freedom to the people. Only then will real democracy be ushered in. Only then will the conspirators, oppressors and communal elements be sidelined.

So this is the time for choice and the time of electing a good and safe party to govern Sikkim. We come to you from a position of strength wherein as outlined before we have shown and delivered on all the promises made to you before.

We at SDF Party are committed to an ever-green, modern, food and water secure, prosperous and self reliant Sikkim. No effort will be spared to transform our youth into responsible citizens of the future through good health, education and capability building. Our three pillars of development for the future are **growth** with equity, **cost** and **green effectiveness** and **excellence** in terms of quality and delivery. Vote us in on this plank.

Please read our manifesto wherein we have detailed the **mission** and **challenges** that we will undertake toward this end.

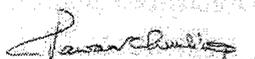
Please remember that we are a party that was founded in Sikkim, is for the Sikkimese identity and for a great Sikkimese future. We stand steadfast.

I am before you all, my respected fellow citizens, in all humility and I would like to reiterate that my political ideology and philosophy is not just to win the elections and to garner your support. Politics is a platform for positive societal transformation. I am present in the political arena with my core political ideology which is to create better opportunities and future for all our citizens. Ensuring, alongside for the people supreme freedom, prosperity, peace and happiness. This is my ultimate and honest mission. Therefore, I am confident that you have understood our mission and ideology and that you will vote as earlier, giving a resounding mandate to the SDF Party. You will show your complete support for this all important mission by participating in this electoral process. I am fully confident of your continued support.

I dedicate this manifesto to the people of Sikkim in the 21st Century.

A revolutionary salute to the people of Sikkim

Jai Sikkim, Jai Sikkimme Janata



Pawan Chamling

President, The Sikkim Democratic Front Party,

Gangtok, March 2009

WHY SDF?

- 1 SDF is the first regional political party in the country to provide non-controversial and stable government.
- 2 After remaining in power for 15 years, our Chief Minister kept his integrity and not discredited the people of Sikkim.
- 2 We are sincere and steadfast in our words, ideology and conduct.
- 3 SDF government has made Sikkim one of the most progressive states in the country. The number of awards that we have received is an indication of national recognition of our effort.
- 4 Steps are afoot to uproot poverty through initiation of schemes in areas like housing, education, health, and employment generation.
- 5 Rural upliftment has been given paramount importance by undertaking various welfare schemes. Our government has eased the urban-rural disparities to a great extent by setting up urban facilities at the grass root level. Seventy per cent of state plan budget has been earmarked for rural welfare measures.
- 6 All old issues with regard to the state of Sikkim have been settled. Sikkim has been integrated into the NEC, Nathula trade route is opened, tribal status has been granted to Limbus and Tamangs, with the inclusion of Chettri-Bahun-Newar-Sanyasis in the list of OBC and the resultant facilities, all Nepalese communities have been recognized as OBC.
- 7 Our government has established fully transparent and responsible governance. People's rule is fully established.
- 8 Our government guaranteed full political protection of the Sikkimese people and economic freedom and equality. Tenets of social justice are fully instituted.
- 9 Massive work has been done to establish physical connectivity connecting every village with every other village with road.
- 10 The SDF government has accomplished historical achievement in area like women empowerment. We have successfully implemented our policy to distribute all welfare schemes in the names of our mothers and sisters.
- 11 Sikkim has established itself as one of the pioneering states to carry out power decentralization to the grass root. Rule of the rural people has been practically put to practice.

- 12 Nowhere in country is there any such scheme like free distribution of school uniform, text books and exercise books. The SDF government is the first government in the country to successfully implement this scheme in Sikkim.
- 13 Our government is the first government to give poor people the very first chance in the distribution of welfare schemes.
- 14 Conservation and preservation of environment is the first priority of the SDF government.
- 15 Our government has brought about evolution in material, cultural and spiritual development of the Sikkimese people.
- 16 The SDF government has provided to the government employees the freedom to conduct themselves in a fully democratic environment. Today, Sikkimese employees are the best paid employees in the entire country. Our government has effected a record increase in their salary structure by over 300 per cent. We have also given promotion to them on a historical scale.
- 17 Education and health facilities have been made easily accessible to the Sikkimese people.
- 18 Employment avenues have been created for the educated unemployed. The government has provided for a wide range of means and opportunities to the people to take up business and private entrepreneurship.
- 19 During fifteen years in office, our leader has matched his words with deeds. His work and achievements amply reflect his immense love and respect for the people all these years. Our revered leader has not changed - in his simplicity, transparency, humility - very much like yesterday. Neither the 'chair' altered him nor power made him conceited. Our leader is committed as ever, humble. Hardworking, thinking and giving - living in harmony with the ordinary Sikkimese and sharing together in their sorrows and joys.
- 20 Neither has SDF bartered its flag nor has it changed its party and colour. We have fulfilled the promises given to the people and will continue to do so to make Sikkim a fully developed State by 2015.

Please remember that we are a party that was founded in Sikkim, is for the Sikkimese identity and for a great Sikkimese future. We stand steadfast.

Our Pledge

On behalf of the Sikkim Democratic Front party, all candidates pledge before the Sikkimese people that we would be fully committed to address and fulfill all the issues raised in this Manifesto. No personal interest or self-seeking motive will come in our way and dilute our endeavor to fulfill the promises and aspirations of the people. We shall stand unruffled under the SDF tri-colour flag with a complete sense of devotion and sacrifice to accomplish our mission.

In order to realize the dream of 'Naya Sikkim and Sukhi Sikkim' of our respected party President and friend of the masses, Dr. Pawan Chamling, we rededicate ourselves in our mind, body, thought, word and deed to support the cause undertaken by him. We shall never betray the people.

We shall humbly accept the public mandate and continue to commit ourselves to selfless public service to Sikkim and India.

All Candidates of the Sikkim Democratic Front Party

Political and Ideological Stand

- **Complete safeguard under Article 371 F of the Constitution of India for the people of Sikkim**

Security to all the people of Sikkim is ensured by the provisions under Article 371F of the Constitution of India. We have been successful to ensure the administration of full political rights of the people as per this Constitutional provision. Furthermore, we will protect and uphold these provisions so that it is not tampered with or diluted in letter and spirit.

We are fully protected under the spirit of the Article taking into account the feelings and aspirations of the people, inserted in the Constitution at the time of Sikkim's merger with the Indian Union. Today, this Article has become more explicit and strongly expressed. We will continue to see that these provisions are fully used to enhance the protection under this part of the Constitution of India.

- **Sikkim's Special Constitutional Provision and character will be fully utilized**

We will ensure complete enforcement of all constitutional provisions protecting the interests and identity of Sikkim and the people. Sikkim as the constituent State of the Indian Union is protected by special constitutional provision as a special category State. The especial constitutional rights and privileges granted to the Sikkimese Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalese is fully safeguarded. The SDF party will continue to ensure protection and promote the special constitutional provision with respect to the State of Sikkim in terms of safeguarding the political, social, economic and constitutional rights of the Sikkimese people. Our government shall in this way continue to uphold the dignity and honour of the Sikkimese people.

- **Safeguard of democratic institution**

A democratic system is the only way of achieving the overall development of the Sikkimese people. That is why we are running the government in the true spirit of a democratic system. We have always upheld the democratic rights, dignity and honour of the people and we will continue to do so.

We will create a positive atmosphere for the establishment of a democratic state in all its nuances. We will continue to guarantee people's rights of freedom of expression and belief. People are today free to speak, write and assemble anywhere without any fear and intimidation. We have taken upon ourselves as prime duty to uphold this principle.

In fact, it was the SDF government which restored the full spirit and meaning of democracy in the State in 1994. It was again the SDF government which began the culture of investing

government's resources and means for the welfare of the people in an equitable manner with its pro poor policies with resounding success.

- **Continued democratization of our State**

To develop Sikkim into a fully modern and developed state, we will implant the democratic values, culture and norms in the collective psyche of the Sikkimese people. We will promote awareness and capability to make the Sikkimese people the master of the society and the State. We have come here fighting against autocratic tendencies of the regimes of the past. Today we are fighting a decisive war against the anti-democratic forces. We must and will defeat all such forces in the coming elections.

We will fully safeguard people's rights and human rights. We will set an example in the country to show that there is no force more powerful than that of the people.

- **Democratic Values, culture and tradition to be institutionalized**

In the coming days we will establish Sikkim as a fully developed modern State wherein again democratic values, culture and tradition will be fully institutionalized. We want to make the people masters and protectors through awareness and capability building. The principle of making the people the masters will be formulated in democratic Sikkim. We are against the dictatorship, against those who are anti democratic and anti people elements. In the elections we are going to destroy these reactionary powers.

We are going to protect the rights and human values for the people of Sikkim. There is no greater power than people in this world and we are going to realize this dream in the not so distant future.

- **Protection of Sikkim and the Sikkimese people – our primary concern**

In the last fifteen years, our government has consistently worked for political rights, economic betterment, social upliftment and educational advancement of the people. Together with preserving the distinct identity of the Sikkimese people, we will continue to safeguard the rights, dignity and respect. All necessary steps will be taken up for development, progress and security of the local Sikkimese people. We will hold discussion and debate from time to time to find the best way out to serve them. We will take various measures to work for the welfare as per the Constitution.

- **Safeguarding the spirit of secularism**

There is equality and freedom of religion and religious practice of all classes and communities in the state. We have guaranteed full freedom of faith and belief to all our people. Every one can exercise his or her Constitutional and legal rights to follow his or her own faith and religion.

The SDF party will continue to adopt the same policy to respect all religions and safeguard the **spirit of secularism**. We have fully established what is often referred to as unity in diversity dictum in the state. Secularism is central in founding principles of the SDF party. We will continue to uphold secularism in the State giving protection to all communities and religious groups.

- **Complete safeguard of constitutional rights and privileges of the minority Bhutia-Lepcha community**

We have guaranteed full safeguard of the political, economic, social and traditional rights of the minority Bhutia Lepcha communities in the state. We have not allowed anything that may dilute the special provision with regard to their political protection. We will continue to safeguard their constitutional rights and privileges.

We shall make a strong case for recognition of Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo languages as the modern indigenous languages by the Sahitya Akademy which would then be used to include these three languages of Sikkim in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

- **The Burman Commission Recommendation – Sikkimese Nepali Community will be accorded Scheduled Tribe Status and Sikkim to be declared a Tribal State**

Our commitment to protect the political rights of all the Sikkimese people will continue to be our watchword. We are going to protect and allow all the communities to enjoy equal political, economic and social rights, in accordance with the recommendation of the Burman Commission which will be implemented in full in Sikkim.

The Limboo and Tamang communities of Sikkim have already been awarded the Scheduled Tribe status. Now from the left over Sikkimese Nepali communities to be accorded this Scheduled Tribe status are Bahun, Chettri, Newar, Jogi, Sanyasi, Rai, Gurung, Mangar, Bhujel, Sunuwar, Yakha, Dewan, Mukhia etc.

According to the recommendation of the Commission all these Sikkimese Nepali communities of Sikkim will be given Scheduled Tribe Status. Furthermore, the State of Sikkim will be declared as a Tribal State.

- **All rights, privileges and protection accorded to Sikkimese Bhutia Lepcha communities will be fully protected**

All the rights, privileges and protection accorded to the Sikkimese Bhutia Lepcha communities will continue to be fully protected by our Government. The twelve seats provided in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for the Sikkimese Bhutia Lepcha communities will continue to be protected for eternity.

The Burman Commission has further protected and strengthened their rights and privileges.

- **The Sikkimese Limboo and Tamang communities will be provided seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly**

The Burman Commission recommendation has strengthened the seat reservation demand for the Sikkimese Limboo and Tamang communities who already have been accorded the status of scheduled tribes. In the next term we will provide the seat reservation in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for these communities on the basis of their population census.

- **Lepcha Community is recognized as 'primitive (indigenous)' Tribe of Sikkim**

Our Government has recognized the Lepcha Community as a 'primitive (indigenous)' Tribe of Sikkim. For this we have passed a resolution in the Legislative Assembly. During the next term we are going to take up this matter at the Central Level to ensure that this is also recognized at the National level.

- **Adequate representation to the Sikkimese people in the Parliament**

We will place our demand with the central government to fulfill the aspiration of the Sikkimese people to enhance the number of seats in the State Legislative Assembly from the existing 32 to 40 and 2 each in both Houses of Parliament from the present 1 each. Our Members of Parliament shall also work to fulfill this demand.

- **Complete safeguard of Revenue Order No. 1 and all old laws in Sikkim**

In the last fifteen years we have guaranteed complete safeguard of all old laws pertaining to Sikkim as provided under Article 371F (k) of the Constitution. The anti-people government of the yesteryears had infringed upon the very basis of Revenue Order No. 1. Our government has now given explicit protection to this old law. The earlier government had done away with the traditional 'Dzumsa' and 'Pipon' system in North Sikkim. We have restored the system to maintain and protect our history, tradition and culture.

We will continue to protect all old laws of Sikkim including the Revenue Order No. 1. We will further deliberate on various measures that would best protect the interests and rights of the Sikkimese people and if necessary, we will bring pro-people legislation to this effect.

- **Reservation in Education and Appointments**

Our Government has strengthened the mechanism of reservation of seats. This will be further enlarged. Based on the population census, reservation for Scheduled Tribes in higher education and employment will be 31 percent; for reservation for Scheduled Castes 6 percent; for MBC 21 percent; for OBC 21 percent. And for Limboo and Tamang community as scheduled tribes will be given 15 percent separately. In the higher education the Old Business Community will be provide 5 percent reservation. In employment for the Sikkimese women 30 percent reservation will be provided. In similar vein for women 40 percent reservation in the Panchayats is provided. For ex-servicemen, physically challenged and sports persons reservation in Government service is provided. In addition to this our Government will make appropriate laws and regulations to fully protect the rights and interests for the people of Sikkim.

We will discuss and debate on the best options to give equal protection to the Sikkimese Nepalese along with other communities of Bhutia Lepcha. We will fully protect all laws which reflect our identity and our individuality. We shall discuss and deliberate on the matter to enact legislation and provide for alienation/sale/transfer of land belonging to Nepali communities except amongst the Nepali communities only.

- **Complete safeguard of dignity of Sikkimese Bhutia, Lepcha, Nepali and the old businessmen and traders**

The first responsibility of our government is to safeguard the identity and dignity of Sikkim and the Sikkimese people. Our government through its pro people policies and programs has won many accolades which has enhanced the image of Sikkim at the national and international level.

Our business community has contributed immensely toward the overall development of our State. This has been made possible by their hard work in an atmosphere of peace and security which has been provided by our Government. Their hard work has been recognized by our Government and citations and awards have been given to several prominent and old citizens of

the community. We will continue to adopt the same policy and shall protect their interest in the state. We have passed a resolution in the Legislative Assembly for exempting them from Central Income Tax by the Old Business Community. Our SDF Party has also ratified this stand with the support of the people of Sikkim.

In schools and colleges, they enjoy the same privileges at par with other communities in the state. Reservation is granted to them in higher studies. The same shall continue.

- **North-Eastern Council and Sikkim**

The inclusion of Sikkim in the North Eastern Council (NEC) is a truly exemplary achievement of our Government. After inclusion, we have benefited both economically and in terms of institutional support.

From NEC, we are getting Rs. 400 to Rs. 600 Crores annually as financial support for the development of State.

We have till date built up a good reputation with the NEC as well as good relations with all other North Eastern States. We are exporting our development paradigm as well as achievements which include a peaceful and law abiding citizen's charter.

We will continue to foster good relations with NEC and the other North Eastern States.

- **Sikkimese politics shall remain free of criminals and power brokers**

We consider criminalization of politics to be last stage in the demise of a political party and its affiliated organizations. Therefore, our effort will continue to keep Sikkimese politics free from criminals and power brokers.

- **Our Government's Holistic Approach to development**

Our Government, in the next term, will adopt a holistic as well as a realistic approach in development planning and policy formulation. What will our people do or innovate in terms of new livelihood generation will be a central theme in our program. Participatory approach will include the people and will form a huge and important part in our endeavour to realize our developmental goals. In this way the people will get empowered to realize their potential and responsibility. The Government will function only as a facilitator. In the process of policy making we will ensure that there is sufficient self introspection and situation analysis so that this holistic approach will be fulfilled. Moreover, the people will be empowered so that there is no more exploitation.

- **Development with quality – our top priority**

The next generation of development will be done in a manner that will ensure that every sector will be developed ensuring quality, with quality inputs and quality output. Our Government will continue its mission of imparting quality health to our people, quality education to our youth and increasing the capability and skills of all. This will ensure that they will be able to take up professional jobs. Infrastructure of all kinds will be of the highest quality for example all roads will be fully carpeted; all bridges will be permanent structures; stable electricity and high quality drinking water will be made available. All villages will have proper waste management and the

protection of the environment will be fully secured. This will transform the quality of life of the people of Sikkim for the better ensuring a harmonious and happy society.

- **Decentralization and devolution of power shall be fully carried out**

Development in real sense is possible only when every single individual is part of the entire development process. With a view to involve every man in the whole development process and give it more dynamism, we have opted for power decentralization. The Government has delegated more administrative and financial powers to the Sikkimese people. We have established the rule of the rural people. Now the villagers and the Panchayats are capable of running village administration. People will now have the power to prepare, sanction, supervise and implement various schemes in their own areas.

- **Government of the people is now fully realized**

Our government has taken a historical step to take away power from the oppressors and dictator and hand it over back to the people. We have dealt a death blow to the autocratic tendency of the previous government to hold on to power so that the poor are born to suffer. Today, people's power determines how the State is governed. So much so that influenced by our pro-poor programs, policy and principle, even the oppressors have changed their tune to sing in favour of the poor people. We will continue to empower our people so that the autocrats may continue to bow down to them. The interest of the poor, their hopes and aspirations has been fully appreciated by our Party and we have succeeded in addressing them in many ways. This trend will continue forever.

- **People's rule shall be made more vibrant and empowered**

We have guaranteed people's participation in governance through the Panchayati Raj institution. Today, people are the master of their own destiny. Now we will concentrate on skill development measures for the Panchayats and people so that governance becomes effective and complete. Everyone shall be made accountable to their responsibility. In the next government, we will continue with the process of power decentralization, all programs and schemes shall be handed over to people for implementation at the village level. We will create opportunity and means in each village and make each village self-sufficient and self-possessed. We will hand over more power and responsibility to the people for the progress of the people.

- **Government of the grass root: rule of the rural people**

We have set up government offices at the Gram Panchayat level. We have set up Block Development Offices and manned them with responsible officers. For speedy progress and easy access to a large number of facilities, we will make Panchayat office as the administrative centre for local governance. Thus, we will provide basic facilities from the Panchayat office itself.

Panchayats and rural people shall be made wholly responsible for rural development. We have elected Panchayats by holding Panchayat elections so that they can take care of development of their own village. They have also been empowered to undertake development schemes in village by earmarking financial package for them. As per the recommendations and suggestions of general public, the Panchayats shall undertake welfare scheme in the interest of the majority

people. Rural schemes are prioritized as recommended by people at the gram sabhas. We have launched a state-wide campaign to build 'village by villagers themselves'. We will continue to grant more power to the people in the future.

- **Pro-poor and pro-people Government**

Since SDF party is the party of the poor, law-abiding and the democratic forces, the policy and programs of the party has always remained pro-people, pro-worker, pro-youth and pro-poor. Our politics is based on this principle and ideal, and we want to make politics clean so that society will benefit from this democratic exercise. We have been able to give to the oppressed and marginalized people, in all sectors, respect, social and political justice, rights and dignity. While framing rules, we take care that such rules address hopes and aspirations of the weak and vulnerable section of the population. We have worked out plans and program in such a way that we secure rights for our poor and justice is done to them at all levels. We have always made our policies that go to serve the people and the poor people in particular. Pro-poor and pro-people principle shall be the basis of all politics in future.

We will continue to work for the marginalized communities within Sikkimese society. Many small communities do not have a voice in Government. We will be identifying them and giving them empowerment through mechanisms that exist and which will be specifically created.

- **Sikkim as flag bearer**

Sikkim will be the flag bearer among the natural resource endowed driven economies of India. Natural resources including water, magnificent beauty of the valleys and mountains, lakes, horticulture and floriculture, forest based products, medicines and herbs, minerals and human resources will be the mainstay of our development strategy.

We are of the firm conviction that in an independent nation like ours the term patriotism can no longer be understood in the traditional sense of winning independence. In the changed circumstances, we can reflect our patriotic spirit to contribute in our individual capacity to winning economic independence of the country. In the present context, every individual and institution can jointly contribute towards building economically strong and prosperous nation. We want to contribute by our own measures towards the development process of our state and the country as a whole.

- **Sikkim shall be economically self-reliant**

Our program and aim has always been to make Sikkim strong economically. We want to make every Sikkimese economically self-sufficient. We believe that unless we raise the income of people through improved production methods, the economy of Sikkim can not be improved in true sense. Immediately after we assumed power, we earmarked seventy percent of our budget for rural development. Along with studied developmental intervention, we provided to the poor people immediate relief packages. We launched some short-term schemes for meeting the immediate requirements of the poor and on the other hand we also initiated many long-term strategies based on our natural resources for the overall progress of the state of Sikkim. While we decided to tap on the huge natural potential of Sikkim, we have not compromised on our

culture, tradition, faiths and environment. Today after fifteen years, we have seen a perceptible change in state economy and the state is far advanced on its path to self-sufficiency.

We have put development of hydro-power, natural resources, animal husbandry, horticulture, agriculture and small scale industries as our priorities. As a result, state economy is on a sound footing today. We will maintain this economic momentum and make Sikkim fully self-sufficient in the near future.

- **Implementation of monitoring & evaluation mechanism**

The SDF party shall fully implement the Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms as recommended in the Report on the Monitoring and Evaluation submitted by the Council for Social Development, New Delhi. The State Planning Commission will be charged with implementing this very important program in the next term.

- **Sikkim to generate internal revenue of Rs. 1,200 Crores**

The Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) was Rs. 426 Crore in 1995. In 2007, we have improved the figure to Rs. 1,730 Crore at current prices. During the same period, the per capita income has also almost tripled from Rs. 8,905 in 1995 to Rs. 29,561. With a growth rate of 10 percent during the Tenth Plan, Sikkim has shown impressive progress in fiscal terms. When we came to power in 1994, the state's revenue was only Rs. 44.72 Crores today the same has gone up to Rs. 410 Crores for Tax and Non Tax Revenue and Grants in aid is at an impressive RS. 975 Crores¹. By 2015, we intend to improve this figure to Rs. 1,500 Crores.

Fiscal deficit has been drastically brought down from 11 percent in 1999-2000 to 4 percent in 2002-03. Tax-GSDP ratio has increased from six percent in 1999-00 to nine percent in 2002-03 and non-Tax GSDP ratio from eight percent to 14 percent during the same period of time.

In the next government, we will increase our internal revenue to Rs. 1,200 Crores by 2014.

- **Central Excise Duties shall not be implemented in Sikkim**

The previous government put economic burden on the people of Sikkim through cigarette scandal and the Central government extended the Central Excise Duty in Sikkim. Our state incurred a loss amounting to Rs. 10 Crores, which otherwise would have been collected as tax revenue.

After Sikkim was made the member of NEC, we have been exempted from paying Central Excise Duty for the initial ten years. We shall maintain this status.

- **Exemption of Central Income Taxes to Sikkimese people**

The Sikkim Subject Certificate holders have been exempted from paying Central Income Tax and this demand has been fulfilled by SDF Government during the last term. This achievement can be called historic as the demand was pending for a very long time. While protecting this achievement of securing exemption from the Central Income Tax, our Government has not lost sight of the genuine demands of Old Business Communities, old residents and old Government employees, both State and Centre. Our Government is seized of this problem and we are going to strongly plead for equal rights of the old business community of Sikkim.

- **Border Trade via Nathula – a historical achievement**

Our demand has been fulfilled by opening border trade between India and China through the traditional Nathula pass. An agreement has been reached between India and China to resume trade through Nathula. Sikkim will draw many economic benefits from this trade route. The Chief Minister, Shri Pawan Chamling played a very crucial role in this historical breakthrough. Border Trade with China via Nathula has now been operationalised. Though initially we shall strengthen all the facets of border trade, the long term idea would be to move to transit trade regime. Emphasis will be on integrating trade and service sector activities like tourism.

- **The SDF Government is committed to make every Sikkimese a Crorepati**

During the last 15 years of SDF led Government we have been able to provide all types of facilities to every Sikkimese which can be valued at saying that all Sikkimese have been made Lakhapatis. If we can utilize all the natural resources and other assets in a scientific and sustainable manner gaining profitability for which we have already prepared documents. Besides we have also prepared appropriate programs and policies. We are now on the path of progress. We do not want to make the people only consumers but they have to be producers for which we have already given them adequate facilities and infrastructure. With this policy we can give a new direction to the economy of Sikkim.

Sikkim comprises many villages and in order to make Sikkim a progressive State we have to take care of the rural people and their aspirations. For rural development we have already set aside 70 percent of the annual budget. We have also decentralized powers and we have given enough rights to the Panchayats and village administration. With these policies we are confident that the rural people will be vigilant and will work for their own success.

In order to raise the standard of living, the SDF Government has prepared many meaningful programs. Tourism, hydro projects, horticulture, animal husbandry, agriculture, trade and other sectors are prioritized. With the implementation of all these programs we are going to make every Sikkimese a Crorepati.

- **Rural participation has been ensured in the development process**

Our party President Dr. Pawan Chamling maintains that unless we bring out improvement in the life of our rural poor, meaningful development of society and the country is impossible. Therefore, welfare of poor and the downtrodden is our government's priority. Our program to initiate development process from the remotest corner of the state is, indeed, based on the same principle.

Robi Kapda aur Markan

Promotion of industry and programs

In the last fifteen years the following economic sectors like electricity, tourism, horticulture, floriculture and agriculture the Government has spent over Rs. 30,000 Crores. In the industrialization and economic development process our Government will continue to give solid emphasis. Our policy is for inclusive growth which amounts to growth with equity.

Our Government's policy is for bottom up growth that empowers the hard working people of Sikkim to climb the ladder of success and security and raise their hopes for a better future which is full of opportunities.

Our government has taken policy decision to promote only such industrial units that best complement local topography, culture and environment which benefits our grassroots people. In order to encourage private investment in Sikkim, we have already held a large number of meetings between Sikkim government officials and the NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and other institutions in Delhi, Kolkata and other international forums like in Singapore, London, New York, Amsterdam and Alsemer. In these meetings, we have apprised the potential investors about the promising areas, our clean environment, social and legal status in Sikkim. Many of the investors have evinced keen interest. Some of them have already come to Sikkim starting industrial units. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is all praise for this endeavour of the State government.

- **Promotion of new environment-friendly units**

Our government has given all-out support to the existing industrial units in the State. We have also given all support at the government level for setting up of feasible industries in the State. We have given preference to setting up of agro-based industries, animal husbandry-related industries, horticulture, tourism, hydro-power and software technology.

Sikkim has huge potential to tap these areas for economic development of the state. We have adopted a new Industrial Policy for the State, wherein we can reap dividends in the long run. All prospective investors will immensely benefit from this new policy. Our Government will continue with industry friendly policy so that they can create more employment opportunities for our people. However, we will also ensure that they are units which are environmentally friendly and do not pollute our rivers and our atmosphere.

- **Promotion of hydro-power potential**

Sikkim is endowed with huge hydro-power potential estimated at 8,000 MW. We must tap into this judiciously. This natural resource can change the economic condition of our state and its

people. We therefore have evolved a comprehensive policy to utilize this resource judiciously to ensure full advantage and economic upliftment of the Sikkimese people.

The national effort and policy is also to tap into all the hydro power potential in the Himalaya and the North Eastern States. This is on account of the huge deficit in power generation in the country. Therefore, Sikkim has to play its part in this national effort.

The 60 MW capacity Rangit project has been commissioned. 510 MW Teesta Hydroelectric Project Stage-V was completed in 2006. The government has also begun construction of a number of macro, mini and micro hydel projects within the state sector. The result of all this is that our internal revenue has quadrupled and the people of Sikkim are benefited by steady power in their homes. This has also created avenues for economic development for our Sikkimese youth.

All these hydro power projects when commissioned will generate close to 5,000 MW and will contribute close to Rs. 1,000 Crores to the State exchequer.

Tourism industry

- **Tourism industry will be developed as a new profession.**

In order to generate revenue and employment tourism can play a vital role. Therefore we have made policies and programs to develop all forms of environmental friendly tourism in Sikkim. With the development of eco-tourism the Sikkim Government has started generating substantial revenue and employment.

- **Peaceful atmosphere, natural beauty and various types of flora and fauna**

Our government recognizes that the tourism industry will generate local employment and earn revenue for the state. We have started promotion of this industry in all earnest. Sikkim's clean environment, natural beauty, flora and fauna, various streams, rivers, lakes and the Himalayas are our natural endowment.

The other important factor responsible for development of tourism is our cultural and traditional heritage. Together with a peaceful environment, our culture and tradition play crucial role in the promotion of great tourism products.

Our efforts have indeed borne fruit and the industry today is the backbone of our private sector economy providing jobs and money to many people. Furthermore we have been winning the Best Performing State in tourism for the many consecutive years.

- **Sikkim to be developed as a Eco-Tourist State**

For the overall development of the tourism trade, we will encourage Village tourism, penetrating into the remote parts of the state. We have prepared a blueprint to develop one tourist spot in every village. Our aim is to develop Sikkim as a wholesome eco-tourism state.

- **New tourist spots shall be established**

We have eased the restricted areas like Nathula and Gurudongmar for the tourists. Taking into consideration security issues we will further relax some hitherto prohibited areas for the tourists in the future.

Construction of 135 ft high statue of Guru Rimpoche at Samdrupste has become a main attraction for the tourists in South Sikkim. In West Sikkim the construction of the Statue of Sri Janga, statue of Bhanubhakta at Geyzing and Statue of Shivaji along with 12 Jyotilinga Char Dham at Solaphuk, Namchi, have become attractions for tourists. The statue of Cherinji will be constructed in the coming term. The Statue of Lord Buddha will be commissioned in the next term and is at present under rapid construction.

- **We will encourage private investment in tourism sector**

We will increase the permit period for the foreign tourists. Tourism industry shall be made more environment-friendly and people-centric. More ropeways shall be constructed. More parks and garden along with artificial lakes shall be developed. More water falls and trekking routes shall be identified and developed.

- **One constituency: one tourist spot**

In order to transform Sikkim into a Tourism State and provide employment to local Sikkimese, one tourist spot in each constituency shall be developed. Some are already in an advanced stage of development whilst others have been completed.

- **Village-centric tourism**

We have made tourism trade in the State increasingly village-centric. We will continue with our policy so that the resultant benefit of tourism shall flow down to the village people as well.

- **Tourism-related training**

We shall train our youths in the professional management of growing tourism industry. Intensive training shall be conducted to equip our people with the required know-how and basic information to handle tourism business at the village level. This will improve their individual capacity to take advantage of this trade.

- **New development partners**

Our government shall continue to base our development strategies on the available natural resources. To tap on these huge natural resources, we shall increasingly involve international donor agencies as our development partners.

Furthermore, like in the past, NGOs will be our main partners in the development process. We shall consciously promote the committed NGOs in the delivery of rural services and for larger goals of development.

- **Establishment of software units**

Given the fragile ecology and geographical location, establishment of heavy industries in the state is practically untenable. In such a situation, establishment of low volume and high value industrial units is the only distinct possibility in the state. Our government shall go ahead to set up as many software units in the state. Software training shall be imparted to the youths of Sikkim to take up such ventures.

- **Every household shall be promoted as an industrial unit**

Every single household in Sikkim shall be promoted as a producing unit taking each household as an industry.

- **Establishment of industries as the grassroots enterprises**

We will establish feasible village industrial unit keeping in mind the area-specific climate, atmosphere and environment. The nature of such units shall depend on available manpower and people's interests. The government shall provide consultancy service, loan, technical support and marketing facilities for setting up such units.

Extensive cultivation of cash crops like orange, passion fruits, pear, banana, pineapple and orange shall be promoted among the rural population. To further promote horticulture, seeds of different vegetable shall be developed in the state. The government shall extend necessary support through the cooperatives for cultivation of cash crops.

- **Establishment of new industrial units based on local resources**

Different industrial units shall be established in every constituency to improve the living standard of Sikkimese poor and for improving the very economic health of the state. Our government has also started security ink-manufacturing unit in the state.

- **Protection of employees, workers and labour in Sikkim**

We have passed a Bill in the Legislative Assembly wherein 100 percent of the jobs in the Government sector are totally reserved for the local Sikkimese people. In the private sector it will be 80 percent reservation of local people and 20 percent of those who have their name on the voter list.

Furthermore, we are going to set up a Labour Board to start education and training for our workers. The purpose of this is to impart high technology training, ensure better quality and methods as well as to over see the health care and work environment of the workers in factories and Government departments.

Our policy and programs reflect our pro-worker and pro-youth stand. We will do everything within our powers to ensure the full security of the rights of the workers and our youth at large.

- **Agriculture shall be promoted as an industry**

Sikkim has been recognized as Agriculture Export Zone. This is a big leap forward for the state of Sikkim. Locally produced flower, ginger and cherry pepper can fetch good prices at the international market. Our government has been able to arrange for international market for the sale of local produce.

Agricultural activities in the state shall be promoted as an industry. Cooperative farming at the grass root level shall be encouraged and necessary support shall be provided by the government. Steps are also afoot to develop agro-based industries on our natural resources.

- **Scientific farming of all cash crops**

Our government has been trying to encourage people to change their trade to live a more productive life. In this new century, our people will modify their traditional ways employing new methods and technology to their advantage. Our government's endeavour has been to inject modern means and technology into the agricultural sector to enhance productivity. Our idea has been to promote cash crops on priority that would fetch better price and other income-generating farming.

- **Price support for the produce of farmers**

SDF Government will provide adequate price support for the produce of farmers in Sikkim including for flowers and fruits, vegetables and cash crops.

- **Marketing Management**

Our government will arrange for marketing of our locally produce at the domestic and international

market. Together with fetching a competitive price at the international market for our local produce, we will also aim at securing competitive edge among our farmers. Besides, we have provided all possible incentives to bolster local production in our rural farms. We will also arrange for good market for local crafts produced by local artisans.

- **Seed production will be given priority**

Sikkim will be made a major producing centre for high quality seeds such as potatoe, cardamom, fruits and flowers. Furthermore, the surplus of the farmers will be exported.

- **Cardamom and Ginger Processing Centres**

We can effectively improve the earnings of our farmers if local products like ginger and cardamom are processed into a finished product locally in the state itself. Prosperity of majority of rural farmers is dependent on these cash crops.

Cardamom and ginger processing centre shall be set up in the state to make best use of these cash crops through production of finished products with these crops. This way we can give best price for the farmers for their products as well.

- **Encouragement to and promotion of collective cash crop farming**

The government shall provide all support to farmers for undertaking cultivation of cash crops, like orange, passion fruit, pears, etc. The government shall also give all support to villagers for undertaking collective farming of cash crops in their respective area on a priority basis. We will also support them through free distribution of agricultural tools and implements. We will continue to support our farmers in all ways possible in the future too.

- **Rural composting schemes for the people**

We will promote Sikkim as a total organic State to keep our people away from possible health hazards in the future. Therefore, we shall grant rural composting schemes widely for the people to prepare manure locally. We will further promote agriculture sector by forming a continuous chain of coordinated action with various agro-based industries.

- **Most progressive farmer award**

Our government shall continue to grant the most progressive farmer award to the committed and progressive farmer of the state annually.

- **Agricultural fair**

Paddy, wheat, millet, buckwheat, oilseeds like rayo, mustard, soya bean and sunflowers will be given emphasis in cultivation.

Agricultural fair shall be held in the state for wider exposure of farmers. Quality seeds and tools shall be provided to people in such fair in a subsidized rate.

- **Technical support to farmers**

Steps shall be taken to impart training on modern technical knowhow to people. Devoted and progressive farmers shall be deputed to agricultural centres and institute for wider experience.

- **Earthworm farming**
The government shall provide technical support and encourage people to take up earthworm farming to improve the fertility of land.
- **Assistance for promotion of tea plantation**
Additional tea plantation shall be encouraged in the state. Economic assistance shall be given to people desirous to take up tea plantation. Adequate assistance shall be granted to people to open tea factories in consultation with the Tea Board of India.
We will give all support to small growers in the state.
We shall also initiate cooperative tea farming on a large scale. We shall introduce organic tea farming in the state, to establish a distinct quality brand of the tea produce.
- **Mushroom farming**
The state has potential for mushroom farming on a large scale, with all available natural resources and markets. The government shall give all support to people to take up mushroom farming on commercial scale.
- **More terracing grants shall be extended to the rural poor**
More terracing grants shall be extended to the rural poor to make their farmland more stable and fertile. The government shall also finance schemes to improve fertility of their lands along with technical support.
- **Agriculture based village industries will be setup**
With the establishment of agriculture based industries the Government will help the people so that they can earn better prices. In higher altitude *argeli* and in lower altitude *hathibar* plants will be cultivated. Orange, passion fruit, banana, guava, papaya, apples, turmeric, *theki phal* will be cultivated for more self reliance in fruits.
- **Land reforms and proper utilization of lands**
Our government has worked sincerely for judicious distribution of land its productivity. The landless Sikkimese has been provided with half-acre of land at Government's cost thereby addressing the need of the landless Sikkimese people.
In the next government, we shall further pursue this policy. We will introduce appropriate legislation against the oppressors to curb possible exploitation of people with minimum land.
We shall improve the quality and fertility of land in the state.
- **One Cooperative society in each GPU**
One cooperative society shall be established in each Gram Panchayat Unit ensuring international price for farmers' products, and we shall protect the interest of the farmers locally. We will effectively arrest the monopoly of black marketers.
- **Animal husbandry shall be promoted as an industry**
The government shall give maximum support and assistance for development of animal husbandry in the state. Assistance shall be extended in areas like poultry, dairy, angora rearing, piggery,

goatery and fisheries. Additional units shall be set up to diversify dairy production in a mass scale. Additional cheese plants shall be set up.

Additional egg production units shall be established.

Industrial units for augmentation of animal husbandry-related products shall be set up.

An all inclusive Veterinary Hospital shall be established in the state. Demonstration farms shall be set up in throughout.

• **Greater investment in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry**

Our government shall pump in greater investment in agricultural sector, horticulture and animal husbandry to develop these sectors as industries. Our government shall further make these sectors more attractive for our younger generations so that they take up self-employment ventures in these areas.

Transportation Infrastructure development is our priority

Infrastructure plays a key role as an enabler for overall development of our mountain State. We are well served internally due to the construction of rural roads. This has enabled many of our village people to sell their produce on the roads, reach medical and educational facilities and take advantage of banking and other such instruments. Today, the jeeps and buses ferry Lakhs of people every year from district towns and villages to main towns.

We have serious challenges with our connectivity with the rest of the country. Due to many disturbances in the immediate neighbourhood the National Highway 31A is closed for many days. This is becoming a bottleneck. Quick access for high quality tourism is another issue. For this we need our own airport.

We have managed to bring this to the attention of Central Leaders and within the next term we will have Sikkim better connected internally as well as externally. This will provide greater fillip for education, economic activities and health access.

- **National Highway and alternative highways**

National Highway 31A which is the lifeline of Sikkim connecting Siliguri will be widened right up to Nathula. An alternative highway to connect Sikkim will be started soon.

- **Alternative state highways shall be constructed**

We will continue our demand for construction of state highways and connect Sikkim with alternative roads.

- **Bus Service to Mansarovar lake**

We will also explore the possibility of Bus Service to Lake Mansarovar and Mount Kailash in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China for pilgrimage purpose.

- **Connecting Sikkim by rail network**

The Government of India has agreed to bring rail access to Sikkim. This will be completed in the next term. This will really facilitate people from visiting other parts of the country through the wide network of Indian Railways.

- **Connecting all districts by state highways**

New state highways shall be constructed and where necessary broadened, carpeted to connect all three districts with the capital. Additional bus services shall be pressed into service all across the state for the benefit of poor commuters.

- **Concrete bridges**

All existing ordinary bridges shall be renovated or repaired and transformed into concrete bridges. As per necessity, many of them shall be improved into RCC/steel bridges as well.

- **Sikkim in the air map**

The dream to connect Sikkim with the rest of the country through an air link has become a reality. Construction of new airport at Pakyong is going on in full swing. The project will be completed by 2012.

- **Helicopter services shall begin all over the state**

Our government has started a regular helicopter service plying between Gangtok and Bagdogra. We have constructed seven additional helipads across the state, helicopter service shall commence in all these location during the next term of our government. It has been found that the helicopter services are very useful during road blocks and sight seeing for tourism purposes. More viable options will be explored.

- **Ropeways operational, additional ropeway services shall be expanded**

Our government has constructed ropeways and ropeway service has commenced in Gangtok. Feasibility test has been successfully completed at Namchi for installing one more prestigious ropeway. The construction work has commenced. Similar ropeways at strategic tourist destinations like Varsey and Mainam shall be constructed in the next government. Ropeways will be expanded to create more transportation facility for people where roads have not reached. These will be operated by the Panchayats.

- **Construction and expansion of roads**

Our government will undertake expansion work of all existing state highways in all the four districts. All roads shall be developed as green roads by planting plants and flowers in both sides of roads.

- **Roads in each village**

Our government has already initiated tangible steps to construct roads in all villages. In the next term of government, all villages shall be connected by all-weather roads. Carpeting of all existing roads has commenced. The carpeting of all remaining roads in the state will continue to create access for our poor to reach all kinds of facilities and amenities like education, health and sales of village produce.

Welfare and Grants Distribution – Social Justice

SDF Government has promised to provide the following:

1. Rural Housing Scheme will be continued
2. House Up-gradation will be increased from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 30,000 per annum
3. Chief Minister's Housing Scheme from Rs. 3 Lakh to Rs. 5 Lakh per annum
4. Those villages where tourism activities have increased and promoted two rooms will be added for every interested household
5. In all households bathroom along with bathing room will be constructed
6. From two it will be increased to three points electricity will be provided to the villagers free and up to 100 units will be free of cost
7. Rice will be given to BPL families at Rs. 3 per kg
8. All necessities food commodities like rice, salt, oil, pulses, sugar will be provided to the people at a reasonable rate.
9. People will continue to get roofing sheets.
10. While distributing facilities the poor and BPL families will have the first chance.
11. Whilst distributing these facilities it will be based on the status of the people but not on caste basis.

• Let the rural poor get rich faster

Our government has drawn up both short-term and long-term programs in the state for alleviating poverty in Sikkim. We are also providing all support to the poor for taking up productive schemes and giving them all possible opportunities. As part of our continued effort to address the problem of poverty, we shall vigorously pursue another pro-poor campaign under the title 'let the poor get rich faster'. We shall concentrate on the following policies to achieve rural prosperity.

In Sikkim's rural economy small businesses are creating employment and self employment through small entrepreneurial ventures. To spur the development of small businesses and value added agriculture we want to increase the funding during the term of the next Government. We will create a Value Added Producer Grant Program which will provide much needed capital for the productive farmers. They in turn will create value added enterprises such as Cooperative Marketing initiatives for high value crops and livestock produce or even farmer owned processing

plants like milk chilling. We will provide training and technical assistance for small rural businesses and also provide price support.

- **Universal Financial Inclusion**

We will be providing Universal Financial Inclusion to all the households in Sikkim. This will be done by using modern banking extension technology. The bank accounts will be opened in the name of the mother of the household. The Government will seed the account with some grant. There will be a paid for insurance which will cover health for 5 members of the family, life insurance for 5 members of the family and loss of property. Sikkim will be the first State to get this full cover.

- **We embarked on the new concept known as *Janata Mela* – this will continue**

The SDF government has been willing to go to any extent for the welfare of the poor Sikkimese people. Our government has embarked on a new concept called *Janata Mela* to deliver government's immediate benefits and schemes to the rural poor at their own doorstep. Nowhere else in the country is this system is practiced. These include Rural Housing schemes, Indira Awas Yojana, LPG Cylinder, GCI sheets, Chief Minister's Self-Employment Schemes, Chief Minister Antodaya Annadan Yojana, Old Age Pension, distribution of quality seeds, agricultural implements, sewing machines, cows and piglets, land for the landless, so on and so forth. Besides, all government departments hold demonstrations and visual communication of their respective departmental programs and schemes for the benefit of people. This has been found to be very effective system for reaching benefits to the poor.

Our government will continue to hold such *Janata Melas* in the future, further increasing the quantum of benefits/schemes for the welfare of the people.

- **Rural housing for the rural populace**

After our party came to power, we have granted land to the landless Sikkimese giving them the comfort and warmth of owning a home. Our government also started program to grant Rs. 20,000 and 30 GCI sheets for construction of rural houses. Thousands of people have benefited from this program. We have moved further to develop one compact model village in each constituency. While developing such model village, one single house cost Rs. 3 lakhs. The Sikkimese poor shall own such homes costing 3 lakhs. Apart from dwelling purpose, this will also promote village tourism giving benefit to the poor Sikkimese. In the 1999 elections, we had committed to the poor to grant 1 Lakh each for construction of houses. Today, the poor are getting 3 Lakhs each by owing one concrete home.

We shall continue with our policy to extend housing grant to the needy people. For those who are unable to construct homes with the government grants, the government shall volunteer to build houses for them with these grants.

- **Land to the landless Sikkimese**

We have helped poor homeless people by granting them land as well as financial support for construction of their houses. Our government has provided them with means of survival and a house to live in. Under this scheme thousands landless Sikkimese people have found their earth

and hearth. This program to grant land to address the landless issue of every Sikkimese shall continue in the next government.

- **Land to the landless urban Sikkimese**

The government shall also provide housing or government site etc. to the landless urban Sikkimese.

- **Eradication of Poverty with prosperity life scheme**

Our aim is to eradicate poverty from Sikkim. In a very short time we are going to free the people Sikkim from the curse of poverty. That is why we have formulated various development schemes so that we can free them from poverty. Our aim is to make the poor people rich as soon as possible. By implementing these schemes we want to make our people self sufficient and self reliant. For this we have already formulated a scheme called Prosperity Life Scheme which will be started in our next term.

1. We will make the people industrious and producers. We want to bring about change from the old professions and we want to give them new professions so that they will progress in life. For this we have already extended facilities and we are providing them with professional training also. Those who want to go for creating wealth special attention will be given to them.
2. A village centric policy is a way of making our people prosperous and self reliant. Till the BPL families do not come up in life we will continue to serve them through these policies and programs. That is why even in the next government this program will be continued.
3. We have also made a plan to prevent the enterprising village youth from migrating to the urban centres. That is why we want to create livelihood programs in the villages itself. The amenities which are available in the cities will be made available in the village itself.
4. Once we can generate development projects in the villages there is bound to be a narrowing of the gap between the village and the city. When opportunities are not available in the village then village youth will have a tendency to seek opportunities in the city.
5. Unemployed youth will be provided every opportunity by giving them necessary facilities. This program will be implemented so that there will be no employment problem in the future.
6. Our Government has already made a plan by giving empowerment to the Panchayats to float tender up to Rs 10 Lakh, BDO office up to Rs 20 Lakh, Subdivision up to Rs. 50 Lakh and District level up to Rs. 10 Crores. With the implementation of these rules and regulations the contractors of district level will get all the opportunities.

- **Lending continuity to our village-centric policies**

Our government shall move further to lend continuity to our village-centric policies to make every Sikkimese prosperous and self-contained in the true sense. Until we establish peace and prosperity in every hearth of the simple and innocent Sikkimese, we will continue to pursue this program. In the coming Government, this program shall be further consolidated.

- **Contractual work in village to the villagers**

Our government has established the system of granting contractual work in village to the villagers themselves. We will carry on with the same system. Contractual work amounting to Rs. 50 lakhs and Rs. 20 lakhs respectively shall be sanctioned and implemented at the Zilla Panchayat

level and Gram Panchayat level itself. We will create more avenues for other contractual works at the village level and execute such works involving local contractors and youth.

- **Industries in every village**

In order to make Sikkim a producer state, we are working out plans and programs to set up productive industrial units in every village. Our programs shall aim at creating such opportunities that would encourage productive venture. We will continue with this policy. Further, cooperative tea plantation units shall be set up. One industrial unit shall be established in each Gram Panchayat unit.

- **Library shall be established in each village**

Our government shall open up one library in each Gram Panchayat. Many of the units have now exclusive library of their own. These centres shall be further expanded.

- **LPG Cylinder to every villager**

To overcome fuel problem of rural people and to ease growing pressure on our ecology, our government has started the scheme for distribution of free LPG cylinder to the rural people. In the next government, we will continue to cover all villagers under this scheme.

- **Toilet and bathroom in every household**

We made Sikkim into a pure State in the area of total sanitation. We received the award "Nirmal Rajya Puruskar" in 2008. With a view to provide and maintain rural sanitation and quality public health, the government would volunteer to construct toilet and bathrooms in each household in the villages. We will continue our drive to see that our State progresses much more in this direction.

- **Facilities of drinking water and electricity**

We have attained 100 percent coverage in providing electrification and safe drinking water both in urban and rural habitations. Any left-out houses and locality shall be compulsorily covered in the next government. We will continue our efforts to provide high quality safe drinking water and stable electricity connections.

- **Free electricity to rural people up to 100 units**

We will continue to provide free electricity to the rural people in the next government. Each household shall get 100 unit free electricity. Each rural household shall be covered with electrification.

- **Health centres in each GPU**

Health centres and sub-centres shall be established in each GPU all over the state.

- **Support to poor people at time of birth and death**

The government shall provide financial support through the Panchayati Raj to the helpless and needy families on occasions of birth and death and other social obligations.

- **Human resource development centres at the village level**

The government shall construct one Panchayat Bhawan, library, nurseries and play ground in each gram Panchayat unit to develop the culture of reading, writing and sportsmanship at the village level.

- **Community Centre in each Constituency**

One community centre shall be constructed in each constituency of the state.

- **Stadium at the sub-division level**

One stadium shall be developed at the sub-division level.

1. Our Environment Policy

- **Conservation of ecology together with sustainable development**

Our party is of the firm conviction that all development programs shall be meaningless unless we protect our environment. We are concentrating on the long-term developmental programs giving emphasis to conservation measures. Our government has so modeled our development projects that may bring minimum possible negative impact on our environment. We have discarded a few such projects with negative environmental fallouts. We will have to continue with this policy because we cannot risk the existence of posterity for some immediate developmental gains. Development should be such that it ensures the security of the future generation as well. This is indeed sustainable development.

- **Sikkim shall be promoted as the first total Organic State in the country**

Our government shall promote Sikkim as the first total Organic State in the country. This will be fully completed by 2015. We have been guided by our realization to care for our fragile ecology to reach this decision. The use of chemical fertilizers shall be discouraged in a phased manner to encourage use of organic manures. This way, our local production shall be more health-nourishing and less hazardous. We will establish a new brand at the international market for all organic products produced in Sikkim. We will fully protect animal wild life in the state. All the medicinal plants, herbs and shoots found in Sikkim shall be conserved and promoted for posterity. We will promote cultivation of medicinal plants to create a stable medicinal base in Sikkim. Many of the medicinal plant system as used by the Sikkimese people from time immemorial are being ruined today for lack of enough conservation measures and commercialization. We will conserve these plants and promote this medicinal system as an industry in the state.

- **Conservation of forest**

If we cannot balance our environment, all development gains shall be temporary, and our society shall head towards destruction. In order to ensure sustainability we have done the following:

1. Carried out massive plantation work.
2. Launched the concept of Smriti Van to improve forest cover.
3. Increased the area under Reserved Forest.
4. Put a complete ban on the use of plastics.
5. Declared South and West districts as the drought-prone areas.
6. Initiated the green revolution.

7. Convinced the centre to close down the proposed army shooting range in North Sikkim, which would have, otherwise, impose environmental disaster on our environment.
8. Hunting down of wild animals has been banned.
9. Felling of green trees has been prohibited.
10. Revived precious flora and fauna by banning grazing in all reserved forests in the state.
11. Earmarked and developed a dumping ground for urban wastes.
12. Have a very strong intellectual Patent Committee and State Intellectual Law Committee to deliberate and decide upon intellectual property rights (IPR) related issues.

The program of *hariyo pariyo kosh* will further be strengthened in order to directly involve the school children and college students in the environmental management program. All the national and international legal regimes and conventions will be strictly implemented. A high level Committee led by a renowned scientist of international repute has been constituted to assess the impact of likely glacial melt and other phenomena on the hydrology of Sikkim. We are moving ahead to make our state pollution-free state by giving stress on conservation measures and environmental cleanliness drive.

- **Clean Development Mechanism**

In our effort to get more resources to fund our conservation efforts we are going to use the Kyoto Protocol initiative to sell our CERs and VERs to European buyers. This will enable us to find funds for many programs that can be taken at the grass roots level and Panchayats can be involved.

- **Green roads**

We have promoted and implemented the green roads concept throughout the state. We shall continue to carry out the campaign through area specific plants/flowers in both sides of the roads.

Our Comprehensive Education Policy

Our education policy is not only to make Sikkim a literate State but it is to transform every citizen to be fully educated in a holistic sense. Furthermore, every citizen has to be knowledgeable, capable and creative. This goal can be achieved by making the education policy simple, of high quality, modern and with scientific temper. Sikkim's education system should be so oriented so that it will make our children competitive and world class citizens.

Good character, skilled manpower and an informed citizen is the way forward for success. We have to create, through our education process, manpower for the 21st Century.

So we will have a competitiveness agenda wherein we will educate and energize our Sikkimese people. They will be made more capable so that they can innovate and feel empowered. This will also ensure that in the knowledge economy all can be accommodated.

- **Setting up University in Sikkim**

Our government has already set up a University and all necessary formalities are tied in. We want to make this institution world class. We want to develop Sikkim as a centre of excellence in higher education.

- **Practical Education**

After school, college and university education our students will be able to take practical training elsewhere in the field of their choice. In order to facilitate the youth to build their capacity a new Capacity Building Institution (Finishing School) will be established.

Sikkimese youth and students who want to pursue higher education in any part of India and the world will be facilitated by our Government.

- **Additional colleges in Sikkim shall be established**

Our government will establish colleges in all the four districts. One degree College and Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya has been established at Namchi and Geyzing respectively. Two technical institutes have been set up in the state, one at Bardang in East Sikkim and another at Chisopani in South Sikkim. Our government has also set up Medical College and an Engineering College in the state. Our government will further establish more professional colleges in the state.

We will set up an Agriculture College and Science College. One Art College is established at Rhenock, a Science College at Soreng, degree colleges at Mangan and Geyzing.

In our colleges we will start Post Graduate courses in Microbiology, biotechnology, Statistics, Tissue Culture etc.

- **Free education up to College level**

With a view to make education easily affordable for the poor people, the government sponsors free education up to Class V with additional incentives of free school uniforms, free exercise books and free textbooks. For students up to Class VIII, free education, exercise books, books are free. Education is free up to the college level. We have also increased the number of students and scholarship grant in the state. We will continue with our policy to make education easily affordable and accessible to the poor children in the State.

- **Meritorious students to get scholarship, loans, fellowship and financial aid for pursuing higher education**

The Government has been providing financial aid to students who want to pursue further education in national and international colleges and universities in the fields of their own choosing in the form of scholarships, loans and fellowships. This policy will be continued and expanded in a larger scale.

- **Chief Minister's Free Scholarship for Student**

If a student gets admission on merit in one of the 20 top universities in the world then she will be eligible to avail the facility of the Chief Minister's Free Scholarship program. This scholarship will be continued.

If poor and needy students get admission in any good and recognized universities in the world then they are eligible to get interest free loans to pursue their education. Those poor and needy students who want to pursue higher education in any nationally recognized universities they are also eligible to avail this interest free loan.

Those poor and needy students who get admission in Sikkim Manipal Engineering and Medical College are also eligible for the interest free loan.

During the next term this will be continued.

- **Quality Education will be imparted starting from Primary Education**
 In order to ensure that our children get quality education our Government in the next term will initiate new programs to facilitate this starting with the primary education. The result of this will be that the quality of education imparted in the Government schools and colleges will become the best in the country and will have world class education standards.
 School leaders today, need not only manage schools but they also need to focus on high quality professional development. They need to design such curricula and school organization so that both the teachers and students can get effective learning.
- **Teachers shall be given grade on the basis of qualification**
 Teachers shall be given grade and scale on the basis of their educational qualification. The rate of scholarship shall be increased.
- **Education shall be made more life-oriented**
 Education shall be made more life-oriented, qualitative and age-oriented. The human rights provision for all the children in the state shall be safeguarded including their right for education. Sikkim shall be developed and promoted as the education destination of the country. We will invite reputed educational institutions in the country and abroad to set up their institution in Sikkim and promote the state as the education destination of the country.
 Our government will provide all assistance to the unemployed youths to take up such venture.
- **Adult education shall be further consolidated**
 In order to liberate our citizens from the clutches of ignorance, our government has put maximum emphasis on the promotion of adult education for the adult citizens in the state. We will further consolidate our effort to support our elders.
- **Secondary School in each GPU and Senior Secondary School in each Constituency**
 Every Constituency shall have at least one Senior Secondary School and every Panchayat unit one secondary school in the state.
- **Compulsory Computer education and environment education in schools**
 We have included environmental studies in the school curriculum. We have also made computer education compulsory in secondary school and above. In the next government, we will make computer education compulsory at the primary level as well.
- **Financial aid to BPL students**
 College students who are from BPL families shall be provided with Financial Aid.
- **Technological Park**
 To keep pace with the advancing age, we have given priority to the development of information technology. We have established forty Community Information Centres which are fully computerized. The rural people are getting support from these centres. In schools, we have made computer education compulsory so that our students can prepare themselves for the global competition in the future. Our idea has been to keep pace with the changing time. To promote scientific temper, we are setting up technological park in the state.

- **Services of Ad Hoc teachers will be regularized**

The services of all Ad Hoc teachers will be regularized by our Government.

- **State Education Policy and Education Board will be established**

We need our own Education Policy and Education Board since Sikkim has its own history and culture. Our education policy has to be holistic. Thus, in order to attain this goal we need our own Education Board and Education policy. We will make our policy and for that we are in search of capable intellectuals and teachers.

- **World Class Education Institutions will be established**

We will set up world class education institutions so that there is access to such education for our citizens and youth. Our peaceful atmosphere and natural environment will facilitate this process of establishment.

We will strive to create world class schools as we realize that the only way to prosperity is through this kind of highly effective education. We recognize too that this leads to high quality employment. Strong local communities will be developed to take into account this process so that we are able to do a better job with our schooling program and educating our children. Successful programs will be scaled up significantly.

- **Computer Education to be intensified**

So far we are teaching computer literacy up to middle school level. We are now going to take this to the level of the primary section.

In this digital age not knowing how to use and take advantage of computers is illiteracy. This skill is now required in almost every sector and work environment and becomes critical for the overall success of our economy.

- **Professional Education in Schools**

In all the senior secondary schools professional courses will be offered. These courses will be as follows:

1. Tourism and adventure sports
2. Medicinal and aromatic plants propagation
3. Local handicrafts
4. Bee Keeping
5. Video and photography
6. Milk production and marketing
7. Poultry
8. Floriculture
9. Mushroom cultivation
10. Modern office management
11. Watch repairing
12. Computer training

13. Telephone and internet café
14. Automobile repairing
15. Hotel Management
16. Type writing

Health for ALL Policy

Health services shall be made available to every single citizen. We have worked hard to make quality health services accessible to one and all free of cost. We have also provided government assistance to patients visiting bigger health centres outside the state. We have installed hi-tech medical equipments in the state itself to provide best medical diagnosis and local facilities.

A Central Referral Hospital has been established in the state. Large district hospitals have been constructed each in Geyzing and Mangan. A large number of health centres and sub-centres have been established across the state.

Our Health Policy will also take care of any medical malpractice that is going on and we will fully protect the patients' rights.

- **Mukhya Mantri Jeewan Raksha Kosh**

Mukhya Mantri Jeewan Raksha Kosh, Mukhya Mantri Netra Jyoti Yojna, Mukhya Mantri Shrawan Shakti Samriddhi Yojna and social health schemes sector welfare work have been started. Since 2004 Hepatitis 'B' vaccination started. Sikkim was the first state in the country to initiate Hepatitis 'B' vaccination to children between the age group of 0-1 year at Government's expense. Similar vaccination program shall be carried out in the state to cover all children in the age group below 15 years.

All the citizens have access to subsidized rate of getting vaccinated.

- **Medical treatment for Poor Families free of cost**

BPL families are facilitated for all kinds of medical treatment whether they are within or outside the State free of cost. All school students are provided under IFA comprehensive medical treatment for removal of worms. Mothers and pregnant women are provided with iron folic medicines and other medicines for their complete treatment. Calcium tablets are given to women below the age of 25.

Children below the age of one year are provided with DPT treatment.

Mobile hospitals have been started for the benefit of the rural people. Spectacles are also given free to people with eyesight impairment.

This mobile hospital will be continued and strengthened in all four districts of Sikkim during the next term. A mobile medical team will be provided with all the equipments for complete diagnosis. This facility will be provided at the doorstep of every villager. Every citizen will be checked up for medical issues free of cost.

Furthermore a 500 bedded super-specialty hospital is being started in Gangtok for all the citizens of the State.

- **Hepatitis 'B' Vaccination**

All children from the age of 1 to 10 will be vaccinated against Hepatitis B free of cost by our Government in the next term.

- **We will strike at the very root cause of all diseases**

Our government subscribes to the time-tested adage that prevention is better than cure. Hence, we have worked out a comprehensive health care delivery system to protect our people from contracting any disease in the first place.

We are trying to establish a fully healthy life for our people, not only physical but also social health, mental health, moral and spiritual. For creation of a health society and citizens, we have drafted and implemented a number of political, economic and cultural reforms in the system.

- **Special care for the senior citizens, children and women**

Our government has given special emphasis on the quality of health for our senior citizens, children and women. Our government is committed to take care for the weak and infirmed on Government's expense. We will further consolidate our efforts.

- **Health mela**

For creation of awareness and to make health services accessible to the poor people, health mela shall be organized annually in the state.

- **Health Insurance**

In order to ensure maximum health Security to the people of Sikkim, our government will institute Health Insurance Policy for all the Sikkimese people above 45 years. All people who attain the age of 45 will be given a full and comprehensive health check up.

This is to take care of the health care disparities that exist in the present day system. Furthermore, we will continue to build more health care infrastructure in villages and districts to take care of the ever increasing load.

- **Modernization of hospital**

The conversion of Sir Thutop Namgyal Memorial (STNM) Hospital into an ultra modern Hospital equipped with sophisticated and the latest equipment will be completed. This hospital will be linked with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi through Telemedicine for both treatment and research.

- **Improvement of district hospitals**

Modern hospitals in other districts have been constructed. These hospitals shall be equipped with modern facilities.

- **A Super-specialty hospital shall be established**

A 500-bedded Super-specialty Hospital shall be established at Rishithang, Ranka in East Sikkim with all modern facilities. The Sikkimese people need no longer go outside the state for advanced medical treatment. Our government will continue to make health services easily accessible and free of cost to all

Sports and Youth Management policy

Our sports policy will encourage and incentivise for promotion of sports in the State. Our government has given topmost priority to development of sports. Sikkim has produced many talented players in different fields, who have successfully represented the country in many national and international sports meets. Our government has encouraged many of our youngsters to bring out their latent talents. We have also given them due honour and respectable place in the society. Our government created an independent Youth and Sports Department in the state and a self-contained Youth Hostel is already in operation. More youth hostels are being constructed in the state. Today, we have many outstanding sportspersons in the state.

- **Establishment of national-level Khel Gaon/Sports village**

Our government has already promoted youth sports and produce international level sports persons in the state. For imparting quality training and bring out their potential, the State Government has already established a holistic 'Khel Gaon' in the state. The 'Khel Gaon' will have state-of-the-art sporting facilities of international standard for all games including a golf course and a research centre for sports sciences. This is going to be the first such facility in the country. Besides, providing infrastructure all sports facilities shall be built at the Panchayat and sub-division level in the state.

- **Improvement of stadiums and sports infrastructure**

Upgrading Palzor Stadium to a full-fledged stadium is complete and the fruits of this have been reaped by our young and talented sports persons. The stadium with all modern facilities is fully utilized for various regional and national games. Our government has named the *Ahaley* ground after the ace football player of Sikkim, Mr. *Bhaichung Bhutia* and Governor's Gold Cup is being held in this stadium. Playgrounds are being provided in all the Gram Panchayat Units. We will continue to build modern sports infrastructure in every district of Sikkim so as to encourage our young people to become the best in the world.

- **Stadium shall be developed in all four districts**

To encourage sporting activities in the state, stadium shall be developed in all four districts. We will complete this work in the next government.

- **Gymnasium halls shall be established in each district**

Our government will establish a gymnasium hall in every district in addition to what has already been established to provide a congenial atmosphere to our sportspersons and also to encourage healthy life and living for all citizens. In the next government, we will finish the work of construction of such halls in each district. The gymnasium will be for all kinds of indoor games and activities.

Youth Power Management Policy

- **Competent guidance, orientation and direction to educate youth**

Youth power is the backbone of any given society. If youth power is channelised positively, our society can progress indeed prosper. Keeping this in mind, our government decided to encourage

and assist them to take up creative and productive ventures. In the State, our government has diversified their options to prove their worth besides government service employment. We have launched the first ever scheme providing opportunity and option of Self-employment for our youth. The Chief Minister's Self-employment Scheme is one such scheme. We have devised many such innovative schemes for our youth so that they are not led astray by many negative forces operating in the globalized world.

We will continue to open up more opportunity to the youths in a wide range of areas like arts, literature, sports, trade and businesses.

- **Professional Training to the youth**

Our Government has been encouraging the youth of Sikkim to progress in this modern era. In this competitive age mental and physical development is necessary. We have taken all the necessary steps toward this end. We will continue to promote industry amongst the youth by giving them relevant education and training.

- **Sikkim Youth Affairs program**

Talented youth of Sikkim will be given every opportunity to progress in their chosen field of interest. They will provide the much needed human resource for our State.

- **Skill Development Fund of Rs. 5 Crores**

The Skill Development Fund with Rs. 5 Crores shall be earmarked to build a range of skills among the youth in the state. Youth can take advantage of this fund to undertake varieties of skill building trainings, professional courses and other capacity building exercise anywhere in the country.

- **Career Development Fund of Rs. 5 Crores**

Career development fund of Rs. 5 Crores shall be earmarked in the state. This can be accessed and used by all the graduate unemployed students and youths of Sikkim.

- **Vocational training to the youth**

Our government has always stood fast with youth to help them keep pace with the new age. Our endeavour is to develop the competency level and mental fiber of our youth to take up new challenges in the coming generation.

We will continue with our program to impart vocational trainings and support them in their endeavour to take up different vocations in the future and truly be able to compete for jobs that are being created by our Government's development program.

- **Establishment of Youth information and counseling centre**

Our government will establish information centres and counseling centres to provide the youth information regarding the emerging business opportunities around the world over and proper counseling to reposition them to take advantage of all emerging opportunities and challenges.

Educated youth will be provided with training and awareness especially on subjects such as environmental protection laws, trade related laws, banking laws, insurance regulation etc. In addition production, marketing, packaging, production identification, bank management, export import rules, consumer laws, warehousing, transportation management etc will be taught.

- **Check on urban migration**

We will create various business opportunities at the village level to check the tendency of our people to move out of the village in search of means of livelihood in the urban areas. Under the 'providing urban facilities to rural areas i.e. PURA' policy, our government shall adopt all means and measures to provide urban facilities right at the village level.

- **Employment to the unemployed**

Our government has been extending all support to our youth for taking up different trade and business. We will create an environment where everyone is gainfully employed in the society. Our government will provide all support and assistance to all the promising entrepreneurs desirous to set his/her own venture. The thrust shall be on creating opportunity and means for all the creative youth to undertake self-employment ventures. The ability, capacity and creativity of the younger generation shall be promoted to make them self reliant.

- **Youth to be provided 10 percent or more of the total budget for capability building**

In order to transform the capabilities and skills of the Sikkimese youth our Government will spare no effort and will provide ten percent or more of the total budget toward this effort. This will result in making them capable and self reliant and to compete in the present competitive age technologically. For this training and skill building mechanisms will be developed.

We will set up a Finishing School which will be skill and management development training. This school will enable our youth to not only build their capacities but we will also place them in different sectors where they can pursue a career of their choice.

- **Capable and Skilled Youth to be given jobs and business opportunities**

In the next term our Government will provide all educated youth with opportunities to improve their skills and capabilities through good and effective training and education. These youth will be further provided with employment opportunities in all the sectors and for setting up self employment business ventures.

Religion and Cultural Affairs Policy

- **Equal regard for all religions – equal protection of all traditions**

Our government has adopted a policy to protect and preserve all religions, culture, traditions, social norms and ethos in the state. We have guaranteed to the Sikkimese people the freedom to follow any faith and religion of their choice. We have adopted this policy with a view to protect our indigenous identity. We will continue to follow the same policy in the future.

- **Protection and regard for all cultural aspects of Sikkim**

Traditional healers of Sikkim like the *Dhami-Jhankris*, *Bijuwa*, *Bongthing*, *Janapa*, *Phedangma*, *Yawa*, *Baidya* and *Pandit* are the inseparable part of Sikkimese culture. Our government has fully recognized their contribution and given them due honour and prestige in the state. We are presently providing them Rs. 500 per month as financial aid. We will further protect their identities thereby strengthening our religious and cultural heritage.

- **Equality of religious belief and practices shall be the hallmark of our policy**

Our government believes and works as per the policy of equality of religious belief and practices in the State. We will continue to follow the same principle. No one will be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sex, caste and creed. We will remain steadfast to this democratic principle and doctrine.

Our government has been requesting the centre to bring the 17th HH Gyalwa Karmapa to Sikkim. We shall continue to impress upon the centre to bring the 17th HH Gyalwa Karmapa to Rumtek Monastery to occupy His seat.

- **Adi Kavi Bhanubhakta Acharya's statue and cultural museum to be established in Geyzing**

In Geyzing the Adi Kavi's statue is completed and Nepali language, literature and cultural museum cum study centre is being established.

- **Complete protection and promotion of Sikkimese dialects**

The SDF government has been promoting the Sikkimese culture and tradition and their distinct identities. Nepali language has been made as compulsory subject in all the schools. Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo languages are being taught at the college level. Twelve numbers Sanskrit High school and Mahavidyalaya have been established. Other local dialects like the Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Manger, Newar, Sunuwar and Sherpa have been recognized as state languages. Our government has tried to develop all languages, culture and tradition to enrich the collective social life of the Sikkimese people. We shall make a strong case for the recognition of Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo languages as the modern indigenous languages by the Sahitya Akademy which would then be used to include these three languages of Sikkim in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution.

- **Promotion of Sikkimese language and literature**

The earlier government used the issue of language and literature for narrow political gains. The then leader tried to take sole credit for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language. But no serious thought was given to the development and enrichment of the language and the benefit that comes with constitutional recognition. We have undertaken to develop all languages in the state including the Nepali language. In order to promote literature, arts and music, Sikkim Akademi has been established in the state.

We have started a culture to award and felicitate writers, artists and musicians of repute in the state. Our government has started to honour and felicitate all Sikkimese veterans, social workers and people who have made considerable contribution to the society.

Our government has undertaken many creative activities for promoting language and literature which include publication of significant books and magazines. Our government has also undertaken translation works of many historical documents. Our government has instituted various awards like the Creative Performance Grant, Positive Journalism Grant and State Appreciation Grants. All artistes and sportsman will also be given financial grant and awards.

In the next government we will continue to promote the All Sikkimese languages and literature of the various communities that constitute the Sikkimese people.

- **Sikkim Study Series**

All the publications under the various heads of the Sikkim Studies Series initiated in the last two

years will now be published. Our effort will also be devoted to mobilize, collect and publish as many historical documents lying in the State, other archives and libraries of India and abroad for further dissemination. We shall encourage the translations of the major writings of the Sikkimese writers in other Indian languages.

- **Barahi-Mizong as government gazetted holiday**

The traditional festival of the Mangar community has been declared as a Government gazetted holiday in the state as committed in the last manifesto.

- **Protection of historical and cultural heritage**

We have preserved the historical and cultural heritage of Sikkim. The historical place of *Rabdenise* has been renovated and preserved. The immediate vicinity bordering the fort has been declared as a Bird sanctuary. We are undertaking construction of a Lepcha Museum at Daramdin along with the historical *Swarga-jane-sidi*. *Sirijunga Manghim* has been constructed at Hee-Bermiok in West Sikkim. We have installed a 135-foot tall statue of Guru *Padmasambhava* at Samdruptse in Namchi. We have started construction work of a cultural park at Solaphuk. We have raised the statue of *Chogyal P.T. Namgyal* in Gangtok. The different festivals of different communities have been declared as government gazetted holidays in the state. *Tendong-Lho-Rum-Faat*, *Sirijunga*, *Lhochar*, *Sakewa*, *Barahi-Mizong* etc have been as declared government holidays.

In order to present Sikkim's cultural heritage to the world community, a special effort will be made to integrate the international tour programs of Indian Council for Cultural Relations and similar other bodies to incorporate Sikkimese cultural fiesta in their regular programming.

Administrative Policy

Good governance is going to be a key focus area for reforms. We are going to bring more innovative and productive concepts to institutionalize reforms and try out corporate governance. Weak governance manifests itself in poor service delivery, excessive regulation, red tape, uncoordinated and wasteful public expenditure that impinges upon growth and development. It will be increasingly replaced by effective, efficient, transparent and simple system of governance.

We will undertake massive reforms in governance particularly in following three areas.

- Enhancing the productivity of the civil service manpower and make certain that each employee is performing socially relevant tasks. A substantive effort will be made to reorient and re-skill the government employees.
- Re-enforcing procedures for rewarding and promoting merit, disciplining malfunction and misconduct and strengthening accountability and performance. We will ensure quality delivery of services to the poor.
- Evolution of a new work culture at all levels of our bureaucracy.

- **Right to Information fully implemented – greater use of technology**

The SDF Government is fully aware of the need to provide transparency in Governance. Toward this end all infrastructure and processes have been put in place. The people's right to information

is a tenet fully respected by the SDF and we will spare no effort to ensure that the Government systems are strengthened to give the information in a speedy and effective manner to the public at large.

We will further enhance transparency through the use of Information Technology so that anyone can see the working of Government as the 'business of Government is really the people's business.' – This is our credo.

- **Pro-employees government**

To the Government employees in Sikkim, our government has given due honour and prestige. The government feels that the government employees are the invaluable partners in the development of the State. During our governance we have given grade C and D employees leave encashment. School mother, ICDS village worker and monastic school teachers have been given scales by our Government.

The government granted promotion on an unprecedented scale to all qualifying employees, in many cases, overcoming stagnation suffered in the past. The qualifying years of advancement grade for Primary Teachers and School Mothers have been reduced from fifteen years to ten years. The government has granted Leave Encashment benefit to the Grade III and Grade IV employees. Ration allowance @ Rs. 400 per month has been given to Police personnel. Physically Challenged Employees of Government and Public Sector Undertakings are being paid monthly conveyance allowance of Rs. 100 per head. The government also, for the first time, introduced Compassionate appointment scheme for the non-gazetted employees. When the sole bread earner in a family passes away, employment is given to the wife of the deceased or the next of kin of the deceased for family sustenance. We pledge to keep up the same spirit so that all the government employees can work with more commitment, dedication and enthusiasm.

- **50% Sikkimese in the administrative services**

Our government has given to the Sikkimese administrators a greater say in the running of state administration. We will further depute our employees for other professional and orientation training and make them able administrators in the state. Our government has made representation to the central government to appoint state administrators on the basis of 1:1 ratio in the State for the next fifty years.

- **Administrative Reforms**

Administration is an important part of our reforms agenda. We want to make it clean as well as productive. We will ensure responsible, transparent and efficient governance. Administrative services will be made easy and highly facilitated. A new culture of administration will be ushered. Employees will be given new direction and new thinking. Their capabilities will be enhanced. The administrative machinery will be made completely people centric.

We will further enhance transparency through the use of Information Technology so that anyone can see the working of Government as the 'business of Government is really the people's business.' – This is our credo.

- **Induction of democratic spirit into bureaucracy**

Our government shall inculcate democratic values among the employees. They can carry out

their duties in a fully democratic environment without fear or favour. We have, indeed, already started this process in the state to benefit the employees.

- **4th Pay Commission constituted**

Our government has constituted the 4th Pay Commission. In the next term we will implement the recommendation of the Pay Commission. In many other states the pay hike of employees has been based on the recommendation of the Central Pay Commission recommendations. Our Government has set up an independent commission in order to ensure full rationalization and protection of all categories of employees thereby ensuring proper justice. The entire process will be on the basis of full hearing of all levels of employees in order to ensure proper gradation which at present is affecting different sets of employees holding same level of posts.

- **Employees DA allowance**

Our Government has created a norm by which the Dearness Allowance is given to the employees without them asking for it. We have done this for the last 15 years and in the next term we will continue this practice.

- **MR, Ad hoc Teachers, Work charge employees will be regularized**

MR and work charge employees, ad hoc teachers and other temporary employees our Government will find that 50 percent of the new posts will be filled from their existing lot whilst the rest would be selected from open competition. This policy will continue to give relief to the existing MR, work charge and Ad hoc teachers for regularization in the new posts created from time to time till all such employees are fully absorbed.

Home Guards will be regularized

Home Guards will be regularized against the vacant post in Police department, Forest, Excise, IRB and SAP and preference will be given in all private industries and companies.

- **Die-in-harness**

Police personnel, electrician (lineman), meter reader and drivers who die in harness will be given a die in harness compensation of Rs. 2 Lakh.

Before we came to power in 1994, the die-in-harness grant for the police personnel was Rs. 20,000/- only.

- **Private Drivers' Compensation due to accidents**

Our government will provide Rs. 1 Lakh as compensation against accidental death for private drivers.

- **Pension to labourers**

Our government shall provide pension benefit of Rs. 1,000/- to labourers who sustain permanent disability during working hours.

- **Dignity and protection to labourers- full recognition of their contribution**

The SDF government increased the daily wage of labourers by 100 percent from the mere Rs. 20 in the very beginning. Keeping in view the incidence of rising price and in the interest of the working class, our government has further increased the wage up to Rs. 100 per day. Our government is committed to give justice to the poor people who earn their bread through their sweat. Our government was the first government to declare May Day as the restricted gazette

holiday for the workers. Our government has put to end the irrational practice of penalizing workers with two-day wages for a day absence. Compared to 1994, the daily wages of labourers has gone up five-folds. We have given dignity and protection to labourers recognizing in full their contribution in the society and nation.

- **Complete protection of collective interest of the working class people**

As the party of the working class, the farmers and labourers, the SDF is always conscious of their rights and protection. In the next government, we will fix working hour for the workers in technical field. We will also institute the Insurance Policy for them. The interest and privilege of the working people shall be fully guaranteed.

Furthermore, we are going to set up a Labour Board to start education and training for our workers. The purpose of this is to impart high technology training, ensure better quality and methods as well as to over see the health care and work environment of the workers in factories and Government departments.

Our policy and programs reflect our pro-worker and pro-youth stand. We will do everything within our powers to ensure the full security of the rights of the workers and our youth at large.

- **Labour daily wage to be enhanced to Rs. 250 per day**

We will, in the next term, increase the daily wage to Rs. 250 keeping in view the rising prices of all commodities and cost of living.

- **Guest House in Namchi for C & D Category employees**

This kind of guest houses for C & D Category employees will be set up in all the districts of Sikkim.

- **Check on corruption**

Before SDF party assumed power, corruption was the order of the day. Through corrupt means, some people became millionaires overnight, while the majority of poor continued to become poorer. Our party went against the system and after we came to power, we have enforced many laws to check corruption. Today our government has been able to contain corruption. Our government has been trying to arrest all forms of corruption including economic, moral and social corruption. We have been trying to present to the Sikkimese society a clean administration and corruption-free environment.

Without arresting corrupt practices, we cannot accelerate the pace of our development and bring about real progress in the state. Keeping this fact in mind, our government shall continue to adopt measures to wipe out corruption from the state.

Communalism is recognized as terrorism

Our political and philosophical ideology considers that communalism is a form of terrorism. Communalism is the ultimate result of exploitative thought. Such thoughts and acts result in societal breakup which results in stopping of the development process. This is why the President of the SDF Party has defined that communalism is a form of terrorism. Communalism influences society ensuring there is division amongst the people engendering hatred and this gives such people the necessary support and incentive. With such negative thoughts the society tends to break up and not integrate for

the common good. That is why such feelings of communalism do not help in state and nation building. This only helps but a few of the perpetrators of groups that spread this virus. That is why we are resolute to oppose this kind of anti people and anti social elements. Wherever, whenever or in any form such elements exist we will firmly oppose them. In Sikkim we will never allow such anti people elements to take birth or grow in stature.

Social Welfare

- **Social and Food Security**

Today the world is facing acute guarantees on the social and food security issues. The world is hard pressed to find solutions to these burning issues. Even in these global challenges we want to find local solutions. For the people of Sikkim we will continue to work for the social security and social justice through equality of measures. State's local food production will be enhanced to ensure food security.

- **Rights and dignity to women**

Our government has granted full political, social, economic and educational rights to the women. Today women are fully conscious in Sikkim. They have moved ahead in all fields at par with their male counterparts. Women have been freed from traditional bondage and are given freedom to develop their talents and potential. The SDF government is the only government which is committed to liberate and empower women in society. We have earned this distinction. Policy of empowering women shall continue in our next government as well which will translate in affirmative action for the women.

- **On whose side are we?**

It is the SDF Government which started to give Post Birth financial relief to the poor women. Maternity leave increase to three months is also the SDF Government's concrete action.

- **Women-child welfare scheme**

Our government has adopted certain schemes for the welfare of women and children to ensure disease-free society in the state. Through undertaking various welfare measures, we shall make our future generation healthy and strong. At the time we assumed power, the infant Mortality Rate was 72 per 1000. We have now brought down the figure to 39 per 1000.

Next term we will ensure that it is less than 30 per 1000. This policy will be taken on a war footing to ensure health for all and especially for the coming generation.

- **Welfare Commission for senior citizens**

Our government has ensured dignity and respect for our senior citizens. For the welfare of senior citizens, our government shall institute the Old Age Welfare Commission in the state.

- **We will increase Old Age Pension grant**

We raised the old age pension grant from Rs. 100 to Rs. 400 and also increased the number of beneficiaries by many fold. In the coming government, the rate of Old Age Pension shall be increased to Rs. 500. We shall continue to provide for free traveling to the senior citizens in the state-owned buses.

- **Winter Allowance to the old**

A 3-month special winter allowance shall be given to the older citizens of the state to cope with harsh winter condition.

- **'We respect you' grant to continue**

We have instituted the 'we respect you' grant for the Sikkimese people above 70 years of age. We will continue to give this grant in the future.

- **Felicitation of senior citizens**

Our government is committed to bring about all-round development of the Sikkimese people. We are working hard to achieve our target. However, our government has also paid handsome tribute and felicitated all the senior citizens who contributed their might for building Sikkimese society to its present status. We have begun the process of recognizing their contributions and felicitate them in equal measure. Our government will further consolidate on this tradition in the future as well.

- **Protection and respect to the Old Business Community of Sikkim**

The SDF Government has given respect and justice to the old business people of Sikkim along with the rest of the Sikkimese communities. This community which has contributed a great deal to the overall development of Sikkim has been recognized for the first time by our Government. They have also been given a proper business environment to flourish in a democratic manner and setup. They have been given dignity, respect and rights to live and practice their business in the State. We will continue and ensure that our business community members receive this respect and positive business environment. In addition to other facilities and rights provided to our business community it is the SDF Government which has for the first time provided higher education facilities (quota) for their children. This will also continue. They do not have to face any obstruction, disrespect or difficulty in carrying on their business and exercising their fundamental rights.

- **Guest House for ex-MLAs**

A Guest House shall be constructed at Gangtok for the benefit of ex-MLAs. The government shall reimburse the medical expense incurred by them.

- **Guest House for ex-employees**

A Guest House, with facility of in-house offices shall be built at Gangtok for the benefit of ex-employees.

- **Guest House for ex-Panchayats**

A Guest House shall be constructed for the benefit of all the ex-panchayats in the state.

- **Parents' Home**

The government shall also construct a parent's home at Gangtok. All elderly parents from any part of the state can come to Gangtok and stay at the home free of cost.

- **Appreciation grant to dedicated professionals.**

Appreciation grant shall be given to Sikkimese professionals who would continue with their service even after retirement.

- **Adarsh Ghar puraskaar**

Adarsh Ghar puraskaar shall also be given to ideal family who would keep their house neat, clean and beautiful.

- **Ensuring Social justice**

The SDF government has established social justice in the state. The interest and human rights of all castes, communities and all classes of people have been guaranteed. We have given full justice to the weak, disadvantaged section of the people.

In our next government, we will continue to give justice to the exploited and marginalized people of the state.

- **Protection to physically challenged citizens**

Our government has provided special protection to the physically challenged citizens in terms of immediate welfare measures and seat reservation to them in government employment. We will continue with our program to provide additional welfare measures.

- **Abolition of bonded labour and child labour**

In order to destroy the monopoly of the affluent classes and the oppressors, we have to ensure empowerment of our poor and marginalized people. Hence, our primary concern is to ensure the economic development and political consciousness of our poor citizens. Together with empowerment, we have to improve their social condition through creation of various means and opportunities.

This we will accomplish. Through this various ways and means, we will abolish the inhuman practices of bonded labour and child labour from the soil of Sikkim.

- **AIDS and Drugs Free Sikkim**

Our Government is taking all necessary steps to make Sikkim an AIDS and Drug free State in the country. Innovative measures will be taken to enhance the efforts toward this end. Awareness programs, counseling and stringent legal measures are being taken up by the Government to eradicate this social disease from Sikkim.

We will continue with enhanced conviction and energy in the next term.

- **Prohibition of drugs abuse**

The government will keep youth away from drugs and narcotics to maintain peaceful environment and tradition of the State. Our government will provide creative opportunity to engage them in gainful enterprises.

Protection of Democratic Institutions

The SDF Party has fully respected the democratic institutions in the State. This principle will continue to be a guiding one. Democratic institutions that strengthen the democratic process will be protected and strengthened.

- **Establishment of modern media centre**

Our Government established the Press Club. We shall build a modern Media Centre for the State in which we shall also provide premises for the Press Club of Sikkim.

- **The development of the profession of Journalism**

Our government shall give all support to improve the quality of journalism in the state. We shall sponsor our educated youth for training to reputed institution in Journalism.

- **Annual media award**

We shall institute annual media award for best practice of journalism and media. They will also be given financial support.

- **Advertisement budget**

The advertisement budget will be increased further by double.

- **Appointment of Ombudsman**

The State will also appoint an ombudsman (chosen from the civil society or any eminent personality) to look into the complaints of people against the press and media.

Urban Development Strategy

All the urban centres in Sikkim will be upgraded, beautified and modernized to reflect the world class stature. All these centres will be endowed with modern amenities. Using world class architects and consultants we will make the blueprints to see that we build high tech shopping malls and trading centres. These will be developed into model urban centres.

- **Urban Homeless to be provided with homes**

Sikkim's urban housing problems will be solved by creation of an Urban Housing Board. We will take the consultation of experts from all over the world to make this happen.

- **Town plan development**

To develop well-planned towns in Sikkim, we will set up Shopping Centre, taxi and bus parking and other facilities at the sub-division level. This will bring planned development beginning with small towns and markets.

- **Wholesale vegetable *mandi* in urban centres**

For proper upkeep of urban areas and for the benefit of the people, vegetable stalls shall be established in each market. This will also provide an easy outlet for the locally-produced vegetable in the state.

- **Elections to urban bodies**

For further development of the urban areas and for proper upkeep of our town, elections to municipalities shall be held in all the notified bazaars and in Gangtok elections to the Municipal Corporations shall be held in the next government.

Our government will further arrange for better supply of quality potable water and electricity to all markets.

- **Development of model urban market**

All modern facilities will be provided in the urban areas and markets. Our government will develop all markets into model markets. Beautification of markets shall be undertaken. Proper steps shall be taken for laying of better sewerage system in the towns.

- **Fly-over bridges for pedestrians and pedestrianization**
Our Government has made good progress in pedestrianisation of the city of Gangtok. This is a model example for the nation. We have done this to ensure that our pedestrians are not hampered due to the increase in the traffic congestion in the city. The main beneficiaries are the school students.
We will continue to build more such amenities wherever needed.
- **Smoking in Public Places is banned**
As per the National law and directive the smoking in public places is fully banned and implemented.
- **New Delhi will have 'Little Sikkim (Sikkim town)'**
Our Government will establish a Sikkim Town or Little Sikkim at Greater Kailash in New Delhi. This will be a place where Sikkimese products and produce will be made available to the New Delhi residents. They will get Sikkimese taste and flavour through our cuisine, get to buy our handicrafts and produce and experience our hospitality. This will also be a place which will enable our Tourism Agents to market their tourism products.
- **Guest Houses for Medical Patients in South Extension, New Delhi**
A 29 Room House has been purchased by our Government to fulfill the long standing demand of patients who regularly visit New Delhi All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and other major hospitals. This will indeed fulfill a major gap and facilitate our needy people. All the rooms are fitted with air conditioning for the comfort of our people. The rent will be subsidized.
- **Guest Houses for Pilgrimage for Buddhist Devotees**
We already have built a wonderful place in Bodh Gaya for our Buddhist Devotees. We will build another one at Sarnath so that the entire pilgrimage centres are covered. We will also see that they are better administered for the benefit of the pilgrims.
- **Guest houses in Kolkata, Bangalore, Vellore and Mumbai**
We already have a good guest house in Kolkata in Middleton Street. We have another one coming up in the Salt Lake City. We will complete this one.
We are planning to build or buy guest houses in Bangalore, Vellore and Mumbai in the next term.
All this is being done since more and more of our people are traveling to these cities for education, medical reasons and tourism. This will facilitate their visits as well as they become a home away from home. We will ensure that all these places are kept clean and managed well for the comfort of our people.

Rule of LAW (*janta raj ma jantai raja*)

In the area of maintaining law and order and maintaining peace, the Sikkim State is the number one State in the Nation which has been duly established. Our Government has ensured that Sikkim is fully secured and safe. This positive mechanism will be maintained in the coming term by the SDF Government.

- **Legal regime shall be strengthened**

Rule of law in the state has been strengthened and institutionalized. There is no law and order problem in the State. Crime rate in Sikkim is the lowest ever in the entire country. We have set up Lok Adalats to deliver justice at the doorsteps of every Sikkimese people. We have set up Atrocity Court, Consumer's Court, Human Rights Court, Family Court, Women's Commission etc. in the state.

- **Right to Information fully implemented**

The SDF Government is fully aware of the need to provide transparency in Governance. The right information to the people is one of the basic principles of democracy. Toward this end all infrastructure and processes have been put in place. The people's right to information is a tenet fully respected by the SDF Party and we will spare no effort to ensure that the Government systems are strengthened to give the information in a speedy and effective manner to the public at large.

- **Free legal aid to the poor**

Our government has also made arrangement to provide free legal aid to economically poor citizens. Legal awareness programs have been initiated which have reached the doorstep of the people even in remote areas. This program will be further strengthened in the next term.

- **Legal infrastructure**

Together with maintenance of all existing infrastructures, our government shall further create additional legal infrastructure for the benefit of the people. Under the SDF Government some districts have been provided with new Judicial Court Buildings. We will be constructing such facilities in all the left over districts.

- **Easy access to legal remedies**

Our government shall further press the Judiciary to make all legal aids easily available and help people through quick disposal of cases.

Nationalism

In our sovereign country nationalism's connotation is for a citizen to contribute in the progress and prosperity of the nation. Nationalism in my opinion is to build a secure and strong and prosperous capable nation. Therefore self rule and sovereign nation building, is related to overall development of nationalism. Today the challenges faced by a nation due to outside forces in conjunction with internal elements gives a different colour to nationalism.

There is no threat from outside forces in geographical and political terms. So every citizen's duty is to contribute toward the overall development of the nation. In order to remove all the difficulties from society we have to make work our passion. Knowledge and technology must be adopted and used. Economic freedom and progress is the main force and we need to work to make the country an economic superpower. Therefore nationalism is defined by one who is continuously giving time and effort in this direction.

This is the new perspective on nationalism and the coming generations must reflect on this. Sikkim and Sikkimese people must understand this new perspective and align with this at all times to foster a greater sense of nationalism.

Pawan Chamling

President

The Sikkim Democratic Front Party

Gangtok

Water Security

According to scientists and other intellectuals, the greatest challenge of the 21st Century is going to be scarcity of water. Climate change is already upon us and indicated by the loss in production of food and severe water shortage in many part of the globe indeed within India as well. This has resulted in huge economic challenge which is evident. One of the fall outs of global warming on the sacred Himalayan region is the depletion of glacial water stock. It is melting faster and faster. SDF Party has started working responsibly to tackle this huge challenge at the local level. Our President, Dr. Pawan Chamling, has contributed immensely in many international forums on climate change and water scarcity issues.

Our Party will continue to be seized of these important issues of water scarcity and will work toward solving this for Sikkimese people.

Water harvesting and conservation programs will be taken up. We have to encourage and inspire our people toward this end. Each household will be educated on the issue of use and conservation of water.

The Himalayan region does not have presently a shortage of quality water. Even then our people must understand that clean water can lead to better quality of life and health. For this we must rise up to the challenges and do all we can to ensure conservation of our biodiversity which in the first place gives us the water we use everyday.

Environmental Security

Sikkim is a part of one of the greatest biodiversity hotspots of the world. We have given top priority toward protection of the flora and fauna, wildlife, forest and other natural resources in our State. In addition to this we are giving protection to medicinal plants, lakes, rivers etc. and to keep it more natural. In order to preserve the ecosystem the farming systems will have to be modified suitably to become more natural and organic. Even in the development work we will minimize the carbon foot print which will make development more eco-friendly. This will ensure a balance between man and the environment. We have to move from a materialism development paradigm to one which is totally eco friendly in order to bring about the balance that we will take even to the classrooms. This form of education of our young minds will ensure sustainability. All our programs and policies will take the environmental impact into consideration during time of formulation and design.

As part of the past legacy, the Government in its next term shall pursue our green goal with renewed zest and energy by ensuring full-proof protection of all our rich biodiversity, forest areas, all wildlife both terrestrial and aquatic, arthropoda and avifauna. Ban on felling of green trees, grazing,

use of non-biodegradable materials shall be as usual strictly enforced. Coupled with massive afforestation drive under different innovative projects like Smriti Ban and Green Mission initiatives, we will continue to make significant contribution in the environmental conservation of the eastern Himalayan region of the country.

Sikkim has become the first ever State in the Country to constitute Glacier Commission under the chairmanship of Prof. S.I. Hasnain. The Commission will undertake scientific study on the environmental changes taking place in the State. We will significantly contribute towards realizing the goal of the centre with regard to Eight Missions spelt out under the National Mission Plan to tackle Climate Change challenges.

In the area of Waste Management, we will improve upon our experience through increased *jhora* training work, river training works including river course development. We have already initiated organic farming practices in the State to do away with the use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides. As part of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) widely discussed by climate experts today, we are also already on our way to achieve 100 percent organic certification for all our products and our practices which will be clean and environment-friendly. At a more psychological level, we will prepare our people mentally to adopt environmentally sustainable development measures in the State.

Human Security

Human security has emerged as a huge issue in the world today especially after the global economic downturn. Human life and existence is being threatened from all directions and evidence of this is seen in Africa. This has resulted in a serious challenge for human existence. The SDF Party is seized of these global challenges and phenomenon. On our part our endeavour is to work at the local level to address this issue. We are working towards guaranteeing for our citizens a civilized and liberated human life. Our Government today has ensured that all communities and classes of people are fully secure to live in dignity in a State full of opportunity and where rule of law prevails. Every citizen of our Society is fully empowered to live in an environment which allows her to prosper and fulfill her aspirations. Consequently it has provided the people of Sikkim the opportunity to be proud of the emerging living standards. Even though there are such global concerns our work and policies have ensured that the Sikkimese people are protected and free from these challenges. Our Government has set an example and direction as a solution for these global challenges which results in deep human insecurity. We will continue to struggle against such challenges and also give leadership in the interest of the people of Sikkim.

Food Security

In a world where food security has become a major issue the Sikkimese people are living very well. However, there is a serious challenge to our own food security issues. We are dependent on imports at this time. We will have to make our people more self reliant in food production leading to food security at the local level. We have to use high technology to increase productivity since the cultivable land is very limited. In our traditional way of farming we have applied new methodology to increase the yield of food production. We are giving priority to distribution of seeds, cash crops and training to our farmers. All these measures will certainly allow our farmers to adapt and produce more food in an environmentally friendly way.

Health Security

It is well said that good health is wealth indeed. Our people's good health has to be maintained and programs toward this end needs further strengthening. This is the pillar for economic and other forms of progress. Importance of the aforesaid statement should be practiced in our day to day life. Educating our people, taking preventive measures, adequate medical facilities prior to birth and after birth, and medical facilities access throughout life is to be given. Such like programs have been taken up in order to ensure total high quality health of our citizens.

Social Security

Our Party President has always maintained that if society is weak, each individual and every caste/community will be weak. Therefore, to strengthen our society would mean making every caste/community stronger. The same principle and related program shall be further strengthened and institutionalized in the next term of this government. During the last fifteen years, our government has adequately developed the regional language, literature, culture and tradition belonging to different people following different faiths. In the next term of our government, the same program will be further consolidated so that no person or caste or community lags behind due to the accident of his/her birth and her circumstances.

Peace Security

We the Sikkimese are perhaps the rare breed of human being who are in an advantageous position to develop peace in the State and in the country. The SDF Government does recognize the need for further development of peace in the Country. The SDF Government will continue to promote Sikkim as the peace maker State. With over 200 terrorists outfit in the country, Sikkim has the distinction to have none. The crime rate in Sikkim is the lowest in the country.

Peace, however, does not and will not come on a platter. The SDF Government has worked steadfastly to keep peace even in the face of extreme provocation. We have firmly promoted democratic values in the State with each citizen enjoying full freedom and rights as provided under the Constitution.

In any case, Sikkim's security is our No. 1 agenda and peace that prevails in State has greatly enhanced the sense of security amongst the population.

Women and Child Right security

The SDF Government has already created history in the area of women empowerment and granting their due in a given society. The same will be further consolidated in the next term of government. The SDF Government shall make our women folks the equal stakeholder in every sphere of State development journey. Excise licence to run shops shall be issued in the name of the female members also. Similarly, child rights security shall be given topmost priority in the State. All privilege and opportunities shall be granted to the children in the State at par with best facilities available in developed countries for child's development.

! Source:

Sikkim

A Statistical Profile 2006-07 Department of Economics Statistics Monitoring & Evaluation

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