

CHAPTER – 2
THE BEGINNING OF POLITICAL
DEMOCRACY IN SIKKIM

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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”.