

Chapter II

THE BIRTH OF THE SSP AND ITS INITIAL SUCCESS

The SSP led by Nar Bahadur Bhandari emerged as the strongest regional party in Sikkim in the 1980s and early 1990s. It was formed in 1984, after the dismissal of Sikkim Janata Parishad government (1979-1984) led by Bhandari. The SSP won two consecutive elections in 1985 and 1989 and formed governments in Sikkim. For almost ten years it dominated state politics of Sikkim. In this chapter of the thesis we attempt to understand the factors responsible for the emergence of SSP and the issues and reasons which contributed to its success. In the chapter, there are four sections. Section I attempts to look at the political developments in Sikkim with the emergence and growth of various political parties prior to 1975. Section II deals with the formation of Sikkim Congress Government led by Lhendup Dorjee Kazi, its performance and later on its decline and, downfall (1974-1979). Section III seeks to study the rise and fall of Sikkim Janata Parishad government (1979-1984). Section IV attempts to understand and analyse the factors responsible for the emergence and growth of the SSP under the leadership of Nar Bahadur Bhandari and the reasons which contributed to the success of the SSP government in Sikkim.

I

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN SIKKIM: A REVIEW

Sikkim is one of the smallest states of the Indian Union with a population of just 607688 (Census, 2011) and 7096 sq kms of land. It became a full-fledged state of the Indian Union on 16th of May 1975. The name of Sikkim is the derivation of two Limboo words, 'Su' meaning 'new' and 'khim' meaning 'house'. The Sikkimese Limboos still call Sikkim 'Sukhim' which means 'New House' in their language. The Lepchas call it 'Renjong' or 'Mayel Liang' and Bhutias 'Denjong'.

Not much is known about the early history of Sikkim. The historical documents specially 'Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum', folktales and legends of Lepchas and

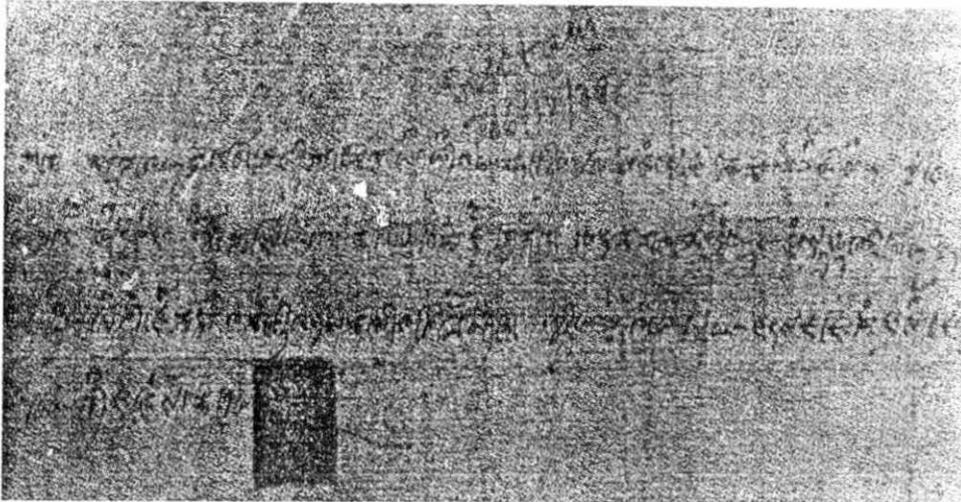
Limboos, ancient records, chronicles and Tibetan traditional texts and other histories, reveal that prior to the advent of Tibetans and Buddhist culture in Sikkim, the Himalayan belt² was divided into tiny kingdoms ruled over by the tribal Chieftains of Rong and Tsong³. As such, there was no proper demarcation of political boundary which exists today.

There is also a historical record that prior to the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim (1642 AD), there existed a landmass called 'Limbuwan' between the Arun River of present Nepal in the west and Teesta River in Sikkim in the east, flanking both the sides of Kanchanjonga, the Great Himalayas in the north and the Great plains in the south (Kharel, 2002, pp. 33-37, Sanyal, 1979, pp. 6-8, Chemjong, 1948, p. 51, Sinha, 1975, pp. 7-14 & 2008, pp. 15-66 and Wangchuk & Zulca, 2004, pp. 61-80) inhabited by the Lepchas and Limboos. The Lepchas were ruled by their Chieftains, 'Mutaiche Emehang' (Chemjong, 1948, p. 48) over the century and the first Chieftain was Turvey Panu (Siinger, 1967, pp. 26-28 and Gurung & Lama, 2004, p. 108). While the Limboos were said to have been administered by the ten Chieftains called 'Theebo:ng Yakthung'. However, both the Lepchas and Limboos could not develop a full fledged state (Datta, 1994, pp. 69-70). For the first time in the late medieval times when Buddhism and Namgyal dynasty descended over the southern frontier of Tibet, present Sikkim, the two native communities, Lepchas and Limboos came under the outside dominion (Sankrityayana, 1994, p. 209). During that period of time, the Lepchas and Limboos also had free intercourse between them (Basnet, 1974, p. 16). The Ordinance issued by the Lepcha Ponu to the Limboos before 16th Century reflects the strong ties between the Lepchas and the Limboos and their existence in the pre-Sikkim period.

² In which Sikkim exist today.

³ Rong and Tsong mean Lepchas and Limboos.

Ordinance issued by the Lepcha Ponu to the Limboos before the 16th Century.



Source: Dahal's 'Sikkimko Rajnetic Itihas', 1984, p.5.

In the early forties of the seventeenth century (1642 AD), three superior Buddhist monks of Ngingmapa Sect⁴ entered into the place called Norbugang, now named Yaksum and chalked out strategies to spread Buddhism in Sikkim. For this they decided first to install an efficient ruler and went in search of an able youth. Finally they found a young youth named Phuntsok Namgyal at Tashitenka and brought him to Norbugang, Yaksum via Yangang (Sikkim Darbar, 1965, p. 27, Gaulay, 2002, p. 13).

It was in 1642 AD, *Chu-Ta* year⁵ according to Tibetan Calendar, Phuntsok Namgyal; descendent of Khyebumsa was consecrated as the first Chogyal⁶ of Sikkim signing the Tripartite Agreement historically known as '*Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*'⁷ by the Sikkimese Lhoree, Menree and Tsongree. The Agreement was signed at Denjong Phuntsok Khangsar between the ministers of Chogyal Chempo on one side and the leaders of Lepcha and Limboo on the other side (Subba, 1999, pp. 91-151). According to this agreement, the three ethnic communities belonged to the

⁴ Gyalwa Lachen Chempo, Kardok Rigzin Chempo and Ngadak Sempa Chempo were the three superior Buddhist monks of Ngingmapa sect who came to Sikkim to spread Buddhism.

⁵ *Chu-Ta* year means Water Horse Year in Tibetan version.

⁶ In Tibetan vernacular '*Cho*' means '*dharma*' and '*Gyal*' means '*King*'.

⁷ *Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum* in Tibetan language means threesome of Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo.

151). According to this agreement, the three ethnic communities belonged to the same family, the Bhutia was considered to be a father, Lepcha a mother and Limboo a son. Through this commonwealth, '*Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*' the kingdom was to be ruled. The threesome should not fight among themselves. If one tribe thinks ill of any other tribe, then the culprit would be vexed by the promise (Gurung, 1985, pp. 69-74).

While concluding the treaty of trinity, they pledged and put their seal to the treaty that the people of '*Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*' will thereafter not have separate self-government but abide by one order only. They also pledged that the '*Threesome*' would have one destiny, one government.⁸ The main reason behind signing this treaty was to accept the supremacy of the first Bhutia ruler, Phuntsok Namgyal and consolidate the sovereignty of Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim with the co-operation of Lepcha, Limboo and Bhutia who inhabited Sikkim at that time (Kharel, 2002, pp. 33-37, Tulku, 1991, p. 52 & Kazi, 1983, p. 4). After the formation of a new Himalayan Kingdom, the area of Sikkim extended from Thangla⁹ in the north to Titalia¹⁰ in south, Tagongla¹¹ in the east to Tamor Chorten¹² in the west and was called as '*Greater Sikkim*' (Sikkim Darbar, 1963, Subba, 1999, pp. 1-46 & 2008, pp. 1-74, Kharel, 2002, pp. 33-37 & Kazi, 1983, p. 4). But when modern Nepal emerged under Prithivinarayan Shah in the 1770s, half portion of the land belonging to Sikkim came under Nepal. As such the landmass, '*Limbuwan*' which was within the fold of '*Greater Sikkim*' was straddled to two nations; present Nepal in 1770s and Sikkim in 1642 AD (Wangchuk & Zulca, 2004, pp. 61-80).

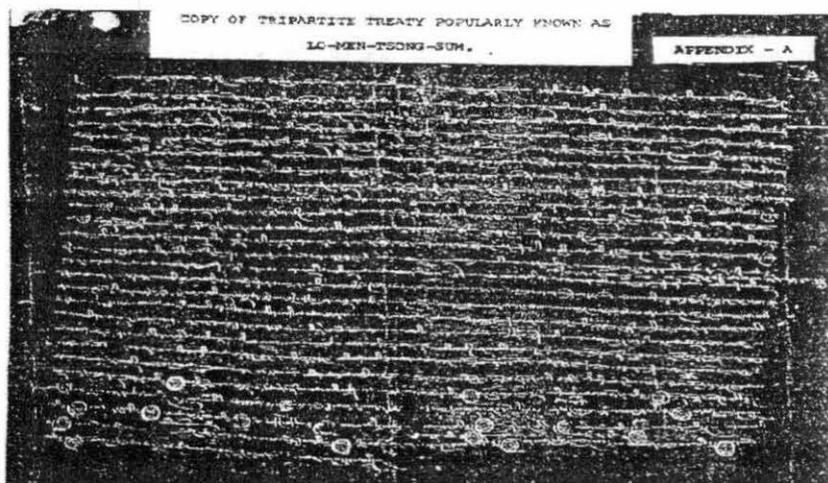
⁸ Treaty of '*Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*', 1642.

⁹ Thangla is near Phari in Tibet.

¹⁰ Titalia is near the borders of Bihar and Bengal.

¹¹ Tagongla is located near Paro in Bhutan.

¹² Tamor Chorten is located in Tamor river in Nepal.



Copy of the tripartite agreement 'Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum'.

Since the early nineteenth century, Sikkim came under the influence of British India. It became a Protectorate of British India in 1890.¹³ During his twenty years stay, 1889-1908 in Sikkim as a political officer, John White Claude brought a number of political and administrative reforms. In 1925, Sikkim State Council was constituted to aid and advice the Chogyal of Sikkim in the administrative affairs. It consisted of both official and non-officials as members. The Chogyal of Sikkim was the head of the Council. When the Council was formed for the first time, it had altogether nine members out of which six were non-officials and three were officials. Later on, Landlords, Thikadars and Buddhist monks from various monasteries were also appointed in the Council by the Chogyal of Sikkim (Kazi, 1983, pp. 4-6 & 2009, pp. 25-28).

The same pattern of Council continued to exist during the Chogyal, Tashi Namgyal's regime. Only the difference between the two regimes was that during the rule of earlier Chogyal, the members of the Council were nominated and in the later the majority of the members were elected. The Councillors generally met twice a year where they used to criticise the budget, which invariably went through the Council for sanction of the Chogyal (Kazi, 1983, pp. 5-7). During the reign of Tashi Namgyal (1914-1965) Sikkim witnessed a gradual evolution towards

¹³ After John White Claude was appointed as the first political officer of Sikkim in 1889.

reign of Tashi Namgyal (1914-1965) Sikkim witnessed a gradual evolution towards a democratic form of government. At the same time, interestingly several political developments were also taking place in Sikkim with the growth and emergence of different political organisations in the 1940s which emerged due to the impact of Indian struggle for independence.¹⁴

Three pioneering political organisations, Praja Sudharak Samaj of Gangtok headed by Tashi Tshering Bhutia as its President, Rajya Praja Sammelon of Timi Tarku with Gobardhan Pradhan and Dhan Bahadur Tiwari as leaders and Praja Mandal of Chakung by Lhendup Dorjee Kazi Khangsarpa emerged during this time¹⁵. These three pioneering political parties held public meetings at Pologround, Gangtok on 7th December 1947 and finally in the same evening threesome merged together and gave birth to a new political organisation named Sikkim State Congress (SSC) with Tashi Tshering Bhutia as its President and Chandra Das Rai as a General Secretary. The newly formed political organisation put forward three important demands: (i) Abolition of Landlordism, (ii) Formation of interim government as a necessary precursor of democratic and responsible government and (iii) Accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union (Kazi, 1983, p. 12 & Sengupta, 1985, p. 8). Since the emergence of SSC, Sikkim experienced an unprecedented democratic movement for the first time. The activities of SSC started attracting the common people towards it (Bhattacharya, nd, p. 77 & Bhadra, 1992, pp. 6-9).

In order to encounter the SSC and its demands, the status-quoists and pro-Chogyal took common platform and formed Sikkim National Party (SNP) in April, 1948. It had the direct backing and effective patronage of Maharaja, Palden

¹⁴ In 1947, India attained its independence from the yoke of British rule. This landmark achievement of India greatly inspired and influenced the educated and intellectual youths of Sikkim. They were determined to overthrow the bondage of feudalism and bring in democratic institutions in Sikkim.

¹⁵ Both Praja Sudharak Samaj of Gangtok and Praja Mandal of Chakung stood for the promotion of people's welfare and protection of their rights whereas Rajya Praja Sammelon took the stand for the accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union and union of Gorkhas of Sikkim and West Bengal (Sengupta, 1985, p. 151).

Thendup Namgyal who was then the de-facto ruler of Sikkim (Bhattacharya, nd, p. 78). Since the party, SNP was anti-thesis to the SSC, it aimed to fight against the democratic aspirations. It gave emphasis to the communal and racial difference as a main weapon to paralyse the democratic development in Sikkim (Sengupta, 1985, pp. 8-153). However, the SSC put constant pressure upon the Chogyal of Sikkim for the abolition of landlordism, introduction of interim government and accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union.

The Darbar of Sikkim agreed to the abolition of landlordism and introduction of interim government. In response to the first demand of the SSC, in May, 1949 an interim government was formed with Tashi Tshering Bhutia as the Chief Minister with four other ministers, Captain Dimik Singh Lepcha, Chandra Das Rai, Reshmi Prashad Alley and Kazi Dorjee Dadul. But unfortunately, the ministry could not last long and came to an end after 29 days of its rule. Regarding the accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union, the Darbar of Sikkim refused the proposal for a number of reasons. The reasons stated were:

- (a) Historically, socially, culturally and linguistically Sikkim had closer affinities with Bhutan and Tibet.
- (b) From geographical and ethnic point of view, Sikkim was not a part of India. She only had political relations with the latter which was imposed on her.
- (c) From the religious point of view, being Lamaist, she was quite distinct from India and
- (d) The policy of the party is to maintain intact the indigenous character of Sikkim and preserve its integrity (Kazi, 1983, p. 12).

Though the Darbar of Sikkim brought number of reformations, yet political situation grew more and more confused. The educated intellectuals wanted immediate abolition of exploitative and tyrannical feudalism and bring in democracy. They demanded popular rule, rule of law and universal adult franchise. On the other hand, the delegations from Buddhist status-quoists

headed by the Chogyal of Sikkim had a series of meetings and discussions in Delhi as an effort to find a basis for Indo-Sikkimese relation (Bhattacharya, nd, pp. 77-78).

In 1948, the Standstill Agreement was signed between India and Sikkim. Under the provision of this treaty, Sikkim continued to be the Protectorate of India and its external affairs; Defence and Communication came under the control of Indian government. In 1950, based on the Standstill Agreement of 1948, Indio-Sikkimese Treaty was signed which further confirmed the status of Sikkim as a Protectorate of India.¹⁶ The Treaty had nothing to do to fulfil the demands of the democratic aspirants and subside the democratic agitation. It was signed only to strengthen the relationship between India and Sikkim. Therefore, the political situation continued to grow from bad to worse and democratic movement continued gaining momentum.

On 28th December 1952, the Darbar of Sikkim issued a Proclamation, which envisaged the Constitution of the Sikkim State Council and the Executive Council based on Parity System. The Executive Council was to be constituted by twelve elected members of whom six would be Bhutia-Lepcha and six Nepali. Five other members were to be nominated by the Chogyal of Sikkim. It was decided that the first general election to Sikkim State Council would be held in the same year, 1953 (Bhadra, 1992, p. 85, Bhattacharya, nd, pp. 139-140 & Sengupta, 1985, pp. 12-73). Under the said Proclamation, Sikkim was divided into four territorial constituencies to elect 12 representatives. The constituencies and allocation of seats was as shown in Table-A: 1.

¹⁶ The Treaty contained altogether 13 Articles. According to this Treaty, Sikkim continued to be the Protectorate of India and was to enjoy autonomy in regard to its internal affairs (Art-II), Indian government was to look after the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim (Art-III), regulate and conduct external relations of Sikkim in terms of political and financial (Art-IV), maintain and regulate railways, aerodromes, posts, telegraphs, wireless etc (Art-V), appoint a representative of India to reside in Sikkim (Art-XI) etc. The Treaty further made provisions for the subjects of Sikkim to have right of entry into the Indian Union freely, carry out trade and commerce, acquire, hold and dispose any property, movable and immovable (Art-VIII) (Sikkim Darbar, 25th July 1951, pp. 1-6).

Table-A: 1

Constituencies and Allocation of Seats during Sikkim State Council Election, 1953.

Constituencies	Seat Allocation		Total
Gangtok Constituencies	2 Bhutia-Lepcha	1 Nepali	3
North-Central Constituencies	2 Bhutia-Lepcha	1 Nepali	3
Namchi Constituencies	1 Bhutia-Lepcha	2 Nepali	3
Pemayangtse Constituencies	1 Bhutia-Lepcha	2 Nepali	3
Nomination by the Chogyal	3 Bhutia-Lepcha	2 Nepali	5
Total	9	8	17

Source: Bhattacharya, nd, p. 136 & Sengupta, 1985, pp. 73-74.

The procedure, which was adopted during the election of 1953, was peculiar because while electing Bhutia-Lepcha candidates, the Bhutia-Lepcha voters of each constituency, in the first stage elected four candidates each for Gangtok and North-Central constituencies and two candidates each for Pemayangtse and Namchi constituencies. Similarly, for electing Nepali candidates, the Nepali voters had to elect four candidates each for Pemayangtse and Namchi and two each for Gangtok and North-Central constituencies.¹⁷ Thereafter there was to be a final stage of election in which candidates specified above had to be elected by all the voters in the respective constituencies.¹⁸

During the election, four political parties, Sikkim National Party, Sikkim State Congress, Rajya Praja Sammelon and Sikkim Schedule Caste League had contested. Sikkim National Party and Sikkim State Congress secured 6 Bhutia-Lepcha and 6 Nepali seats respectively whereas Rajya Praja Sammelon and Sikkim Schedule Caste League did not secure any of the seats. The SSC could not secure any of the Bhutia-Lepcha seats while Sikkim National Party did not secure any Nepali seats (Table-A: 2). In this election both the SNP and SSC seemed to have

¹⁷ The candidates so elected had to be the candidate at the final election for both Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali candidates referred above in Table-A: 1.

¹⁸ According to the Proclamation, a candidates fighting election for Council had to be above the age of 30 years, a subject of Sikkim, should not hold any office of profit under Sikkim Darbar and possess such other qualifications as may be prescribed by the Chogyal (Sengupta, 1985, p.72).

emerged as two sectarian parties representing the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali communities respectively (Sengupta, 1985, p. 73).

Table-A: 2
Seats Secured by the Political Parties in the first Sikkim State Council Election, 1953.

Name of the party	No of seats contested	No of seats secured	Community
Sikkim State Congress	06	06	Nepali- 06
Sikkim National Party	12	06	Bhutia-Lepcha- 06
Rajya Praja Sammelon	05	00
Schedule Caste League	02	00
Nomination by Chogyal		05	Nepali- 02 Bhutia-Lepcha- 03
Total	25	17	17

Source: Cited in Bhattacharya, nd, p. 140 from Sikkim Darbar Gazette, Vol. III, No 2, July 1953.

The second general election to the Sikkim State Council was supposed to be held in 1956 but was withheld.¹⁹ After the embodiment of agreement, the Darbar of Sikkim issued a Proclamation on 16th March 1958. According to the Proclamation, the enrolment of Council was increased from 17 to 20. The seat for both Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali remained the same, 6 each respectively. However, the number of nominated members in the Council was enlarged to 6. A new, 1 seat each for Sangha and General was introduced.²⁰ Following the same year, the election was held. There were altogether 41 candidates of whom 20 were the contestants from Nepali, 19 contestants from Bhutia-Lepcha and 2 contestants from the Sangha seat respectively (Table-A: 3). The most peculiar feature of this election, 1958 was an introduction of Sangha and General Seat.

¹⁹ This was because the Council which had completed three years of its term earlier had to be modified and the tenure had to be extended to 5 years after obtaining the agreement of all the political parties by the Dewan of Sikkim.

²⁰ The Sangha representative was to be elected by an Electoral College constituted of the monks belonging to the monasteries recognised by the Sikkim Darbar. For qualifying to the General seat, candidate had to be permanent inhabitant of Sikkim with other qualification as prescribed by the Sikkim Darbar.

Table-A: 3

Community-wise break-up of Candidates contesting in different Constituencies in Sikkim, 1958.

Name of Constituencies	No of Seats	No of Contestants	No of Nepali Contestants	No of Bhutia-Lepcha Contestants
Sangha	01	02	---	---
General	01	03	02	01
Pemayangtse	3 (2 Nep+1 BL)	09	06	03
Namchi	3 (2 Nep+1 BL)	09	06	03
North-Central	3 (1 Nep+2BL)	08	03	05
Gangtok	3 (1 Nep+2 BL)	10	03	07
Total	14	41	20	19

Source: Cited in Sengupta, 1985, p. 77 from Sikkim Darbar Gazette, Vol. VIII, No. 5, Notification No. 5 (63) 58/ CE, dated: 18th October 1958.

In 1960, due to friction within the two major political parties, SSC and SNP, a new political party named Sikkim National Congress (SNC) emerged through the merger of Swatantra Dal of Lhendup Dorjee Kazi, dissident group of SSC and SNP led by Sonam Tshering Bhutia (SNP), Chandra Das Rai (SSC) and Lhendup Dorjee Kazi (SD). Lhendup Dorjee Kazi became the President of Sikkim National Congress.

With the formation of a new political party, the politics of Sikkim also changed in the Sikkim State Council. The SNP had 5 members; SNC 4 and SSC 3 in the Council (Sengupta, 1985, p. 81). Members of the SNC (1960) submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India in Delhi. The memorandum carried the following objectives: (i) A Constitutional monarchy of Sikkim, (ii) A Council based on communal parity but elected by a joint electorate, and (iii) An independent judiciary with a High Court established by a charter (Kazi, 1983, p. 13).

The third election to the Sikkim State Council was to be held in 1961. However, the Proclamation of Sikkim Subject Regulation Act 1961 created dissatisfaction and resentment among the Nepalis as the Regulation referred to only Sikkimese, 'Lho-Men-Tsong', Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo, among the

categories of persons entitled to citizenship but excluded Nepali who formed 70% of the total population of Sikkim (Govt. of Sikkim, Home Dept. No 5/277/61, Dated: 16th January 1962). This led to a certain amount of possible discrimination against the community (Datta, 1994, p. 77 & Rao, 1978, pp. 20-21). The political parties launched agitation and demanded for the revision of Sikkim Subject Regulation Act 1961. In 1962, the Darbar of Sikkim announced its willingness to hold the third election by October but the political situation changed due to Sino-India conflict. Until further notice was served, the election was postponed in the public interest. The Executive Council was also allowed to continue to hold office until further order.

In 1966, next Royal Proclamation was issued by the Chogyal, Palden Thendup Namgyal according to which the total number of seats in Sikkim State Council was increased from 20 to 24 adding 1 more seat for Nepali and 1 for Bhutia-Lepcha. It also introduced 1 each separate seat for Tsongs (Limboos) and Schedule Caste as indicated in Table-A: 4.

Table-A: 4
Community-wise Seats Allotment in the Sikkim State Council, 1966

SI No	Community	Seats
01	Seat reserved for Bhutia-Lepcha	07
02	Seat reserved for Nepalese	07
03	Seat reserved for Tsong	01
04	Seat reserved for Schedule Castes	01
05	Seat reserved for Sangha	01
06	General seat	01
07	Nomination by the Maharaja of Sikkim	06
	Total	24

Source: Sikkim Darbar, Gazettee, 21st December, 1966, No. 6.

The new allotment of a reserved seat for the Tsongs was a kind of political justice given to the Tsongs in due recognition of the century old historical Treaty, 'Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum', their distinct identity and their role in shaping the history of

Sikkim as well as effort on the part of the Chogyal to strengthen his position (Bhattacharya, nd, p. 143). In accordance with this Proclamation, the third general election to the Sikkim State Council was held in 1967. The SNP, SSC, SNC and Sikkim Schedule Caste League four political parties secured 08, 05, 02 and 01 seat respectively out of 18 elective seats. The candidates of Sikkimese Tsong and Sangha secured the other 2 seats (Table-A: 5).

Table-A: 5

Seats secured by the respective Communities and Political Parties in Sikkim State Council Election, 1967.

Sl No	Name of Political Parties	No of seats secured	Community
1	Sikkim National Congress	07	06 Nepalese and 01 Bhutia-Lepcha
2	Sikkim National Party	05	05 Bhutia-Lepcha
3	Sikkim State Congress	02	01 Nepalese and 01 Bhutia-Lepcha
4	General Constituency (SNC)	01	01 Nepalese
5	Tsong Constituency, ally to (SNP)	01	01 Tsong
6	Schedule Caste	01	01 Nepalese
7	Sangha Constituency (SNP)	01	01 Bhutia-Lepcha
8	Nomination by the Maharaja	06	
	Total	24	18

Source: Cited in Bhattacharya, nd, p. 144 in Sikkim Darbar Gazette Extraordinary No. 19, dated: 12th May 1967.

During the end of 1969, a new political party, Sikkim Janata Party was formed with Lall Bahadur Basnet as its President and Krishna Chandra Pradhan a General Secretary. It stood for secularism, democracy and unity of the Sikkimese people (Bhadra, 1992, p. 113). On the other hand both SNC and SSC stood for democracy and demanded for the written Constitution from time to time. They also promised various socio-economic reformations in their election manifestoes (Sengupta, 1985, p. 87).

Under such a political situation, the fourth general election to Sikkim State Council was held in 1970. In this election, SNC secured 5 seats, SSC 4 seats and SNP 8 seats including 1 Sangha and 1 Tsong seat (Bhadra, 1992, p. 114). After the Constitution of Sikkim State Council, a six member Executive Council was formed on July 1970.²¹ But in 1972, Kazi was dismissed from the Executive Council and the portfolios were reallocated among the five Executive Councillors (Sengupta, 1985, p. 163).

In October, 1972, Sikkim State Congress and Sikkim Janata Party merged and Sikkim Janata Congress (SJC) was formed to stage the politics of Sikkim. It launched state-wide campaign against the Darbar of Sikkim, demanding joint electorate and abolition of the Parity System. The political development of Sikkim took sharp turn on the eve of the fifth election to the Sikkim State Council of 1973. The leaders of the SNC and SJC in their meeting held at Gangtok on February, 1973 put forward five demands to the Darbar of Sikkim.²²

II

THE SIKKIM CONGRESS LED GOVERNMENT AND ITS DOWNFALL (1974-1979)

Lhendup Dorjee Kazi was born in 1904 in an ancient and noble Khangsarpa Lepcha Kazi family at Chakung, West Sikkim (Sinha, 1975, p.109).²³ In 1945 he joined politics and dedicated his full time for the noble cause of the people of Sikkim.

²¹ Martam Topden was its Senior Executive Councillor and Nakul Pradhan and Lhendup Dorjee Kazi as Executive Councillors and Norbu Wangdi, Chaksum Bhutia and Bhawrajit Mukhia as its deputies (Kazi, 1983, p. 11). Lhendup Dorjee Kazi was allowed the portfolio of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Transport Authority (Sinha, 1974, p. 110).

²² The demands were (i) Full-fledged democracy in Sikkim, (ii) A Written Constitution, (iii) Fundamental Right, (iv) One-man one-vote based on Universal Adult Franchise and (v) Abolition of Parity System (Kazi, 1983, p. 13).

²³ His forefathers had played significant role in the history of Sikkim. His two very influential paternal uncles, Phodang Lama and Khangsar Dewan during the reign of the Maharaja of Sikkim, Thutob Namgyal were the instrumental in getting the Nepalese settlement in Sikkim in the nineteenth century (Sinha, 1975, p. 109). Lhendup Dorjee Kazi, who was brought up in such a liberal traditional family, entered the famous Rumtek Monastery as a monk at the age of 6 years. After 18 years of his priesthood, he became a social worker and established number of schools in west Sikkim.

Unlike other political leaders in Sikkim, Kazi had a number of advantages to win the hearts of all section of the Sikkimese society. By virtue he belonged to Bhutia-Lepcha community thus had greater appeal as far as Bhutia-Lepcha progressive elements were concerned than any other leader. He was also a monk which was his source of strength to impress the spiritual minds of the Sikkimese people. Therefore very soon, Kazi became an architect of democracy and spearheaded the democratic movement in Sikkim.

After Lhendup Dorjee Kazi's dismissal from his Executive Councillorship in 1972, he and his wife, Elisa Maria left for Europe for tour. In 1973, after he returned from Europe Kazi again joined politics and took part in the election on the intervention of the Indian Government. He started his politics with the fragmented party but due to his organising capability and towering leadership, he could mobilise a political force behind the SNC. Sooner or latter, all the youths joined his party. There was a cry for democratic government everywhere in the Sikkim. The Sixth General Election was held in January 1973. During this time, there were three organised political parties, SNP, SJC and SNC. The SNP secured 11 seats including 7 Bhutia-Lepcha, 2 Nepali, 1 Sangha and 1 Schedule caste seat. Whereas SJC secured 2 seats and SNC 2 seats including 2 Tsong and 2 general seat (Sengupta, 1985, p. 35).

The leaders of two political parties, Lhendup Dorjee Kazi of SNC and Krishna Chandra Pradhan of SJC accused Darbar personal of rigging the election. They protested against the pro-national party officials who were on duty in the election and started agitation over the issue of rigging. A Joint Action Committee (JAC) was formed under the leadership of Lhendup Dorjee Kazi. JAC mobilised the people to achieve their demands and urged upon the Chogyal of Sikkim to fulfil their aspirations and demands failing which it would launch a mass movement. They were reluctant to join the Sikkim State Council formed through the Council Election in 1973. The continuous protests led to the deterioration of administration and collapse of law and order in Sikkim. Such political turmoil

compelled the Chogyal of Sikkim to request the Government of India to take charge of law and order of Sikkim.

The Indian Government sent Avtar Singh, a Senior Officer of the Ministry of External Affairs on 8th April 1973 to examine the situation. The Indian Army took charge of law and order of Sikkim. The Government of India appointed B S Das as the Chief Administrative Officer of Sikkim. Thus, the administration of Sikkim came directly under the control of the Indian Government. On 8th May 1973, the Tripartite Agreement between, the Chogyal of Sikkim, Indian Government and three political parties consisting of 15 members was signed.²⁴

The first general election of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly was held in April 1974 in accordance with the Representation of Sikkim Subject Act of 5th February 1974 of the Chogyal of Sikkim and 8th May Agreement of 1973 under the supervision of the Election Commission of India. According to the notification No.196/SC, 5th February 1974, No. 17 of Sikkim Darbar, the Assembly was to be composed of 32 members and Sikkim was divided into thirty-one territorial constituencies and one Sangha constituency. The Sangha constituency was to be comprised of Sangha belonging to the monasteries recognised by the Chogyal of Sikkim (Darbar of Sikkim, Gazette, 5th February 1974, No. 17).

On the eve of the election, SNC and SJC which were working together to achieve the common goal since February 1973, merged and gave rise to new political party, Sikkim Congress (SC). In the election of 1974, there were only two political parties, SNP and SC and one independent candidate. The SC under the leadership of Lhendup Dorjee Kazi emerged as the most powerful political party and swept the poll capturing 31 of 32 seats in the Assembly, losing 1 seat to SNP. The SC stood for democracy, social and economic justice and political right of the

²⁴ This treaty envisaged the establishment of a fully responsible government with more democratic Constitution, guaranteed right, rule of law, independent of judiciary, legislative and executive powers to the elected representatives of the people and Universal Adult Franchise based on one-man-one-vote

people. The election result of 1974 indicates that majority of the people of Sikkim were in favour of democracy, socio-economic justice and fundamental rights.

After the formation of the new Assembly under the Chief Ministership of Lhendup Dorjee Kazi, a house on 2nd May 1974 adopted a resolution, Government of Sikkim Bill 1974 intending to make the Chogyal as a Constitutional Head.²⁵ This resulted to the rise of frictions and conflicts between the Chogyal and various political parties. Some section of pro-Chogyal officials and supporters did not welcome the Bill of 1974. They launched demonstrations to prevent the Assembly from approving the Bill. Meanwhile the Indian Parliament enacted the 35th Constitutional Amendment Bill 1974 and made Sikkim as an 'Associate State'. The Bill of 1974 was challenged in the Central Court of Sikkim at Gangtok.

The political situation became from bad to worse. An emergency meeting was called to reconsider the Bill. Finally, in an emergent session held on 10th April 1975, the Assembly passed a resolution abolishing the institution of the Chogyal and proclaiming Sikkim to be a Constituent Unit of India. The resolution read as, '*the institution of the Chogyal is hereby abolished and Sikkim shall henceforth be a Constituent Unit of India enjoying a democratic and fully responsible government*'. A Referendum, called '*Special Poll*' was held on 14th April, 1975 to place the resolution before the people to get final verdict from them regarding Sikkim's merger to the Indian Union. In the Referendum, '*Special Poll*' out of 61143 total voters, 59637 voted in favour of the resolution and only 1496 voted against the resolution (Rao, 1978 & Kazi, 1993, pp. 289-290).²⁶

The result of the Referendum, '*Special Poll*' was placed in the Indian Parliament for reconsideration. The Indian Parliament passed the 36th

²⁵ Since this Bill was a controversial; it caused much apprehension in the minds of the people of Sikkim.

²⁶ In other words about 97.53% wanted Sikkim to be merged with India and 2.44% wanted Sikkim to remain as an independent state.

Amendment Bill on 26th April, 1975 making Sikkim the 22nd state of the Indian Union inserting Article 371F into the Indian Constitution. Thus, on 16th May 1975, Sikkim became a full-fledged state of the Indian Union under the 38th Amendment of Indian Constitution. This historic event marked the end of 333 years old Chogyal rule in Sikkim.

The SC merged with the Indian National Congress (INC) and became a state unit of the party in December 1975 after Sikkim became a part of the Indian Union. The lone representative of SNP also joined the Congress. The Assembly of Sikkim became a single party affair. However, in 1977, the National Emergency was imposed at the centre. This had great impact on the state politics of Kazi's government.

After the withdrawal of Emergency at the Centre, the state politics of Sikkim took a new turn. Inter-party conflict and factionalism within Sikkim Congress Government of Kazi led to disunity and disintegrity within the party (Bhadra, 1992, p. 138). The strength of Sikkim Congress Government led by Kazi in the Assembly was reduced to 28 from 32 after Nar Bahadur Khatriwada disassociated with the party with three other MLAs and formed the provisional unit of the Congress for Democracy which latter on became Sikkim Prajatantra Congress (SPC).²⁷ So, President's Rule was imposed on 18th August, 1979 under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. This marked the end of Kazi's Government.

Though the Kazi Government ruled for only one term i.e, from 1974-1979, it brought a number of changes in socio-economic spheres. Sikkim witnessed rapid development, particularly in Health, Education, Agricultural, Industrial and other allied sectors. During the time of the Chogyal of Sikkim, the Plan outlay was only 3.71 crores. However, after Sikkim became a part of India, the Planning Commission of India started pumping sufficient amount of money in order to give

²⁷ The SC which had become a heterogenous organisation later became the state unit of the All India Congress Party and then Janata Party finally.

all possible support to achieve its long as well as short-term goal. In 1975-1976, the Planning Commission of India sanctioned Rs 6.31 crores, in 1977-1978 Rs 12.47 crores and in 1978-1979 Rs 15.80 crores. Out of this 90% was by the way of grant and 10% as loan (Nirash, 1978, p. 38). The top most priority of the Kazi Government was to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains production.²⁸ In 1977-1978, land was acquired to set up regional centres and regional sub-centres. Action for the identification of suitable varieties for different agro-climatic condition, works for the multiplication of crops like maize, paddy, wheat and millet was initiated. For the rapid transformation and double-cropping in the cultivable lands, government distributed High Yielding Varieties of food grains and vegetable seeds and saplings of fruits to the farmers.²⁹

In 1975, the government enacted Sikkim Cultivators Protection (temporary provision) Act to provide occupancy rights to tenants for the first time in Sikkim. The government under various schemes constructed a number of minor and medium size irrigation canals and by 1979, about 28000 hectares of land was covered with the schemes. In the year, 1979-1980, the outlay of Rs 80 lakh was embarked for minor irrigation. By the end of 1979, 72 multi-purpose co-operative societies including fair price shops were set up for advancing loans to the farmers for developing agriculture, horticulture and agricultural products at highly subsidised rate. The government also passed and enforced Sikkim Co-operative Societies Act 1978 in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly to consolidate and amend the law relating to Co-operative Societies of Sikkim. With the initiative of the government, 'Growers Association' was also set up for marketing vegetables and fruits. As a result of these effort of the government, food grain production in 1977-1978 increased from 35000 tonnes of 1976 to 40000 tonnes (Singh and Singh, 1978, pp. 16 & Roy, 1980, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, pp. 8. 12). The Government also conducted

²⁸ During the financial year 1978-1979, the Government launched crash programmes to bring the fallow lands under the plough during the winter season with the objective of covering 50% of such land under multiple cropping in the next five years

²⁹ The farmers were trained in the Regional Centres for the scientific application and use of chemical fertilizers and HIV seeds and adaptation of scientific/modern techniques of cultivation.

preliminary survey for the plantation of coffee in 100 acres of land. The sum of Rs 2 lakh was allocated for the plantation of coffee in 1978-1979.

During the first two years of the Fifth Five Year Plan (1975-1979), the infrastructure for animal health, extension and commercialisation was set up. For 1979-1980 alone, an annual outlay of Rs 72 lakh was proposed for Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development in Sikkim. Dairy Development Board and Livestock Development Co-operation were established to provide Veterinary Service and promote dairy farming, to provide remunerative price of work producers, the production cum collection system and financing various small and village enterprises and marketing animal products. In the 1975-1979 annual plan, government also made provision to set up poultry farms to accommodate 500 birds each in each of the district veterinary hospitals at four district headquarters. Under the control of the Forest Department, a fishery wing was established for the first time in 1976-1977 to exploit the existing fishery wealth and develop the inherent potentiality in inland fisheries. Under the 1979-1978 annual plans, a piggery development scheme was initiated for small breeding units and demonstration centres were set up. Rs 6.30 lakh was sanctioned in an annual plan for the piggery development during 1979-1980 (Roy, 1980, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, pp. 13-14).

The Industrial growth and activities during pre-merger period in Sikkim was limited to only production and development of traditional crafts such as weaving of carpet and woollen blankets, woodcarving, painting, and cane and bamboo crafts and papermaking. The most important industries during this time were Sikkim Distilleries (1975), Sikkim Mining Co-operation, Sikkim Fruit Preservation Factory, Sikkim Jewels etc. Soon after Kazi led Government came to power, the government conducted a number of surveys for industrialisation in Sikkim through the various agencies.³⁰ The government also established Sikkim

³⁰ Those agencies were Development Commissioner, Small Scale Industrial Units (1975-1976), National Industrial Development Co-operation (1975), Industrial Development Bank of India (1977-

Time Co-operation' (SICO) in 1976 for the Assembly of watches and Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Co-operation (SIDICO) in 1977 as a Financial Institution at the state level to promote and finance the industrial units by providing loans and also to procure and distribute raw material for selective industries and activities. During 1974 to 1979, large number of small manufacturing units for washing soap, coke briquette, matches, candles, leather goods, swan timber (Bagey Khola), cables, aluminium utensils, detergents, cotton fabrics with loom and bread and biscuits were set up (Singh & Singh, 1978).

Similarly, considerable achievement was made in the field of education during the Kazi Government. The enrolment of students increased to 45758 in 1979 against 32279 of 1974.³¹ Sharp rise in the enrolment of students at every stage of education has necessitated the increase in the strength of teaching personal by more than 50% from about 1200 in 1975 to 1919 in 1975 and also expansion of school facilities, infrastructural development and rise of expenditure in the educational sector. Along with this, the Plan Expenditure on Education also increased from Rs 63.95 lakh in 1975-1976 to Rs 99 lakh in 1978-1979 and then to Rs 391 lakh in 1979-1980. To ensure regular and qualified teachers to impart education in the schools of Sikkim, the government established full-fledged State Institute of Education (SIE). The state government made education free for the boys upto the end of class VIII and for girls up to class X.³² Under the Directorate of Education, Text Book Units for three regional languages viz Tibetan, Lepcha and Limboo of Sikkim was set up and Text Book Writers in each language were appointed to prepare text books up to class VII. Besides from text books, dictionaries in Lepcha, Limboo and Tibetan languages had also been produced by the Text Book Unit, Education Department. In 1977, a regular Government Degree college was established at Gangtok to ensure higher education and to provide

1978), High Power Team of the Ministry (1977-1978), Government of Handlooms (1977-1978), Roller Flour Hill Project etc (Dasgupta, 1985, pp. 31-36).

³¹ There was a marginal difference of 13,480.

³² The government also provided books to the students at half the cost. Free boarding schemes for the children of the weaker section of the society to study in Junior High Schools were launched in order to make education universal and accessible to all.

three streams, Arts, Commerce and Science. The night college established in 1972 was allowed to continue to exist to benefit those who were in the middle of their under-graduate course. At the primary level, the government in 47 private primary schools provided one teacher each. Ten primary schools were upgraded to Junior High schools, 5 Junior High schools to High schools and altogether 264 schools were set up from 1974-1979. In 1975, an elaborated programme of Non-Formal Education (NFE) was also launched in Sikkim for catering to continuing education of dropouts. From 1975-1979, 424 sub-centres were set up and in those centres the enrolment of the students were 13000 with 430 part-time teachers (Roy, 1980, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, pp. 34-37 & Singh & Singh 1978, p. 6). For making better facilities to the patients, hospitals at Mangan and Singtam were constructed. From 1974-1979, 33 to 50 new ambulances were provided. Three emergency medical officers, three additional general duty medical officers, at the Headquarter and four district medical officers were appointed. Number of Primary Health Centres and Primary Health Sub-Centres to cover the entire population were established. Preventive measures to fight malaria, smallpox and tuberculosis were launched throughout the state. Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was also launched in two of the four districts to facilitate the supplementary nutrition programme. For the first time in Sikkim, in 1976-1977 full-fledged Social Welfare Department was set up (Roy, 1980, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, pp. 38-40 & Nirash, 1978, pp. 19-53).

During the Chogyal regime, democracy was silent, the masses could neither experience the spirit of democracy nor could have an opportunity to have political representation and participation in the governance and in state affairs. The masses were merely subjects.³³ Since the dawn of democracy in Sikkim in 1975, political liberty, rights, social and economic justice could be enjoyed by the people of Sikkim, the people could participate in both administrative and political

³³ It was Lhendup Dorjee Kazi, an architect of democracy for Sikkim who was able to overthrow and plant the seed of long cherished and aspired democracy in 1975. In other word, it was for the shake of democracy that Sikkim was scarified.

affairs as a citizen. The society of Sikkim could witness rapid transformation and socio-economic development. Universal and elementary education, basic health care and social welfare became more accessible to the people of Sikkim.

III

FALL OF KAZI AND RISE OF SIKKIM JANATA PARISHAD LED BY BHANDARI (1979-1984)

After the 16th of May 1975, Sikkim entered a new phase of democratisation. The people of Sikkim also went through a different socio-economic and political experience such as current and cross-current of the political life, inter-party conflict, inter-community and intra-community contradictions, working of the democratic government, social-economic transformation and development in the state. Several factors such as distrust, a sense of insecurity feeling among the people of Sikkim of becoming aliens in their own homeland, wide flow of outsiders into Sikkim generated apprehension and dissatisfaction among the Sikkimese people of both elite and common strata. Communalism became more a dominant feature of the politics of Sikkim. Apart, merger of Sikkim within the India union had always been the burning issue in the minds of the people of Sikkim. Anti-Indian feeling in the state was increasing day by day. Lhendup Dorjee Kazi who was declared as undisputed leader during 1974's Sikkim Legislative Assembly election, lost his position and image after the merger of Sikkim to the Indian Union. He was accused of being '*Deshbechuwa*'³⁴ and functioning as a mini-Chogyal of Sikkim who deprived the people of Sikkim of their rights and freedom of speech and expression (SSP, 1993, p.2). Moreover, his isolation from the people further added fuel of propaganda, which gradually tarnished his image publicly. In protest against the working of his government, series of public rallies and demonstrations took place all over Sikkim (Séngupta, 1985, p. 167 & Bhadra, 1992, pp. 115-125).

³⁴ '*Deshbechuwa*' in Nepali vernacular means seller of a country, Sikkim.

Meanwhile, the Janata Party came to power at the centre. This political change at the centre had a serious impact on state politics of Sikkim. Nar Bahadur Bhandari and Nar Bahadur Khatiwada considered this political change more as a chance to secure central government's support in favour of their effort in opposing Kazi's government. Under such political dilemma in Sikkim and public discontentment and apprehension, a new political party, Sikkim Janata Party was formed on March 1977 by a young pro-Chogyal and anti-merger schoolteacher, Bhandari.³⁵

Nar Bahadur Bhandari was born in a humble farmer family in 1938 at Malbasey, Soreng in west Sikkim. In March 1968, he joined Government service as a school-teacher and served in various schools of Sikkim. In February 1974, during the pro-democracy revolution he resigned from his service and joined politics.³⁶ In 1976, Bhandari was arrested under Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during Lhendup Dorjee Kazi's Government and was kept in Behrampur Jail in Orissa from 1976-1977 (SLA Secretariat, 1993, pp. 1-2 & IPR, Govt. of Sikkim, 2000, pp. 55-56). During this time Bhandari had to suffer a lot. His wife also lost her government job (Sengupta, 1985, p. 169). His supporters and party was not allowed to hold any public meeting in the state. Meanwhile in 1977, National Emergency was also imposed in the country. In 1977, he was released from the jail. Thereafter he again joined politics and on 22nd March, 1977, formed Sikkim Janata Party. In the same year, October 1977, the name of Sikkim Janata Party was changed to Sikkim Janata Parishad. But this party was not given registration as a political party (Sengupta, 1985, p. 168). The Sikkim Janata Parishad (SJP) stood for democracy, socialism and secularism. It promised to provide real democracy to the people, undertake all sort of development in the state and curb corruption

³⁵ The party had full support of the Chogyal, other members of noble families as well as the section of people who were anti-merger.

³⁶ Bhandari along with few like-minded associates then formed the United Independent Front, became its General Secretary and contested the first general election held on the basis of Universal Adult Franchise for the first time in Sikkim in 1974 under the banner of the Front but could not succeed.

(Himalayan Observer, 22nd September 1979, Vol-14, No. 5). The SJP also made commitment to take up local issues since its inception.

Since May, 1975, the merger of Sikkim to the Indian Union had always been the burning issue of state politics of Sikkim.³⁷ Some members of the ruling party had been demanding to undo the merger of Sikkim to the Indian Union (Bhadra, 1992, & Sengupta, 1985, p. 98). Since Sikkim was merged with the Indian Union during Kazi Government, Bhandari accused Kazi as '*Deshbechuwa*' or '*Man of Mergers*' and his MLAs as '*Batishey Chor*' meaning '*Thirty-Two Thieves*' (SSP, 1993, pp. 5-6). Bhandari sensitised '*anti-merger*' as an important issue of local politics. '*Sikkim Forkao*' meaning '*let us bring back Sikkim*', '*Sikkim for Sikkimese*' '*Let us not be fooled again*', and '*We have to regain our lost rights*' were some of the slogans raised by the SJP which earned the sympathy and confidence of all section of the people including the monks and royal families (Bhattacharya, nd, p. 155). He also promised to provide 2 separate seats reserved for the Sikkimese Tsongs in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly if voted to power in the election (Chakravarti, 1991, p. 41).

Meanwhile, the question of reservation of seats for different communities came up and created tension in the political atmosphere of Sikkim. According to the 8th May 1973 Agreement, out of 32 seats, 16 were reserved for Sikkimese Bhutia-Lepcha including one Sangha and 16 for Nepali including Tsong and Schedule Caste. But the Central Government proposed to reserve 12 seats for Bhutia Lepcha, 1 Sangha and 2 for Schedule Caste and remaining 17 seats as general and placed it in the Parliament in March 1979, proposing the amendment of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to accommodate provision for the election to Sikkim Legislative Assembly. In May, the Bill was introduced in the Parliament. On 18th August, 1979, President's Rule was imposed in Sikkim under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. Meanwhile, the Parliament was also

³⁷ Moreover, the statement of the Prime Minister of India, Maroji Desai criticising the manner in which Sikkim was merged gave rise to considerable sensation in Sikkim.

adjourned resulting in the dissolution of Parliament. The Election Commission of India fixed the date of election in Sikkim for the 12th October, 1979. The President in the meantime issued an Ordinance called Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance 1979, stating that during the operation of this Ordinance, the Representation of the People Act 1950, the Representation of the People Act 1951, and Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituency Order, 1976, should have an effect. This Ordinance of 1979 has abolished 16 Nepali seats, which were reserved for them in the Assembly and reduced 16 Bhutia-Lepcha seats to 13 including 1 Sangha seat.³⁸ This change has brought apprehension among the people of Sikkim especially among the Sikkimese Nepali. This Bill of 1979, called Black Bill, 1979 was strongly opposed by the SJP as it failed to accord any reservation for Sikkimese Nepalis and provided the plain people the franchise. The party also demanded that the system of reservation as was agreed upon by all in the Tripartite Agreement of 8th May 1973 should be continued.

The citizenship issue was one of the burning topics of Sikkim during this time. It precipitated political crisis in Sikkim when electoral roll was being prepared with the prospect of 1979 Assembly Election as names of a number of people from the voter's list was excluded during this time. Citizenship issue cropped up when in October, 1978, state Government published a draft voter's list, which put the total number of electorates at 94000. The new list had the name of only 2000 people more in it than the old list published in 1974 (Bhadra, 1992, p. 140). The issue was taken up by the SJP demanding that all those names which had been included in the 1974 electoral roll should be included in the new rolls prepared for conducting the coming election and that citizenship should be granted to those who were living in Sikkim till 1971 (Sengupta, 1985, p. 171-185). Bhandari also opined that a good number of people had been left out of the electoral rolls who were genuine Sikkimese subjects. He also alleged that the 1974 electoral rolls was full of discrepancies since names of many persons who were

³⁸ This Ordinance in fact has violated the provisions of Article 371F of the Indian Constitution and 8th May Agreement of 1973.

either Indian citizens or Sikkimese subjects were included in the voter's list (Bhadra, 1992, p. 117). Apart from these local based political issues, Bhandari also, in order to get the support of cross sectional people of Sikkim, kept the inclusion of Nepali language in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution as one of the low key issues.³⁹

In Sikkim, there have been an atmosphere of uncertainty, tension and confusion due to citizenship issue and Ordinance of 1979.⁴⁰ Moreover, some sections of the people especially pro-Chogyal and people having anti-merger sentiments were not satisfied with the merger of Sikkim to the Indian union. Under such political crisis, Sikkim went to the poll on 12th October 1979 to elect 32 members of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

The first Assembly Election to Sikkim Assembly after Sikkim's merger to the Indian Union was conducted under the direction of the Election Commission of India and Indian Election Law.⁴¹ For the first time, 17 seats were declared general and plainsmen were provided both rights to exercise franchise and contest an election in Sikkim. The voters were for the first time provided with election photo-identity cards containing their photographs, names, addresses, and constituencies. Of the total electorates of more than one lakh, photo identity cards for eighty thousand voters could be prepared before the election (Sengupta, 1985, p. 102 & Bhadra, 1992, p. 141).

But the Chief Election Officer made it clear that the voters having their names in the electoral rolls would be eligible (Bhadra, 1992, p. 141). During this time, there were a total number of 1 17157 electorates in Sikkim.⁴² Out of 117157 voters, 2144 voters belonged to Sangha (Election Commission of India, New Delhi,

³⁹ Since Nepali language is one of the most common language used by the people of Sikkim as medium of communication.

⁴⁰ Under which no Assembly seat had been reserved for Nepali of Sikkimese origin.

⁴¹ It was held according to the new parity formula and is considered to be the first democratic election in Sikkim (Chakravarti, 1994, p. 100).

⁴² Out of which 51,224 were female and 65,913 were male voters.

1979, pp. 1-47). Three national political parties; Communist Party of India (Marxist), Indian National Congress and Janata Party and four regional parties; Sikkim Schedule Caste League, Sikkim Congress (R) and Sikkim Janata Parishad and Sikkim Prajatantra Congress as well as Independent candidates had contested during the election (Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 1-47). Election was conducted in 30 constituencies and 1 Sangha constituency.⁴³

In the election, SJP won 16 seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and formed government with the support of 1 Sangha seat. Except SPC, no other party contested the Sangha seat. The candidate who won the Sangha seat was supported by both Janata Party and the SJP. But the elected candidates, Lachen Gomchen Rimpoche having joined the SJP as a result its total strength increased upto 17. The Sikkim Congress (R) secured 11 seats of which B B Gurung won from two constituencies, Chakung and Jorethang-Naya Bazar. The SPC secured 4 seats. The three National political parties, CPI (M), INC and JNP, state political party, Sikkim Schedule Caste League did not secure even a single seat. Out of 108 Independent candidates contested in the election, only 1 candidate, Lachen Gomchen Rimpoche was elected. The SJP, which secured 16 seats, had 22776 votes (31.49%) of 72339 votes polled in 213 polling stations as shown in Table-A: 5.⁴⁴ The Janata Party led by Kazi could not win even a single seat. The SJP gained an absolute majority in the Assembly and formed a new government based on a regional political party for the first time in the state politics of Sikkim.

⁴³ Separate ballot boxes were provided for casting votes to the Sangha constituency. For the first time, two candidates backed directly by political parties fought the Sangha constituency (Chakravarti, 1994, p.99). In one constituency, Khamdong constituency (SC), election was not conducted due to the death of a contesting candidate. B B Gurung of Sikkim Congress (R) contested from two constituencies-Jorethang-Naya Bazar and Chakung.

⁴⁴ Next to SJP which got second highest votes was Sikkim Congress (R) of Ram Chandra Poudyal, i.e. 14,889 votes (20.58%) in the election.

Table-A: 6

Seats secured by the political parties in Sikkim Legislative Assembly Election, 1979.

SI No	Party	Seats		Votes Polled	
		Contested	Won	Votes	Percentage
I	National Political Parties	—	—	—	—
1	Communist Part of India(M)	02	00	241	0.33%
2	Indian National Congress	12	00	1476	2.04%
3	Janata National Party	30	00	9534	13.18%
	Total	44	00	11251	15.55%
II	State Political Parties	—	—	—	—
1	Sikkim Schedule Caste League	02	00	85	0.12%
2	Sikkim Congress Revolutionary	27	11	14889	20.58%
	Total	29	11	14974	20.70%
III	Registered (Unrecognised Parties)	—	—	—	—
1	Sikkim Janata Parishad	31	16	22776	31.49%
2	Sikkim Prajatantra Congress	32	04	11400	15.76%
	Total	63	20	34176	47.25%
IV	Independent Candidates	108	01	11938	16.50%
	Grand Total	244	32	72339	

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1979, pp.1-47.

After the formation of SJP ministry, Bhandari replaced Central Reserve Police with Sikkim Armed Police from various state government offices and ministerial official residence. Slowly, he tried to put an end to the influx of deputationists from government of India and other states to Sikkim. He attempted to transform the entire administrative system of Sikkim in accordance with the change of time and need of hour and circumstances (Chakravartti, 1994, pp. 101-102).

3rd January 1980 was fixed as polling date for the General Election to the Lok Sabha. The countermanded poll in the Khamdong (SC) constituency following the death of a candidate and a by-election to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly from Chakung constituency was notified by the Election Commission that it has to be held along with the Parliamentary Election. By-election of Chakung constituency was to be held as a result of B B Gurung's resignation who had

contested from two constituencies, Chakung-7 and Jorethang-Naya Bazar-10 in October, 1979 election. Gurung retained the seat of Jorethang-Naya Bazar, leaving Chakung constituency. In the election of those two stated constituencies, Dal Bahadur Damai of Sikkim Prajatantra Congress from Khamdong (SC) and C B Rai of Sikkim Congress (R) from Chakung won the election (Sengupta, 1985, pp. 108-110 & Bhattacharya, nd, pp. 157-158).

In the Parliamentary Election of 3rd January 1980, seven candidates contested. They were Pahal Man Subba of SJP, Ram Chandra Poudyal of Sikkim Congress (R), Indra Bahadur Rai of SPC, Kharananda Adhikari of Indian National Congress (U) and Independent candidates, Ashok Kumar Subba, Ram Prashad Sharma and Damber Kumari Pradhan. Pahal Man Subba of SJP won the Lok Sabha seat securing 31750 i.e, 61.65% votes of 51503 total valid votes. Nearest to it was Ram Chandra of Sikkim Congress (R) with 11632, i.e, 22.59% as shown in Table-A: 7.

Table-A: 7

Number of Votes secured by the Contestants in the Sikkim Parliamentary Election. 1980.

Sl No	Name of Candidates	sex	Party	Votes secured	Percentage
1	Pahal Man Subba	Male	SJP	31750	61.65%
2	Ram Chandra Poudyal	Male	SC (R)	11632	22.59%
3	Indra Bahadur Rai	Male	SPC	5125	9.95%
4	Ram Prashad Sharma	Male	IND	1073	2.08%
5	Kharananda Adhikari	Male	INC (U)	943	1.83%
6	Ashok Kumar Subba	Male	IND	801	1.56%
7	Damber Kumari Pradhan	Female	IND	179	0.39%
Total			07	51503	

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1980, p.201, Vol. 1.

Few months after the formation of SJP led government in Sikkim, Parliamentary Election was held in India, in January 1980. Congress (I) returned to power at the centre with absolute majority. This political change at the centre had great impact in the state politics of Sikkim. The three opposition parties, SPC of Khatiwada, Sikkim Congress (R) of Ram Chandra Poudyal and Janata Party of Kazi which were

trying to get recognition of Congress (I) joined together to seek the permission of the Congress (I) leadership to form a unit of the party in the state.⁴⁵ The SJP leader, Bhandari came to know about this fact and merged with the Congress (I) in July 1981 along with eight ministers and eleven MLAs and became the ally of Congress (I). The SJP changed its name and became Sikkim Parishad giving up its middle term '*Janata*'. But the merger of SJP with Congress (I) was not an easy affair as the leadership suffered from a serious rift over the question of its merger.⁴⁶ While constituting the Sikkim PCC (I) ad-hoc committee, the central leaders inducted four of the colleagues of Kazi which was against the wishes of Sikkim Parishad members. Bhandari took the matter with the High Command of the party and names of those four persons were dropped. This disappointed the Kazi group, which led to the re-grouping of Kazi men under the flag of Sikkim Congress.

On 1st July 1981, a meeting of Sikkim Parishad was held. In the meeting Sikkim Parishad strongly took the stand and passed a resolution on seat reservation requesting the Congress-I High Command to recommend the Government of India the need of restoration of the parity system and to maintain the Sangha seat so that the interests of the local people are fully protected.

In 1983, the Bhandari Government came out with the seat formula which was more reasonable and acceptable to most of the people in Sikkim.⁴⁷ The matter was pursued further when Bhandari visited Delhi to meet the Prime Minister of India and discussed the issue. On the same subject, the memorandum was submitted to the Prime Minister on July 1983 by the State Government

⁴⁵ In a joint sitting, they passed a resolution announcing their willingness to work as a single group in the state and under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Mrs Indra Gandhi.

⁴⁶ This act was against the wishes of staunch supporters of the party. It was also accused to violate the party manifesto which declared to promote the all over interest of the sons of the soil and to safeguard the regional interest of the state. But ultimately they had to give away a strong lobby. V. Patel, one of the General Secretaries of the Congress (I) also admitted that there had been dissension in the former Sikkim Parishad on the issue of merger.

⁴⁷ The seat formula was as 13 seats for Bhutia-Lepcha including Sangha, 13 for Nepali including Tsongs of Sikkimese origin 2 for Schedule Caste and 4 for General category (Kazi, 1983, p. 28).

requesting the Prime Minister to consider the matter regarding the reservation of seats in the larger interests of the people of Sikkim.

Meanwhile, the controversy of the ruling party with the central leadership over the issue of nomination of candidate for the Rajya Sabha created crisis in the state politics of Sikkim. The SPCC (I) wanted to nominate Kalzang Gyatso Bhutia as Rajya Sabha candidate whereas the central leaders wanted Solaman Sareng to be re-elected for the same. In order to resolve the issue, Rajendra Bajpai was deputed to Gangtok to meet the leaders of SPCC (I). He had discussed with the leaders and Bhandari agreed upon the decision of the party High Command and re-elected Solaman Sareng as a member of Rajya Sabha from Sikkim (Sengupta, 1985, pp. 183-185). From time to time, the issue of Citizenship of 30,000 people of Sikkim also led to political tensions in Sikkim. The opposition leaders particularly Ram Chandra Poudyal of Sikkim Congress Revolutionary (R) constantly pressurised the Bhandari Government to ventilate its stand on the issue.⁴⁸

Apart, the Bhandari government was also facing severe criticism from different directions. The opposition leaders accused his government of being corrupt and supporting nepotism and favouritism.⁴⁹ In February 1982, R C Poudyal of Sikkim Congress (R) submitted a memorandum to the President and Prime Minister of India to institute corruption charge against the Bhandari government.

In 1983, the gap between Bhandari and Sherab Palden Bhutia of his ministry started widening. The whole Congress (I) Legislative party members was divided into ministerial and non-ministerial groups (Sengupta, 1985, p.

⁴⁸ All-Party Citizenship Committee was constituted with L B Basnet, the then Deputy Speaker of Sikkim Legislative Assembly as its Chairman to look upon the matter of citizenship issue. Bhandari also took stand, expressed his readiness to grant citizenship to those 30,000 stateless persons of Sikkim and considered 1970 as cut-off-year (Sengupta, 1985, p. 184).

⁴⁹ Corruption had become most common talk all over the state.

185).⁵⁰ Bhandari, obtaining the permission from the High Command dropped Sherab Palden and Sanchaman Limboo from the Cabinet.⁵¹ Sherab Palden declared his willingness to serve the Congress (I) but was forced to leave the party in March 1983, when Bhandari issued corruption charge sheet against him and his group. This resulted in a crisis in the State Congress (I) on the eve of the Budget Session of the Assembly and Rakdong-Tintek By-Election.

The continuous inner-party conflict in the Congress (I) was giving rise to different speculation in the state politics of Sikkim. In June 1983, Kazi dismissed his old party Sikkim Congress and formed a new political party, named Sikkim United Council. This newly formed party got its momentum and strength when two dropped out ministers of Bhandari's ministry, Sherab Palden and Sanchaman Limboo joined it. In January 1984, a group of 13 ruling party MLAs including 4 ministers submitted memorandum to the Governor of Sikkim, Homi J Talyarkhan enumerating corruption charge against Bhandari Government and expressing their lack of confidence against Bhandari. In Delhi, Janata Party also demanded the imposition of President's Rule in Sikkim in the context that Bhandari Government had lost majority in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. But the party High command had no intention to change the leadership in Sikkim immediately. Some pro-Bhandari group furthermore demanded the removal of party leaders like Loden Tshering, Sonam Tshering and ministers like Lachen Gomchen Rimpoche and Athup Lepcha. But on the one hand some strong section of party men were pressuring Bhandari to step down from the Government. On the other, opposition parties were relentlessly accusing Bhandari of being corrupt (Bhadra, 1992, p. 118).

⁵⁰ Sherab Palden Bhutia was a close and confident of Bhandari since the very beginning of Bhandari's political career. However, Bhandari was increasingly growing unpleasant over the predominance and popularity of Sherab Palden Bhutia. Furthermore, Palden annoyed his ministerial colleagues in the party by his attempt to keep himself clean of the charge of corruption.

⁵¹ Though Bhandari tried to maintain the differences for sometime, the ethnic interest and corruption issue went on widening the rift within the ruling party.

IV

DECLINE AND FALL OF SJP LED GOVERNMENT AND EMERGENCE OF THE SSP (1984-1994)

The Third Sikkim Legislative Assembly and the Eighth Lok Sabha Election were to be held in 1985 and 1984 respectively. In early 1984, Bhandari took a rigid stand. He and his party started demanding special status for Sikkim and recognition of Sikkim as a tribal state. On a number of occasions, in the public meetings, he declared that there would be no election in Sikkim if seats are not reserved for the Sikkimese Nepali community and citizenship is granted to the stateless people of Sikkim. 'No Seat, No Vote' and 'No Reservation, No Election' were the two important slogans of Bhandari. The two slogans were adversely against Bill 79 of 1979 which abolished 16 seats reserved for the Nepalis including Tsong in the Sikkim Assembly and had immense impact over the people who were dissatisfied and unhappy with the Bill 79 (Kazi, 1983, pp. 27-28).

In April 1984, a conference of the Congress (I) was held at Jorethang, South Sikkim. During this time, Bhandari assumed an uncompromising attitude over the issues of seat reservation and grant of citizenship and criticised the central government severely for not fulfilling the aspirations and demands of the people of Sikkim. He also declared that his party would boycott the coming Assembly Election of 1985 and Lok Sabha Election of 1984 if central government fails to meet the demands.

Inner-party conflict continued to exist within the ruling government led by Bhandari. Some legislators and political leaders of opposition parties have been accusing Bhandari of being corrupt. The pro-Bhandari group demanded the removal of Loden Tshering, Sonam Tshering and ministers, Athup Lepcha, Lachen Gomchen Rimpoche. As a result of this, Bhandari in 1984, took a drastic step of expelling three Ministers like Athup Lepcha, Samten Tshering and Lachen Gomchen Rimpoche from the cabinet on the charge of anti-

people activity (Bhadra, 1992, p. 18). The dissident group consolidated their position and pressurised the party High command for changing the leadership of the government since Bhandari has lost majority support.⁵² They also accused Bhandari of being corrupt in Sikkim (Sengupta, 1985, pp. 189-190).

Although, the party High Command had no intention to disturb the political atmosphere in the state on the eve of the General Election of 1984 but the situation was going out of order. The Union Minister for state, P. Venkatasubbaia was sent to Sikkim by the party High command to observe the situation on 10th May 1984 evening. The Governor of Sikkim, Homi J Talyarkhan and P Venkatasubbaia understanding the political situation, requested Bhandari to step down and give up the three demands on which he had staked his carrier: Assembly reservation for the Nepalis, Indian citizenship for an estimated 30000 stateless people of Sikkim, and inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution.⁵³ However, Bhandari was reluctant to do so. As a result the Governor of Sikkim, Homi J Talyarkhan⁵⁴ dismissed Bhandari from his high profile office on the 11th May 1984 (Govt of Sikkim Gazette, Friday, 11th May 1984, No-59, 60). On the same day, B B Gurung, the then finance Minister in the Bhandari's government was sworn in as the third Chief Minister of Sikkim along with three other ministers (Sikkim Herald, 16th May 1984, vol-27, No-32/ Govt. of Sikkim Gazette, Friday, 11th

⁵² They also remarked that the future of not only minority but also of the majority community was in danger at the hands of Bhandari.

⁵³ Bhandari was given ultimatum to think over the matter until 9 O'clock of 11th May morning 1984. Otherwise he had to quit the chair of Chief Minister if fails to do so (SSP, 1993, p. 8).

⁵⁴ In exercise of his power under Article 164 (1) of the Indian Constitution.

May 1984, No-59, 60).⁵⁵ The CBI instituted investigation on the charges of corruption in which Bhandari was stated to have been involved.⁵⁶

The moment, Bhandari was dismissed from Chief Ministership, he started mobilising his supporters and threatened to quit the Congress (I). He went to Delhi with a number of MLAs and demanded that the government be formed under the leadership of Chamla Tshering Bhutia who enjoyed majority support. But nobody paid attention to his demand. Bhandari in disgust along with his majority legislators quitted the Congress (I). Nar Bahadur Khatriwada invited Bhandari to join his Gorkha League. On the other hand, Chandra Das Rai also called Bhandari to join his Himali Congress and form a broad-based political platform. But Bhandari declared that he would not join any political party. He was determined that Sikkim required regional party, regional politics and regionalism as a faith and decided to devote his activities for the promotion of those activities (Sengupta, 1985, p. 191 & Bhadra, 1992, p. 118).

It was under such circumstances that Bhandari on 24th May 1984 formed a new regional political party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) with red and white coloured-flag and elephant as its election symbol (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984 & Constitution of SSP, 1984). The newly formed party, the SSP just a few months before the Third General Election to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly of March 1985 emerged as one of the strongest regional political party of Sikkim. It stood for socialism, secularism and democracy and upheld sovereignty, unity and integrity of India, maintain peace, progress and

⁵⁵ In the meeting held on 13th May 1984, 22 MLAs in writing had given full assurance of their support for the leadership of Gurung. The cabinet of Gurung was further extended on the 16th May 1984 by including other five Ministers (Sikkim Herald, 17th May 1984, vol-27, No-33/ Govt. of Sikkim Gazette, Wednesday, 16th May 1984, No-61, 62). Gurung confirmed that his government was stable since he enjoyed support of the majority. The dismissal of Bhandari was welcomed by the opposition parties of Sikkim.

⁵⁶ The Government of Gurung could not survive for more than 13 Days. Due to the failure of the constitutional machinery, in pursuance of sub-clause (I) of clause (C) of the of the Proclamation issued on the 25th May 1984, by the Governor, Homi J Talyarkhan under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution once again imposed President's Rule in Sikkim (Govt of Sikkim. Gazette, No-6(21) Home/84/ 2nd Friday, 25th May 1984).

communal harmony, protect and promote the age-old customs, tradition and cultural heritage of Sikkim. It also promised to fight anti-social and anti-National activities (Constitution of SSP, 1984, pp. 1-2). The SSP also raised a number of issues in its Election Manifesto, 1984, pp. 3-10. These issues are discussed under sub-heads as below:-

(i) Restoration of Seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly

Restoration of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for the ethnic communities of Sikkimese origin had been the most important issue that has been agitating the minds of the people of the state ever since the Tsong seat in 1973 and Nepali seats were abolished in 1979. The reservation of seats in the Sikkim State council was made during the Chogyal of Sikkim on the basis of maintaining peace and communal harmony amongst the various ethnic communities in the state and ensuring that one community does not dominate over other communities (Sikkim Darbar, 8th May 1973).⁵⁷

The reservation of seats made under the provision of 8th May 1973 Agreement, continued until 1979. In March 1979, Central Government proposed to reserve 12 seats for Bhutia-Lepcha, 01 Sangha and 02 Schedule Caste and remaining 17 seats to be left as general seat and placed it in the Parliament, proposing the amendment of the Representation of the People Act 1951 to accommodate provision for the election to Sikkim Assembly. The said Bill was introduced in the Parliament in May 1979. On 18th August 1979, President's rule was imposed in Sikkim under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. Meanwhile, the Parliament was also adjourned resulting in the dissolution of the Parliament. The Election Commission of India fixed the date of the election in Sikkim for the

⁵⁷ The seat reservation was an important element in the Historic May 8th 1973 Agreement reached between the Chogyal, the Government of India and three major political parties of Sikkim. This Agreement was the precursor to Sikkim's merger with the Indian Union in 1975. Here it is also worth mentioning that when the said Tripartite Agreement was signed, Tsong seat was abolished and clubbed the Tsongs with Nepali community without their consultation. This undemocratic move had paved the way for the eradication of their distinct identity. Since then the Tsong have been agitating to get back their Tsong seat procured in 1966.

12th October 1979. The President of India meantime issued an Ordinance called 'Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance 1979' stating that during the operation of the Ordinance, the Representation of the People Act 1950, the Representation of the People Act 1951 and Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituency Order 1976, should have an effect.

When this Ordinance, 1979 was implemented in Sikkim, 16 seats which were reserved for the Nepalis in the Assembly was abolished and 16 seats reserved for the Bhutia-Lepcha was reduced to 13 including 1 Sangha seat.⁵⁸ The Bill of 1979, called Black Bill, 1979 was strongly opposed by the SJP on the pretext that it failed to accord any reservation for Sikkimese Nepalis and provided the plain people the franchise. The party also demanded that the system of reservation as was agreed upon by all in the Tripartite Agreement of 8th May 1973 should be continued. As a reaction to it, R C Poudyal formed the Sikkim Congress (R) on 22nd September 1979 opposing the 'Black Bill No. 79 of 1979'. Poudyal also filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court under Article 226 of the Indian Constitution on 18th September, 1979 (Kazi, 1983, p. 24).

The demand for restoration of reserved seats became the main plank of SSP. Bhandari reminded that Sikkim is a small state with less population therefore, the continuous influx of the people from other parts of the country will be dismembered one day and Sikkimese people will become a minority. Furthermore, if the political rights of the Sikkimese people is not restored in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly through seat reservation then politically they will be endangered and their identity will be diluted within Sikkim in near future. Therefore, Bhandari made commitment to bring back the abolished seats in the Assembly if SSP was voted to power (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984, p. 3).

⁵⁸ This Ordinance in fact has violated the provisions of Article 371F of the Indian Constitution and 8th May Agreement of 1973 and brought apprehension and discontentment among the people of Sikkim especially among the Sikkimese Nepali.

(ii) Grant of Citizenship to Stateless Person in Sikkim with 1970 as the Cut-off year

Grant of citizenship to those persons who were rendered stateless was another political issue reflected in the SSP manifesto. Sikkim had before it, the problem of involving thousands of people who were left out of being Indian citizens. This unpleasant situation has arisen out of the Sikkim citizenship order of 1975 that was issued by the Central Government following the merger of Sikkim to India on 26th April 1975.⁵⁹ But thousands of people whose names were not entered in the Register due to various reasons became stateless overnight following Sikkim's merger to the Indian Union. As a result, those stateless persons were deprived of all the benefits, facilities and privileges enjoyed by other citizens. While in Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Pondicherry, the people became Indian citizens the moment the territories became a part of the Indian Union. The case in Sikkim was not the same. The different and illogical yardstick followed in the case of Sikkim had deeply affected and hurt the sentiments of Sikkimese people. Realising this fact, Bhandari in his SSP manifesto, made this issue as one of the political agenda and promised to the people that he would grant citizenship with 1970 as the cut-off year if voted to power (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984, P. 3).

(iii) Son of the Soil policy

'Son of the Soil Policy' was another political issue of the newly formed SSP. Since the very beginning of his political carrier, Bhandari was deeply influenced and inspired by anti-merger and pro-Chogyal feeling. He also had an apprehension that the continuous influx of the people from other parts of India in

⁵⁹ The citizen order stated, 'Every person who immediately before the 26th April, 1975 was a Sikkim subject under the Sikkim Subject Regulation, 1961, shall be deemed to have become a citizen of India on that day' (Memorandum submitted to the President of India, dated: 21st October, 1991). Accordingly only those persons whose names were entered in the Sikkim Subject Register under the Sikkim Subject Regulation, 1961, were deemed to have become Indian citizens.

due course would outnumber the Sikkimese people and they will become insecure and become a minority losing their distinct identity in future. He was very much critical about the outsiders who came to Sikkim in search of employment either on deputation or for a fixed period of time.⁶⁰ He feared that the people from the plains would gradually outnumber the Sikkimese people from all positions of importance (Sengupta, 1985, p. 175).⁶¹ He also intended to preserve the local identity to give all sorts of government jobs, trade licence and facilities and benefits to only Sikkimese people (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984, p. 4a).

(iv) Maintenance of Cordial Centre-State Relation

Bhandari, in 1979, came to power on Anti-merger, Anti-Bill, 1979 and Citizenship issue that was quite controversial in nature. He had bitter experience when his ministry was dismissed in 1984 due to uncompromising nature and contradictory attitude towards the Centre and the Governor. The Indian Constitution clearly states that the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers hold their office during the pleasure of the Governor. It means if the Governor of the state is not satisfied and not pleased with the performance of the government in the state then he can dismiss the ministry under Article 164 (1) of the Indian Constitution. Moreover, under the Article 371F (g), the Governor of Sikkim enjoys special power and responsibility. Considering all those aspects, Bhandari wanted to maintain cordial relation with the Centre to ensure more financial support and political freedom for the state of the Indian Union and external support for constitutional amendment to the concept of the state government continuing in power in the pleasure of the Governor (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984, pp. 8-9).

⁶⁰ Earlier he even had accused Lhendup Dorjee Kazi government of depending upon the 'imported bureaucrats'.

⁶¹ In 1979, in the manifesto of the SJP too, Bhandari declared that 'It shall be the constant endeavourance of his government to provide over-all interest of the sons of the soil of Sikkim and safeguard the regional interest of the state' (Kazi, 1983, p. 27).

(v) Constitutional Recognition of Nepali Language

Nepali language is one of the languages that is spoken by a sizeable number of Indian Nepalis living in some parts of West Bengal, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Dehradun, Himachal Pradesh and other parts of India.⁶²

In Sikkim also, Nepali language is used as lingua-franca for communication. It is spoken almost by all the ethnic communities of Sikkim.⁶³ In 1984, when Bhandari formed the SSP he included the inclusion of Nepali Language in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution as one of the political agenda in Sikkim. He ventilated that Constitutional recognition of Nepali language and its inclusion in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution would facilitate unity, integrity and national integration in the country. Therefore, he made this agenda as one of the issues and appealed to the masses that if SSP is voted to power then his government would endeavour to include the same in the Eighth Schedule of the India Constitution (Memorandum submitted to the President of India, 21st October 1991, pp. 3-5).

Apart from those political and local issues of Sikkim, the SSP also took a stand to declare Sikkim as a 'Backward State' with the view of making provision for special treatment of Sikkim in the matter of fund allocation and granting more facilities aiming to achieve and improve the economic, educational, social and cultural life of the people of the State (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984, p. 4).

Poverty alleviation and social welfare was the bedrock of the SSP's programmes. The SSP in its election manifesto promised that the main thrust will be the development of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, Poultry

⁶² As a well-developed language, it has a rich literature. It is taught in most of the Indian Universities and Colleges. Due to its richness in literature, the Sihitya Academi, New Delhi, recognised it. Inclusion of Nepali language in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution has been an age-old aspiration and demand of Nepali speakers of India. The issue has been raised from time to time both in the state and Union legislatures but remained unfilled.

⁶³The Constitutional recognition of Nepali language as a political issue took its shape in 1979, when Bhandari included the matter in the manifesto of SJP. But this attempt was unsuccessful and it remained as a mirage until 1990s.

Farming and Forestry.⁶⁴ Thus, the SSP further promised to demand regular supply of better seeds, fertilizers insecticides and agricultural implements, establishment of Regional Centres, Sub-Centres and Village Level Work Centres and implementation of irrigation projects by constructing canals. Better breed of cattle wealth was felt necessary to increase the protection of milk and milk products. It also assured to extend all sort of measures and provide loans to the farmers at a highly subsidised rate with the objective to make poor people and every village self-sufficient in their basic need (Sikkim Herald, 29th January 1984, Vol-29, No-5). Furthermore, the Parishad laid great stress on Rural Electrification Programme, Rural Housing Schemes and essential commodities at a highly subsidised rate. It pledged to electrify each and every village in Sikkim in the shortest possible time and provide safe drinking water and made an assurance to launch various schemes for Old Aged, Disables, Destitute, Women and weaker section of the Sikkimese society (Sikkim Herald, 21st January 1984, Vol-27, No-2).

For making education free, universal and accessible to all, the SSP laid more stress on vocational education reoriented to meet the needs of the country as a whole. It promised to give more emphasis on quality rather than quantity in the educational sphere by providing free education upto class (XII) with free text books and exercise books at highly subsidised rate, opening more schools, Colleges, Polytechnics, Engineering, and Medical Colleges and University and upgrading existing schools in Sikkim. It also promised to fight for more seats for Sikkimese students in the educational institutions outside the State (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984, pp. 5-6 & Sikkim Herald, 25th July 1984, Vol-27, No-23).

So far as the extension of basic and better health care was concerned, the SSP stressed for greater medical facilities in terms of more beds, more qualified doctors and better nursing care, mother and child care in the State. It called for specialized and sophisticated treatment in main hospitals in Gangtok.

⁶⁴ During the SJP led government (1979-1984) Bhandari had given much emphasis to these sectors. As a result, the food production increased from slightly over fifty thousand tonnes to ninety three thousand tonnes.

and more facilities in District Hospitals and Dispensaries, establishment of more hospitals, primary Health centres, sub-centres wherever necessary and provide free medical facilities. The Parishad made commitment to give top most priority to the supply of safe drinking water to the people all over the state with a time-bound programme especially for the supply of safe drinking water to all the villages in the State (SSP, Manifesto, 1984, p. 6). It also accorded top priority to family planning and promised to provide mid-day-meal for school going children upto class-V (Sikkim Herald, 29th January 1984, Vol-29, No-5).

The strengthening and widening of the infrastructure of Transport and Communication was very essential for all-round development of the state. Thus, construction of roads and bridges and need for the strengthening of telecommunication was also added in the agenda of election manifesto, 1984. For telecommunication network, SSP led government promised to establish and launch the mini Radio station and a pocket Television Relay centre in Gangtok to cover the State Capital as well as powerful Radio & Television Network covering the entire State (SSP, Manifesto, 1984, p. 5).

For generation of employment avenues and opportunities, the SSP promised to establish Small Scale and Cottage Industries of handlooms and handcrafts and other industrial units. It further pledged to encourage carpet weaving, thanka paintings and wood-work and assured to develop infrastructure for tourism industry in Sikkim by demanding net-work of ropeways in the State to carry men and material, inexpensively and swiftly from one place to another. For the industrial units, hotel taxi operators, artisans, entrepreneurs and businessmen as well as unemployed youths, the Parishad committed to provide financial assistance through Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (SIDICO) and Financial Industries and Sikkim Khadi and Village Industrial Board (FISKVIB) (SSP, Election Manifesto, 1984, p. 6 & Sikkim Herald, 5th July 1984, Vol-27, No-23).

For the welfare of the schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste, the party assured to demand for more financial allocation and provide pre-matric and post-matric scholarships and increase the same for school going children, give special concession to the youths of ST & SC on matters of recruitment to Central Services, grant housing loans at a highly subsidized rate, provide home for homeless and impart training for capacity building and skill development (SSP, Manifesto, 1984, p. 7 & Sikkim Express, 26th January 1984).

For efficient, corruption free and accountable administration, the Parishad gave more stress for the decentralisation of Administration involving the people right from the grass-root level through strengthening village Panchayat. For the augmentation of forest wealth and maintain ecological balance, the Parishad assured to place emphasis on preserving and increasing social forestry (SSP, Manifesto, 1984, p. 8).

In addition to these, SSP also made an assurance for the construction of community centres, Panchayat Ghars, Libraries and Multi-Purposes Co-operative Societies (Sikkim Herald, 29th January 1984, Vol-29, No-5 & 19th January 1985, Vol-29, No-5). It further promised to protect the rights and interests of the people of Sikkim, maintain peace, progress, communal harmony and secularism, uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India and fight against anti-social and anti-national elements, various forms of exploitation, suppression and oppression and discrimination respective of caste, creed and religion. To work for the welfare of the youths, women and children and preserve, protect and promote the age-old customs, tradition and cultural heritage of the people of Sikkim and shall preserve Sikkimese distinct identity (SSP, Manifesto, 1984, p. 3 & Constitution of SSP, 1984, pp. 1-2).⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Although the new Parishad (SSP) was formed over the ruin of old Parishad (SJP), the two differed in the issues raised and standpoint. The SJP had issues like anti-merger of Sikkim to the Indian Union, Restoration of seats in the Sikkim Assembly, Grant of citizenship to the stateless persons and Constitutional recognition of Nepali language and stood for democracy, socialism, secularism and anti-corruption. It also had some important slogans like 'Let's return Sikkim', 'Sikkimese for Sikkimese', 'Let us not be fooled again' and 'We have to regain our lost right'. While

The Eighth Lok Sabha Election was held in December, 1984. In the election, there were eight contestants 3 from National parties-Indian National congress (INC), Communist Party of India (CPM) and Janata National party (JNP) and 5 Independent candidates of which Bhandari was one of them. In this election, Bhandari as an Independent candidates won the Lok Sabha seat securing 56614 i.e, 68.50% of the 96024 total valid votes polled in 225 polling stations. Nearest to Bhandari was Pahalman Subba of Indian National Congress who secured 21324 i.e, 25.81% of the total valid votes polled as indicated in Table-A: 8.

Table-A: 8

Votes secured by the candidates in the Eighth Parliamentary Election, 1984.

Sl	Name of contestants	Party	Votes Secured	%
1	Nar Bahadur Bhandari	Independent	56614	68.50%
2	Pahal Man Subba	Indian National Congress	21327	25.81%
3	Bishnu Kumar Rai	Independent	1717	2.08%
4	Lal Bahadur Basnet	Independent	936	1.13%
5	Bhim Bahadur Mishra	Communist Party of India	843	1.02%
6	Ashok Kumar Subba	Janata National Party	604	0.73%
7	Phur Tshering Lepcha	Independent	495	0.60%
8	Bal Deoram Harijan	Independent	110	0.13%
	Total	08	96024	

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1984, p. 198, Vol. I.

The victory of Bhandari in the Eighth Parliamentary election of December 1984 made him more confident and determined to fight for the forthcoming Assembly election which was to be held in March 1985. His 68.50% of votes secured during Parliamentary election confirmed that his newly formed party, SSP certainly had a chance to come to power. So, Bhandari mobilised the youths and his supporters under the banner of SSP with elephant as its election symbol and red and white coloured flag in the election campaign.

new Parishad (SSP) had issues such as Restoration of seats, Constitutional recognition of Nepali language, Grant of citizenship to the stateless persons, Son of the Soil policy and Cordial Centre-state relationship and stood for the protection of rights and interests, peace, progress, communal harmony, secularism, upholding sovereignty, unity, dignity and integrity.

In March 1985, the Fourth Assembly election was held in Sikkim. In the election, four national political parties, CPI (M), CPI, Indian National Congress (INC) and Janata Party and two state political parties; SSP and Sikkim Prajatantra Congress (SPC) had contested (Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1985, p. 1). Here it is also worth mentioning that during this time, there were altogether 195 candidates who fought an election. Out of 195, 94 including 11 women were independent candidates. In the Assembly election, SSP led by Bhandari got a landslide victory securing 30 out of 32 Assembly seats.

During the election, the total number of votes polled was 97057 in 290 polling stations. Out of 97057 votes polled, 60371 (62.20%) was secured by the SSP as indicated in Table-A: 9. On 8th March 1985, the SSP led ministry was formed with 11 cabinet ministers including the Chief Minister, one speaker and 19 chairmen for the term of five years. The formation of Bhandari government confirmed the firm political foundation of the SSP, setting a new milestone in the political history of Sikkim.

Table-A: 9
Number of votes secured by the political parties and independent candidates
in Fourth Sikkim Legislative Assembly Election, 1985.

Political Party	Seats		Votes Polled	
	Contested	Won	Votes	Percentage
I National Political Parties	—	—	—	—
Communist Party of India	02	00	25	0.03%
Communist Party of India(M)	01	00	336	0.35%
Indian National Congress	32	01	23440	24.15%
Janata National Party	20	00	913	0.94%
Total	55	01	24714	25.47%
II State Political Parties	—	—	—	—
Sikkim Prajatantra Congress	14	00	438	0.45%
Sikkim Sangram Parishad	32	30	60371	62.20%
Total	46	30	60809	62.65%
II Independent	94	01	11539	11.88
Grand Total	195	32	97057	

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 1-45.

CONCLUSION

During the Chogyal regime, democracy was absent. The masses were not allowed to participate in the governance and in state affairs. There was no political representation. They were merely subjects. Since the dawn of democracy in Sikkim in 1975, political liberty, rights, social and economic justice could be enjoyed by the people of Sikkim, the people could participate in both administrative and political affairs as citizens. The society of Sikkim could witness rapid transformation and socio-economic development. Universal and elementary education, basic health care and social welfare became more accessible to the people of Sikkim. But sometimes, it is also claimed that democracy in Sikkim suffered from serious hollowness. It is reported that the provision made under Article 371F of the Indian Constitution was violated. Such violation of the provisions of the 8th May Agreement of 1973 and Article 371 confirms the hijack of democracy also in Sikkim.⁶⁶ Moreover, misuse of power and corruption by the political leaders who are in power indicates violation of democratic institutions in Sikkim. Since in Sikkim, democracy has not taken its roots hence corruption and misuse of power inhibited the working of democracy.

⁶⁶ For instance abolition of 16 seats which were reserved for Sikkimese Nepalis and reduction of 16 seats for Bhutia-Lepcha to only 13 seats through Sikkim Ordinance in 1979 without consulting any public opinion and passing in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly was clear indication of the violation of the said provisions as well as an act against the interest of the Sikkimese people.