

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Every country whether developed or underdeveloped has economically advanced and backward regions. Sikkim is no exception to this. Since all parts of the state is not equally endowed with natural resources, or all parts of the state do not take advantage of growth opportunities, and since historical inequalities have not been eliminated or may take time, variations in the levels of development is sure to be noticed. Planned intervention is required to ensure that large regional imbalance does not occur. It is vital that the facilities for development at a desirable pace are to be provided to all the constituent units of the state in such a manner that they are enabled to become healthy for national integration. It is a general notion that the fruits of development do not percolate uniformly to the lower strata hence it has to be ensured. Since the issue of spatial variation and regional disparity sometimes take political angles and influences various policy decisions of the government, a rigorous study based on sound analytical methods is called for. Keeping in view of this

fact, various issues relating to regional development have been examined in depth in the present study.

Balance regional development is required in the state of Sikkim because of the fragile nature of the Himalayan state. It has an advantage that Balance regional development strives to maintain parity in the standard of living across the districts and state. Moreover for sustainable development, regional inequality must be removed. As long as differences in regional prosperity or development persists, there prevails a tendency for people to migrate from relatively backward to the more prosperous areas, thereby leading to congestion, pollution health hazards and several other problems etc. Though the process of urbanization is a recent phenomenon, things have to be sorted out before it gets worse. These environmental and social evils can be contained through a balanced type of development across the regions. Balanced regional development is also required to maintain social security, order and harmony. If the inhabitants of one region continuously enjoy higher consumption standard and other amenities, it may lead to social unrest and disorder from the growing discontent of people residing in relatively deprived regions. The outcry of regional autonomy in the surrounding

ares of Sikkim like the Gorkhaland movement, Kamtapuri Andolan are some burning examples that has turned violent.

A number of studies on regional development and variations were conducted in India and abroad. In Sikkim however the question of regional variation and development is not well addressed except few. Notable among the studies are Chakraborty,(1967), Boot (1988), Dasgupta (1980), Debnath's (1979), Sankrityayana's (1994), Choudhury, M. (2006), Chakraborty, Anjan (2009). Chakraborty,(1967), in his paper entitled "The Causes of Economic Underdevelopment in Sikkim", analyses that Sikkim's economic activities reveal that she is a backward and underdeveloped state. The paper was written prior to Sikkim's merger with India. Boot (1988) in his paper "A Note on-Urbanization in Sikkim", notes that urbanization in Sikkim is a very recent phenomena. The towns in Sikkim has grown from "Bazaar" or market centres. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the emergence of newer "bazaars" or market centres along the major roads, which reciprocated to the demand of the surrounding villages. Dasgupta (1980) in his paper "Structure of Sikkim's Economy" has paid attention to the essential features of Sikkim's economy. He notes that the economy of Sikkim is still in its lowest ebb. The reason to that can be easily noted

by looking at the dependence of population to agriculture, which is more than 80%. The absence of industries in Sikkim has also been responsible for its poor economy. Debnath's (1979) paper on "Planning in Sikkim" needs special mention as because he has attempted for a critical process of Planning in Sikkim. He notes that in 1946, the then Maharaja Kumar Palden Thendup Namgyal tried to set up a Planning Commission for the development of Sikkim. But much progress could not be achieved because of financial crunches resulting from internal resources of the country. Maitreyi Choudhury (2006), book on "Sikkim: Geographical Perspectives" focuses on the physical and Human geography of Sikkim. The major focus area of the book is on post modern development, Quality of Life, Employment, Infrastructure, education urbanization and educational development. She opines that the reason for better quality of life in the rural areas of North district (which has been categorised as underdeveloped in the present study) is because of low density of population, higher per capita availability of land and multiple sources of income whereas the scores of the East district of Sikkim is lower presumably the urban centric development had retarded the growth of villages in the peripheries. Anjan Chakraborty's book on

“Economic development and Employment in Sikkim”, deals with land and agriculture, Industry in Sikkim and economic Transition of Sikkim. He views that the development strategy so far has been pursued in the state is marked by a high degree of government intervention in all spheres of economic activities. Sankrityayana’s (1994), paper on “Development Without Shocks: A Himalayan Exxperience” focuses on the problems of underdevelopment of the tiny Himalayan state. He argues that the development scenario that unfolded in Sikkim is interesting in that, while it recognises the rural orientation of the state’s economy and its high agricultural dependence, it has sought to create new avenues outside agricultural without dismantling the village community.

In the past few years, four noteworthy documents has dominated the research woks on Sikkim, namely “Sikkim: Human Development Report” 2001 by Mahendra P. Lama, “Sikkim: Perspectives for Planning and Development” 1998, edited by S. C. Rai et.al., Sikkim: People’s Vision, 2001, by Ashok K. Lahiri and others and “Development and Livelihood in Sikkim: Towards a Comparative Advantage Based Strategy”, 2005, by T. S. Papola. The focus of the above mentioned books are relevant in the sense that they build up a conceptual basis for further investigations and research

work that can help in building up better livelihood options in developing the state of Sikkim. These documents analyses the developmental experience of the Himalayan State and strategies for development in the future.

Ashok K. Lahiri, Chattopadhyay and Bhasin's book, "Sikkim: The People's Vision" focuses on the vision for Sikkim in the years to come. The book gives an insight into Human Development, unplanned development, anomalies of growth, pressure on the state finance, economic strategy and strategies for sectoral growth. They argue that a stagnant agricultural growth combined with steadily declining industrial activities has severely limited employment opportunities. Growth that has taken place has been regionally imbalanced, with the North District still remaining relatively backward in comparison with the other three districts. They have put forward a design for future development of the state in the lines of sustainable development. These are (1) empowering people with the right education and skill to enable them to benefit from recent development in science and technology, (2) building up the right infrastructure, particularly in roads and power, and (3) fiscal consolidation and reform, which will constitute the core of economic restructuring.

The Sikkim Human Development Report came up in the year 2001 by Mahendra P. Lama. Sikkim was the third state to produce the Human Development Report and the first among the North Eastern states. Since 1975, Sikkim reported a per capita net state domestic product of rupees nine thousand four hundred and seventy two. Over eighty percent household in Sikkim has electricity. The human development index for Sikkim was reported to be 0.532 for 2001, which is lower than the all India HDI of 0.563. One of the surprising facts that the Human Development Report reveals is the increase of the percentage of people living below poverty line. Percentage of people living below poverty line was 36% in 1993-94, which rose to 41% during 2000-2001. One of the most striking features of Sikkim's Human Development Report is its high per capita income in one hand and a very high poverty ratio on the other. This suggests a highly improper income distribution and a growing gap between rich and the poor.

Suresh C. Rai, Rakesh Sundriyal and Ekalabya sharma's (1998), book on "Sikkim: Perspectives for Planning and Development" is an edited book and deals with every aspects of the state's economy. The book focuses on the physical background of Sikkim, Culture Socio-politics and

Education, Resource status and Biodiversity, Agriculture Animal Husbandry and Horticulture, Energy, Health, food and Economy, Perspective planning and ecology and environment.

In a geographical sense growth seems to be necessarily imbalanced. As Hirschman (1958), observes in his famous “inverted-‘U’- shape theory” as an economy grows, regional disparity diverge at first only to converge later. In the process of development some “growth poles” emerge and spatial concentration of economic development clusters around those regions. Friedman (1963) also explains that ‘nations are not homogeneous’ and that ‘development does not affect all parts equally’. Hence it is inevitable that regional imbalance will persist in a state like Sikkim, but the effort must be to reduce these imbalances as far as possible to enable people to lead a healthy life.

The origin of the regional disparity can be traced back to the pre-merger period of the Namgyal Dynasty since earlier to that the history of Sikkim is not well known. In the first half of the eighteenth century Sikkim was engulfed in a series of attacks from aggressive Nepal and Bhutan. Though the presence of the British East India Company in Sikkim stopped the aggression by Nepal, but there was no

improvement in the internal resource mobilisation of the state and the condition of the state remained the same. The British interest in Sikkim was chiefly in trade with Tibet. Sikkim signed a treaty with the British East India Company surrendering all her rights to deal with any foreign power and conceded unhindered rights of free access to the British till Tibet border and in 1861 Sikkim became a protectorate.

The internal resources of the state were meager along with low population, which resulted in financial insufficiency for the development of the state as a whole. Though the state was involved in trade relationship with Tibet since its earliest part of history, which even joined Central Asia through Tibet, but it couldn't generate additional income needed for all round development of the state. The development process was also thwarted due to the aggression by neighboring Bhutan and Nepal during the seventeenth and eighteenth century that also forced the "*Chogyi*" to shift its capital frequently.

India after independence, entered into a standstill agreement with Sikkim in 1948, maintaining the status quo and retaining all earlier rights and obligations. During this period grants and loans were given to the state for restructuring the states' economy. A referendum was held in

the state to decide the question of Sikkim's merger with India and on the basis of the referendum on May 16, 1975, Sikkim merged with India becoming the 22nd state of the Indian union.

There has been a gradual increase in generation capacity as far as the power development is concerned during the successive plan periods of the state. The power department has seen a progressive increase of expenditure during the last Four Five Year Plan for various activities like Generation, Transmission and Distribution and Rural Electrification. A number of Hydel power Projects were initiated to meet the growing demand of electricity as well as to strengthen the state's economy. There are 405 Revenue Blocks in the state and has accomplished 100% electrification during the year 1990-91 with the help of loan assistance from Rural Electrification Corporation of India Limited, A Government of India undertaking. One of the most important developments that took place in Sikkim was the finalizing of the Teesta Hydroelectric Project Stage V with an installed capacity of 510 MW and with an estimated investment of over Rs.3000 Crores on 27th December 1996. The signing of the project was important for two reasons firstly the power deficit of the state could be sorted out easily

and secondly the internal revenue of the state could increase several times that would ultimately strengthen the development process going around the state.

The average height of Sikkim varies between 3000m to 9000m Out of the total land area in Sikkim 80% of the area is not suitable for human habitation and about one-third of the area is covered with forests and snow. People generally lives in the river valleys, hill slopes, terraces and ridges where agricultural lands are available. The climate of Sikkim is extremely varied largely due to variations of elevations, temperature and rainfall. The monsoon mainly controls the agriculture, which influences the distribution of population in the district of Sikkim as irrigation is not supported throughout the year because of hilly nature of topography. The mortality rate is higher in Sikkim as compared to the national average, which can be attributed to the factors like poor health care facilities, low level of educational attainment, unfavourable environment and lack of communication system but in recent years there have been noticeable changes in all these parameters.

Land is a basic but limiting natural resource for planned development and its per capita availability because of its hilly nature and because the north district is snow

bound. The per capita land availability is low and is supposed to go down with the population growth percentage.

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Bhutia, the first Chief Minister of Sikkim immediately after merger to India emphasized the fact that in the past no attention was paid towards development of industries and his government shall seriously consider ways and means for adopting suitable measures for speedy development of industries particularly emphasizing on the need for setting up Small-Scale industries, handicrafts and other type of industries which can be started by rural artisans and persons belonging to weaker section of the population of the state. However, industrial development could not speed up owing to the terrain condition and transportation bottlenecks. Some of the industries were located around the state capital of Gangtok, but other parts of Sikkim were neglected as far as industries were concerned.

Planning in Sikkim began in the year 1954 with the objective of developing the state. The Maharaja of Sikkim took the first positive step to introduce planning in the state of Sikkim for her overall development by introducing First Seven-Year Development Plan (1954-1960). Since then there has been steady development in different sectors of the economy.

The state government tried to reduce the disparity of the state by investing in certain key areas like small and medium scale industries, building of infrastructure etc. However, serious focus was absent in the agricultural sector that could probably had developed as a prime industry in Sikkim as a cardamom/orange/ginger/tea/orchid state of the country as the apple orchards is associated with the state of Himachal Pradesh. The maximisation of agricultural output could have not only enhanced the revenue collection of the state but it could have also generated additional income for the primary producers who are the major concern for any state or country. The government has realised the importance of the agricultural sector and is coming forward with newer ventures to boost the agricultural sector. One important step that the government has considered in recent years is to change the state into a bioorganic state of the country. The idea is quite good if we consider the damage that has already been done to the environment. In the advanced countries the markets are already developed and there is a good demand for the bioorganic products that fetches a higher price, which compensates for its low returns. In India the concept is very new and the markets are yet to develop, hence how far it will allow the producers to remain in the competition if they go for

large-scale production process remains a question. Whether people will prefer to go for bioorganic product at higher prices is a question in India where greater portions of the masses are illiterate and won't understand the rationale behind bio-organic farming.

The state of Sikkim is dotted by small towns and informal bazaars, which can be seen as sources of employment generation particularly for the small farmers and petty traders. In the line of cooperation petty traders or small farmers can sell their produces in an open space and do not need shops for their operation. This will help them to deal with the consumers directly and suit their need according to the demand of the market or consumer. In the absence of the middleman, the producers will be benefited with the maximum return of their produce.

One interesting scenario that has emerged in Sikkim particularly after its merger to India is the fact that the divide between the rich and the poor has widened much more than the period of the '*Chogyi*'. The impact of the developmental schemes was that they were not targeted hence it bypassed the weaker section of the society. In the absence of a stringent centralised monitoring system, the upper section of

the society always benefited from the developmental schemes, which were otherwise targeted for the weaker section.

The credit in the agricultural sectors has increased substantially but the amounts spend on small and marginal farmers are still low that it points out the loophole in the objectives with which it was formulation. Hence it can be sensed that rural credit system is only strengthening the people who are well off than those who actually needs it. One ugly phase in Indian politics that has emerged in recent decades is the regionalisation of political parties. One thing can be ascertained that poorer people can be easily mobilised since they are desperately seeking for improving their livelihood. Once the development process begins by giving them opportunity to improve their livelihood, they will climb over the feeling of religion, cast or creed and realise that economic development is more important than their caste or religion.

In fact the planners have to think seriously about two major problems that have gripped the state, though it is moving forward with providing better infrastructure facilities to its people. The growing unemployment and the poverty ratio are two major cause of concern, which, if not properly addressed, is certain to topple the growth momentum. In the

era of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation the state has not gained much particularly in the field of generating employment.

The process of urbanization is inhibited by the difficulty of the terrain and lack of road and transport development. The National Highway 31A is the only Highway that connects Sikkim with West Bengal or Gangtok with Siliguri. The development of major industries in Sikkim shows a linear pattern arrangement. They are close to the National Highway 31A, to avail better transport and communication network. The construction of a ropeway and flyovers are a welcome measure to reorganize the town of Gangtok but they are not sufficient to counter the growing vehicular movement inside the town. The opposition from various transport organization has to be sorted out so as to increase the number of city buses that can accommodate more passengers as compared to local Taxis and can reduce traffic congestion to a greater extent. Strengthening the mass transportation system within the town can deter the use of personal transport. One of the major problems that the town of Gangtok faces today is the lack of space that has been thought of to counter by proposing new townships. The construction of a new township at Resithang and Ranka can

certainly ease the existing pressure of Gangtok but diverting the population is a hard task unless planned efforts are made. Parking of vehicle is a genuine problem and acquiring newer land will remain a problem.

One of the main issues is urban unemployment, particularly among immigrants and youths. Their high rates of unemployment are the direct result of a changing urban economy. The local effect is a decreasing demand for low skilled workers along with a continuing in-migration of vulnerable (i.e. economically weak) groups. The well-known mismatch occurs between the low education of the unemployed living within the cities and the high skills required for many of the new jobs being created here, specifically in the service sectors. Urban unemployment could pose a serious threat since there will be a decreasing demand for low skilled workers and a continuous in-migration of economically weaker section. Gainful employment in the rural sectors can ease the pressure. Moreover, it should be also noted that Gangtok is the hub of tourist activities in the state and due care must be taken to accommodate them. Spatial restructuring and development of small towns are needed. Massive programmes for eliminating rural poverty, especially by generating more non agricultural employment in

the rural and neglected areas must be urgently taken up to reduce distress migration. The production of vast volume of waste is posing a formidable problem of its disposal. Efficient way of garbage disposal is an urgent need of any growing city. To be efficient in garbage disposal, the service should follow the minimum distant routing. It means the least effort or the least cost to the user. An efficient routing involves consideration of two parameters-: the least possible distance for the trucks and the best possible distribution of the truckloads to the dumping sites. The main objective should be to make Gangtok 'complete'. A city is said to be 'complete' if it has a strong economic, physical and social structure. Drawbacks should be seen as chances for positive development. To reorganize the town of Gangtok it is essential not only to plan the city limits but also to its surroundings to set up a linkage between the city and its hinterland. Auroousseau, observes that the city is 'an organic part of social group together with the area influenced by its existence'. A smaller town has to be diffused with growth waves to surrounding villages so as to minimize the concentration of population at Gangtok. If the growth of Gangtok is not planned meticulously, it may result merely in the growth of population and not in prosperity. Social and

economic inequality will mount to begin many criminal offences.

The state is a late starter in the process of development or is aspiring to become a developed state from its underdeveloped status. In one way it is good that it can take the advantage of the bad effects of development and can apply the latest trends set by the western world that are feasible in sikkimese context. Sikkim is the first state in India which has aspired to become an Organic state of the country. The concept of organic farming has taken its way in the western world and its products are fetching good demands in the urban market. In that sense since Sikkim has officially announced itself to become an organic state by 2013, can market its produce in a grand way not only in India but globally. Government expenditure in the field of tourism has increased that shows that it is serious to develop her tourism industry but on the other hand it is also propelling eco tourism efforts in a large scale. This shows that it is not only interested to develop her tourism industry but is also cautious about the fact that the state lies in the Himalayas zone and is ecologically fragile in nature, hence the concept of sustainable development keeps a key position in the development process of the state. Tourism industry in

one way is good for the state because it is a labour intensive industry. It has the scope of absorbing unemployed youth in this field since the employment avenues in the state is limited in the secondary sector. The school education has undergone changes in the recent years wherein there is a clear cut policy of no detention till matriculation. This will naturally swell up the number of educated youth for whom government job where the only avenue till recently. Tourism Industry will not only generate employment in the field of tourism but it will also pressure the transport and communication and traditional retail sector to grow considerably.

Sikkim continues to remain a highly food deficit State. The deficits are seen more remarkably in oilseeds and pulses production. Sikkim's climatic conditions are ideal and conducive for proliferation of diseases and pests in endemic or epidemic form and the loss of crops caused by this in the fields and under storage have been quite high ranging from 5 to 30 per cent. This affected both traditional and cash/commercial crops like large cardamom, ginger, orange, apple, potato and off-seasons vegetables. The systematic intervention made in the State in this field has contributed positively in tackling this traditional menace. The

consumption of Pesticides/Fungicides and other plant protection materials have significantly increased.

Disparity is also seen in the priority levels of the government in allocating funds to different sectors in developing the state. In general the state has always given high priority in building up infrastructure changes and development of small and medium scale industries, where as priority towards agricultural development was neglected. Agriculture is a key area in Sikkim, about 89% of the state's population live in the rural area and depends on agriculture. As a result development in the agricultural sector not only can increase the purchasing power of the people, this can also pave way for new industries and other related activities to grow up as the demand for such activities will grow due to the increase in purchasing power of the people. Moreover it has to be also kept in mind that the urbanization level of the state is very low and has a very low share of population residing in different towns of Sikkim. In recent times the government is trying to build up the agricultural sector providing them with necessary infrastructure requirements.

The State has switched over to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) concept of Plant Protection which includes, pest monitoring, rapid roving survey, field scouting

and agroeco-system analysis. The State bio-control laboratory has also become functional and is now in a position to produce various bio-agents for release in the field.

The Fifth Plan (1976-77 to 1980-81) document of Sikkim mentioned, "agricultural stagnation is the main constraint on the rate of growth of the economy and by restricting the peoples' purchasing power such stagnation also limits the scope for industrialisation." In the post merger period, therefore, the land related issues were given a high priority.

The State designed a well strategised package of services aimed at consolidating the peasant-economy. This covered land reforms, agricultural credit and marketing, provision of inputs like seeds and fertilisers and minor irrigation, and encouragement to horticulture and cash-cropping.

The varied topography of Sikkim provides an ecotourism niche in every season whether it be winter, spring, monsoons or autumn. While the spring and autumn treks are quite popular and growing in volumes, we still need to market our monsoon alpine flowers and subtropical forests in winter more aggressively. If promoted they have the potential to ensure that ecotourism provides continuous

round the year sustainable incomes for everyone. We have the prospect of doubling our ecotourism economy without affecting the carrying capacity since these off-season treks are in geographically different locations and will cater to the lean season.

A New Industrial Policy was formulated in the year 1996. The policy envisaged the creation of an atmosphere conducive to industrial growth taking into consideration the availability of natural resources. It also envisaged the rehabilitation of the sick industries with comprehensive assistance and guidance from the state. Link between agriculture and agro-based industries to develop the agricultural sector, promotion of Khadi, small scale and ancillary industries to balance regional development was emphasised. Rapid development of basic infrastructure to promote industrial growth, encouragement of self employment and identification of such areas were undertaken. It stressed the need for attraction of both internal and external investors and formation of suitable mechanisms for attracting and encouraging the growth of capital formation in Sikkim. The Union Government extended the New Industrial Policies for the state of Sikkim on the line of the existing North-East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIP) in 2013. The policy included

exemption of excise and income tax to all new industrial and expansion of existing units for a period of ten years from the date of commencement of commercial production.

A fifteen year Master Plan for tourism was prepared in the year 1997. The Plan covered a period from 1997-1998 to 2011-2012. The Plan emphasizes on the development of three independent tourist destinations within the state to speed up economic growth in the rural areas. The Plan focuses on eco-tourism based on natural scenic resources. Increase in the tourist arrival both domestic and foreign is encouraging for the state.

The educational system in Sikkim before the merger period was biased in favour of the ruling classes i.e. the Bhutias. Moreover, the Bhutias and the Lepchas were also inclined towards the traditional educational system that has a very important role in the traditional Sikkimese society i.e. the monastic education system which was not acceptable to the Nepalese since they followed Hinduism and not Buddhism. Hence Nepali people who were in large number than the Bhutia's and Lepcha's remained neglected for long.

There is a notable disparity in the literacy rate between the males and females as well as among the rural and urban population. Gender gaps are seen to be very high. It is evident

that the overall literacy rate has shown a sharp increase from 17.74% in 1971 to 34.05%, 56.94% and 69.68% in 1981, 1991 and 2001 respectively. What is seen here is that in terms of literacy rates East District of Sikkim has an advantage over the other three districts of Sikkim namely South, North and West.

Sex ratio of Sikkim seems to be skewed. Decline of sex ratio is observed during 1971-1981 and 1991-2001, however the decline was sharp during 1971-1981. What is important to notice in the sex ratio of Sikkim is not that it is below the national average of India but that it has a huge gap and it has still not crossed the 900 mark. It is observed that there is absence of the normal causes that are responsible for a low sex ratio in the state like domestic violence against women, female foeticide, female infanticide, lower socio-economic status of women etc. Unfavourable sex ratio over the last few decades may be attributed to the factors like in-migration of large number of male workers from different states of India. The presence of large number of army personals in the state owing to its strategic importance is one of the important factors for the low sex ratio. In recent years Sikkim has surged ahead in terms of developmental works that are under progress. A large number of hydro electric projects are

underway in the state that has resulted in the migration of skilled and unskilled labours that may be the reason for such a skewed sex ratio of Sikkim.

Work on the educational aspect of Sikkim has not been conducted by using any sophisticated statistical technique that has revolutionized the investigation methodology in human geography and other branches of social sciences. A systematic study based on proper theoretical framework was lacking in the region concerned. Keeping in mind the above fact a study was conducted with proper theoretical framework and an attempt to fill the research gap in the area. The main objectives of the study was to examine the inter district variation in the literacy rates of Sikkim at three points of time i.e. 1981, 1991 & 2001 for rural and urban areas and to find out the inequality of literacy rate between the males and females and the underprivileged section of the societies i.e. the schedule castes and the schedule tribes. The literacy disparities were computed using the modified version of Sopher's Index of disparity (1974), which was presented by Kundu and Rao (1986). It is noticed that the mean SC literacy is higher than the ST literacy rates, which is 47.00 in case of ST and 56.68 in SC population. The highest disparity value of 4.0990 is observed in Gangtok subdivision and the lowest

disparity value of 0.0112 is seen in Chungthang subdivision. Male literacy percentage is seen highest in South District for all the three census years. It also witnessed highest female percentage in these census years. Female literacy percentage is seen lowest in the West district for the entire census years. The Male-Female disparity in literacy is seen to be reducing with its highest value as 1.4355 and lowest value as 0.1316.

An attempt to portray a macro level perspective into the overall development of the state by considering selected demographic, economic, social and infrastructure indicators in the four districts of Sikkim. The major objectives behind this investigation are to find out the degree of regional disparities in the levels of economic development and its causes and to identify the backward, developed and highly developed areas with respect to Agriculture, Industry, Infrastructure and overall development. We have also analysed the position of the districts in the composite indices (separate index has been computed for demographic, economic, Social and infrastructure indicators), by categorization of these districts into high, medium and low levels of development in 2001. Thirty-two key parameters from various sections have been used to calculate the overall composite index. The figures have been standardized using Z-

score method to transform the data matrix into a scale free matrix. It was found that the literacy percentage is highest for the district of South and lowest for the district of West. Educational attainment seems to have spread much widely in the South and East district of Sikkim particularly in respect to female literacy rates. In respect to rural birth rate, the West District ranks poorly where as the East District ranks much better. Similarly, with regard to rural infant mortality rate, the North District of Sikkim ranks poorly where as the West District of Sikkim fairs better. Percentage of total workers is highest in the district of North and South, whereas the West district lies at the bottom. The number of registered industries is the highest in the East district and the North district has the lowest number of industries. Similarly, in case of percentage of irrigated area, East district has the highest with 48.17% and North at the bottom with 12.26%. The Overall Development Index ranked East Sikkim at the top followed by South Sikkim, West Sikkim and North Sikkim. North Sikkim is sparsely habited and is inaccessible due to rough terrain. Most part of the year the region remains under snow cover which is reflected in her performance of overall development.

Sikkim is a remotely located state in the north eastern part of India, which has a predominantly rural population of about 90%. To accelerate the process of development in Sikkim, there is a need for sectoral concentration of industries at a particular location, which will gear up the peripheral areas. It cannot be denied that concentration is a feature which is unavoidable; hence we need to keep in mind when we consider the efforts of policy makers to redistribute wealth or production in regional policies.

Even after thirty-six years of its merger with India, the state has only one National highway to join the rest of the country that depends on the mercy of the monsoon for some part of the year and the other half for the 'Gokhaland' agitation in the neighbouring Darjeeling District of West Bengal. Moreover in recent years the number of local parties has increased in the hills of Darjeeling as well as the the plains of West Bengal through which the National Highway passes, that had affected the movement of the traffic particularly during the 'Bandh' period. No serious efforts have been taken till recently to focus on these issues. The states development process have been hindered more for its connectivity problem with the rest of the country and within,

than for its known physiological strains for more than three decades.

Sikkim is a smaller state of India. It has advantages as well as disadvantage owing to its physical features. The greatest advantage that lies in this small state is that the core-periphery relations are very close; hence they affect each other very fast. Any decision taken at the centre can be percolated at ease to the periphery to take effect. Hence, if right decisions are made that can become a boon and the wrong one can be a bane to the people.