

CHAPTER - 4

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DARJEELING AND SIKKIM WITH REFERENCE TO ETHNIC COMPOSITION

"Geography is the stage on which the drama of history is enacted" (Sheik Ali 1978:79)¹.

The region of Darjeeling and Sikkim is nestled between Nepal, China, Bhutan and the plains of West Bengal. The climate, mountainous terrain, flora and fauna captivated the westerners. The Catholic missionaries made this region their home since 1846. This chapter deals with a brief history of the universe of study and its inhabitants. The religions and festivals are studied in the context of the study of Catholic religion. This chapter also serves as a backdrop for the fuller understanding of the establishment of Mission campus by the Catholic missionaries and the response by the Himalayan inhabitants towards Catholicism.

4.1 Sikkim

The erstwhile Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim, the second smallest state of India, has its own majesty and mystery. It is situated in the lap of Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak of the Great Himalayas. In the *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Risley states:

"The Native State, commonly called Sikkim is situated in the Eastern Himalayan Mountains, and is bounded on the north and north-east by Tibet, on the south-east by Bhutan, on the South by the British District of Darjeeling, and on the west by Nepal: it lies between 27° 5' and 28° 10' N. Lat., and between 88° 4' and 88° 58' E. Long., and comprises an area of 2,818 squares miles" (Risley, 1928:1)².

Sikkim has four districts, each governed by the district collector. The four districts are named after the four cardinal directions as the East, West, North and South districts. These four districts are divided into sub-divisions, and the sub-divisions are further divided into revenue blocks.

4.1.1 Origin of the Name

In Nepali, the word Sikkim means crested land. The word is a derivation of the word "Sikhin" which in Sanskrit means crested. The terrain is seen as a chain of crests. According to L. A. Waddell, Sikkim means "the land of mountain crests." (Waddell, 1978:10)³.

Another etymology is that the name was derived from the Limbu words 'Su' meaning new and 'Him' meaning palace. After the palace was built in Rabdentse, the Limbus must have referred this area as the place of the new palace. Risley observes that the Limbus called the area the place of the new palace or house (Risley 1928:40)⁴. K. P. Tamsang, a Lepcha writer holds the view that:

"This region was known in the ancient times as Mayel Lyang, which means the land of hidden paradise or the delightful region or abode" (Tamsang 1983:1)⁵.

A. R. Foning compares Mayel Lyang with the Garden of Eden (Foning 1987:18)⁶. When the Tibetans arrived in this region, they noticed fertile paddy fields with grains and thus named this region as Denjong, "the Valley of Rice" (Rustomji, 1987:3).⁷

4.1.2 History

The earliest record related to Sikkim is the passage of the Buddhist Saint Guru Padma Sambhava⁸ through Sikkim in the 8th century A.D., enroute to Tibet. The land of Sikkim was blessed by the Guru. A Tibetan prince Khye Bumsa of the Minyak house in Kham travelled towards south to seek his fortunes in the 14th century. The first king of Sikkim, Phumtsho Namgyal, the fifth descendent of Khye Bumsa, was consecrated by the three venerable lamas who had come to Yuksam from North, West and South.

Risely observes that his reign was unmemorable and monotonous except for the construction of the monastery at Dubde⁹. He was chiefly engaged in subduing the chiefs of the clans (Risley 1928, 10-11)¹⁰. In 1670, Phumtsho Namgyal was succeeded by his son, Tensung Namgyal. The capital was then moved from Yuksam to Rabdentse, but the attack of the Nepalese forces compelled the Chogyal to flee to Tibet. The Sino-Nepal Treaty, finally allowed Chador Namgyal, the third king to be reinstated at Rabdentse. The invasion of the Bhutanese in 1700 AD made Chador to flee from Sikkim to Tibet through Ilam in Nepal. The monastery in Pemiongchi was founded by him. Gyurmed Namgyal came to the throne in 1707 as the fourth king of Sikkim. During his reign the Limbus joined hands with Nepal. Phumtsho Namgyal II was the next ruler. He witnessed Gurkha inroads into Sikkim under the leadership of Prithvi Narayan Shah of Nepal. Tensing Namgyal succeeded Puntsho in 1780. During his reign Nepali forces occupied large chunks of Sikkim territory. Rabdentse was attacked by Nepalese forces and the king fled to Tibet. The Nepalese incursions penetrated even into Tibet. Therefore, the Chinese intervened and Nepal was defeated. Though Sikkim lost some of its land to Nepal, monarchy was allowed to be restored in the country. Tenzing Namgyal died in Lhasa and his son Tsugphud Namgyal was sent to Sikkim in 1793 to occupy the throne. Since Rabdentse was insecure because of its proximity to Nepal border, the capital was shifted to Tumlong. The expansionist designs of Nepalese continued. Meanwhile Sikkim entered into an alliance with the British in order to check the inroads of Nepalese. The British took the opportunity to establish a trade link with Tibet through Sikkim. The war between Nepal and British resulted in the treaty of Sagauli¹¹. British India also signed a treaty with Sikkim in 1817, known as the treaty of Titalia¹². Later a rupture broke out between Sikkim and British when Dr. Campbell, the superintendent of Darjeeling and Dr. Hooker visited Sikkim in connection with botanical research and were imprisoned in 1849. In 1850, a punitive expedition was

sent to Sikkim that resulted in the annual grant and the annexation of a great part of Sikkim into British India. Sikkim resorted to making attacks into British territories in November 1860. In retaliation, British sent a force to the capital Tumlong that resulted in the signing of a Treaty between the British and Sikkimese.

The next ruler was Sidkeong Namgyal who ascended the throne in 1863. The British government started the payment of annual subsidy of Rs. 6,000/-, which was subsequently raised to Rs. 1,200/- per annum.

Thutob Namgyal, half brother of Sidkeong ascended the throne in 1874. Again the rupture broke out between the king and the British. The king fled to Chumbi and became more aligned towards the Tibetans. Meanwhile, the British sent a delegation led by Colman Macaulay, financial Secretary to the Bengal Government of British India, to Sikkim in 1884 to explore the possibility of establishing a trade route with Tibet through Lachen valley. The delegation met Maharaja at Tumlong and Maculay was granted permission to make necessary arrangements for trade. As a first step, the British started the construction of a road. This construction of a road in Sikkim was viewed with suspicion by Tibet in 1886. Tibetans came to Sikkim as far as Lingtu, near Jelepla. In 1888, the Tibetans attacked Gnathang and were driven away. A memorial was built at Gnathang for the few soldiers who died in the attack. In 1889, the British appointed Claude White as the first political officer in Sikkim. Chogyal Thutob Namgyal was virtually under his supervision. He was forced by the British to shift his capital from Tumlong to Gangtok in 1894. The Sir Thudob Namgyal Memorial Hospital was built in 1917 in memory of Thutob who died in 1914.

Sidkeong Tulku ascended the throne in 1914. Unfortunately he did not live long and died in the same year. He was succeeded by his half brother

Tashi Namgyal. In 1947, when India became independent, Tashi was successful in getting a special status of protectorate for Sikkim. At the same time, Sikkim State Congress wanted democratic set up and accession of Sikkim to India. The Treaty signed between India and Sikkim ratified the status of Sikkim as protectorate with Chogyal as the Monarch. Tashi died in 1963 and was succeeded by his son Palden Thondup Namgyal. By 1970, there was a demand for the removal of monarchy and the establishment of democratic setup. This finally culminated in wide spread agitation against Sikkim Durbar in 1973. There was complete collapse in the administration. The Indian Government tried to bring about a semblance of order in the state by appointing a chief administrator Mr. B. S. Das.

In 1975, Sikkim was annexed to India as a constituent state of the Republic of India. L. D. Kazi was elected the first Chief Minister of Sikkim and the Chogyal remained as the constitutional figurehead monarch of the new set up. Mr. B. B. Lal was the first Governor of Sikkim.

4.1.3 Physical Features

Sikkim is characterized by mountainous terrain. The state has no sizeable piece of flat land, and some of the areas are still inaccessible. Having a range of elevation from 920 feet to 28,000 feet, the entire region is a mass of winding ridges and hills. The northern part of the state resembles the plateau of Tibet. The highest point in Sikkim is the Kanchenjunga summit. While the Kanchenjunga and Singalila Ranges adorn the western borders of Sikkim, the northern and eastern borders are adorned with the Donkia and the Chola range. Trade between India and Tibet was possible only through the passes on these ranges. The two meandering rivers Teesta and Rangit drain out the water from Sikkim into the plains of West Bengal.

4.2 Darjeeling

Darjeeling hills, lying south of present day Sikkim, were originally a part of independent kingdom of Sikkim. After it became a part of the British Empire, the area was referred to as British Sikkim. The physical features of Darjeeling and Sikkim are very similar. The waters of the Rangit and Teesta rivers separate Darjeeling district from Sikkim. At present Darjeeling occupies the northernmost part of the Indian state of West Bengal.

4.2.1 The Name

There are two opinions regarding the origin of the name Darjeeling. One opinion is that the name is derived from the name of a Lama, Dorje Rinzing. The second opinion is that the name is derived from the mystic thunderbolt of the Lamaist religion. According to E. C. Dozey:

"The Darjeeling monastery, which once stood on Observatory Hill, was built in 1765, or 156 years ago, as a branch of the Phodang Monastery of Sikkim" (Dozey 1921:79)¹³

The Lama of the Darjeeling monastery was responsible for land revenues to the Durbar of Sikkim. He enjoyed both spiritual and temporal power in his locality. However, the monastery was looted and ransacked in 1815 by the Nepalese. The name of the place must have come from the Observatory Hill. L. S. S. O'mally too writes about the name of Darjeeling in the following words:

"The name Darjeeling is a corruption of Dorje-ling and means the place of the Dorje, the mystic thunderbolt of the Lamaist religion, a designation formerly given to the Buddhist monastery which used to stand on the top of Observatory Hill" (O'Malley 1907:181-82)¹⁴

The Tibetan word Dorji means the precious stone or ecclesiastical sceptre, which is the embodiment of the thunderbolt of Indra. The sceptre of Indra is believed to have fallen at a place where now stands the Observatory

hill. The Observatory Hill has religious importance and is revered by both Buddhists and Hindus.

4.2.2 A Brief History of Darjeeling

The British became interested in Darjeeling, a small Lepcha village in the Eastern Himalayas that could be developed both as a hill resort and as an out post from where Tibet and Sikkim could easily be accessible. When the rupture broke out between the Company and Nepal, British obtained alliance of Sikkim for political and military reasons (Wangyal 2002:34)¹⁵. The Anglo-Gorkha wars resulted in the treaty of Sagauli. Later, the treaty between the British and Sikkim resulted in the treaty of Titalia. The article 3 of the treaty mentions that any dispute between Chogyal's subjects and Nepal or any neighbouring state must be referred to the British. When a dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal after 10 years of the treaty, Captain George Alymer Lloyd and J. W. Grant, the Commercial Resident at Malda, were deputed to investigate the matter. It was on their route to Ontoo that the two men passed through Darjeeling in February 1829. The place where Lloyd and Grant stayed was the old deserted Gurkha military station. During their stay for six days, they were fascinated by the climate of the area. Coincidentally, the British Government was searching for a Sanitarium in a hill station. Lloyd sent communication to the government, describing the feasibility of Sanitarium at Darjeeling. Mr. Grant also recommended the area for a hill resort. Another important reason for acquiring the area was of trade and military importance. The British came to India primarily as traders. Therefore, they wished to trade with Tibet. Sonam B. Wangyal writes:

"Besides the suitability of the climate both men stressed the importance the place could have in commercial and military matters" (Wangyal, 2002:35)¹⁶

After getting reports from Herbert, Lloyd and Grant in 1830, Lord William Bentick deputed Lloyd to negotiate with Tsugphud Namgyal for the land

to establish a sanitarium in Darjeeling. After a prolonged negotiation on the issue, the deed, written in Lepcha was given to Lloyd.

The British appointed Lloyd as the local agent in Darjeeling. The year 1839 was the most important year in the history of Darjeeling. The hill of Darjeeling was connected to Siliguri by a road through Pankhabari. The road enabled the immigrants from Calcutta to reach Darjeeling. The post of local agent was abolished and Dr. Campbell was made the first Superintendent of Darjeeling. The little town founded by the two officers, Dr. Campbell and Lieut Napier of the British government grew rapidly. Tea was introduced in Darjeeling by Dr. Campbell. He planted some seeds in his garden at Beechwood. At the same time Dr. Whitecombe and major Crommelin established tea gardens in Pankhabari and Kurseong. The tea gardens necessitated the need of train to transport goods. The ropeways were established to link tea gardens with Hill Cart road. In 1865 the Kalimpong section, which was occupied by the Bhutanese, was annexed to Darjeeling district. The Darjeeling district, along with the rest of India, attained independence on 15th August 1947. Darjeeling remained a part of West Bengal.

However, there was a movement for creating a separate state in Darjeeling. After prolonged agitation in the Darjeeling hills, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) was formed in 1988. This gave the district autonomy at the regional level. The DGHC, (now known as the Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomus Hill Council or the DGAHC) functions as an autonomous administrative body in Darjeeling.

4.3 The People of Sikkim and Darjeeling

The people of Sikkim and Darjeeling are discussed together in this section since common ethnic groups inhabit Darjeeling and Sikkim. Sikkim-

Darjeeling Himalaya is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual region, comprising various communities, namely, the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese, of whom the Lepchas are regarded as the original inhabitants. The second ethnic group i.e. the Bhutias are of Tibetan origin and the Nepalese trace their origin to Nepal.

4.3.1 The Lepchas

The Lepcha community is a tribe mainly living in Sikkim and Darjeeling region. In the *Bengal District Gazetteers*, O' Malley states about the Lepcha tribes in the following words:

"The Lepchas are the aboriginal inhabitants of the country, who call themselves Rong i.e., the squatters, and their country, the land of caves. The word Lepcha or as it should be spelt Lapcha or Lapche, means the people of vile speech and was contemptuous appellation given to them by the Nepalese. Formerly they possessed all the hill of Darjeeling and Sikkim but about 250 years ago the Tibetans invaded their country and drove them into the lower valleys and gorges" (O'Malley 1907:44)¹⁷.

With regard to their appearance, Lepchas are mongoloid people. In the *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Risley states:

"The Lepcha are woodmen of the woods, knowing the ways of birds and beasts, and possessing an extensive zoological and botanical nomenclature of their own" (Risley, 1928:1)¹⁸.

Noted anthropologist Gorer observes:

"The Lepchas are a mongoloid people; it would seem slightly more pronounced mongolian features, fairer complexions and greater stature than their present neighbours" (Gorer 1996:45)¹⁹.

Regarding the Lepchas, Fr. Martin Rey, a Swiss Catholic missionary holds the view that the Lepchas have milder features and their eyes are more closed than the Bhutias (Awasty 1978:29)²⁰. The Lepchas speak their own language, which is believed by some Lepchas to have been invented by the mother creator Itmu-moo. The Tibetan scholars believe that the Lepchas were given the script by one of the three monks who consecrated the first King, Lhatsun Chhembo. It is also believed by the Nepal

historians that the script was the creation of King Mawrong, the overlord of Kirata chiefs in 7th century A.D.

A written document in the local language, the *Namthars*, a collection of Tibetan scriptures was translated into Lepcha during the first half of the 18th century (Foning 1987:186-87).²¹

4.3.2 The Bhutias

The name Bhutia is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Bhot' which means Tibet. O'Malley in his *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling* writes:

"The word Bhotia means probably an inhabitant of Bhot or Tibet, and is synonymous with Tibetan. The native name of Tibet is Bod, and the Sanskrit form of this word was Bhot" (O'Malley 1907:46)²².

In the 15th century the people of Kham province of southern Tibet traveled towards Chumbi valley. After settling in Chumbi for several centuries, the diffusion took place. The people went towards Bhutan and a faction of the sect entered Sikkim via Nepal. They also came to Sikkim through western, northern and eastern passes on the border between Sikkim and Tibet and Sikkim and Bhutan. A. R. Foning writes:

"The first of the ethnic groups that set foot in our preserve and habitat were the people from Kham, a province in Tibet" (Foning 1987: 281)²³.

The first Tibetan immigrant was Khye Bhumsa who entered Sikkim in the 14th century to seek his fortunes. He settled down at Gangtok and entered into a blood-brotherhood treaty with the Lepcha chief Thekong Tek. These followed the historical visit of three Lamas and the consecration of Phumtsho Namgyal as the first King of Sikkim in 1642. The Bhutias are mainly descendants of the early settlers from Tibet who accompanied the first Chogyal. A. R. Foning says:

"The next to enter the country after the Tibetans were the Bhutanese from the east. On the death of Tensung Namgyal, the second ruler in 1700, there was succession trouble. Out of the three consorts, one happened to come from Bhutan. Not having a son as heir to the throne, she sent word

back to her people in Bhutan to invade the country. Thereupon, a strong Bhutanese force came and occupied the whole country and stayed on for full seven years" (Foning 1987: 282)²⁴.

This invasion resulted in the inflow of Bhutanese into Sikkim. After reinstating King Chador Namgyal on the throne, the Bhutanese retreated to the east of the River Tista, the Present Kalimpong sub-division. The Bhutias became the dominant ethnic group and owned the prime lands in Sikkim during the reign of Bhutia rulers for more than three centuries.

4.3.3 The Nepalese

Towards the end of 18th century, Prithvi Narayan Shah consolidated his power in Kathmandu. His successor waged war against Sikkim. The Nepalese occupied the kingdom until they were chased away by the British. However, most of the soldiers stayed back in Sikkim. A. R. Foning writes:

"The last of those to enter the country in large numbers were the people from the west, from Nepal. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, to be exact in 1788-89, in the wake of the conquest of Nepal by Prithivi Narayan Shah, his successors ventured further east. They came and occupied the whole territory to the west of river Teesta and stayed on till the time they were forced to vacate the occupied lands by the British after what was known as the Nepal War of 1816" (Foning: 1987: 282)²⁵.

Cindy Perry is of the opinion that there was 'push and pull' factor in the immigration of Nepalese into Sikkim and Darjeeling. Prithvi Narayan Shah re-organized the nation of Nepal. This led to oppressive land and labour policies in Nepal, which forced a large number of inhabitants to take refuge in other places. Meanwhile, the kings in Sikkim and British authorities in Darjeeling allured the Nepalese to labour with a reasonable wage. Therefore, the Nepalese immigrated to Darjeeling and Sikkim in the 19th and 20th centuries (Perry, 1997)²⁶. Nepali is not a designation of nationality but refer to a group of people who migrated out of Nepal to India. They are divided into different castes, speaking various dialects. A

major stock of the Nepalese community is the Kiratas. The Kiratas include Limbu, Rai, Mangar, Gurung and Tamang. Originally, most of them were semi nomadic hunters and shepherds. Another class of people is of Aryan stock that came to Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas through Nepal. The Nepalese speak Nepali. The language has become the lingua franca of Sikkim and Darjeeling. It has its root in Sanskrit and uses the Devnagari script. It has been given constitutional recognition in 1992 and included in the 8th schedule of the constitution of India.

4.4 Religions and Festivals

4.4.1 Buddhism

After Buddha attained Pari Nirvana, differences of opinion arose in the religion causing the formation of new sects. In 100 AD a split took place and caused the formation of two schools, Hinayana and Mahayana. The Hinayana adheres to more radical philosophy with rules and ethics. It emphasized upon the realization of Nirvana only for oneself by directly worshipping Buddha. Whereas Mahayana school believes in attaining Nirvana by worshipping the deities called Bodhisattvas. Mahayana has a wider perspective, as it believes in the Nirvana of oneself and freeing the humanity from the bondage of suffering. Guru Padma Sambhava brought Mahayana Buddhism to Tibet. He also absorbed the existing religion of Tibet, called Bon. Again, Tibetan Buddhism was divided into Red and Yellow sects. The Red sect comprises Nyingma, Kargya and Sakya lineage. On the other hand, Yellow sect consists of Gelugpa lineage.

Nyingma is associated with Guru Padma Sambhava. Since the Guru instituted the community of Lamas, the form of Buddhism practiced in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan is known as Lamaism. The Tibetan Sacred books are called Kanjur and Tanjur. The Kanjur corresponds to the teachings of Buddha, whereas, the Tanjur is related to the teachings of Bodhisattvas. Sham Nath in his Panorama of North East India writes:

"The form of Buddhism, known as Mahayana, which prevails in Sikkim, belongs to the Red Sect. There are three main subsects of the Red Sect and in Sikkim only the Nyingmapa and the Karma-Kargyudpa are found. Lhatsun of the three high Lamas, who met at Toksam and consecrated Chogyal Phuntsong Namghao as the first Chogyal of Sikkim in 1641, is of the Nyingmapa. The Pemayangtse monastery, the premier monastery in Sikkim, belongs to the Nyingmapa. The Lamas of Pemayangtse have the sole customary right of performing the religious ceremonies on all royal and official occasions. They take part annually in the now famous Warrior and Khagyud dances at the Tsuk-La-Khang Royal in Gangtok" (Nath: 2004: 198)²⁷.

The Lepchas and Bhutias of Darjeeling and Sikkim are mainly Buddhists.

The religion of the Lepchas is based on the belief in *bongthing* faith or *mun* faith, which was basically based on sprits, good and bad. The spirits of the mountains, rivers and forests are worshipped by them. The human beings and the super naturals are linked by the *mun* and the *bongthing*.

In general a *mun* is a lady who conducts the ceremony of the transportation of the soul to heaven. A *bongthing* on the other hand has another very important role in the lives of the people since his services are required from birth to death of an individual. Since he is an exorcist, he is called upon to ward off evil spirits and appease them with prayer. At wedding ceremony he invokes the gods and goddesses to shower their benediction upon the couple. About the *bongthing*, A. R. Foning writes:

"Between the mun and the bongthing, the bongthing is very much more in demand and in circulation. The simple reason for this is that, in all families, there is always, and invariably, some sort of sickness occurring and, according to us, these are the works of some malignant mungs or evil spirits and devils; and it is the bongthing who has been commissioned by Iibu-moo herself to tackle them for us" (Foning1987:79)²⁸.

The Lepcha community follows chiefly Buddhism, Protestantism and Catholicism. The Shamans and the Lamas simultaneously perform the rites. For example, a Lama chants the religious verses from the Buddhist Scriptures while the Shamans perform their rites in the open courtyard. The priests and nuns of the Catholic Church pray to Jesus Christ. The

major festivals are connected with their beliefs, deep-rooted in legends and myths.

The festivals that are typically of Sikkimese origin include Pang Lhabsol and Tendong Lho Rum Faat. The worship of Mt. Kanchenjunga is known as Pang Lhabsol²⁹. According to the creation story, Itbummoo created *Fodong thing* and *Nazaongnyoo* from pure virgin snows of Kanchenjunga. The Lepchas also believe that Kanchenjunga is their guardian deity. It is held on the 15th day of the 7th month of Tibetan calendar around the end of August. Sharma is of the opinion that Pang Lhabsol is a unique festival:

"It has its genesis in the Lepchas belief of the mountain as their place of origin, and the vision which came to Lhatsm Chempo, the monk who brought Buddhism to Sikkim" (Sharma 1998:18)³⁰.

When the Tibetans entered this region, they also started worshipping Kanchenjunga. The monks of Pemayangatse monastery offer prayers to invoke the guardian deity to protect the land and people.

The festival of Tendong Lho Rum Faat is specific to the Lepchas. A. R. Foning describes the legend in the following words:

"Rongfolk, the children of Fudong-thing and Nazong Nyu, according to the plan of Itbu-moo, prospered and multiplied. Mayel Lyang, or the country, the original utopian land of our tribe was fertile, fruitful and prosperous. But a time came when they started forgetting Itbu-moo, the Mother-creator, and became negligent in offering sacrifices and prayers. So, the Great Mother was hurt. The big black shiny Pamolbu, the very embodiment of evil in a serpent form, took that as his cue. This cursed creature, true to its evil nature, now went and blocked the flow of the two main rivers, Rongit, and Rong-Nyu, flowing through the prosperous Mayel country. The flowing waters of these two rivers, thus being dammed, started rising till at last a time came when all the land was submerged under the Great Flood. Forests, hill and mountains started disappearing; there was commotion among the Rongfolk. They started running here and there; they climbed up trees, and climbed up high mountains; and yet the water kept rising up and up. At last, the whole of the prosperous land became a mass of water, destroying everything" (Foning, 1987:88-89)³¹.

Risley narrates the origin of the festival as follows:

“Tendong, ‘the up-raised horn,’ is the mountain which the Lepcha asserts arose when all the country was under water, and supported a boat containing a few persons, all other people being drowned. The hill rose up like a horn (hence its name) and then subsided to its present form. To this day at the commencement of the rains a monk is sent from the neighbouring monastery of Niamtchi to top of Tendong, where he has to remain during the wet season, praying hard that a second flood may not be sent” (Risley, 1928:42)³².

The Lepchas believe that they are descendents of the people who survived the deluge. The mountain is 8,660 feet high and the festival is celebrated on 8th August.

Saga Dawa is the holiest of the holy Buddhist festivals. The Lord Buddha is believed to have taken birth, achieved enlightenment and Pari Nirvana on this day. On this auspicious occasion the Buddhists carry holy books of the teaching of Lord Buddha on their head through main streets. The bystanders bend their head in order to be touched by the holy books by the bearer. This festival is held on the full moon day of the fourth month of the Buddhist calendar that comes around the end of May or early June.

4.4.2 Hinduism

Hinduism is a major religion in India. Unlike Christianity, Buddhism or Islam, Hinduism was not founded on the teachings of one person. It developed over a thousand years and each sect like Saivism, Vaishnavism etc. developed its own philosophy and form of worship. The sacred books are divided into Shruti and Smriti. The Hindus believe in the authority of Vedas. The Hindu concept of God is evolved from the ancient writings of Rig Veda. Most of the Hindus believe in the supreme spirit, the Brahman. The three most important aspects of the supreme spirits are Brahma, the creator of the universe, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer and regenerator. The three male deities are represented by a single concept

called Trimurti. They have their female consorts, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati. Shakti or Parvati is also known as Durga or Kali.

The Nepalese, who emigrated to Darjeeling and Sikkim from Nepal, brought Hinduism to the region under study. The Nepalese celebrate the major festivals of Hinduism in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Hindu festivals are colourful. Dasain is the biggest and most important festival, celebrated by the Nepalese Hindus. It is held approximately in the month of October. They decorate the home with banana leaves and marigold flowers. They recite prayers to Goddess Durga. On the eighth day or Ashtami, many families sacrifice goats or buffaloes. On the 10th day, Vijayadashami, the elders of family smear the foreheads of the young ones with Tikas and relatives visit each other seeking blessing from the older members.

Tyohar is celebrated 15 days after Dasain with gaiety and enthusiasm. The Nepalese worship Goddess Laxmi on the first day. In the evening, thousands of oil lamps are lighted and crackers are burst to celebrate the festival of light. On the third day is Bhai Tika, when sisters apply Tikas on their brothers' forehead and pray for their well-being.

4.4.3 Christianity

Christianity is the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The Christians believe that God took the form of a human being in order to save the sinful humanity. Jesus lived in Palestine, a middle-eastern land ruled by the Romans. He was a radical itinerant preacher. He instructed his followers about the ways of achieving salvation. He criticized the current oppressive practices of Jewish religion. As a result Jesus was crucified by the Romans at the instigation of Jews. Jesus' followers were convinced that he rose from the dead after three days. The followers spread Christianity to major cities throughout Roman Empire. Gradually Christianity spread throughout Europe. The Cross is the

symbol of Christianity. The trading companies from Europe were the agents of the propagation of Christianity in India. The British East India Company was responsible for introducing Protestant Christianity in Eastern Himalayas.

The history of Christianity in Darjeeling dates as far back as the arrival of British in Darjeeling. A. R. Foning in *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe* writes:

"Exactly six years after the taking over of the present town area and the surrounding places of Darjeeling by the British i.e., in 1841, the Reverend Mr. William Start established a school just below the present St Joseph's College, at Tukvar" (Foning1987:155)³³.

Since there was a sizable number of Europeans in Darjeeling, an Anglican church with full time chaplain was founded in 1843 with a name, St. Andrews church. The next attempt was by Macfarlane who decided to start a mission in Darjeeling in 1869. Since he met with disappointment he shifted his mission to Kalimpong. Another protestant group Scandinavian Alliance Mission founded a mission station at Ghoom in 1892. The two groups worked in the hills of Darjeeling. At the same time, the Scandinavian Alliance Mission moved to Sikkim with the help of Mr. J. C. White to establish a mission station in North Sikkim. The Eastern Himalayan Mission of the Church of Scotland established themselves in South and West Sikkim. In this way Protestantism spread far and wide in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Catholicism entered Darjeeling and Sikkim in 1846 A. D and penetrated into Himalayan villages. Now, Catholicism and various denominations of Protestant religion have spread in Eastern Himalayas, doing humanitarian works.

The major festival of both Protestants and Catholics is Christmas. It is observed on 25th December as the date of Christ's birth. The followers of Christ take part in special religious services in the churches. The story of Christmas comes from the gospel of Luke in the Bible. Luke narrates:

"And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:6-7)³⁴.

The first mention of Christmas celebration is found in 336 A.D in the Roman calendar. When Catholicism became the official religion of the Romans, Christmas festival picked up a momentum. The artists painted the scenes of the nativity, the birth of Jesus. Today, Christmas is celebrated with pomp and gaiety in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Besides decorating the houses, the followers of Jesus sing Christmas carols. The Christmas carols are songs composed keeping in view the nativity scene. The carolers move from house to house, singing songs related to the birth of Christ. A star is also placed at a prominent place in the house or on the charismas tree.

The Catholic missionaries felt at home in Darjeeling and Sikkim, because of the suitable climate and ecological settings. They came in contact with ethnic groups in the locality. The missionaries devoted their whole life for the well being of the people. They learnt the local language and appreciated the religious practices. Thus the Catholic missionaries made Eastern Himalayas their home.

References and End Notes

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2. H. H. Risley (1928) *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*. Delhi: Low Price Publications, p.1.
3. L. A. Waddell (1978), *Among the Himalayas*. Kathmandu. Ratna Pustak Bhandar, p.10.
4. H. H. Risley (1928) *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*. Delhi: Low Price Publications, p.40.

5. K. P. Tamsang (1983) *The Untold and Unknown Reality about the Lepchas*. Kalimpong: Lyangsong Tansang, p.1.
6. A. R. Foning (1987) *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, p.18.
7. Rustomji (1987) *Sikkim: A Himalayan Tragedy*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, p.3.
8. Guru Padma Sambhava passed through Sikkim in the eighth century A.D, on his way to Tibet. It is believed that Guru Padma Sambhava, the Lotus Born, brought Buddhism to Sikkim and Tibet. He is also known as Guru Rimpoche. A 75 feet high statue of Guru Padma Sambhava has been installed at Samdruptse near Namchi in 2004 A.D.
9. This is the oldest Monastery in Sikkim. It was built in 1701 A.D. It is situated on a lofty hill at an elevation of nearly 1000 feet above Yuksam.
10. H. H. Risley (1928) *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*. New Delhi: Low Price Publications, p.10-11.
11. The Treaty of Sagauli took place on 2nd December 1815. It was a treaty of peace between the East India Company and the Maharaja Bikram Shah, Rajah of Nepal. It established peace and firendship between British and Nepal.
12. The Treaty of Titalya took place on 10th February 1817. It was a treaty between the British Government and Raja of Sikkim. It has 10 articles. The treaty made Sikkim a mere Puppet in the hands of the British.
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15. Sonam B. Wangyal (2002) *Sikkim & Darjeeling Division & Deception*. Jaigaon: Dolma House, p.34.

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26. Cindy L. Perry (1997) *Nepali around the World*. Kathmandu: Ekta Books.

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28. A. R. Foning (1987) *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Private Limited, p.79.

29. It is a unique festival celebrated in Sikkim. It is celebrated both by Lepchas and Bhutias.
30. Sharma S. K. & Usha Sharma (1998) *Social and Cultural Heritage of Sikkim and Bhutan*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications, p.18.
31. A. R. Foning (1987) *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Private Limited, p.88-89.
32. H. H. Risley (1928) *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*. Delhi: Low price Publications, p.42.
33. Foning, p.155.
34. The story of the birth of Jesus is found in the writings of Luke and Mathew. According to the stories, since there was no place for Jesus to be born, Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable.