

CHAPTER – II

STATE OF SIKKIM: A PROFILE

On the basis of geographical elements and pattern of human habitation, the Great Himalayas may be divided into three major realms: a) Western Himalayas, b) Central Himalayas, and c) Eastern Himalayas.¹ These realms possess certain measures of geographical homogeneity, including certain common physical and cultural traits. Sikkim is located in the western-most part of the Eastern Himalayan realms within the great and the inner Himalayan regions. From above, Sikkim looks like a gigantic amphitheatre hewn by perpetually snow-clad mountains. The tangled series of snowcapped interlacing ridges, rising range above range even to the foot of the wall of high peaks and passes, Sikkim deserves to be called an “abode of the snows”.

Sikkim lies between 27°5' and 28°10' North latitudes, and between 88° 4' and 88° 58' East longitudes. It has a total area of 2,818 square miles or 7,096 square kilometers. The physical shape is somewhat rectangular about 113 kilometers long and 64 kilometers wide. It is squeezed between Nepal on the West and Bhutan in the East. On its South lies the famous hill station of Darjeeling district of West Bengal and People's Republic of China on its North.

The present shape of Sikkim, which looks truncated, is due to the pressures and conquests by its powerful neighbours in the past. At one time the territory of Sikkim was extended as far as Limbuan (presently the eastern part of Nepal) in the West, Chumbi Valley (now in China) in the North, parts of Western Bhutan in the East and whole of Darjeeling district in West Bengal as far as Titaliya on the Bihar-Bengal border in the South.

Sikkim is a land of mountain ridges and passes. In the eastern border of Sikkim and Tibet, the Chola range contains two most important passes of Nathula ‘the pass of the listening ear’ (15, 512 ft) and Jelap-la ‘the lovely plain pass’ (13,354 ft) which had served as trade routes between Sikkim and Tibet in the past. The Singalila range on the Western frontier forms a line of separation between

Sikkim and Nepal. The important pass of Chiabhanjang (the hollow where one peep over: 10,320 ft) and Kangchenjunga (the auspicious forehead peak: 28,156ft.), the third highest peak in the world, lie in this range. The Teesta along with its tributaries is an important river of the State. It rises from Cholamo Lake and flows through the heart of the State embracing numerous mountain streams in its fold. The Great Rangeet, a tributary of the Teesta, is another important river which rises from Kabru glaciers and meets Teesta near Melli in West Bengal.

Apart from rivers natural springs provide alternative source of water. Some of these springs are hot like the one at Ralong at an elevation of about 3,100 ft on the west bank of river Rangeet. Other hot spring sites are Phut Sachu on the east side of Rangeet near the Rinchingpong monastery, Yumthang on the east bank of river Lachung, and Momay below the glacier of Kinchinjho.

In terms of geology, Sikkim lies in the mild tremor zone but, unlike Assam and Bihar, Sikkim has not experienced anything like disastrous earthquakes. However, landslides and mudslides are the recurring features owing to the composition of the soil (micacious), steep slopes, unplanned construction and poor drainage system.

Sikkim experiences, even for its small size, a climate suitable for both pineapple and apple. Her northern frontiers remain perennially snowcapped discouraging human habitation. The settlement is found between 5000 ft. to 14000 ft. She lies directly on the path of the South –West monsoon and receives abundant rainfall varying between 150 inches in the lower Teesta valley to 40 to 50 inches in Lachung Valley. In short, almost all parts of Sikkim receive rainwater during the monsoon. About 43 per cent area is covered with lush green forest of various types. Several varieties of bamboos, ferns, cherry, laurel, oak, chestnut, firs, pines, maples, magnolia, champs, katoos are found at an altitude between 3000 ft. to 7000 ft. Rhododendrons of about 36 varieties are found between 6000 ft. to 8000 ft. Among 5000 floral plants about 500 species of orchids, 30 species of primulas and 424 species of medicinal plants are found in Sikkim. Similarly, a wide variety of wild animals such as Panda, Otter, Clouded Leopard, Snow Leopard, Thar, Ghoral, Musk Deer, Black Bear, Hyena, Jackal,

Civet Cat, and Himalayan Weasel roam about freely among the thicket of the jungle. Apart from this about 500 varieties of birds and 600 species of butterflies are also found in Sikkim.

A brief political history of Sikkim:

It has been rather a common practice among the scholars to begin political history of Sikkim with the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty though a rudimentary form of political system existed much earlier in Sikkim. Despite lack of documentary evidences, which are believed to have been destroyed by the Tibetan lamas when they migrated to Sikkim, the information available from various Lepcha and Tsong (Limboo) oral traditions indicate existence of tribal chiefs and a unique institution resembling rudimentary monarchy. The king was selected through an open competition held from time to time. According to the Lepcha legend the successor to the throne was required to possess expertise in the fields of religion, administration, military tactics etc. The king was expected to be polite, humble and a sociable person who would remain bachelor and would possess no property. Such a platonic king was known as 'Panu' by the Lepchas. The spiritual leader, called Athing or Bongthing, was another important person in the Lepcha society. After the death of a Panu, the Athing used to look after the affairs of administration till a new Panu was selected. The matter of selection would often take several years.

A detail documentary and chronological history of the Lepcha and Tsong (Limboo) rulers is not available. However, Lepcha legends describe Pohartak Panu as the first important Lepcha ruler of the Mayel country, now called Sikkim. He is believed to be the contemporary of Chandragupta of the Gupta dynasty.² There is no record of his immediate successor but sometime during 1230-1316 A.D. Turvey Panu, another Lepcha king, used to rule Sikkim with his capital near Kurseong, now a town in Darjeeling district. According to Dahal, he had Tsongs (Limboos) and Mangars among his courtiers³. It is believed that he was killed in a military expedition possibly by the Kirats of the eastern Nepal. He was succeeded by Tubh Athak but very little is known about him too. The last among

the Lepcha rulers was perhaps Gaeboo Achok Panu of Damsang in Kalimpong region. According to Dahal, he was the son of the slain Lepcha Prime Minister, Tshongzod Bolek, of Sikkim. He too was assassinated treacherously at Daling fort at the age of 36 in 1856 A.D. Contrarily, Tamsang believes that Lepchas of Damsang belonged to the independent principality of Kalimpong whose ruler Gaeboo Achok was murdered by the Bhutanese in 1780 in connivance with the Sikkim Raja, and then Kalimpong was annexed to Bhutan.⁴ In another version, he was described as the son of Kya-bo-Rab, a Bhutia ruler of Damsang and Daling, and was killed by the Bhutanese General Ari Sethi near Ambiokh.⁵ Fanning also expressed doubt about the ethnic identity of Gaeboo Achok. He contests that he “could never have been a Lepcha. At the most, he was a half-breed, cultured, moulded and fashioned in the style of rulers themselves”.⁶ Despite claims and counter-claims, one thing comes out quite clearly that this part of the territory was ruled by the Lepchas and Limboos, now a constituent of the Nepalis. These rulers were more like democratic chiefs than territorial sovereigns.

Much before the 16th century the Tibetans began migrating towards the northern tracts of Sikkim in search of land and pasture.⁷ Generally it is believed that the Tibetan migration began as a result of the defeat of the Red Hat Sect (followers of Nyingma-pa) at the hands of the Yellow Hat Sect (followers of Geluk-pa) in Tibet in a religious strife. According to the legend a Tibetan prince, Guru Tashe, was foretold to proceed to Demozong, the Bhutia name for Sikkim. His eldest son Jo-Khye-Bumsa (the superior of the ten thousand horses) married Gurumo, the daughter of the Sakya hierarch and settled in Chumbi, then a part of Sikkim. As legends have it, being childless the couple was advised to propitiate blessing from the Lepcha spiritual head Thekong Tek. Khye-Bumsa met the Lepcha spiritual head and solicited blessing for sons⁸. Khye Bumsa was also said to have concluded a ‘Blood-brotherhood’ pact with the Lepchas. It is also said that Thekong Tek, the Lepcha Athing, prophesized that the descendents of Khye-Bumsa would become lords of Sikkim while his own people would become their raiyats⁹. The statement, however, seems to be a modern innovation seeking to legitimize Tibetan occupation of Sikkim. The second son of Khye-Bumsa, Mi-

upon Rab, had four sons, the youngest of whom was Guru Tashe. His eldest son was Jawa Apha. Jawa Apha's son was Guru Tenzing who fathered Phuntsog Namgyal, the first Tibetan Gyalpo (king in Tibetan language) of Sikkim. Phuntsog Namgyal was consecrated in 1642 at Yoksum by the three Tibetan lamas of Red Hat Sect namely Lhatsum Namkha Jigmed, Sempah Chhembo and Rigdzin Kunzangpo.¹⁰ Mullard, however, believes that the consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal took place in 1646.¹¹

The transition of political power, however, was not at all peaceful. According to Dahal, Geyzing (the place of victory) got its name as a result of the armed struggle between the combined forces of the Limboos and Lepchas on the one hand and the Bhutias on the other.¹² Mullard also writes that despite establishing himself as the dominant power in Sikkim, Phuntsog Namgyal suffered a rebel, possibly in 1649, instigated by the Lepchas of Yug-bsam (Yoksum) and Limboos (referred to as local traders)¹³ The rebellion was subdued followed by an agreement of some form which, however, was not favourable to the Lepchas. The agreement seemed to have introduced a Tibetan system of land economy marked by social difference between land owners (Dpon) and Lepcha tenants/servants (G.yog), though it is still premature to say anything conclusively.¹⁴

The consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal could be perceived as the realization of the dream of a greater Tibetan state. After having established the political domination, it did not take much time to have monastic influence to penetrate and mark its presence among the pagan Lepchas and Tsongs (Limboos). Centuries old Lepcha polity based on non-hereditary kingship was replaced with a theocratic and hereditary monarchical system very much akin to the system found in Tibet. The Dalai Lama was looked upon as the ultimate source of authority both in temporal and spiritual matters concerning Sikkim. The Tibetan interest was served as far as possible while the indigenous Lepchas remained in utter negligence "mostly confined to the northern belt of Sikkim in an area called Dzongu" and forced to live "a life in indolence and negligence contributing little against the aggressive exploitation by the Bhutias of the riches in land and

forest.”¹⁵

Phuntsog Namgyal extended the boundary of Sikkim as far as Chumbi valley in the North, Tagongla (Bhutan) in the east, Titlia (Bihar) in the south and Devagaon (Bangladesh) and Singalila range in the west. By considering Bhutias (father), Lepchas (mother) and Tsongs (sons) as members of the same family, he improved ethnic relation with other communities. Mangars were allowed to keep their fiefdom at a payment of annual taxes while the Tsongs could use their title of ‘Subba’. For administrative efficiency, he divided the territory into twelve Dzongs or districts such as Lassu, Dallom, Yangthang, Sang, Libing, Malling, Simik, Pandom etc.¹⁶ and Dzungpons (governors or administrator of forts) were appointed from among the Lepchas. There is no recorded evidence suggesting appointment of Tsongs (Limboos) and Mangars as Dzungpons. His royal council was composed of twelve ministers mostly drawn from the Bhutias. He died in 1670.

His son Tensung Namgyal shifted the capital from Yoksum to Rabdentse and reduced the number of councilors from 12 to 8. According to the legend Sikkim inherited its present name from his third wife who was the daughter of a Tsong chief Yo-Yo Hang of Rabdentse. Basnet, however, claims that it was the Lepcha chief with whom the marriage of the daughter of the Tsong chief Yo Yo Hang of Rabdentse was solemnized. When the bride entered her husband’s house, she exclaimed in her own tongue “Su Him” (the new house) which was later corrupted into Sukhim and then to Sikkim.¹⁷ But, according to Dr. Waddell ‘Sikkim’ was a parbatiya (Nepali) name given by the conquering Gorkhas.¹⁸

Sikkim suffered first territorial loss during the reign of Chador Namgyal at the hands of the Bhutanese in 1700. The Sixth Dalai Lama, however, persuaded Dev Raja of Bhutan to withdraw from Rabdentse. By this time the practice of finding Tibetan brides for the Gyalpos (Kings) of Sikkim had been established. But the circumstances under which Gyurmed Namgyal married a Tibetan refugee girl created unhappiness among the Lepchas and Tsongs which took the form of a revolt. The Gyalpo fled to Tibet. In ‘Sikkim-A concise Chronicle’ published by the Sikkim Durbar in 1962, the event has been explained in terms of invasion of

Prithivi Narayan Shah over Sikkim which, however, does not seem to be correct. The Gyalpo (king) was issueless but a nun was found pregnant and the lamas concocted a story that in his death bed the Chogyal had acknowledged the child as his own. The boy born out of this nun succeeded the throne after the intervention of the Tibetan authority. The boy being minor, the authority in Tibet also appointed a Tibetan regent by the name of Rabden Sarpa to take care of the administration until the heir apparent, Phuntsog Namgyal II, attained adulthood.

In the political history of Sikkim Rabden Sarpa is notable for two specific reasons. Firstly, he introduced a crude system of taxation on land and trade, and, secondly, he earned enmity with the Mangars. The offended Mangar chief secretly hatched conspiracy with Dev Raja of Bhutan against the Gyalpo. Bhutan invaded Sikkim in 1770 and occupied certain areas on the east of river Teesta, i.e. Kalimpong subdivision of present day Darjeeling district, and remained so till 1864 when the British finally took over this portion of land from Bhutan.

During the reign of the Sixth Gyalpo, Tenzing Namgyal, Prithivi Narayan Shah, the ruler of a small principality of Gorkha in western Nepal, was consolidating Nepal into a strong and unified nation and had already expanded his territory as far as river Sutlez. Since 1775 the Gorkha soldiers invaded Sikkim with varying success. In 1788-89 the Gorkha General, Jahar Singh, invaded Sikkim from the western border and occupied Rabdentse. In 1791 war broke out between Nepal and Tibet, in the course of which the Gorkhas established themselves firmly in Sikkim, especially in the southern and western parts of the river Teesta.¹⁹ In 1792 Sino-Nepal treaty was signed. Tsugphud Namgyal, being a minor and a fugitive, failed to protect the interest of the Kingdom. The land mass which lied on the south of river Teesta and Pemiongchi area went in favour of Nepal which remained occupied till 1815, while Tibet got the Chumbi valley.²⁰ The Chola-Jelap range became the northern and eastern boundaries of Sikkim.

The British Connection:

With the ascendancy of British in Bengal in the wake of the battle of Plassey in 1757, a new political power with a modern administrative, economic

and military organization appeared in the southern frontiers of Sikkim in the 18th century. Sikkim which had close political and religious connections with its northern neighbour now was forced to face its southern neighbour with which it had little contacts. This new development completely changed the history of Sikkim during the 18th and 19th centuries. The British from the very beginning viewed Sikkim as a passage for establishing trade connection with Tibet. Apart from the lucrative Tibetan gold trade which had already begun in a low magnitude between the Newars of Nepal and Tibetan traders with their trade terminus at Patna, the British government was as much interested in commercial transaction of English manufactured consumer goods to Tibet via Sikkim. In 1767 an opportunity to come into contact with the Newars and thereby with the Tibetans had gone unutilized due to Kinlock's half-hearted expedition. The second opportunity came to British when Cooch Bihar involved in a battle with Bhutan and the former requested Warren Hastings for help. Sikkim, on the other hand, came in support of Bhutan. Unwilling to lose this opportunity Warren Hastings wrote to Tashi Lama of Sikkim about the lenient treatment towards Bhutan in exchange of a friendly mission to Tibet.²¹ Two years later in May, 1774 the mission was sent "to open a mutual and equal communication of trade" under George Bhogle but it too did not prove fruitful.²² A similar mission in 1783 also remained unsuccessful because of the sudden departure of Warren Hastings to London and non-involvement policy in the Himalayan kingdoms adopted by his successors.

Considering the deteriorating relationship with Nepal, it became imperative for the British government in India to establish amicable relationship with Sikkim. In 1815, Lord Moira, the then Governor General, persuaded the Gyalpo (king) of Sikkim through Captain Barre Latter to fight alongside the British against the common enemy Nepal and on compliance to the British offer the Sikkim Gyalpo was promised restoration of the territory occupied previously by Nepal.²³ The defeat of Gorkha force under Amarsingh Thapa was followed by signing of the Segauli Treaty in December 1815. The interest of Sikkim was incorporated under article VI of the Treaty. In accordance with the promise the British signed the

Treaty of Titaliya with Sikkim in 1817 and the territory lying between eastward of Mechi and westward of river Teesta, around 4000 sq. miles, which was occupied formerly by Nepal and transferred to the British by virtue of the Treaty of Segauli, was restored to Sikkim. However, some parts of the Tarai, revenue-rich Dabgong, and surrounding areas were not restored. Within two months from the date of signing of the Treaty, Morung was gifted to Sikkim by Lord Moira. The Treaty put a check on the expansionist ambition of the Gorkhas and, at the same time, Gyalpo's freedom was to a large extent constricted. Article VIII of the Treaty says, "Sikkim authorities would afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company's provinces and would levy no transit duties on their merchandise".²⁴ In 1827 tension brewed once again between Sikkim and Nepal regarding the possession of Ontoo²⁵, a small area on the east of river Mechi. Besides, the dispute also involved the question of about 800 Lepcha refugees, actually the relatives and supporters of the slain Prime Minister, Tsongzod Bolek, of Sikkim who had taken refuge in Ontoo, then under Nepal's occupation²⁶ and had been harassing Sikkim continuously.²⁷ In spite of the joint efforts displayed by Sikkim, Tibet and China these Lepcha refugees from Sikkim could not be brought back to Sikkim.²⁸ As required by article III of the Treaty of Titaliya, the Sikkim Gyalpo was forced to seek British mediation on the border dispute over Ontoo. The Governor General Lord William Bentinck authorized two British deputies, Captain G.A.Lloyd and J.W. Grant, the commercial resident at Malda, to investigate into the matter, who eventually negotiated for the grant of "the old Gorkha station called Darjeeling" for the purpose of a 'Sanitarium'.²⁹

Though the grant was effected sometime in February 1835³⁰ the detail analysis of the correspondences which took place between the concerned parties such as the Gyalpo, Captain Lloyd and the British government at Calcutta, were suggestive of the fact that the grant of Darjeeling was neither a free gift to the British nor was it comprised of a "spot" situated "on the northern spur or ridge of the Gurdum Kutta or Sinchel mountain"³¹ as Major Lloyd and Captain Herbert put it. When Major Lloyd met the Gyalpo for the first time at a place called Ponk Samp on the eastern bank of the river Teesta on February 19, 1835, to propose for

the cession of Darjeeling by “offering such equivalent either in land or in money as deem reasonable”,³² the Gyalpo handed over a written statement containing a list of grievances.³³ Though no discussion took place on that day, it was quite obvious that the cession of Darjeeling depended upon compliance of three simple requests namely:

- a) The western boundary of Sikkim to be extended to Konti (? Kankai river);
- b) That a certain Kummoo Pradhan (? Kumbhey Pradhan or Runno Pradhan) and some Kazis be seized and delivered to Sikkim;
- c) That Dabgong (Dev Gaon, Debgong, Dabgong, Deb-gram) in the Tarai, might be ceded to the Gyalpo’s territory.³⁴

Major Lloyd, however, was in constraint to comply with the request as he was not authorized to negotiate anything other than ‘offering such equivalent either in land or in cash’. The Gyalpo after having waited for two days since February 22, summoned Major Lloyd on February 25 and told him that “if his requests were complied with he from friendship would give Darjeeling to the British government, but that his country was a very small”.³⁵ Interestingly, the Gyalpo had dropped two of his earlier requests this time but the extradition of Kummoo Pradhan and exchange of Dabgong were, however, kept as it were. The Gyalpo’s request concluded with “also if from friendship Dabgong from Amedeggee north be given to me, then my Dewan will deliver to Major Lloyd the grant and agreement under my red seal of Darjeeling that he may erect houses there, which I have given in charge of the said Dewan to be delivered, dated 19 Maugh, 1891, i.e. February 25, 1835”.³⁶ It seems that by that time, the Gyalpo had already prepared the deed and had it left with his Dewan to be given over to Major Lloyd on compliance to a territorial exchange (i.e. Debgong for Darjeeling). But the shrewd Major somehow managed to see the deed (written in Lepcha) from the Dewan who accompanied him in his return journey and had it copied and translated. The deed so translated read:

“That health may be obtained by residing there I from friendship make an offering of Darjeeling to the Governor General Sahib, 1891,19

Maug (25 February, 1835)” (True Translation), G.W.A.Lloyd, Major.³⁷

The deed being vague in terms of boundary demarcation, Major Lloyd drafted a deed of his own specifying boundaries in particular and sent it to the Gyalpo with a request either to substitute the original short deed with the new draft or to make a fresh one based upon the draft sent by him. The draft said;

“The Governor General having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, Sikkimputtee Raja, out of friendship for the said Governor General hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the lands south of the Great Ranjeet river, east of the Balasun, Kahial and little Ranjeet river, and west of the Rungno and Mahanadi rivers.”³⁸

The Gyalpo did not seem to have made another draft. What transpired the Gyalpo, Tsugphud Namgyal in accepting the deed drafted by Major Lloyd could not be known. In this regard Fred Pinn writes that the Gyalpo had a vague idea of the topography of Sikkim, though he knew his international frontiers quite well.³⁹ Thus, the grant that defined Darjeeling was not just confined around the Observatory Hill but comprised of a large chunk of landmass stretching about 30 miles in length and about 6 to 10 miles in breadth apart from an additional stretch of land for the construction of road to make Darjeeling accessible to the plains. The deed of transfer of Darjeeling was conditional but none of the requests made by the Gyalpo was conceded. Major Lloyd was unfaithful in his dealings with the Gyalpo and for the latter it was disgraceful or against the Sikkimese tradition to take back gift. By sending the deed too early the Gyalpo had “trapped himself in the conventions of royal etiquette”.⁴⁰ Later, the Gyalpo was sent ‘ a double barreled gun, a rifle, a pair of shawls superior, a pair of shawl inferior and 20 yards of Red Broad cloth’. In 1841 the Gyalpo was made an offer of Rs. 3,000 per annum which he wanted to be paid in terms of Rs. 1000 worth of Gold Mohur, Rs. 1000 worth of fusils with bayonets and accoutrements and the remainder in cloth

and coral.⁴¹ The amount was further raised to Rs. 6,000 in 1847 to Rs. 9,000 in 1868 to Rs. 12,000 in 1873.

The transfer of Darjeeling to the British India brought with itself number of problems for Sikkim. Nepal and Bhutan accused Sikkim of selling out to the foreigners. Bhutan even attacked Sikkim in 1844. Tibet became suspicious of Sikkim's action and expressed displeasure by denying hitherto given grazing right to the Sikkimese and restricting the visit of the Gyalpo (King) to Lhasa to once in eight years.

In order to improve the relation with Lhasa, the Gyalpo (king) appointed Dunya Namgyal, better known as Pagla Dewan (mad Chief Minister), a Tibetan of strong anti-British or pro-Tibet conviction, as the Chief Minister of Sikkim. He had absolute monopoly over the Tibetan trade and was apprehensive of the presence of British in Sikkim. British subjects were kidnapped and sold as slaves in Sikkim while the British gave refuge to runaway slaves and criminals from Sikkim in Darjeeling. In 1848, Dr. Hooker's plea to visit Sikkim was denied which led to the arrest of both Dr. Hooker and Dr. Campbell in November 1848 while returning from Tibet. They were released in December 1849 and escorted to Darjeeling. This incident was followed by a military expedition against Sikkim in February 1850 and reoccupation of Tarai, and suspension of annual grant of Rs. 6,000 being given in lieu of Darjeeling. On February 1, 1861, British occupied Tumlung, the capital of Sikkim, and Dewan Namgyal escaped to Tibet.

On March 28, 1861, a new treaty was signed between Ashley Eden and Sikkim Gyalpo (actually with the Crown Prince Sidkeong Namgyal) at Tumlung. As a consequence of the treaty the staunch enemy of the British, Pagla Dewan, was banished from Sikkim, free trade began between the two countries, all previous treaties were declared ultra-vires, Gyalpo was not allowed to stay in Tibet for more than three months at a stretch, a post of vakeel from Sikkim was established at Darjeeling, Gyalpo was debarred from ceding any portion of territory to any other foreign power and allowing the passage to any foreign army through Sikkim without the consent of the British government in India. In brief,

the British control in both internal and external affairs of Sikkim was established. Effectively Sikkim became a protectorate of the British government in India.

Sikkim as a protectorate State:

Sidkeong Namgyal was a liberal person and managed to improve the relations with the British as far as possible. It was during his rule the annual payment of Darjeeling was raised from earlier Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 9,000 and then to 12,000 in 1873.⁴² However, the relationship once again deteriorated with the consecration of Thutob Namgyal (1874-1914) because of latter's pro-Tibetan attitude. The Gyalpo even refused to come to Darjeeling for talks without the expressed permission of the Tibetan government.⁴³ Colman Macaulay, the Finance Secretary of the government of Bengal, who was sent in 1884 to investigate into the matter and to explore the possibilities of reconciliation, particularly held Gyalpo's anti-British attitude responsible for bitter relationship. He recommended for sending a mission to Tibet to patch up the differences. Accordingly, a trade mission was decided to be sent to Tibet in 1886 but the same had to be abandoned in presence of extreme opposition from the Tibetan side. Meanwhile, the Tibetans occupied Lingtu, about twenty miles inside Sikkim's border. The occupation of Lingtu by the Tibetans was approved by the Gyalpo which further infuriated the British. The military expedition was inevitable and in March 1888 the Tibetans were driven out of Lingtu by the British force under General Graham and also occupied Gnatong. The Gyalpo, who had fled to Chumbi, was brought to Gangtok.

J. Claude White, an engineer by profession, was appointed in June 1889 as the first political officer of the protectorate state. Administrative reform became his first priority and accordingly State Council was formed comprising of eminent personalities like Chief Dewans, Kazis and Lamas of Sikkim. He retained the post of President of the State Council by himself. The Gyalpo was sent to Kalimpong. Though he returned to Sikkim in 1891 he was no less than a prisoner in the hands of J.C. White. After his attempt to sneak to Tibet via Nepal had failed, he was imprisoned once again at Kurseong in Darjeeling. He was allowed to return to

Sikkim in 1896 and remained under the watchful eyes of the political officer. In the meantime a treaty was signed at Calcutta between China and British India in 1890 in which the former recognized the status of Sikkim as the protectorate of British India.⁴⁴ Thutob Namgyal died in 1914. He was succeeded by his second son Sidkeong Namgyal (Tulku) as J.C.White did not want Tchoda Namgyal, the eldest son of the late Thutob Namgyal who was studying in Tibet, to be the Gyalpo of Sikkim. However, Sidkeong Namgyal met an untimely death in 1914 and his half-brother, Tashi Namgyal, succeeded him. In his fifty years of rule Sikkim witnessed several radical changes in judicial and socio-economic fields. The abolition of magisterial power of the landlords, introduction of land reforms, abolition of forced labour, direct payment of taxes to the state, restructuring of judiciary in the model of Indian civil and criminal procedure codes were some of his landmark achievements. But it was during his rule that agitation against the arbitrary and discriminatory system also began. He died in December 1963. He was succeeded by his second son, Palden Thondup Namgyal. He assumed the title of the Chogyal (Dharma Raja) as he was believed to be a Tulku, an incarnate of a noble soul. It was during his rule that Sikkim had to witness series of political uncertainties and agitations leading to an end of the theocratic monarchical system and beginning of a popularly elected State Assembly in 1974. In 1975 Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union.

Sikkim after the merger with India:

The Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim became the 22nd State of the Indian Union in May, 1975 as a consequence of the unanimous decision of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly of April 10, 1975, seeking abolition of the institution of the Chogyal followed by the referendum of April 14, 1975, by the people of Sikkim to that effect. Mr. B.B.Lal was appointed as the first Governor of Sikkim on May 16, 1975. Article 371F was incorporated in the Constitution of India which provided for a special constitutional status to the State of Sikkim. The basic tenets of the provision may be summarized as:

The 32 member Assembly of Sikkim, as elected in April 1974, would continue to act as the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim for a period of four years until other provisions are made in parliament by law. Whole of Sikkim would constitute one parliamentary constituency and would be allotted one seat in the Lok Sabha and not in the Rajya Sabha. The members of the present State Assembly would participate in the election of the member of the Lok Sabha. The Indian Parliament for the purpose of protecting the rights and interests of the different section of Sikkimese population would make provisions for the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly to be filled by candidates belonging to such sections and to delimit Assembly constituencies accordingly.

Regarding the power of the Governor of Sikkim, article 371F (g) states “The Governor of Sikkim shall have special responsibility for peace and for equitable agreement for ensuring the social and economic advancement of different section of the population of Sikkim and in the discharge of his special responsibility under the clause, the Governor of Sikkim shall subject to such directions, as the President may, from time to time, deem fit to issue, act in his discretions”.⁴⁵

The existing High Court of Sikkim and all courts of civil, criminal and revenue jurisdiction, and authorities and officials - judicial, executive and ministerial – to continue and exercise respective functions subject to provisions of the constitution.

Similarly, the article provides for continuation of old Sikkimese laws even after the merger. It stated “All laws in force immediately before the appointed day in the territories comprised in the State of Sikkim or any part thereof shall continue to be in the force therein until amended/repealed by a competent Legislature or other competent authority”.⁴⁶ For the purpose of facilitating the application of any such law, as referred above, in relation to the administration of the State of Sikkim and for bringing the provision of any such law in accordance with the provision of this constitution, the President by order would make such adaptations and modifications of the law, whether by way of repeal or amendment, as may be necessary or expedient, within two years from the

appointed date, i.e. within April 1977. Every such law should have effect subject to adaptations and modifications so made, and any such adaptation or modification should not be questioned in any court of law. Furthermore, the Supreme Court and any Court were not to exercise jurisdiction in respect of any dispute or other matter arising out of any treaty, agreement, engagement or other similar instrument relating to Sikkim which was entered into or executed before the appointed day and to which the Government of India or any of its predecessor Government was a party. This provision was, however, not construed to derogate power of the President of India to consult the Supreme Court under article 143 of the constitution.⁴⁷

A cursory look at the constitutional position of Sikkim will unfold certain striking features. Firstly, article 371 F is a non-obstante article which means that neither any other provision of the constitution nor an interpretation of the Supreme Court can limit the scope of the provision. Secondly, the present constitution allowed continuation of Legislative Assembly elected in 1974 even after the merger. It is interesting to note that the electoral rolls for 1974 Assembly Election were prepared keeping December 1, 1973, as the qualifying date. The voters lists, published on February 4, 1974, enumerated 1,03,495 names as eligible (those who were 21 years and above and had Sikkim Subject Certificate) voters which was just 49.3 per cent of the total population of Sikkim in 1971. The report suggested that a sizable number of populations also did not participate in voting. In brief above 50 per cent population of Sikkim did not participate in the 1974 Assembly election and hence it should have been dissolved and a fresh election for constituting a new Assembly should have been ordered. Thus, by continuing the Legislative Assembly elected in 1974 a covert attempt was made both to appease the supporters of merger and to avoid undesirable outcome had the election to new Assembly was called for. Thirdly, Sikkim Legislative Assembly was to compose of not less than thirty members with tenure of four years. It was inconsistent with the provision of article 170 of the constitution of India. The term of the Assembly was made five years in 1979 and the nature of seat reservation in the Assembly too was modified in the same year despite the

limitation imposed by article 371F (o) which states that 'no such order (i.e. Presidential Order adapting or modifying the provisions) shall be made after the expiry of two years from the appointed day' which was April 1977. Fourthly, the Governor of Sikkim was vested with discretionary power under 'Special Responsibility' for the maintenance of peace and for ensuring equitable advancement of different section of the population. Unlike the Governors of other states, the Governor of Sikkim exercises this power as per the provision of article 371F (g). Fifthly, by continuing the old Sikkimese laws which were considered discriminatory in favour of the erstwhile ruling community, the inter-community relations continue to mark by one of apprehension and suspicion.

Politico-Administrative structures – their evolution:

The present day politico-administrative structure has evolved from a very simple system existed hundreds of years ago in Sikkim. The political structure existed then was basically the reflection of a simple and carefree tribal society with tribal chief as their ruler/king. As mentioned earlier, the Lepcha king, called 'Panu', and the spiritual leader 'Bongthing' or 'Athing' used to occupy important position in the political and socio-religious life of the Lepcha community. A.R.Fonning, however, does not support the theory of Lepcha rulers and contends that the Lepchas do not believe in the system of gradation or ranking.⁴⁸ A sixteenth century document⁴⁹ which grants permission to the Tsongs (Limboos) to settle in the Mayel Lyang (i.e. Sikkim), however, suggests existence of a determinate source of authority whose social/political status in the Lepcha society was undoubtedly superior to others.

The Lepchas, however, lost their authority with the solicitation of a proverbial brotherhood pact with the migratory Bhutia patriarch, Khye Bumsa. In 1642⁵⁰ Phuntshog Namgyal, a Bhutia peasant, was consecrated as the first Bhutia king, called Chogyal (Dharmaraja), of the Tibetan origin at Yoksum in west Sikkim. He was believed to be the descendant of the brave ancestors of the Kham province in eastern Tibet.⁵¹

The system of government during the Namgyal dynasty was essentially based on absolute monarchy with feudalistic root. The king was aided by an assembly of monks and laymen, called 'Lhade-Mede' (the Assembly of Elders) composed dominantly by the Bhutia lamas. The Lhade-Mede had no fixed numbers. Initially the members were nominated by the Kazis and later by the Private Secretary to the Chogyal. Lhade-Mede's jurisdiction was extended to everywhere from marriage of the member of the Royal family to issues of national importance. In all these matters Lhade-Mede used to advice the Chogyal. He was not legally bound by their advice though rejection was not the convention. The meeting of Lhade-Mede was generally held at the Palace at the request of the Chogyal at any time the latter deemed necessary.⁵² Reportedly, the last meeting of the Lhade-Mede was convened in order to consider the marriage proposal of the last Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal, with an American lady, Hope Cooke.

The politico-administrative structure underwent further evolutionary refinement under the first political officer of Sikkim, John Claude White. He usurped the authority of the Chogyal Thutop Namgyal and brought the administration of the State under his complete control. After the convention of 1890 between Great Britain and China relating to Sikkim and Tibet, the British Political Officer became the virtual ruler of Sikkim exercising powers both in internal and external affairs of Sikkim.⁵³ He introduced Advisory Council, later called the State Council, composed mainly of Kazis and landlords considered faithful by the British government. It is stated "Members of the Council have continued to attend regularly at the Palace. Their attendance at the meeting of the Council held by the Political Officer has been particularly good. The Maharaja was present on each occasion...."⁵⁴ The Council grew both in terms of maturity and in its content gradually with the progress of time requiring it to meet thrice a year.⁵⁵ J. Claude White tried his best to establish a modern system of administration in Sikkim. After the return of the Maharaja Thutop Namgyal from confinement in 1895 he was restored the charge of Judiciary. Gradually he took over the Council and shared administrative power with the Political Officer with

the power of reviewing any transaction vested with the latter. Sidkeong Namgyal Tulku, son of Thutop Namgyal, was trained and educated in Oxford. After his return to Sikkim in 1908, he was appointed the Vice-President of the State Council and given the charge of Education and Forest Departments in addition to Ecclesiastical.⁵⁶ With the growing confidence between the Chogyal and the British Government in India, the Chogyals gained much of their lost authority. During the reign of Tashi Namgyal, certain departments like Excise, Income Tax, Police and Jail were transferred to the Chogyal in addition to Education, Forest and Ecclesiastical affairs over which he had independent control.⁵⁷ Later, the departments like Revenue, Stamps, Printing Press, Co-operative Societies etc. were also transferred to the Chogyal. The Chogyal was assisted by K.P. Dewar, the then Chief Executive Officer, in his day-to-day administration. In April 1918 the Chogyal Tashi Namgyal was conferred full power of administration of Sikkim by Charles Bell, the then Political Officer of Sikkim.⁵⁸

Thus, the Chogyal once again became the fountain of all authority in so far as internal administration of the State was concerned. The government was directly under the control of the Chogyal who used to receive functional assistance from the secretariat. The administration was trying to adapt itself to modern form of government but owing to the presence of conservative elements, it basically served the interests of the influential clergy and landed class. During the late 1930s the strength of the nominated State Council was raised to 9 and the incumbents remained in the post during the pleasure of the Chogyal. The working of the Council was systematically organized and definite functions were assigned to it including that of budget preparation to which the final approval of the Chogyal was required. The Chogyal enjoyed prerogatives to pass any order independently of the Council.⁵⁹ But in all matters of administration of importance the Chogyal was to consult the British Political Officer. In other words, even if the powers were transferred to the Chogyal, the ultimate authority was, in fact, retained by the Political Officer.⁶⁰

After the departure of the British from India in 1947, the successor government, i.e. India, had no treaty obligation with Sikkim. The void was,

however, filled up by concluding a Standstill Agreement on 27 February, 1948 between the Sikkim Darbar and the government of India. Both the parties agreed to continue all agreements, relations and administrative arrangements which existed between the British Crown and the Sikkim State before 14th August, 1947 pending the signing of a new agreement or treaty. In December 1950 an Indo-Sikkim treaty was signed continuing the status of Sikkim as the Protectorate State of India. Accordingly, the Chogyal was given autonomy regarding internal affairs subject to ultimate responsibility of the government of India for maintenance of good governance and law and order; the government of India was responsible for Sikkim's external relations, defense and communication⁶¹ besides being the most important source of planned revenue.

With the increasing association with India and birth of the political parties in the nineteen forties the demands for democratic government and economic reforms gained momentum. In order to accommodate the interest of the agitating people the Chogyal was forced to introduce certain legislative reforms on an experimental basis. The State Council was made representative in its composition by including six more members from the agricultural class but soon after attending few sessions these representatives realized the futility of their presence in the governmental machinery.⁶² There were no proper rules regarding sharing of powers between the Ministry and the Chogyal. The resignation of the Ministry unleashed a fresh agitation which resulted in the appointment of an Indian Officer as Dewan with effect from 11 August, 1949. The appointment of an Indian administrative officer, John Lal, as Dewan, was primarily to facilitate increasing association of the Sikkimese people with the government of India.⁶³ With this development the Chogyal and the Dewan became the joint authorities of political/administrative power of the State with the divided State Council in the middle to act as pawns in the hands of the either of them. According to the Agreement of 1950, an Advisory Committee was formed to initiate measures for establishing Panchayati Raj Institutions, providing training in the art of popular government and holding elections for forming future State Council. A Tripartite Agreement between the Chogyal and two other major parties (Sikkim National

Party & Sikkim State Congress) of Sikkim was reached in May 1951 in which the “Parity” system as a basis for distribution of seats between the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalis in the State Council was adopted.⁶⁴ Under the Parity system the minority Bhutia-Lepcha and majority Nepalis were allotted equal seats in the State Council. The Parity system denied separate representation to the Lepchas while seats allocated for the Nepalis were inadequate to the majority community. The Proclamation of January 1952 laid down the mode of election to the Sikkim State Council⁶⁵ while the constitutional proclamation of March 1953 provided rules of governance and powers of the State Council.⁶⁶

In August 7, 1953, the Chogyal promulgated a constitutional proclamation raising the members of the State Council to 17 in which six seats each were reserved for the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalis. Another five members were nominated by the Chogyal. The provision of five nominated members was introduced with an intention to maintain domination of the Chogyal and his supporters in the legislative institution. Thus, the ethnic considerations continued to receive major attention at the political decision making process. The proclamation of 1953 also postulated the powers and functions of the State Council and the Executive Council. A system of diarchy was established to share the powers between the Chogyal and the State Council. The Chogyal was in command of the Reserved Subjects which included the items like Ecclesiastical, External Affairs, State Enterprises, Home and Police, Finance, Land Revenue, Rationing, Establishments etc. The Dewan appointed by the Government of India was the administrator of the Reserved subject. The Transferred Subjects namely Education, Public Health, Excise, Press and Publicity, Transport, Bazars, Forests and Public Works etc. were managed by Executive Councillors chosen from among the elected members of the State Council. They held office during the pleasure of the Chogyal and were responsible to the latter. However, the Chogyal had the right to veto any decision made by the Executive Council and to substitute his own decision thereof.⁶⁷ The Executive Council was composed of the Dewan, who was the ex-officio President of the State Council, and such other Councillors appointed by the Chogyal on parity basis from the elected members of the Council

from time to time. The formation of the government was peculiar in the sense that the member of the State Council was elected on party basis whereas formation of the Ministry was not. Both the legislative and executive wings of the government were headed by the Dewan appointed by the government of India in consultation with the Chogyal. Moreover, the nominated members could also be appointed as the member of the Executive Council. The number of Executive Councillors varied between two in 1953⁶⁸ to six in 1970⁶⁹ and 1973.⁷⁰ There was also a practice of appointing two⁷¹ or three⁷² Deputy Executive Councillors since 1959.

In 1958 the members of the State Council was increased to 20 with a provision of separate seat reservation: 6 seats for the Bhutia-Lepcha, 6 for the Nepalis, 1 for General, 1 for Sangha and 6 seats nominated by the Chogyal.⁷³ In order to contest the General seat, a person was required to have permanent habitation in Sikkim and such other qualifications necessary for becoming the member of the State Council.⁷⁴ In principle, the General seat was meant for any person having fixed habitation in Sikkim, but the Indians settled in Sikkim were ineligible to participate in the elections. Fixed habitation was presumed to mean habitation before February 1, 1958, and consequential termination of fixed habitation in the country of origin.⁷⁵ Thus, mere owning of land or making a living in Sikkim were qualifications inadequate for a person for enjoying right to vote and contest elections.

In 1967 the total membership of the State Council was enhanced further to 24 of which 7 seats were reserved each for the Lepchas - Bhutias and the Nepalis and one each for General, Tsong, Scheduled Caste and Sangha and 6 were nominated by the Chogyal.⁷⁶ Those who possessed Sikkim Subjects Certificate and were of 30 years of age were eligible to be the member of the State Council. The normal tenure of the State Council was three years unless otherwise dissolved sooner by the Chogyal. It was to meet at least twice a year in six months interval counting from the date of the last sitting⁷⁷ though the Chogyal was empowered to summon special sessions at any time he deemed necessary. The Chogyal could also address the Council, send messages⁷⁸ and postpone election of the State Council. In the absence of the Presiding Officer, i.e. the Dewan who was the

Principal Administrative Officer or Sidlon, the Chogyal could appoint any other person to preside over the meetings. For example, the Chogyal appointed Rai Bahadur T.D.Densapa in the absence of Mr. R.N. Haldipur in 1967, Mr. M.P. Pradhan in the absence of Mr. I.S.Chopra in 1972.⁷⁹

Diarchy as the principle of division of powers between the Chogyal and the State Council continued in 1967 also. The Reserved Subjects, which contained all the important items of State interests, continued to remain under the prerogatives of the Chogyal. The State Council enjoyed powers with regards to the Transferred Subjects such as education, forest, agriculture, public works, health etc. subject to the assent of the Chogyal.⁸⁰ The State Council was restricted from holding discussion on, or, asking any question or dealing in any manner on matters involving the Maharaja or members of the ruling family, external relations, including relations with the Government of India, the appointment of the Dewan and the members of the judiciary and any matter pending before the court of law.⁸¹ The State Council could discuss and cast vote regarding the annual budget, but if the budget estimate was rejected by it, the Chogyal enjoyed power to certify it and consider it sanctioned. The Council could not vote on certain expenditures made out of the State fund namely expenditure on civil list, including household expenditure of the Chogyal, pay and allowances of the Dewan, members of judiciary and officers on deputation from the government of India.

In the executive field too the Chogyal exercised authority through the Principal Administrative Officer who was also the President of both the State Council and the Executive Council. The executive councilors enjoyed limited power. Under 'financial power' the Executive Councilors and Deputy Executive Councilors could spend Rs. 500 and Rs. 200 respectively which was later increased to Rs. 5000 and Rs. 2500 subject to approval of the Chogyal. Regarding legislation on the Transferred Subjects, the proposal to that extent was required to be passed unanimously in the Executive Council as far as possible; in case of difference among them or between the Councilors and the President, the matter was to be decided by the Chogyal. The Executive Councilors were to keep the Chogyal informed of all matters of importance through the Principal

Administrative Officer. They were to submit their tour programmes to the Chogyal for approval and were eligible to sanction leaves, with or without pay, to classes II and III officials but regarding gazetted and class I officers, the councilors were to refer the matter to the Establishment department.

The Dewan was the most powerful man in the administration of Sikkim. He was the President of both the State Council and Executive Council as well as the chief administrator of the Reserved Subjects. It was true that the power of the Chogyal was clipped neither by the constitution nor by legislature, but the administrative complexities emerging over a wide field of administration required the expertise and experience of the Dewan. He was called Sidlon or the Principal Administrative Officer to whom other administrative officers like the Chief Secretary, Secretaries and Directors were subordinated. The Councilors were far weaker as a decision maker or lawmaker than expected. During the debate on the Sikkim Subject Regulation in 1961, one of the members of the Executive Council compared their status with an office clerk.⁸² The office of the Principal Administrative Officer was abolished in 1972⁸³ and thereafter the Chogyal assumed the administration of the State. In December 1972, the Chogyal appointed an ad-hoc Council, called Special Council, composed of senior bureaucrats to deal with matters of urgent national importance, including the general elections, in his absence.⁸⁴ The Sikkim Government Gazette announced that "All decisions taken by the Special Council would be of interim in nature subject to the Chogyal's review and/or ratification."⁸⁵

In 1973 Council election the grudges over counting of votes between the two rival candidates was followed communal frenzy⁸⁶ and agitation by virtue of ethnic affiliation of the candidates involved (a Bhutia and a Nepali). At the intervention of the Dewan the agitation was, however, put off and a Tripartite Agreement was signed on May 8, 1974, between the Chogyal, the government of India and the representatives of the three political parties of Sikkim.⁸⁷ The Agreement postulated for wider legislative and executive powers for the elected representatives, an adult franchise with one man one vote principle as a basis of election to be conducted for the first time under the supervision of the Election

Commission of India and constitution of the Assembly in four years interval in place of the State Council. Commenting on the Agreement, L.B.Basnet wrote, "The powers of the Chogyal, even though he remains the 'Head of the State', have been drastically reduced. The preponderant ascendancy of the Bhutias in every field has been rudely shaken. The Nepalese people of Sikkim, who had risen in revolt, have been assured of a fairer deal. The government of India has gained enormously. The Indian hold over Sikkim has become firmer. The internal administration of Sikkim has, to all intents and purpose, been taken over by India".⁸⁸ The Tripartite Agreement eases transformation of a Protectorate State, as mentioned in 1950 Treaty, into an Associated State of India.⁸⁹

In the following year, i.e. February 1974, the Proclamation of Representation of Sikkim Subjects Act, 1974 was issued enhancing the numerical strength of the Assembly to 32 out of which 15 seats were reserved for the Lepcha-Bhutia, 15 for the Nepalis, 1 for the Scheduled Caste and 1 for the Sangha. The seats reserved for the Tsongs community was unfortunately done away with. The Proclamation also stipulated 25 years as a qualifying age and the Sikkim Subject Certificate mandatory for the members of the Assembly. In April 1974 the election to the Assembly was held under the new Proclamation. The Sikkim National Congress swept the poll by winning 31 seats. The Sangha seat went in favour of the National Party. The Chogyal addressed the new Assembly on May 10, 1974. On May 11, the Assembly adopted resolutions reaffirming the principles, purposes and provisions of the 8th May Agreement and requesting the government of India to take immediate steps for Sikkim's participation in the political and economic institution of India.⁹⁰ In another resolution, the Assembly resolved to request the government of India to depute a constitutional expert to give a legal and constitutional framework to the objectives of its resolutions.⁹¹ The resolutions of the State Assembly for Sikkim's participation in the political institution of a separate country of India and framing of a new constitution for Sikkim by India indicate Assembly's intention for merger. Accordingly, at the instance of the Chogyal, the government of India deputed G.R.Rajagopal, former Secretary in the Ministry of Law, Government of India, to prepare a draft

constitution for Sikkim, called Sikkim Bill. The draft constitution which was ready by June 20, 1974, provided for a unique division of powers intending to maintain India's legitimate control over the affairs of Sikkim. Under the proposed Sikkim Bill the Chief Executive, who was the appointee of the government of India, was the chief administrative head in Sikkim with the responsibility to ensure total compliance with any decision taken or orders or directions issued by the government of India in relation to Sikkim.⁹²

The Assembly adopted the draft constitution unanimously but the Chogyal was constrained to accept the status inferior to that of the Chief Executive in a country of his own. He also opposed the Sikkim Assembly's request for participation in India's political and economic institutions. The Chogyal refused to give his assent to the Bill and even contradicted the statement that he had ever agreed to accept the draft constitution earlier.⁹³ He was of the opinion that "the draft constitution violated the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 under which Sikkim had its separate identity and international personage as a protectorate of India."⁹⁴ In his communication to the government of India, the Chogyal firmly maintained that Sikkim had never been a part of India geographically, ethnically or racially.⁹⁵ The Chogyal contended that the three basic principles, which he considered important, should be included in the proposed Sikkim Bill of 1974 namely (1) the establishment of a fully responsible democratic government; (2) safeguarding of the legitimate rights and responsibilities of the government of India; and (3) the preservation of separate identity and internal autonomy of Sikkim.⁹⁶ The Chogyal feared that the Chief Executive who being the nominee of the Government of India and responsible to it could not be impartial in his functioning whenever the interests of the two countries were involved. Though genuine the fear might be, a spate of statements published by him in foreign press embarrassing India perhaps crippled him in winning favour of the government of India to come to terms.

The conservative pro-Chogyal elements like the Sikkim National Party and the association of the Lamas, called Denzong Lhade Tsogpa, had lost much of their organizational strength since the end of 1960s. The enhancement in the demand for democracy and popular government during this time, made them

apprehensive of the fate of the Chogyal and the status of Sikkim as a Buddhist state. Some prominent members of the Denzong Lhade Tsogpa tried to influence the people on the need for protecting the status of Sikkim. They also appealed to the Buddhist Association of Calcutta and other parts of India to use their influence on the government of India so that the status of Sikkim could be protected.⁹⁷ Some members of the Sikkim National Party too formed an ad-hoc committee to request the constitutional expert for introducing safeguard measures in the interest of the Bhutia and Lepcha communities in the proposed constitution. They also urged upon the concerned authorities to carry out census of the Bhutia-Lepcha population in order to counter the false propaganda that their number in Sikkim was only a few thousand and demanded continuation of the 'Parity formula' as a basis for seat distribution in the Assembly, safeguards against the influx of the Nepalis and others from outside Sikkim, preservation of distinct identity of Sikkim and the Bhutia-Lepcha communities etc.⁹⁸

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee was relentless in his effort for seeking Chogyal's approval to the Sikkim Bill, 1974. On June 28, 1974, the Assembly endorsed the Bill for the second time and issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the Chogyal for his assent to the Bill. Again on June 30, 1974, he urged the Chogyal "to come to reason and respond to the 48-hour ultimatum for the promulgation of the Sikkim Government Bill, 1974".⁹⁹ On July 1, 1974, the Chogyal returned to Gangtok and finally agreed to give assent to the Bill. The Assembly was reconvened on 3 July but the Chogyal did not attend the emergency session. His message was read out by the Chief Executive which stated that "the clause 30 of the Bill, instead of safeguarding Sikkim's separate identity under the Treaty of 1950, would badly affect it".¹⁰⁰ Under Chapter VI, article 30 of the Sikkim Bill 1974 states, "For speedy development of Sikkim the social, economic and political fields the Government of Sikkim may (1) request the Government of India to include the planned development of Sikkim within the ambit of the Planning for the economic and social development of India and to appropriately associate officials from Sikkim in such work; (2) request the Government of India to provide facilities for students from Sikkim in institutions for higher learning and for the employment of

people from Sikkim in the public services of India (including All India Services), at par with those available to citizens of India; and (3) seek participation and representation for the people of Sikkim in the political institutions of India. On July 4, 1974, the Chogyal gave his assent to the Sikkim Bill without modifying the relevant clause of the Sikkim Bill over which he had reservation.

The Government of Sikkim Act, 1974 was finally passed upholding the legal status of Assembly formed as a result of the elections held in April 1974, as the first Assembly duly constituted under this Act. Later, the cabinet made two formal requests to the government of India to provide representation for the people of Sikkim in Indian Parliament and to merge Sikkim with India.

After detailed and careful study of the request the Union Cabinet on August, 29, 1974, took a crucial decision to accord Sikkim a status of an "Associated States" of India. Accordingly the Constitution (Thirty-fifth Amendment) Act 1974 was passed in the Parliament on September 3, 1974, to provide legal constitutional framework to Sikkim as an "Associated State" of India by inserting article 2A and X Schedule in the Constitution. In another development the Sikkim Assembly on April 10, 1975, passed a resolution abolishing the institution of the Chogyal and declaring Sikkim as a constituent part of India. A referendum was conducted on April 14, 1975, and the people's verdict went in favour of the Assembly's resolution for merger. In fact the political situation was such that the people had to choose between the Chogyal and Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa, the symbols representing monarchy and democracy respectively. The mandate favouring Kazi was meant for the institutionalization of democracy in Sikkim. The government of India was apprised personally by the Chief Minister, Kazi L.D. Khangsarpa, about the verdict of the referendum on April 16 & 17, 1975 and urged for taking necessary action. The Lok Sabha, accordingly, passed the Constitution (Thirty-sixth Amendment) Bill on April 23, 1975, to include Sikkim as the 22nd State of the Indian Union. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on April 26. On May 16, 1975, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed gave his assent to the Thirty-sixth Constitutional Amendment Bill and with it Sikkim became the twenty-second state of India.

Article 371F was inserted in the constitution of India to provide and preserve political, social and cultural distinctiveness of Sikkim. The President appointed Mr.B.B.Lal, formerly the Chief Executive of Sikkim, as the first Governor of Sikkim who then administered the oath of office to the first Chief Minister, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa, and to his four other cabinet colleagues.

Thus, in the post-merger scenario the executive authority was vested in the Governor who was an appointee of the President of India. The Chief Minister along with the Council of Minister became the real ruler of the State Government. The State Secretariat headed by the Chief Secretary and other Secretaries taken from the Indian Administrative Service, was established. All the four districts were put under the District Collectors drawn from the Indian Administrative Service. The office of the Development Commissioner continued with an objective to push through development projects and planning in close collaboration with the heads of several other departments.

The uniformity of the procedure in politico-administrative structure, including the system of election, was lacking in Sikkim since the beginning. Earlier, the franchise system was discriminatory in nature. By amending the Representation of the People Act, 1950 the erstwhile communal voting system was removed but by reserving seats in the Assembly on ethnic ground led to perpetual ethnic division, competition and confrontation among the communities. The political parties though secular in constitution, could not prevent themselves from becoming the parties of their respective ethnic communities. Even though they fought the elections on the party basis, their share in the government was based heavily on ethnic consideration.¹⁰¹ Parity formula was continued as the principal basis for distribution of seats in the Assembly between the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali population, including old rules favouring the erstwhile ruling sections of the Sikkimese population. Thus, though the office of the Chogyal was abolished much of the schemes designed by him continued, including his cherished idea that the government should be carried on equally by the two major communities-the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalis respectively¹⁰², irrespective of the fact that the constitution of India justifies rule of the majority.

Economy of Sikkim:

Like other Himalayan states the economy of Sikkim has been basically agrarian in character based on terrace farming system. The Bhutias, who were mainly traders, and the Lepchas who made poor farmers, the agricultural economy is the contribution of industrious Nepalis who by virtue of historical antecedents had acquired immense knowledge on farming. The topography of the state of Sikkim, however, is such that even in 1991 hardly 16 per cent of the total land was put under operational holding. As such control of agricultural land has been the principal means to wealth, stability and power and, thus, a prime factor in determining social relationship.

Traditionally, the Chogyal, including members of the royal family, was the sole owner of lands and, obviously, it was not considered source of State revenue system. Historically speaking, during 1740's Rabden Sharpa, a Tibetan monk who accompanied Phuntsog Namgyal II from Tibet and served as regent to the young king for five years, introduced a system of crude form of assessment and collection of revenue, called Zolung, to be collected in kinds (grain and wine) or cash although the actual rate of duty on trade is unknown. The ryot was to pay a basketful of rice and a rupee annually during the normal time and during extraordinary situation, like war, the payment was to be as much as possible.¹⁰³ The economy was possibly a self-sufficient agricultural system with little surplus though detail information about the state of economy is not available. The notion that there was limited agricultural surplus can be deduced from the evidence that Sikkim was not a prosperous kingdom. The condition of the peasantry during this period cannot be accurately ascertained. However, the incidents of revolt by Lepcha and Limboo peasants at Rabdentse and Pemayangtse during the late 18th century are indicative of presence of peasant's discontent.

A new system of assessment and collection of revenue was introduced in 1988 by John Claude White, the first political officer of Sikkim with an objective to enhance the revenue of the government. He along with Phodong Lama and Khangsa Dewan facilitated some Nepalis of Darjeeling, especially Laximidas Pradhan and his uncle Keshab Narayan Pradhan, to get the thikadarship for

cultivation and mining, as the Bhutias were averse to digging soil for their religious belief. By 1913 the family members of Laximidas Pradhan could be found all over Sikkim. Some important members of Laximidas's family were Rai Saheb Lambodar Pradhan, Rai Saheb Laximi Naryan Pradhan, Suriaman Pradhan, Dalbahadur Pradhan, Ratnabahadur Pradhan, Sherbahadur Pradhan.¹⁰⁴ They also operated a number of copper mines like Tuk Khani near Turuk in South Sikkim, Rinchi Khani in Rinchingpong in West Sikkim, Bhotang Khani near Rangpoo in East Sikkim, Pachey Khani near Rhenock in East Sikkim and Rathok Khani in Manthang in South Sikkim.¹⁰⁵ The family is also credited for minting coins in Sikkim.

By the beginning of the twentieth century Sikkim witnessed a steady change in the land holding pattern and collection of revenue. Out of a total of 104 estates in Sikkim 15 estates were managed by the Maharaja as Private Estate and were divided into 62 revenue blocks, Monasteries had 5 Estates consisting of 38 revenue blocks, 13 estates were under Managers appointed on commission by the Durbar and the rest 71 estates were with the Kazis and Thikadars.¹⁰⁶ Altogether there were 71 landlords, of whom 13 were Lamas, 21 were Kazis and 37 Thikadars.¹⁰⁷ Within their territorial jurisdiction the landlords enjoyed certain degree of civil and administrative power, including magisterial power.

The land at the block level was further distributed among some people called Bustiwallas and Mandals who became the first intermediaries between the Kazis and ryots. The second type of intermediaries was the Kazis and Thikadars between the Mandals and Bustiwallas, and the Chogyal. The difference between the Mandals and Bustiwallas depended on the area of land they held. A Bustiwal could hold 20 acres of land whereas 30 acres was fixed for the Mandals.¹⁰⁸ They, however, did not usually cultivate the land by themselves but further leased out to tenants, known variously as Adhiadars, Kootidars, Chakhureys and Pakhureys, under certain conditions. The right of the Bustiwallas was hereditary and transferable.¹⁰⁹ The Kazis and Thikadars were to assess the land revenue to be paid by the tenants and the Bustiwallas and Mandals were responsible for collection of revenue from the tenant fixed at the time of commencement of lease

and deposition to the Kazis and Thikadars who in their turn paid a fixed amount to the State treasury.¹¹⁰ Tenants like Chakhurey and Pakhurey were found in Monastery Estates. Besides tilling the land, one member of the tenant was to render compulsory labour daily in the households of individual lama or the monastery.

From the management point of view, monastery estates were grouped under two types - Private Estate like Rumtek and Phodong, and Udor Tsosum like Pemiongtsse, Relang, Tashiding and Phensang. The revenues collected through the block mandals was to be deposited in the monastery concerned to be used for the maintenance of gompas and religious performances in the monasteries. The mandals would not get commission for their services but were exempted from payment of land revenue for the land they held as their personal holdings.¹¹¹ The monasteries under Udor Tsosum also collected rents of various types directly through the respective block mandals and maintained settlement record.

Regarding the Private Estates of the Maharaja, his own agency collected revenue from 18 blocks while the revenues of the remaining 44 blocks was to be collected by the government through respective district officers and deposited in the Private Estate account after deducting 7 per cent Mandals' commission and 10 per cent supervision charges. However, on cardamom khazanas the 7 per cent mandals' commission was not to be deducted.¹¹² At present the sales tax from the traders located within Private Estates are collected by the department of Income tax and Sales Tax to be refunded to the Private Estate after deducting 10 per cent as supervision charges.

The lessesse landlord system introduced by J.C.White proved so successful that in 1889 land revenue constituted as high as 67 per cent of the total revenue of Sikkim.¹¹³ The growth in economy led to competition and social confrontation, and in 1897 restriction on transfer of Bhutia-Lepcha land to others, including the Nepalis, was imposed. In 1917 the land prohibition law was redefined as Revenue Order No. 1. Apart from this, inequality regarding payment of revenue also prevailed. For the same amount of land the Bhutias and Lepchas used to pay less than the Nepalis. The rate of House Tax between the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali

subjects was also unequal, i.e. Nepalis used to pay Rs. 6 while it was Rs. 2 for the Bhutia-Lepcha. The new revenue policy benefited the Kazis and Thikadars immensely but the condition of the tenants deteriorated further due to the presence of intermediaries and their extortionist behavior, besides insecurity of tenure. Correction measure was introduced in 1925 by making the provision of collection of revenues directly by the collectors but its effect on the condition of the tenant was marginal. An economic reform was urgently needed. In 1949, after the democratic movement for greater civil rights, the lessee system was abolished without disturbing the Private estates and the Estates of the Monasteries.

The best view of the socio-economic conditions of the people of Sikkim under the feudalistic regime of the Chogyal can be found by referring to the document entitled 'A Few Facts About Sikkim State' written by Tashi Tshering in 1947. The document reads, "The landlords are vested with magisterial powers in both civil and criminal matters. They are also empowered to register documents for the sale or transfer of landed properties. There are no effective checks on these powers and the landlords are free to abuse them for their own gains. The more fine a landlord can impose, the larger his share of spoils, for he receives one-half of the collection as his fees and the other half goes to the State. A grabbing landlord has no difficulty in dispossessing an uncompromising ryot of his cherished possession, be it a paddy field or a herd of cattle. Most of the landlords live away from the estates and their powers are exercised by ignorant and rapacious underlings who have no scruples about filling their own pockets besides extracting as much as they can for their masters."

The document then highlights the form of oppression under forced labour (Jharlangi), which was rampant in Sikkim. "There are various forms of forced labour to which the ryots are subjected. About twenty years ago, a notification was said to have been issued by the State, based on International Conventions announcing the abolition of forced labour. This notification was never explained to the ryots and the practice was never stopped, let alone abolished. It is carried on to this day....Forced labour with minimum, often without any compensation, is usually exacted by the landlords when cultivating their extensive, mostly ill-

gotten, private fields and when harvesting their crops...such exactions of late have become manifold on account of the ever-increasing farming and gardening interests of the landlords, which allow the ryots scarcely any time to attend to their own affairs. Most of the influential landlords...live in Gangtok. Their estates may be two or three days journey away. From there the ryots have to come all the way to Gangtok and serve their landlords in turn in various menial capacities. The ryots get no wages or compensations for such services, and they are lucky if they escape cruelties.”

Those landlords whose estates were in and around Gangtok “ the forced labour is often requisitioned on behalf of the State for carrying loads across the passes (over 15000 feet) into Tibetan territory.....What he will earn as wages under the prescribed rates for forced labour, would barely suffice to buy his meager meal for the journey to and from. The landlord bleeds him to the limit and sends his own private pack mules to carry the loads, for which he is doubly recompensed. A greedy landlord often seizes upon his chance of making further easy money and calls for double the number of men required.”

This state-requisitioned forced labour was commonly known as “Kalo Bhari” (black loads) in Sikkim. The document continues, “Kalo Bhari was the name given to a special consignment compactly packed in black tarpaulin, which gave the name. Huge quantities of these loads were transported overland to China via Tibet during the later part of the war (World War II). Such was the demand for transport for this purpose that the wages offered reached unprecedented heights. The cupidity of the landlords rose in unison and they stooped to swindle. They falsely requisitioned ‘force labour on the authority of the State’ to carry these loads. A very large number of these loads belonged to private concerns..... The landlords charged the private concerns the highest rates, paid the ryots the prescribed rates, and pocketed the rest....Such blatant deception could not, however, remain concealed for long. When they learnt about it, the victims of the swindle approached the powers- that-be for redress. As the culprits were all ‘high born’ Kazis, the matter was hushed up, and the aggrieved ryots were sent away with the facile advice to ‘let bygones be bygones and to forgive and forget.’ The

publication of the article incited peasants' resentment which resulted in the peasants' movement of 1949 for economic reforms.

After merger, the Lhendup Dorjee Government constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. N.B.Khatiwada to look into the problems of land revenue and to recommend measures for land reform in Sikkim. Among others, the Committee in its report recommended for fair rent and heritable rights of tenancy, non-eviction of tenants and allocation of at least 3.5 acres of land under unavoidable circumstances, fixation of upper ceiling at 16 acres on agricultural holdings, maintenance of land records of Private Estates by the government and abolition of Private Estates and the Monastery Estates. The government responded by enacting the Sikkim Agricultural Land Ceiling and Reform Act, 1977. But contrary to the Khatiwada Committee recommendation the Act of 1977 came out with some striking differences. The Act did not abolish the Monastery Estates but classified the monasteries into 'Group A' Schedule and 'Group B' Schedule and fixed the ceilings as 60 acres and 25 acres respectively. Similarly, for an adult unmarried person or only surviving member of a family the ceiling was six and a half acres while a family with a minimum of five members was to have twelve and a half acres as the upper ceiling. An addition of two acres was allowed for each person in excess of five but not to exceed twenty and a half acres in aggregate.

The Land Reform Act, 1977 had many loopholes. The ceiling was applicable only on agricultural holdings. And since the entire land records of the Estates were in the hands of Private Estates Organization manipulation for showing agricultural land as non-agricultural one was very much possible. Moreover, there were problems regarding distribution of vested land and land confiscated by the government in excess of ceiling due to the existence of Revenue Order No. 1 of 1917 which prohibited alienation of land to other communities other than the Bhutias and Lepchas.¹¹⁴ In 1989 two separate Bills, namely the Sikkim Alienation of Land (Regulation) Bill, 1989 and the Sikkim Transfer of Land (Regulation) Bill, 1989 were passed by the State Legislature with an objective to restrict alienation of land by the members of Bhutia and

Lepcha communities of Sikkimese origin to others and also by Sikkimese in favour of non-Sikkimese. However, the Governor, Shri S.K. Bhatnagar, reserved both the Bills for further consultation with the President of India. It is to be noted here that the regulation in question, i.e. Revenue Order No. 1, is applicable even in cases that could conceivably be in the larger interest of the State in terms of providing employment opportunities. At present the tribal land can be obtained on lease after obtaining permission from the State government or the State can take over a tribal land by paying compensation.

According to the report published by the Department of Land Revenue, the percentage of land owned by the Nepalis in 1983 was 59 per cent of cultivable land while the land shared by the Bhutias and Lepchas in the same year was 20 per cent each.¹¹⁵ It is important to mention here that though the Nepalis own the largest amount of cultivable land, the Bhutias have the highest amount of excess land. Thus the detection of excess land and its acquisition is likely to escalate tension with political overtones.¹¹⁶

Table 1.0: Communitywise Distribution of Land in Sikkim – 1976-83
(Area in Hectares)

Communities	Total Paddy field (Area %)	Total Dry land (Area %)	Wasteland (Area %)	Cardamom (Area %)	Total Cultivable land (Area %)
Bhutia	21.12.	16.13	24.18	27.05	20.32
Lepcha	14.97	--	17.53	32.72	20.38
Nepali	57.19	64.95	62.00	22.37	58.66

Source: Land Record Section, Department of Land Revenue, Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok.

The distribution of operational land holding in Sikkim reflects unequal distribution pattern. The marginal landholders, who form the lowest type of landholders and represent about 50. percent of landholdings, possessed 10.3 percent of the total operational land area in 1990-91. Their concentration was highest in the East district, both in terms of number of holdings (56 per cent) and area (12.8 per cent). In comparison to this, farmers with large holdings, i.e. above 10 hectares, were about 2.3 percent of the landholdings, but owned 20.2 percent

of the operational area. The North district had the highest number of large farmers who, with 5 per cent of the operational holdings, owned over 30 percent of the operated land in the district. Except in the East district, land holdings and operated area were more or less evenly distributed among the small and semi-medium farmers.

Inequality regarding land distribution also prevailed among the Scheduled Caste farmers. The large farmers, who consisted of less than 1 per cent (0.4 per cent) of the total Scheduled Caste farmers, possessed nearly 10 per cent of the operational area. The marginal farmers, on the other, who constituted of 70 per cent of Scheduled Castes farmers, operated 27.2 per cent of the operated area. The situation among the small farmers, i.e. 19 per cent, was quite encouraging with almost 28 per cent of the operated area.

**Table 1.1: District-wise and Size/Class-wise
Distribution of Landholdings - 1991**

Category	North Holdings		East Holdings		South Holdings		West Holdings	
	No. %	Area %	No. %	Area %	No. %	Area %	No. %	Area %
Marginal	49.0	8.5	56.0	12.8	44.3	9.7	46.0	10
Small	10.0	5.1	22.0	22.0	25.0	18.5	21.0	17
Semi Medium	18.0	20.0	14.0	23.0	18.0	24.0	20.0	28
Medium	17.0	36.0	6.4	23.0	10.0	26.0	11.2	31
Large	5.3	30.0	1.3	17.0	3.0	22.0	2.1	14
Total in Hectares.	4,942	14,407	19,666	32,936	12,548	28,575	13,971	31,088

Source: Sikkim Human Development Report, 2001, Govt. of Sikkim Publication.

Among the Scheduled Tribe farmers, the distribution of land was more or less in equilibrium. The percentage of the marginal farmers among the Scheduled Tribes was relatively low and the Medium and Semi-Medium farmers together held more than 35 per cent of the operated holdings and over 57 per cent of the operated land. But, in this case too, the large farmers, who consisted of less than 5 per cent, held over 28 per cent of the land. This is indicative of the fact that the

land reform measures have been ineffective and the traditional pattern of land holding is still persisting.

Uncertain land tenure rights, insignificant public investment and over-dependence on obsolete technologies characterized the agriculture sector in pre-merger period. However, different land reform measures, agricultural credit and marketing, and provisions of inputs like better quality seeds, fertilizers, and better irrigation along with extensive plan outlay have induced a new vigour in the sphere of agriculture. From subsistence farming, agriculture now has become an economically viable venture. The total food grain production in the State has increased from nearly 62,000 tonnes in 1980-81 to 103,000 tonnes in 1997-98 to nearly 111,000 tonnes in 1999-2000.¹¹⁷ However, in 2000-01 the food grain production remained more or less unchanged at 111,000 tonnes.

Table 1.2: Land Distribution within the SC & ST Population (1991)

Category of Holdings	Scheduled Castes		Share in		Scheduled Tribes		Share in	
	No.	Area Hect.	No.	Area Hect.	No.	Area Hect.	No.	Area Hect.
Marginal	1366	547	70.0	27.2	7073	3425	42.3	7.2
Small	370	558	19.0	27.7	2901	4384	17.4	9.2
Semi Medium	164	468	8.4	23.3	3421	10497	20.5	22.0
Medium	43	247	2.2	12.3	2487	15962	14.9	33.5
Large	7	191	0.4	9.5	827	13362	4.9	28.1
All	1950	2011	100	100	16709	47630	100	100

Source: Sikkim Human Development Report, 2001, Govt. of Sikkim Publication.

Developments in the field of horticulture, floriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries etc. are also worth mentioning. Horticulture production includes fruits vegetables, potatoes, other tubers, cardamom, ginger and turmeric. By and large this sector is making a steady progress. In 1995-96 the total horticulture production was 92,700 tonnes which during the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) has risen to 1, 31,000 tonnes.¹¹⁸ The South district reigns number one position in terms of horticulture production. Sikkim also has great variety of flowers. Efforts are being

made in recent past to augment quality production of cut flowers and bulbs along with the infrastructural facilities. A model floriculture garden has been set up at Namchi and an orchid centre at Pakyong.

Animal husbandry as a traditional occupation forms an integral part of the household economy of the State. Almost every family earns income through rearing of some livestock. It is estimated that about 50 per cent of Sikkim's total area is used for livestock farming. In the last 20 years the livestock products has risen but has not been able to meet the local demands. Fish production has remained stagnant at 140 tonnes since 1997 though the revenue earned has increased from 0.48 lakhs in 1997-98 to 0.76 in 1999-2000.

The first ever industrial development planning under the Seven Year Development Plan was initiated in 1954 as a result of the understanding reached between the Prime Minister Nehru and the Chogyal. For providing stability to rural economy, the cottage industry was given first priority. The Second Five Year Plan, however, stressed emphasis on medium scale industries like tea industry. These industries were given subsidy up to 15 per cent of the total investment. The upper limit of the grant was fixed at Rs. 5 lakhs. Apart from this subsidy on transport, on interest, on power, pre-operative expenses and facilities for getting machines on hire purchases were also provided. The Directorate of Industries and Industrial Training Institute were set up in 1976 to monitor trend of progress and provided adequate training for industrial purposes. In the following year (1977) a financial institution, called Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (SIDICO) was established with two-pronged objectives- a) to work as a composite developmental corporation and b) to provide financial assistance to small and medium scale industries. It provides loan up to Rs. 90 lakhs for individual units apart from granting loan for expansion, diversification and modernization. The loans are sanctioned for: (a) Industrial activity- manufacturing, processing or preservation of goods; b) Hotels and Restaurants; c) Tourism and related activities; d) Transportation of passengers and goods; e) Service sector- like computer and software development; (f) Diagnostic Centre, Nursing Home, Medical Equipments, Pathological, Clinical laboratories, Health

Care Center etc; (g) Assembling, Repairing or Packing any articles with the aid of machine or power; (h) Such other activities which may be made eligible by IDBI/SIDBI from time to time.¹¹⁹

Besides, the Institution also provide loans upto 50 thousand to the artisans and craftsman, upto 10 lakhs for women, upto 15 lakhs for ex-servicemen, widows of ex-servicemen and disabled persons, upto 10 lakhs with 1 per cent service charge for people having technical skill and to purchase vehicles to ply as taxis. The interest rate is fixed at 12 per cent, 13.5 per cent and 19 per cent depending upon the amount of money loaned.¹²⁰ Loans are also granted by ST/SC/OBC Development Corporation Ltd., established in 1996, for setting up Poultry Farming, Piggery etc. upto the limit of Rs. 30 lakhs.

Table 1.3: Registered Small Scale Industries / Tiny Units in Sikkim (1999)

Period	East	North	South	West	SSI/Tiny Units Total
1975/76 - 79/80	7	X	2	1	10
1980/81 - 84/85	7	X	4	2	13
1985/86 - 89/90	56	1	14	9	80
1990/91 - 94/95	84	2	18	11	115
1995/96 - 98/99	60	X	13	6	79

Source: Government of Sikkim, Department of Industry, Gangtok.

Under the Sixth Five Year Plan emphasis was given to the Small Scale Industries and Cottage Industries. Accordingly, District Industrial Centers were set up at Jorethang and Gangtok to provide information and guidance and to work as a facilitator.¹²¹ In 1983 Sikkim Industrial Licensing Act was promulgated for regulating a systematic development of Industries. This Act no longer exists today.

The industry sector in Sikkim is still at a nascent stage. According to 1992 data the industry contributed a negligible one percent towards employment generation. Most importantly many small-scale industries are going sick. In recent study of PSU performance in Sikkim, the Indian Institute of Cost and Management Studies and Research (INDSEARCH) recommended for the closure

of four public sector units like Sikkim Mining Corporation, Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Ltd., State Bank of Sikkim and Sikkim Nationalized Transport.¹²² Sikkim flour mills and the Chandmari Workshop are also facing losses. However, among the consumer enterprises Sikkim Jewels Ltd. and Sikkim Time Corporation are profit-making units. The factors inhibiting industrial development have been physical remoteness, difficult terrain, lack of raw materials and markets, and high transport and marketing cost. Under the New Industrial Policy, 2007 the government of Sikkim has given highest priority for setting up eco-friendly industries particularly agro-horticulture and floriculture, animal husbandry and dairy products, minor forest based products, handlooms and handicrafts, precision oriented high value low volume products, information technology, hydropower, tea, health, education and tourism.¹²³

In view of the pristine panoramic surroundings, diverse culture and religious practices of the people, the tourism industry has been considered having a huge potential to expand availing income generation opportunities not only for those who are directly engaged but also to those who are engaged in allied sectors like hoteliers, transporters, retailers and those associated with telecommunications. Every year the visitors to Sikkim are increasing. For instance, in 1997 about 120821 domestic and 8812 foreign tourists visited Sikkim. In 1998 it was 120103 domestic and 8985 foreign; in 1999 the number was 135273 and 9821 respectively. In 2000 there was a slight increase in domestic tourists (140151) but the number of foreign tourists had fallen (i.e. 8794) as compared to preceding year. This trend continued in 2001 also (i.e. 144278 domestic and 7757 foreign). In 2002, about 136506 domestic and 8539 foreign tourists visited the state as compared to 133247 domestic and 6947 foreign in 2003. The trend is marked by constant ups and downs but as compared to pre-1994-95 era the flow of tourists is increasing.

Similarly, a steady progress has been seen in the field of tea production, herbal medicine and fruit processing. A better farming method, modern technology, improved transportation and distribution would prove blessing to these sectors. The Temi Tea Estate has already become a household name in many

a house in India and abroad. The climate is suitable for tea cultivation and the experience of the Sang-Martam area needs to be utilized for future expansion of the tea industry. Production of drugs and herbal medicine may prove equally effective and a viable economic activity to venture. The reoperationalization of the fruit-processing unit at Singtam and establishment of a new unit at Ravangla have greatly benefited the local farmers. Under the new industrial policy (2007), the sectors like floriculture and horticulture are expected to do well.

The work opportunities in Sikkim seem to be precarious. According to the census data between 1981 and 1991 the absolute number of workers have increased from 153,000 to 169,000 while the percentage of total workers to the total population have decreased from 48.4 to 41.7 which is among the highest level of decline in India.¹²³ The income distribution, at the same time, is also very much skewed. Despite high levels of per capita income, the proportion of population living below the poverty line has gone up from 36 per cent in 1987-88 to 41 per cent in 1993-94. In the same year about 8 per cent of the urban people and 45 per cent of the rural population were living below poverty line.¹²⁴ The benefits of excellent growth rate have not percolated down to the people at the lower rungs of the economic ladder.

The Marwaries and other trading families from the plains control the major urban commercial establishments. Being a non-industrial State, the government depends on import from outside creating minimal income generation and employment opportunities beside beneficiaries parking their funds outside the State. Thus, the public sector has been the propelling force as far as employment is concerned. In per capita terms, Sikkim has the highest public sector employment in the country. There are over 11,000 employees on the muster roll in various government offices.¹²⁵ Almost half of total government expenditure gets exhausted on wages and salaries (including pensions) and interest payments. To reduce the burden, the Government of Sikkim, under the new economic policy, has issued directives to private investors to provide compulsory employment to local candidates in their establishments.

Table No. 1.4: Community/Caste-wise total numbers of employees - 2002

Community/Caste	Regular	Work-Charged	Ad-hoc	Muster Roll	Others/PSU	Total
Bahun	2578	166	20	771	115	3650
Bhujel	63	8	1	50	7	129
Bhutia	4275	229	40	1070	361	5975
Chettri	2674	286	18	1484	218	4680
Damai	242	28	3	180	11	464
Gurung	1385	107	18	895	190	2595
Jogi	5	2	-	7	-	14
Kami	761	95	3	479	66	1404
Lepcha	1902	72	19	789	171	2953
Majhi	7	-	-	9	3	19
Mangar	436	22	3	274	41	776
Pradhan	1394	127	8	428	54	2011
Rai	2629	172	20	1229	346	4396
Sarki	17	2	-	27	3	49
Sherpa	610	33	4	435	76	1158
Subba (Limboo)	1328	63	12	827	230	2460
Sunuwar	82	16	-	88	100	286
Tamang	1350	78	14	705	105	2252
Thami	5	-	-	2	-	7
Others	1936	72	15	240	-	1723
Total	23139	1578	198	9989	2097	37001

Source: Sikkim – A Statistical Profile-2004-05, Government of Sikkim.

Demographic Profile:

Sikkim's strategic geographical position has been the major determining factor in the demographic composition. Its territorial contiguity with four international borders viz. Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and India along with intermittent military expeditions from different directions in the past have brought about a kind of cultural and demographic upheaval upon which the present day Sikkim, as a pluri-cultural society, is embedded. In the absence of documentary evidences it is difficult to come to a conclusion about the original inhabitants of Sikkim but it is generally acknowledged that Lepchas and some other tribes which now constitute Nepalis were among the early inhabitants of the State. At present Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis forms the three major communities of Sikkim. The socio-cultural interactions among the three communities have rendered a kind of a

“Salad Bowl” culture, yet maintenance of separate identity and social distinctiveness have remained groups’ priority.

During the Chogyals’ rule the maintenance of the Bhutia domination, whether cultural or political, was emphasized. The Bhutia rulers had always seen to it that no other community rise to such formidable a position as to pose a threat to their power. They had been able to subjugate the Lepchas quite conveniently through the myth of blood brotherhood, religious conversion, matrimonial alliances and appointment of some prominent Lepcha figures to formal governmental capacities. The Mangars were driven away to the south and the west, and Limboos and other Kirati tribes had been contained to a significant extent. The establishment of the British predominance, effectively from 1817, had been the beginning of erosion of Bhutia hegemony and also the beginning of large scale Nepali settlement. There were incidents of clashes between the rulers of Sikkim and the British India mainly due to the involvement of Tibetan interest over Sikkim, but the settlement process continued unabated notwithstanding the use of repressive and regulative measures by the Bhutia rulers. The Bhutia rulers sought to counter-balance the increasing Nepali settlers by encouraging settlement of the Tibetans and Bhutanese in Sikkim.

The earliest unofficial information regarding the population of Sikkim can be obtained from the writings of C.R. Markham. According to him there were about 7000 population in Sikkim in 1840 in which the Lepchas were 3010 (43 per cent), 1995 were Limboos (28.5 per cent) and Bhutias were also 1995 (28.5 per cent).¹²⁶ However, it is difficult to ascertain whether Markham was accounting for the whole of Sikkim or a particular tract or region. The first ever official census was conducted in February 1891 according to which the total population of Sikkim was shown as 30,498 persons including 5762 Lepchas, 4,894 Bhutias and various Nepali communities / groups, including Tsongs/Limboos, taken together were registered as 18,955 persons.

The Rais and Khambus, though represent a single community, were enumerated separately. If the two communities are merged together, as they should have been, then the Rais will become the largest among the Nepalis

followed by the Limboos (11.0 %) and Gurungs (9.6 %).¹²⁷ In 1909 J.C. White unofficially mentioned the population of the Lepchas as 6000, Bhutias as little over 6000 and the Paharias/Nepalis as nearly as 50,000.¹²⁸ The figures do not provide a precise picture of the population yet it clearly indicates that there had been a steady growth in the population of the Nepalis and the Bhutias.

A cursory look at the decadal population growth rate of Sikkim gives us an inconsistent result. During 1901-1911 the growth rate had been the highest while in 1911-21 there had been a fall of 6,199 persons. The reasons behind the fall could be either because of the influenza of 1917 or the First World War or the slower rate of migration as was mentioned by J.C. White in the Administrative Report of 1910-1911¹²⁹. In 1921-1961 the population of Sikkim had increased steadily but at a slower rate though the population of Nepali had fallen by 0.83 per cent in 1931-1951.¹³⁰

Table 1.5: Community-wise Distribution of Population of Sikkim – 1891.

Caste/Communities	Males	Females	Children	Total
Lepcha	2362	2399	1001	5762
Bhutia	1966	1960	968	4894
Limbu (Limboo)	1255	1159	942	3356
Gurung	1108	1047	766	2921
Murmi (Tamang)	801	778	1288	2867
Rai/Jimdar Etc.	742	691	587	2020
Khambu	726	648	589	1963
Kami	626	464	580	1670
Brahman	521	372	521	1414
Mangar	363	346	192	901
Chhetri	303	253	273	829
Newar	240	183	304	727
Darji	102	92	93	287
Slaves	124	99	103	326
Miscellaneous/ including soldiers.	350	72	99	521
Total	11589	10563	8306	30458

Source: H.H.Risley: The Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894/1993.

In 1931 census population figures of many communities like Gurung, Rai/Jimdar/Khambu, Mangar, Chhetri and Kami, had been shown 'Not Available' which undoubtedly indicate that these communities had been clubbed with 'others' for some enumeration difficulties. Table 1.6 gives us the following details of composition of population of Sikkim.

In 1951, statistics based on religious affiliation presented an overall increased population of 1,37,725 persons with 39,397 Buddhists (largely the Lepchas 13,625 and the Bhutias 15,626) and 97,863 Hindus, including 15,991 Limboos. In 1951 Sikkim did not have urban areas in the sense that there was no municipality, corporation, notified town area, engagement of about 75 per cent people in non-agricultural occupation and others which generally required for an area to be classified as urban areas.

Table 1.6: Community-wise Distribution of Population , 1931

Community / Caste	Total Persons
Lepcha	13,030
Bhutias of Sikkim	11,070
Bhutias of Tibet	560
Bhutias of Nepal (Sherpa)	3,645
Limboo	10,536
Gurungs	N.A.
Murmi / Tamang	7,617
Rai / Jimdar	N.A.
Khambu	N.A.
Magar (Mangar)	N.A.
Newar	3,911
Brahmin	8,530
Chhetri	N.A.
Kami	N.A.
Darji / Damai	1,866
Others	49,043
Total	1,09,808

Source: Census of India, 1931.

In 1961 the total population, taken on the basis of the mother tongue spoken by at least five hundred persons, increased to 1,62,189 in which Nepalis were 88,916, 14,847 Lepchas and 47,339 Bhutias including the Bhutia unspecified and

6,690 Tibetans. Since the speakers of Gurung, Newar and Mangar languages were not available, they must have been amalgamated with the Nepali speakers.

Table 1.7: Mother Tongue-wise Distribution of Population - 1961.

Mother Tongue	No of Speakers
Nepali	74,319
Lepcha	14,847
Sikkim Bhutia	36,577
Bhutia Unspecified	10,762
Tibetan	6,690
Limboo	4,955
Sherpa	3,997
Rai	2,965
Tamang	1,423
Subba	1,257
Others	4,397
TOTAL	1,62,189

Source: Census of India, 1961, Vol. XVI, West Bengal and Sikkim Part 1-A, Book ii, Population and Society, P. 198.

In 1961 only the east district, i.e. the capital town Gangtok, was recognized as urban area having 12.08 as urban inhabitants. The East District had 85,621 persons followed by the West, South and North with 58,023, 53,185 and 13,014 persons respectively. The 1971 census once again taken on linguistic basis, had shown the total population as 2, 09,843 persons in which the Lepcha speaking people were accounted as 22,306 (10.63 %), 23,565 (11.23 %) were Bhutias and 1,34,237 (63.97%) were Nepali speakers inclusive of Limboo, Khambu/Rai, Gurung, Tamang, Sunwar, Mangar, Newar, Sherpa, Brahmin (Bahun), Chhetri, Kami, Damai etc. By 1971 North, South and West districts had been classified as urban areas with 2.5, 2.3 and 1.9 urban dwellers respectively. The East district had 19.9 per cent urban dwellers. The decennial population growth per every thousand persons in 1961-1971 was +334, +510, +162 and +0 in the North, East, South and West districts respectively.

In 1981 the total population of Sikkim was 3,16,385 persons out of which the speakers of Nepali language were 1,92,995 (61 %), the Lepchas were 22,147 (7. %), 21,514 Bhutias (6.8 %), 15,819 Limboos (5 %), 10,757 Sherpas (3.4 %),

4,240 Tibetans (1.34 %) and 48,914 others (15.46 %). The East district had been recorded as the most populated district among the four with 1,38,762 persons and a density of 145 persons per Sq. Km., followed by South (101 persons), West (64 persons) and North with meager 6 persons per Sq. Km. The North district, which is prohibited for Nepali settlement, represents 59.56 per cent (4226 Sq. Km.) of the total area of Sikkim (7096 Sq. Km.) but due to inhospitable climate, rugged and perpetually snowcapped mountain ridges makes the place unsuitable for human habitation.

Table 1.8: District-wise Distribution of Population in Sikkim - 1981

District/State	Area in Sq. Km	%	Urban	Rural	Total	%	Density per Sq. Km
North	4226	59.6	780	25,675	26,455	8.4	6
East	954	13.4	43,242	95,520	1,38,762	43.9	145
South	750	10.6	5,365	70,495	75,976	24.0	101
West	1166	16.4	1,697	73,495	75,192	23.8	64
Sikkim	7096		51,084	2,65,301	3,16,385		45

Source: District Census handbook-1981, Directorate of Census Operation, Sikkim.

The overall growth rate of population during 1971-81 has been very high in the North district which is 103.28 per cent followed by East (62.07 %), South (42.85 %) and West (29.59 %) in descending order. The increase in North district may be attributed to increasing Tibetan migration after the merger of Sikkim with India in 1975 and road construction.

The East district obviously has the highest density of population per square kilometer by virtue of being the capital of Sikkim, Gangtok, and all the major business centers like Singtam, Rangpo are located in this district.

In 1978 the Constitution (Sikkim) Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Order was promulgated according to which Damai Kami, Majhi and Sarki of Nepali castes were recognized as Scheduled Castes of Sikkim while the Lepchas and the Bhutias including Chumbipa, Dophapas, Dukpas, Kagateys, Sherpas, Tromopas, Yolmos and Tibetans were declared Scheduled Tribes of Sikkim. A separate table was included in 1981 in order to enumerate the number of SC/ST

population of Sikkim. In 1981 there were 18,281(5.78%) Scheduled Caste and 73,623 (23.27 %) Scheduled Tribes population with Scheduled Tribes having highest concentration in the North District but with 30,540 persons they were largest in the East District in terms of absolute number. The district wise distribution of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations in 1991 and 2001 are given below.

In table no. 1.9 both Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations are highest in the East district (absolute) whereas in terms of percentage and concentration of Scheduled Tribes population, the North District top the list with more than 53 percent both in 1981, 1991 and 2001. As in the earlier instances, the Scheduled Caste populations continue to be lowest in the North district whereas the Scheduled Tribe is lowest in the South district. However, the number of Scheduled tribes population in Sikkim has changed recently with the inclusion of Limboos and Tamangs in the Scheduled Tribes list of Sikkim in 2003.

Table 1.9: District-wise Distribution of SC/ST Population in Sikkim - 1991 & 2001

	1	9	9	1	2	0	0	1
District /State	SC	%	ST	%	SC	%	ST	%
North	1,111	3.55	17,301	55.38	879	2.14	21,772	53.06
East	12,482	6.99	37,632	21.09	14,277	5.82	45,321	18.49
West	4,927	5.02	19,297	19.66	5,747	4.66	23,829	19.33
South	5,564	5.64	16,671	16.91	6,262	4.76	20,483	15.57
Sikkim	24,084	5.93	90,901	22.36	27,165	5.02	1,11,405	20.61

Source: Census of India, 1991 and Sikkim Statistical Profile, 2004 -05 (DESM & E), Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok.

According to the 1991 census, the total population of Sikkim were 4, 06,457 persons of which 22.39 per cent (90,901 persons) were Scheduled Tribes and 5.93 per cent (24,084 persons) were Scheduled Castes. The decennial population growth rate of 1981-91 was 28.47 percent, which indicates a sharp fall in the decadal growth rate except in the West district where an increase of .96 per cent was registered. As usual the highest density of population was recorded in the East district (187 persons per sq.km.) followed by 131 in the South, 84 in the

West and 7 in the North. In 1991 the percentage of ethnic Bhutia to the total population was about 16 per cent (65,033), the Lepchas as 14 per cent (56,904) and the Nepalis, including the plainsmen, constituted 70 per cent (2,84,520).¹³¹

The 2001 census has shown the total population of Sikkim as 5,40,851 persons of which 2,88,484 are males and 2,52,367 are females. The density per square mile has been 76. The Scheduled Caste constituted 5.02 per cent (27,165 persons) while the Scheduled Tribes are 20.61 per cent (1,11,405). The decadal growth in 1991-2001 in the Scheduled Tribes population is 20,504 persons absolute while the Scheduled Caste population increased by meager 3,081 persons. In other words unlike the 1991 census there has been a fall in the Scheduled Caste population while the Scheduled Tribes continue to show an upward trend even in 2001.

The distribution of population in the State, reflect wide variations owing to topographical factors. The North district, which comprises of 60 per cent of the total geographical area, accounts for hardly 8 per cent population. The majority of the population of North district belongs to Scheduled Tribes, while Scheduled Castes form 4 percent only according to 1991 census. In 1971-81 the North district recorded the highest decennial increase of almost 104 per cent but has registered the lowest increase of 18 per cent in 1981-91.

Table 2.0: District-wise Distribution of Population in Sikkim- 2001

District/ State	Area in Sq. Km.	%	Urban	Rural	Total	%	Density per Sq. Km.
North	4226	59.6	1248	39,782	41,030	7.6	9
East	954	13.4	52,852	1,92,188	2,45,040	45.3	256
West	750	10.6	1,824	1,21,432	1,23,256	22.8	164
South	1,160	16.4	3,946	1,27,579	1,31,525	24.3	112
Sikkim	7,096		59,870	4,80,981	5,40,851	100.0	76

Source: Calculated from census data, 2001.

The East district is the most densely populated among the four districts of Sikkim with a density of 187 persons per square kilometer. According to 1991 census, it has less than 14 per cent of the total geographical area of the State

(13.44 Sq. Km.) but provides shelter to about 44 per cent of the total population. In 2001, the East district represented about 45.3 per cent of the total population of the State with a density of 256 persons per square kilometer. (Table no. 2.0).

Table 2.1: District-wise Decennial Change of Population, 1971-2001

District/Year	Population	Absolute increase	Percentile increase	Annual Growth Rate
NORTH				
1971	13,014	-	-	-
1981	26,455	13,441	103.28	7.35
1991	31,240	4,785	18.09	1.68
2001	41,030	9,790	23.86	2.76
EAST				
1971	85,621	-	-	-
1981	1,38,762	53,141	62.07	4.95
1991	1,78,452	39,690	28.60	2.55
2001	2,45,040	66,588	37.31	3.22
SOUTH				
1971	53,185	-	-	-
1981	75,976	22,791	42.85	3.63
1991	98,602	22,628	29.78	2.64
2001	1,31,525	32,923	33.38	2.92
WEST				
1971	58,023	-	-	-
1981	75,192	17,169	29.59	2.63
1991	98,161	22,969	30.55	2.70
2001	1,23,256	25,095	25.56	2.30

Source: Calculated from various census data available.

The study of demographic composition of the State of Sikkim is indeed a challenging one because of the fact that the population figure prior to 1891 is not an official figure. It is equally difficult to ascertain that whether figures provided by C.R.Markham is that of a particular tract or whole of Sikkim. Similarly, in the post-1951 period the community-wise census figures are not available. The census enumeration on the basis of the religion or language cannot always provide exact account of the ethnic community, least in the case of Sikkim. However, after having studied the demographic composition of the state of Sikkim since 1840 certain striking features have been noticed such as:

- a) That there has been a steady increase in the population of the Nepali community due to gradual inclusion of all other tribes, enumerated separately earlier, in the Nepali fold;
- b) That Limboos who are regarded as Nepali tribe in other parts of India and Nepal have always maintained a separate identity in Sikkim and have been enumerated in census as a separate linguistic group except in recent days;
- c) That Lepchas who constituted the single largest group in 1891 have been relegated to numerical minority with only 14 per cent of the total population in 1991 though it does not mean a fall in their absolute number;
- d) That the number of Bhutia population is also increasing substantially though not in the same proportion as the Nepali population is increasing. However, there has been a sharp fall in 1981 (21,514 persons) perhaps due to administrative callousness as the figure in 1991 has shot up to about 65,033 persons, i.e. 16 per cent of the total population.
- e) That this disproportionate rise in the population of three communities is often perceived as a bone of contention though adequate safeguards (social, political and economic) have been devised favouring the Lepcha-Bhutia communities.
- f) The population of Plainsmen is increasing since 1975 but official record is not available. According to an unconfirmed official calculation their population in Sikkim is about 50,000 persons (10 %) in 2001.

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