

P R E F A C E

In the state of Sikkim agriculture is the mainstay of the rural population which comprises about 83% of the total population. Agriculture in Sikkim is not purely crop farming. Farmers keep livestock as well. Generally animals such as cattle, goats, pigs, poultry etc. are kept by them. In upland valleys, among others, in the La-chen and La-chung of North Sikkim yaks and sheep are also reared and raised by the tribal people. As such agriculture in Sikkim is close to mixed farming.

An interesting aspect of mixed farming in La-chen and La-chung is that it was not their traditional occupation till the sixties. Mixed farming in these two valleys has been brought about by cataclysmic changes and is distinctive in its own way from the rest of the state.

Agriculture, though occupying a pivotal position in the state's economy, its planned development initiated in the sixties, gained momentum only during the Fifth Five Year Plan, i.e. after its merger with the Indian Union. It is beyond doubt that a speedy development of agriculture in Sikkim is vital for an overall development of the economy. Land reforms measures vis-a-vis suitable land use patterns and other steps for developing cropping systems and raising livestock are now being adopted. New land-use systems, such as, agro forestry, agro horticulture, silvi pastoral etc. are also introduced in the state.

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This research work aims at studying the problems and developmental changes that have taken place in agriculture and making this information available to the world at large so that people outside the state could catch a glimpse of how the small state of Sikkim, once isolated and inaccessible, has been marching ahead on the path of economic development.

It is also an attempt to delve deep into the problems and prospects of mixed farming in the two valleys of La-chen and La-chung of North Sikkim and throw light on the following aspects of the situation —

- i) To know in more details about La-chen and La-chung, the less known tribal valleys of North Sikkim.
- ii) The prime factors that have now made them switch over to mixed farming by giving up their traditional occupation of traders and herders.
- iii) Transhumance and community life in La-chen and La-chung.
- iv) How mixed farming as practised in La-chen and La-chung differs from other parts of the state.

The remarkable resilience of the people of La-chen and La-chung in adjusting themselves to the cataclysmic changes that adversely affected their economic life and their survival amidst niggardliness of nature and hostile environment provide an excellent example for the present day mankind to emulate. This

is what has fascinated me most in choosing these two valleys in my research work.

This research work of mine, if at all, will serve to be a source of reference to other research-scholars, I shall indeed feel my efforts have not been in vain.