

Chapter 8

MAJOR FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study is an ethnographic and exploratory study of the Limbus, an ethnic tribal community of Darjeeling Himalaya. In the foregoing chapters an effort has been made to sketch an account of economy, society, culture, identity and habitat of the Limbus through an extensive field work in the three Limbu villages. In this chapter the major findings of the entire study as well concluding remarks and discussion on the socio – economic conditions are described.

[I]

Major Findings

Historically, the arrival of the Limbus in Darjeeling Himalaya can be traced with the establishment of colonials' edifice and imperialism in 1835. Racially they belong to a Tibeto – Mongolioids stock and linguistically to Tibeto – Burman language group. The whole of the Eastern Himalaya was once a solitary kingdom of Limbus known as 'Limbuwan'. The political boundary of Limbuwan stretched from Arun River in the East to Teesta River in the West including Sikkim and Darjeeling. The social history of Limbu in Limbuwan is very complex. The ethnic assertions of Shah Dynasty were so powerful. They slaughtered thousands of Limbus to control Limbuwan. The new nation building process of the unleashed Gorkha ruler Prithivinarayan Shah made Limbus to flee from their *Kipat* to the unknown territories of the Eastern Himalayas. Standing in the fluid political boundary of two nation states i.e. India and Nepal Limbu got their fluid identity.

The establishment of Darjeeling as Sanatorium opened up the new avenue for the commercial exploitation of the region with virgin resources. The colonials, were far sighted they build their army reinforcement in Darjeeling and Tea plantation estates in the far flung rural areas. The coming of Limbu into the core plantation area of Teesta valley is completely the Colonials intervention for maintaining their imperialism edifice. It is believed that the bulk of Kirati population mainly composed of Limbu and Rai arrived in Darjeeling Himalaya for labour services to the plantation areas. With the passage of time they settled before their departures.

The emergence of Limbu population in the Dungra Khasmahal of Kalimpong was not so similar like Teesta valley. The Dungra is a Lepcha origin word meaning Jungles of ferns. According to the oral history collected from the senior knowledgeable Limbu and Lepcha informants. Lepchas had shown their resentment against the Britishers for their annexation policy. This results into a war in which the bulk of Limbu population had helped the Britishers to control over the Lepcha supremacy. Their cordial support allows them to establish their settlement in the Dungra Khasmahal.

The Limbus of Bungkulung has very different history which is not documented. It is still alive in their fading folklores, myths and stories. Bungkulung is the mixed Limbu and Lepcha word meaning *Bungku* (forest) and *Lung* (big boulders or stones). The place was originally inhabited by the Lepchas who later deserted the village due to epidemics and aftermath of Malaria. The migration of Lepchas soon saw the encroachment of Limbus. They cleared the forest and settled in Bungkulung. Then the village Limbu goan was formed. Now also this place is densely forested, therefore it is the new hotspot Eco- tourism destination in Darjeeling Himalaya.

Limbu are living permanently in this fragile Himalayan milieu from many decades. The villages of the study areas have a mixed composition of population based on caste hierarchy system. The coming of the Nepalese in the middle of 18th century has broadly divided the village into three broad groups' namely high, middle and low

class which may also be described as upper, lower and untouchable's castes. From the commensal point of view, the Nepali caste can be grouped into two broad classes – *Pani Chal ne Jat* or castes from which water can be taken and *pani na chal ne jat* or caste from which water cannot be taken. The former group is called *chhut* and latter *achhut* (Subba, 1989). They live in both heterogeneous and homogenous society. The present study is limited only to 369 households.

The Limbu population according to the recent census of 2011 is 46847 in Darjeeling Himalaya. The rural and urban population composition is 36908 and 9939. The majority of Limbu population is concentrated in rural areas with 18452 males and 18456 females populations. In urban areas population is very low with 4847 males and 5092 females. The female population is slightly higher in both the areas. The total sample of Limbu population of the surveyed villages in study areas are 708 in Teesta Valley, 496 in Dungra Khasmahal and 441 in Bungkulung. In the study areas Teesta valley and Dungra the female composition is more than males and vice versa in Bungkulung. The Sex ratio of the surveyed population in Teesta valley Tea Garden is 1052.17 per 1000 males and whereas, Dungra Khasmahal has 1049.58 and Bungkulung has 876.60 per 1000 males. But the female literacy rate is very low then the male counterparts in the studied areas.

In Teesta Valley 150 households were taken as samples for the research study which represented more than 50 % of sample size giving an in depth details of population characteristics. It helps to understand the changing pattern of population growth. The total population of Limbus in the study area was 708, out of which the total numbers of males are 345 and the total numbers of females are 363. The higher sex ratio of female shows a better social status of women in Limbu society. The maximum number of population is found in the age groups of 21-25 years (11.4 %) and 26-30 years (13.4%). The minimum number is found in the senile age group of 61-65 with (2.8%).

In Dungra Khasmahal the total number of household sample taken is 112 which constitute 45 percent. The total population is 496 out of which male population is 242 and female population is 254. The maximum number of population is found between 21 – 25 years with (11.6 %) and 26 – 30 years being (12 %) respectively. The minimum number of population is found in the senior age group (61 – 65 years) with (2.2 %) of total population.

In Bungkulung the total Limbu households is taken i.e. 107 which constituted 100 %. The total population is 441 with 235 male and 206 female populations. Bungkulung is only the study area where male population is more than female counterparts. The maximum population is found in between 26 – 30 years with (13.6%) and (9.3 %) in age group of 31-35 years. The area has maximum number of children population in age group between (6 -10) years with (9.5 %). The minimum population is found in the senile age group above 60 years with (3 %) only. The highest number of respondents in the study areas belonged to male members with (90.67 %) in Teesta valley, (86.61 %) in Dungra and (74.8%) in Bungkulung. The female respondents is (9.33 %) in Teesta valley, (13.39 %) in Dungra and (25.2%) in Bungkulung respectively.

The majority of the Limbus in the study areas of Bungkulung and Dungra hold their land ownership right with (93.5 %) and (89.3%) respectively. The Limbus of Teesta valley has no land ownership as their land is under Tea Garden Jurisdiction. The leased land (3.6 %) in Dungra and (1.9 %) in Bungkulung basically belonged to a family who are bonded labourers (*Pakure*) settled in the agricultural field nearby livestock sheds. They only hold right over yield production from the field, of which $\frac{1}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ of the produce is given to the owner either through cash or kind. The rented household belonged especially to those families who had separated from the main house due to personal obligations. The newly married couples without the consent of parents are living in the rented house. In Dungra (7.1 %) families in Dungra and (4.6%) in Bungkulung are living in rented household.

The educational attainment of the surveyed households is not at all satisfactory. Very few had attained the Graduation degree. It is due to their educational backwardness. They are not very economically sound. They had to live in meager income which they earn from garden related works or by working in the fields. But in recent times they have become much conscious regarding their children education. The data analysis reveals that the most of the enrolled students are females.

The occupational pursuit revolves around three basic work purpose, Tea garden centric, Army recruitment and others which includes teaching, petty business and abroad seeking jobs. The army job is regarded as the most prestigious and honourable one. Many of the young lads had tried their luck in army recruitment in the studied areas. In Teesta valley (58 %) of the males are working as army personnel, (38 %) in Dungra and (4.4 %) in Bungkulung. The findings of the study revealed that the unemployment problem is very severe in the study areas. Most of the youths have started to move different parts of the country. Therefore, remittance is another important source of income in the studied areas. The total of (15.3%) of households in Teesta Valley Tea Garden, (7.1%) of households in Dungra Khasmahal and (8.4%) of the households in Bungkulung got their required amenities of living through remittance.

The process of migration for work purpose is common in the studied areas. Migration has both the positive and negative measures. By far the negative measures are not very clearly visible in the study areas. But in Bungkulung one of the respondent said, that there is lack of youths in hours of emergency in the village due to migration. Both the male and female have started migrating to different places for work purposes. It was found that normally male travelled to far distant places and sometimes abroad for work purpose. The contribution of the Limbu womenfolk in the economic structure is also significant. Most of them are the bread earners in the family. Huge female employment is seen in Teesta valley where majority of the womenfolk are garden employees.

The study of complex social fabric of Limbu is incomplete without its social structure and cultural dynamics. The clan and kinship helps in understanding the interpersonal interaction of day to day life. Limbu society evolves through patrilineal ties. The Limbu society of the study areas is patriarchal where father is the head of the family. He takes all the important decision in the family. In his absence either the mother or the eldest son is treated as head of the family. The woman enjoys absolute freedom in the Limbu society. They have their right to choose their partner and also share the property right if she is unmarried after the death of her parents.

The Limbu peoples of the studied areas has unique kinship structure segment constructed by its history and oral narratives. It basically consisted of four elements namely *Thum*, *Thar* (Clan), *Bangsa*, *Heem* (Localized Lineage) and *Parivar* (family). These four elements are one of the important entities describing family organization of the Limbu society. Three types of family are seen in the studied areas namely Single, Nuclear and Joint, of which most of the households were nuclear family. It is clear from the findings that the mutual understanding factor plays a very important role in the formation of new family i.e. nuclear family. This is exclusively adopted from the modern advanced societies.

The relation among the members of the nuclear family is informal in nature because it contains only two types of relation based on the linkages between parents and children and husband and wife. In the study areas the rate of nuclear family is highest in Teesta Valley with (63.3 %) and (57.1%) in Dungra Khasmahal. In Bungkulung the nuclear family is constituent with (69.2%). The main reason behind nuclear family formation is love marriages because the young couple generally liked to settle separately and this was supported by their parents. As a result more or more nuclear families started to grow in the Limbu society. The size of the family depended on the number of family members. The big family comprises of family members above 10 and very small with only one member.

There are many rituals Limbu performed in their course of life from birth to death. These rituals are performed by them in order to maintain their belief and faith to

continue the betterment of family legacy and to sustain the cultural heritage. The rituals are believed to protect the family from evil eye and always bestowed them with blessings. These rituals are performed by Limbu Shaman *Phedangba* who too heals and cure the sufferings of the people.

The Birth of a child is celebrated with joy and happiness. They conduct different rituals before and after birth of child. The *Sappok Chomen* (womb worshipping) is important ritual for the protection of unborn child. Once child is born *Sutak* (pollution period) is observed followed *Yangdang Phongma* (Naming ceremony) and *Takshi* (Rice feeding ceremony) after six months.

The Limbu term for marriage is *Meikhim* and the foremost thing in the marital custom of the Limbus is the examination or the determination of the exogamic unit in order to prevent any sort of incest (Pradhan, 2014). Limbus enjoys relative freedom in the choice of marital partner as opposed to the surrounding Hindu people and the Lepchas of Sikkim (Barnouw, 1955). In Limbu society woman always has an upper hand for choosing her life partner. Three types of marriages are quite common in the study areas, marriage by elopement (*Chori Biha*), arranged marriage (*Mangni Biha*) and extra marital affair marriage (*Jari Biha*). Elopement marriage is quite common among the Limbus. The arrange marriage has some peculiar tradition and practices where both the marital parties are socially obligated to one another. Monogamy marriage is more prominent than polygamy in the studied areas. The rate of monogamy marriage is (99.3%) in Teesta valley, (97.9%) in Dungra and (98.6%) in Bungkulung. The *Chori biha* is one of the most common marriages among Limbu society. In Teesta valley (60.5%), Dungra (63.8%) and in Bungkulung (65.7%) of the couples got married by *chori biha* and much common among the younger generation. The marriage within same clan group is strictly prohibited.

The death rituals too are strictly observed. During this period family members restrict themselves from going out. The purification period from pollution is three days for female and four days for male. There are certain ceremonies which they celebrate with joy and ecstasy. The cultural life of Limbus is going through certain changes due

to acculturation and assimilation. The infused of Hinduism among Limbus was quite visible but the majority of villagers follow *Yumaism* as their core religion. The households following Christianity and *Satyahangma* are very negligible. The traditional knowledge and wisdom for conducting rituals and rites is guided by the institution of shamans. In Limbu society they are regarded as the messengers of *Yuma* without whose concern the rituals are not performed.

Thus, the Social and Cultural organization of Limbus is highly influenced by traditional roots and norms but among the younger generations, modernization has had huge impact in their livelihood. Limbu womenfolk occupy different positions in the social structure and organization as they pass through different phases of their life cycle and the very basis upon which the community ascribes power, privilege and prestige also changes. Their condition can be characterized by a few facts (i) they hardly participate in politics; (ii) most of them are illiterate (iii) lack of infrastructure development in rural areas had caused inadequate access to basic services such as health, education, water, electricity etc; and (iv) existence of caste, gender and social exclusion further aggravate the already deplorable condition of these women.

Limbu women play a significant role in the economic upbringing of the family. Apart from doing regular household works she also brings cash to her family. In the tea plantation areas large section of Limbu womenfolk are working. In the tea garden area two types of women labourer is prominent one is *line* or main worker and another is *biga* or temporary workers. *Biga* workers are mainly employed for the tenure of six months at peak plucking period. In other two studied areas of Dungra women are involved in farming activities and in Bungkulung women are engaged in home stay tourism. Many of the senior Limbu women are retired employees from plantation area while the rest are employed in the different sectors which included teaching, government and private jobs along with own petty business carried by some rural Limbu womenfolk. In the present context, the gloomy picture of women illiteracy is changing because every parent is conscious of their education. The girls are also treated equally and provided all the basic amenities of life helping them in securing a good and healthy life.

The most important aspect of the community is its identity which denotes being different from one to another. The Limbus in the Darjeeling Himalaya had gone through various changes and upheaval in the course of ethnic identity formation from Shah Rule in the east Nepal to recent political movement of Darjeeling hills. The very identity of Limbus has shaped from various parameters of Economy, Society and Habitat in which culture had played one of the most roles in defining them. The colonial discourse has different opinion regarding the identity formation of Limbus. They consider Limbus as one of the tribe of Kiranti group, who are chinky eyed, agile with a short stature. The gazetteers of Malley even point out there habitation in Darjeeling along with the Lepchas.

The shifting of identity dynamics is so interesting among the Limbus that their very route to tribalism was shifted to mainfold of Hinduism. Thereby, they are given the identity of Hindu from a religious point of view. The blend of Hinduism had stirred so well among the Limbus till date. The assimilation of Limbus into the core philosophy of Hinduism dates back to the reign of Shah Kings who converted their religion and the domination of the migrant Nepali Brahmin families into their Kipat land as said by Caplan. The History and culture of Kipat landholding and tenure completely altered the ownership right giving so much of upper hand to Non-Limbu families, that the original Limbu inhabitants started to migrate different places of Eastern Himalayas.

The plight of Limbus was an involuntary movement which made them to enter the Darjeeling Himalayas as lucrative labourers of British officials for establishing their British Empire in India. It was not only the Limbu who were migrating but there were other Nepali caste too, and mixing of Limbus with the other caste groups gave them a Nepali ethnic Identity and Language.

The assimilation of the Limbus in the core Nepali tradition and rituals had merged them into a Nepali speaking people in the census records and documents. The tribal Limbus drifted away from their ancestral ritual and started to profess Hinduism as

their way of life. The majority of Limbus celebrates all the festivals in Hindu calendar which has started to trigger the attention of orthodox Limbu outfit. These Limbu outfit and association scattered over the region of Darjeeling and Sikkim initiated to revive the lost Limbu culture, art and tradition through celebrating the authentic Limbu festivals. They tried their best to associate the drifting community into the bond of tribalism and animism. It was their effort that urged most of the Limbus to start following and perpetuate the philosophy of Yumaism among them.

The association also started call for a boycott of celebrating major festivals like *Dashain* and *Diwali*. Such steps was taken to proceed themselves for a tribal status ensuring the better scope for living. They started to demand and cried for ST status as a solution for the betterment of the community. It was only in 2002 that the effort brought smiles of happiness among them as they got their scheduled tribe status. The achievement in securing ST status not only secured their jobs and other opportunities but also gave them an identity as Tribal's.

In the recent census 2011 the Limbu were counted aloof from the major Nepali speaking population giving an idea of exact Limbu population living in Darjeeling Himalaya. The dynamics of Limbu identity in Darjeeling Himalaya has gone through a series of changes from ST status to Development Board. The creation of development board in the phase of Gorkhaland agitation has opened a new chapter in the overall political discourse and identity politics of different ethnic communities of Darjeeling Hills. The Limbus association too strongly felt a need of such strong apex body sustaining their aspirations through mode of good governance attributes for the betterment of community. It was the association from Kalimpong who actively participate in the dialogues with state for formation of the Limbu Development Board in the peak of Gorkhaland agitation. They deliberately convinced the worsened situation of Limbus socially and economically. The State government accepted their proposal and after the strict scrutiny of the situation the very Limbu Development board was formed for the upliftment of the community. The effort of the Limbu Development was to ensure the social and cultural upfiftment of the Limbus through

the revivalism of traditional roots. Thus the contemporary Limbu are asserting them in an exclusive Limbu identity.

[II]

Discussion

The process of research is a never ending work, because one finding leads to another question and in its quest of understanding the phenomenon through analysis, observation and field work, the process continues to sort the reasons, its validation to context and objectives. Similarly, the study on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya will also open avenues for further research perusals in social science. I, undertake this study of understanding the Limbu community with different aspects through problems and research questions. Therefore, in this section I will assess the problems and answer the research questions put forward to analyze and examine the Limbu community.

The exclusive study of Himalayan Tribes got its major attention when the plethoras of literature works were done in undermining their culture, society and economic conditions in relation with the nature's harmony. They were the main subject of colonial as oriental studies where they studied their social structure and organization. The colonial administrators like Dalton, Hooker and Malley has lucidly described them in their writing and documents. Among the most studied tribes of Darjeeling Himalaya, the Lepchas occupy the most important place as they were the original inhabitant and native of the Himalayan landscapes. The stories and myths of the Lepchas were brilliantly portrayed by the Colonials and thereby got the recognition throughout globe. Whereas, the presence of Limbu tribe was submerged beneath the fathoms of dominant culture and ethnic group, and was unnoticed. Thus, the research work is very scanty in Darjeeling Himalaya. Numerically less populated and socially marginalized the bulk of Limbu population had always remained in the oblivion for many centuries. The Limbu are spatially distributed in the Eastern Himalaya region

covering parts of Nepal and India. In India, they have settled in Darjeeling – Sikkim Himalayas and in the North Eastern states with marginal ratio.

The Limbus of Eastern Himalayas comprising of Eastern Nepal was widely studied by the Anthropologists and Sociologists. But the studies on History, Culture and Tradition of the Limbus residing in the other side of the Himalayas are very negligible. I had placed forward seven research questions on the basis of which the entire thesis is carved out. The research questions were very relevant in studying the Economy, Society and Culture in relation to Habitat of Limbus. These questions are already explained in the thesis through proper chapterization and findings. Therefore, in this section I will assess the importance of those questions in relevance to the objectives of my research work. Being a researcher it is very important to delineate the thrust areas using various parameters in understanding the changing spectrum of the society and its nomenclature. Throughout the phases of human civilization it was found that societal processes are so dynamic that it evolved new chapters in understanding the social and ethnic history.

Limbus, in this regard is not an exception. They had seen the changing dimension in their course of historical survival and development. The social history of the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya has both the colonial interpretation and oral narration based on the lingering aspect of Limbuwan Diaspora. Therefore, to understand the research question on social and ethnic history of Limbus in Darjeeling Himalaya I, have used both the colonial interpretation and oral narratives from native inhabitants as an apparatus to measure the in-depth details of the subject concerned. I clearly mentioned the background of Limbus and their reign of conquest in chapter two lucidly. But in a gist apt here, I have tried to mention the oral narratives too, well equipped with the findings in understanding the socio – ethnic history of a Limbu community.

The social history of Limbus and Limbuwan is complex, gruesome memoir engulfed with war and severe ethnic assertions. The forceful and involuntary migrations of

Limbus from East Nepal had opened a new chapter in the far flung villages of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalaya which became their shelter in the later process of Development. The displaced Limbus of Eastern Nepal started to flock the rural corners of the Darjeeling and thereby substituted themselves into a labour class group of building an imperial edifice of Britishers administrators and rule. The journey from displacement to development brought various changes in the social segment. They were separated from the ancestral Land and merged into a new heterogeneous society dominant, mainly of Nepali ethnic groups. Throughout the course of development and resettlement they aloof their culture and mingled with host culture. Their adaptation to new serene environment of Darjeeling Himalaya was much easier because of the landscape similarities and physiognomy of the people. The socio – cultural aspects took a sharp change but the economic conditions remained the same.

Therefore the second research question regarding the major economic activities of the Limbus under the study areas will attempt to sketch their Economy and their contribution towards the development of a region. In every society both the male and female counterpart had directly and indirectly contributed towards the sustainable economic growth. Their work and role not only helped in the upliftment of society but also in well being of families. In chapter three and four I had made a humble attempt in understanding the demographic attributes in relation to the economic activities of the Limbu villages in the studied areas.

The Economic Condition of the Limbus in the three studied areas of Teesta Valley Tea Garden, Dungra Khasmahal and Bungkulung has more or less similar conditions but had diverse activities in procuring wealth and resources. The Teesta valley is a Tea plantation area, Dungra an agricultural village and Bungkulung a mixture of both agriculture and rural tourism. The blend of economic activities has different income group of Limbu families. But the majority of them are still downtrodden and vulnerable. They are surviving with a handful and meager income in their hand. The gift of British edifice is still existed in the form of Plantation estate and Tea factories collecting huge revenue for Government in the name famous tea flavour brands.

During the field visits it was found Limbu were working in the Tea industry from its inception. Here, I mean first their great grandfather to grandfather to father and now they too are working in the same post as labourers. The pathetic economic condition seems hardly improved. Moreover, their economic conditions were ruptured and halted during the separate state agitation in past 1986 and recent from 2007. Moreover the fresh agitation 2017 led by the GJMM forced the authorities for closing tea garden and with the stoppage of production process triggered the economic problems and worsened their situation. The economic marginalization of Limbus is never looked properly, either by Tea garden governance. As for now too, process is same and will only change if proper intervention and measures are taken into considerations. The Limbus of Dunga Kalimpong and Bungkulung have same gloomy pictures where the majority of population is sustaining from agricultural pursuits. The lush green forest and undulating rolling terraced fields is providing them to do farming in small commercial base and major share is consumed for subsistence need. Thus, the economic condition is in deplorable state because of lack of educational attainment, lack of skillful knowledge they face stiff competition in employment opportunities.

The third and fourth questions are concerned with the impact of regional culture on the very material culture and socio-economic of Limbus of the studied areas. The absorption of regional culture is so peculiar in the social and culture life of Limbus which clearly reflects in their daily affairs of life. The heterogeneous society has alienated them from core Limbu ritualistic essence. The inter caste marriage among Limbus with other ethnic groups has lead to further changes in their social structure and organization. The very first impact of regional culture has negated their dialect and language from *Yakthungpan* to Nepali. Nepali language being one of the major Linga Franca of Darjeeling has recognized by the Indian constitution and one of the most popularly spoken language. Apart from the lost and forgotten Limbu language, Limbus has undergone changes in their material culture too like dress, food habit and housing conditions. The younger generation has huge impact of regional as well as popular culture.

The fifth and sixth research questions deal with the strong assertion of Hinduism as religion over the traditional belief and efforts of Limbus in delineating the boundaries between them from the others in a viewpoint of religion and cultural practices. The Limbus of the study areas have perfectly blended with the process of religion syncretism. They worship different Hindu gods, Goddesses and Deities but they also firmly believe in the supreme power of Limbu deity *Tagera Ningwaphuma*. The senior and knowledgeable Limbus are doing their best to incorporate themselves into core *Yumaism*, which is the true religion of Limbu tribes. They are also propagating principles of *Yumaism* among the fellow Limbus who have divulged into other religions. They are celebrating all the major Limbu festivals and rituals essentially to mark a line of difference from others. Even the different Limbu outfits are making their best effort to spread their religion. But during the field visits it was found Limbus were practicing both the religions simultaneously. They had a worship place for Hindu Gods and a separate place for *Yuma Than*. Chunks of Limbu population settled in the urban ambience are acculturated. These populations are numerically very less and are customized with the broad spectrum of urban culture. One of the urban residents of Kalimpong town said “It is not that easy to delineate and make a point of cultural difference between Limbu and Non-Limbu. The only things which differ from them are our traditional attire which we wear in cultural functions that clearly signifies us as Limbus”.

The last and final research question was on Dynamics of Limbu Identity which I have tried to explain in my seventh chapter. I made an attempt to understand the dynamics of identity on the basis of three assumptions. How does the State perceive Limbu identity? How does the Non-Limbu of the study areas perceive their identity? Lastly, how do Limbus themselves perceive and seek their identity exclusively and inclusively. These three parameters are apprehended in understanding the politics of culture in asserting the dynamics of Limbu Identity.

The Identity is such a debatable discourse in the society and politics which keep on changing with the state building process and development, the very Limbu identity

has gone through the series of changes depending upon the circumstances. The very sole political change of Limbu identity was seen in getting the title of “Subba” given by Privithi Narayan Shah as the Village headman in his kingdom in Eastern Nepal after his conquest over the Limbuwan province. This honourable title is still used by the Limbus till date in their surname. The second Identity transformation was clubbing into a Nepali ethnic fold. The Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya got their exclusive tribal identity way back in 2002 under the State and Government of West Bengal. At present Limbus are preserving their fading identity by imposing the cultural attributes in defining themselves and drawing a thin borderline of difference with the rest.

[III]

Conclusion

The Himalayan milieu of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas has seen as a fluid space for the mobility of people reinforcing with each other for various activities. The concretization of the geo – political boundaries in the past has institutionalized new values and customs thereby giving the new meaning and dimension to culture and ethnicity. The establishment of colonialism not only transformed the physical set up and entity of the region but it institutionalizes the place with cultural transformations. More than a sanatorium it became the meeting place for different groups of people like Limbu, Rai, Mangar and Tamang etc. These ethnic groups largely homogenized under the rubric of Nepali customs and cultural norms.

As a researcher we always try to underline the problem in understanding the phenomenon and thereby come up with the probable measures to cope with the relevant situation. The research on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya had ample of problems on the basis of which entire thesis is knitted. The problems may rise of many direct and indirect factors which need to be harmonized with preventive measures for procuring the aspirations of the people. Therefore, the present research

has identified and tried to explore the main problem and crisis encircling the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya.

This thesis with rich ethnographic data is an attempt to showcase the Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya and their adjustment to the very habitat. The Limbus of Darjeeling, Sikkim and east Nepal share a common history of culture and religion but fall under different political and administrative jurisdictions. Therefore, few references of Limbus residing in the other side of the Eastern Himalayas are incorporated to understand the community more holistically.

Historically the whole of the Eastern region of Kirat hills was the territories of Limbus and their kingdom called Limbuwan. They had a close association with Khambus in terms of manner and had intermarried with them. Though there is difference in their languages (Kirkpatrick, 2006). Many of the Limbus prefers to call themselves as *Yakthumba* which connotes different meaning like Yak herders, Hill men or the one who had defeated the Yakhas, a Khambu tribe. They embrace *Yumaism* religion which is the form of animism.

The Limbu village of the study areas has heterogeneous composition of population. Limbus are not much different from their non Limbu neighbours in respect language, dress, material aspects, food habits, behaviour, customs and family organizations. They observe the major and important festivals of Hindu calendar. But also celebrates Limbu authentic festivals and rituals with much ease and happiness. The process of cultural integration has been taken place due to acculturation among the Limbus. Due to this syncretism, the Limbus of the studied areas is more inclined towards the cultural realm of Nepali society. Under such circumstances, the Limbus constructed a new identity based on their situational demand. However, they raised their voices to incorporate them into the cluster of Gorkha identity which is the result of structural and behavioural acculturation.

During the field work in the Limbu village of the study areas, it was observed that there was a considerable economic variation in the income of Limbus living in rural

areas and Limbus dwelling in urban centers. Moreover, all sorts of developmental dimension were far from reality, which indeed over burdened the load due to growing population and lack of resources and infrastructure. Living in such harsh habitat for more than three to four generation, the fate and condition of Limbus has never improved. The problems of Limbu are increasing day by day, because the rate of unemployment is on alarming rate. Agriculture is the only source of income in the study areas. However, in the course of study people expressed some of their aspirations and hope to overcome such deprivation and crisis. The most important of them are given below, which I have categorized socially, culturally, economically and politically wise.

The cultural diffusion of Limbus in the main fold of Hindu religion and customs has completely debarred them from understanding their own culture and gestures. The process of Sanskritization had completely merged Limbus into Hinduism and has given them a Nepali identity that completely made them oblivion from their cultural ethos and socio-political development.

Moreover the Limbus of the study areas is educationally backward. There is maximum number of school and college drop outs. Despite being scheduled tribe they are yet not able to derive the benefits because, they very less conscious socially and politically. The villages had only primary level schools and most of the high schools were located in the urban areas and some of the high schools were nearly 6 to 7 kilometers away. Moreover during the monsoon seasons students had to suffer a lot. The rate of the female student drop outs are more in number and lag behind educationally.

The social and cultural life of village is simple and joyful. The villagers enjoys among themselves by enjoying feast and drinking alcohols. The use and consumption of alcohol is not restricted in Limbu society, because they regarded themselves as '*Matwali jaat*' which I have already referred in my previous chapters. Sometimes the

consumption of the alcohol becomes the reason for broken family and violence in the neighbourhood.

The absence of younger generation in the study areas is another problem. The majority of youths are always mobile and agile for the dream of better living and improving the family conditions. They migrate to different places for work. It is not only the poor are migrating but even the youths of influential Limbu family are migrating but the choice of destination varies. During my field work in Bungkulung I was told about an old lady who has lived in destitute and despair because all of her children are working in Chennai. They send her money monthly and visit her during the occasion of festivals. Mr. N.B Limbu one of the key informants of Bungkulung told me half of the village is empty because, some had gone to work some had gone to town for their children education. There is a problem in the village man power in the hour of crisis like funeral and other social work. The lack of employment opportunities is one of the main grievances of the Limbus in the study areas.

IV

Recommendations

The most essential thing of life is better civic amenities and the sound environment to live with aspiring future. The Limbus of the study areas are living in the far flung rural places in relative isolation coping with the nature adversity and improper state intervention. The vulnerable situations coupled with other problems like poor infrastructural facilities make them more prone to live in underdeveloped conditions. The infrastructural facilities like hospitals, schools and college are located in distant kilometers. The economic empowerment can be an efficient tool for betterment of this community to overcome from these situations. The specific programmes for sustaining self employment or home based employment can provide skill to the people to subside more income as a secondary option to bring social and economic change.

If the drop out and non- matriculate youths are encouraged to continue the further studies in their village by an opening a sub centers of different institutions run the Government organizations at a nominal rate. The increasing trend of school drop rate could be checked. The children of the poor families can also get education at nominal cost because most of them discontinuing higher education due to expenditure cost.

The Study areas offer a luxuriant ambience for rural tourism. Therefore the Limbus of this areas needs the Government organized programs as an effective skill enhancement equipped with modern managerial, technical and design skill to reinforce area into hotspot tourism destination and thus providing the people with training session for earning a lucrative income from their own village.