

**Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya: Aspects of their Economy,  
Society and Culture in Relation to Habitat**

**A Thesis Submitted to the University of North Bengal  
For the Award of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Himalayan Studies (Geography)**

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## CERTIFICATE

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## ABSTRACT

Darjeeling Himalaya is the small frontier region located on the laps of snow clad mountains, traversed by rugged valleys and turbulent streams. It looks like a sentinel from the heat shimmering plains of North Bengal. The serene and pristine environment of Darjeeling dragged the colonials to establish it as their Sanatorium for treating the invalid soldiers of warfare in 1835. Much before, the encroachment of Colonials the vast tract of this Himalayan region was under the jurisdiction of Nepal and Sikkim rulers. Hidden beneath the histories of this region lies the story of emergence of a tribe, and their struggle and survival, the Limbus. According to Hooker (1999) “Limbus were brave and cruel in battle, putting the old and weak to sword, carrying the younger to the slavery and killing on the march such captives as are unable to proceed”. Limbu marginal hill tribe collaborated with the state building processes both in Nepal and Sikkim. Political antagonism has resulted in their land being divided into two, thereby making the Limbus, a community which straddles the two nations of Nepal and India (Subba, 2013).

The population of Limbu is spatially distributed over the Eastern Himalayas. Most of them reside in East Nepal comprising of nine districts. The census of India (2001) reports that 37,265 people speak the Limbu language, most of them probably lives in Sikkim and with some smaller populations in Assam (Fitzpatrick, 2011). A smaller portion of the Limbu population is scattered throughout the areas of Darjeeling and Kalimpong in West Bengal, India. The word ‘Limbu’ means as an archer or ‘the bearer of bows and arrows’. The Limbus likes to identify them as *Yakthumba* or *Yakthungba*. They are also known as *Drejongka* in Tibet and *Chong* or *Tsong* in Sikkim. Northern Tibetans call them ‘*Monpa*’, meaning those who live south of the Himalayas (Dutta, 2014).

Racially, Limbu are purely Mongoloids with epicanthic fold (a small normal fold of skin from the upper eyelid, sometimes covering the inner corner of the eye). The cheekbones are high, with a small flat nose without facial hairs. The complexion is fair to pinkish and the body stature is agile, sturdy and strong with short to medium height in size. Linguistically, they belong to the Tibeto-Burman groups of complex pronominal dialects. It is placed in the Austro-Asiatic linguistic group. They refer their language as *Yakthungpan*. The Limbu script is called '*Srijunga lipi*'.

The exact origin of Limbu is not known. It is believed that they once lived in the Northern regions of *Tsang* province of Tibet and had migrated to their present habitat. Francis Buchanan Hamilton in his *Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (1819) has listed Limbu as one of the Kiranti groups. Sources reveal that the Kathmandu valley was under the rule of Kiranti (Rai and Limbu are known as Kiranti) from approximately the first century B.C., to the second Century A.D., and according to *Gopal Vamsabali*, about thirty-two Kiranti kings ruled the valley (ibid). According to Chatterjee (1951) the Kirata or Kiranti were usually described as hunter – gatherers who live in the forested mountainous areas on the fringes of civilized India. There are no clear and consistent accounts of the historical origin of the Limbus and many ethnographers have dealt with this problem by simply not addressing it in detail. The Tibetans believe that Yakthungba, the ancestors of the Limbus, migrated into Limbuwan through the Kangla Pass and settled in the *Yangma* valley in the *Tamar Khola* region (Dutta 2014). Chaitanya Subba (1995) elucidates the theory of Limbu origin in the light of the Kiratas notions. He postulated that the Limbu are descended from the three groups of Kiratas. The *Lhasagotra* migrated from the Northern Tibet province; the *Kasigotra* migrated from the south and south east of Indian territories; and the *Khambonba – Lungbongba* who were the indigenous to the areas of Eastern Nepal.

According to Chemjong (1966), Limbu are the descendant of *Shan Mokwan* of Northern Burma. They migrated from there via Assam route and settled in east Nepal. Before their arrival the east Nepal was ruled by the eight feudal chiefs. They gained permission from the feudal chiefs to settle in east Nepal. Eventually, they revolted against them and won the battle. They delineated their politically boundary of newly won territory. The demarcations of the borders were Tibet in Northern side, Jalal Garh near Purnea at the southern side, the eastern boundary at River Teesta and the western boundary at River Dudhkosi. They named this territory as Limbuwan and divided it into ten kingdoms to be ruled by the “Ten Leaders of Shan – Mokwan People” (Fitzpatrick, 2011). This area is also known as *Pallo Kirant*. The history of Limbuwan is very much tied to the history of the modern state of Nepal and annexation policy of Prithvi Narayan Shah. According to Pradhan’s (1991) history of the Gorkha conquest, the Kiranti people were enjoying political autonomy under the suzerainty of Sena dynasty which controlled the region between the Kali Gandaki River and Nepal valley to the East. The annexation and conquest policy of the Gorkha ruler completely altered the political geography of the region. They captured and controlled the *Wallo* and *Majh Kirant*. These Kirati who had accepted the sovereignty of the Gorkha rule were asked to do away with their chiefs. They reinforced their troops further in Limbuwan which resulted into the battle of Chainpur (1776) and by 1786 the annexation of Further Kirant *Pallo* was completed and the war in Limbuwan ended (Pradhan, 1991). The battles were fought, political boundaries changed, old system of Governance was replaced by new ones; Limbu as an ethnic group, however, has managed to survive despite such sharp changes. The political unification of modern Nepal in 1774 in the Eastern Nepal and socio-political relation of Namgyal with Limbus of Sikkim is very important in understanding the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya.

Nepal and India are the two independent states in their own context of development. But the nation building process in these two countries had directly or indirectly influenced the Limbus, if the Limbus of Darjeeling and Sikkim, an Indian origin is different from the Limbu of Eastern Nepal origin. Why does Eastern Nepal always remain a reference point while discussing issues of Limbus? The answer is politically ambiguous because of the open border policy between two nations and migration history. Culturally, however it is important to note that history plays an important role in any ethnic mobilization. The lack of archival and concrete historical evidence among the Limbus of Darjeeling has made them to depend on Eastern Nepal and Sikkim Himalaya for their ancestry and understanding the community history. Therefore, the present thesis is an ethnographic research and study. It examines the Limbus society and their cultural set up in the fragile environment of Darjeeling Himalayas. In order to understand the Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya the researcher has carefully selected the areas dominated by the Limbu population. The study is based on data collected through intensive field investigation. Both primary and secondary data is collected. Simple random sampling method is adopted. The basic primary data is gathered from house to house census survey. Conventional tools and Anthropology techniques like household survey, interview, key informant interview, group discussion and participation observation etc was adopted for data collection.

The three Limbu villages namely Teesta Valley Tea Garden from Darjeeling Subdivision, Dunga Khasmahal from Kalimpong Subdivision and Bungkulung from Kurseong Subdivision were studied. The study areas exhibits the diverse geographical features of landforms formed during tertiary period due to plate tectonic movement. The larger portion of this region is composed of granite and gneissic rocks. The study area of Teesta Valley comes under the Darjeeling range which forms the northernmost portion of the

region with an elevation varying from 400 meters to 3000 meters. Teesta river flows southward with radial drainage pattern. Bungkulung falls under Kurseong range where the general slope of the region is from North to South with varying altitude of 300 to 800 metres. The important river draining in the study area is Balasan which occupies the central part. The boundary of Kurseong range is well demarcated by River Mechi in the west and Teesta in the east. Dungra Khasmahal falls under the south east of Darjeeling Himalayas in Kalimpong range. The range has abruptly rising hills with numerous streams and small torrents as marking physiographic units lying within 300 to 3000 metres between Darjeeling gneiss and Daling series.

Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya lives in both heterogeneous and homogenous society. The present study is limited only to 369 households who have been living permanently in the fragile and undulating valley for at least fourth and more generations in the study areas of Teesta valley, Dungra Khasmahal of Kalimpong and Bungkulung of Kurseong subdivision. In Teesta Valley 150 households were taken as samples for the research study which represents more than 50 % of sample size giving an in depth details of population characteristics. It also helps us 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. In Dungra Khasmahal the total number of household sample is 112 which constitute 45 percent. The total population is 496 out of which male population is 242 and female population is 254. In Bungkulung the total households' is 107, which constitute 100 %. The total population is 441 with 235 male and 206 with female population. The Bungkulung is only the study area where male population is more than female counterparts. The higher sex ratio of female shows a better social status of women in Limbu society.

The study of complex social fabric of Limbu is incomplete without taking into consideration of its social structure and cultural dynamics through clan and kinship in understanding the ethnographic account of a community through

which we look their interpersonal interaction of day to day life. Limbu society evolves certain terms to denote and refer one's own descend line and kin through patrilineal ties. Limbu society is a patriarchal in nature. The father is the head of the family and is considered as the most universal social group. In the study areas families are largely nuclear in structure and small proportions have joint family with more than 7-8 members. The interpersonal relation is cordial. In Limbu society *Chori Biha* (elopement) is the most common form of marriage. The Limbu religion may be defined as a elementary form of Shamanistic animism in which the *Bijua* and *Phedangba* play the part of Shaman, the former operating on the demons and latter having for his department the God (Sagant,1996). The worshipping of *Tagera Ningwaphuma* or the supreme deity is accepted by all Limbus, except a few who have become Christians recently. *Tagera Ningwaphuma* being often personified as Shiva makes the situation difficult because Shiva is not only considered as a Limbu god but also equally worshipped by Hindus. Though the Limbus often refers to Shiva as “*Our God*” they are aware of the fact that he is not their exclusive God (Subba, 1999).

In the study areas the majority of Limbus follows Hinduism, *Yumaism*, *Satyahangma* and Christianity. The Limbus of the study areas has perfectly blended with the process of religion syncretism. They worship the different Hindu pools of God, Goddess and Deities but they also firmly believe in the supreme power of Limbu deity *Tagera Ningwaphuma*. The senior and knowledgeable Limbu are doing their best to incorporate themselves into core *Yumaism*, which is the true religion of Limbu tribes. They are also propagating the principles of *Yumaism* among the fellow Limbus who are divulge into other religion. They are celebrating all the major Limbu festivals and rituals essentially to mark a line of difference from other. Even the different Limbu outfits are making their best effort to spread their religion. Lastly the understanding of Limbu Identity dynamics and (re) construction of Identity

through political discourse, religious and cultural attributes is studied. Considering these changing parameters the author has attempt to study the formation of Limbu Identity based on religious and cultural transition on one hand showing how the new ritual a landscape, folk culture has become an important aspect in (re) defining ethnic identity among Limbus in their habitat. The associations' members' acts as cultural promoters which enables the Limbus to further define and re-define religious and cultural aspects in accordance to their interests.

The present thesis is organized into eight chapters minutely studying the details of Limbu community. Each chapter had made an attempt to understand the peculiarity of the statement of problems. Thus, the present study on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya: Aspects of their Economy, Society and Culture in relation to their Habitat is exploratory in nature. It attempts to provide the scientific information based on empirical findings. The data collected from the extensive field work will provide a guide for the researcher, planner and administrators belonging to the various fields and departments to understand Limbu community in better ways for the holistic development. The findings of the present study will surely enhance the knowledge about the Limbu tribe who has been living obscure in the fragile terrain of Darjeeling Himalayas. Therefore, this study made a humble attempt to present and understand the ethnographic detail of the Limbu living in Darjeeling Himalaya.

## **PREFACE**

The present thesis is a humble attempt and contribution in understanding the Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya from different perspectives in relation to their Economy, Society, Culture and Habitat. The thesis seeks to understand this community by exploring into the core essence of Limbu Social and Cultural elements. The thesis represents a culmination of my field work in the core Limbu villages of Darjeeling Himalaya and the learning process of becoming a research scholar over the period of almost four and a half years. The research journey starts as a Junior Research Fellow with an up gradation of Senior Research Fellow of the Centre for Himalayan Studies and finally at the end of submission as an Assistant professor of Geography in Muralidhar Girls' College, Kolkata.

Throughout these years I, gained lots of experience and motivation from the various people who entrusted me and build the ladder of confidence inside me to excel and pursue higher goals. It's my utmost priority to acknowledge those wonderful people of my life without whose support and guidance, I would never achieve my goal and the target of becoming an able researcher. First and Foremost I want to thank almighty God for showering blessing upon me.

It is the blessing of God that I met my Supervisor Professor Dr. Sekh Rahim Mondal, the man who polished me by imparting the valuable knowledge and wisdom. It is his continuous support and hard work I learned the research work and ethics. Sir, my words of appreciation would be less in defining you and your support towards me. I owe a deep sense of respect and heartfelt of gratitude to you for making me as an able person with a vision and precision. I, Thank you Sir for believing in me and always helping in my need.

I am so fortunate to be the part and parcel of Centre for Himalayan Studies, the assemblage of intellectuals from all disciplines of Social Science. I am really grateful to Professor Mrs. Maitreyee Choudhury, the then Director of Centre for Himalayan

Studies for providing her assistance and cooperation to me during my stay at the centre. I am equally thankful to Professor Mrs. Karubaki Dutta for extending her help and support to me especially for providing financial assistance for field work during her Director tenure. I owe deep sense of gratitude to Professor R. Sahu and Associate Professor Ujjwal Bhui for always supporting me and providing needful and helpful suggestions to shape my research work. I am also thankful to our newly appointed Director Sir Professor Swatahsiddha Sarkar for his valuable feedback in Pre submission seminar of my Ph.D work.

I like to thank the then Documentation officer Mr. Ajay Mishra for providing me the helpful documents and articles on Darjeeling Himalaya. I would like to thank our non – teaching staffs for their kind co-operation. I have derived enormous personal benefit from my time spent at the study areas both from the local people and the Limbus who are the main subject in the study areas. It is not possible for me to encapsulate all the names and no word is enough for their support and positive response.

Hence, I am going to thank some people personally for their kind gestures and humility. I thank Mr. N.D Limbu, Chairman of Limbu Development Board and member of Development board for their immense help. I thank Professor Shova Chemjong of Kalimpong College for giving me an important documents regarding Limbus. I thank Smt. Sanjogita Subba, Mr. N.B Limbu, and Mr. Panche Limbu for providing me assistance during the field visits of Teesta Valley, Kalimpong and Bungkulung.

I want to thank Mr. B.P Limbu, President of All India Limbu Association of Darjeeling and Mr. Songpangbe and Mr K.B Limbu for their kind help. I am grateful to my college teacher Dr. Sherpa Bhutia, Associate Professor of Darjeeling Government College for helping me in making maps and diagrams for research work. I am grateful Dr. Lakpa Tamang Assistant Professor of Geography in Calcutta University for his support and encouragement. I am very much thankful to Miss Patricia Moktan English teacher of Tiny Angels' School Takdah for correcting errors

and grammatical mistakes and to the students especially Sangit Tamang, Biswa Rai and Lucky Rana for helping me in Teesta valley field work. Similarly, I am thankful to Mr. Deepen Pakhrin and my cousin brother Girish Gurung for tremendously helping me to carry out my field work in Kalimpong. I am thankful to my scholar friend and dear brother Phupu Wangdi Bhutia for travelling with me in the interior core of Bungkulung for collecting data and field survey.

I am forever indebted to my loving parents Baba, Ama and members of my family for their understanding, endless support and motivation whenever I am low. Incalculable and inexpressible, however, is my debt to my dear friends and research scholars of Centre for Himalayan Studies for their continuous intellectual stimulation and scientific academic reviews of my writings. I am also thankful to my college principal and my colleagues for always motivating me to complete my research work. Finally, I offer my regards and gratitude to all those who supported me in all thick and thin moments of my research career for the completion of this thesis.

Date :-

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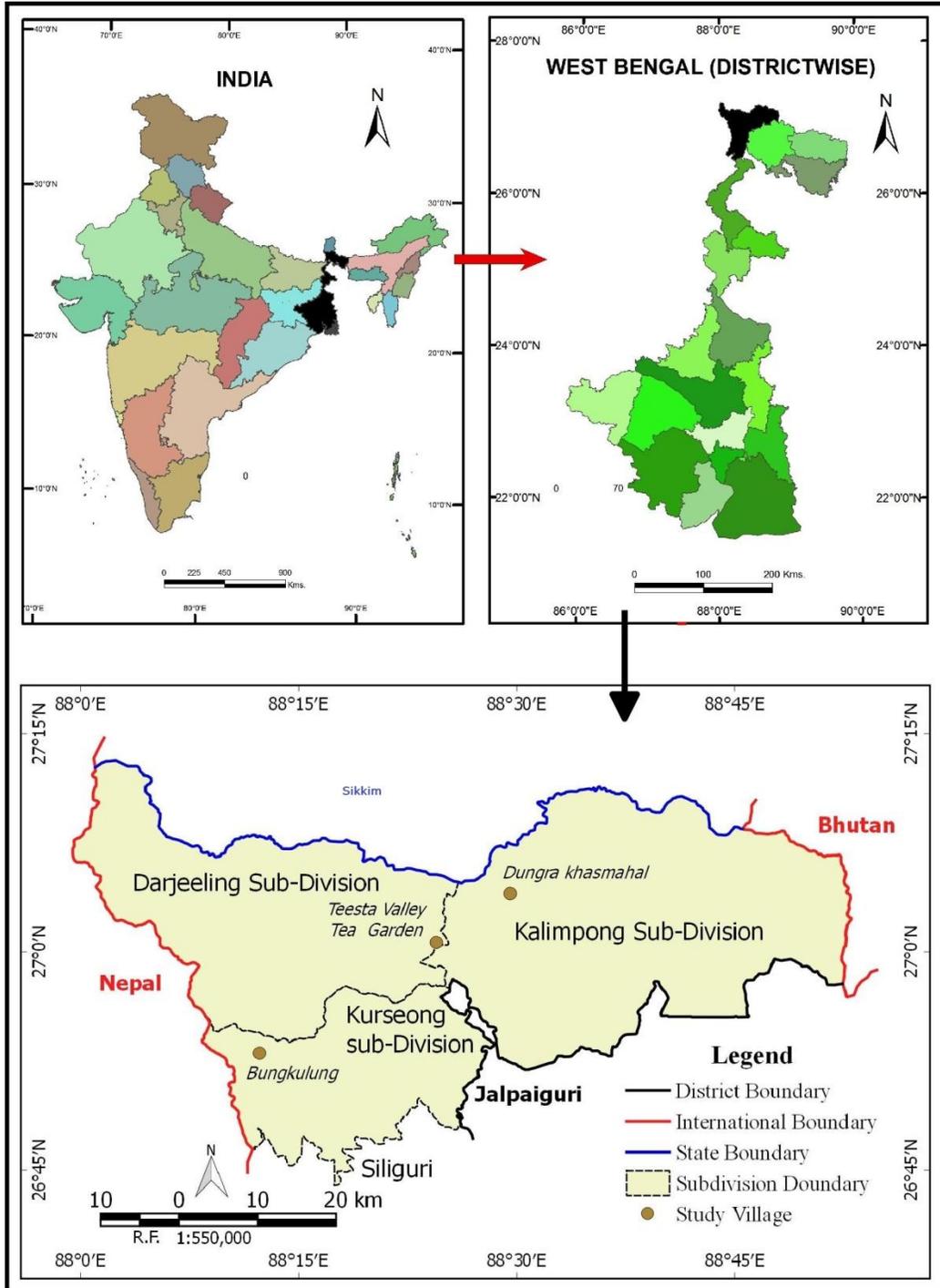
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# LOCATION MAP



# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Introduction

Darjeeling Himalaya looms like a sentinel from the heat shimmering plains of North Bengal. Nestled in the range of Eastern Himalayas, the territories of Darjeeling Himalaya historically belonged to Sikkim and Bhutan. The interests of British East India Company allow the whole region under its occupation in three phases during the thirty years from 1835 to 1865. The coming of Colonials into the areas of Darjeeling Himalaya was motivated by the several factors. One of the main reasons was the geo-political importance of strategic location and overland trade with Tibet and Central Asia (Dasgupta, 1999). This small frontier region situated on the Eastern Himalaya soon became the sanitarium for the treatment of injured European soldiers of warfare, and also became the summer headquarters of the Bengal Governor in the then colonial period.

The ethnic composition of the three hill subdivision of Darjeeling Himalaya witnessed the sharp changes in its demographic pattern in the mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century, which completely alters the geography of this region. It was evidently caused by the waves of massive migration from Nepal emanated, from the three major factors. The first factor is the ascendancy of Gorkha ruler Prithivinarayan Shah Policy of conquest ensuring the domination of the high caste Hindu over the Buddhist and Non – Hindu Nepali tribe, resulted in the alienation of tribal *Kipat* into royal possession and making them landless. The tribal communities of Kirat region such as the Limbus, Rais, Gurungs and Tamang were socially downgraded to the position of Sudras. The vulnerable

position faced with severe atrocities in the name of ‘*Panchakhat*’ confiscated their property if they refrained to accept their rules. Faced with repressive measures, large chunks of Limbu population along with the fellow groups banished the Kirat region of Eastern Nepal. These communities entered into the British ceded portion of Darjeeling which became their enclave for new accessible place for resettlement. The second reason of welcoming immigrants was to boost up the tea industry with the free source of cheap labours. Lastly, the third one is to recruit them in British battalion of Gorkha regiment for their bravery, courage and loyalty to strengthen their army infantry. Historically, the Limbus in Eastern Himalayas was the landowners and their land was known as Kipat, which is non-transferable. Thousands of them were killed during Prithvi Narayan Shah’s unification campaign to land reform act of 1774 A.D. They became landless and were forced to live an exiled life by migrating to different parts of Assam, Sikkim and Darjeeling. Thus, the arrivals of Limbus in Darjeeling Himalaya trace their ancestral roots in Eastern Nepal of Limbuwan Kingdom. Later this Limbuwan kingdom was incorporated into greater state of Nepal by the then ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah’s.

### **Background of the Study**

Limbus the tribal communities of Darjeeling Himalaya trace histories in the kingdom of Limbuwan. Their Kingdom got fragmented into two portions during the course of political conquest in the Eastern Himalayas. With the passage of time, Limbus straddles between the two countries of modern Nepal and India (Darjeeling & Sikkim Himalaya) with their fluid identity. Though the Limbu population is spatially distributed in the mainland of India and Nepal, the present research work completely focuses on the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya.

The Darjeeling Himalaya is a perfect blend of social, cultural and religious diversity, creating an interesting facet for understanding the dynamic society

of Himalayan communities. The present research is an ethnographic and exploratory study of the Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya. An effort has been made to understand and examine the economy, society and culture of the Limbus along with their habitat through an extensive field work. The three different villages of Darjeeling Himalaya namely Teesta Valley Tea Garden, Dungra Khasmahal and Bungkulung are studied. The study helps us to understand the social and cultural aspects of Limbu community and their struggle to retain their cultural heritage and homogeneity in the heterogeneous society of Darjeeling Himalaya.

The serene and pristine environment of Darjeeling Himalaya is a homeland for various tribal communities belonging to Mongoloids racial group. Limbu is one of the communities of this racial group having its own unique culture, customs and traditions. The ethnicity and tribalism of Limbus is at crossroads. The process of Hinduization among Limbus is quite common and is clearly visible in their socio-cultural sphere of life. The changing trend in their environment, economy, society, and culture has pushed them into oblivion from their cultural identity. The rich intangible heritage of this Himalayan community is fading away. A very less research work has been done on them compared to other ethnic groups. They are overlooked and obscure in the main stream of tribal affairs and development in Darjeeling Himalaya. Therefore, the studies seek to understand the society and cultural aspects of Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya in a holistic manner.

## **1.2 A Note on Limbus**

Limbu community is an Indigenous ethnic group of Indo-Mongoloids family (Sanyal, 1979). Linguistically they belong to Tibeto- Burman Himalayan language of Sino-Tibet family and had their own written script known as *Srijunga lipi*. The word Limbu means an Archer. Limbu people are called by

different names like ‘*Yakthungba*’, ‘*Tsongs*’ and ‘*Monpa*’ in the different parts of Eastern Himalayas.

The oral narratives of Limbus claimed Limbuwan as their ancestral homeland. Limbuwan is said to be conquered by them through the use of bows and arrows. Later the Province of Limbuwan was divided into seventeen *thums* (districts) and was ruled by the ten powerful chiefs. The armpit of Limbuwan holds its extension from Eastern Nepal to Western Sikkim including the modern day Darjeeling Himalaya. Their homeland was traversed by mighty Himalayas and swift flowing rivers which occupies an important place in their myths, folktales and oral narratives. The reverence of Mount Khangchendzonga by the Limbus itself certifies that this community has been living in Darjeeling Himalaya, since the time immemorial. Mount Khangchendzonga occupies an important place among them. The mountain is worship by this people on all their occasions, like religious rites, agricultural *pujas* and in the sermons of *Mundhum* recitation. Even the Limbu *phedangba* talks about the presence of their ancestral homeland in the areas around this holy mountain.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The Eastern Himalayan region is inhabited by a number of ethnic communities. These communities have their own history and ethics. In this socially and geographically diversified society, there are some regional pockets in this Himalayan belt having such groups and communities who had not achieve socially sanctioned position in the broad spectrum of the society so far. Due to unavoidable reasons like geographical impediments, socio-cultural isolation, lack of communication and transportation such communities could not get any identifiable and definable position in the society and remained in a state of backwardness for a long time. There are still such communities in India who are beyond the experienced and knowledge not only of the common

masses but also from the reaches of the social scientists. They are very few in number to attract the attention of politicians, social workers and policy makers. Due to the lack of proper representation and leadership such communities could not come in the limelight of the society.

Darjeeling Himalaya, in this context, is not an exception. It, even today, has adhered to and concealed so many ethnic groups who are geographically isolated and confined within the hilly, forested and remote far-flung areas of the Darjeeling Himalaya. The numerically large number of Scheduled Tribes of India is at cross-roads today. While some tribes have come to avail the benefits of development and have become socio-economically advanced, there are also many tribal groups who find it difficult to maintain their livelihood. Being in the inaccessible and underdeveloped periphery of Darjeeling Himalaya, Limbus are economically and educationally one of the backward Himalayan community. Their primary occupation is agriculture though some of them practice a little trade as well. They are also in the armed services in India and abroad because Limbu are considered as one of the martial communities favoured by the British for their army (Subba, 2006).

The change in the political boundaries, occupation, shifting of the village and the process of acculturation made the Limbus to secure different identity in the modern era. With the influx of Nepalis labour force by the British for raising the state revenues, the Limbus began to get acculturated into their fold. Moreover, with the improper representation and efforts of sustaining their social conditions in the State intervention policy and programmes by the authorities, the Limbus began to lose their distinct identity and finally got submerged into the Nepali fold.

Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is influenced especially by the Hindu caste members through the process of Hinduization. The adoption of a new way of life among the Limbus replaced their tribal faith whose oral tradition could not

legitimize their tribal religion of *Yumaism*. Apart from the course of assimilation and acculturation, the influence of modernization is evidently visible among this ethnic group.

The Limbu communities are spread in both the urban and rural areas of Darjeeling Himalaya. The majority of concentration is mainly found in rural areas where they sustain their livelihood in a relative isolation. The literature review clearly suggests that the social and cultural researches on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya are very scanty. Besides this, the aforesaid studies on Limbu were basically conducted at the Eastern part of Nepal and Sikkim. Thus the study on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is very negligible and Limbu culture is in need of preservation in Darjeeling Himalaya. The present study is very necessary, both for academic as well as for practical needs as there is a wide gap research on the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya from social science aspects.

#### **1.4 Conceptual Framework Used for the Present study**

The systematic and meaningful research work carries the concepts, approaches and paradigms to examine the society and culture of the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya. For this study, Structural Functionalism and Ethnographic approaches have been adopted. The major concepts used in the study are noted below.

##### **1.4.1 Structural Functionalism**

*A.R Radcliffe Brown* formulates the concept of Structural functionalism. Structural functionalism / functionalism, is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex organization whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms. This approach looks at both social structure and social functions.

Functionalism seeks to address society as a whole in terms of their function and its important parameters like traditions, customs, social norms and institutions. The structural functionalism approach is an anthropological and sociological analysis, with a broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole (Srinivas, 1988). The study of the economy, society and culture of the Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya is basically related to communities who are nature worshipper and confined to the Darjeeling Himalaya since time immemorial. The perspective of the present study is based on the context of Limbu people. The emphasis on understanding the Limbu society from grassroots helps to fill up the gap between textual knowledge and so far contextual ideologies regarding their belief, faith, ritual and Limbu society. Structural functional approach is adopted for this study for which empirical field data are collected for understanding the Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya.

#### **1.4.2 Economy**

An economy is the total aggregate sum of all transactions of value between two agents, such as one individual to one other individual, or between groups of individual activity, such as in organizations to other organizations, and between one nation and another nation. In tribal society people live close to the physical environment which supports them and determines their economic activity and economic organization showing how potential energy in the habitat and in the human population is utilized for the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services (Vivelo, 1978).

#### **1.4.3 Society**

The term society is often used in various senses. According to Cole (1920), “Society is the complex of organized associations and institutions within the community”. MacIver (1959) has given a succinct definition of Society. In his words, “Society is a web of social relationship”. Society usually, an entity

defined as some combination of the following (a) a group or population of people, (b) who share a similar language and set of customs, beliefs, institutions and traditions, and (c) who have a strong sense of distinct group identity (Vivelo, 1978).

#### **1.4.4 Culture**

It is the possession of culture that differentiates man from others and labels him a cultural animal. Man is able to recreate the natural environment by this peculiar endowment, called culture. His social life is governed by culture. Culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society” ( Tylor 1874). Culture is shared patterns of learned belief and behavior constituting the total life way of a people; the totality of tools, acts, thoughts and institutions of any given human population (Vivelo, 1978).

#### **1.4.5 Cultural Ecology**

Cultural Ecology is the study of human adaptations to social and physical environments. In Etic terms, the study of culture as an adaptational device; i.e., the study of the interrelationships between sociocultural systems and their habitats. In Emic terms, the study of the people’s cognitive orientation toward their habitat and their adaptation to it (Vivelo, 1978).

#### **1.4.6 Habitat**

Habitat is an ecological context, as an area in which the requirements of a specific animal or plant are met (Monkhouse, 2008). Habitat is the area in which an organism can live and which affords relatively favourable conditions for existence. Habitat is immediate surroundings, social and physical, in which a population lives it, is the external milieu to which population adapts (Vivelo, 1978). The environment comprises the resource base of a community’s most basic activities and the people manipulate and mould it in an effort to meet

their needs. Therefore, the study of the Habitat where a community lives and leads its life is essentially important particularly for knowing about the economic, social and cultural aspects. Because these aspects have direct and indirect concern with the environment of a given society, it is, therefore, essential to be acquainted without knowing the different component of the environment the economy, society and culture cannot be understood properly (Clapham, 1981).

### **1.5 Review of Literature**

In this section some relevant literatures are reviewed. These reviews of literatures are on some important ethnic communities of Indian Subcontinent in general and Darjeeling and places adjoining Eastern Himalaya focusing especially on Limbus in particular.

Beteille, (1971 ): In his book *Caste, Class and Power : Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* is a well researched book based on the field work experiences in sripuram village in Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu. The author has shown a descriptive analysis of the three caste group and agrarian classes and interaction between them. He discussed the caste structure of Tanjore district into three segments Brahmins, Non-Brahmins and Adi-Dravidians from one another. According to him castes are enduring groups, fairly well defined boundaries governed bu complex principles. Class on the other hand meant a category of persons occupying a specific position in the system of production. In the context of power Beteille reiterated the fact that it was difficult to define power in formal terms inspite of its location in formal structure such as panchayat and parties.

Bose, (1977): In his book *Tribal life in India* gives some insight into the tribe's social life. Tribes differ from others in their social system. They have retained their own marriage regulation. Almost all marry within their restricted local group, and are sometimes guided by their own elder or political chief in

external and internal affairs. In other words they form socially distinct communities who have been designated as tribes in the schedule for special treatment, so that within a relatively short time they can come within the mainstream of political and economic life of India.

Bisht, (2001): In his book *Ethnography of a tribe* is the first ever study of the little known Anwal community of Indo-Tibetan border, who are confined for a long time to hilly, forested and remote areas of Uttarakhand Himalaya. The centuries old isolation of the Anwals has made their identity undefinable in the broad spectrum of Indian social systems. The Anwal people reside in the higher reaches of the border of Kumaun Himalayas their settlements lie in Dharchula tehsil of Pithoragarh. The author has deeply studied the Anwal society and tries to evaluate their social position in the broad spectrum of the Hindu social organization. Keeping the view of nature and objectives the study is done in more scientific manner using purposive random sampling method. The main findings of the study shows the Anwal community is still backward and underdeveloped. Though they bears the common traits found in the Indian tribes yet not classified as a tribe, or in OBC category neither in the Scheduled caste. Therefore, the Anwal community has remained obscure for centuries.

Biwas, (2008): In his article *The Dhimals- A little known tribal group of Sub Himalayan West Bengal Historical perspective* study the Dhimals of Naxalbari Block of Darjeeling district. Dhimals the lesser known community are in marginal number. The author uses the secondary data for his present study to trace down the historical accounts and has highlighted the list of the ethnography of Dhimals done on the various aspects of their culture, economy, society and culture. The author has done a comparative study on the Dhimals of West Bengal and Nepal. The finding of the study shows that the condition of the Dhimal in Nepal is better than those of Dhimals who are residing in the Naxalbari, India. Even though Dhimal are included in OBC's but still faces

difficulties with their counter part of the same status due to their socio-economic background.

Brouah, (2011): In this article *Sustainable Tribal Development: A Case Study in Nagaland* the author focus on the health conditions among the Ao's tribe of Nagaland. Ao's are the tribe who lives in isolation where the Jhum cultivation is still a predominant occupation. The inaccessibility of infrastructure in the study area is one of the reasons of poor socio-economic conditions of the people. The health awareness among the Ao is negligible. The improper sanitation and lack of proper food have resulted in the outburst of many diseases/illness in their health. The conditions of child and womenfolk are very vulnerable during the time of pregnancy and child delivery. The absence of medical facilities and primary health centers shows the risk in the life of the patient during the hours of need. Moreover the idea regarding vaccination is absent among the people except few educated. Lack of regular checkup and burden of work in the domestic chores has lead to deplorable health conditions of the rural womenfolk, though the Christian missionaries are trying to improve the conditions of the Ao's. But due to the geographical and social constraints development is lacking far behind. Therefore, there is a need of good and effective effort from the Government to uplift them.

Caplan, (1970): *Land and social change in East Nepal* examines the relations between the indigenous tribal Limbus and the immigrant but now dominant Brahmans of the Ilam District of eastern Nepal. He argues that Limbu-Brahman relations are characterized by cleavage and interdependence. The two groups are divided by competition over land, by cultural differences, and by differences of caste rank. Two systems of land tenure, *Kipat* and *Raikar*, exist side by side in eastern Nepal. With the formation of the Kingdom of Nepal in the latter half of the eighteenth century large numbers of Hindu immigrants were encouraged to enter eastern Nepal. Many of the immigrants received grants of land from the Limbus. Until 1886 these lands continued to

be regarded as *Kipat*, subject to Limbu, but in that year the government allowed non-Limbus to convert to *Raikar* tenure any lands which they had been or would in future be given by Limbu owners. The main beneficiaries of these conversions have been the immigrant Brahmans. Brahmans are now the wealthiest and largest caste in the region. The economic position of Limbus is further weakened. Members of many tribal groups in eastern Nepal have adopted some of the Sanskrit customs of the dominant Brahmans. Limbus, however, has resisted Sanskritization and has attempted to maintain their distinct and separate identity. In a brief but suggestive discussion of the politics of culture Caplan analyses the relations among land tenure, the structure of the Limbu community and Limbu identity.

Chemjong, (1963): *Kiratkalin Bijaypur Ko Sankshipta Itihasa* The book highlights the History of Bijaypur and the role of Kirat King. Bijaypur was located in the Eastern side of Nepal before Limbuwan came into being. At that time it was popularly known as Kirat desh. In ancient time it was whole Kirat but after 600 years it was divided into two parts Limbuwan and Khambuwan due to interior hostility. In the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the lowland of Limbuwan state Morang was ruled by a Kirat king whose name was Sangla Ing. His ancestors had come from Kamrup and his Kingdom was stretched from Teesta River in the east to the Kosi River in the west to Sagurigadi in the north to Jalalgad in the south. After his death his son PunglaIng who succeeded him on the throne and adopted Hinduism and called himself by the name of Amar Rai which means the immortal king. The Bijaypur town remained capital of Limbuwan and Morang states up to 1774 A.D. It was founded and named Bijaypur by kirat king Bijaynarayan Rai of Sanglaing family himself in 1584 A.D. It was captured by another Kirat king Lo Hang Sen of Shan Makwan dynasty in 1609 A.D his descendents ruled it for seven generations. In 1769 A.D Dewan Bhudikama Rai, the Chief Minister of Bijaypur succeeded his King Kamdatta Sen and ruled Morang state from 1769

to 1773 A.D and from 1774 A.D this town fell into hand of Gurkha King Prithivi Narayan Shah.

Chemjong, (1978): *Kirat Mundhum* The Limbus, one of the main branches of the historic Kirat dynasty inhabiting the major part of eastern Nepal after the takeover by the Lichchhavi Kings, have their own distinct language, culture, tradition, religion and oral literature called Mundhum. The Mundhum is a common religious oral narratives of all Kirat people – Limbu, Rai, Yakkha, Sunuwar and Athpaharia in which Limbu is the one who designate themselves as “Yakthungba,” they call their language “*Yakthungbapan*” and their script “*Srijunga*”. They have a long tradition of narrating or reciting *Mundhums* and performing rituals and ceremonies in their own distinctive ways. *Mundhum* is a holy oral scripture transmitted verbally from one generation to another. This book explores into rites, ritual and customs of Limbus. The *Mundhum* occupies great value in Limbu culture. The book consists of legend, folklores, sermons, and prehistoric accounts, moral or philosophical exhortations in poetic language.

Das, (1964): *The Koras and some little known communities of West Bengal* have briefly studied the social and cultural life of Koras. He has also partly studied the some ethnic Nepali communities of West Bengal inhabiting the Darjeeling Himalaya. Regarding the study of Limbus he has studied the social and cultural aspects of this community. He also gives the rough sketch of their spatial distribution in Darjeeling. Where he mentioned Limbus are found largely in the Darjeeling district mainly in the Tea gardens, Khasmahal areas and Kalimpong subdivision. On the account of demographic data they numbered around 19835 in 1951 and were mostly an agriculturist people.

Dahal, (2003): In his article *Dhimal Culture: continuity and change* shows the Dhimal culture and their norms, rituals with the very social life in the modern era of continuity and change. Author in his article tries to trace their origin and

history mentioning the references of various researches done on them. The Dhimals fall into the category of janjati in Nepal but are no longer in isolation. Though there is a change in their society due to new economic opportunities but at the same time they have maintained continuity of their language and cultural practices among them.

Dutta, (2014): In this article *Limbus: An outline of their Music and Culture* the author has sketch down the cultural and musical aspects of Limbu rituals and tradition. The author tries to examine and understand the folk Limbu songs and its importance with the very social and cultural life depicting the social stories, dreams and daily affairs of everyday life.

Fitzpatrick, (2011) in his book *Cardamom and Class: A Limbu Village and its Extensions in East Nepal* has studied about the history of class formation in the traditional Limbu village of Mamangkhe. It discusses about the how the cardamom plantation and production change the village economy and distribution of wealth and resources in the village. He also explained how the migration of non-Limbus led to lose the land of Limbus in the hand of the non-Limbu population. This work sketches the details of the cardamom cultivation and the surfacing of economic differentiation in the socio-cultural and economic life of the Limbus in the village of eastern Nepal.

Gautam and Magar, (1994): *Tribal Ethnography of Nepal* Volume II has thrown some light on interesting and colourful culture of the Limbus. Emphasizing on their historical background the authors traces the genealogy of Limbus as *vamsavali*. Subba synonym to Limbu was the title given to them by the then ruler Prithivi Narayan Shah. The author also delineated the spatial geographical distribution of Limbus from past to present time. The authors have contributed a significant study on Limbus regarding their physical features, language, clan, family and life cycle rituals.

Gustavsson , (2013) : In this dissertation *Religious Change and Identity Construction among the Limboos of Sikkim* focussed on the impact of religion and religious change in construction of cultural identity and identity politics of a small marginalized tribal group of Sikkim. The author has made an attempt to understand the role of different ethnic Limbu outfits and association working as a cultural engineer for promoting the Limbu religion *Yumanism* for the identity construction to show clear drawn borders between them and others. In the contemporary ethno political landscape competing assertions of ethnic identities as a part of the desire to be desire to be recognized and visible to their surroundings is very important among Limbus. Because they have been politically ignored in the then colonial rule and for now in the present contest also are politically marginalized. Therefore, the author has shown how the tribal religious identity is no longer a sign of subalternity but rather a political consciousness, and in the same way how Limbu are emphasizing themselves as a distinct community with a respected religion.

Haimendorf, (1979): *The Gonds of Andhra Pradesh: Tradition and Change in an Indian Tribe* in his anthropological monograph the author has shown the changes that have occurred over a few decades in the Gond society. In this book he outlines the consequence of events affecting the position of the Gonds in between four decades and the policy on the succeeding governments could fill the whole volume. He also highlights the phratries as the main pillars of their social structure. To sketch their communal structure he describes their clan and kinship system. He devoted 30 pages in his volume to enumerate their Feudal system past and present context. Afterwards he has mentioned about the Brads, chief of the Gond, and their tribal justice and its social values in their life.

Jones, (1976): in his book *The Himalayan Woman: A study of Limbu women in marriage and divorce* studies the place of women occupy in a society dominated by men. The book mainly highlights the diversity of the feminine

condition based on material collected from the Limbus of the Terhathum region of Eastern Nepal. The authors start out from the initial observation that divorce among the limbus is frequent. At first sight, then, limbu marriages seem unstable. But these statistics are not helpful if one wants to find out the reality. The authors study successively the rules of inheritance, particularly in real properties, the definition of lineage and of clans and the three types of Limbu marriages. In their study of marriage the authors show that the Limbus of Therathum contrary to their brothers who live farther north, mostly practice arranged marriage. The young girl is consulted regarding the choice of her husband, but initiative remains with the boy. The authors have new elements at their disposal in explaining the divorce question. Though the men take the initiative in the marriage, the women have all the authority to accept it or not. True divorces after several years and after several children are rare. The Limbu marriage is therefore more stable than it would appear at first glance. And it is this stable marriage that is once again the women choice.

Jones, (1977): in his article *Courtship in an Eastern Nepal community* has described the courtship of Limbu community. According to author Limbu recognize three kinds of legitimate marriages magi biha or arranged marriage, choribiha or marriage by theft and Jaribiha or adulterous marriage. In all these marriage ceremony an institution of courtship known as the Dhannach plays an integral role. This courtship dance is unique among the various castes and ethnic groups of Nepal. In case of Limbu community it provides potential marriage partner an opportunity to exercise freedom of choice in the selection of spouse. A dhannach is an informal dance which is performed in festivals, markets and carnivals between boys and girls of marriageable age. It is a Limbu form of dating. There are certain rules in the dance which doesn't permit the members of the same clan of opposite sex to participate. Though, the *dhannach* seems unique to the Limbus of Eastern Nepal but Hindus look upon the dhannach as somewhat shocking form of behavior. Because of this

dance Limbu marriage has built the flexibility in the selection of a spouse that is not found among the non-limbus. But looking into the positive side the dhannach allows Limbu women to gain knowledge of available males that other Nepali women are unable to acquire. Finally the dhannach highlights the cultural differences between the Limbu, Hindu and Buddhist people in the Eastern Nepal. It reflects the conservative nature of Limbu kinship and social institution is experiencing rapid social change. Thus dhannach may represent an adaptive mechanism to the forces of change that tends to divide and segregate limbu communities among Hindu enclaves.

Jones, K. S., (1994): in her article *Limbu Spirit Possession- A case study* deals with her experience regarding Limbu spirit possession in a lady who used to do her household work. Author along with her husband hired a lady named *Kanchi* a limbu women who was often possessed by a limbu deity *Yuma*. The author briefly describes the condition and on what circumstances she was possessed by a limbu spirit. Another incident the author narrates was a story of *Sahili* who too possessed by a spirit but a evil one. Therefore Author tries to find out reason for this spirit possession in a limbu woman. She came to conclusion that that as such cases are not unusual in Nepal because quoting to Lewis statement author found that these spirit possession was done in order to gain attention, respect from a deprived section of women.

Kainla, (2010): in his article *Comparative study of the Limbu Folk Deities* studied the folk deities of Kirat Limbus and describes their origin, works, features, rites and rituals as well as the emergence of Priesthood and its long term effect on Limbu society. He made an attempt to classify Deities on the basis of gender, altars and food habits of deities along with necessary offerings required in their worshipping. He shows how the dominance of big traditions is deviating limbu recently from their religion and traditional values with the changing pace of life. With the emergence of a new a sect of Limbu religion Satyahangma with ideals of Hinduism influencing Limbu by giving new

names and meanings to the traditional deities in which the Limbu are losing their identity along with the loss of their link and continuity with their past.

Limbu, (1989): *Kirat parampara Limbu ritithiti ra Sanskriti* The book deeply explores into the rich, authentic traditional rites and rituals which Limbu people performed in their social, cultural and religious affairs of day to day life. The author has categorized the book into three parts starting with the Origin of Kirat and concluding with the significance of Mikwa Tongsing Mundhum. According to Limbu myth when Princess of Kush Island named Kangati was married to Mahadev (*Lord Shiva*) and from them a son was born whose name was Kirat. The very first King of Kirat was *Yalamber* later the King himself named as Kiratishwar.

Author has deeply thrown a light on many ceremonial limbu rituals like Metkhim (*marriage*), Yangdang Fangma (naming ceremony), Takshi (*Food feeding ceremony of baby*) and Khauma (*rites that has to be performed in one's death*). Thus, the book gives a good knowledge to insight oneself into the customs of Limbus.

Limbu, (2011): In her M.phil thesis *Practices of Resource Management in a Limbu Village* aims to find out the relation of Limbu with nature and the role of Government and NGOs in resource management. The study was conducted in Maunabuthuk VDC of Dhankuta district of East Nepal. The households were selected basically on the availability of people in their house and snow ball sampling method was applied. The agriculture was the main economic activity with only few of people who are associated with off farm activities. The agricultural land is divided into upland and lowland. Orange plantation is the main source of income. Limbus of the study area has established their own local system of management of their resources and shared a special relationship with the nature. The role of the government for resource management has been minimal in comparison to the NGOs while the role of

women in resource management has also been encouraging. Though Limbu people are managing their resources as per their needs and with their local Knowledge, still they have their own challenges to deal with and they also need to further develop their management strategies.

Limbu, D. K., (2008): In his Project report *Indigenous Knowledge of Limbu on Ecology, Biodiversity and Ethnomedicine* made an exploratory survey of Indigenous knowledge on ecology, biodiversity and ethno medicine taking Chokmagu and Ranita VDC of Panchthar district of East Nepal. The study revealed that Limbu people use over 200 plants for a number of purposes. Almost all the plants (96%) studied had Limbu names, which implies that the native has been close association with these plants from the past. Limbus of the study area copes with natural calamities by traditional methods. They use prophylactic measures utilizing local resources and indigenous ideas. Women were found to possess an astounding wealth of knowledge about medicinal plants and their use, often surpassing their male counterpart. Since this tradition of orally transmitting the knowledge has its own serious disadvantage, a parallel documentation practice must be encouraged.

Limbu (2008): *The status of women in Kirat religion* is a final report submitted to SIRF, Secretariat, Nepal is the study which made a humble attempt to explain the status of women in the Kirat community. Limbu, Rai, Yakhas and Dewan come under Kirat confederation because four of them are perfectly blended into the same customs, rituals and practices. Their main religion is Kirat guided by the principles of Mundhum which is the holy text book for them. In Kiranti society women has respect and power to their mate. The findings of the study shows that the status of women in Kirat society is good compare to average Nepali women. Their educational backwardness is the main reason for women underdevelopment. In today's context they feel equal to their male counterparts but to a certain extent they are excluded from the religious dimension for some socio-cultural affairs.

Mondal, (2001): In his article *An Ethnic Profile of the Himalayas* present an ethnic and tribal profile of the Himalayas both of western and eastern region in a comparative perspective where the emphasis has given on their economy, society and culture. The author has also traces down the historical background of these groups and has studied their cultural matrix in the Himalayas. The findings reveal that the people bear physical features of two major groups namely Caucasoid and Mongolioids. They mainly speak in Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages, but have their specific tribal dialect too. On the basis of their economic activities two cultural areas has identified mainly the cultural pastoral area and Jhum cultural area. The author concludes saying owing to natural and environmental peculiarities the Himalayan people are less exposed to outside world. Lastly, an emphasis has stress on the holistic and sustainable development by harnessing the local mountain niches which are compatible with the mountain specification.

Mondal and Chatterjee, (2010): In their article *People of Darjeeling Himalaya: A profile* presents the ethnic profile of Himalayan communities in aspect of their economy, society and culture. The authors have trace down the origin of different ethnic communities on the basis of their history, folklore and beliefs. The authors have studied the Nepali society in a broad spectrum along with major economic activities of the people. The paper is very informative and shows the transition and changes occurred among the major ethnic groups.

Mallick, (2009): *The Bhujel of Darjeeling Himalaya: a Bio-Social Study* has studied the anthropological profile of the Bhujel of Darjeeling Himalaya who has migrated from the Karnali region of Western Nepal. The term Bhujel was used frequently only after the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century and before it was termed as Ghanti. The study is holistic in orientation covering both biological and cultural aspects of Bhujel. In his study author has made an attempt to present the Bhujel life, activities, morphological and genetical features. The

area of Kalimpong subdivision namely Suruk, Samthar and Yanmakun has taken into consideration for the study purpose. The thesis is divided into two parts with twelve chapters. In part I the physical characteristics of the Bhujel has been examined and also an attempt had been made to examine their affinity with other Mongolioids group. In part II attempt has been made to illustrate an economic profile of the Bhujel through highlighting their economic status, conditions, pursuits and livestock. The material culture, festivals, rites and rituals of this community is studied along with their political organization and the changing nature of their culture. The author also emphasized and highlights the major problem of this community i.e. Social suppression, living in very isolated areas where infrastructural facilities are not properly developed. He tries to show how the rich material traits and indigenous knowledge system of this people has been vanishing very fast. Therefore author has stress on the need of documentation of this indigenous community and its endangered culture.

Mipun, (1987): In his book *The Mishings of Assam* is an auto ethnography work which deals with very sensitive plus interesting study on socio- cultural change among Mishing tribe of Assam. Socio-cultural changes because of culture contact through different media are inevitable in the modern dynamic world. Dynamism is a sign of progress. The Mishing is a major tribe of Assam. There has always been socio cultural as well biological interaction among the tribal and non-tribal population, and as a result the tribes are at different levels of modernization. The influence of Hinduism is very strong among many tribes. The Mishings were originally hill dwellers in Arunachal Pradesh. After their shift to plains of Assam, they became the part of the regional Assamese culture. Therefore, the author has made a modest attempt to study and analyze the interrelationship between acculturation, communication and development with special reference to the Mishings.

Nembang, (2007): In his project report, a study on the *Socio-Economic Condition of Limbu Community* in Nepal studied about socio-cultural aspect with economic consideration of two wards of Limbu households of Panchthar and Jhapa districts. His main objectives of the study were to understand economic aspects of the villagers in relation to their living conditions. The income analysis along with the migration and remittances of the respondents are carefully discussed in the research work.

Northey and Morris, (1987): In their book *The Gurkhas their manners, customs and country* briefly studied the history of Nepal. The book is divided into 6 parts. The first and second part deals with general information about Nepalese people and their customary laws and rituals. The authors have in detailed studied the various ethnic communities residing in the eastern, Western and Central Nepal. Therefore, the authors have attempted to give a picture of the country as a whole, and a description of the manners and custom of the various races inhabiting Nepal at that time. The part fifth section of the book is devoted towards the study of two Kirati people Rai and Limbu. The author has explained the gotra of Limbus along with the narration of wars between Limbus and other kings. The book deeply explores into the Limbu rituals of marriage, death rite and other expect of shamanism practices among Limbu. The material culture of Limbu is well studied along with the socio-economic setting.

Pradhan, (2014): In this article *Marital Rituals and Customs of the Limbus* marriage is studied with descriptive and analytical perspectives. The paper discussed the various forms and rituals highlighting the internal cleavages in terms of their social – cultural set up. The most common form of marriage among Limbus is elopement marriage. But the traditional Limbu ritual associated with the arranged marriage is well underpinned in this article. How this traditional marriage customs and rituals bind the both marital parties in a more reciprocal value is shown by the author. The paper highlights the status

of Limbu women who enjoys absolute freedom and liberty as compare to other groups in choosing her partner. Thus, the author has made a very good approach to understand certain cultural codes of the traditional Limbu marriage.

Panda (2015): In her book *Culture, Heritage and Identity – The Lepcha and Mangar Communities of Sikkim and Darjeeling* is about the documentation of the cultural pursuits and quest for identity issue among Lepchas and Mangar. Based on research experience of more than one and half year the author has shown how this two communities perceive their cultural identities through roots and routes of tradition and heritage. The study is primarily based on field trips supplemented by the available written documents representing the two varied sets of examples of the processes of cultural construction or reconstruction.

Rai, (2012): This M.phil Dissertation *Social structure, cultural value and Transformation – A study of Rai community in Sikkim* is an ethnographic research work carried out in the three villages of Sikkim. The study basically focused on the changing social and cultural environment of Rai community. Where she has used some fundamental concepts and has related it with the works of Srinivasan, Karl Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Dipankar Gupta to justify her work in relation to social change. Her findings reveal many new things among which emerging of new religious sentiment among Rai community is very important. Regarding social change new generation are keener to adapt and follow popular culture. But the old generation wants to attach with traditional norms and rituals. She showed how the state had played a prominent role in preserving the traditional and cultural roots of Rai community by constructing Kirat temples and observing major Rai festivals. The introduction of Rai language in elementary school and the revival of old aged traditions of keeping three hearth stones in every household.

Roy, (2003): *Dynamics of Social Formation among the Lepchas* has studied the social formation among the Lepchas with land as the central unit of attention. He deeply studied the different Lepcha villages of Darjeeling District along with their Geographical and Historical perspectives. He further analyzed the changing economic parameters in Lepcha traditional agricultural method by means of various factors like labour, transfer, ownership and landscape along with the institutional sources of capital and how the adaptation of new technique and innovation has helped Lepchas to sustain a better livelihood. Author has also shown how the major agricultural products mainly food items besides being utilized for consumption are distributed to meet the obligation i.e. social and ritual. Thus the entire work and relating chapters of the Thesis tried to establish a link to identify the type of Lepcha social formation.

Sanyal, (1965): *The Rajbansis of North Bengal* is the first empirical documentary of the Rajbansi community which presents a demographic account of this people. The author's describes their social, economic and religious life. He also highlights their material culture, social structure on the basis of their relationship, mode of exclusion from this community. He throws light on their dialect and outlines their grammar. He also makes an outstanding documentary on their songs and dances. To examining their religious and festive life he traces out a remarkable sign of Sanskritization in this community. In this book he draws a careful discussion about the continuity and change of their traditional culture.

Sanyal, (1973): *The Meches and the Totos-Two Sub-Himalayan Tribes of North Bengal* In this book the author has studied about the two Sub-Himalayan tribes Meches and Totos of North Bengal. The Meche tribes are sparsely distributed in Assam valley, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri Duars areas. He has studied the different aspects of their social and cultural life. He further insight into their daily functioning of life and thus presents the vivid

picture of their day to day activities like sports etc and the description of their possessed material culture in which they are shaping their life. Meches are isolated tribe having their own traditional culture, and rituals of ceremonial to death rite in which author has highlighted their ethics and moral values in terms of religion and their term of relationships. While studying another primitive tribe Totos author has taken into consideration of Toto dominating area of Totopara in Jalpaiguri. Toto are the most backward and secluded tribes of North Bengal. He analyzed their Social and Economic life where they mostly depend on forest for their Livelihood. They are away from the modern materialistic life hence their living condition is simple. He studied the material aspects like dress, food habits of the Totos and says their conditions improve when this tribe came into limelight for their intense study and research work. Under the initiative of West Bengal Government to a certain extent their condition has improved by the maintenance of roads and establishment of shops, schools and other services. The social organization of Toto is very rigid they prefer to marry within their own community but some exception are there i.e. they cannot marry if they belong to same gotra or sib and like this author has describes their language, ceremonial function, religious rites and death rites.

Sanyal, (1979): *The Limbus-A South Eastern Himalayan Kirata People* In this book author has studied the Kirata race Limbus regarding their origin by giving account of their historical past and how these tribe flourished in South Eastern Himalayan region of India. He highlights their social and cultural aspects by throwing some light on their Language, Religion and cultural ceremonies and different ritual performed in marriage and mortuary rites. He focused on the social and domestic life of Limbus and their relationship with the nature, people and places.

Sagant, (1996): *The Dozing Shaman-The Limbus of Eastern Nepal* this book is collection of essays on the Limbus of eastern Nepal, a Tibeto-Burmese

speaking group who live in the valleys located between Mount Everest and Mount Kanchenjunga. The book revolves around two main subjects. The first concerns the shamans-their healing power, their command over the elements, and their power to legitimize local headmen. The second theme deals with the residues of traditional political organization which, until recent times, were characterized by a system of 'great men' chosen by the gods and recognized by the community. A number of themes concerning traditional life are also dealt with in this book such as children's independence, 'marriage by abduction', and integration within the Nepali nation. The book also questions certain notions of ethnography such as the cultural conditioning of the observer, and the relation between myth and reality.

Sharma, (2010): In his master thesis entitled *Socio- Economic Conditions of Limboo in Sikkim – A case study of Lunchok Salangdang Gram Panchayat unit* has made a humble attempt to study the Limboo community. Sikkim is one of the small Himalayan kingdom's in the colonial time ruled by Namgyal dynasty. The western Sikkim portion was ruled and populated by dominant Limbu tribes. After the post colonial rule Sikkim subject was under Indian government which declares it as the one of the state of Northeast India. Limbu are called as Tsong in Sikkim. The main concentration of the study is focused in small Limbu hamlet a micro unit of Luchok Salangdang gram panchayat. The main objectives of the study are to understand the socio-economic conditions and the interpersonal relationship with non-limbu of the village. The major findings of the study reveal that male population is more than female. The impact of modernization and globalization has influenced the Limbus. The main economic activities are farming and despite of their reservation position they have not been able to do wellbeing in their social sphere. Majority of the households are encircled with the vicious circle of poverty.

Subba, (1990): in his article *Clear Mountains, blurred horizons-Limbu perception of their physical world* shows the belief of limbu in indigenous knowledge especially regarding management of natural resources with the help of ethnographic materials an attempt has made to study the physical environment with their social and spiritual aspects. He analyzed who are the limbus and compare their ecological condition with other groups of people living in the same habitat. He shows the importance of Mundhum in the religious affairs of Limbus while performing various rituals. He describes the economic history of limbus and their sustaining strategy for livelihood showing pastoralist as their main occupation and landownership system of Kipat among limbus. Lastly he states that though the limbu conception of their physical world is interlinked with their spiritual and social worlds but they lack the scientific knowledge of interdependence between the various elements of physical environment and thereby cause great harm.

Subba, (1990): in his article *Limbu Ethnicity at Crossroads* has analyzed the formation of Limbu Ethnicity in Eastern Nepal and Adjoining parts of Western Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills. Limbu being the member of Kirata origin racially belongs to Indo-Mongoloids family and linguistically to the Tibeto-Burman family. The author has shown the formation of ethnic identity among kiratas and how Sarva Kirant Chumlung or All Kirata Association tries to bring them in one roof but indeed of cultural similarities, the linguistic and geographical barriers have played important role in preventing the growth of the Kirata Nationality. There was a strong sense of nationalism among Limbus of Eastern Nepal in favour of Limbuwan or Limbu kingdom but whereas the Limbus residing in western Sikkim and Darjeeling hills were completely aloof from this sentiment because they were never part of Limbuwan though they have similar socio-cultural linkages. Whereas the Limbus of Sikkim were part of another ethnic association called *Lhomentsongsun* during 17<sup>th</sup> century formed of coalition of Bhutia ,Lepcha and Limbu This was completely a political

move of the then ruling Bhutias to strengthen their rule in Sikkim as they always felt threatened by Non-Bhutia communities. But this association couldn't really pick up its gears due to many reasons and thus Lhomentsongsum remain as an underground organization. Lastly Gorkha identity flourished and distracted many of them from the Limbu nationalism. But it is still doubtful if Limbus will remain satisfied with the Gorkha nationalism because there are chances they may fall back upon the Kirata Nationalism.

Subba, (1999): *Politics of culture: A study of three Kirata communities in the Eastern Himalaya* has tried to reconstruct the social and cultural life of the three communities of Kirata-the Limbus, the Rais and the Yakhas living in the Eastern Himalayan on the basis of various historical and well as ethnographic data. His work describes about the present situation of active process of reinventing linkages not only within one's own groups but also at the level of cognate concepts like 'Kirata', 'Janjati', and 'Mongol'. The author has describes the culture of the Kiratas from birth to the death rituals in relation to the Tagadharis. The language and the religion is another aspect shown here, like the dialectical variations across the different places and regions are more pronounced among the Rais then among the Limbu and Yakhas. Binding all the Kiratas groups together by one Kirat Language is not easy as imposing one language over the other had always proved to be counter-productive but rather it is the common sense of having lost their respective language over the one Nepali language that binds these groups. The study further states that the Kiratas cannot afford to ignore those Tagadharis elements which have over the time fused with their own culture as it could also affect their own culture but this will not certainly help the process of internal homogenizations and external differentiation at National and State levels. Subba's literature has overall traced the similarities between the Limbus and other Kiratas belonging to Nepal as well as those in Sikkim (northeastern region of India). It presents the process of various organizations (family, kinship, political, socio-

economic, religion, linguistic, culture) and their role in bringing together the Kiratas. The gradual socio-cultural degradation of these communities explains their need to reconstruct their identity.

Subba, (1999): in his article *Limbu Nationalism and Integration* has analyzed the marginalization of Limbus by King of Nepal on the ground of subjugating in July 1774 conforming the customs and traditions, rights and the privileges of the Limbus but the fact that it was not honored and has become a major cause of the resurgence of Limbu nationalism in Nepal. In 1866, The Nepalese government passed a discriminatory legislation to all such Kipat lands converted into government land and even could not be reconverted into Kipat even if the original owners cleared the mortgage. The Limbu revolted against this legislation and orders were passed between 1902 and 1903 banning of the transferable of land. The Kipat system a form of communal landownership of Limbus was finally abolished during the 60s of the present century. The Limbu nationalism in the Eastern Himalayas resembles the formative state of nationalism where Limbus are yet to delineate the boundaries of their nation from those of the neighboring nations which consists of confronting dense assemblage of cultural, racial, local and linguistic categories. Limbus may strive for a confrontation with the nation states either singly or in association with other such marginalized nations or will be more sensitive to geographical and cultural peripheries of Nepal due to the state arrogance.

Subba, R. J., (1998): *The Philosophy and Teaching of Yuma Samyo (Yumaism)* describe about the belief system and philosophical doctrines of Yuma Samyo (Samyo = religion) or *Yumaism* of Limbus. *Yuma Samyo* is a way of life for the Limbus, the belief system is traditionally handed over to the descendants, generations to generations through ThungsapIam (oral *Mundhum* or Scripture). It provides brief account of the creation of the Universe and the human race by Goddess *Tagera Ningwaphuma*. It further describe the eighteen Dens (loks) of the Universe in which the highest, sacred place is *Sangram Pedang den* where

*Tagera Ningwaphuma* resides (top of the Universe) to *Khemading Yongsong den* (bottom of the Universe) surrounded by flames of fire (hell). Thus, according to this study, the Limbus believes that there are nine worlds (loks) above the earth (inclusive) and nine worlds (loks) below the earth in this universe. The earth is between the two worlds. Yumaism believes that there are two supernatural powers –Malevolent and Benevolent to reattribute and reward the vicious and virtuous deeds of human beings. This study describes the origin of religious priests, their ranking, their heredity and vocation. The *Phedangba, Sambas, Yeba', Satyahangma and Yuma* are the Limbus religious practitioners who fulfill both the role of a religious priest as well as local healers. The heredity linkage is important because if the individual cannot indicate his heredity, he is not recognized; both patrilineal and matrilineal affiliation is recognized. It shows four kinds of different religious priests and their functional differences and their gears.

Subba, R. J., (2012): *Yumaism, the Limboo Way of Life* in his book the author has presents the ancient religion of Limbu tribal society Yumaism. The book documents the evolution and ideology of Yumaism which plays an effective role to strengthen the social and religious institution of Limbus. A structured approach is attempted by the author to explore the conceptual beliefs, ethnic ideas, and folk ideas. The book studies Yumaism from a philosophical point of view and seeks to resolve some philosophical problems of incoherency.

Subba, (2015): In this article *Relevance and Significance of Proverbs among the Limboos of Sikkim: A Socio-Cultural Perspective*. The author has shown the importance and relevance of proverb in the day today affairs of Limboos. Based on the three process of methodology she has collected these Limboos proverbs from the western portion of Sikkim by formal and informal methods. She had shown how these proverbs can be interrelated in everyday life. These proverbs are the source of Knowledge, wisdom and how the way of life is often guided by it. Furthermore, proverb provides an insight into their socio-

cultural life and gives a glimpse of inner complexity of Limboo people.

Subba, (2015): In her article *Shamans and their ethno medical practices among the Limboo tribe of Sikkim* Subba talks about the degrading status of Limbu shaman in the Himalayan state of Sikkim. Her paper explores as how the developmental strategy has led to the loss of indigenous medical knowledge among Limboo tribe of Sikkim.

Sarkar and Dasgupta, (2000): *Ethno-Ecology of Indian Tribes* In this book the author has studied how tribal cultures flourish in the specific ecological niche. The present volume deals with the Indian tribal situation in varied geographical settings. To understand this situation, selected tribes from Chotanagpur of Bihar, Bastar of Madhya Pradesh, Malkangiri of Orissa and Andaman and Nicobar are taken as samples in the present study. The author attempts to shows how the natural environment plays an important role. The traditional knowledge of treatment of various diseases and the conservation of biodiversity as well are also discussed in the perspective of ethno-science of the tribal people of India. The authors have tried to depict how eco-friendly development planning and programme could be possible in the light of the existing ecological conditions.

Sharma (2001): *Society and Economy of the Lhops (Doyas) of Bhutan* has intensively studied the Lhops of Bhutan regarding their social and cultural life. He focuses on their habitation along with the social setup and their daily economic activities to sustain their livelihood and showed how transition has occurred in their activity due to impact of modern education system. While studying their social organization he found it to be matrilineages having distinct titles, origins and associated ancestral deities. Lhops being a minority community have been over shadow by the dominant other tribal group living in the Bhutan. Thus the author work has stressed on the need of good environment for the development of Lhops without any cultural prejudices

from outside in order to be treated as equals to recognize and appreciate their distinct cultural identity.

Thapa, N. (2017): *Phedangma among Limboos of Sikkim: Change and Continuity*, in this dissertation the author has done the ethnographic research work on Limbu Shamans and their role in the society. She has examined the changing the status of Phendangma in Limbu society and their importance in preserving the cultural essence of Limbus through the art of Shamanism.

Yonghang (2011): *Intra Socio-Cultural dimension of Exclusion – A study of Limbu Women* this is the project report submitted to SIRF Secretariat, SNV Nepal, Lalitpur on the issue of discrimination against women and their subjugation of exclusion in socio-cultural spheres of life. In every part of the country women are subdued by male authorities. They are treated as the most vulnerable and are always placed in the subordinate position. Nepalese society is rooted in discrimination based on religion and culture which has perpetuated mainly on the exploitation of less access group in national mainstream and partially on the exploitation of women. Traditional barriers prevent them for going out, studying, working outside. Even they don't have legal rights over the property. Their only sole responsibility lies on the domestic chores. Limbu women are defected mostly in four ways women, as Janjati, as Janjati women and as Poor. Limbu women have to face socio-cultural exclusion. Gender discrimination within own group and the poverty are the main factors responsible for their exclusion. This exclusion is forcefully imposed upon them both knowingly and unknowingly.

### **1.6 Research Gap:**

Limbu has been overlooked and obscure from the mainstream of tribal affairs in Darjeeling hills because very few research works has been done upon them in comparison to other dominating tribal groups of Darjeeling Himalaya. In the various account and writings of foreign scholars like Vansittart, Caplan,

Hamilton and others Limbus are acknowledged as Indigenous Tribe of Eastern Himalayan region. In their writing the emphasis and study was focused on Limbus of the Eastern Nepal. The Limbu population is mostly concentrated in the Eastern Nepal but Limbu also inhabits the hills of Darjeeling and Sikkim from 17<sup>th</sup> century after migrating from the rural parts of Eastern Nepal. Hardly any attempts have been made to study and explore the rich and authentic lifestyle of Limbus in Darjeeling hills in comparison to Limbus of East Nepal. The Limbus of both India and Nepal comes under the same race and language group but yet there is a vast difference between them due to geographical and socio-economic factors. The main research gap lies in understanding their Social and Cultural aspect in relation to Habitat. The proposed study on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya was not done earlier. Therefore, this study will fill up the research gap in understanding the different aspects of economy, society and culture of Limbus in Darjeeling Himalaya.

### **1.7 Aims and Objectives of the Study:**

- i. To examine the spatial distribution of Limbus in Darjeeling Himalaya.
- ii. To examine the basic demographic attributes of the limbus on the basis of field study.
- iii. To examine and analyze the economic conditions of the Limbus in Darjeeling Himalaya.
- iv. To delineate the social and cultural behavior of the Limbus with particular reference to the aspects of their material culture, family, marriage and kinship system.
- v. To highlight the religion, religious practices and festivals of the limbus along with the contemporary changes in their religion and culture.
- vi. To examine the identity dynamics including their adaptation process in the local, natural and social environment.
- vii. To study the status of women in Limbu society.

### **1.8 Research Questions:**

1. What are the main economic activities of Limbus in Darjeeling hills?
2. What changes has occurred among the limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya in terms of socio-economic conditions?
3. How are they trying to adjust their traditional belief system and forms of worship with growing impact of Hinduism and other forces?
4. What changes have occurred in their dress, housing pattern, tools and implements due to the impact of the regional culture?
5. How Limbus in urban setting distinct themselves from other communities through their cultural practices?
6. What role does Limbu/Kirati association plays in shaping the identity of this community?
7. What was the ethnic and social history of the limbu on the basis of their oral traditions?

### **1.9 Research Methodology**

The main purpose of this research study is to gain insights on the Limbu community. The design of this research work has been formulated on the basis of its nature depending on the study area, the informants or respondents and the tools and techniques for data collection. The research work is purely exploratory and analytical based on the principles of structure – functional approach with diagnostic outlook. For getting a perfect picture of the Limbu community the data from both the primary and secondary sources are taken into considerations. The facts relating to Limbu society, culture and traditions has been gathered through analyzing the textual materials focussing on the various regions of Eastern Himalayas mainly Nepal and Sikkim. The empirical facts are mainly collected through rigorous field investigations among the three dominated Limbu villages of Darjeeling Himalaya.

### **1.9.1 Sources of Data**

The Present research work is explanatory and descriptive one. The field work is conducted on the three Limbu villages of Darjeeling Himalaya. The information required for the study is collected from both the primary and secondary data. Various published and unpublished materials were consulted for better understanding the Limbu community. While empirical facts were collected through intensive field work.

#### **1.9.1.1 Primary Sources**

The primary data for the study was collected through intensive field work among the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya. Standard tools and techniques were adopted for the same. An interview schedule was prepared for conducting household census survey and basic socio- economic data was collected. There after key informants were interviewed both in the form of structured and unstructured. Case study method was used for collecting primary data regarding the rite de passage, women status and other cultural aspects. Finally participant observer was an important tool to collect the oral narratives, myths in revealing the social and economic condition of the Limbu communities living in the fragile terrain of Darjeeling Himalaya.

#### **1.9.1.2 Secondary Sources**

Secondary information from various published and unpublished materials were collected to incorporate in writing of the thesis. Published books, book chapters, journal articles, unpublished Ph.D thesis and various census reports along with some statistical hand books were considered as secondary sources for the study.

### **1.9.2 Tools and Techniques of the Data Collection**

The information for this study were collected both from the primary and secondary sources. The data on ideal concept of society and culture along

with the social history of the Limbus were gathered from the published materials. The information furnished by the various departments in the context of this study reflecting the Limbu society and culture has also been taken into consideration. Various published and unpublished materials were also consulted for better understanding the economy, society and culture of Limbu habitat both from the cultural and historical perspectives. While the empirical facts were collected through intensive field work on three selected villages of Darjeeling Himalaya.

The primary data were collected through conventional anthropological and geographical tools and techniques, viz households' survey, interviews, case studies, group discussions and observations. The location and physical maps are drawn with the help of Geographic Information System (GIS).

The study is based on data collected through intensive field investigation. Both primary and secondary data has been collected. Simple random sampling method is adopted. The basic primary data is gathered from house to house census survey. Conventional tools and techniques like census survey, interview, key informant interview, group discussion and participation observation etc was adopted for data collection.

To obtain inclusive data standard interview schedules were prepared for the respondents for collecting the required information. A census schedule was also prepared for collecting basic demographic and socio – economic characteristics of the selected villages. Though the questions were in English, the informants were interviewed in Nepali. Information was also obtained through informal discussion from the members of the family and locality elderly persons. Formal group discussions were also arranged for data collection with the member of Limbu associations and Development board. The bulk of data for this study were collected through the households' survey, direct observation, case studies, and by interviewing

the selected informants having the knowledge regarding the Limbus with the help of structured interview schedule.

At the initial stage of field work, the pilot survey was conducted on the selected villages to have an idea of the basic demographic attributes. The second stage was to collect the data through intensive study. The depth study was made through the case studies. The interview were conducted by taking prior – appointment with the respondents. On an average each interview took about an hour depending on the type and nature of the respondents. Informants who were absolutely illiterate or had a very little education faced a problem to responds the queries. Difficulties were also faced with regard to accumulation of data relating the past history of villages from old people because of lapse of memory and recall.

### **1.9.3 The Field and the Study Area**

The study has grown out of field research in three Limbu villages selected from each subdivision of Darjeeling Himalaya namely Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong and Kalimpong. Thus out of three villages Teesta Valley Tea Garden is selected from Darjeeling, Dungra Khasmahal from Kalimpong and Bungkulung from Kurseong. The research study is limited to these areas because the Limbu population is found dominantly. The study areas are different from the basis of economic activities and geographical impediments. The people are ready to share their opinions with more comfort and ease. Considering these realities, the researcher has carefully selected those areas as regional representation is necessary for understanding the local variations. Where the informants are well acquainted and have the maximum number of Limbu households. This was important for bringing out the reliable information and creating a comfortable environment for talks and discussions with the household members. Though ultimately Limbu population is the criterion, yet it

cannot be said that the selected villages are only inhabited by the Limbus. While selecting the villages certain adjacent hamlets were also included for the sake of this study.

The fieldwork was conducted from November 2013 to February 2017 with the help of a local friend. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 2013 the pilot survey was conducted in Darjeeling Subdivision to select the villages for field work. The researcher met with the president and General Secretary of All India Limbu Association on 13<sup>th</sup> May to collect the information regarding the Limbu settlements. On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013, researcher met with the President of *Yakthung Soong Choomvo* of Kalimpong on his invitation for *Manghoop Puja*. The meeting with the Association executives was very fruitful because the researcher could collect the ample information regarding the Limbu habitation and thereby selected the study areas.

The first field work was conducted in the Teesta Tea Garden from 30.11.2013 to 17.12.2013 followed by March – May 2014. The Last final phase of collecting information for data gap was done in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of August 2014. The researcher then moved on to his next study area Dungra Khasmahal for collecting information. The first phase of field work started from 24.8.2014 to 8.9.2014. The second phase of field work was done from 23.05.2015 to 27.05.2015 followed by last phase of field work on 18.02.2016 to 22.02.2016 in Dungra Khasmahal. This time the West Bengal Limbu Development was already formed and the head office was itself in Dungra Khasmahal of Kalimpong. The researcher had the meeting with the Board Chairman regarding the functioning of Board and its implications towards the weaker section of the Limbus. The field work was stopped after visiting the Dungra Khasmahal because of deteriorating health of the researcher. On March 2016 the researcher had his major operation for which the fieldwork was halted till the fully recovery of the health.

From 11.07.2016 the last village for the field work was initiated in Bungkulung. The field was done for almost a week in the village. Since the village was comparatively smaller than the other two surveyed villages. The second and the final phase of field work was started from 29<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and completed by the 1<sup>st</sup> week of February 2017.

In addition to these demographic and social attributes, the physical and locational features of the villages were also studied to understand the geographical pattern in varied ecological aspects relating to Limbu habitat. The selected villages thus represent the interior and fringe villages. In terms of location Teesta Valley Tea Garden and Bungkulung are interior villages and Dungra Khasmahal is the fringe village. In this research emphasis on village studies has given because village is the most important unit of geographical and anthropological investigation of understanding the rural area. Although most of the primary data were collected from the above mentioned villages, but many observations were made in course of the study related to wider areas.

#### **1.9.4 Rapport Establishment**

The present empirical study was primarily depended on the informants. Naturally rapport establishment is the most vital to carry the research smoothly. Being from the same region, there was no problem to conduct the survey because of the language familiarity. But in some cases, it required a help from the locals to understand and examine the relevant situation of the Limbus. In the beginning the researcher faced some of the difficulties in doing the fieldwork. The main difficulty was to convince them regarding the study purpose. At first they felt that the researcher is the member of development board who had come to see their problems.

But when they later come to know the truth they were reluctant to answer. The villagers at first were so reluctant to share their views and opinions.

Then, the researcher had explained them the aims and objectives of the study for conducting the survey. To tackle the problem, the researcher had to convince the people by stating the fact that their information is purely for academic purposes. With this assurance, they agreed to extend their co-operations. The friendly relations and support was developed with them in due course of time. They happily responded the queries. Then, the researcher frequently visited the study areas to collect data relating to the study purpose.

#### **1.9.4.1 Selection of Informants**

It was determined to conduct empirical and holistic study on every Limbu households of the selected villages. Information on Limbu households of the selected villages was obtained from the village official's i.e. the members of the panchayat, Limbu associations and also from the knowledgeable senior persons of the village. In most of the cases the information provided by these two categories of people did not tally. Therefore, to gather necessary basic information and data the household surveys were conducted among the Limbus living permanently in the villages. To map out the households or families of the Limbu, kinship linkage has taken into consideration and persons living under the same roof have considered being a household. There were more than 300 permanent Limbu households in the study area of Teesta Valley Tea garden, nearly 250 households in Dungra Khasmahal and exactly 107 Limbu households in Bungkulung.

This information was collected from the official record of the Limbu Development board office and the Limbu associations of the study areas. For the present study, 50 and 45 percent samples of the Limbu households were collected from Teesta Valley Tea garden and Dungra Khasmahal through intensive field work based on simple random sampling technique.

In Bungkulung the all Limbu households were surveyed. The sum total of 369 Limbu Households was selected for the study. Among them 150 and 112 households are from Teesta Valley Tea Garden and Dungra Khasmahal covering the 50% and 45% of the sample size. Whereas, in the Bungkulung the total 107 households were surveyed covering the 100 % of the sample size.

To obtain relevant information necessary for the research informants were selected from all the villages. The informants were chosen in such a way so they could represent every section of the village community with particular reference to their socio- economic conditions. Some non Limbu individuals were also interviewed. Two types of informants were selected on his reliability and sincerity from the study areas. The key informants and the occasional helpers or informants, help are taken to understand the rite de passage of the Limbu groups. They were also used for furnishing most of the qualitative data on the basis of some set of questions framed for the present study.

### **1.9.5 Data Processing and Analysis**

The data collected through field study were processed and analyzed after necessary checking and editing. In course of data processing the completeness and accuracy of data was looked carefully. Tabulation was done manually. Data were analyzed from both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Simple statistical methods are applied consisting mostly of percentages were calculated. The analysis of qualitative data was made through systematic and analytical descriptions of the collected facts.

### **1.10 The Fieldwork experiences and Problems**

This study has certain major limitations. Since the empirical study on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya covering their socio – economic conditions is undertaken for the first time. The benefits of earlier research studies were not

available. Hence as an explanatory study it has its own limitations. Secondly, the study was undertaken on only three villages of the Darjeeling Himalaya mainly on the basis of convenience as the study. Hence the observations drawn from this study cannot be generalized too far covering the whole of the region.

Thirdly, the re-emergence of Gorkhaland Movement with uncertain strikes had hampered the field work. The fragile topography results in massive Landslides in monsoon season also delimit the research work through road blockages. However, irrespective of all these limitations and problems, researcher had tried to spend more and more time in field area for collecting the data. Though, the study provides broad clues about the Limbus.

### **1.11 Organization of Chapters**

The thesis is organized into eight chapters on the basis of in-depth fields' studies among the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya and these are divided into three parts. Part one is the background, which consists of three chapters showing the social history, physical and demographic attributes of the study area. The first chapter is Introduction which introduces the problem including the background, a brief description of major concept used in the study, review of literature, research gap, aims and objectives along with the research questions of the study, research methodology, research ethics, and significance of the study and limitations of the study. The second chapter provides the socio- historical background of the Limbus in Eastern Himalayas in general and Darjeeling Himalaya in particular. The third chapter depicted the physical and demographic attributes of the study areas on the basis of data collected from the field.

Part two is dealing with economy, society and culture of the Limbus. It consists of two chapters. The fourth chapter is about the economic profile of the Limbus and their sustainable rural livelihood in the study areas. The major economic activities and economic status is discussed with the help of data

collected from the fieldwork. The fifth chapter deals with the aspects of society and culture of the Limbus where the cultural attributes is depicted on the basis of tradition, spiritualism and religious attributes.

Part three is consists of three chapters analyzing the Limbu women status, identity dynamics and conclusions. The sixth chapter provides the role and status of Limbu woman. The chapter makes a humble attempt to understand the importance of womenfolk in Limbu society. It also highlights the contribution of woman in the family economic support system. The seventh chapter deals with the multidimensional process of the Limbu adaptation and integration with the greater society of Darjeeling Himalaya in relation to their cultural identity and dynamics. The eighth chapter is on the major findings, discussion and conclusion summing up the entire thesis on the basis of field data presented in the above said chapters of the thesis.

### **1.12 Research Ethics**

An ethnographic research coupled with social science and geographical aspects always allows you to understand the human variation with its environmental concerned. Like every research some unique problems may encountered in studying a community for which one has to remember and follow the code of research ethics. Researcher strictly followed the code of conducting a research. An ethical behaviour goes beyond simply not harming his study populations irrespective of caste, colour and creed. For the proper understanding the researcher spends time with them by staying in their village. The detailed data were collected prior to their intimation and consent after explaining them the research objectives. The researcher has tried his best to establish friendly relations with the villagers to erase their hesitation and gain some love from them.

### **1.13 Significance of the Study**

The present study on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya: Aspects of their Economy, Society and Culture in relation to their Habitat is exploratory in nature and attempts to provide scientific information. The study brings out the essence of Limbu society and culture of the Darjeeling Himalaya. The data collected from the extensive field work will be the source for planner and administrators belonging to the various fields and departments to understand Limbu community in better ways. The findings of the present study will surely enhance the knowledge about the Limbu tribe who has been living obscure in the fragile terrain of Darjeeling Himalayas. Therefore, this study is a humble attempt to present and understand the ethnographic detail of the Limbus living in Darjeeling Himalaya. The findings of this research work shall be helpful for the planning and policy makers to understand this community for over all development.

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## Chapter 2

# LIMBUS OF DARJEELING HIMALAYA: A SOCIO - HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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### 2.1 Introduction

Concealed beneath the histories of Himalayan kingdom, reign of kings and in their quest for victory and state building process, lies the history of a fringe tribe known as Limbu and their kingdom Limbuwan. Historically the Limbus had been living in Limbuwan from centuries. The kingdom of Limbuwan and its vast boundaries covering the tracts of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalaya has always embraced Limbu as son of this soil. Occupancy of Limbuwan by the Gorkha ruler in the past (1774) and lack of administration in the present day has reduced the Limbus into a fringe tribe leading to a subordinate position submerged below the major Hindu ethnic Nepali fold.

Political antagonism in the past with the process of reconstruction and reunification of Greater Nepal including Limbuwan has resulted in their Kipat land being divided into two, thereby making the Limbus, a community straddling between Eastern Nepal and Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya. Great battles were fought and new political boundaries were drawn by replacing the old governance. The bulk of Limbu populations were slaughter, killed mercilessly and exiled from their own homeland in the Eastern Himalayas (Subba, 2013).

Sections of Limbus who inhabit the hills of Darjeeling and Sikkim from time immemorial are acculturated which has overshadowed their origin, history and oral narratives. Limited research compared to others and misinterpretation had led the Limbus into the depth of unknown community battling with own

existence and underdevelopment. Thus the Limbu remained stagnant and unnourished as a secluded tribe of Darjeeling Himalaya, West Bengal. Aloof from Government facilities and provision, with vanishing cultural traits and heritage Limbu culture indeed needs preservation. The identity of Limbus in Darjeeling Himalayas has become a very complex issue in contemporary times. Moreover the influences of dominant religion have progressively alienated Limbus from their traditional religion and acculturate them into Hinduization. Though the effort to maintain the internal homogeneity is largely undermined by the external forces drifting Limbus away from their traditional practices (Subba, T.B., 2010). The merging of Limbus into the greater sphere of heterogeneity paves a vague and obscure identity.

The authentic ethnographic research of Colonel Dalton in the book form *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* in 1872 under the colonial rule of undivided Bengal. He traces down the presence of Limbu settlement in the hilly terrain of Darjeeling Himalaya. They inhabit the mid upper belt of this region mostly in busy and Tea gardens. They are using the same flora and fauna species for their requirement and nourishment as used by Lepchas and other tribal community. Though the boundary was fluid in those days but fluidity of boundary has given them a fluid identity in Darjeeling Himalaya. Generalizing the bulk of Limbu population in the east Nepal and focusing more on the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya the author tries to trace down their historical background.

## **2.2 The Limbu: Etymology**

The word Limbu literally means an archer but they are also known by various names. In Darjeeling Himalayas Limbus are called 'Yakthungba' a combination of three Limbu syllables- yak or *yiok* hill, *thum* or place/district, and *ba* or inhabitant, which together may be translated as 'hill men' (Subba, 1989). In Sikkim the Tibetans call them *Monpa*, the Lepchas and

Bhutia call them *Tsongs*, which traces their origin in the *Tsang* region of Tibet from where they are believed to have come to Sikkim following their Guru called *Matog Lama* and signifies their occupation as cattle herders especially Yaks and butchers (Subba, T.B.,1999). In Eastern Nepal they are called as *Subba* which is also a popular title among Limbus of Darjeeling and Sikkim, but in the present time the use of clan names as titles is more common. According to Eden Vansittart, the word ‘Subba’ means ‘chief’ and it was a title conferred by King Prithivi Narayan Shah upon influential Limbus as an appeasing measure after subjugating them politically (ibid).

### **2.3 Spatial Distribution of Limbus**

Thriving in the fragile Eastern Himalayan milieu from centuries, Limbu has acclimatized into a little taller in stature, less fleshy, wirier limbs, fair in complexion and almost beardless in physical appearances (Campbell, 1869). They are spatially distributed in the altitudinal range of 2000 to 5000 feet ranging from Tambur valley in Eastern Nepal to Indian Himalayan regions of West Bengal and Sikkim. The Limbu habitat of Tambur considers themselves as the earliest inhabitants though originally emigrated from Tibet, which their Tartar countenance confirms (Hooker, 1854).

In Eastern Nepal they are spatially distributed in Taplejung, Panchthar, Illam and Jhapa districts of Mechi zone and Sankhuwasava, Therathum, Dhankuta, Sunsari and Morang districts of Koshi zone I. The bulk of Limbu populations are also living in West Bengal mainly in the Darjeeling Himalayas and geographically contiguous areas of Sikkim. There are ample historical records to show the spatial distribution of Limbus in western Sikkim and in the Darjeeling hills at least from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In this context, Fr. Hermanns (1954) adds that “*The Limbu occupied the land as far as Sikkim where they were known as the Tzongpa by the Tibetans*”. Professor Sprigg of Oxford University said “The Limbu was living in Sikkim before there was a

Sikkim for them to live in! By this paradoxical remark it mean that Limbus have inhabited the area in which they now predominate from time immemorial” before the Namgyal Dynasty ascended their throne (Subba, J.R, 1999). Limbu also inhabited the hills of Darjeeling also is plainly stated from the following quotation ... **Beyond a few Lepchas and Limbus with their little clearing in the forests, an occasional raid from Nepal, or a stray visitor from the table lands of Tibet, the Darjeeling Hills were practically uninhabited.** (O’ Malley, 1907).

In Sikkim Limbus are predominantly found in Singpheng, Darap, Nambu, Lungang, Lingbit, Timlon, Daramdin, Tharpu, Sombaria, Soreng, Timburbung, Khanisirbung, Samdong, Martam, Bermoik, Hee-Pangbhay, Uttarey, Lingchom, Tikject, Langang, Changay, Lungjik, Yaksum, Gerethang, Thinling, Mangsabung in the West, Sokay and Rabitar in south, Mangsila in the North and Aho, Assam Lingjay, Biring in the East district of Sikkim (Khamdhak, 2003).

Since the cession of Darjeeling to the British Government in 1835, a large number of Limbus settled in Darjeeling as labourers (Campbell, 1869). Being an agriculturist people (Sagant, 1976), Limbus are predominantly found in villages situated in the relative isolated rural areas. The Limbu settlements are found in Teesta-Valley of Rangli Rangliot block, Bijanbari and Lama Goan of Darjeeling Pulbazar block of Darjeeling subdivision and Dungra, Pudung Khasmahal, Tanek busty and Nimbong in Kalimpong. In Kurseong subdivision they are chiefly located in Bungkulung and in the interior parts of Mirik and Soureni (Field Survey; All India Limbu Association, Darjeeling and Yakhthung Shoong Chomvoo, Kalimpong 2013-14)

**Table 2.1 Census-wise Distribution of the Limbus in the Colonial Period**

S. No	Year	Total Population (Darjeeling District)	Limbu Population
1	1901	249117	14305
2	1911	265550	13804
3	1921	282748	14191
4	1931	319635	16288
5	1941	376369	17803

*Source: Bengal District Gazetteer Darjeeling, (1947) and Bhuimali, Anil & Das, Minakshi: Darjeeling Hill Economy (2011).*

According to the Census report of 1881 the total population of Limbus was 2429 in the district of Darjeeling (Risley, 1891). Then, the total number of the Limbus in Darjeeling was 14,305 in 1901. But even after 50 years their populations are recorded to be 19,835 only. The reasons for such a slow growth are, however, not properly understood. One possible reason is that many of them must have later declared their mother-tongue to be Nepali for the census figures based on mother tongue counts (Subba, 1989). It is also estimated that the Limbu population in the Seven North Eastern states is about 20,000. The total Limbu population of Nepal and India is about 302186 persons inclusive of 45000 persons of Sikkim (Subba, 1999). A rough estimate conducted by All India Limbu Association, Darjeeling, West Bengal, indicated that the present Limbu population (1997) of West Bengal is 40,000 persons only. 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

## 2.4 The Origin of Limbus

The Limbus, for centuries inhabited the undulating slopes of Eastern Himalayas. The exact origin of Limbu is not known. Most writing on them mentions three sources of their origin. Firstly, they are from the North-Tsang province of Tibet which is advocated by Risley. Secondly, they came from Kasi or Benares. This belief has, according to Northey and Morris, probably developed out of their desire to show the Rajput or high caste origin. The stand taken by Northey and Morris is shaky for two reasons:-

- i. The kiratas are known to have once ruled up to Indo-Gangetic valley and even the name 'Ganga' is firmly believed to be a Kirata word.
- ii. Limbus never bothered much about caste status as their counter parts like Gurungs and Magars because they still have pride in their own traditional culture than the Hindu culture of Bahuns and Chettris.

Thirdly, a large number of them believed to have emerged from the mother earth which is also a belief strongly found among the Lepchas of the Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas though many British scholars trace their origin from the Eastern part of India (Northey and Morris, 1987; Subba, T.B., 1989).

Circumstantial evidences from the review of literature of Mongolioids shows that the ancestors of the Native Himalayas Limbus were originated somewhere North-Eastern Eurasia during Ice Age, and they started descending downwards from there, following Yellow river of the Northern China and Yangtze River of the Southern China and arrived in the Himalayan region probably crossing Mansorowar lake and its surrounding mountains during the Archaic period (Subba, 2012). The Mundhum reveals that they were hunter-gatherer nomads. Their oral narratives categorized them as Kasi, Lhasa and Bhuiphuta gotra on the basis of their migration. Such division amongst the Limbus is highly rejected by this community on the ground that is a hinduised and a theoretical

construct and not historically accurate one (Subba, G.M., 2013). There are several theories propounded by several authors explaining the origin and migration of the Limbus in Eastern Himalayas.

#### **2.4.1 Notion of Kirata Origin**

Various notions were put forward by the different authors' based on the hypothetical archeological assumptions, oral narratives and myths. Among these theories, the theory of Kirata origin is widely accepted. The word Kirata has a wider contextual meaning because it implies the wide range of ethnic communities. According to Kirata theory Limbus are the descended from the family of Kirat *Asura* who once fought against the Aryans (Subba, 2013). Kotturan (1983), quoting from Rigveda, drive back the Kirats to caravans and says that the Limbus are descendent from the ten brothers who were forced to migrate from Indo-Gangetic plains to eastern Himalayas due to Aryan invasion. Sanyal (1979) says Limbus the inhabitants of lower Himalayas had been migrated from Assam along the river Brahmaputra to India, some period before 1000 B.C. Subba (1999), relates Limbus to be the people of Indus valley civilization and claims to be the off shoot of ancient Indian race, who at the arrival of Aryans migrated to eastern Tibet and back to Limbuwan via Walangchuk. On the other hand he gives a contradictory opinion designating them as the nomads to have wandered in the various places of inner South Asia. It is quite unsure whether he is trying to explain that the Limbus after coming of Aryans left their land and became wandering nomads or whether he is referring to something else (Subba, 2013).

#### **2.4.2 Notion of Tibetan Origin**

This is one of the most accepted notions in the context of Sikkimese Limbus because in Sikkim Limbus are called as Chongs or Tsongs who have migrated from the Tsong province of Tibet. Many authors have supported and advocate this theory. Sagant (1996) compares *Nahangma*, the Limbu goddess, with God

*Dgra-iha*, of the nameless religion of Tibet, brings out the religious similarity between Tibetans and Limbus. Wangchuk and Zulca (2007) bring out the ancestral affinity among them. The records of popular belief that Tibetan ancestors of *Yakthungba* migrated into present Limbuwan searching their lost yak via kangla pass and settled in the *Yangma* valley of Tamar Khola region ( Northey and Morris, 1987; Subba, G.M., 2013). About ‘Chongs’ or ‘Tsong’, the History of Sikkim by Maharaje Thutob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshi Drolma says that they are “ a tribe who revered the Matog Lama as their Guru, followed him from Tsang and settled with him in Sikkim” shows the close relation of Limbus with the Tibetan origin (Subba, 1999).

### **2.4.3 Notion of Chinese Origin**

Chemjong (1966), considered limbus as one the Kirata group who had migrated from Sichuan Yunan province of China after reaching Burma they settled in a place called Mokwan and were called Shan Mokwan. Then Shan Mokwan reached Eastern Nepal via Terai region of North Bengal crossing Tista River. Where they established their rule by defeating the existing rulers and thereby demarcated the geographical boundaries and changed their names from Shan Mokwan to Yakthumba meaning head of the hill tribes. J.R Subba (2012), also opined that the Limbu ancestor were shaped by the process of biogenesis in the North East Asia during the ice age and started descending downward following Yellow river of North China and Yangtze river in South China. Collecting millets and dry paddy seeds on the way this nomadic tribe arrived in the Himalayas region during the archaic period as early as 25000 years ago, bringing with them the practice of soya bean cultivation. After occupying land of Limbuwan, they remain isolated from the rest of the world when finally they came into contact with the people of Sikkim in 1642 and Nepal 1774. Since people are by mobile by nature and it is quite acceptable but isolating themselves seems quite irrational.

#### **2.4.4 Notion of Migration**

The idea of shifting residence has been pivotal to mankind throughout the history. The wide experience of migration has required a remapping of connection between self, home and the community in order to trace their origin. The slaughter of human lives, loss of individual property and dismemberment of their territory still holds a connection of Limbus with Limbuwan. The Limbu community in pre-merger of Darjeeling hills with British east India Company were living in the Limbuwan province stretching up to Sikkim ruled by the then Chogyal dynasty. Redrawing of territorial boundary by Gorkha ruler into Greater Nepal pushed limbu into a forced migration due to onslaught by Gorkha invasion. In Sikkim limbus are categorized into early and later migrants. The Limbus who came from Tsang province to Sikkim following their guru are called early settlers. Whereas, those who came as the labourers during Namgyal dynasty for construction work, were granted to settle in open fields in Phodong estate of Mangsila as later settlers (Balikci, 2008). Similarly in the Darjeeling also most of the Limbu settlements are the outcome of Britishers who engaged them as the labourers in Tea estates in 1835 (Campbell, 1869). Deprived from political rights, these sections of Limbus are living in this area from generation to generation with a faint memory or illusion of their faraway home. During the field work, it was found some of Limbus had come to work as labourer from west Sikkim in tea garden area of Darjeeling in colonial period. Later they had permanently settled in the Darjeeling Himalaya from last fourth generations. The Limbus claim present Eastern Nepal and Western Sikkim is their ancestral home where they trace their origin.

#### **2.5 Kirant and Kirata People of Eastern Himalayas**

In ancient times, the entire Himalayan region was known as the *Kimpurusha desha* a phrase derived from a Sanskrit term used to identify people of Kirant origin. The earliest references to the Kirant as principal inhabitants of the

Himalayan region are found in the texts of Atharvashirsha and Mahabharata (Dhungel, 2006). From the Yajur-veda onwards the mountains regions of North and North Eastern India, the Himalayas particularly is well attested as the abode of the Kiratas. In Mahabrata, the kiratas are dwellers in the Himalayan region mainly in the Eastern Himalayas (Chatterjee, 1951). The Tibeto-Burman family was designated as Kirantis by the Hindus. The Kiratas probably entered India through Assam along the River Brahmaputra at some period before 1000 B.C. The Eastern Nepal and the Brahmaputra Valley were the lands specially connected with the Kiratas (Sanyal, 1979). They were spatially distributed over the high plateaus of the Himalaya and the country round the mouths of the Ganges. Pushed back and absorbed by the Hindu influx from the plains, the Kiranti became confined to the mountains to the east of the Nepal valley (Northey and Morris, 1987). The Eastern hills beyond Sunkosi River were called the Kirat Pradesh. This area was divided into three sub regions; the area from Sunkosi River to the Likhu was called *Wollo Kirat*. The area between the Likhu and the Arun was called Manjh Kirat and the land stretching east of the Arun to the Indian border (*Darjeeling & Sikkim*) was called *Pallo Kirat*.

*Pallo Kirat* directly jostled with Sikkim and Bhutan for its entity river Tista adjoined Hazary, Rangmuthy and CoochBihar in the South (Kirkpatrick, 1975). The Eastern Himalayas covers a large geographical area. For over two millennia, a large portion of this region mainly East Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling hills which are physically, historically and culturally contiguous has been identified as the home of the Kirant people. The word 'Kirata', which includes a host of Mongoliod peoples living within region, has been used here as a single expression for three cognate communities known to today as Rai, Limbu and Yakha (Subba, T.B., 1999). They were believed to be one large tribe with a genealogy known as the Bamsavali which cannot be located today (Gautam and Mangar, 1994).

## **2.6 Limbu and Kirata Connection**

In early literary accounts, only the Rai (*Khambus*) appear to be considered as Kiratas though Brain H.Hodgson in his writing express the inclusion of Limbu and Yakha into the Kirata identity on the accounts of cultural similarities (Subba, T.B 1999). Chatterjee (1951) identifies the Limbu, Yakhas and Rai as Kiratas dwelling in the Indian side of Himalayas in Nepal and Sikkim. Chemjong (1966) includes almost all Mongoliod groups of Nepal under label of Kiratas. But Regmi (1969) takes Limbu and Khambus as Kirata Stock with excluding Yakha and clubbing sections of Newars. According to Northey and Morris (1987), The Kiranti race comprises the clan of the Khambus, Yakha and Limbus but claimed that the Danuwars and Thamis also legitimately claim to be Kirata, but being of mixed origin and comparatively little importance, they are not taken seriously. Limbus called themselves the descendants of ‘Susuwa Lilim Yakthungs’ or ‘Yakthungbas’. In Limbu language it denotes heroes of the hills (*Yiok = hills, Thung = heroes*). Today Limbus, Khambus and Yakhas have separate entities; however they share the common tradition, customs and way of life which binds them into Kirata connections (Subba, J.R., 1999).

## **2.7 Historical Retrospection of Limbuwan**

Limbus inhabited the land of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas from time immemorial. These landmasses lying adjacent to Eastern Nepal was politically and culturally an important part of the then undivided province of Limbuwan. Governed and ruled by ten chiefs called *Theebong Yakthung*, Limbus was believed to be descendants of three stocks of earlier Kiratas. Limbus were ethnic Mongoliods group who are believed to be brave and cruel in battle, putting the old and weak to sword, carrying the younger to the slavery and killing on the march such captives unable to proceed; this marginal hill tribe is straddling between two nation state which has obscured the very identity like

their hidden kingdom Limbuwan (Hooker, 1820; Chemjong, 1966; Sanyal, 1979; Subba,G.M., 2013).

### **2.7.1 Origin of Limbuwan**

During 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C Chinese origin Taishan people of Yunan Sechuwan province migrated from Nam Mao to North West direction and inhabited the land lying Patkoi Mountain and Chindwin River. They remained there for many years then sections of Taishan group move ahead to Burma and settled in Mokwan. At Mokwan they were known as Shan Mokwan from there they entered Assam along with the ten leaders and three priests. After crossing River Teesta the Shan Mokwan came to terai lands of North Bengal and there from reached Eastern Nepal.

During that time eight kings were ruling independently over there. The ten limbu leaders consulted their priests and on their advice they decided to stay there in East Nepal under those eight kings. The eight kings given them permission to set up their settlement and became subjects of their Kingdom. Soon the population of Shan Mokwan increased which became the matter of concern for eight kings. In order to subjugate them the kings started to implemented harsh laws upon them. Torture, harassment and exploitation aroused Shan Mokwan to take immediate step and they started a war against eight kings. Shan Mokwan won the battle and dethroned the eight kings with their weapons bow and arrow. They decided to name their country Limbuwan because in limbu language li means bow, bu means archery and wan means name (Chemjong, 1966; Vansittart, 1906; Rai, 2002). According to the historians the migration history of Shan Mokwan seems to distort the facts because lack of documental proof and evidence to support it (Pradhan, 1991). However, Limbus remained rulers of Limbuwan until the Gorkha rulers established their hegemonic control over them (Subba, J.R., 1999).

### **2.7.2 Territorial Boundary of Limbuwan**

*“The landmass lying on the eastern or left bank of the Arun River and extending from it to Tista river is the Limbuwan or the country of the Limbus, a tribe of the Himalayas”* (oldfield, 1858). The boundary of Limbuwan lies between the Dudh-Kosi and the Kanki River in Nepal stretching further towards the east of Mechi River which forms the boundary of Nepal and Sikkim Himalaya (Campbell, 1869). The ambit of Limbuwan also included the hilly terrain of Darjeeling and Kurseong. In the terai plains, the Limbuwan included Siliguri and Jalpaiguri bordering the Purnea district of the then Bengal province (Chemjong, 1963). Historically the Limbuwan was known as the *‘pallo Kirat’*. Chainpur was a capital and a place of much importance, apart from its strategic location sharing a border with Tibet, it also served as an important trade center. From 1774 A.D a new phase of political development creating new nation building state under the leadership of Gorkha ruler Prithivi Narayan Shah completely changed the geographical boundaries of Limbuwan forever. The acquisition of Limbuwan through battle of conquest, Political agreements and conspiracy has divided it into different parts covering the landmasses of both eastern Nepal and Darjeeling Sikkim Himalayas.

Thus, the Limbuwan has been divided into the following parts:

- a) The presently six districts of Eastern Nepal namely Tehrathum, Sankhuwasobha, Dhankuta, Taplejung, panthar and Illam having a total area of 4347 sq.miles bordering Arun river in the west and Mechi river in the east.
- b) The entire Darjeeling district of West Bengal state of India covering a total area of 1164 sq.miles.
- c) The two important districts of Sikkim the west and South districts, and a part of north District of Sikkim.

Thus, presently Limbuwan has been divided into three parts, two states of India and six districts of Mechi and Kosi anchals of Nepal (*Subba, J.R., 1999*).

### 2.7.3 Reign of Kings in Limbuwan

After defeating the existing rulers, the Shan Mokwan established their sovereignty over Limbuwan. They demarcated their boundaries from Tibet in the North to Jalalgarh in the South, the Eastern and Western boundary stretching from River Tista to Dudhkosi River. Then, the Shan Mokwan changed their nationality to Yakthumba and divided the Limbuwan into Ten districts placing ten kings to rule each kingdom. Originally at the beginning only the Kings of Limbuwan were called Limbus and the people of Limbuwan were called Yakthungba. Later, all the people of Limbuwan started calling themselves Limbu.

**Table 2.2 Showing the Ten rulers, their Kingdoms and their Forts**

S.No	Name	Kingdom	Capital
1	Samlupi Samba Hang	Tambar	Tambar Yiok
2	Sisiyen Shering Hang	Mewa and Maiwa	Meringden Yiok
3	Thoktokso Angbo Hang	Athraya	Pomaj
4	Thindolung Khokya Hang	Yangwarok	Hastapojong Yiok
5	Ye Nga So papo Hang	Panthar	Yashok and Phedim
6	Shengsengum Phedap Hang	Phedap	Poklabung
7	Soiyak Ladho (Chemjong) Hang	Miklung (Choubise)	Shanguri Yiok
8	Mung Tai Chi Emay Hang	Ilam	Phakphok
9	Tappeso Perung Hang	Thala	Thala Yiok
10	Taklung Khewa Hang	Chethar	Chamling Chimling Yiok

*Source: J.R Subba, The Limboos of the Eastern Himalayas (1999).*

The death of King Bijay Narayan Sanglaing of Morang and the subsequent war of revenge by the King of Phedap led to the conquest of the Morang Kingdom of Limbuwan by Lo Hang Sen of Mokwanpur. This event led to the

era of divided Limbuwan because the association of Limbuwan states no longer existed. Only a few of the ten kingdoms of Limbuwan actually formed alliances with the Sen King and saw him as their overlord. In the meantime, in 1641, when King Phuncho Namgyal of Sikkim became the new ruler, independent Limbu kings of Tambar Kingdom, Yangwarok Kingdom, Panthar Kingdom and Ilam Kingdom allied with the Sikkimese king, effectively dividing Limbuwan in half. From the enthronement of King Puncho Namgyal of Sikkim in 1641 to 1741, the eastern and northern Limbuwan kings allied with the kings of Sikkim.

From 1641 to 1741 for approximately a hundred years, the Limbu kings of Tambar, Yangwarok, Panthar and Ilam kingdoms allied with the King of Sikkim and regarded him as their overlord. During this time the other kingdoms of Limbuwan were allied with the Sen King of Makwanpur. King Puncho Namgyal died in 1670 and was succeeded by his son King Tensong Namgyal, who married three queens. The youngest queen was from Limbuwan, and her name was Queen Thungwa Mukma, daughter of the King of Yangwarok, Yong Ya Hang. King Tensung Namgyal of Sikkim built a new palace and asked his youngest queen to name it. She names it “Song Khim” meaning new home. Over time this name changed from "*Songkhim*" to "*Sukkhim*", and eventually the name Sikkim came into being. The original name of Sikkim was Mayel in the Lepcha language, Chungjung in the Limbu language and Denjong in the Bhutia language. After the enthronement of the Chogyal, Tensung Namgyal, the matrimonial alliance between the King, Royal Tibetan families and the Tsongs also strengthened and culminated to a great significance in the history of Sikkim (Khamdhak, 2013). Even the royal Tibetan family members married number Limboo ladies (Basnet, 1974). The Chogyal granted Royal Decrees '*Lahalmor*' to the Limboos, permitting them to use their customary drums like *Negra* (royal kettle drum) and *Kay* (*Chyabrun*) while observing their religious gathering, rituals and festivals

which they had possessed since immemorial. Through this decree, the Limboo chiefs were permitted to look after the affairs of their 'thums', administrative centres (Gurung, 1985).

#### **2.7.4 Tripartite Treaty of Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum**

In 1642 A.D, a tripartite treaty Lho-Men -Tsong-Sum was signed between Limbus, Bhutias and Lepchas. This treaty is also regarded as blood treaty, according to this treaty Bhutia was considered as father, Lepcha as Mother and Limbu as son. Through this council of Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum kingdom was supposed to rule. Where these three communities hold authority and had is represented equally in the council and its affairs. Through this agreement they cannot declare war and hostilities among each other. The tripartite treaty was never implemented and remained on paper only (*Kotturan, 1983*). The treaty of Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum regards Limbu as the inhabitant of Sikkim but Chogyals often discriminated them on the grounds of cultural and religious entity. Since the Buddhist connection of Bhutia and lepchas resemblances close affinity. All the important and high official posts were bestowed upon Bhutia and Lepchas and limbus were given a mere post of chief in administrative units (*Khamdhak, 2013*). Moreover this treaty was a political manipulation of Chogyals to subdue Limbu nationalism and bringing them into their contextual interest to rule Sikkim under their hegemony.

#### **2.7.5 Role of Limbus in Sikkimese warfare**

Limbus had played a significant role in shaping the history of Sikkim. During the reign of Chador Namgyal, Sikkim was invaded by Bhutanese army and its capital Rabdentse was captured for prolonged period of eight years. The Limbus along with Lepcha and Bhutias bravely fought against the Bhutanese force and were successfully drove them away. But the areas of Rhenock and Kalimpong were lost to Bhutan. Seeing, bravery spirit the chogyals also made the special provision for limbus to get admitted in the Pemayangste Monastery

as a monk to learn Buddhist culture and religion. Such provision was made in due recognition of role and sacrifice done by the Limbus for the sake of Sikkim.

#### **2.7.6 Decline Status of Limbus**

Gyurmed Namgyal reign is considered to be worst for Limbus. They subjected to harassment and humiliation. The council of *Lhomentsongsum* was completely a failure for Limbus because they were only district heads. Betrayal of Chogyals led Limbus to throw off their allegiance with them and had joined Nepal. Thus Sikkim began to lose its Limbuwan territory (Subba, J.R., 1999).

#### **2.8 Loss of Limbuwan Territory from Sikkim -Darjeeling**

King Tensong was succeeded by his son and third king Chhyagdor Namgyal. He died in 1716 and was succeeded by his son, King Gyurmi Namgyal. In 1733 King Gyurmi Namgyal of Sikkim died childless, then his minister declared himself the King of Sikkim under the title of “*Tamdang Gyalpo*” and started ruling from the throne of Rabdentse palace. He ruled from 1738 to 1741. This threw the Limbu alliance with Sikkim into disarray as other ministers had placed the infant king on the throne. Meanwhile in 1741, a Limbu scholar named Srijunga of Yangwarok Kingdom of Limbuwan came to western Sikkim to teach Limbu script and literature to the Kirant people there. The Tibetan mainly Ta Tsang Lamas of Pemayangtse monastery feared the Limbu Srijunga actions. They killed him by tying him to a tree and shooting him with arrows. This caused anger in Limbuwan and the kings of all the kingdoms of Limbuwan that had allied with the King of Sikkim in 1641 broke off the ties and stopped regarding the kings of Sikkim as their overlords and allies. (Subba, J.R., 1999).

### **2.8.1 Subjugation of Limbuwan by Gorkha Ruler**

According to Pradhan's (1991) history of the Gorkha conquest, the Kiranti people were enjoying political autonomy under the suzerainty of Sena dynasty which controlled the region between the Kali Gandaki River and Nepal valley to the East. The sharp turning point on Limbuwan history was the inclusion of its sovereign territory under Gorkha Empire. King Prithivi Narayan Shah played a very crucial role in dividing Limbuwan into seventeen districts and thereby coalescence it into greater Nepal. The unification policy of Gorkha King made a huge impact on Limbus by making them as straddling community. The legal authority and land ownership of Limbus were snatched away and was transformed into Raiker landholding. The annexation and conquest policy of the Gorkha ruler completely altered the political geography of the region. They captured and controlled the *Wallo* and *Majh* Kirant. These Kirati who had accepted the sovereignty of the Gorkha rule were asked to do away with their chiefs. They reinforced their troops further in Limbuwan which resulted into the battle of Chainpur (1776) and by 1786 the annexation of Further Kirant *Pallo* was completed and the war in Limbuwan ended (Pradhan, 1991). The previous ten Limbu rulers were given a mere authority and bestowed them with the title of 'Subbas', which was eroded in due course of time. Moreover the control over Majh Kirat, Khambu dominated region makes Gorkha rulers to emerge as a supreme power in the Eastern Nepal and in the areas of Sikkim which was under territorial Jurisdiction of Limbu Kings.

#### **2.8.1.1 Limbuwan Gorkha War:**

The Limbuwan Gorkha war was fought between the various principalities of Limbuwan and the Gorkha ruler from 1771 to 1774 AD for nearly three years. The occupancy of Majh Kirant (*Kirant Rai kingdoms*) by the Gorkhas encouraged them to attacked Limbuwan from two fronts. One front was in Chainpur and the second front was in Bijaypur. They approached from the Arun River to attack Limbuwan. The huge battle was fought but Limbu were

successful to drive away the Gorkha force from their territories under the leadership of their general commanders. In 1774 A.D, Gorkhas once again declared a war against Limbuwan and this time the Tenzing Namgyal Sikkimese King made alliances with the Limbu Kings, also declared war against the Gorkhas. The defeat of Gorkha King in the second battle of Limbuwan in Chainpur compels them to declare a ceasefire with the Limbus and the battle came to an end in 1774 with the treaty which allowing Limbus right to Kipat land with full autonomy (Chemjong, 1963)

#### **2.8.1.2 Limbuwan Gorkha Treaty 1774 A.D**

The Gorkha Bhardars namely, Abhiman Singh Basnet, Parath Bhandari, Kirti Singh Khawas and Bali Bania on behalf of the Gorkha king Prithivi Narayan Shah agreed to restore peace with Limbus. They made an agreement by taking an oath and swear on “*noon pani*” (salt water) promising that Gorkha king would never take possession of Limbus’ Kipat land (self-autonomous land) nor declare any war upon them. The agreement on salt water urged the Gorkha Bhardars on behalf of Gorkha raja, to give *Lal Mohor* to the Limbu ministers of Bijaypur by resolving the hostilities. Thus the Limbuwan Gorkha War came to an end in 1774 with all the principalities of Limbuwan joining the Gorkha kingdom, except the kingdom of Yangwarok.

#### **2.8.2 Limbus of Contemporary Darjeeling Himalaya**

After the occupancy of Limbuwan in (1774) a considerable number of Limbu population migrated to different parts of Eastern Himalaya region. The Limbus are scattered in the rural belts of three subdivisions of Darjeeling Himalaya. They have completely intermingled with the Nepali culture of diverse ethnic communities. Few of them are the descendents of early migrant families who first migrated to Sikkim from Nepal and completely settled in the Darjeeling hills from Pre-Independence time. The living conditions of Limbus in the study area of Teesta Valley, Dungra Khasmahal and Bungkulung were

encircled with lack of basic amenities, poor educational background and average socio-economic conditions. The majority of them are employed as garden employees with menial wages. Apart from the Tea garden areas Limbus who are living in Khasmahal areas are agriculturalists. Many of them are employed in Indian armed services. The Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya are indeed fading away from their cultural roots due to acculturation.

## **2.9 Findings**

Darjeeling, the small outcrop in the eastern Himalayas, is a place that makes an interesting contribution to the bewildering cultural and ethnic diversity of West Bengal, India. Apart from its scenic beauty and abode of snowy clad peaks is a home for smiling inscrutable Mongoloids people Limbu. The ethnic cocktail of this region is a mix of Tibeto-Burman speaking people, the Nepalis and host of plain people. The original dwellers of this region are Lepchas but along with them Limbus are also inhabiting this region from time immemorial. Darjeeling which was the part of the Sikkim Himalaya was the land ruled by Limbu kings whose boundary armpits was up to the east of Arun River and was called by the name *Pallo Kirat*. Limbu called their land as Limbuwan which still hold a great matter of concern in the contemporary times of Nepal political affairs. Believed to be brave, Limbu are martial people who are recognized as a ferocious warrior in the ancient times, belongs to Kirat family and are believed to come from Tsang province of Tibet following the Buddhist gurus. They are often regarded as Tibetan stock and are called by the various names.

In Sikkim Himalayas they are known as the *Tsongs or Chongs*. Some believes that they trace their origin from Tambur Khola of Eastern Nepal. The myths and origin of Limbus are rectified and placed by various authors on the basis of their assumptions, folklore and findings. Some trace down their origin from the Chinese province and has shown their migration route from Burma to

Assam to present day of Eastern Nepal. Therefore the origin of Limbu is not known exactly. In the Sikkim's context they dates back to Caravan people or nomads who were hunters and food gatherers and had out migrated from the Tibet province following religious priests and settled in the Sikkim Himalaya following Buddhist as their religion.

Similarly, in the context of Darjeeling this notion is quite acceptable because it lies contiguous to Sikkim. But in Darjeeling Himalaya Limbus follow Yumaism whereas in the East Nepal the authentic Limbu culture, religion started to get acculturated with growing influence of Hinduization after its occupancy by the Gorkha King in 1774 A.D. The history of Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is not properly elucidated and researched. The demarcation of the fluid boundaries and the diplomatic steps of Namgyal in Sikkim by tying them into matrimonial relations have placed them in their subject rule. The signing of blood treaty of Lhomentsongsum finally subdue their strong Kirata nationality and redrawing of new boundaries by Gorkha ruler including Limbuwan completely made them subservient by dividing their Kipat land and thereby making Limbus a people divided between two nations and having a fluid identity.

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# Chapter 3

## PHYSICAL, ETHNOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF LIMBU VILLAGES UNDER STUDY

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### 3.1 Introduction

Man interacts with nature by making the use of available resources for their survival and adjustment with the physical parameters like topography, drainage and climatic conditions in characterizing the regional set up. These combined factors have influenced the economy, society, culture and habitat of the Limbus in the study areas. The rugged and undulating terrain of Darjeeling Himalaya is a homeland for different ethnic communities living in Himalayan habitat from time immemorial.

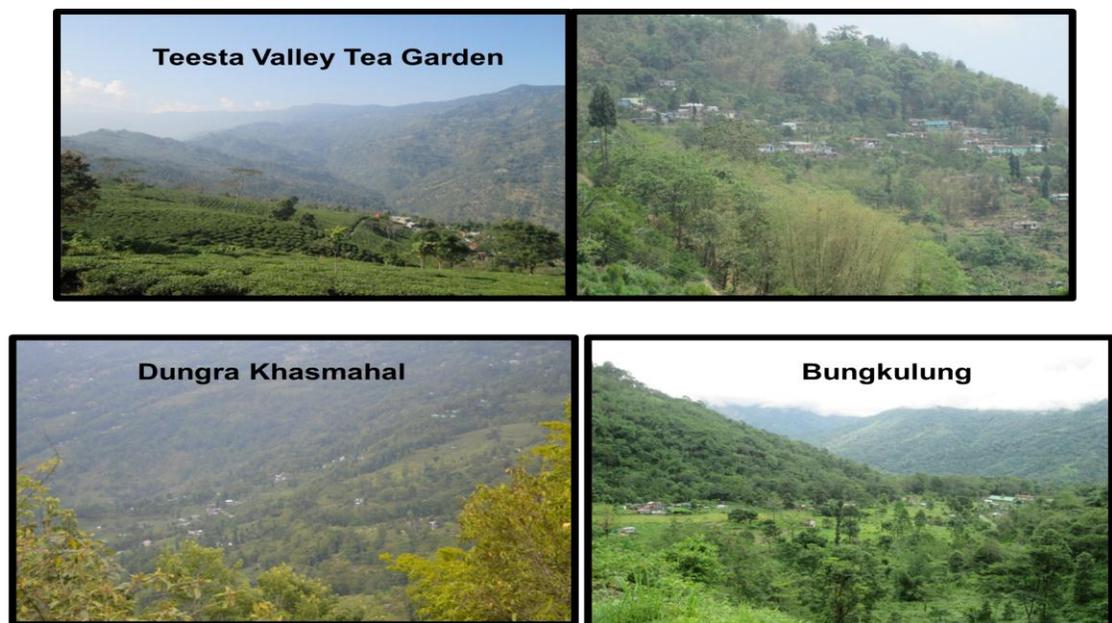
In order to have a proper insight, the researcher has selected those areas which exhibits vibrant socio-cultural aspects moulded with physical proximity and attributes representing the perfect habitat of Limbu community with variations in terms of economy, society and lifestyle. Limbu settlements are located in the far flung rural areas of Darjeeling Himalaya among which three Limbu villages are studied namely Teesta Valley Tea Garden from Darjeeling subdivision, Bungkulung from Kurseong subdivision and Dungra Khasmahal from Kalimpong subdivision.

The selected villages are unique in their composition and offer a good prospect to understand Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya from different perspectives. Among the studied villages Teesta Valley is a Tea plantation area, Dungra Khasmahal is an agricultural village and Bungkulung is a mixture of both agriculture and rural tourism sector. The location factor of these villages is also very important from historical point of view. The Teesta valley was the outcome of colonial rule and lies in the rural core of Darjeeling. But whereas Limbus of Dungra and Bungkulung believe the place is their native land which lies on the periphery of main towns of Kalimpong and Mirik. The present chapter makes an attempt to understand the physical and demographic attributes of Limbu communities living in the study areas of Darjeeling Himalaya.

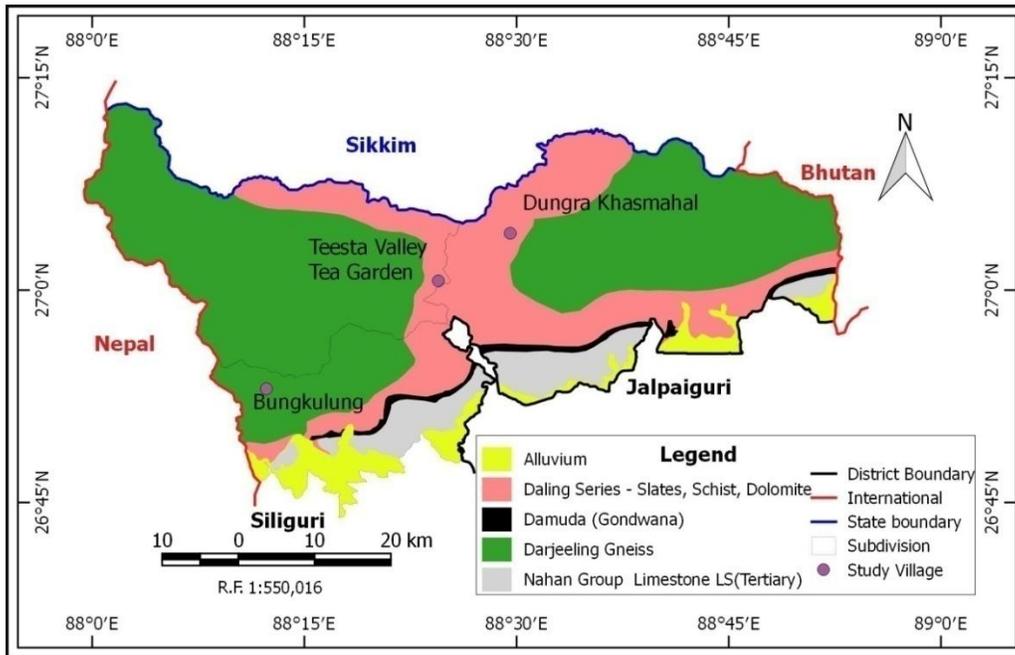
## 3.2 The Physical Setting of Limbu Villages

### 3.2.1 Geological Setup and Relief

Geographically, the Darjeeling Himalaya has a complex mountain system wedged between the Central (Nepal) Himalaya to the west and Bhutan Himalayas to the east (Cajee, 2018). It exhibits the diverse geographical features of landform formed during tertiary period due to plate tectonic movement. The first complete and systematic geological assessment of this region was made by F.R. Mallet in 1874. Dr. Hooker, in his famous “Himalayan Journals” (1854) reports too, studied the geological set up of the region. He traced the regional domal pictures of gneisses and observed the overlying, bedded sedimentary rocks. The geology of the Darjeeling Himalayas consists of unaltered sedimentary rocks. The Sub-Himalayas is made up of Shiwalik deposits of the Tertiary age. In the North of the Shiwalik lies the coal-bearing lower Gondwana formation. The Daling series (Pre-Cambrian) follows and is succeeded by the Darjeeling gneiss further north (ibid).

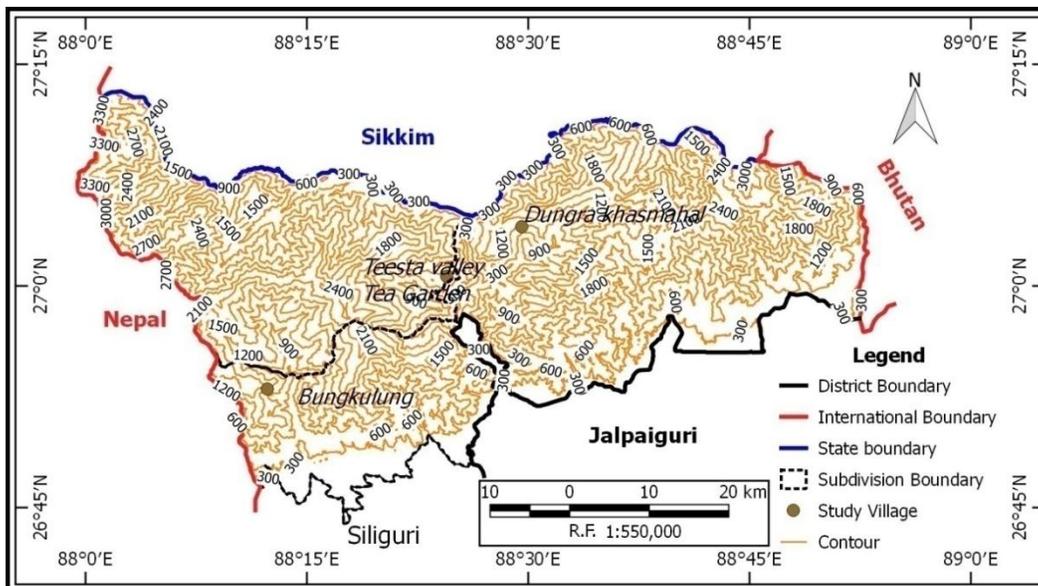


**Plate 3.1 Showing the Bird Eye View glance of the Study Areas**



**Figure 3.1 Geological Map**

Darjeeling Himalaya is divided into number of micro and macro relief forms due to its topography. The hill rises abruptly from the plains that is, approximately from about 150 m and the elevation increases north-westwards up to Sandakphu (3636 m). The region is comprised of three units' namely Lower, Middle and Upper hills.

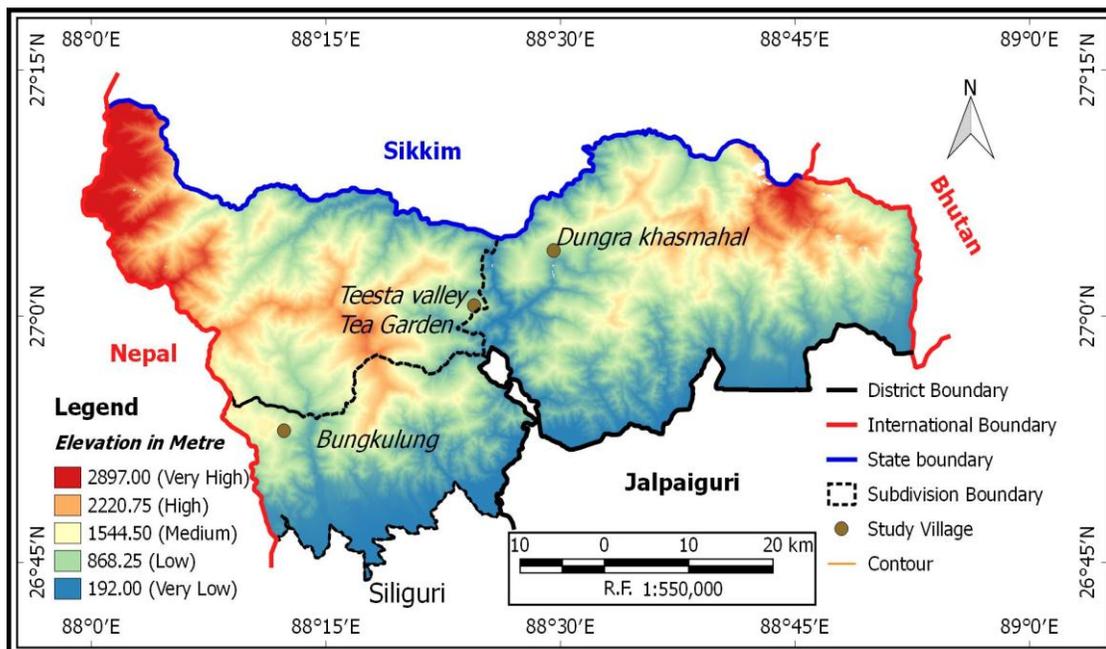


**Figure 3.2 Contour Map**

**Lower hills:** This region is delimited by contour heights of about 200 - 800 m and covers most of the study area of Bungkulung. The rivers are mostly south-flowing and cut deep gorges and V-shaped valleys. The landscape is characterized by narrow ridges, deep incisions and numerous mass-movement scars. The average slope in this zone varies between 10° - 30°, with slope length sometimes exceeding 800 m. These lower hills are the most dissected and eroded tract in the Darjeeling Himalayas.

**Middle hills:** This is a narrow zone, sandwiched between the upper and lower hills, bounded by 800 m and 1400 m contours. The study area of Dungra Khasmahal falls under this category.

**Upper hills:** The upper hills lie above the 1400 m contour line and have been identified along the Mahaldiram Bagora region and above the Ghum-Sonada ridge. It is most prominent along the extreme north-western. The Study area of Teesta Valley falls under this category. These hill slopes are mostly used for tea plantations.



**Figure 3.3 Relief Map**

The study area of Teesta Valley Tea Garden comes under the Darjeeling range which forms the northern-most portion of the region with an elevation varying from 400 meters to 3000 meters. Teesta river flows southward with radial drainage pattern.

Bungkulung falls under Kurseong range where the general slope of the region is from North to South with varying altitude of 300 metres to 800 metres. The boundary of Kurseong range is well demarcated by River Mechi, in the west and Teesta in the east. Dungra Khasmahal falls under the south east of Darjeeling Himalayas in Kalimpong range. The range has abruptly rising hills with numerous streams and small torrents as marking physiographic units lying within 300 metres to 3000 metres between Darjeeling gneiss and Daling series (Tamang, 2014).

### 3.2.2 Climatic Conditions: Temperature, Rainfall and Humidity

The Darjeeling Himalaya experiences the monsoonal type of climate, with wet summers and dry winters. The study areas fall under Agro climatic region of Eastern Himalayan zone II of the sub region of Northern hills. The climatic condition of the study areas are characterized by a great degree of seasonality and altitudinal variations leading to varied climates ranging from the subtropical to the temperate and alpine type. The moisture laden south west monsoon plays a prominent role in the rainfall distribution. The four main dominant seasons are experienced in the study areas namely summer season (May to September), autumn season (October to November), winter season (December to February) and spring season (March to April).

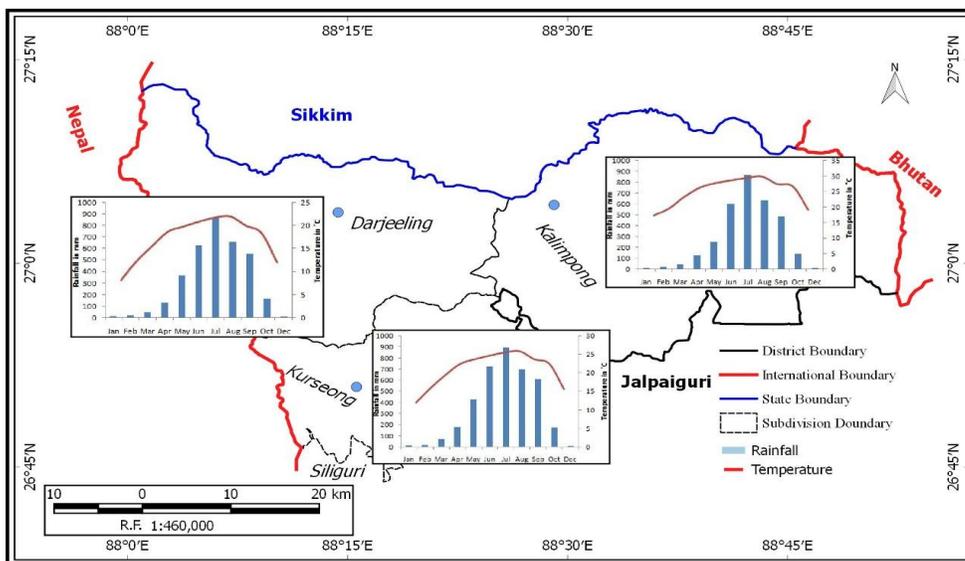


Figure 3.4 Climatic graph of the Darjeeling Himalaya

**Table 3.1 Showing the Average Rainfall and Temperature Characteristics of the Darjeeling Himalaya**

Months	Darjeeling		Kalimpong		Kurseong	
	Rainfall (Mm)	Temp(°C)	Rainfall (Mm)	Temp (°C)	Rainfall (Mm)	Temp (°C)
January	13.89	8.12	10.16	17.39	17.03	11.97
February	20.16	12.28	20.34	19.67	21.25	15.98
March	47.97	15.55	46.34	23.46	72.17	19.51
April	132.89	18.67	129.82	26.32	181.36	22.5
May	371.67	19.79	248.98	27.77	428.33	23.78
June	631.45	20.85	598.44	28.62	724.95	24.74
July	867.59	21.72	865.26	29.41	896.43	25.57
August	659.89	21.98	634.66	29.82	698.28	25.9
September	556.24	19.99	487.21	27.44	611.73	23.72
October	167.39	18.37	145.99	26.69	176.69	22.53
November	36.96	15.69	38.98	23.03	42.97	19.36
December	10.88	11.98	11.46	19.21	12.67	15.6

Source: Tea Planters' Association, Darjeeling

Temperature of the Darjeeling Himalayas, show a great degree of variation where elevation plays a vital role. In the upper hilly region the temperature (day and night) remains higher during the rainy season than in summer and spring season. The range of fluctuation of temperature between day and night is higher in the plains. The terai region remains hot or warm till the withdrawal of southwest monsoon (i.e. from the month of November). Thereafter, the temperature falls rapidly throughout the region. Such variation widely affects the vegetation of the region (Cajee, 2018). In Teesta Valley the maximum temperature is 28°C and the annual rainfall is 2637.55mm with the average humidity of 74%. The annual temperature in Dungra ranges from a high of 27 °C to a low of 9 °C. Summers are followed by the monsoon rains which lash the village between June and September. The winter month starts from December and last February with the maximum temperature around 15 °C. Bungkulung falls in the foot hill zone of Balasan river basin with the average temperature of 27°C to 28°C

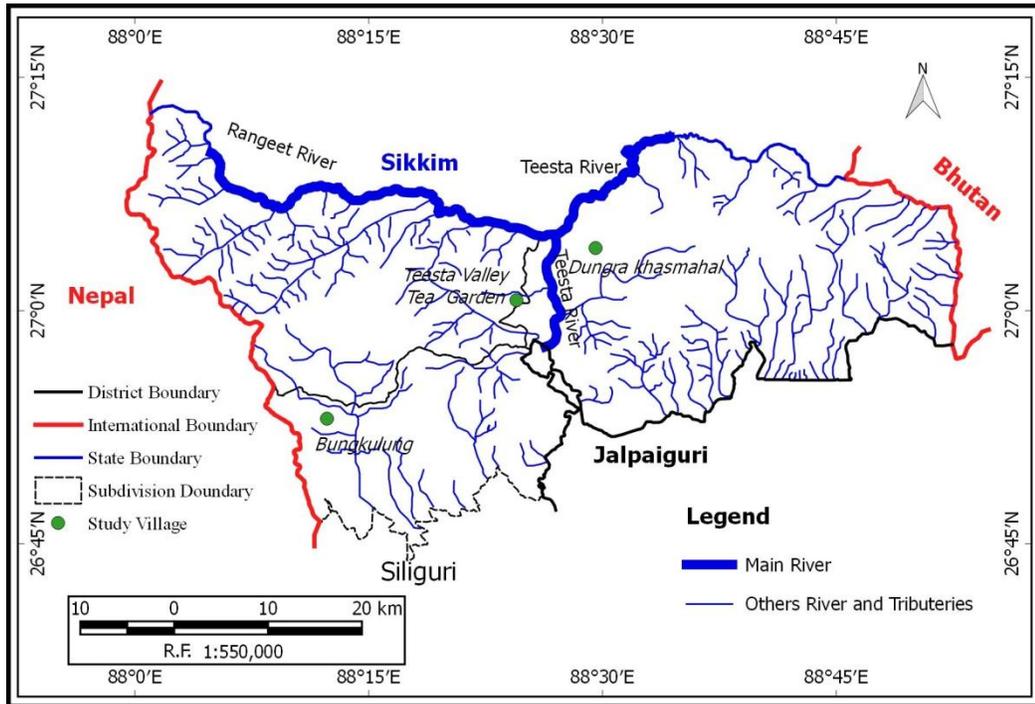
whereas in winter the temperature drops to 17°C. The region experiences the highest rainfall between June to September brought about by the southwest monsoons and the lowest between November - February with occasional moderate showers during March - May. The entire Darjeeling Himalaya experiences a high relative humidity that remains uniformly spread. Generally the north facing slopes are cooler and remain humid throughout the whole year. Relative humidity is higher at the higher altitudes (above 2000 m) ranging from (85 - 99 %) during the monsoons, and the relative humidity generally decreases towards the lower elevations. The drier months of March and April are less humid with relative humidity ranging between 45 - 60 % (ibid).

### **3.2.3 Drainage and Soil Conditions**

The two most significant rivers of Darjeeling Himalayas are the glacier fed river, Teesta and its tributary the Great Rangeet originating in Sikkim (from the Zemu glacier located in north and the Rothong glacier in West Sikkim). The Teesta is a mighty mountainous river traversing a large part of Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalaya. The main tributary of Teesta is the Great Rangeet. It receives the Rammam River arising from Singalila and Rangu arising from Senchal in Darjeeling on its right bank. The entire course of the river is interspersed with deep gorges. A very prominent gorge is found at the confluence of the Rammam river with its main tributary; the Lodhoma *Khola*. The Little Rangeet arises at *Chitre Pokhri* (2380 m) and flows north, almost parallel to the Lodhoma *Khola*. The Little Rangeet flows sinuously within a maze of interlocking spurs and valleys. Below the *Triveni* confluence, the Teesta flows eastward, where it receives the Little Rangeet from Darjeeling and enters the plain of North Bengal and finally joins the river Brahmaputra in Bangladesh (Cajee, 2018).



**Plate 3.2 : Showing the Meandering Course of River Teesta**

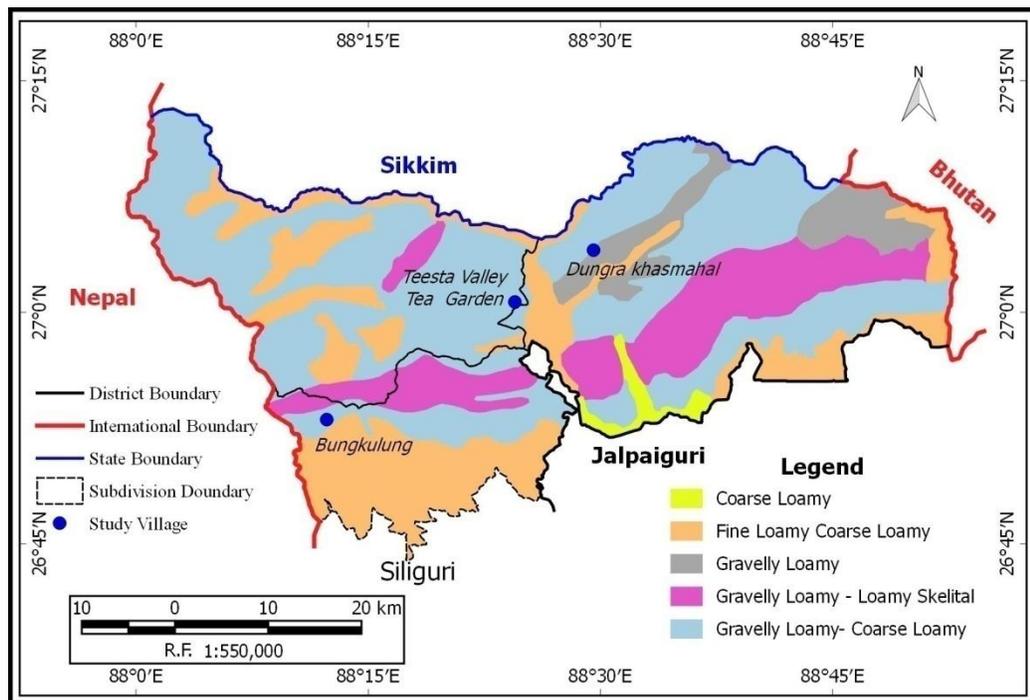


**Figure 3.5 Drainage Map**

The other important rivers of Darjeeling include the Balason, arising from the Lepchajagat in Ghoom saddle and running south till it reaches the plains at an altitude of 304 m and then turns south east and divides into two channels, the New Balason and the Old Balason that subsequently joins the Mahanadi further south. It receives tributaries like Pulungdung *khola*, Rangbang *khola*, the Marma *khola*, Dudhia *khola* on the right bank and Rinchingtong *khola*, Rakti *khola*, Rohini *khola*, Jor *khola* etc on

the left. The important stream found in the Teesta valley namely *Kali khola* and *Gielle khola*. The *Marma khola* and *Balasan River* forms the important drainage network in Bungkulung. The river *Relli* in the extreme southern lower periphery of *Dungra* forms the important drainage pattern but the small rivulet and seasonal springs are the main source of water supply in *Dungra Khasmahal*.

In this region, the soils found are mountain soil that is characterized by the high organic matter, high water holding capacity and volume expansion. Due to the continuous percolation towards the bottom layer, the middle portion of the soil horizon is associated with the coarse textures, that reduced the shearing strength of the soil and enhanced the materials to move downward along the roadsides slopes and valleys in the Darjeeling Himalayas (Pal, 2016).



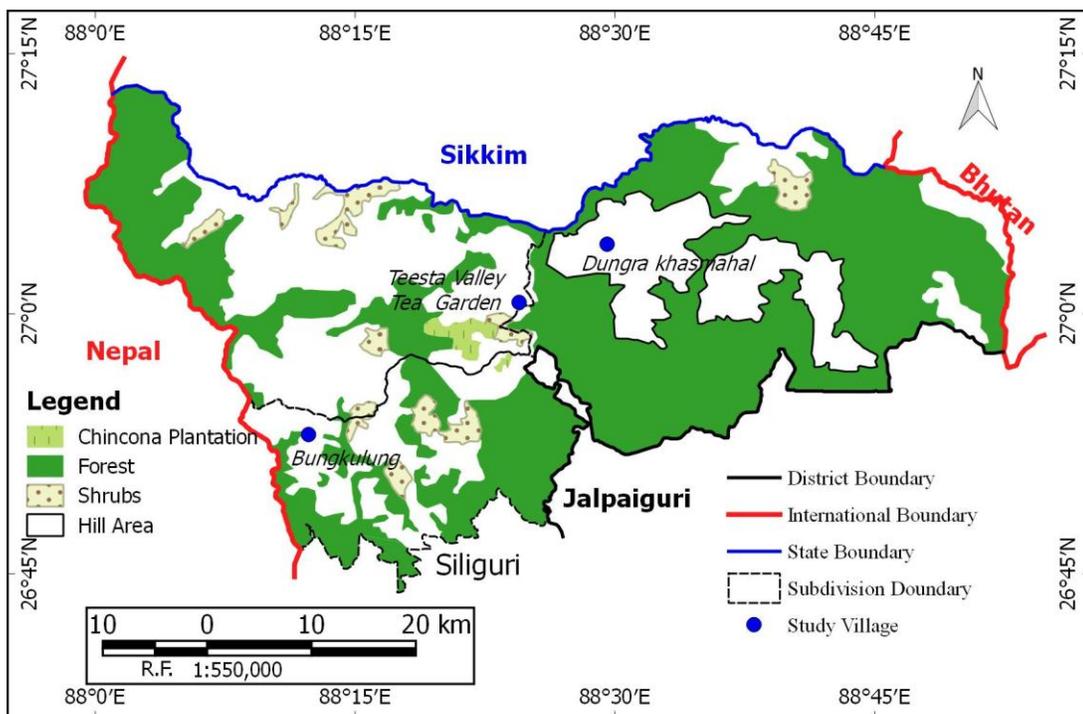
**Figure 3.6 Soil Map**

The soil of the upland is usually red and gritty while that of the plain is dark and more fertile. Along the banks of Teesta, silt or silty loam predominates. Red and yellow soils have developed on the gneisses and schist in the higher slopes of the Darjeeling Himalayas. The greater portion of the hilly area lies on Darjeeling Gneiss which most commonly decomposes into a stiff reddish loam. The study area of Teesta Valley Tea

garden is well drained by sandy- loamy soils with an average pH value of 5.7, with the availability of phosphorus being 96 kg/hectares and potash 350 kg/hectares. In the study area of Kalimpong and Bungkulung the soil is high to moderately fertile, and well-drained (coarse loamy soil), although there is a potential for these to become leached and exhausted in areas with relatively high population and steep slopes. Chemical fertilizers have been adopted in some cases, which are seen by many to be expensive, so fertility is maintained by the use of natural fertilizers, especially cow dung mixed with leaves.

### 3.2.4 Natural Vegetation

Uniform vegetation pattern does not exist in the study areas, and wide variation are found with changes in elevation. Nature wise, Champion & Seth (1968) have defined this area as East Himalayan subtropical wet hill forest.



**Figure 3.7 Forest Cover Map**

In Teesta valley tea garden, Bungkulung and Dungra Khasmahal, subtropical mixed forests of broad-leaved trees exists at an elevation of 1000m -1600m and dry deciduous forest up to 900m. From 1400m to 2500m, the temperate forest takes over,

where evergreen trees of medium height form a closed canopy. Here, mostly rain fed large and old trunks are covered with mosses, ferns and epiphytes. The natural vegetation of these forests seems to have changed to some extent due to human intervention and the resultant biotic pressure.

### **3.2.5 Flora and Fauna**

Darjeeling Himalayas and its adjoining regions are situated in an ecological hotspot of the lower Himalayas, one of the important eco-regions of India. The forested regions of the place exhibit a diverse range of fauna and flora. Owing to its altitudinal gradation, the region has a wide variety of plants, from tropical species to temperate, alpine tundra, and is perhaps one of the few regions to exhibit such diversity within such a small area. The pines forests are found at the higher altitudes along with evergreen alpine vegetation. Several species of flowering trees like rhododendrons are found in the region east of Kalimpong. The temperate deciduous forests include with oak, birch maple and alder are also found in the regions. The hardwood trees like Teak and *Chaap* was common in the study areas along with the dense bamboo forest. Three hundred species of orchid are found around Kalimpong. Some of the wild species of poinsettia and sunflower are found in the study area of Kalimpong. The endangered species like Red panda, clouded leopard, Himalayan black bear and barking deer are some of the fauna and various species of birds are found in the Darjeeling Himalayas.

## **3.3 Habitat and Limbu Villages: A profile**

### **3.3.1 Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

The Teesta valley is one of the finest tea garden in Darjeeling Himalaya. It is mostly famous for its high quality black and green teas. The Tea garden is established in 1841 A.D and covers a large area along with suitable human habitation. The geographical extension is 27° 01' 01.57" N to 88°22' 47.87" E situated at an elevation of 2772 feet from MSL. The recent census report of 2011 shows that more than 1000 households are present in this Tea garden area comprising of different hamlet types belonging to different ethnic communities of which Limbu population is spatially distributed. The study area is selected after pilot survey and by gathering

some information from the local and the regional office of Limbu association (Darjeeling) and Gram panchayat office, Takdah Cantonment for research convenience. According to the locals of Teesta valley Tea garden more than 300 Limbu households are present in the entire valley. To know the exact figure, researcher met Mr. RB Limbu an Ex Army by profession and the president of Limbu association of Teesta Valley who provided the same figure. The Limbu settlement in the entire valley is spatially distributed in small hamlets belonging to one proper clan and few other clan groups. The total sample size of the research study is (50%) i.e. 150 Limbu households are taken into consideration in order to get a proper insight of rural Limbu village lifestyle depending on different economic activities.



**Figure 3.8 Study Area Map**

**Description of Surveyed Limbu Hamlets of Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

- ❖ **D.P side** is a small village with semi compact settlement situated on the upper slopes of the Tea garden. The village composed of different ethnic groups among which the Limbus constituted half of the population proportion. The village activity is mainly

teagarden centric and their livelihood is highly influenced or depends on the existence of the Tea garden. The entire surveyed household revealed that the member of every family worked in the Tea garden as Line workers (permanent) or as *Biga* Workers (Temporary) who are employed for 6 months. The village exhibits a glimpse of rural folk communities maintaining low standard and sustaining their life with economic hardships. The climatic condition is warm humid , with temperature above 27° C favoring the luxuriant growth of tropical fruit crop Mandarin orange which is one of the important cash crop of the study area.

- ❖ **Limbu Goan** is a semi- compact rural settlement which is located in few Kilometers above Lower Khamjet. There is a big play ground in the village which also demarcated the boundary between Rai *Goan* and Limbu *Goan* belonging to same Kirati stocks. The Limbus are basically tea garden workers in this area but young adult males have migrated to major metropolitan cities for work purposes and female folks have delimited themselves into the domestic chores and tea garden activities. Orange farming is worst affected in this area hampering the economic conditions of the villagers.
- ❖ **Dharel** is another small hamlet settlement which is above Limbu *Goan* composed of Limbu, Tamang and Brahmin households. The economic condition of Dharel completely depends on the Teagarden wages.
- ❖ **Lower Khamjet** is a linear pattern rural Limbu settlement on either side of the main road which connects with NH 10 linking the place with the route going towards Kalimpong and Siliguri. Being situated in the better accessibility area it offers good site for business activities. Most of the respondents in this area are the owners of variety of shops.
- ❖ **Siru Bari** is a small hamlet settlement which is located in the southern sides of the valley. The economic activity of this village is different from the other surveyed areas. They work in Tea garden and also practice floriculture for good earning. They export their floricultural items like ornamental plants, pine varieties and orchids to neighboring states of Assam and Orissa. They had small farm in the backyard of their

houses where saplings of different pines varieties are grown. The monetary value of this product is quite high in both domestic and national markets.

### **3.3.2 Dungra Khasmahal**

Dungra is one of the big Khasmahal areas of Kalimpong district and consists of lower and upper part. The latitudinal and longitudinal extension is 27°4' 05.57" N to 88°24' 15.77" E situated at an elevation of 3121 feet from MSL. Dungra is a Lepcha word which means fern jungle. Dungra is located on the southern side of the main town Kalimpong, Bombusty located on its western side and Sindebong on the eastern side. The village is fed by small perennial streams. Huge concentration of Limbu population is settled on the lower Dungra where agriculture is the main economic activity to sustain a livelihood. The lower Dungra region is again divided into two zones namely: Damaitar and Ramitee. According to the information collected from the *Yakthung shoong choomvo* an ethnic Limbu association of Kalimpong located within lower dungra listed 200 hundred Limbu households. The two zones were separated by a stream (*Jhoras*).

- ❖ **Damaitar:** The settlement pattern of Damaitar varies from its upper to lower limit. The main road ends in the upper end of the village where semi compact settlement is seen along with the few Lepcha households. The side of the road is marked with terraced crop field and noodle making small factories, which is the last vehicle accessible point of the village. The settlement pattern is widely dispersed in the core area due to presence of large arable land.
- ❖ **Ramitee:** The settlement pattern of Ramitee is widely dispersed with only three to four households distantly situated. The village has one primary school. The village is still inaccessible and villagers have to walk uphill and downhill. The majorities of the people are agriculturalist and leads a very simple rural life.

### **3.3.3 Bungkulung**

Bungkulung is a small Himalayan village nestled on the laps of nature and surrounded by majestic hills along with the green carpet of forest. Bungkulung is a combination of two words derived from Lepcha and Limbu. *Bungku* in Lepcha means the place where God and Goddess reside. *Lung* is a Limbu word meaning big stones or

boulders. The village is drained by cascading and criss-crossing turbulent Marma River in the interior part and Balasan River demarcating the village boundary with Ambootia Tea Garden. Geographically the village is located within 26 ° 52' 34.27" North and 88°13'33.85" East at an altitude of 2060 ft above the MSL. The village is 15 Kilometers away from Mirik and 48 Kilometers away from Siliguri. The northern side of the village is surrounded by Marma Tea garden and Soureni in the western side. Ambootia Tea Garden lies in the eastern part of the village. Phuguri forest lies in the North western side and Manju forest in the Southern side. The village is predominantly inhabited by Limbus for more than 100 years. The lush green meadows, outstretching paddy fields, ponds and mesmerizing greenery makes the village immensely beautiful for rural tourism and home stay. The village has three hamlet types of settlement with peculiar socio-cultural settings.

- ❖ **Siren Goan:** The upper part of the village is known as siren goan with 25 to 30 households belonging to different communities.
- ❖ **Bich Goan:** The middle part of the village is known as bich goan having the largest number of Limbu households.
- ❖ **Zero Point:** The Lower part of the village is called zero point which is the main entrance point of the village from the lower periphery. The maximum amount of terraced fields is located in the lower fringe area of the village.

During the field survey in Bungkulung Mr. N.B Limbu a local and active member of the Limbu association of village gave the detailed list of households. According to village data altogether there are 147 households exactly, out of which 26 households belongs to Rai families, 3 households belong to Tamang and Chettris families respectively, 6 households belongs to Mangar families and one households belongs to Lepcha and Damai (Scheduled Caste) families each. The one common thing which was observed and noticed during the field work in these villages was, people rarely refer to each other by their given names, but usually by the sequence of their birth and thus the first born male of the family is called *jetha* and the female is called *jethi*. The second born is *maila or mailee* and so on. The members of a particular family are often referred to by the location of their house, thus someone whose house is at the

top of the village becomes *mathilo bhaje*. A particular Limbu person might be nicknamed by his mannerism and profession like Colonel Limbu Sir, or with an impressive moustache as *joongay* (Limbu, 2005). These villages located on the slopes with terraced fields has its own slow and tranquil pace, following an age old pattern, quietly and peacefully, far from the hustle and bustle of the modern world .

### **3.4 History of Limbu and Non-Limbu Settlements**

It was difficult to obtain the exact information about the early history of the village and of the Limbus in the study areas. Therefore, in order to understand the Limbu community of the study area oral narratives, myths and genealogical charts are tracked down to know their arrivals in the village. The origin and migration of the Limbu ancestors are the major topics in the oral narratives and myths which are also supported by some historical facts to ascertain. In fact these narratives are very helpful to reconstruct about their forefathers migration and family history.

#### **3.4.1 Narratives, Legends and Myths**

The study regarding the origin of the Limbu settlement in Darjeeling Himalaya is very scanty and mostly not researched about. Historical records prove that disempowerment in the region results an increasing population pressure which leads an emigration of Limbus from Eastern Himalaya in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Caplan, 1970). Moreover the establishment of tea plantation in the Darjeeling and Assam valley in 1835 and construction of the Railway networks in these fragile zones shows the huge wave of the bulk migration of Kirati communities in this rugged terrain (LSSO' Malley 1907). The historical records, legends and narratives are equally important to re-construct the origin of Limbu settlements in describing their culture, customs and beliefs. Some elderly Limbus claimed that they are native inhabitants to this place, their great forefathers held a significant history. The collected oral narratives from the study areas help to understand the Limbu settlement more properly.

In order to understand the History of Limbu settlement the narratives of Padam Kumar Limbu from Teesta valley Tea garden, Kharak Bahadur Limbu from Dungra Khasmahal and Mr. N.B Limbu from Bungkulung is taken into consideration. These

men are elderly persons from villages unknown to one another but to some extent common in their experiences and knowledge. Padam Kumar Limbu, 77 years old, is a retired garden worker who is survived by his wife, children and grandchildren's. His Father's ancestral home is in *Fidim*, Eastern Nepal. His family had migrated to Darjeeling Himalaya in 1922 A.D and had settled in West Sikkim. He was born in Sikkim and when he was a year old his father got an employment in the Tea garden of Teesta Valley and settled here. But, still his family relatives are in Sikkim. The entire village had households belonging to different ethnic groups who had settled in the valley among which the majority of population were Limbus. Regarding the migration history of the Limbus one can draw the attention towards the establishment of the tea garden as one of the main reasons behind the economic needs. At first the migration was temporary as they come to *Mughlan* (Nepalese used to call the then British India as *Mughlan*) to work in Tea garden due to dearth of financial problem. There was the popular proverb among them "*Chiya ko bhot ma paisa huncha*" which means one can earn good income from working in Tea garden. Therefore, the origin of Limbu settlement in the valley dates back to 1835 A.D where they were brought by the Colonial to build up the Tea garden.

Before the Colonial rule, the vast tract of Kalimpong was occupied by Lepchas and was ruled by Lepcha king who were popularly known as *Rongs*. The onset of the Colonial rule in the region, led to hostility among Lepcha which resulted into a war. Limbus living there helped Britishers and Lepchas were defeated and left the area. It was believed that entire village was densely forested with ferns from where it gets its name *Dungra* meaning Fern which is a Lepcha word. The Britishers granted most of the land to Limbus and thereby they cleared the forest and new settlement was formed along with agricultural fields.<sup>1</sup> At present some of the hamlets are called by Limbu *goan* based on its clan members. Slowly the village started to grow when the family size extended from one to another household. The narratives of Kharak Bahadur

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<sup>1</sup> During Interview with Mr. N.D Limbu resident of *Dungra* & president of *Yakthung Shoong Choomvo* on 25.05.15

Limbu (*Yongyahang*)<sup>2</sup> an 80 years old man is used to trace the origin of hamlet based on clan group. Mr. K. B Limbu is a descendant of Paache Karna Limbu, his great grandfather. Paache Karna arrived in Dungra at 18<sup>th</sup> century with his cattle's from mid eastern hills of Nepal<sup>3</sup>. He made an exhaustive and long journey challenging his both physical and mental endurances. After tumbling down through hills he reached the bank of Mighty River Teesta and he realized that it was not easy to cross the turbulent river.

He made a promise and took vow with Teesta saying if she allows him and his cattle's to cross safely. He would sacrifice a buffalo and cross the river holding the tail of a buffalo. After reaching safely to other side he swears that in *Panchami*<sup>4</sup> he will come again to Teesta and sacrifice the animal. He then moves towards Kalimpong and settled in Dungra. The sacrifice of animal continued till the fourth generation. Kharak Bahadur Limbu still remembers the sacrificing of animal in his childhood days by his grandfather in the name of Paache Karna's promise to River Teesta. Slowly, Paache Karna family tree extended in the village and few of his relatives also arrived and thereby a small hamlet of Limbu clan "*Yongyahang*" was originated. Since then Clan is living in Dungra (Ramitee) and moreover K.B Limbu has donated his land for the establishment of school for the educational upliftment and keeping the name of his grandfather alive in the village history. The school named as Goandhoj primary school was set up in 1960 and was recognized by West Bengal Government in 1962.

The folklore of Bungkulung unfolds the settlement history of Limbus and non Limbus in a very interesting way. Lepcha were the very first inhabitants of this place and had cleared the dense forest region of Bungkulung for settlement. As the place was geographically isolated the entire village was densely forested. Sudden outbreak of diseases like Typhoid and Malaria worsened the health conditions of Lepcha families. Many of them died due to lack of medical treatment which ultimately led to their mass migration to Kalimpong region for better settlement. After Lepcha, Limbus made their permanent settlement in Bungkulung from more than 150 years. There are

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<sup>2</sup> One of the Sub clan of Limbu

<sup>3</sup> Oral Narratives of K.B Subba rendered to him by his grandfather gathered by researcher in Dungra on 24.05.2015

<sup>4</sup> Fifth day of the Hindu month of Magh ( February)

two types of Limbus, settlement history namely; the early settlers who came to this place during colonial period and later settlers who came to this place after Independence. (This information was documented for the first time from the elderly knowledgeable person of the village.) The first Limbu household of the village was of Late Mr. Baiiraj Limbu, along with the family of Late Mr. Bikram Singh Limbu. Both of them belonged to the different clan namely *Thamden* and *Phagu*.

During Colonial period Bungkulung was the part of Marma Tea Garden. After the Independence Bungkulung is no more under the authority of the Tea estate ownership. During the field visit it was found that only a single person (woman) was working in Marma Tea garden. As for now, the early Limbu settlers owned spacious land in the village. Some of them had donated the land for construction of Limbu *Mangheem* (Temple) in the village. The shifting of residence for later Limbu settlers of the village is not a new phenomenon. Influx of migrants to a new place might be of various reasons. Social factors like marriage, kin and affinal ties, Economic factor like job opportunities, Political factor like civil war, insurgency etc. The upper part of the village was mostly composed of fresh Limbu settlers who have been living in Bungkulung since the last 50 years.

### **3.4.2 Non-Limbu Settlements**

In the study areas the settlement of non Limbus has different migration history and purpose. In the Teesta valley Tea garden arrival of non Limbus ethnic groups is mainly due to establishment of Tea gardens in and around the study area. For instance Gielle, Jinglam and Namring Tea garden which form a boundary with Teesta valley predominantly inhabited by Tamang's, Gurung and Mangar's who are hugely concentrated and formed hamlets on the basis of their clan like *Lama goan*, *Allay dhura*. The high caste Brahmin and Chettri and Lower caste Nepali households are present in the village. In Dungra Khasmahal apart from Lepcha very few households of non Limbus were present.

In the olden days the orthodox Limbus hardly allowed their family to sale their land to others. Slowly the population was increased and problem of unemployment crippled most of Limbu family which ultimately led to sell their lands to others for

financial purpose. Thereby most of the new families entered into the village among them, many army personnel have made their settlement. One of the Brahmin families said that their ancestral house is in Echhey Kalimpong, they arrived in Dungra to work as agricultural labourer. After staying for more than 20 years his landlord granted a small plot of land to them for living. It was difficult to obtain more data for the arrival and departures of Non Limbu families due to time constraints and lack of documents. But why they migrate this area was clear from the field survey with the following reasons.

- i. Availability of employments in the tea gardens.
- ii. Accessibility of resources with virgin lands.
- iii. Lepchas also sold their properties and allows a space for other Nepali community.

### **3.4.3 Historical Background of Land Relations**

The land tenure and land ownership of Limbu in the study areas of Darjeeling Himalaya is completely different with one other. In this section an attempt is made to understand how an individual obtains rights to Land. How the land transfer system has made an impact to Limbus of study areas? Generally in the study areas land tenure is owned through traditional system of inheritance through kinship and marriage of the members. Under this framework the landholding pattern of Limbu tribe is determined.

The land is cultivated by all the members of the family and each member gets their individual share. Once all the brothers marry, the father's properties especially land is equally divided among themselves. So among Limbu the limit of landholding is neither a single person nor a nuclear family but rather a group or number of nuclear family tied patrilineally (Limbu, 2013).

### **3.4.4 Land Ownership and Land Transfer**

The three types of Land ownership are found in the study areas. Limbus of Teesta valley who owned land had made permanent houses without having legal documents of Land ownership and thus their land is classified under lease land. In the Tea garden areas all the lease land comes under the jurisdiction of concerned company which has

given to them by owners with stipulated time of 100 years. The inhabitants of this area can't sell or buy any plot of land.

Limbus who had made their permanent settlement in the garden areas is aware of the fact but believed that they won't be deprived of their land since they had been living from generations. But in case of Dungra and Bungkulung they have rights over their land and had valid legal documents of their concerned land ownership. Some of the Limbu households in the study areas have rented land ownership.

**Table 3.2 Showing the Classification of Land ownership of Limbu households**

.No	Land Ownership	Study Areas					
		Teesta valley Tea Garden		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
		Households	percent	Households	percent	Households	percent
1	Owned	-	-	100	89.3%	100	93.5%
2	Leased	150	100%	4	3.6%	2	1.9%
3	Rented	-	-	8	7.1%	5	4.6%
4	Total	150	100%	112	100%	107	100%

**Source: Field Survey (2014 – 2017)**

The majority of the Limbus in the study areas of Bungkulung and Dungra Khasmahal holds their land ownership right with (93.5 %) and (89.3%) respectively. The leased land (3.6 %) in Dungra Khasmahal and (1.9 %) in Bungkulung basically belongs to a family who are bonded labourers (*Pakure*) settled in the agricultural field nearby livestock sheds. They only hold the rights over yield produce from the field of which 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the produce is given to owner either through cash or kind. The rented households especially belong to those families who have separated from the main house due to personal obligations. The newly married couple without the consent of parents are socially boycotted and thereby had to live in rented house. (7.1 %) in Dungra Khasmahal and (4.6%) of the families in Bungkulung lives in the rented households and sustaining their livelihood.

#### **3.4.4.1 Land Transfer: Case Study of Dungra (Kalimpong)**

In the Study areas land transfer is done either through inheritance, marriage, or mutual concern of the families as a gift to someone. In Dungra Khasmahal land transfer holds a significant history showing how the Limbu land was transferred to Governor of Bhutan and how the land later came into colonial to present state rule. In the olden days most of the Limbus of Dungra Khasmahal was landlords who were popularly known as Mondal. At present also Lower Dungra Khasmahal has small hamlet named as Mondal Goan from where I could trace down the history of Land transfer narrated to me by Mr. N.D Limbu. Since these accounts are not documented and is the first hand information of the researcher on the basis of field survey.

Mr. N.D Limbu, 82 years old retired army man from Mondal Goan who was the grandson of Landlord Sankhman Limbu. Similarly, like his grandfather there were few landlords in the village who had gifted their lands which in later phase converted into Government land. Sitam Limbu a landlord of Mondal Goan has friendly relation with Topke Raja of Bhutan and has gifted 13 acres 38 decimal of land in 1865 A.D in return of the gift ( half tola<sup>5</sup> of gold ring) by Raja to him. Thus, the land was transferred to Bhutan King and when colonial established their rule in Kalimpong the land went under their control and the villagers<sup>6</sup> who used reside on that land were shifted to nearby areas. Later Colonial handed this land to Indian Government. By the end of 1975 – 76 these lands were brought under the construction of Citrus office, Livestock office, Primary Health Centre and Seed Farm Junior School as the Infrastructural facilities to village by the then State Government of West Bengal that is still present today in the study area. In some cases, Land of Limbus had been transferred to Limbus not by deed of the legal paper but by the traditional norm of the village. Jit Bahadur Limbu owns a plot of land of 10 decimal approximately but holds no legal paper of land. Many years ago his grandfather used to work as *Khetala* (agricultural worker) in one of the Limbu household apart from farm work he also helped them in domestic chores. Due to his good behavior the owner of the house had

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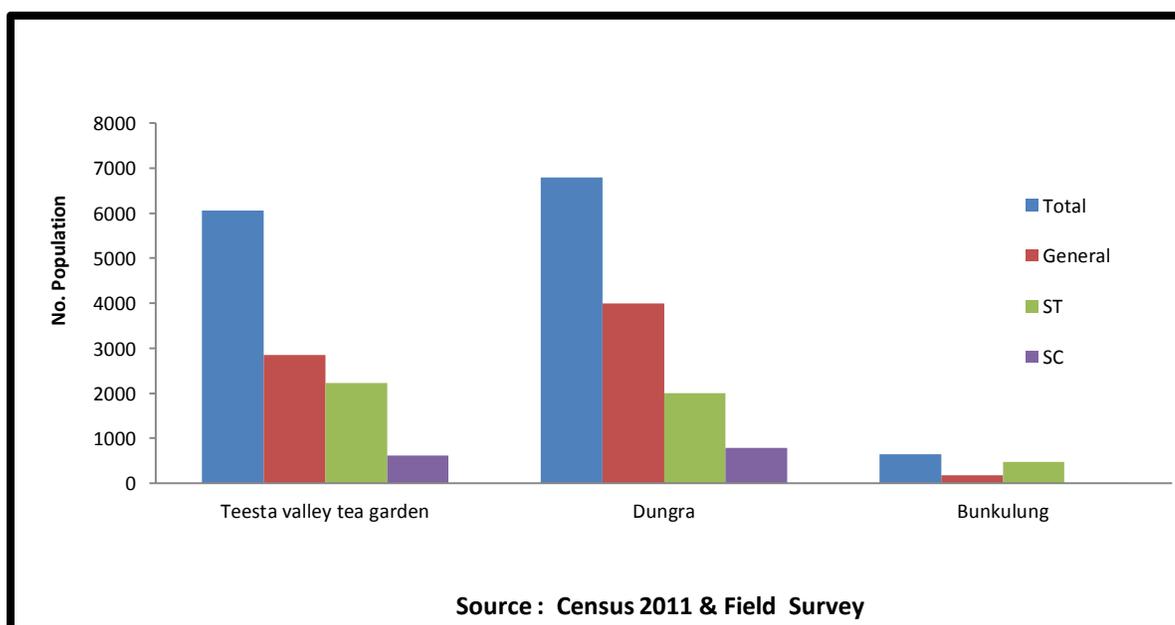
<sup>5</sup> Tola is a unit for weight measurement of gold which is 11.66 grams

<sup>6</sup> When the land was under the Topke Raja he allows the villagers to reside on the basis certain tax to be paid as a royalty to Bhutan. But people hardly pay any such tax to them therefore, he hand over that land to Britishers on the basis of some political development and friendly alliance.

constructed a small hut for him at the backyard of their house to earn his livelihood. He settled with his family in that small plot of land and now the third generation is living in the same place. Presently the owner has settled to somewhere but his *Khetala* family is still there and no one can displace him due to the traditional rights over land through occupancy.

### 3.5 Demography and Population Dynamics

The Limbu villages of the study areas have a mixed composition of population based on caste hierarchy system. The coming of the Nepalis in the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century has brought this system which has broadly divided the village into three board groups high, middle and low which may also be described as upper, lower and untouchables castes. From the commensal point of view, the Nepali castes 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 castes from which water cannot be taken. The former group is a called *chhut* and latter *achhut*. The high and middle castes constitute former class and the untouchables the latter (Subba, 1989).



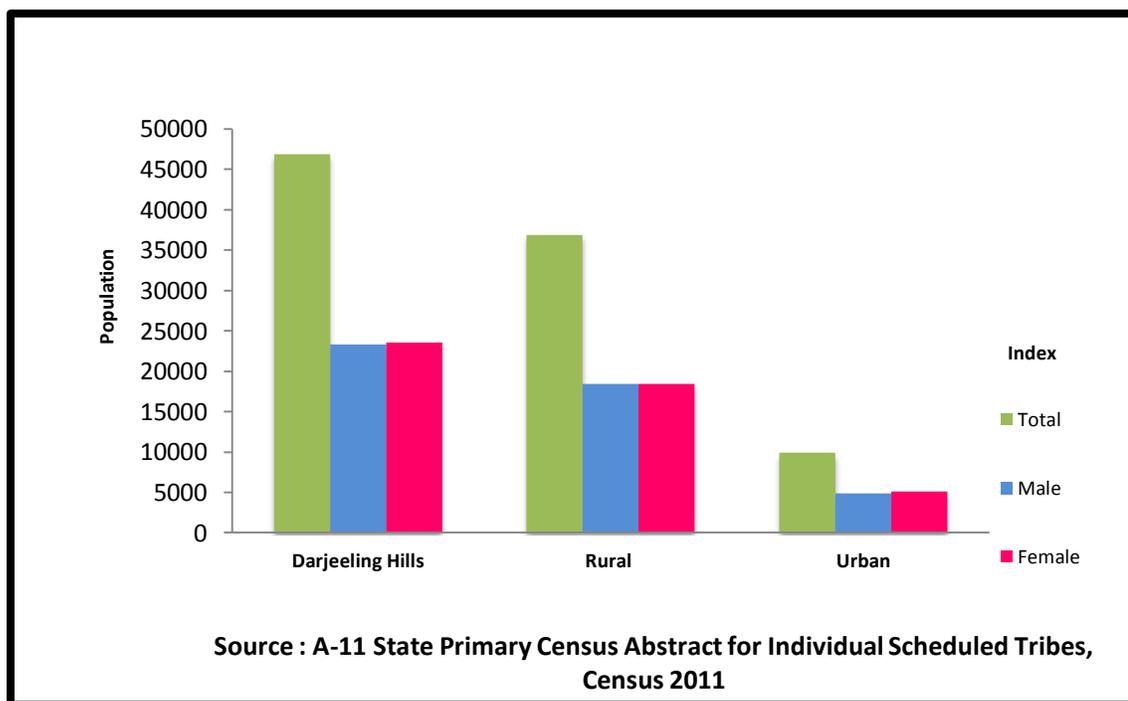
**Figure 3.9: Showing the Caste Composition of the Study Areas**

The establishment of the tea garden and the agricultural lands opened a new avenue for the employment opportunities to migrants belonging to lower castes. The high

caste came much later which forced them to stay in the Khasmahal areas with livestock rearing. Lastly, the low castes were accommodated in the village for repairing and manufacturing of tools required for the various purposes. In the olden days the caste hierarchy was done on the basis of their traditional occupation. Still the caste hierarchy prevails but occupation has changed.

### 3.5.1 Limbu Population of the Study Areas

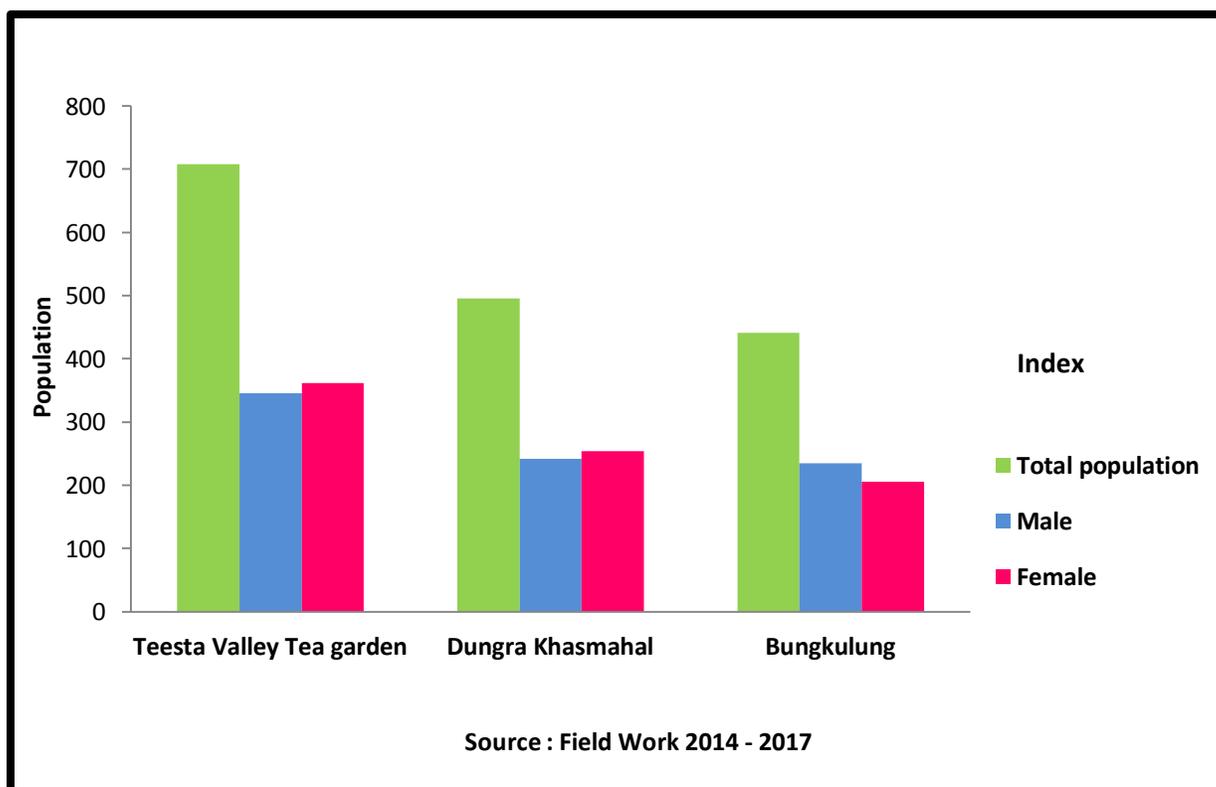
The Limbu population according to the recent census of 2011 is 46847 in Darjeeling Himalaya. The rural and urban population composition is 36908 and 9939. The majority of Limbu population is concentrated in rural areas with 18452 males and 18456 females populations. In urban areas population is very low with 4847 males and 5092 females. The female population is slightly higher in both the areas.



**Figure 3.10: Showing the Limbu Population of Darjeeling Himalaya**

The study of population composition is considered to be very important because it shows the economic, social, educational, occupational and other conditions of the

society. Different types of population composition, which are generally studied, are age composition, sex composition, sex ratio, educational composition, marital status etc. Limbu population in the study areas consist of all age groups.



**Figure 3.11: Showing the Limbu Population of the Study Areas**

The bulk of Limbu population is concentrated in the plantation areas compared to Khasmahal areas, though the traditional occupation of Limbu is agriculture. The Limbu population shows the similarities with the census data and field data which indicates the female population is quite high in Limbu Community.

In Teesta valley tea garden and Dungra Khasmahal the female population is quite high as compared to male counterparts except in Bungkulung. The growth in the number of female population shows good aspect of female status in the community.

### **3.5.2 Age Structure**

The age-sex composition of a population is the distribution of the population among different age groups, which constitutes an important subject of demographic analysis and development planning. Age structural dynamics includes fertility, mortality and as well as related changes in family planning and social arrangements. Keeping in mind the following points of age data, researcher will examine the age–sex composition of the Limbu population of the study areas and its implications on future demographic trends. Age is regarded as one of the important parameters for understanding and judging one’s personality and characteristics traits. It is one of the significant components of social background of an individual reflecting his thought, ideas, moral values and principles. It focuses on the individual mental maturity, experiences and behavior pattern.

The below mentioned Table 3.3 shows the population composition of Limbus living in the rural belt of Teesta Valley Tea Garden. Altogether 150 households were taken as samples for the research study which represents more than 50 % of sample size giving an in depth details of population characteristics. It also helps us 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 (81 in number and 11.4 %) and 26-30 years (95 in number and 13.4%). The minimum number is found in the senile age group of 61-65 groups with 2.8%.

**Table 3.3**  
**Showing the Age Sex wise Population Distribution of Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

Age Group	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
0 - 5	21	6.1%	22	6.1%	43	6.1%
6 - 10	11	3.2%	21	5.8%	32	4.5%
11 - 15	16	4.6%	22	6.1%	38	5.4%
16 - 20	32	9.3%	22	6.1%	54	7.6%
21 - 25	25	7.2%	56	15.4%	81	11.4%
26 - 30	48	14%	47	12.9%	95	13.4%
31 - 35	31	9%	22	6.1%	53	7.5%
36 - 40	20	6%	32	8.8%	52	7.3%
41 - 45	24	7%	16	4.4%	40	5.6%
46 - 50	27	8%	40	11%	67	9.5%
51 - 55	32	9.3%	19	5.2%	51	7.2%
56 - 60	15	4.3%	11	3%	26	3.7%
61 - 65	13	4%	7	1.9%	20	2.8%
Above 66	30	8%	26	7.2%	56	8%
Total	345	100%	363	100%	708	100%

**Source: Field Survey (2013 – 2015)**

**Table 3.4**

**Showing the Age Sex wise Population Distribution of Dungra Khasmahal**

Age Group	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
0 – 5	12	4.9%	14	5.5%	26	5.2%
6 – 10	9	3.7%	10	3.9%	19	3.8%
11 – 15	17	7%	24	9.4%	41	8.3%
16 – 20	20	8.3%	20	7.9%	40	8%
21 – 25	23	9.5%	34	13.4%	57	11.6%
26 – 30	31	12.8%	28	11%	59	12%
31 – 35	17	7%	19	7.5%	36	7.2%
36 – 40	21	8.7%	27	10.6%	48	9.7%
41 – 45	14	5.8%	15	5.9%	29	5.8%
46 – 50	18	7.4%	20	7.9%	38	7.7%
51 – 55	20	8.3%	15	5.9%	35	7%
56 – 60	14	5.8%	8	3.2%	22	4.5%
61 – 65	5	2.1%	6	2.4%	11	2.2%
Above 66	21	8.7%	14	5.5%	35	7%
Total	242	100%	254	100%	496	100%

**Source: Field work (2014 – 2016)**

The given table 3.4 shows the total sample population of the Dungra Khasmahal required for the study purpose. The total number of household sample 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) with (12 %) respectively. The minimum number of population is found in the senior age group (61 – 65 years) with (2.2 %) of total population.

**Table 3.5 Showing the Age Sex wise Population Distribution of Bungkulung**

Age Group	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
0 – 5	8	3.4%	8	3.9%	16	3.6%
6 – 10	24	10.2%	18	8.7%	42	9.5%
11 – 15	19	8.1%	20	9.7%	39	8.8%
16 – 20	15	6.4%	19	9.2%	34	7.7%
21 – 25	18	7.7%	20	9.7%	38	8.6%
26 – 30	37	15.7%	23	11.2%	60	13.6%
31 – 35	19	8.1%	22	10.7%	41	9.3%
36 – 40	17	7.2%	16	7.8%	33	7.5%
41 – 45	16	6.8%	16	7.8%	32	7.3%
46 – 50	22	9.4%	11	5.3%	33	7.5%
51 – 55	14	6%	14	6.8%	28	6.3%
56 – 60	11	4.7%	8	3.9%	19	4.3%
61 – 65	8	3.4%	6	2.9%	14	3.2%
Above 66	7	2.9%	5	2.4%	12	3%
Total	235	100%	206	100%	441	100%

**Source: Fieldwork (2015 – 2017)**

The given table 3.4 shows the total Limbu population of Bungkulung. The total households' is 107 which constitute (100 %) of the total sample. The total population is 441 with 235 male and 206 with female population. The Bungkulung is only the study area where male population is more than female counterparts. The maximum population is found 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 between (6 - 10) years with (9.5 %). The minimum population is found in the senile age group above 60 years with (3 %).

### **3.5.3 Sex Composition**

In the study areas, respondents of both the sexes were interviewed. It has been found that both of them play an important and pivotal role in family and society. So,

respondents were divided widely into two domains i.e. male and female. On the death of the husband, the deceased's wife inherits the right to enjoy husband's property and becomes the head of the household. Women today have been acquiring an equal status and position in society. In study areas the researcher observes that Limbu women were the main pillar of family support system. They play an active role in different economic activities and also dutifully perform all the domestic chores of village folk life. Though they enjoy the good social status but still they are subordinate to male members. Most of the decision making process is taken by the father. During the field work it was found most of the respondents were males and in their absence they ask their sons to respond the queries. The women were not willing for the interview because being uneducated most of them hesitate to respond saying they do not know anything related to Limbus. These types of insecurity were more common in housewives because apart from domestic chores they hardly ventured into other social activities.

**Table 3.6 Showing the Distribution of Respondents according to Sex**

Category	Respondents of the Study Areas		
	Teesta valley Tea Garden	Dungra Khasmahal	Bungkulung
Male	136 ( 90.67 % )	97 (86.61%)	80 (74.8%)
Female	14 ( 9.33 % )	15 (13.39 %)	27(25.2%)
Total	150 ( 100 % )	112 (100%)	107 (100%)

**Source: Field work (2014 – 2017)**

The Table 3.6 reveals the highest number of respondents in the study areas which belonged to male members with (90.67) % in Teesta valley Tea Garden, (86.61) % in Dungra and (74.8%) in Bungkulung, Male respondent was quite high compare to the female counterparts with (9.33 %) in Teesta valley, (13.39 %) in Dungra and (25.2%) in Bungkulung respectively.

### 3.5.3.1 Age Sex Pyramid

The age sex pyramid is one of the important geographical parameter to understand the population composition and its dynamics. The shape of the pyramid undermines the socio- economic development of a region. Another interesting feature about these types of population pyramids is to show the nature of gender imbalances in the specified age groups. In the given below figure male population is shown by the blue colour and female by pink colour. The given figure shows the higher rate of senile and female population in the study areas of Teesta Valley Tea garden and Dungra Khasmahal. The concentrations of younger populations are high in all the three villages.

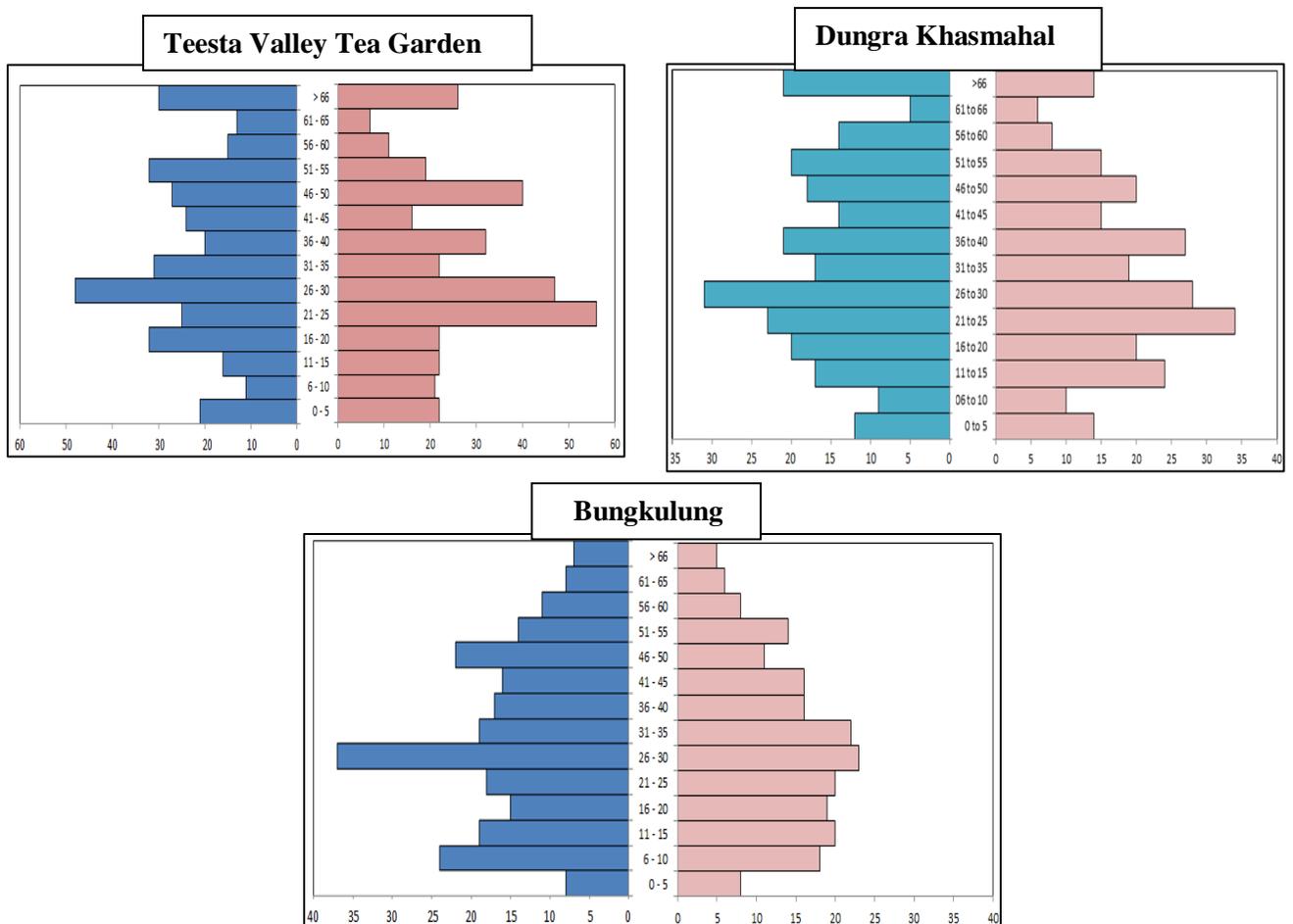


Figure 3.12: Showing the Age Sex Pyramid of the Study Areas

### 3.5.4 Marital Status

The study tries to show the marital status of Limbu community of the study areas of Darjeeling Himalayas. From the table below it is quite cleared to understand the marital status of the Limbus in study areas.

**Table 3.7**  
**Showing the Marital Status of the Study Areas**

No	Types	Teesta Valley Tea Garden		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Unmarried	79 (13.3%)	72 (12.2%)	66(16.4%)	60(14.9%)	57(16.9%)	40(11.8%)
2	Married	201 (34%)	204 (34.5%)	115(28.5%)	120(29.8%)	105(31.1%)	108(32%)
3	Widow/ Widower	10 (2%)	22 (4%)	14(3.5%)	19(4.7%)	10(3%)	14(4.1%)
4	Divorced	4 (0.6%)	1 (0.2%)	4(1%)	5(1.2%)	-	1(0.3%)
5	Separated	-	1 (0.2%)	-	-	2	1(0.3%)
6	Total	592 (100%)		403 (100%)		338 (100%)	

**(0 -16 years is excluded)**

**Source: Field Survey (2014 – 2017)**

The given table 3.7 shows the marital status of Limbu population reflecting the various parameters of population dynamics. One thing which was very common in the study areas was the slightly high population of married women. The main reason of such rate was the result of polygamy, where some of the married males had two wives. In the plantation area of Teesta Valley young men and women marry at quite young age. The majority of person had marriage by elopement. The age of elopement was not fixed because some marry at very young age (17 years) and some married at (40 years). The rate of married women and men is quite high in Teesta valley with (34.5%) and (34%) respectively. Some men and women who are physically disabled were not married and categorize as unmarried but even the persons between (18 – 40 years) are labeled as unmarried. The proportion of unmarried male and females are somewhat same with (13.3 %) and (12.2%) respectively. During survey it was found that the women whose husbands had died at young age have remained as widow (4%) throughout their life. But only few men were widower (2%) especially those who lost

their wife at old age. Most of the widower falling in mid age had married twice and had started their new family. The rate of divorced or separated was low as per survey because most of the respondents did not reveal their personal life. But it was found male divorcee (0.6%) was more than female. Regarding separation by mutual consent not by legal laws was found in one household where the daughter has come back to her natal village due to hostile attitudes from husband and in-laws.

Limbus of Dungra Khasmahal also married at quite young age by elopement. The percent of married women (29.8%) is bit high than those of males (28.5%). During the fieldwork it was found the unmarried populations are young but ready to get married after some years. Only few of them had crossed their age of marriage. The percentage of unmarried males (16.4%) is higher than unmarried females (14.9%) because females were getting married as soon as they finished their school or if they were drop outs. The percentage of widow is slightly higher (4.7%) than widower (3.5%). Very rare cases of divorce or mutual separation were found. Only (1%) of males and (1.2 %) of females are divorced either through legal ways or mutual consent of separation after their husband married to another woman. The marital status of Limbus in Bungkulung shows the choice of selecting the partners depended on both the couples. The marriage through elopement is quite popular and the trend is still continuing in the study areas. The village is also comparatively smaller than the other two villages. Therefore the married population proportion is also quite low with (31.1%) of married men and (32%) women. The unmarried population of male is quite high with (16.9 %) of males and (11.8%) of unmarried females. The separated and divorced cases were very few and the respondents also did not want to disclose their broken relationships. It is through the third party such information is collected. The study area has (0.6 %) of male and female population either divorced or mutually separated from their spouses.

### **3.5.5 Sex Ratio**

In India the sex ratio of female is comparatively lower than the males. The preferences of male child over the female have increased the infanticide at an alarming rate. The social stigma and stereotype obligations on female as debt burden

have led in the abnormal decreasing birth rate in society. Darjeeling district (*including Kalimpong*) on the other hand has different stories of positive growth of population with the highest sex ratio (970 females per 1000 males) in the state of West Bengal and the district retains same rank for rural sex ratio (973 females per 1000 males) also. In case of Scheduled Caste it rank 3<sup>rd</sup> with sex ratio of 965 females per 1000 males & Scheduled Tribe population, it rank 2<sup>nd</sup> 1015 females per 1000 males respectively (census, 2011). The positive sex ratio indicates the good social status of women in the Himalayan society.

**Table 3.8**  
**Showing the Distribution of Limbus in the Study Areas according to Reproductive Status**

Age groups	Category	Teesta valley Tea Garden			Dungra Khasmahal			Bungkulung		
		Male	Female	Sex ratio	Male	Female	Sex ratio	Male	Female	Sex ratio
0-15 years	Pre reproductive	48 (13.9%)	65 (17.9%)	1354.2	38 (15.7%)	48 (18.9%)	263.15	51 (21.7%)	46 (22.3%)	901.9
16-50 years	Reproductive	207 (60%)	235 (64.7%)	1135.3	144 (59.5%)	163 (64.2%)	1131.94	144 (61.3%)	127 (61.7%)	81.9
>51 years	Post Reproductive	90 (26.1%)	63 (17.4%)	700	60 (24.8%)	43 (16.9%)	716.66	40 (17%)	33 (16%)	825
Total		345 (100%)	363 (100%)	1052.17	242 (100%)	254 (100%)	1049.58	235 (100%)	206 (100%)	876.6

**Source: Field Survey 2014-2017**

Table 3.8 shows the total sex ratio of the Limbus of the study areas according to their reproductive status. Age group between 0 – 15 years is considered as pre reproductive category, 16 – 50 years is considered as reproductive and 51 years and above is

considered as post reproductive category. In the study area of Teesta Valley among the males 13.9 percent and 17.9 percent females are in the category of pre-reproductive with the sex ratio of 1354.2 females per 1000 males. 60 percent of males and 64.7 percent of females are reproductive with the sex ratio of 1135.3 females per 1000 males. There are 26.1 percent males and 17.4 % females in the post reproductive category with the sex ratio of 700 females per 1000 males. In Dungra Khasmahal nearly 15.7 percent of males and 18.9 percent of females with the sex ratio of 1263.15 females per 1000 males falls under the pre-reproductive category. In the reproductive category nearly 59.5 percent of males and 64.2 percent of females with the average sex ratio of 1131.94 females per 1000 males are recorded. The post reproductive stage belongs to those populations whose fecundity rate is negligible. Almost 24.8 percent of males and 16.9 percent of females with the sex ratio of 716.66 per 1000 males are present in this category of reproductive status.

In Bungkulung the average sex ratio of Limbu population 876.6 was females per 1000 males. The sex ratio is comparatively lower than other two villages. In pre reproductive age group the percentage of female is high with (22.3%) and (21.7%) male. Whereas in the reproductive age group (16-50 years) the sex ratio is 881.9 females per 1000 males where (61.3%) is males and (61.7%) is females. The percentage is quite less in the post reproductive age group above 50 years. The Sex ratio is 825 females per 1000 males with (17 %) of males and (16%) of females.

### **3.6 Education and Institutional Assets of Limbu Villages**

Education is the most important tool for the overall development of human being. It helps us to build our conscience to think rationally and illuminates us with the knowledge and wisdom. The educational scenario of the Limbus in the study areas is not satisfactory. Very few of them are highly educated holding a respectable position not only in professional life but also in the society. During the field survey it was found that in the early day's education among the males and females has always been a secondary option not because of choice but because of the economic hardships. The growing number of family members led to increase the size of the dependents for which working is inevitable one. Most of the respondents start to work as labourer or

any precarious jobs due to this reason. For them work was very important to sustain a livelihood which is also reflects in their *Ukhaan* ( *Proverb*) saying *padi lekhi ke ko kaam halo joti maam* meaning ploughing is better than studying because it provides you food. This *Ukhaan* which was very prominent has lost its significance in recent years. Because the educationally deprived section of Limbus knows the fruits of education. They send their children to school for better education.

The stereotype thoughts has negate with positive approach where every parents support girl child education which was restricted in the olden days. Prior to this the numbers of schools are very less in the study areas. During the field work it was found that only one high school was present in the study areas. The majority of the students have to walk for kilometers everyday for schooling as good numbers of schools are located farther away from the villages. Therefore most of the parents during olden days did not allow the girl child to go to schools because of security issue leading to the educational backwardness of the female students in the study areas



The woman in a picture is Smt. Kamalphul Limbu of Teesta Valley Tea garden. She opined that during old days her parents had refrained her from going to school. Because they worried if she could learn the reading and writing in school. She would start to write a love letter to her lover and will eloped away without the consent of her parents. This would not only bring the shame to her family but will also increase the pressure of domestic household chores of her mother. Keeping these considerations in their mind, they never allow her to attend the school

**Plate 3.3 Showing the Limbu Woman addressing the problem of Educational attainment in old days**

**Table 3.9 Showing the Educational Attainment of the Limbus in Study Areas**

Study Area	Teesta Valley Tea Garden		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Illiterate	135	19.5 %	45	9.4%	40	9.2
Primary level	105	15.1%	49	10.2%	110	25.4
Middle (V – VIII)	106	15.3 %	65	13.5%	71	16.4
Secondary	75	10.8%	96	20%	44	10.2
Higher Secondary	80	11.5%	47	9.8%	25	5.8
Graduate / PG	46	6.6 %	71	14.8%	22	5
Studying	147	21.2 %	107	22.3%	121	28
Total	694	100 %	480	100%	433	100%

(0 - 3 years is excluded) Source: Field Survey (2014 -2017)

Table 3.8 shows the general educational scenario of the Limbus under study areas. The educational attainment among the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is very negligible as compared to other communities. Prior to relative isolation the lack of awareness among the Limbus is also one of the prime reasons for lack of education. Limbus practice farming activities for their sustainable livelihood therefore education might remain as the secondary option. But with the changing passage of time some rays of improvement in enhancing the education for betterment of the children is seen among the Limbu families. In the Study areas nearly 19.5 % of illiterates Limbus are present in Teesta valley and 9.4 % in Dungra Khasmahal and 9.2 % in Bungkulung. The maximum female populations are illiterates in the study areas. Nearly 15.1 % have received their primary education in Teesta valley and 10.2 % in Dungra followed by 25.4 % of Limbus in Bungkulung. It was found in the survey that only

basic primary schools were present in the study areas due to which after attaining primary level education only few used to continue their education and the rest engaged in different sorts of economic activities. The Limbu populations who received education up to middle school level are 15.3 % in Teesta valley, 13.5 % in Dungra Khasmahal and 16.4 % in Bungkulung. The population who had attained the Secondary level of education which is also regarded as the first stepping foundation in building up the educational carrier was nearly 10.8 percent in Teesta valley and 20 percent in Dungra Khasmahal followed by 10.2 percent of Limbus in Bungkulung.

Most of the Limbu students discontinued their studies after higher secondary level mainly due to financial problems and engagement in the economic activities. The majority of the male population tried for defense services and female population went for other professional training courses like nursing, parlors and beautician etc. Some of them also migrate to abroad for work purpose, 11.5 % of Limbus in Teesta valley had their education up to higher secondary level and 9.8 % in Dungra Khasmahal followed by 5.8 % in Bungkulung. Very few of them had college and university degrees. 6.6 percent in Teesta Valley, 14.8 % in dungra Khasmahal and 5 % in Bungkulung are graduates and post graduates. But in the recent years few changes have come across in the life of the Limbus were they understand the importance and benefits of the modern education system.

The numbers of good schools are not present within the village. Therefore, the parents are sending their children to town areas for proper educational upliftment. Moreover the Tribal status is also giving benefits to the students who are good in studies by providing them stipend and scholarships for pursuing higher education. During the field survey it was found most of the young populations are still studying in schools and colleges among which females has outnumbered the males. In Teesta valley 21.2 percent and 22.3 percent in Dungra followed by 28 percent of Limbus in Bungkulung are still studying or continuing their education.

### 3.6.1 Educational Attainment of the Limbus of Teesta Valley Tea Garden

The table 3.9 given below shows the percentage of how much Limbu population is educated. In the study area of Teesta Valley Tea garden the female illiterates (23.5%) is relatively high than male (15.2 %). Some of them have left the school either after completion of primary level or Junior High School level due to economic reasons. The main reason of female illiteracy is early marriage, inclination towards the domestic chores and looking after the siblings in home. The majority of males have their education up to secondary and higher secondary school level (11.9 %) and (14.9%). In the garden area army is one of the prestigious jobs therefore; many males have left their high school as they joined army. The percentage of graduates is very low with (5.9%) of females' and (7.3 %) of males' graduates.

**Table 3.10 Showing the Sex wise Educational Attainment of the Limbus of Teesta Valley Tea garden**

Category	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
Illiterate	51	15.2%	84	23.5%	135	19.5 %
Primary level	54	16.1%	51	14.2%	105	15.1%
Middle (V – VIII)	55	16.4%	51	14.2%	106	15.3 %
Secondary	40	11.9%	35	9.8%	75	10.8%
Higher Secondary	50	14.9%	30	8.4%	80	11.5%
Graduate / PG	20	5.9%	26	7.3%	46	6.6 %
Studying	66	19.6%	81	22.6%	147	21.2 %
Total	336	100%	358	100%	694	100 %

(0 – 3 years is excluded)

Source: Field work (2013 – 2014)

In the field work it was found that many boys and girls also left their schools in case if they failed. So the numbers of the female drop outs are more in the Teesta valley tea garden. Now- a- day's emphasis on the girl education is prime necessity in Limbu society which makes them empowered independent and determined supported by all households and is clear from the survey because of the percentage of female students (22.6%) are more than the male students (19.6%). Out of 694 the total literacy rate in the study area of Teesta Valley is (80.5 %) and illiteracy rate is (19.5%). From the above analysis it can be said that the Limbus, in the study area are less educated. Now their attitude regarding the need and the value of education is changing. During the field work, the researcher asked them about the type of education they prefer for their children. About (50 %) preferred engineering, medical science and post graduations for their children and other remaining people preferred other types of education for their children. These preferences indicated the changing attitude of the Limbu people in the study area.



**Plate 3.4 : Showing Nepali Medium Primary School of Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

### 3.6.2 Educational Attainment of the Limbus of Dungra Khasmahal

The educational attainment of the Limbus of Dungra Khasmahal is similar to Limbus living in Tea garden belt. As per the location the Dungra lies in the periphery of the main town of Kalimpong. But still Limbus of the village lack to generate an educational awareness among them. The major occupational pursuits of the Limbus are agricultural activities which do not require any educational qualification aspect like, the physical power and labour requirement for farm activities. Therefore, in the olden days hardly anyone focus in the attainment of educational qualification. Many of them left the school after completion of primary and middle school level in order to support their family income by becoming a helping hand in the farming system.

**Table 3.11 Showing the Educational Attainment of the Limbus of Dungra Khasmahal**

Category	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
Illiterate	17	7.3%	28	11.4%	45	9.4%
Primary level	20	8.5%	29	11.8%	49	10.2%
Middle (V – VIII)	36	15.4%	29	11.8%	65	13.5%
Secondary	47	20.1%	49	20%	96	20%
Higher Secondary	26	11.1%	21	8.5%	47	9.8%
Graduate / PG	41	17.5%	30	12.2%	71	14.8%
Studying	47	20.1%	60	24.4%	107	22.3%
Total	234	100%	246	100%	480	100%

(0 – 3 years is excluded)

Source: Field work (2014 – 2016)

Majority of old aged females (11.4%) are more illiterate than males (7.3%) due to engagement in domestic chores from a very early age. But surprisingly in primary educational level female percentage (11.8 %) is more than male (8.5%). In middle school level

only (11.8%) female attained the education because of early drop outs from school as compared to male (15.4%). This may be due to the early marriage of the girl and lack of interest in education. In secondary and higher secondary level the percentage of male is comparatively higher than females. Only (8.5%) of females have attained higher secondary level compare to males with (11.1 %). Thus the male graduates (17.5 %) are also more than female graduates (12.2%). But in the recent days many changes have come across. In the hilly region female education is given more emphasis. In Dungra the current enrollment of females (24.4 %) studying in the school is more than males (20.1%).



**Plate 3.5 : Showing the Primary School in Dungra Khasmahal**

### **3.6.3 Educational Attainment of the Limbus of Bungkulung**

Bungkulung is most educationally backward Limbu village compare to other study areas. During my field work it was noticed that the majority of youths were drop outs. The relative isolation of the place is also one of the factors for underdevelopment.

The place lacks in number of schools with only one private school and junior basic schools.

**Table 3.12 Showing the Educational Attainment of the Limbus of Bungkulung**

Category	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
Illiterate	13	5.6%	27	13.4%	40	9.2%
Primary level	56	24.1%	54	26.9%	110	25.4%
Middle (V – VIII)	40	17.2%	31	15.4%	71	16.4%
Secondary	25	10.8%	19	9.5%	44	10.2%
Higher Secondary	20	8.6%	05	2.5%	25	5.8%
Graduate / PG	12	5.2%	10	5%	22	5%
Studying	66	28.5%	55	27.3%	121	28%
Total	232	100%	201	100%	433	100%

**(0 – 3 years is excluded)**

**Source: Field work (2015 – 2017)**

The give table 3.11 it is clear that female is most educationally backward and are in deplorable positions. The percentage of female illiteracy is (13.4 %) and male illiteracy is (5.6 %). It was believed that in olden days most of the female students were refrained from going to high schools located in distant far town of Kurseong and Mirik due to security reasons. Therefore, the majority of the young girls were forced to leave schooling after primary and middle school to give their hand in the domestic chores. The percentage of females having education up to primary level is (26.9 %) and (24.1%) falls under males section. About (15.4 %) of females had completed their middle school and (9.5 %) had completed their secondary education. Whereas (17

.2%) of males had attained middle school level followed by (10.8 %) completed their secondary level.

The highest qualification i.e. graduation was completed by a handful of Limbus with (5.2 %) males and (5 %) females. But now the parents have become conscious about the education of their children and encourage them. The present populations of younger generation are studying in different fields. Nearly (28.5 %) of young males and (27.3 %) of females have engaged themselves in studying schools, college and professional courses.

### 3.7 Limbu Language: Choice and Preferences

Nepali is the one of the most important language spoken by the people in the study areas. In term of Limbu language, very few elderly members of the households spoke in dialects with their spouses and children at home and with other Limbus during social gatherings. Many of the younger generation do not speak the Limbu language in the study areas. There is no doubt that awareness towards ones identity and culture has reached to a new heights in the past few years but proving oneself in the ever changing modernized time and at the same time holding to one’s roots is forever a challenging balancing act. During my conversation and observation the younger members of the family spoke in Nepali because they found difficult to learn and grasp the needed words/ tense from the Limbu language.

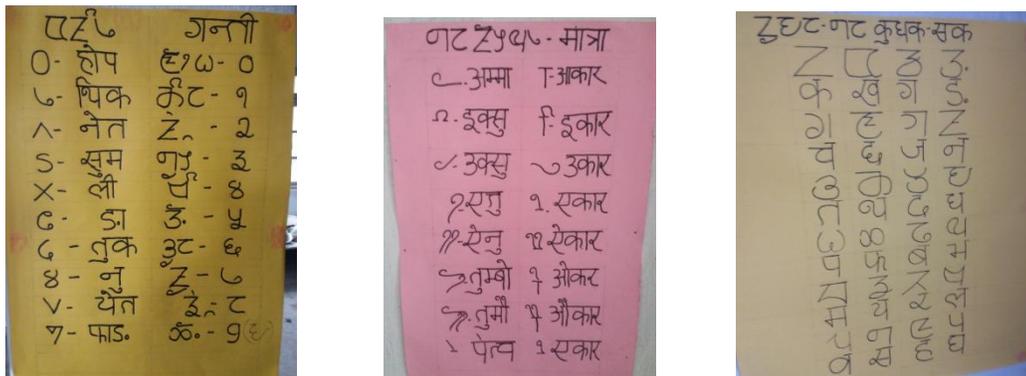


Plate 3.6 Showing the Limbu Alphabets and Numerical displayed in one of the respondent house in Dungra Khasmahal

**Table 3.13****Showing the Number of Persons Who Can Speak Limbu Language**

Age Group	Teesta valley Tea Garden		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
	Limbu	Nepali	Limbu	Nepali	Limbu	Nepali
0 - 9	-	75	-	45	-	58
10 - 19	-	92	3	78	-	73
20 - 29	2	174	2	114	-	98
30 - 39	-	105	5	79	10	74
40 - 49	1	106	16	51	9	65
50 - 59	3	74	11	46	30	47
60 +	20	56	26	20	20	26
Total	26	682	63	433	69	441

**Source: Fieldwork (2014-2017)**

Most of the younger members said that no one spoke in Limbu at home. There was less use of the language outside the home. Because Nepali is a common language in day to day life and in Darjeeling Himalaya it is needed for every government related works especially in government offices, ignorance of Nepali language can be troublesome. Beside Nepali language the influence of English language was more equally strong in the study areas. Many of the younger members of the households felt that they would be left out in modern competitive world if they do not know English language. From the above mentioned table it is clearly seen that majority of the Limbus cannot speak their native language and indeed it is eroding away. In Teesta valley hardly (3.7 %) and (12.7%) in Dungra Khasmahal of the persons can speak both in Limbu and Nepali and (96.3 %) in Teesta valley and (87.3%) cannot speak Limbu language. In Bungkulung 15.6 % of population can only speak and understand Limbu language and majority of population speaks Nepali. Elderly Limbus of the Study areas opined that language problem and inefficiency of speaking it ultimately hampers the culture, customs and traditions. The legacy of every community is passed down to next generation through own language which recites the

myths, narratives and legends of their ancestral achievement and lifestyles which helps in the reconstructing the forgotten history and cultural identity. Limbus of study areas is struggling to revive their forgotten language *Yakthungpan*.

In Dungra Khasmahal, it was said majority of the Limbu speak in their own language as it is one of the dominant Limbu settlement. In reality it was found hardly 10 percent of the total population can understand and speak their native language. In order to understand about the forgotten Limbu language in the fieldwork, I met senior lady who was fluent in language. Among her family members only she spoke Limbu language. She told me during her childhood days her parents did not allow her to speak in Nepali language as they refer it as other language. Meanwhile, her children do not show any interest to learn and speak in Limbu. Because they felt shy and ashamed as their friends used to give satire and jokingly comment on them saying “*Manche Khaane Jaat Boleko*” which means are you speaking in cannibalism? Therefore, they started to speak in Nepali as it was a major Linga Franca in the Darjeeling Himalayan region.

### **3.8 Non formal Limbu School and its Role**

*“The losing interest in language ultimately leads to a death of a culture” said Mr. N.D Limbu (Chairman of West Bengal Limbu Development Board).*

The forgotten language and eroding cultural heritage is the main problem in Limbu society. The majority of the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya hardly speaks in their language. The heterogeneous society and the impact of modernization have completely alienated the cultural essence of Limbus. There is no such officially formal school in Darjeeling imparting Limbu language. During the fieldwork it was found that there used to be informal school teaching Limbu language in weekends in Dungra Khasmahal in Zambiook Junior Basic School. The primary school was built in the memory of Late Zambiook Limbu who was the first B.A .LLB from Calcutta University, an educated man from Dungra. But unfortunately he died at a very young age. The Zambiook Memorial was only one such school in Dungra where Limbu language was taught. Mr. N.D Limbu used to teach Limbu language to village children in weekends. But he left the school in 2000 A.D due to absence of students

and lack of interest to understand it. Though the teaching of language is stopped but every morning school starts with a Limbu prayer.



**Plate 3.7 Showing the Zambik Basic Junior School in Dungra Khasmahal**

### **3.9 Infrastructural Facilities and Services**

The availability of the infrastructural facilities reflects the standard of development of any society. By the infrastructural facilities we mean education, medical, health and nutrition, family welfare, drinking water, agricultural pattern, employment, electricity, transportation, communication and the public distribution system (Bisht, 2001). The infrastructural facilities available in the different Limbu villages are presented in the table below.

**Table 3.14 Showing Infrastructural Facilities at a Glance**

No	Infrastructural Facilities	Village/ Hamlet	
1	Educational Facilities	Primary School	Limbu goan, Ramitee, Khamjet, Dp side, upper dungra, Bungkulung
		Junior School	Damaitar, Teesta valley, Bungkulung
		High School	Teesta Valley Tea Garden
2	Health and Medicare	Primary health centre	Teesta valley Tea Garden
		Dispensaries, Hospital	Nil
3	Cooperative Societies	Bank, post office	Dungra, Teesta valley Tea Garden, Bungkulung. No bank
4	Public distribution centre	Fair price shops	Dungra, Teesta valley Tea Garden, Bungkulung
5	Nutrition Programme	Midday meal, ICDS	Dungra, Teesta valley, Bungkulung
6	Development Programme	MGNEGRA	Dungra, Teesta valley, Bungkulung
7	Electricity ,Drinking water	Every village has electricity and drinking water. Except Teesta valley tea garden which has acute water problem.	
8	Panchayat Office	Rungli gram panchayat in Teesta valley, Rousay gram panchayat in Dungra, gram panchayat in Bungkulung	
9	Transportation	Bridle path, road is partially pitched and has many potholes in Dungra & Teesta valley. Road condition is worst in Bungkulung	
11	Market	Haat market held every Saturday in Teesta valley.	
10	Livestock	Veterinary	Dungra Khasmahal

**Source: Field Survey 2013- 2017**

Table 3.3 provides a general scenario of the availability of the infrastructural facilities in study areas of the Limbu community. These may be further delineated as follows:

Education is pre-requisite for human resource development. The Limbu communities of the core rural belt of the study areas are still deprived of primary educational facilities. In the study area of Teesta valley tea garden out of five Limbu hamlets only three hamlets have primary school, whereas in Dungra the upper Dungra has one primary school and one in the lower Dungra one school in Damaitar and one primary school in Ramitee. Most of the primary schools are of Nepali medium only the junior and high schools are English medium. It was observed from the field work the villagers send their children to urban areas for schooling. The health and medical care system is deplorable in the study areas with only one primary health centre in Teesta valley tea garden owned by the garden authority. The good numbers of hospitals are kilometers away from the villages. The developmental works like MGNERA, PMSGY, ICDS, old age pension scheme, few offices are present in the study areas. The village has electricity connection but in some of the hamlets electricity is installed only few years back. The Limbus still depend on natural resources for drinking water. Teesta valley tea garden suffers from acute water crisis as seasonal streams dry up in the summer which not only create problem but also lead to conflicts among them in fetching water. Public Health engineering department has constructed one tank but there is no water supply. In Dungra Khasmahal and Bungkulung there is no such problem. People fetch drinking water directly from natural springs. For irrigation purposes they just make small *nala* for water supply in the agricultural fields. The abundance presence of water in Bungkulung helps the people to encourage pisciculture in commercial scale. The availability of the motorable road transportation not only developed a region but also helped in the spatial mobility of people. The tea garden area has bit good transport accessibility than two Khasmahal villages. The village in Dungra is only accessible on its upper limit but in the interior core people to walk 2 to 3 Kilometers or more uphill on foot to avail this facility. The condition of road in Bungkulung is extremely bad with big pot holes. Though the village is located in exotic ambience but only few tourists visits the place due to its bad road

conditions. Apart from infrastructural facilities market is also important. There are no such markets present in the study areas except *Haat*<sup>7</sup> which is weekly in nature.

### 3.10 Health Care System and Services

Health is a dynamic situation that needs a considerable amount of time and expertise to capture its sundry aspects (Khawas, 2006). The study does not go into the detail of health care system but only tries to understand the major health problems of the Limbus and their ways to cope it. Limbus of the study areas practices both the traditional and modern medicinal treatment for their ailment. In field study it was found that they seek remedial cure from shamans who are popularly known as *Phedangba*. They also used some medicinal herbs to cure their minor diseases.

**Table 3.15**

**Distribution of Limbu households on the Basis of Treatment Adopted**

Study Areas	Traditional	Modern	Both	Total
Teesta Valley Tea garden	30 (20%)	50 (33.3%)	70 (46.7%)	150 (100%)
Dungra Khasmahal	15 (13.4%)	37 (33%)	60 (53.6%)	112 (100%)
Bungkulung	20(18.7%)	20(18.7%)	67(62.6%)	107(100%)

Source: Field Survey (2014- 2017)

Health treatment is very important in order to keep oneself healthy and free from disease. But now-a-days the cost of treatment is worsening the problem of people. The acute and chronic health issue is incurring the huge cost expenditure because of the improved medicine and medical techniques. In the study areas there are no hospitals, proper dispensary and medical shops. Teesta valley tea garden has provided a health care system with a mere facility. Whereas in Dungra Khasmahal Kalimpong Government Hospital is the near option for the Limbus apart from costly Nursing homes. In Bungkulung the nearby health centre is in *Ghoornauny Tar* in Soureni bazaar. The health treatment also depends on the condition of the households. Limbu family having low source of income goes for traditional treatment and Government hospitals. The middle and high income group goes for modern specialty hospital. The

<sup>7</sup> Rural market which is held ones in the week

Limbu army personnel go to army hospital for their treatment in Lebong and Bagdogra ECHS. From the above mentioned table it is found that 20 percent of Limbus in Teesta valley and 13.4 percent of Limbus in Dungra seek for traditional treatment cured by Phedangba, homeopathy and herbal medicines. Some of the households believe in both the traditional and modern treatment methods. If someone fell sick at first they call Phedangba to ward off evil spirit and takes blessing from *Yumasam* and goes for doctor checkup. Because they believe that unless and until if the phedangba would not see them doctor treatment will not be fruitful. 46.7 percent households in Teesta valley and 53.6% percent in dungra practiced and seek for both the treatments. 33.3 percent in Teesta valley and 33 percent in Dungra Khasmahal seeks for proper medical attention and does not believe in traditional method of shamanism.

**Table 3.16 Showing Major Health Problems in the Study Areas**

<b>Teesta Valley Tea Garden</b>	<b>Dungra Khasmahal</b>	<b>Bungkulung</b>
Liver Jaundice, Pressure	Liver Jaundice	Typhoid
Paralysis, Joint Pain	Tuberculosis	Malaria
Heart, Diahorrea and Dysentery	Nose bleeding Asthma	Asthma
Gland TB	Heart , Joint pain	Body ache, Joint pain
Asthma	Pressure, Typhoid	Blood Pressure, Arthritis

Source: Field Survey (2014 - 2016)

### **3.11 Findings**

Darjeeling Himalaya is a rugged terrain situated on the Eastern Himalayan range. Geographically it is very fragile and has complex form of socio - cultural settings. The region is located on the laps of snow clad Himalayas, traversed by rugged valleys and turbulent streams. The study areas exhibits the diverse geographical features of landforms formed during tertiary period due to plate tectonic movement. The region is composed of granite and gneissic rocks. The Teesta Valley Tea garden is situated in Darjeeling range with an elevation varying from 400 meters to 3000 meters crisscrossed by Teesta River. Bungkulung falls under Kurseong range where the

general slope of the region is from north to south with varying altitude of 300 to 800 metres drained by the River Balasan. Dungra Khasmahal lies in the south east of Kalimpong range within 300 to 3000 metres between Darjeeling gneiss and Daling series of which the Relli *Khola* is the prominent stream.

The habitat of Limbus in this Himalayan landscape has a close relationship with nature, resource and culture maintaining through sustainable livelihood in relative isolation. The origin of Limbu settlements has close connection with the social history of Eastern Nepal from where they had migrated. The settlement of Limbus in the Teesta valley region was after the establishment of Tea plantation by a colonial enterprise. The labour paucity was compensated by their settlement in and around Tea gardens as labourers. The origin of Limbu settlements in Dungra and Bungkulung has an interesting history and stories to narrate. The Dungra is originally a Lepcha word; meaning Fern jungles and Bungkulung is derived from both the Lepcha and Limbu word meaning *Bungku* (Forest) and *Lung* (Stone). The settlement of Limbus in Dungra was after the defeat of Lepchas by the Britishers, with the help of Limbus. The Britishers provided help to the Limbus to settle permanently in these areas. This base or foundation helped the other Limbus from Eastern Nepal to migrate and mingle with the already settled Limbus here. The factors for their migration or settlement were marriage, family ties, friendship and mainly the loss of Limbuwan territory in the Eastern Nepal due to conquest policy of the then Gorkha ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah.

The Bungkulung village holds a significant history of Limbu settlements mainly; the early and latter settlers. The retreat of Lepchas from the Bungkulung, due to spread of epidemics encouraged the settlement of Limbus. These early settlers cleared the forested land and started the permanent settlement with sustained agricultural practices. The early settlers are that Limbus who had arrived in Bungkulung before the colonials' establishment. The latter settlers are those Limbu families who came to Bungkulung for economic purpose after colonial departure and India's Independence. The influx of other Nepali communities in the Limbu settlement of the study areas has huge impact on the demography and socio – cultural attributes. The coming of

Nepalis brought the caste hierarchy system. In the early days the caste hierarchy was done on the basis of their occupation (Subba, 1989). They started to employ themselves in various economic activities. The Limbu were influenced by them and witnessed the change in population composition. The process of migration, fertility and mortality has completely altered the demographic attributes of the studied areas. According to the Census of 2011 the total Limbu population of Darjeeling Himalaya is 46847. The rural and urban population composition is 36908 and 9939 respectively. The study of population composition is vital in understanding the Economy, Society and Culture in Relation to the Habitat. The surveyed population of the studied areas is thus helpful in understanding the Limbu community and their demographic profile.

The total surveyed population of the studied areas is 1645 of which The Teesta Valley Tea garden comprises of (708), Dungra Khasmahal (496) and Bungkulung (441). The male and female population composition shows the interesting characteristics. The female population is slightly higher than males in the studied areas of Teesta Valley tea garden (363) and Dungra Khasmahal (254). In Bungkulung the male population is comparatively higher than female population. The good number of female population shows better aspect of women position in Limbu society.

The sex ratio of Teesta valley is (1052.17), Dungra Khasmahal (1049.58) and Bungkulung (876.6) per thousand males. The female sex ratio is more than males but educationally males are more literates.

The educational qualification is unsatisfactory with majority of the population having middle school qualification. The females are educationally backward and most of them are school drop outs. The higher illiteracy rate among them is mainly due to the social stigma and financial crisis. The higher rate of girl's school dropout resulted in early marriage through elopement. The young men and female marry at quiet young age through elopement. The rate of separation and divorced couple is very negligible.

The local culture has immense influence among the younger generation. They do not know Limbu language. The effort was taken to impart the knowledge of language through informal school but in vain. The inter caste marriage is quite common which

is considered as one of the major reason for fading Limbu language. The infrastructural facilities especially health conditions is deplorable and pathetic with no medical facilities. They practiced both traditional and modern methods of health care system.

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## ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THREE LIMBU VILLAGES

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### 4.1 Introduction

Manpower is the basic resource of a region. The economy of a region depends on the major economic pursuits which are concerned over the functions of production, distribution and exchange of commodities in a society. The main objective of a human society is to strive for profit maximization through different sectors of economic activities. The economy of a tribe is a projection of tribal society, a response to the ecosystem in which it is placed. Its function of production and distribution are governed by the bonds of kinship within or between families, clans and kindred (Singh, 1982).

Economic organization helps us to understand the mode of production, relation of production and technology of production (Beteille, 1971). This chapter helps in understanding the relationship of Limbus with the member of the village for the purpose of production. In the rural belt of Darjeeling Himalaya the economy of the village is based primarily upon agriculture and tea gardens.

The relation of production consists between owners and labourers, including persons contributing in different process of mode of production. These together with their interrelation constitute the economic structure of the village. The economic structure of the studied villages has its own characteristics with slight changes in the traditional economy. The traditional occupation has been influenced by the diversified economic activities. This chapter focuses on the different economic activities of the Limbus, a fringe tribe of Darjeeling Himalaya in sustaining their livelihood.

## **4.2 Major Economic Pursuits of the Study Areas**

### **Teesta Valley Tea garden**

Economic activities are directly related with the development of infrastructural facilities offering a number of employment opportunities. Therefore, the economy of a region highly depends on it. Apart from infrastructures, working class is another important aspect for industrial and economic enhancement. The physical, manual work provided by this working classes helps in both the production process and economic growth because of the less expenditure cost. The dearth of physical energy to run tea industry is filled up by this working class. The minimum wage is not sufficient to look after their family. This compels them to step outside for other economic pursuits to fulfill their basic amenities and needs of life. The above mentioned sentences, relates the economic hardship and survival struggle of Limbus. The normal life circle is encircled with paucity and deprivation of economic assets. The majority of Limbu are living a relatively isolated life with economic hardships.

#### **4.2.1 Economic Pursuits of Limbus in Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

The core of Darjeeling economy comes from its world famous tea brand. The Limbus living in the valley is working in the tea garden from its inception. The garden has flourished in acres of land allowing number of Nepali ethnic communities to work and to be a part in the production process. Both male and female are engaged in this garden but the majority of women folks outnumber their male counterparts. Therefore, the economic pursuits of Limbu females are most vital in determining the economic setup of Limbu society in Teesta Valley Tea Garden. These working females are the bread earner in the family.

Owing to fragile environment, the area offers two major economic activities as plantation worker and farming. Climatically the area is an important growers of two major cash crops i) Mandarin orange and ii) Large cardamom. But with the increasing population most of the arable lands are transformed into residential areas thereby delimiting the farm activities. The major change in the climatic regime has worstly

affected the orchard farming and cultivation of large cardamoms'. This cash earning crops are badly affected by diseases which incur huge expenditure cost for plant treatment and thereby stagnating the flow of money in the village. Though the village is garden centric, apart from the garden work handful of Limbus in the village are engaged in floriculture and animal husbandry. Among the major economic activities defence is quite popular. During the field work it was observed most of the Limbu households have family member recruited in the army. This job symbolizes the respect, honour and dignity of the family in the village environment.

The young agile lads are more enthusiastic in joining the Indian army. The retired personnel also encourage these youths for its pride and social status. Prior to army, garden workers outnumber the employment percentage where they work as a line and *biga* workers. Line workers are mostly the permanent working group in the tea garden whereas the *biga* workers are the temporary workers who are hired on certain stipulated wages in peak plucking season to speed up the deadline assignments on said time. These Biga workers are the most affected population because rest of the year they remain as unemployed, due to lack of education and employment scarcity in the valley.

During the field work many developmental schemes and programme were on progress in the village. The most significant was MGNEGRA (constructing roads from village to market areas). They were working in the construction site as labourers. During the Interview one of the respondent mentioned working as a labour is the tiresome job. The said wages is very less as compared to their physical endurance. But they still work for the survival of their family and welfare. The given table shows the major economic activities of Limbus in the study area of Teesta valley.



**Plate 4.1: Showing the Lush Green Tea Garden of Teesta Valley**

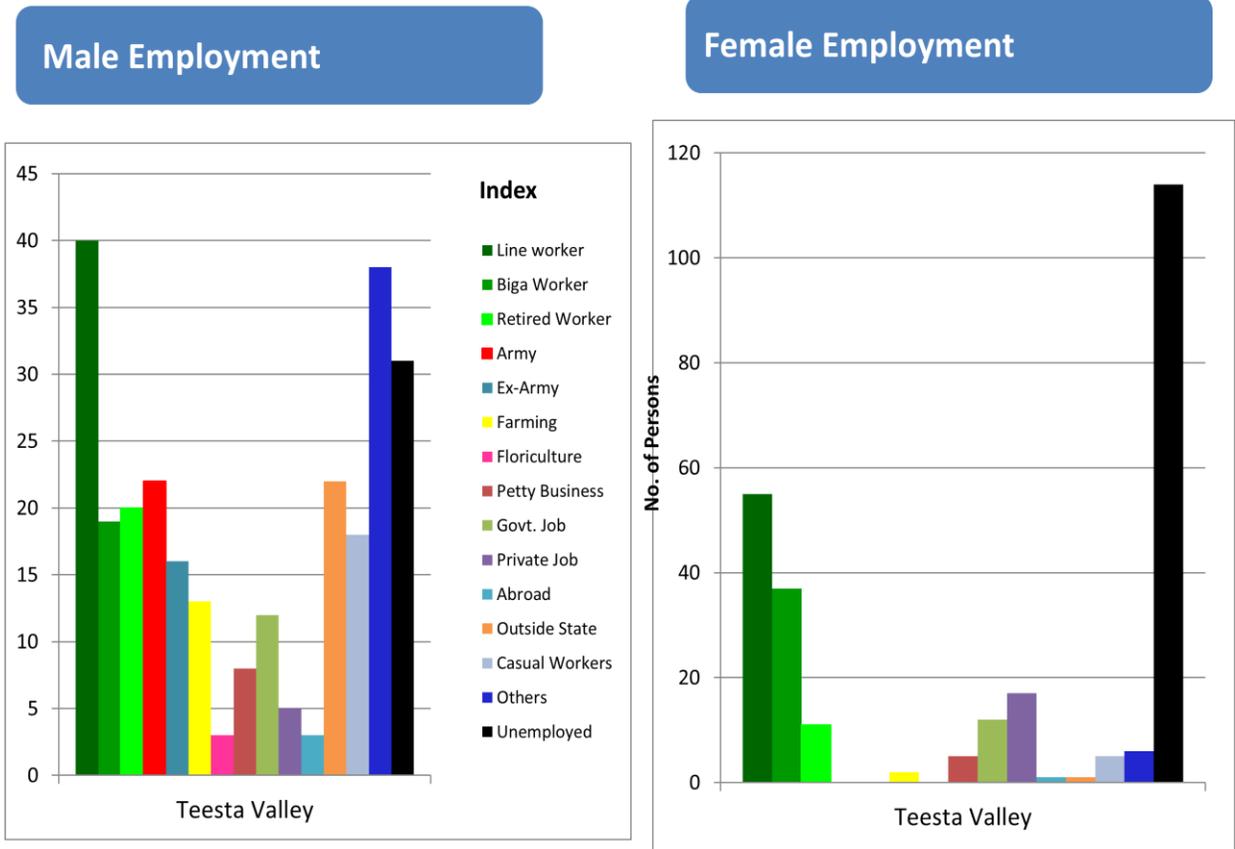
**Table 4.1 Showing the Occupational Pursuits of the Limbus in the Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

S.No	Types	Male	Perce nt	Female	Perce nt	Total	Perce nt
1	Tea garden line worker	40	14.8%	55	20.7%	95	17.7%
	Tea garden biga worker	19	7%	37	13.8%	56	10.4%
	Tea garden retired worker	20	7.4%	11	4%	31	5.8%
2	Army	22	8.1%	0	0	38	7.1%
	Ex serviceman	16	6%	0	0		
3	Farmers	13	4.8%	2	0.8%	18	3.4%
	Floriculture	3	1.1%	0	0		
4	Casual workers	18	6.7%	5	1.9%	23	4.3%
5	Petty Business	8	3%	5	1.9%	13	2.4%
6	Teaching (Government)	12	4.4%	12	4.5%	46	8.7%
	Teaching (Private )	5	1.9%	17	6.4%		
7	Private Jobs (Abroad)	3	1.1%	1	0.4%	27	5%
	Within India	22	8.1%	1	0.4%		
8	Others	38	14.1%	6	2.2%	44	8.2%
9	Unemployed	31	11.5%	114	43%	145	27%
	Total	270	100 %	266	100%	536	100%
Source: Fieldwork (2013-2015)							

The occupational structure of the Limbus in Teesta Valley Tea garden shows, diverse range of works and employment choice. The most prominent and significant is Tea garden work and Army recruitment. At present days the employment opportunities in Tea garden has reached to its saturation point and now it fails to require more labourers due its own financial condition and factory sickness. In some parts of the Darjeeling Himalaya most of the tea garden has closed down. It is not sufficient for people to provide the basic requirements of the family. Therefore, most of them are also doing secondary jobs apart from being a tea garden employee. The most common work was a

casual worker in the development programme and scheme initiated by the Government as MGNEGRA. The casual workers were not only the male members but females too participated in the work to speed up the income flow in the family saving.

Moreover it is clearly seen from the Figure 4.1, below that the larger section of Limbu womenfolk is associated in Tea garden work (20.7 %) of them are employed as Line or Permanent workers, (13.8 %) of them are engaged as Biga workers who are hired during the peak plucking season and (4 %) of them are retired employee. The men are usually engaged in the production processing and weeding of the tea bushes, so basically doing all the muscle works. About (14.8 %) of men are Line workers and (7 %) of men are Biga workers. Most of the Limbu males in the study area are in defence services (8.1 %) are in service whereas (6 %) are ex- serviceman (pensioners).



**Figure 4.1: Showing the Male and Female Employment of Teesta Valley**

The Lower flank of the valley has agricultural land where subsistence farming is the most suitable method for sustaining livelihood. They cultivate both the food and cash crops along with floriculture. Nearly (4.8 %) are male and (0.8 %) is female farmers. Climatically the region is most favourable for the growth of different plant species. (1.1 %) of the Limbus practice floriculture in a small scale but the income generation is highest in this occupation as compared to other. Both the male (3 %) and female (1.9%) are doing petty business.

Though literacy rate among the Limbus is low compare to other ethnic groups but still few of them are working in teaching sectors. About (10.9 %) of female and (6.3 %) of males are working in private and Government schools. Most of the ambitious youths migrate to major metropolitan cities within India or sometimes abroad for better future and good earning. Among migrated members, males are seen to migrate in larger number compared to females. In study area (8 %) of Limbu females are working abroad and within metro cities of India. But nearly (9.2 %) of males are working in major Indian cities and abroad particularly in Dubai and Kuwait. Most of the females (43 %) are unemployed who are basically housewives. Some males who are physically challenged and illiterate (11.5 %) are unemployed. (14.1 %) of the males and (2.2 %) of the females are working in different fields.

#### **4.2.1.1 Case Study of Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

##### **1. Panche Limbu (Shopkeeper)**

Panche Limbu was interviewed to know the socio-economic conditions of the Limbus. He is survived by his wife and children. He sees no option of employment in the village except garden worker and petty business. His father was a farmer. In those days orchard farming was the most important cash crop in the village. The entire village bloomed with oranges during winter season allowing flow of cash in the village. Panche Limbu is living through petty business as a local shopkeeper selling grocery. He also sells local country liquor and other alcoholic beverages. During the interview especially, middle aged males frequently come to his shop asking for liquor. He earns about Rs 500 to Rs 700 daily by selling liquor and earns double of it during functions, ceremonies and

festivals. His sons are working outside the village in different states; their remittance is meager to support family, children education and medical issue. Panche Limbu had his primary level education but was keenly interested in state and regional politics. He firmly believes if the infrastructural level could enhance in the village, the economic opportunities will itself start to flourish. The economic deprivation and stagnation of Tea garden is the main problem of Darjeeling Himalaya. The marginal people are encircled with economic burden affecting their life.

## **2. Labong Baje ( Traditional Healer & Shaman )**

Labong Baje is illiterate and living a life encircled with economic hardships. He was bare feet, dressed in a torn half pants and woolen cap on his forehead. His story reflects the condition of Limbu living in the tea garden belt of Darjeeling Himalaya. Therefore, it is necessary to sketch down his economic life as to provide a light on down trodden Limbus, living in economic debt and emptiness. He is a traditional healer and practice shamanism in the valley. His house is located in the lower flank of Khamjet, Teesta valley Tea Garden. He is called by clan name Labong, than his real name. He is survived by his wife and two sons. His sons are separated from the joint family. His wife Bhutrani Subba is a 70 year old retired woman of Tea garden. They are living in a Kutcha house made up of mud and bamboo with tin roof having two rooms and one separate kitchen. Every year the monthly expenditure cost double the rate of income with a very little saving. Labong Baje goes for performing ritual, puja and ceremonies in nearby villages for his daily bread. The institution of Shamanism is in very deplorable state because of modern and sophisticated methods of medical science. The earning of the day highly depends on the family standard where he is performing pujas. Some household offer good amount of money for cure and divination. He also works as a labourer in MGNEGRA to substitute his income for daily household chores.

## **3. Narendra Limbu( School Teacher )**

Narendra Limbu is a teacher by profession and a literate Limbu in the village. Aged in between 50 years, Sir Limbu is noble and humble man who promptly understood my

research work and willingly agreed to support me. He works in the primary school which is just a distance away from his residence.

Narendra Sir has respect and dignity in the village owing to his educational qualification. He keenly participates in the village social affairs and also gives suggestions and ways for the overall village development. It's been more than 20 years he is giving service to his village by sowing the seeds of knowledge among the children. The school is Government aided. During field visit to school it was found the numbers of staffs were less. Deprived children of poor families study in the school. He does all administrative and academic related works of school whole heartedly.

Survived by wife and three children he has good source of income. His children are studying in good school and colleges. Among the deprived and illiterate sections of Limbus of the village he is living sophisticated lifestyle with all necessary amenities in the relative isolated village environment of the Teesta Valley.



PLATE 4.2: SHOWING THE RESPONDENTS AND THEIR FAMILY OF TEESTA VALLEY TEA GARDEN

#### 4.2.2 Major Economic Pursuits of Limbus in Dungra Khasmahal

Limbus of Kalimpong is enjoying all sorts of economic activities. Kalimpong is an agricultural region favouring the growth of both food crops and cash crops. In the study area of Dungra Khasmahal the main source of income depends on farm based activities.

The village is located in the southern side of the main town with heterogeneous composition of different ethnic Nepali group. The upper part of the village has well established houses belonging to armed Limbu personnel's. Their living standard is good and dignified among the villagers. The economic condition of the Limbus is in good condition compared to the Tea garden areas. Like, most of the villagers, Limbus of Dungra also leads a very simple and normal life filled with joy and sorrow. The climatic condition of Dungra Khasmahal offers the luxuriant growth of crops and vegetables. The field data reveals that most of the family income comes from the agricultural production.

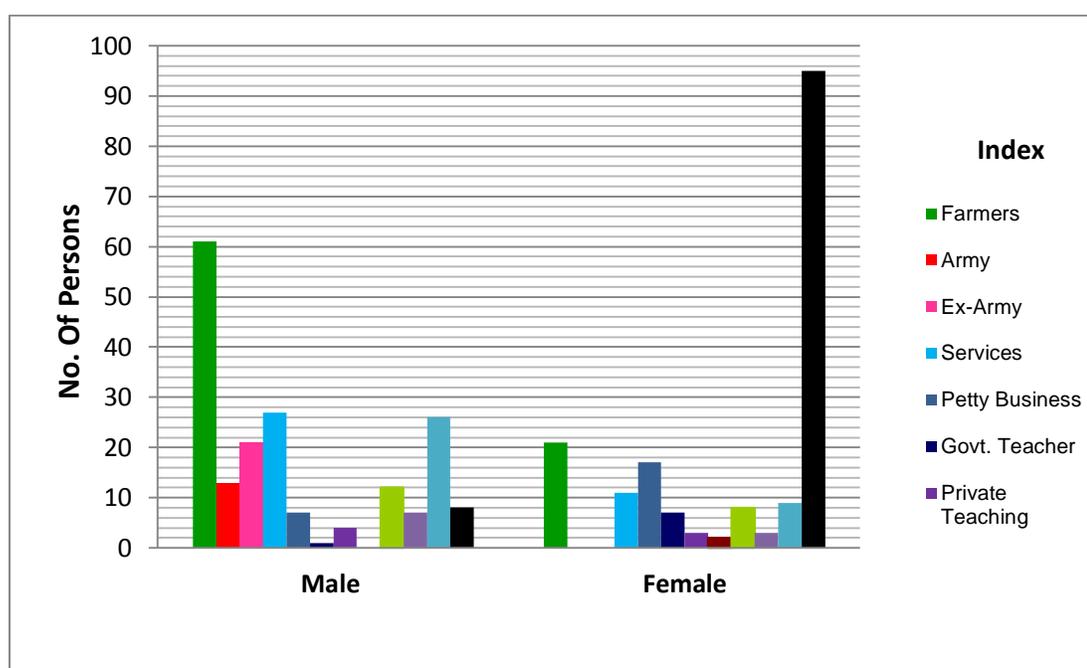
**Table 4.2 Showing the Occupational Pursuits of the Limbus in Dungra Khasmahal**

S.No	Types	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
1	Army	13	6.9%	0	0	34	9.4%
2	Ex serviceman	21	11.2%	0	0		
3	Farmers	61	32.6%	21	11.9%	82	22.6%
4	Agricultural Labourers	7	3.7%	3	1.7%	10	2.8%
5	Petty Business	7	3.7%	17	9.7%	24	6.6%
6	Government Service	27	14.5%	11	6.3%	38	10.5%
7	Teaching (Government)	1	0.5%	7	4%	15	4.1%
	Teaching (Private )	4	2.2%	3	1.7%		
8	Private Jobs ( Within India)	12	6.5%	8	4.5%	22	6%
	Abroad	0	0	2	1.1%		
9	Others	26	13.9%	9	5.1%	35	9.6%
10	Unemployed	8	4.3%	95	54%	103	28.4%
	Total	187	100%	176	100%	363	100%
Source: Fieldwork (2014-2016)							

The above mentioned table shows the occupational pattern of Dungra Khasmahal. The main economic activity of the area is farming. The open undulating terraced field occupies the major part of the village where intensive subsistence farming is practiced.

Every Limbu households has significant amount of agricultural land, where both gender plays an active role related with farm based activities.

Being an agrarian village the hardcore farm activities relating with tillage, ploughing and muscle related works are performed by male farmers. The female farmers basically do the sowing of seeds, planting and harvest related activities. The percentage of male engaged in farming is (32.6 %) with meager percentage of female participation about 11.9 %.The proportions of agricultural labourers constitute (3.7 %) males and (1.7 %) females’ participation. The figure 4.2 below shows the rate of male and female participation in the economic activities.



**Figure 4.2: Showing the Male and Female Employment of Dungra Khasmahal**

Apart from farming some of the Limbus has engaged themselves in both secondary and tertiary economic activities. This type of occupation earns respect and honour to their family in village social environment. Nearly (14.5 %) male and (6.3 %) females are employed in Government services of the State in various departments. The recruitment in Army is quite popular in the village but the percentage is less when compared to Teesta valley Tea Garden. About (6.9 %) are presently working and (11.2 %) have

retired. The field observation reveals that most of young graduate felt reluctant to work in fields therefore they have engaged themselves in teaching profession where female outnumbered the males. The females working both in private and Government Institutions is (4 %) and (1.7 %) whereas (2.2 %) of males are working in private and (0.5 %) in Government Institutions.

The unemployed female percentage is highest with overall (54 %) including housewives and (4.3 %) of males among which some of them are physically disabled. (6.5%) of males and (4.5 %) of females are working in major cities of India under private firm. (1.1 %) of females are working in South Asian Countries mainly Singapore and Hongkong as domestic helpers and as child care taker. (9.7 %) of females are doing petty business, with (3.7 %) of males which basically includes selling grocery and country liquor. Rest of the (13.9 %) males and (5.9 %) females are working in different miscellaneous works which are categorized as others like casual labourers, drivers, carpenters etc.

#### **4.2.2.1 Case Study of Dungra Khasmahal**

##### **1. Itimaya Limbu ( Farmer & Businesswoman)**

In every society woman performs most of the major work and are the backbone to their family. In this context the economic pursuit of Limbu woman of Dungra and her survival strategies for sustainable livelihood was studied. Itimaya Limbu is a 58 years old widow, survived by two children and had a nuclear family. She is competent and outspoken lady wearing a trouser, T-shirt and a head scarf. She has been looking after the family for the last 10 years after her husband death. She owned 15 decimal of land which includes household and cultivable area. She was a farmer by profession and sells her agricultural produce to nearby areas. Her monthly income comes from farming and remittance send by her daughter who is working in New Delhi.

Regarding farming she told the input cost is more. Therefore apart from the farming she rears livestock and also work as labourer in the Government development programme of the village. She sells her farm produce to nearby Haat bazaar of Kalimpong. But as for now she delivers all agricultural produce to Sikkim, due to its profitable business. She

said the vendor collects all the items once it is dispatched from Kalimpong. Firstly she has to take whole loads to Kalimpong bus stand by a vehicle at Rs 150 for four quintals. Then she loads it to Sikkim bus which cost another 120 per quintal. By the time when it reaches Sikkim it fetches Rs 480 – Rs 500 for four quintals as a carrying tariff. Then the agent deals with rest of the work and decides the price value depending on the demand and freshness. Suppose the vegetables are good price value increases and vice-versa. So in a week or twice in a month she delivers her vegetables to Sikkim which bears her the amount ranging from Rs 2000- Rs 4000. The economic pursuit of Itimaya portrays role of an efficient woman farmer challenging the obstacles of life and thereby becoming a self dependent, empowering herself to achieve fruitful goals of life.

## **2. Karna Bahadur Limbu ( Ex- British Army)**

Mr. K.B Limbu is one of the living war veterans of Second World War awarded by British bravery medals he holds an immensely important position in the Limbu society. He is 89 years old, almost fit and fine. He possesses immense knowledge of Limbu rituals and customs. Therefore, he is also known as *Tumba* (Elderly senior) for giving advice and directing Limbus for the betterment of intangible cultural heritage. He is the source of legends, myths and folklore which is yet to be documented. Recently well known author Samsheer Ali of Kalimpong has written a biography on him. He lived in joint family with total ten family members.

The source of income is farming and other related work. The arable land is used for cultivation of both cash and food crops. But due to lack of labour and decrease in the yield production he has replaced the rice farming by orchard farming in the order to double his income and cash flow. In 2013-2014 he ordered the orange saplings nearly 150 pieces each for the plantation. K. B Limbu new experiment is a challenge and opportunity to increase income level and economic conditions if things go properly. Thus the economic life is good and sounds well.

## **3. Manhang Limbu ( Agricultural Labour )**

Being an agricultural labour is the tough and hard to survive as what Manhang Limbu said. Survived by wife and his children family Manhang still works in the field at an age of 70 years also as to provide basic amenities to his family. Born in a poor family he

could not secure good education and life. From a very young age he started to work the daily earning is very low which can be used only for daily breads. There is no saving from his earning. He still lives in the rented house of the landlord where he do not need to pay his rent but has to work for in their field. His economic condition is not good because of deprivation and lack of education.



**PLATE 4.3 Showing the Respondents Of Dungra Khasmahal**

#### **4.2.3 Major Economic Pursuits of Limbus in Bungkulung**

The rural livelihood of Limbus in Bungkulung revolves around farming and rural tourism. The undulating terraced land is well irrigated for yielding both food and cash crop. Very few Limbus are engaged in the off farm activities. The majority of youths are engaged in private jobs in metropolitan cities. The male members are working in

security agency and females are working in the saloons of Bangalore and Chennai. The outmigration of skilled youths from the village in search of employment is the main economic problem. The secondary activity which is very common in Bungkulung is home stay tourism. The female folks are also interested because they can earn good income by selling their local goods to tourists using available resources. The table 4.3 shows the occupational pattern of Limbus in the study area.

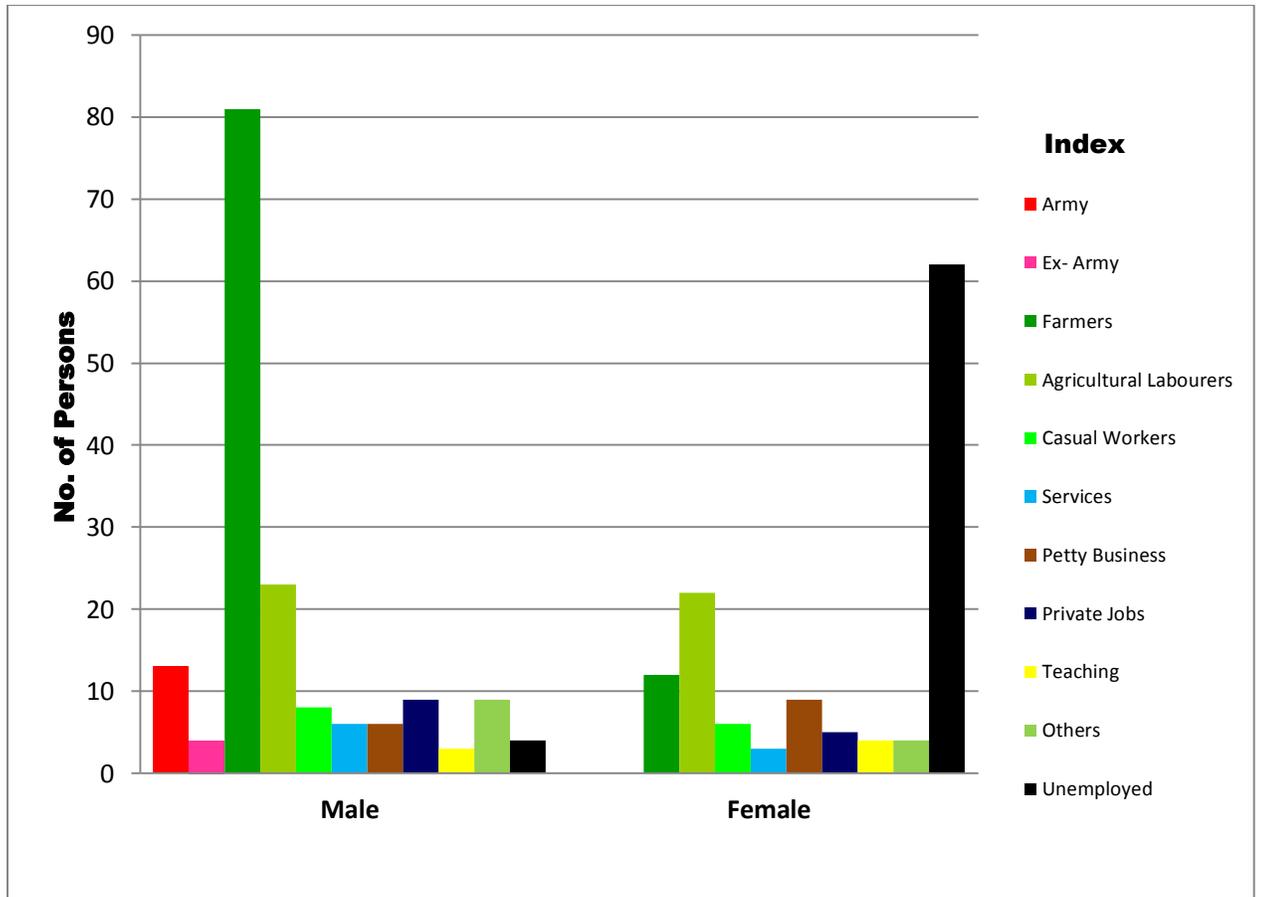
**Table 4.3: Showing the Occupational Pursuits of Limbus in Bungkulung**

S.No	Types	Male	Perce nt	Female	Perce nt	Total	Perce nt
1	Army	13	7.8%	-	-	13	4.4%
2	Ex serviceman	4	2.4%	-	-	4	1.4%
3	Farmers	81	48.7%	12	9.4%	93	31.7%
4	Agricultural Labourers	23	13.9%	22	17.3%	45	15.4%
5	Casual workers	8	4.8%	6	4.7%	14	4.8%
6	Government Service	6	3.6%	3	2.4%	9	3.1%
7	Petty Business	6	3.6%	9	7.1%	15	5.1%
8	Private Jobs ( Outside)	9	5.4%	5	3.9%	14	4.8%
9	Teaching	3	1.9%	4	3.1%	7	2.4%
10	Others	9	5.4%	4	3.1%	13	4.4%
11	Unemployed	4	2.4%	62	48.9%	66	22.5%
	Total	166	100%	127	100%	293	100%

Source: Field work (2015 – 2017)

The above mentioned table shows the details of occupational characteristics of the villages. The relative isolation of the study area and suitable climatic condition has encouraged most of the Limbu households for farm based activities. The wet paddy

cultivation in the undulating terrace is the main economic activity. It is done mostly for self-consumption. During the field visit it was observed, many female farmers growing organic vegetables in their homestead.



**Figure 4.3: Showing the Male and Female Employment of Bungkulung**

On the basis of field survey there are (48.7%) male and (9.4%) female farmers. The female are also working as agricultural labourers during sowing and harvesting periods of rice cultivation. Female agricultural workers constitute the total percent of (17.3%) and their male counterparts represent (13.9 %). The casual workers are those who work in the Government village development programme as helpers in MGNERGA of which male (4.8 %) and female (4.7 %).

The recruitment in the defence services is the most respectable job in all the three studied areas. Limbu man is known for their bravery and agility. Therefore, the young

lads are interested in joining Indian army. In study area (7.8 %) of the Limbus is serving Indian army and (2.4 %) are retired armed personnel's. Being educationally backward very few of them are Government employees mostly working in group D category. There is only one person who has passed the West Bengal Civil Service in the village till date of at survey time in the Bungkulung. The male and female holding the government service comprises of (3.4 %) and (2.4 %) respectively. The outmigration from the village is common in search of better livelihood and employment opportunities. The migrant Limbu are working in the private sector with (5.4 %) male and (3.9%) female in the study area. These youths seek to travel major metropolitan cities of India to work in different security agencies, domestic helpers and parlours. Most of them are working in family saloon because of good salary and perks. The rest population is engaged in petty business and different sorts of economic activities. Very few of male are unemployed especially the disabled one with (2.4 %) and the majority of Limbu women comprising of (48.9 %) who are mostly the housewives, engaged in domestic routine of life.

#### **4.2.3.1 Case Study of Bungkulung**

##### **1. Santabir Limbu ( Honey collector and petty Business)**

Mr. Santabir Limbu is 71 years old man living in Bungkulung with his fifth generation. He is one of the oldest inhabitants of the village. He is survived by his wife and children who are all married now. In order to have a sustainable rural livelihood he used to do apiculture and farming. He told me 50 years ago the village was sparsely populated and surrounded by dense jungle. The jungle was the source of collecting wild edible honey which used to fetch a good price in the market. He used to collect honey from the forest and sell them in the nearby markets. Being uneducated this job was lucrative from him for which he started apiculture and still practice. From 1970 onwards he started to collect honey from nearby villages. At that time he had 13 boxes of beehive from which four bottles of honey could produced from one box. He had a business partner from Siliguri plain, an Adivasi man Walsalam who used to pay Rs 30 per bottle. In a year he managed to sell nearly 100 kg honey to Walsalam. He told me, Walsalam used to export honey to Pune in Maharashtra as he was working there. As for now his business is

looked after by his younger son who is a temporary staff in the Yanki Tea factory. Now he is selling *Putka* (Stingless Bee) honey which has high demand in the regional and global market. He brings them from Bhutan at the cost of Rs 6000 per bottle and keeping some profit he sells it to his customers. The deforestation and forest entry restriction has reduced the source of honey production in the village.

## **2. N.B Limbu ( Social Worker and Farmer )**

Mr. N.B Limbu is a farmer by profession and a social worker by his choice. I met Mr. NB Limbu during my fieldwork, and had helped me immensely during my stay and fieldwork in Bungkulung. He is a middle aged man survived by wife and two children. His philosophy of life revolves around the social work and the upliftment of Limbus in the village. He is a portfolio member of regional party and has been associated with number of village organization and committee. Influenced by the ideals of late Gorkha leader Shri Subhas Ghising, NB Limbu is the active member of GNLF and is the party president of the GNLF from Bungkulung area. Mr. Limbu had studied till grade nine because of his family economic conditions. Moreover the bloodshed agitation of 1986 had driven him away from the village because of political unrest and chaos. For many years he was away from his village. In 1990's he came back and started doing farming and pisciculture. He is very fond of pisciculture for which he had initiated the programme for it. He constructed a pond in his house for better fish production. Soon, thereafter many Government projects were implemented in the Bungkulung. He had attended many seminars and workshop for pisciculture and the outcome of the workshop has been implemented in the village. Apart from this he is a social worker and restlessly works for the interest of every villager. When I asked, how he sustain his family because you may hardly benefit from the social service. He said he sells and grow agricultural products and his income comes from livestock rearing too. Recently he got a sanctioned of Rs 2 lakhs for constructing a house from West Bengal development board which is still under construction.

## **3. Sujita Limbu ( employee in a parlour)**

Sujita Limbu is young vibrant woman who is working at the parlour in Chennai. Being dropout from school, due to financial problem at home made her to realize the problem

and she started to support the family. She then decided to go outside so that she could be more financially secured. She went to Bangalore to work as some of her close friends were working there. It's been almost two years for her, working in Chennai and she is content with her work. She sends remittance every month back in her village. She said at first her parents strictly opposed her to send to work outside because of lack of security. Later on she made her best to convince her parents. Now everyone is happy in her decision. Every year especially in Durga puja she comes to village for *Dashain*.

#### 4. Pawan Limbu ( Farmer and Entrepreneur )

Pawan Limbu is a farmer cultivating Lemon grass from 2011 with the aim of exporting the product in the international market. He had also set up a small factory for extracting oil from lemongrass. His motive behind the establishing this factory was to provide job opportunities in a most sustainable method. He first brought the lemon grass saplings from Manipur and Uttar Pradesh. He invested six lakhs rupees on installation of a machine and started growing lemongrass in 20 acres of land. The price of the oil is Rs 600 / liter in the market. This initiative of Pawan Limbu is highly praised by the villagers because it is providing employment to the locals.



**Plate 4.4 showing the respondents of Bungkulung**

#### 4.2.4. Earning Status

The family standard is completely depends on the earning status of the members. The study areas of Darjeeling Himalaya offer a small opportunity for income generations. Therefore, most of the family is still not economically sound because of their meager income and earning status. In order to understand the earning status researcher had clubbed the sample population under three following heads. They are earner, earner dependent and dependent. The majority of the respondents fall under the category of low to medium earning groups. The living conditions of Limbus in the Tea garden of Teesta valley and Bungkulung is slightly poor compare Limbus of Dungra Khasmahal. In general they all are encircled by vicious economic hardships.



**Plate 4.5: Showing the Name Plates and Medals of the Army households depicting the Social and Earning Status**

**Table 4.4 Showing the Earning Status of the Limbus**

Study Areas	Earner		Earner Dependent		Dependent		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Teesta Valley	193	90	68	55	84 (11.8)	218	708
Tea Garden	(27.3%)	(12.7%)	(9.6%)	(7.8%)		(30.8%)	(100%)
Dungra	142	30	32	55	68	169	496
Khasmahal	(28.6%)	(6%)	(6.4%)	(11.1%)	(13.8%)	(34.1%)	(100%)
Bungkulung	120	15	31	13	85	177	441
	(27.2%)	(3.4%)	(7%)	(3%)	(19.3%)	(40.1%)	(100%)

Source: Field Survey (2014 – 2017)

The above mentioned table clearly shows the earning status of the Limbus. The dependent ratio is more in the study areas. The female population is in very vulnerable state with only the women of Teesta valley who is earning in the family. These women are the tea garden workers. Earner dependent are those working population whose earning is menial to only look after them. Therefore they too highly relied on the family.

### **4.3 Income Analysis, Sources and Levels of Income**

Income is defined as earning in cash or flow of resource in a household in the past twelve months. The source of income differs from one household to another. In the study areas of Limbu village the main income source are farming, remittance, animal husbandry, business, tea garden and pension. In order to have a detailed and in depth study researcher has tried to analyze the various aspects of economic characteristics of a Limbu village on the basis of total sampled households taken from the field study.

#### **4.3.1 Limbu Households of Teesta Valley Tea Garden as per their Monthly Income and Source**

The dearth and paucity of money is quite common among the Limbus of Teesta valley tea garden. Very few households are self-sufficient as they had good source of income. Central livelihood activities in the Teesta valley are garden centric.

The given below table 4.4 shows the amount of households income of the study area. The Limbus of the Teesta valley tea garden procures their income from different sources depending on the nature of their work. In every household one of the family members was associated with garden work and few of them were in Indian army. Some of the household income depend on the daily earning thus they have a fluctuating rate of monthly income. During my survey, it was really hard for me to take out their monthly income and expenditures details. Therefore, a general sketch of monthly income analysis is made by a researcher on the basis of the primary data gathered from the field visits.

**Table 4.5 Showing the Distribution of Limbu Households According to Monthly Income**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Income (Rs)</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	< 5000	25	16.7 %
2	5000 – 10000	66	44%
3	10000 – 15000	24	16%
4	15000 – 20000	14	9.3%
5	20000 – 25000	12	8%
6	25000 – 30000	5	3.3%
7	>30000	4	2.7%
Total		150	100%

Source: Field Survey 2013 – 2015

The above mentioned table shows the monthly income of the Limbus of Teesta valley Tea Garden. The flow of monthly income among the household is INR 5000 to INR 30000 which also clearly reflects their living standard and nature of their work. (27%) of the households have good source of income because they are employed in Government services like teaching, army etc. (3.3 %) of the households income mainly comes from remittance, pension and defense services.

Whereas (9.3 %) of the household income is from business, pension and floriculture, (16 %) and (44%) of the households' income comes from garden wages and other related works. (16.7 % ) of the Limbu households' are in vulnerable conditions because they are temporary and casual works who are active in half of the year and lie vacant and jobless in the remaining year with some minor works in the plantation and orchard farming.

**Table 4.6 Showing the Distribution of Limbu Households According to Source of Income**

S.No	Source	No. of Households	Percentage
1	Tea garden wages	58	38.7%
2	Defense service	23	15.3%
3	Government / Private jobs	11	7.3%
4	Farming / Livestock / Floriculture	17	11.4%
5	Remittances	23	15.3%
6	Petty Business	6	4%
7	Others	12	8%
Total		150	100 %

Source: Field Survey 2013 – 2015

The source of income is very important to ensure the sustainability of the economic needs. The geographical conditions of the Himalayan regime always undermine the economic pursuits of the region either through demographic attributes or by harsh physical terrain delimiting the economic opportunities. Colonial enterprises like establishment of the Tea gardens provide a steady flow of income in the rural belt of Teesta Valley. The majority of the Limbus in the study area of Teesta valley is depended on the Tea garden. (38.7%) of the Limbu households depends on Tea garden, (15.3 %) households derive their income from defense pension and remittance. (11.4 %) households depend on animal husbandry, farming and horticultural activities. (7.3 %) household income comes from Government salaries and 4 % of household depend on petty business. The rest (8 %) of households income comes from different sorts of economic activities.

#### **4.3.2 Limbu Households of Dungra Khasmahal as per their Monthly Income and Source**

Limbus of Dungra Khasmahal sustains their livelihood by farming. The farming activities include the growing of both cash and food crops. The majority of farmers'

incur stipulated income because the output expenditure cost is quite high. The Limbu households apart from farming have also indulged in others economic activities in daily affairs of life for procuring bread and butter. The given below Table 4.6 shows the monthly income of the Limbu households.

**Table 4.7 Showing the Distribution of Limbu Households according to Monthly Income**

S.No	Income (Rs)	No. of Households	Percentage
1	< 5000	14	12.5%
2	5000 – 10000	23	20.5%
3	10000 – 15000	15	13.4%
4	15000 – 20000	15	13.4%
5	20000 – 25000	15	13.4%
6	25000 – 30000	23	20.5%
7	>30000	7	6.3%
Total		112	100%

Source: Field Survey 2014 – 2016

The above mentioned income table shows the economic conditions of the Limbus in the study area is quite stable. The flow of the money within the households is throughout the year in terms of wage, salary and remittance. Though, the primary occupation of the majority of villagers is farming but they also surplus their income by participating in others economic activities as their secondary occupation.

The nature of work also depends on the income generation of the individuals. Some Limbus are unskilled and unprofessional so they landed up in doing meager jobs such as agricultural labourers, casual works etc whose income depends on the daily work. The household standard and family condition is very vulnerable with monthly income less than Rs 5000. Nearly (12.5 %) households fall under this type of income category. The average income (Rs 5000 – Rs 10000) of standard households with either one or two working family members is (20.5 %).

The half proportion of the surveyed household in the study area shows a good aspect of the income generation with (Rs 10000 – 15000), (Rs 15000 – 20000), (Rs 20000 – 25000) with (13.4%) respectively. The affluent Limbu households (20.5 %) are belonging to army officers, landlords with large fields and Government service holders who has diversified their income in various ways in order to surplus their income generation and maintain standard of living with monthly income of Rs 25000 –30000. Nearly (6.3 %) of the Limbu households’ income (above Rs 30000) is very good with better style of living.

**Table 4.8 Showing the Distribution of Limbu Households according to Source of Income**

S.No	Source	No. of Households	Percentage
1	Farming	36	32.1%
2	Defense service	8	7.1%
3	Government jobs	7	6.3%
4	Private jobs / wages	18	16.1%
5	Remittances	8	7.1%
6	Petty Business	10	9%
7	Others	25	22.3%
Total		112	100 %

Source: Field Survey 2014 – 2016

The main source of the income in the study area is farming, 32% of the Limbu households’ income comes from the agricultural pursuits. In recent time, the yield and the field has decreased with the conversion of arable land into human habitation. With the diversification of different economic activities younger generations tends to join new avenues. Outmigration for work purpose is quite high due to unemployment apart from that they also had to look after the family.

Nearly (7.1 %) of the households’ income comes from remittances. But sometimes in course of time it might happens the flow of remittance is stop or not sufficient for

procuring the daily requirements. Therefore, the member of the households to do some petty business by selling essential commodities in the village through shop in the small scale by selling locally made liquor and agricultural produce (9 %) of the households' income comes from this sort of petty business which is mostly carried by womenfolk. Recruiting in defense and getting jobs in Government sector is very influential and dignified in terms of family security, (7.1 % ) households' income depends on defense service and (6.3 % )depends on the income coming from Governments sectors (16.1% ) of the households' income is derived from private jobs and wages. The maximum number of households' (22.3 %) income comes from miscellaneous jobs categorized as other in the above mentioned table including agricultural labourers, casual workers, drivers, pensioner, contractual workers and etc.

#### **4.3.3 Limbu Households of Bungkulung as per their Monthly Income and Source**

Sustaining rural livelihood in the relatively isolated locale offers more number of obstructions and mere opportunities to assess the optimum allocation of resources. Bungkulung a small isolated village in the fringe of forest offers a hospitable environment for conducting small scale farming in both commercial and subsistence way.

The geographical set up of the village allows the people to grow both food and cash crops. The main income of the village comes from farming. Though the farming is one the most profitable and laborious job but very few of the Limbu households possessing large acre of land are making profit. The rest others are taking very handful income from it. The monthly income of the every Limbu households depends in agricultural yield. The good productivity of the agriculture is dependent on suitable climatic conditions.

The Limbu farmers of the study area are still environment deterministic because as such no alternatives are implemented in the farming system. Therefore the monthly incomes of the Limbu households are very meager to support family needs, when there is hike in the price of daily essential commodities of life they suffered a lot. Due to such adversity

every households apart from farming has also engaged in other activities. So they could double their income to meet the daily requirements.

**Table 4.9 Showing the Distribution of Limbu households according to Monthly Income**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Income (Rs)</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	< 5000	78	72.9
2	5000 - 10000	14	13.1
3	10000 - 15000	4	3.7
4	15000 - 20000	5	4.7
5	20000 - 25000	5	4.7
6	25000 - 30000	1	0.9
7	>30000	-	-
Total		107	100

Source: Field Survey 2016 – 2017

The above mentioned table is showing the total income flow in the village. The majority of households have daily income less than INR 5000. The households who are earning less income (72.9%) respondents are mainly the marginal workers who are basically agricultural and casual labourers. (13.1 %) of the household respondents has basic income to materialize their cost and way of living. The main workers employed in the different Government jobs of Centre and State is very few. Therefore only few households (4.7%) whose source of income comes from the Government jobs and Defence services were good. In very few households the economic stability was very sound and good (0.9%) of the respondents are living in better conditions with all necessary amenities of life.

**Table 4.10 Showing the Distribution of Limbu households according to Source of Income**

S.No	Source	No. of Households	Percentage
1	Farming	55	51.4
2	Defence service	10	9.3
3	Government jobs	4	3.7
4	Private jobs / wages	11	10.4
5	Remittances	9	8.4
6	Petty Business	10	9.3
7	Others	8	7.5
Total		107	100

Source: Field Survey 2016 – 2017

Farming is the most important source of income in the study area. The agricultural produce is used for both the self consumption and selling in local markets. The majority of Limbu households (51.4%) depend on farming as their source of livelihood. Apart from farming activities many households source of income from defence service (9.3%), Services (3.7%), Private Jobs (10.4%), and Remittances (8.4%), Petty Business (9.3%) and 7.5 % of the households derive their source of income from various miscellaneous economic activities.

#### **4.4 Migration and Remittances**

Migration from one area to another in search of improved livelihood is a key feature of human history. Migration has become a universal phenomenon in modern times. Due to the expansion of transport and communication, it has become a part of worldwide process of urbanization and industrialization. Migration and Globalization are gradually breaking down the age-old boundaries between the countries. It has been rapidly changing from the traditional spheres of human activity. The concept of ‘Global Village’ has become a reality. Formerly isolated villages in the country side of Darjeeling Himalaya have become closer to major Indian metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai,

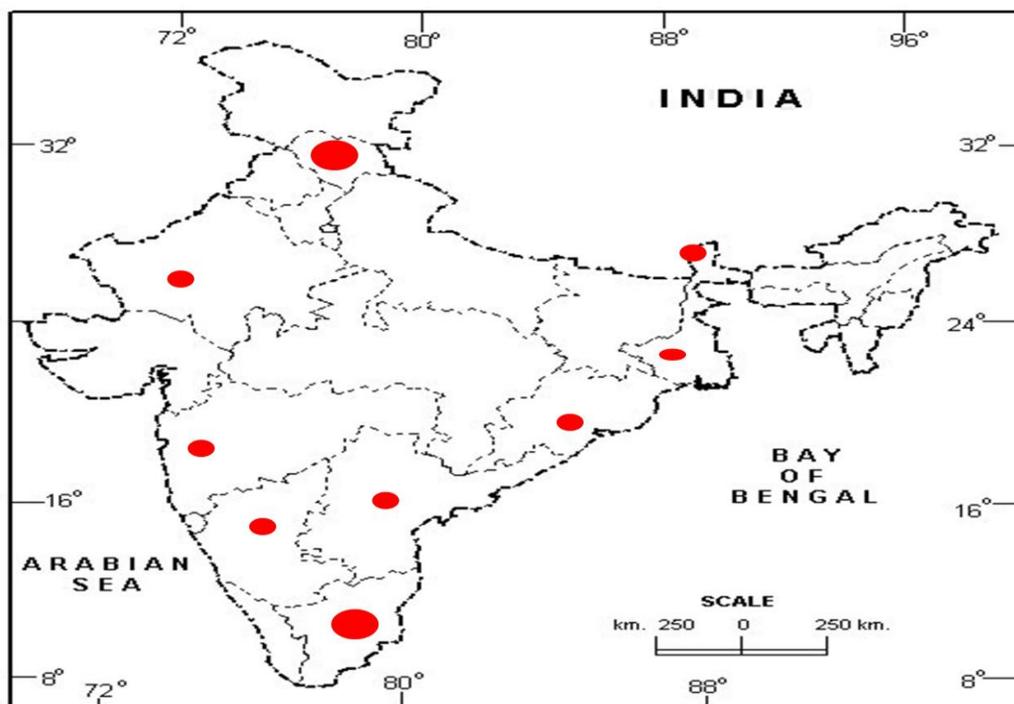
Chennai or Bangalore and other Countries owing to high monetary value and better living conditions. The rural belt of Darjeeling Himalaya are the most backward and isolated region in terms of development. Unemployment and Poverty are the main cause of migration among the villagers including Limbus. Migration for work purpose in the study areas is analyzed from two perspectives; Pull and Push factors. Push factors are scarce employment opportunities, family pressure where as pull factors are easily availability of jobs and betterment of economic conditions.

**Table 4.11 Showing the Area of Destination for the Work Purpose among the Limbus of Study Areas**

S.No	Area of Destination within India & Abroad	Study Areas		
		Teesta Valley Tea Garden	Dungra Khasmahal	Bungkulung
1	Sikkim	7	3	
2	Siliguri	2	-	
3	Orissa	1	-	
4	Delhi	3	11	
5	Chhattisgarh	1	-	
6	Chennai	3	3	5
7	Bangalore	1	1	9
8	Mumbai	1	-	
9	Kolkata	-	-	
10	Jharkhand	-	1	
11	Dehradun	1	-	
12	Rajasthan	3	-	
13	Hyderabad	2	-	
14	Middle East Countries	2	-	
15	South East Asia ( Mainly Nepal and Singapore )	2	2	
Total		29	21	14

Field Survey 2013 - 2016

From the field analysis it is clear that male members of the Limbu are more mobile for work purposes. Most of the young lads marry at quite early age and sole responsibilities of family rely upon them. Family pressure ultimately leads to migration for work purpose. The financially weak Limbus may not choose migration because of travelling expenditure. When there are opportunities of working around or near the village, they tend to migrate to diversify the income. They tend to go to near destination like Sikkim and Siliguri mostly on a seasonal basis that involve relatively low cost and risk. They choose short distance migration as they are not able to invest in far distance migration. They have good networks of interpersonal relation with former migrants at working destination, through ties of kinship and friendship by minimizing the costs and risks at destination. The above mentioned table clearly shows the outmigration of young male Limbus with few numbers of females for work purpose. The female mostly migrate to South East Asian countries namely Singapore and Nepal. They work as domestic helper or child care taker. Those who are educated they are working as school teachers in Nepal.



**Figure 4.4: Showing the Migration Destination of the Limbus**

Limbu males are now going to Middle East countries because of high monetary value. From the table it is seen the migration for work purpose is quite high in Teesta Valley Tea garden because of insecurity and uncertainty of Tea factory. Recently one of the very near by tea garden of the same place under Duncan company was shut down thereby creating all sorts of employment fluctuations.

The Limbus of Study areas Teesta valley tea garden, Dungra Khasmahal and Bungkulung has migrated to all cardinal direction of India major cities in search for employment. Whereas in Dungra Khasmahal migration to Delhi is common, very few educated Limbu youth in Delhi are working under BPO Company. The rest of the others are employed in the domestic work, security service and parlors.

### **Remittance**

Remittance is defined as a transfer income received by a household within last 12 months (Nembang, 2007). It is supposed to be one of the major sources of income in the study areas. In the surveyed Limbu households most of their family members are working in foreign countries. In Teesta valley Remittance has seen as the second largest share on the total household income of Limbu community.

**Table 4.12 Showing the Remittance received by Households (HHs) in the study areas**

Study Areas	No. of HHs receiving remittance	Percent of HHs receiving remittance
Teesta Valley Tea Garden	23 HHs out of 150	15.3%
Dungra Khasmahal	8 HHs out of 112	7.1%
Bungkulung	9 HHs out of 107	8.4 %

Field Survey 2013 - 2016

The Limbu had been supporting their families back home through remittances. They save remit money for their native place. The money remitted by the migrants is mainly used by their families for daily consumption needs, social purposes and a very small portion of it is saved and invested. The sending of money to the households gives them a mental satisfaction.

As they feel instrumental in supporting their family socio - economic conditions. This provides them a prestigious position in their household as well as in the community. In Teesta valley (15.3 %) and in Dungra (7.1 %) of the households daily requirement and family upbringing depends on the remittance. Whereas (8.4%) of the Limbu households in Bungkulung depends on the monthly remittance to look after the family affairs.

#### **4.5 Monthly Expenditure**

The source and monthly income of the different Limbu households' of the study areas differs widely with one another. Therefore the rate of expenditure patterns and expense depends on the economic stability of the village and nature of economic activities performed by the Limbu villagers. Expenditure details of the households include the money spend by the family for the cost of living and sustaining a life with better amenities.

The expenditure includes ration cost, education cost, bills, social functions, clothing, health and others. It was really a great difficulty for a researcher to obtain the minutely pattern of every expenditure cost as the respondents were quite hesitant and feeling reluctant to give the details. Therefore, the researcher has made an honest attempt to show the appropriate sum of the total monthly expenditure cost and pattern of the Limbu households'. The given below table shows the expenditure cost of each household excluding the monthly saving

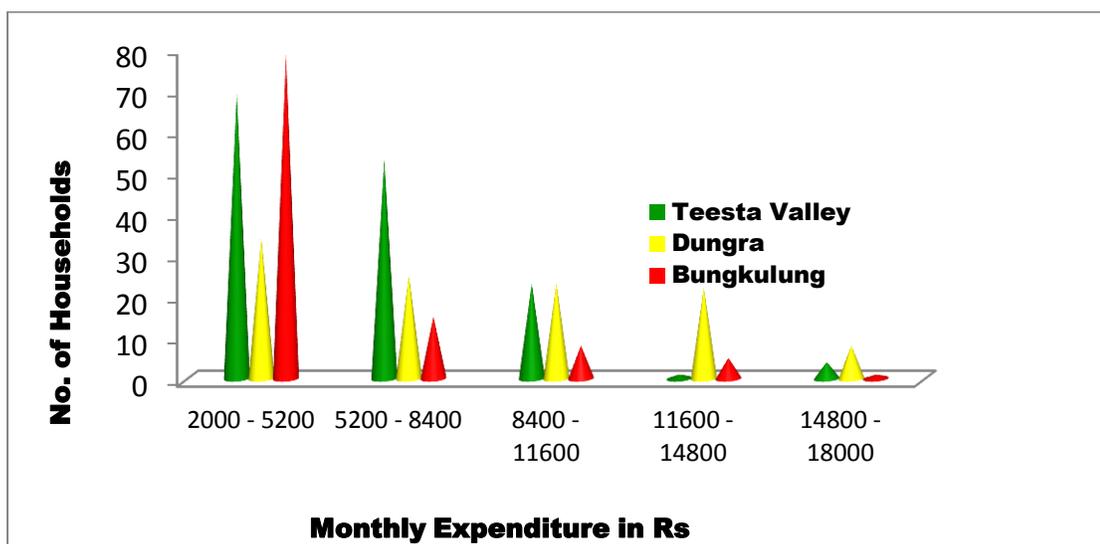
**Table 4.13 Showing the Monthly distribution of Expenditure of Limbu households’ of the Study Areas**

S. No	Monthly Expenditure cost in Rs	Study Areas					
		Teesta Valley Tea Garden		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
		HHs	percent	HHs	percent	HHs	percent
1	2000 – 5200	69	46%	34	30.4%	78	72.9%
2	5200 – 8400	53	35.3%	25	22.3%	15	14%
3	8400 – 11600	23	15.3%	23	20.5%	8	7.5%
4	11600 – 14800	1	0.7%	22	19.6%	5	4.7%
5	14800 – 18000	4	2.7%	8	7.2%	1	0.9%
6	Total	150	100%	112	100%	107	100%

Source: Field Survey 2013 – 2016

In order to bring out monthly expenditure cost the researcher has calculated the total amounts spend on different things starting with least amount to the highest. On an average, it was found that the daily basic requirements tend to increase every month thereby, increasing the cost of living.

**Figure 4.5: Showing the Monthly Expenditure of the Study Areas**



In the given Figure 4.5 the tea garden area of Teesta valley, majority of the Limbu households (46%) expenditure cost is in between Rs 2000 – Rs 5200, followed by Dungra (30.4%) and (72.9%) in Bungkulung. This type of the household belongs to those persons who are garden labourers, agricultural labourers and casual workers etc. whose income depends on the availability of work purpose. The total monthly income is meager which hardly fulfills the basic requirements without any saving for the future prospects. Then, the households whose expenditure cost bears within the monthly range of Rs 5200 to Rs 8400 could hardly save the very little amount of money. In Teesta valley Tea Garden (35.3%) Dungra Khasmahal (22.3%) of the households and (14%) in Bungkulung bears this range of expenditure cost. The expenditure cost within the range of Rs 8400 – Rs 11600 mostly belongs to persons who are regular workers and also indulge themselves in other economic pursuits (15.3%) in Teesta Valley, (20.5%) in Dungra and (7.5%) in Bungkulung falls under this category. The households having steady flow of income bears the expenditure cost of Rs 11600 – Rs 14800 in which expense on education is more in Teesta valley (0.7%), (19.6%) in Dungra and (4.7%) in Bungkulung. The expenditure cost ranging between Rs 14800 – Rs 18000 belongs to those households whose income comes from diverse source. These households belong to influential Limbus whose earning is quite high compare to others in Teesta valley (2.7%) households, (7.2%) in Dungra and (0.9%) in Bungkulung belonging to Government Teachers, Army officers and well equipped farmers.

#### **4.5.1 Expenditure Pattern**

The expenditure pattern of the study areas highly depend on the source of the households' income. Every households income differ from one another so does their level of consumption. The monthly expenditure cost of the Limbu households' are divided into various pattern on the basis of its utility. The expenditure cost of living is always increasing and thereby making the huge financial problems in the study areas.

**Table 4.14 Showing the Expenditure Pattern of the Households' in Study Areas**

S. No	Expenditure Pattern	Teesta valley		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
		Spend	Don't Spend	Spend	Don't Spend	Spend	Don't Spend
1	Food items	150 (100%)	Nil	112 (100 %)	Nil	107 (100%)	Nil
2	Education	70 (46.67%)	80 (53.33%)	73 (65.18%)	39 ( 34.82 % )	70(65.4% )	37 (34.6%)
3	Clothes	148 (98.67%)	2 (1.33%)	110 (98.21%)	2 ( 1.79 % )	107 (100%)	Nil
4	Medical treatment	138 (92%)	12 (8%)	105 (93.75%)	7 (6.25 %)	107(100 %)	Nil
5	Social functions	150 (100%)	Nil	112 (100%)	Nil	107(100 %)	Nil
6	Festival/Ritual	150 (100%)	Nil	106 (94.64 %)	6 ( 5.36 % )	107(100 %)	Nil
7	Others	10 (6.67%)	140 (93.33%)	100 ( 89.29 % )	12 ( 10.71% )	7 (6.5%)	100(93.5 %)

**Source: Field work (2013 – 2017)**

In the above mentioned table the expenditure pattern of Limbu households is shown to analyze the relationship between the income and expenditure. In order to simplify the work and findings the researcher had taken the total number of surveyed households who are spending in the necessary commodities of daily life clubbed into two categories showing those who spend and those who do not spend. In order to examine the trend of expenditure pattern, following essential commodities are taken into consideration which is dire necessity of every individual. From the given table it is seen almost all the households are spending money on food items, functions, health treatment and children education depending upon their social status and income level. Apart from this some of the Limbu households spend some of their saving for family recreation like travelling and other stuffs. In the fieldwork it was found hardly 5 percent of the households spend in family recreation. In Teesta valley (6.67%), Dungra (10.71%) and Bungkulung (6.5%) of the Limbu households spend on these recreations. The respondents lament that

every year their expenditure budget is increasing due to the hike in the price of essential commodities and cost of children education.

**4.5.2 Assets Ownership** The quality of living depends on the possession of assets which allows an individual to attain the level satisfaction in sustaining the rural livelihood. The ownership of assets not only makes the life easy going but also gives the worthy position in social status and cultural life of village society. The possession of land property and materialistic assets helps to minimize the financial crisis in hour of needs. Therefore, in the study areas assets ownership comprises an essential element to understand the complex fabric of economic standard of the households and their problems associated with it. Assets ownership is not just an entity but dignity and pride in the study areas.

**Table 4.15 Showing the Distribution of Respondents by Asset Ownership in Study Areas**

S.No	Assets	Teesta Valley		Dungra		Bungkulung	
		Who Possess	Who don't Possess	Who Possess	Who don't Possess	Who Possess	Who don't Possess
1	House ownership	Nil	150 (100%)	100 (89.3%)	12(10.7%)	100(93.5%)	7(6.5%)
2	Separate Kitchen	150 (100%)	Nil	112(100%)	Nil	107(100%)	Nil
3	Electricity	145(96.7%)	5(3.3%)	110(98.2%)	2(1.8%)	105(98.1%)	2(1.9%)
4	Water Supply	40(26.7%)	110(73.3%)	40(35.7%)	72(64.3%)	107(100%)	Nil
5	Sanitary Toilet	150(100%)	Nil	112(100%)	Nil	107(100%)	Nil
6	LPG Gas	140(93.3%)	10(6.7%)	112(100%)	Nil	105(98.1%)	2(1.9%)
7	Radio	150(100%)	Nil	112(100%)	Nil	107(100%)	Nil
8	Tape recorder / DVD	150(100%)	Nil	112(100%)	Nil	107(100%)	Nil
9	Television	150(100%)	Nil	112(100%)	Nil	107(100%)	Nil
10	Mobile	150(100%)	Nil	112(100%)	Nil	107(100%)	Nil
11	Cable Connection	150(100%)	Nil	112(100%)	Nil	107(100%)	Nil
12	Motorcycle	30(20%)	120(80%)	60(53.6%)	52(46.4%)	27(25.2%)	80(74.8%)
14	Car/ Van/ Jeep	10(6.7%)	140(93.3%)	20(17.9%)	92(82.1%)	5(4.7%)	102(95.3%)

Source: Field work 2013 – 2017

Land ownership is the most important component of economic sustainability. Land as a resource offers many attributes. In the study area of Teesta Valley, land belonging to the Limbu households (100%) does not have any legal documents to claim. The tea garden is the private enterprise where the entire Land constituting Teesta valley falls under their jurisdiction of lease land. They have been living on those houses from British time and got the authority of living which made them to construct permanent residency and establishment of Limbu settlement.

In Dungra Khasmahal (89.3%) and Bungkulung (93.5%) have their permanent landholding and house ownership. These land were inherited and been equally divided among the children. Very few respondents have no house ownership because they are mainly the migrant family, residing in the village for better livelihood recently. In Dungra (12.7%) and Bungkulung (6.5%) of the households belong to such family who are living in rented house. The households have their separate kitchen in the study areas with LPG connection. Located in the rural ambience many households used both the gas and fossil fuels for cooking purposes. In Dungra Khasmahal all Limbu households' are well equipped with gas connection. But very few of the Limbu households' whose economic conditions is deplorable is using fossil fuels in Teesta Valley (6.7%) and Bungkulung (1.9%) of the Limbu households' extensively using fossil fuels for their cooking.

Rural electrification and water supply is the most essential amenities in the village core of life. In Teesta valley (96.7%), Dungra (98.2%) and Bungkulung (98.1%) have electricity. Whereas very few households (3.3%) in Teesta valley, (1.8%) in Dungra and (1.9%) in Bungkulung are debarred from connection because of unclear dues and hostile terrain of the study areas is also responsible for delay in rural electrification. The water supplies, throughout Darjeeling Himalaya are very scanty and thus face an acute water crisis in peak season.

In Bungkulung there is no water problem because the area is blessed with number of water resources. But in the Teesta valley tea garden there is an acute crisis of drinking water. Every household has to fetch drinking water from nearby stream source. Only few

households has water supply in their village premises. The entire village has to depend on the seasonal springs and perennial stream for source of water.

In Dungra Khasmahal upper part of the village has water problem but lower part of the village has water accessibility. The use of modern electrical appliances and gadgets are very common in the study areas; almost all Limbu households have these appliances like TV, Cable and Mobiles and only very few households had computer with internet connection. Similarly only high income group of Limbu households had personal transportation system in the form of Car, Jeep and Sumo. In Teesta valley teagarden (6.7%), Dungra (20%) and Bungkulung (4.7%) of the household's uses their personal transport system and rest others uses public transportation.

#### **4.5.3 Credit Facilities'**

The studied village has no banking facilities and other sources of credit facilities. They mostly depend on their friends, relatives for credit in time of emergency. They had hardly taken loan from the bank and also not much aware of the loan facilities given by the Government. Very few about 2 % of the respondents had taken loan from the bank. In time of financial problem they keep their jewellery as mortgage and take credit from the gold merchants.

#### **4.6 Agricultural Pattern and Production**

##### **Farming System and Production Pattern of the Study Areas**

Darjeeling Himalaya offers necessary environmental factors for growing both food crop and cash crops along with a number of sub-tropical and temperate fruits (Limbu, 2012). Subsistence farming and production of the cash crops forms a core village economy (Fitzpatrick, C.I. 2011) for which mountain farming is the most suitable method for growing crops and fruits in the rugged terrain of the study areas. Limbu are agriculturalist community of the Eastern Himalayan region who practice farming for their sustainable livelihood. During the course of evolution and adaptation processes the nature of farming was changed from sedentary farming to settle farming.

The migration of Limbus in Darjeeling brought a settled farming system where food crops were grown along with the rearing of animals. In the historical records the development of agriculture in Darjeeling Himalaya dates back to 1866 A.D where large portion of forest were cleared and replacement of Jhum cultivation by settled agriculture through efficient methods of terracing, ploughing and irrigating lands. New crops were introduced, the most noteworthy being Tea, Cinchona, Potatoes and Mandarin oranges.

In fact the development and growth of agriculture started from colonial era (Samad, 1985). Cultivation of subsistence cereal crops is the main occupation of the people of Himalayan regions, which is based upon the centuries old traditional practices and carried out on the narrow patches of the terraced fields (Sati, 2010). Farming system which includes the cultivation of agricultural crops, horticultural crops, floriculture and rearing of livestock is traditional. Under the traditional farming system the main crops grown in the study areas are rice, maize, millet, local variety of pulses and vegetables. Livestock plays an integral role in the traditional farming system.

#### **4.6.1 Traditional Farming Knowledge and Practices in the Study Areas**

Traditional knowledge combined with technologies play a very significant role in agricultural practices. Unlike other agricultural communities, Limbus use different types of tools and cultural technologies in their agricultural practice starting from preparation of the field to harvesting and preservation of seed. Since the possibility of using modern innovation is negligible due to small holdings and undulating terrain, they use the resources that are locally available and implement their traditional knowledge regarding the farming system. The most visible traditional agricultural tools of Limbus are plough drawn by oxen, *Hasia* (sickle), *cow dung*, *khurpi*, *halo-kata*, *dhoko* (basketries) and so on. They use axe and spade in preparing agricultural fields. The stock of seeds is stored in the container made up of bamboo. The cow dung is most commonly used as manure. The traditional manure is made by mixing the cow dung with other organic substances through decomposition. The harvested crops are stored in granary called *dhukuti* and the farm implements are kept in a house called *katero*. For the seed preservation, first they

are separated and cleaned which are then exposed to sunlight in order to dry the water content in it and then are directly preserved by packing the seeds for next use (Limbu, 2013).

#### **4.6.2 Farming Conditions in the Study Areas**

Limbus of the study areas has little idea about the improved agricultural practices. They use traditional method of agriculture. They commonly use the tilling of land by means of plough employing bullocks. Immediately after the harvesting of crops, animals are placed on their land in order to graze and to fertilize the fields. The Farming conditions are different in the plantation and Khasmahal Limbu village with diverse agricultural pursuits. The Limbu village of Teesta valley is a plantation area and other two study areas are Khasmahal where farming is the main economic activity. Farming in the study areas is practiced under rain fed regime purely in organic manner. The maximum temperature recorded in the study areas is 28°C to 29°C which is ideal for the growth of number of food crops, vegetables and horticultural crops. The soil of the study areas slightly varies from one another in Teesta Valley Tea garden soil is sandy loam with the average pH value of 5.7 in which availability of phosphorus is 96 kg / hectare and potash 350 kg /hectare<sup>1</sup>. During dry season irrigation is required and all farm related activities are performed manually. The effective use of manure is being done within small, medium and large scale farms. Observation during the field survey revealed that all the farm families have livestock which helped them in producing manure for crops. Pruning and weeding are performed 2 to 3 times a year.

Climatically wise the study areas of both Dungra and Bungkulung also experiences the same farming system with slightly differences in the production scale. Dungra is an agricultural village where farming is the primary occupation for sustainable livelihood. The majority of the Limbu farmers practiced traditional method purely organic in nature. Though the farming system of Bungkulung is traditional but with the new ideas accompanied by technologies has carved out new system of agriculture which is

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<sup>1</sup> Data collected from Agricultural Office of Takdah Rangli-Rangliot Block

innovative and commercially profitable for the village economy. The farming activities in the study areas are of four main types which are as follows:

- i. Homestead Farming
- ii. Orchard Farming
- iii. Floriculture
- iv. Cash crop

**i) Homestead Farming:** This type of farming is basically done on the backyard of their house mainly for subsistence please by growing vegetables, fruits and local variety of pulses. The womenfolk are mostly engaged in this type of farming. Among the study areas majority Limbus of Teesta valley Tea garden practices homestead farming.

**ii) Orchard Farming:** Orchard farming is very common in the Limbu villages of Teesta valley Tea garden and Bungkulung. The main fruit Mandarin orange is important cash earning crop for Limbus. But recently the production of oranges is worst affected due to outbreak of disease in Teesta valley tea garden. Even the production has gone down in recent years hampering the farmers economically. In Bungkulung too condition is quite similar Madan Limbu, an orange grower from Bungkulung in Mirik block, said in 2010 the production of oranges got good price compare to recent years.

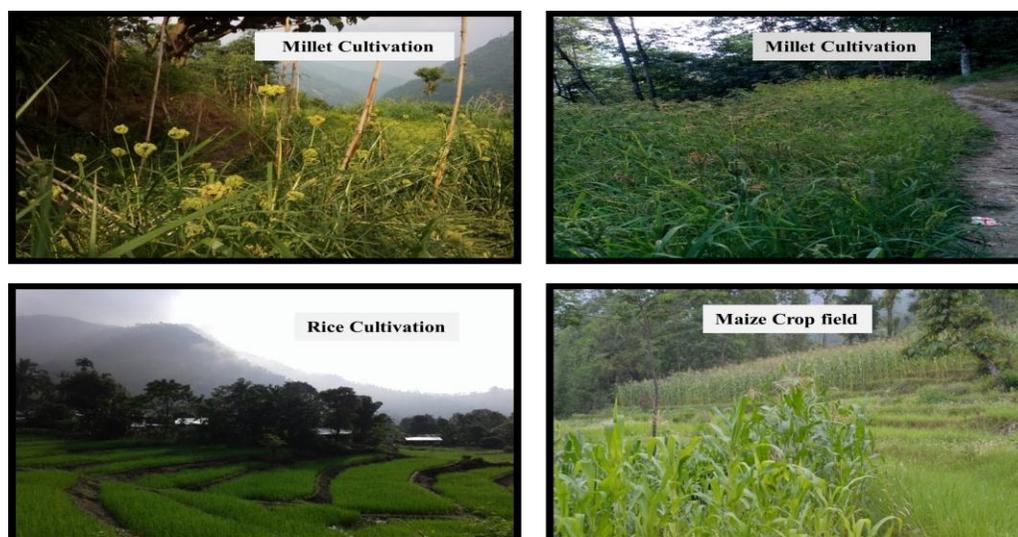


Plate 4.6 Showing the Major Food crops grown in the Study Areas

**iii) Floriculture:** Floriculture is one most profitable economic activity in the study areas. The Limbu hamlets of Teesta valley Tea garden and Dunga are doing floriculture on the commercial scale. Many varieties of ornamental plants, orchids, gladiolus and pines are grown in the nursery for export purposes to neighboring states. During the field work in Teesta valley Rocky Limbu 25 year's old married man was doing floriculture for the last 9 years. He sees better prospects in it than working in Tea garden. The floriculture incurs benefit with supply of fodder; manure freely available in the village. The suitable climatic condition offers the growth of flowers and plants.

**iv) Cash Crop farming:** The major cash earning crops in the study areas are Mandarin orange, Ginger, Cardamom, *Amlisiyo* and Lemon grass. Lemon grass is new venture of its first kind throughout North Bengal and its small factory is located in Bungkulung.



**Plate 4.7 Showing the Major Cash earning farming of Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

### 4.6.3 Cropping Pattern

The Limbus in the study areas still practices traditional farming system. Their staple food crop is paddy, millet and maize. The crops are grown on the subsistence basis. Only the surplus crops are sold in the market. In Dungra and Bungkulung, rice is grown in the lowland *Khet* owing to the fact it is a wet season crop and is grown during the monsoon season. They have managed the irrigation facilities by drawing water from nearby streams if the rainfall is not sufficient. The different crops have been planted according to the ecological patterns of the village (Limbu, 2011). The dry crops and vegetables such as maize, millet have been planted in the upland near to their home while the wet crops like rice in the low lands. It was found that millet was grown in some of the households of study areas because of religious and cultural values. They make *Jaad* (Local beer) and *rakshi* (Wine) out of millet which is used in many ceremonies. They mostly practice mixed farming, where maize and millet are grown along with soya beans. The nitrogen content of soya bean is high which helps to increase the production of the crops. The intercropping mainly helps to maintain the soil fertility and has also led to the best utilization of the land. Orange trees and the fodder trees were found to be planted near the belt of the terraces for controlling the soil erosion. *Amlisiyo* (bouquet grass) was specially planted in the slopes of the land whereby it has helped in the conservation of soil and prevention from landslides. The fruits are the next important crop for the people as they provide them with the income for the household. One of the important fruit, Mandarin orange is planted during *Jestha* (May/June) and harvested during *Kartik* (Oct/Nov). The other important cash crop are ginger, cardamom and local variety of chilly (*dalle*). Recently cardamom agro forestry is done by the Limbu farmers' of the study areas.

**4.6.4 Agricultural Cycle:** The agricultural cycle is made up of two main seasons. The spring, summer and autumn months are important for harvesting cash crops. It involves the higher participation of work force and the period is quite busy for the farmers. The farmers work become slack and low during winter months from December to February. The harvesting of oranges starts from October to November and continues till January

depending on the production. This season is the most crucial period of the year for earning good income. Similarly for floriculturist the months of September to October is important. The buyers from different states visit the village for flowers and ornamental plants.

**Table 4.16 Showing the Seasonal Calendar of the Limbu Farmers of the Study Areas**

S.no	Types	Farming Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	<b>Cash Crops</b>	Orange Planting						■						
2		Orange Harvesting										■	■	
3		Ginger Planting			■									
4		Ginger Harvesting											■	
5		Cardamom Planting								■	■			
6		Cardamom Harvesting											■	■
7		Amlisiyo Plucking												■
8	<b>Food crops</b>	Rice Planting						■						
9		Rice harvesting										■	■	
10		Millet Planting					■							
11		Millet Harvesting											■	■
12		Maize Planting		■										
13		Maize Harvesting								■	■			
14	<b>Pulses</b>	Kaalo Dal harvest												■
15		Masayam Dal harvest												■
16	<b>Spices</b>	Turmeric harvesting										■		
17		DalleChilli harvest												
18	<b>Vegetables</b>	Soyabean harvesting										■	■	
19		Potatoes harvesting		■	■									
20		Carrot, radish, beetroot							■	■				
21		Beans,pumpkin,peas							■	■				
22		Ladyfinger,cabbage							■	■				

Source: Field Survey (2013-2015)

The agricultural month of September and October is quite hectic and majority of the households are involved in farm activities. These months often coincide with festivals and religious rituals and ceremonies of Limbus along with the cash flow in the village through cash crop farming.

In the winter months villagers are engaged in off farm activities. They work in the developmental schemes of Government as casual workers to sustain their livelihood. By the month of March the same seasonal calendar of Limbu farmers' starts thereby, engaging themselves in growing food crops, cash crops and vegetables for the subsistence need and commercial purposes.

#### **4.6.5 Processes of Production**

The interaction of different categories of people in process of production develops a relationship between persons in a socially organized way bound with specific duties and obligation to one another. This relation of production creates a cleavages and bond with different classes of people. The basic cleavage within the class structure is between owners and non owners of the means of production (Beteille, 1971).

#### **4.6.6 Division of Labour**

The Division of labour in farming is of two types of categories namely, Tenants and Agricultural labourers. In the study areas tenants are the person living on lease land looking after the land and agricultural works. A tenant normally gives the minimum stipulated produce of the field to the owners and takes maximum share of the total production. He has to bear his family requirements and expenditure cost. The agricultural expenses like manpower, ploughing, harvesting, weeding, planting and sowing is given by the landowner only to some family but rest of all has to be done by them.

Traditionally there are two types of land lease system in the study areas of Limbu villages. In *Adhiya* system the tenant has only the cultivation right. He owns a living on the lease plot of land of which 25 % of the produce is given to the owner. The landowner

has its right over the land and could replace him by another if the work and relation does not go well. During the field work in Dungra, Kalimpong it was found Mr S. B Limbu (Khewa)<sup>2</sup> is a tenant. He was earning from the field belonging to Lepcha family. Mr. S.B Limbu also possesses a land in the village but the intention was to double his income. He has taken more arable land in *Adhiya*. The total input and output of expenditure related to farming has to bear by him. In *Bargadhari* or *Pakure* System the land owner gives a small plot of land in the field to tenant to look after *Chilikcham*<sup>3</sup> was a tenant and was looking after a field. It has been more than 15 years' he is living in the kutchha house at the field. The law abides the owner to remove *Chilikcham* from that law. If disputes may arise then the case is taken before a panchayat where a desirable amount is paid to the tenant for leaving the land. Moreover some of the tenant has acquired 4(four) decimal of land in the village from the landowner to earn and sustain their rural livelihood.



Plate 4.8 : Showing the Agricultural Labourer (Pakure) of Dungra Village, Kalimpong

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<sup>2</sup> Name of the Clan

<sup>3</sup> Name of the Clan

#### 4.6.6.1 Labour Requirement and their Costs

Village labour is part of both the monetary and non- monetary economy. There are three types of labour in the study areas namely *Khetala* who is paid in either kind or cash. Second one is reciprocated labour or the mutual exchange of labour like some Limbus of Dungra. They help each other in farm related works to certain extent saving the labour costs. The last one is *thekka* which is a paid contract work for terracing, ploughing etc (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Therefore, the Farming in the study areas includes numerous work forces depending on the farm size. These agricultural labourers (*Khetala*) are paid at a rate of Rs 200 – 300 per day depending on the nature of their work. In the orange orchards of Teesta valley tea garden and Bungkulung, most of the farm activities in small orchard are done by family members. However in medium and large size orchard labourers are used. They do all farm related work and are paid on weekly basis at the rate of Rs100-120. Usually labourers are also required during weeding season and after post-harvest period. During the time of orange harvesting season number of labours is required for plucking the oranges. The wage is paid them in weekly basis of Rs 12 for plucking 100 oranges and in a day labour can pluck 1000 -3000 of oranges.



**Plate 4.9: Showing the labour ploughing in the terraced field in Dungra Khasmahal**

#### **4.6.7 Gender Role in Farming**

Limbu men and women do almost all works related with farming which includes land preparation to seed storage. However, their role depends more on the family situation than on gender. In a family with more male members, male works in the fields, whereas in families with fewer men, women work equally with men (Denzogpa, 2009). But still there is little strictness in some farming activities. In relation to planting and transplanting of food crops women performs the duty. While heavy task like ploughing, hoeing and terracing are done by male members. However children are kept refrained from farm activities. Apart from heavy tasks the purchasing and selling of agricultural produce solely depends on male decision. During the field visit in Dungra it was found that most of the male members working in the field conversed and shared jokes among their peer groups. In peak harvest season when there are shortage of labours most of the womenfolk helps in the harvesting processes.

#### **4.6.8 Livestock Rearing and their Importance in Farming**

Animal resource implies wider and foremost role in livelihood as it is the second most important occupation after farming of subsistence crops. On the other hand it helps agriculture systems as ploughing the field and providing manure (Dekens, 2005). For centuries organic fertilizer as manure is used for production of crops that avail only from animals. The production of milk plays substantial role in sustaining livelihood. Milk is sold in the nearby local market. Livestock rearing constitutes major segment in the income and economy of the farming community in Limbu villages. It received more significance when high attention was paid to organic farming in recent years. From economic point of view, livestock rearing is good because it is not a seasonal activity. It can earn income throughout the year. Limbus rears all kind of domestic animals in good number like cows, poultry, pigs, goats in addition to this, oxen are kept for ploughing. The output of animal production is consumed for both family and selling in the local market. They usually keep large number of poultry birds and pigs because of its demand.

#### **4.6.9 Major Changing Scenario in Farming: Case Study of Fulbari Limbu Hamlet of Teesta Valley Tea Garden**

The farming conditions in the study areas has affected due to deforestation, settlement and climate change. This ecological change has forced the farmers to cultivate in new cropping pattern. The farmers of *Fulbari* hamlet of Teesta valley tea garden had witnessed the major agricultural change. In 1975 they used to grow paddy in the valley for subsistence needs<sup>4</sup>. But with the introduction of cash crop like oranges, paddy fields were converted into orchards farming because of its high price value in the market. The production of oranges faced a major setback from 2011 when trees were infected with pests and diseases. Limbu farmers of this hamlet are economically deprived and are unaware of modern technological knowledge. So majority of their orchards were affected with only few trees left to bear fruits which could only fill up subsistence needs for their family. The affected orchards are now plant with Bouquet grass (*Amlisiyo*) which is not only used as the fodder for livestock but also earns a good amount of money by selling it. Many others fruit trees are planted among them Pomegranate is significant. Floriculture basically of pine varieties are grown in small scale.

#### **4.7 Findings**

Darjeeling Himalaya is one of the important centres for tea and tourism. The region offers a good scope for these two industries to constitute an important economy for revenue generations. The lush green tea garden has its own unique history of colonial enterprise and socio- cultural settings. The central livelihood practices found in the study areas revolve around the primary and secondary economic activities. The main primary economic activities include working in tea gardens and farming. The Tea garden is one of the major backbones in sustaining the livelihood of the rural villagers in study area. The garden has fill up the vacuum of unemployment to certain extent but with the increasing population size and dearth of employment. The lives of the villagers are tremendously affected. The economic life of Limbu is completely different from the

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<sup>4</sup>Data recorded during Interview with the Limbu farmer of Teesta valley

taste and flavor of Tea to tasteless and hard life of a plantation worker. Who works throughout his/her life but still inefficient to look after his family.

The Limbu people are also agriculturist. They are generally mixed farmers, growing agricultural and horticultural crops with livestock rearing. Farming may be regarded as their principle source of income for supporting livelihood. Limbu males keep themselves busy at work outside their household in their fields and other physical works. It seems that they have quite balanced work division in their community. The majority of Limbus, who are engaged in farming, has their own arable land. They work on land owned by them, some Limbus work on land owned by others constituting the basis of economic and social ties between the villagers. In the study area Limbu women were engaged in and outside their houses. Limbu men do not indulge themselves in the household activities like cooking, washing clothes, and looking after the children etc, all of them are done by females. The economic role of Limbu woman is very noteworthy, in the gender biased patriarchal society of rural Darjeeling. The Limbu woman is the bread earner and does all the domestic chores of family. The rate of female employment is negligible because of their subordinate position.

The male members of the family are the economic pillar. They provide security and fulfill the needs of family. The rate of male employment is higher in the studied areas. They are employed in different occupational pursuits on the basis of their education and ability. The recruitment in Indian army is very popular in the study areas. The field data shows that Teesta Valley (8.1%), Dungle Khasmahal (6.9%) and in Bungkulung (7.8%) of males are employed in Indian Army. This job owes respect and pride among the family in the village environment.

The educational attainment among the Limbus of the studied villages is low. Very handfuls of them are employed in the Government services. In the study area of Bungkulung there was only one person who was having the officer post till date. Majority of the population are doing menial jobs with a meager income in sustaining rural life. They substitute their income by doing petty business. This business includes selling of local products and grocery. The limited job opportunities and the unstable

socio-political scenario of Darjeeling Himalaya have worsened the situation of the Limbus. The migration in search of better living and economic conditions has led many aspiring youths to out-migrate from the village in search of work. Limbu males are mobile than female. They are migrating to major Indian cities and sending remittance to the family. The migration destination is based on the personal ties and friendship. In Teesta valley they are mostly working in Delhi because the former migrants of the village helped them. In Bungkulung, Chennai is the prominent destination.

Lastly, the Limbus of the study areas is living a very simple lifestyle. They are adjusting the adversity of both social and physical environment. The occupational pursuits of the Limbus in the study areas depend upon the nature of village society and economy. The employment opportunities are also limited with farm based work. The Limbus of Teesta Valley is working in the Tea garden factories and youths are more fascinated towards army recruitment. Dunga Khasmahal lies in the lower periphery of the main town of Kalimpong. The economic condition is also slightly better than other two study areas. The majority of Limbu population in Bungkulung also sustained their livelihood by farming. The influence of globalization is clearly visible in the economic activities of Limbus.

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## Aspects of Society and Culture among Limbus under Study

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### 5.1 Introduction

The Social fabric of village life is deeply embedded with tradition, custom and social norms. It perpetuate from one individual to another through family, clan and kinship. It ascertains the role and status of different constituent part of the society. It channelizes their interpersonal relation. This relation between individual and groups form a network called the social structure and organization.

The Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya has a complex web of social structure and organization. It shows a very distinctive character. It has traits of both the Kirati and local tradition. The socio-cultural aspect like family, clans, kinship and religion undermines the essence of Limbu society and culture. These parameters play an important role in associating Limbus into one philosophy.

The socio-cultural life of Limbus revolves around the faith of *Yumaism* and teachings of *Mundhum*. The elderly and knowledgeable Limbus has maintained their cultural legacy and socio-religious affair. They restricts and refrained themselves from cultural diffusion. The impact of diffusion is clearly visible among the younger generation. This chapter helps us to understand about the society and culture of Limbus.

### 5.2 Aspects of Material Culture

#### 5.2.1 House Types

The house is known as *Khim* in Limbu language. Besides the dwelling houses, there are other huts such as granary, farm house, and sheds for cattle and domestic animals

found few yards from the main dwelling house. The household structure of Limbus can be broadly classified into two categories based on the availability of the local resources and the socio-economic standard of the family. The two types of household were common in the study areas namely

1. Traditional Household
2. Modern Household

Traditional households were found in the inner core of the village. The household structure is made up of local resources mainly bamboo, mud and thatched roofs. During the field survey few Limbu households were in traditional style. Most of the households' had cushioned their living with more sophisticated means of housing. The households are of three types:

- i. Pucca House: well furnished cemented house with proper sanitation.
- ii. Semi Pucca House: half cemented and tin roofed house.
- iii. Kutcha House: made up by hay materials with improper sanitation

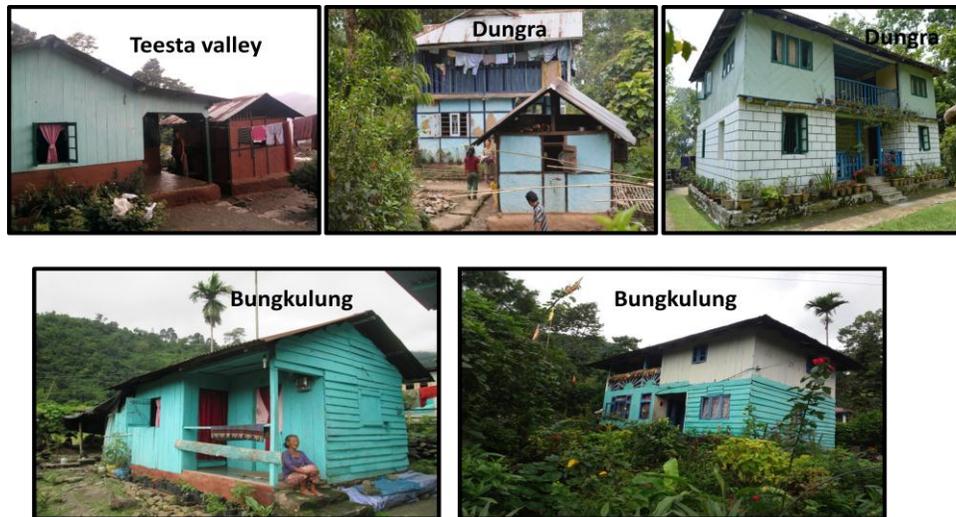


Plate 5.1 Showing the Traditional Households Structure of Study areas

Traditional Limbu household is basically a two storeyed building. It has two or three rooms connected by a wooden staircase with a small balcony at the first floor. The thatched roofs are now been replaced by tin roofs, with earthen pot of flowers kept in the front yard of the house for decoration. This type of household is made up local

resources, therefore would not sustain for a long duration. The structure of household is in quite orthodox but rooms have no problem for aeration. The kitchen is separately built from the main house. The sanitation mainly, toilet and bathroom is also quite away from the main house.

During the fieldwork in Dungra Khasmahal the fusion of traditional and modern household was found. The front yard of the houses were designed with lawn where a small pond was constructed with some ornamental and local variety of fishes. At the backyard of the house the cattle shed, poultry farm and granary was constructed. The toilet and bathroom were constructed at the edge of *Jhoras* (Small rivulet) so the dumped wastages would be washed away by the running water. Where there was no *Jhoras*, dumping pit was constructed for the decomposition.

Traditional households had a separate hearth were both the gas oven and fire place was used for cooking purpose. Normally a small room with four or five wooden chairs makes up the living room for guest and visitors. Even the researcher, was made to sit and relax in the same type of room in Mrs. Sarita Subba's house at lower Dungra Khasmahal. The room was made up of wood with mud floor well mopped with cow dung which is an easy alternative means of pesticides and house purification among Limbus. The interior of the room was quite fashionable with wall pictures hanged. Curtains were hanged in window and door. Thus the traditional household structure of Limbus is not so much orthodox nor too much of modern but fusion of both art and designs.

One of the peculiar things among the households of Teesta Valley Tea Garden and Dungra Khasmahal was the hosting of a Limbu flag in their houses. In Bungkulung, there was no sign of traditional house at all. Though the conditions of roads inside the village was not good but village is well accessible which allows the inhabitants to bring raw materials for constructing a house. A modern household is the sign of well being economically and socially. The modern household has concrete walls, cemented floor, glass window and gate before entering the compound. The house is well planned with interior and exterior designs. In Teesta Valley Tea garden and Bungkulung Limbus whose source of income is good has this type of household.

Most of the well concrete houses in the Dungra Khasmahal were predominantly found in the upper part of the village. Because the inner core of the village is cut off from main road. Due to which household materials incur huge cost. The double expenditure cost may be one of the reasons why Limbus of the village is not living in the modern sophisticated.

**Table 5.1 Showing the Different Types of House in Study Areas**

S.No	House Types	Study Areas		
		Teesta valley	Dungra	Bungkulung
1	Kutchha	51 (34%)	36 (32.1%)	36 (33.6%)
2	Semi Pucca	56 (37.7%)	43 (38.4%)	50 (46.7%)
3	Pucca	43 (28.7%)	33 (29.5%)	21 (19.7%)
4	Total	150 (100%)	112 (100%)	107 (100%)

Field work (2013 – 2017)

The following table shows the housing conditions of Limbus in the study areas mainly three types of houses are found on the basis of their structure. The majority of the Limbus has Semi pucca houses representing the fusion of traditional and modern aspects. (37.7 %) of Limbus in Teesta valley had this type of house followed by (38.4%) in Dungra and (46.7%) in Bungkulung. Kutchha house belonged to group whose earning is meager (34 %) of Limbus in Teesta valley, (32. %) in Dungra and (33.6%) in Bungkulung has this type of housing condition. The Pucca house is well cemented, spacious rooms, and integrated with all sorts of facilities required to have for good means of living. Very few of the household are Pucca in nature in Teesta Valley (28.7 %) of these houses belonged to well off Limbu families with (29.5 %) in Dungra and (19.7%) in Bungkulung.



Plate 5.2 showing the different types of Limbu households

### 5.2.2 Dress and Ornaments

Dress is one of the indicative factors to distinguish one ethnic group with others. Every particular community has their separate traditional outfits which they wore in festivals, ceremonies and in special occasion. Limbus has their own kind of dress and ornaments like most of the hill people. These costumes are simple but hold a certain charm. The very few elderly males are found wearing *Dhaura Sural*, coat, Nepali *Topi* with *Khukuri* in the study areas. In the past they had won the war using *Khukuri*, so carrying *Khukuri* is their pride. The female wears *cholo* and *sari*. Younger generations are inclined towards the modern fashion and styles. Now-a-days, everyone is comfortable in modern attire.

The Traditional attire of Limbu male consists of many items. They wear white *Paga* (Headwear) tied at the back with long strips. The *Ningkheng* (Muffler) is wrapped around the neck. The men wear *Hanglang Kamtet* a formal suit *Paohao* main dress covering the lower part. The belt *Phaoee* is tied in the waist. The *Sandokpa* is the upper part of the dress is covered by a *Sungrehba* (Coat).

Limbu women wear ornaments made up of gold and silver. Earrings and nose stud were common among the Limbu womenfolk. The older women were found wearing

*Dungri* and married women wore neck piece of green beads known as *Poote*. Limbu females are very much interested in decorating themselves with different brass and ornaments. They wear heavy ornaments such as *Sirbandi*, *Phuli*, *Mundri*, *Bulaki*, *Pauju*, *Har* and *Naugadi*.

### 5.2.3 Food and Drinks

The food habits of Limbus in the study areas are based on the availability of the products and the economic standard of the family. The study areas are in relative isolation and quite inaccessible for which the choice of market for buying varieties of food products were not so desirable. Therefore, the Limbus of the study areas depends on the food crops grown in the field for their livelihood. So their main food sources comprised of cereals, grains, vegetables and fruits grown in the hilly climatic zones.

They also collect the weekly Government ration from the fair price shop located in the village. The Limbus belonging to the higher level of income earning groups bought their essential food requirement from the town's market. Majority of the Limbus are non-vegetarian and their food habits consisted of eating staple food grains, pulses, vegetables and meat. The rice and meat is the staple food of Limbus in the study areas. Among them very few are purely vegetarian. Limbus eats all the edible varieties of meat and vegetables. They grow vegetables in the fields and also consume wild varieties of edible roots and shoots.

The most popular non-vegetarian dishes are pork curry, fish, chicken, mutton and buff meat. Most of the Limbus does not eat beef meat but the younger generation is fond of dishes made up of pork and beef. There is a food taboo among some clan of Limbus. The *Khewa* clan doesn't eat Chicken and *Ninglekhu* clan forbid themselves from eating beef and buff meat due to religious belief. It was believed that the food habit among Limbus has sharply changed after the conquest of Limbuwan by Gorkha ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah. The domination of Hindu ruler refrained Limbus of slaughtering *Karangpit* (Heifer<sup>1</sup>) as a religious offering to their God *Pochchama*. The

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<sup>1</sup> A young cow over one year old that has not produced a calf.

Hinduization among Limbus refrain them from eating beef and slaughtering cow, as it is sacred to Hindus (Tumyahang, 2012).

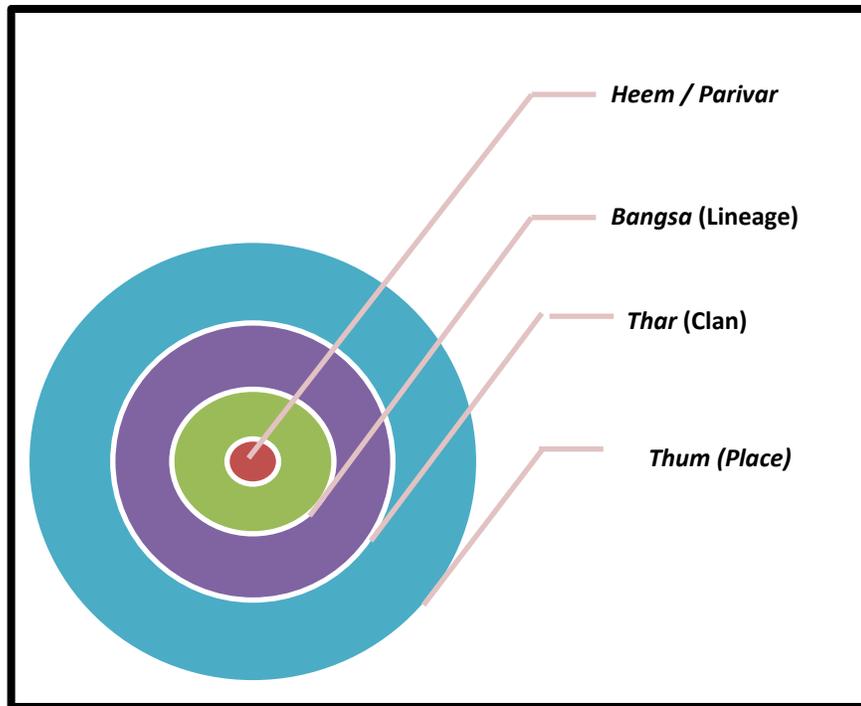
Limbus of the study areas also enjoys the fermented and distilled type of beverages. The alcoholic beverages are commonly known as *Thii* prepared from rice, maize and millet. The popular alcoholic beverages among Limbus are *Jaad* and *Rakshi* which is also used in rituals and ceremonial functions. This Liquor is part and parcel of their lives. In recent time brewing of liquor has become a secret business in many households. It has become one of the ways of increasing their daily income.

### **5.3 Aspects of Social Structure and Organization**

The social structure and organization involves the understanding of individual and group behavior in a specific social context (Chaudhury, 2004). The study of social organization and cultural dynamics is important to understand the interpersonal interaction of a community. British Social Anthropologist Radcliffe Brown used the term social structure. He describes the regularities in kinship behavior, economic and religious organization. Levi Strauss through his kinship study drew attention to the existence of social life. According to him structure encompasses all kinship, relation. It includes three types of family relations: - consanguinity, affinity and descent.

#### **5.3.1 Clan and Kinship**

The Limbu society evolves through the relationship of clan and kinship. It is interwoven with the family ties and marriage. It descends patrilineally from one clan group to another. Therefore it is necessary to have a holistic understanding of these aspect in undermining the society and cultural life of Limbus. The Limbu society of the study areas is sub divided into 51 clan groups. In Kirat Vamsabali Seventeen *thums* reference is given to trace the location of Limbus in Eastern Himalayan region. These clan and kinship structure is well understood with the following assumptions.



**Figure 5.1: Showing the Structure of Clan and Kinship**

### **5.3.1.1 *Thum* (Place)**

Before the Gorkha invasion the Limbus used to live in the place lying between *Dudhkosi* and Arun River, stretching up to the east of Darjeeling Himalaya known as Limbuwan. The Limbu were of a different clan groups belonging to ten different *thums* (Place) of their country. The names of different clans (*Thar*) are derived from these *thums* from which it is believed to descend (Northey & Morris, 1987). The names of the *thums* are as follows

- i.** *Panthar Thum*
- ii.** *Fedap Thum*
- iii.** *Phawakhola Thum*
- iv.** *Yangrok Thum*
- v.** *Tambarkhola Thum*
- vi.** *Mewakhola Thum*
- vii.** *Chathar Thum*

- viii. *Aatrai Thum*
- ix. *Chaubis Thum*
- x. *Charkhola Thum*

### 5.3.1.2 The Clan (*Thar*)

Thar is a wider level of structural integration in the kinship system. The Limbus *Thar* is synonymous to clan, but they too have taboo, which forbids them from marrying between the same clan. On the whole, the *Thar* is a descent group formed by members who believe they have common ancestors. Altogether more than hundred clan groups are present in Limbu society belonging to different *Thums* (Place). During the field survey more than 25 clans of Limbus were found in Teesta Valley Tea garden. *Angdembe Thar* was the most dominant clan group. *Angdembe* clan traces their ancestral history and descent from *Mewakhola Thum* of Eastern Nepal. This clan group is living in a very close vicinity to each other. The households of different brothers in a family are separated from the parental house after marriage. In Dungra Khasmahal of Kalimpong 31 clan groups of Limbus were present among which *Yongyahang* had a unique clan history. For the last six generation this clan group is living in Dungra. The most eldest member of this clan Mr. K.B Limbu (*Yongyahang*) said, Dungra is their ancestral Land (*Thum*). In Bungkulung *Thamden*, *Lauti* and *Phagu* are the common clan groups. The children get the Clan (*Thar*) of their patrilineal so it is transmitted from generation to generation. Even the socio economic status cannot help the people to change their *Thar*. So mobilization of *thar* is not possible. If a non Limbu female is married to a Limbu man. She can get the *Thar* after the marriage. In such cases the newly married man arranges a feast by calling *phedangba* and elderly persons. Where *phedangba* officiates the ritual in which girl will be given a *thar* name of her husband. To get an acceptance she has to make a ceremonial brother sister relationship (*Mit Daju*) with a Limbu man of another clan. Though the relation is non consanguine but it is very important. This whole process is called “*Jaat ma halnu*” accepting her in their kins and family. But if a girl is Limbu as per rule she has to leave her all rights of the natal home.

**Table 5.2 Showing the Distribution of Limbu Clans of the Study Areas with respect to their Thums**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Clan Name</b>	<b>Thum</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>
1	<i>Angdembe</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	41
2	<i>Angthupo</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	6
3	<i>Chambeng Khamba</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	1
4	<i>Chongbang</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	1
5	<i>Charkole</i>	<i>Charkhola</i>	1
6	<i>Chilikcham</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	1
7	<i>Chemjong</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	5
8	<i>Edingo</i>	<i>Yangrok</i>	6
9	<i>Fakh</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	1
10	<i>Fedabay</i>	<i>Fedap</i>	2
11	<i>Ingnamphe</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	1
12	<i>Keroong</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	6
13	<i>Kokling</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	1
14	<i>Kungdongpa</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	1
15	<i>Khewa</i>	<i>Chathar</i>	6
16	<i>Khopung</i>	<i>Chathar</i>	7
17	<i>Khambang</i>	<i>Yangrok</i>	1
18	<i>Khudung</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	2
19	<i>Kurungbang</i>	<i>Fedap</i>	14
20	<i>Lauti</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	9
21	<i>Lingkhim</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	6
22	<i>Loharung</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	1
23	<i>Libang</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	1
24	<i>Loktam</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	10
25	<i>Lingden</i>	<i>Yangrok</i>	3
26	<i>Mebok</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	1
27	<i>Mangyung</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	12

28	<i>Mabo</i>	<i>Tamabarkhola</i>	1
29	<i>Makhim</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	3
30	<i>Miyangbo</i>	<i>Phawakhola</i>	3
31	<i>Nungo</i>	<i>Tambarkhola</i>	2
32	<i>Nembang</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	10
33	<i>Phagu, Fagu</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	19
34	<i>Photro</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	2
35	<i>Panthar</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	2
36	<i>Sereang</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	21
37	<i>Senehang</i>	<i>Yangrok</i>	5
38	<i>Sauden</i>	<i>Tambarkhola</i>	6
39	<i>Saba</i>	<i>Yuksom</i>	2
40	<i>Songpangbe</i>	<i>Dungra</i>	14
41	<i>Samba</i>	<i>Mewakhola</i>	2
42	<i>Tumsawa</i>	<i>Chathar</i>	13
43	<i>Thegim</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	32
44	<i>Tumrok</i>	<i>Fedap</i>	14
45	<i>Thamden</i>	<i>Charkhola</i>	20
46	<i>Thebe</i>	<i>Maiwakhola</i>	15
47	<i>Tumbapo</i>	<i>Fedap</i>	3
48	<i>Yakten</i>	<i>Yangrok</i>	5
49	<i>Yongyang</i>	<i>Yangrok</i>	23
50	<i>Yokwa</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	2
51	<i>Younwango</i>	<i>Panthar</i>	1
	Total		369

**Source: Field work (2013 – 2017)**

The above mentioned Table 5.1 shows the distribution of the different clan group of the Limbus in the Study Areas. In the Kinship structure *Thums* and *Clans* play a pivotal role to trace the family genealogy. Some of the families still have their

relatives living in *thums* of Eastern Nepal from where they can trace their ancestral connection.

During the field work, one of the respondents of Dungra Khasmahal said he visited his great grandfather's *Thum*. His grandfather had a family lineage in Eastern Nepal. His main intention was to know about his far relatives and family. Therefore, in curiosity he went there but was not able to locate them. But he brought the soil of that place to restore his ancestor's memories and legacy. He has told his children about the importance of the soil which was brought. He wants it to be used in the burial ground after his death.

#### **5.3.1.3 *Bangsa* (Lineage)**

*Bangsa* is a lineage among Limbus. They practice the patrilineally rule of descent. The name of the *Bangsa* is known by the surviving elderly male of the family. The name of the deceased ancestor is used when the families are spatially located in several villages. The relation among the members of the *Bangsa* is formal than those living in a family. But they equally participate in social, religious and affairs of their *Bangsa* showing the solidarity and unity. The members belonging to the same *Bangsa* observe the pollution, restrictions and purification rites in regard of birth, death and marriage. The strength of their kinship is especially evident in the joint participation of its members in social, ceremonial activities of its family members.

#### **5.3.1.4 *Heem* (Localized Lineage)**

*Heem* is a localized lineage, among the Limbus. The joint and extended family are divided into separate households after marriage. The separated household is located near the main residence of the father. Therefore it is patrilocal, and the separated households also continue to maintain close cooperation with the main house to fulfill mutual obligations.

### 5.3.1.5 *Parivar* (Family)

*Parivar* is the small unit of kinship structure of the Limbu community. The members belonging to the same family shares the common food and shelter. The husband or the son are always included in the *Parivar* even if they are absent from the main house. They perform their responsibilities by helping their family. They take an active part in the family welfare. The details of family structure and organization are mentioned in the following sections.

### 5.3.1.6 Kinship Terminology

Kinship terminology denotes to the word that explains and describes familial relationship. In Limbu society, there is no distinction in the usage of kinship terms between the patrilineal and matrilineal ties. The same term is used for the both sides. It consists of both classificatory and descriptive terms. The word “*Phu*” is a classificatory kinship term which means elder brother, wife elder brother, wife’s elder sister’s husband and husband elder sister’s husband. The descriptive kinship terminology shows only one type of relationship between the two people, for example, “*Yemba*” which only denotes for husband (Thapa, 2017).



**Plate 5.3: Showing the informants explaining the researcher about the terminologies**

**Table 5.3 Showing the Kinship Terminology**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Limbu Term</b>	<b>English Term</b>
1	<i>Aboo</i>	Father
2	<i>Amoo</i>	Mother
3	<i>Phu</i>	Elder brother
4	<i>Nene</i>	Elder sister
5	<i>Nusa</i>	Younger brother
6	<i>Nusama</i>	Younger sister
7	<i>Theba</i>	Grandfather
8	<i>Yuma</i>	Grandmother
9	<i>Mencha</i>	Grandson
10	<i>Mencha</i>	Granddaughter
11	<i>Tumba</i>	Father's elder brother
12	<i>Phona</i>	Father's younger brother
13	<i>Tumma</i>	Mother's elder sister
14	<i>Suma</i>	Mother's younger sister
15	<i>Nya</i>	Father's sister
16	<i>Nwa</i>	Mother's brother
17	<i>Kumba</i>	Brother-in-law
18	<i>Annee</i>	Sister-in-law
19	<i>Pangmey</i>	Son-in-law
20	<i>Sohmeet</i>	Daughter-in-law
21	<i>Ingyadray</i>	Father's youngest sister's husband
22	<i>Kuwah</i>	Mother's elder and younger brother
23	<i>Phudray</i>	Elder brother wife
24	<i>Panglee</i>	Elder sister husband
25	<i>Numa</i>	Mother-in-law
26	<i>Nupa</i>	Father-in-law
27	<i>Nakma</i>	Brother's daughter
28	<i>Nakpa</i>	Brother's son
29	<i>Suyuma</i>	Great Grandmother
30	<i>Sutheba</i>	Great Grand father

Source: Field Survey (2013 – 2017)

### **5.3.2 Family Organization**

The family is one of the important entity of the social structure and organization of a community. Family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic and ideological cooperation and reproduction (Mallick, 2009). Family is the basic and universal institution. It fulfills various needs of the member of the society. In addition, it performs several functions including continuity, integration and change in the society.

In the Limbu society father is the head of the family and household. In the absence of the father the eldest son is treated as the head of the family. In some of the households the widow mother is treated as the head. There is a cordial relationship among the family members with mutual level of understanding. The senior most family member is given special privileges and respect from the younger members. An elder member acts as the disciplinarian and teaches the moral values to family members. Children are affectionately raised by their parents. They build up their conscience with moral values.

#### **5.3.2.1 Family Types**

The three types of family structure were found by the researcher in the study areas namely Nuclear family, Joint family and Single/Broken family.

##### **i. Nuclear family**

The nuclear family is also one of the smaller units of the society. Sometimes only a husband and wife form a nuclear family. This type of family is formed due to various reasons:

- Separation of spouses from natal house after marriage.
- Separation of spouses from natal house after mutual consultation with parents.
- After the death of parents their married son formed his family.

**ii. Joint Family**

There are several types of role relations responsible for the formation of the joint family in the society (Mallick, 2009).

- Couple with their married son/sons.
- Father/Mother with their married son/sons.
- After the death of parents the married son/sons with his brother/sister.
- Grandparents and grand children.
- Married brother/brothers and his/their brothers’ wives.
- Father’s siblings.
- Parental cousins.
- The couple living with their married daughter and her husband and children.
- The mother/father living with their married daughter and her husband and children.
- The couple living with their widow sister.
- The couple living with their sister children.

**iii. Single / Broken Family**

The single or broken family comprise of one individual person whose parents have died. In the study areas it was found single family person to be unmarried and in some case he/she is physically disabled.

**Table 5.4 Showing the Distribution of Family Types**

Types	Teesta Valley Tea Garden		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
	HHs	Percent	HHs	Percent	HHs	Percent
Single	2	1.4 %	6	5.4%	3	2.8%
Nuclear	95	63.3%	64	57.1%	74	69.2%
Joint	53	35.3%	42	37.5%	30	28%
Total	150	100%	112	100%	107	100%

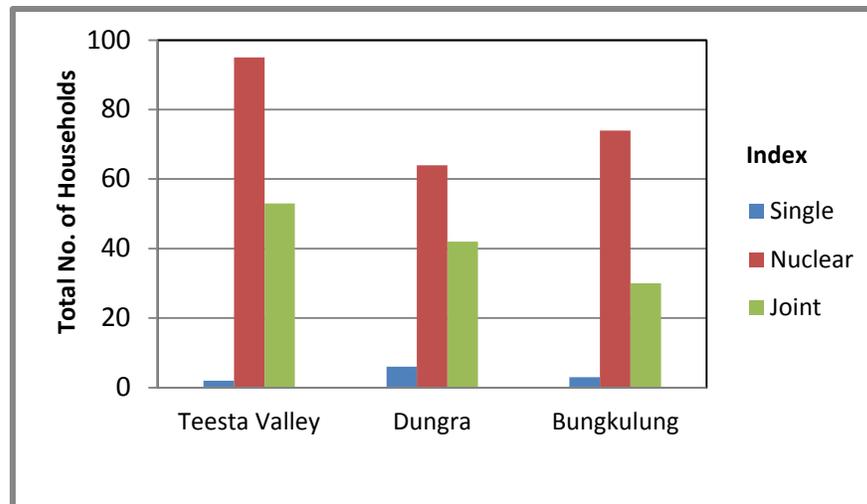
Source: Field work (2013 – 2017)      HHs = Households’



**Plate 5.4 : Showing the Nuclear and Joint Family of the Study areas with the researcher**

The given table shows the distribution of different types of family in the study areas. The households belonging to the single family unit is hardly found in the study areas. Nearly (1.4%) in Teesta valley, (2.8%) in Bungkulung and (5.4%) in Dungra Khasmahal of the households have single family. 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. It has only two types of relation based on the linkages between parents-children and husband – wife (ibid).

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 constituted (69.2%). The main reason for the formation of nuclear family was love marriages because the young couple liked to settle separately and this is also supported by their parents. As a result more or more nuclear families started to grow in the Limbu society.



**Figure: 5.2 Showing the Family Types of Study Areas**

The Limbu joint family enjoys a healthy and cordial relationship with each other. In Teesta valley (35.3%) of the households have joint family, (37.5%) in the Dungra Khasmahal and (28%) in the Bungkulung. Father is the head of the joint family and takes all the important decisions. Generally, the eldest son takes over the charges of family in his absence. Mother also shares a joyful relation with her son in a joint family. Though sometimes mother often engage in arguments with daughter-in-law's which ultimately leads to segregation of the family. The relation between the younger brother wife and her husband's elder brother is of extreme formality and avoidance. She shares a good rapport with husband's younger brother.

### **5.3.2.2 Family Size**

In the study areas the family size varies from single family to family member of more than 10 persons. The size of the family has direct impact on the very socio-economic condition of the Limbus. The large and small size of family has both the merit and demerits. In the tea garden area large size of the family means a cumbersome and loads of responsibility because of the meager income and lack of alternative opportunities. In the agricultural villages of Dungra and Bungkulung large size of the family often compensates the dearth of labour paucity. The family members actively take participation in the production process. It is known that people in the rural areas consider more children as a blessing. A woman can establish herself with her husband

and in-laws until she has own children, especially, males. Therefore, in the existing socio-cultural set-up, children play a vital role in avoiding fraction between husband and wife, and other member of the family.

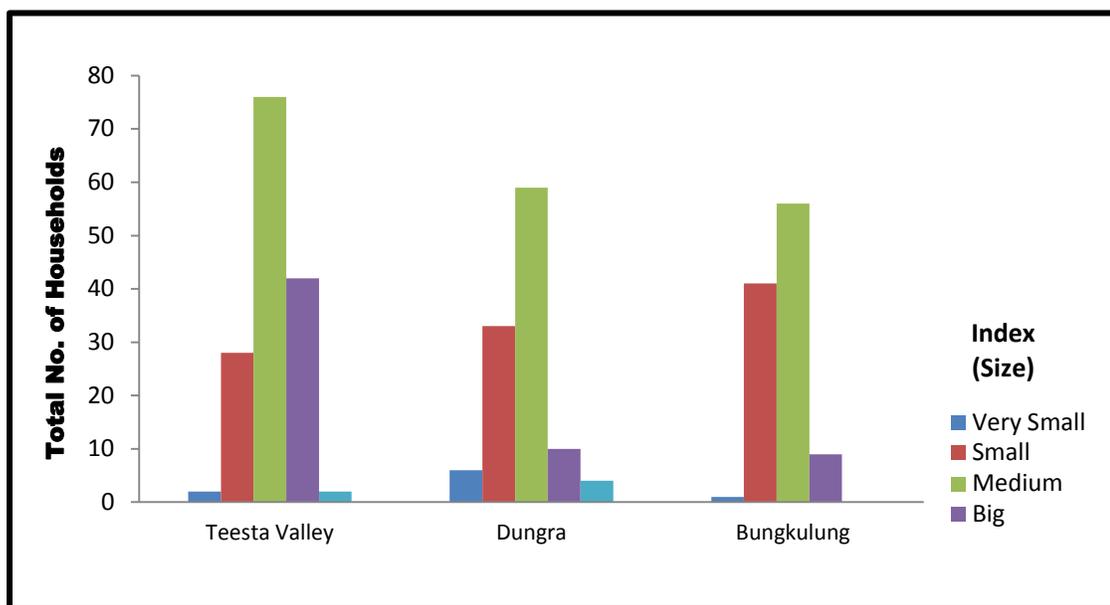
**Table 5.5 Showing the Distribution of Limbu Households (HHs) of the Study Areas according to size of the family**

S.No	Types	Members	Teesta Valley Tea Garden		Dungra Khasmahal		Bungkulung	
			HHs	Percent	HHs	Percent	HHs	Percent
1	Very small	1	2	1.3%	6	5.3%	1	0.9%
2	Small	2 - 3	28	18.7%	33	29.5%	41	38.3%
3	Medium	4 - 6	76	50.7%	59	52.7%	56	52.4%
4	Big	7 - 9	42	28%	10	8.9%	9	8.4%
5	Very Big	above 10	2	1.3%	4	3.6%	0	0
6	Total		150	100%	112	100%	107	100%

**Source: Field work (2013 – 2016)**

From the above mentioned table 5.3, the size of the family varies from one person to more than ten people depending on the structure and economic conditions. Very small family size is in negligible percent with (1.3%) in Teesta valley, (5.3%) in Dungra Khasmahal and (0.9 %) in Bungkulung. The main reason of the very small size of the family is mainly due to death of the parents and spouses. In some of the household the spouse had died without bearing a child. Some of them had crossed the marrying age for which they are living alone.

The Small family comprises of husband, wife and children. But sometimes the widow/widower along with their children forms this type of family. In Teesta valley (18.7%), (38.5%) in Bungkulung and (29.5%) households in Dungra Khasmahal have small size family.



**Figure 5.3: Showing the Family Size of the Study Areas**

The medium size family comprises of 4 – 6 members forming both the joint and nuclear type of family. The big size is basically a joint family where 7 – 9 people live together. In Teesta valley (28%) of the households has big family size. In Dungra and Bungkulung, the big size family households comprises of (8.9%) and (8.4%) respectively.

The very big family is extended joint families of more than 10 members living together. In Teesta valley (1.3%) and Dungra Khasmahal (3.6%) have this type of family. In Bungkulung big size family do not exist.

### **5.3.3 Marriage: Types and Forms**

Marriage is regarded as the union of two people who binds into a relationship bestowed by blessings from elder. Marriage is a social acceptance by family, friends and society declaring two people as husband and wife. It is one of the important stages of human life from different aspects. The marriage ritual, custom and tradition among different ethnic groups differ from one another depending on the situation, social and religious prejudices. 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). Limbu enjoy relative freedom in the choice of the 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 the marriage by elopement (*Chori Biha*), arranged marriages (*Mangni Biha*) and extra marital affair marriage (*Jari Biha*). Elopement marriage is quite common among the Limbus.

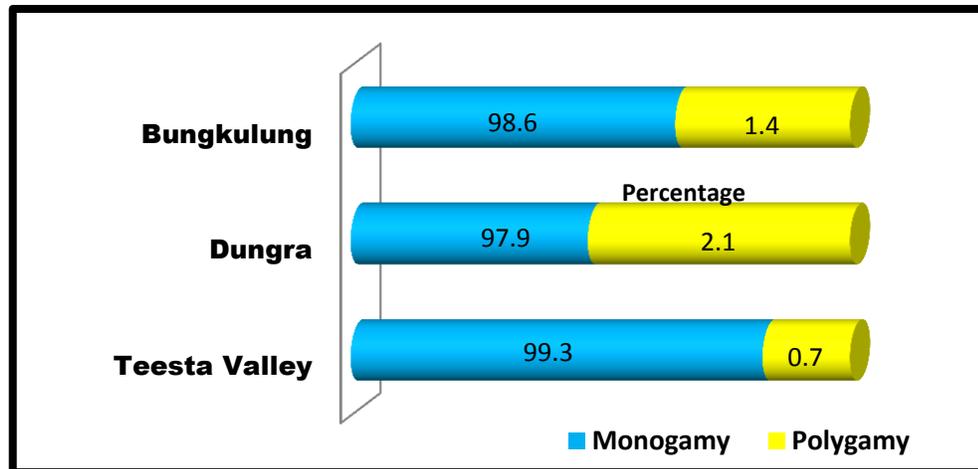
The arranged marriages has some peculiar tradition and practices where both the marital parties are socially obligated to one another. The practice of Jari marriage i.e. taking someone else wife by seducing her, although is not common in the study areas but few cases were there. In which the victims of seduction are normally those young ladies whose husbands are away from their home for a longer period. The seducer after developing illicit relations with her takes her as his wife. Afterwards on the return of her husband the matter is taken to the village panchayat where the elderly Limbus decide the amount of compensation (*Jarikal*) that the seducer has to pay to the husband of the lady (Sharma, 2000).

**Table 5.6 Distribution of the Limbu Population in the Study Areas According to Forms of Marriage**

S.No	Forms	Teesta Valley Tea Garden	Dungra Khasmahal	Bungkulung
1	Monogamy	402 (99.3%)	230(97.9%)	210(98.6%)
2	Polygamy	3 (0.7%)	5 (2.1%)	3 (1.4%)
	Total	405(100%)	235(100%)	213(100%)

Source: (Field work 2013 – 2017)

Monogamy marriage is mostly popular rather than polygamy. It is seen a Limbu man remarrying to another woman in presence and in death of first wife. Though a woman can marry with another man in presence of her husband but polyandry is not found in the Limbu society. Polygamy is not so much permissible within the Limbu society.



**Figure 5.4: Showing the Forms of Marriage**

The main reason for Polygamy found in the study areas are quite common everywhere. It is bound by both the social and religious factors. The infertility among women is the main cause of husband remarriage, for the sake of family lineage. The extra marital affair among married man is another reason of such marriage.

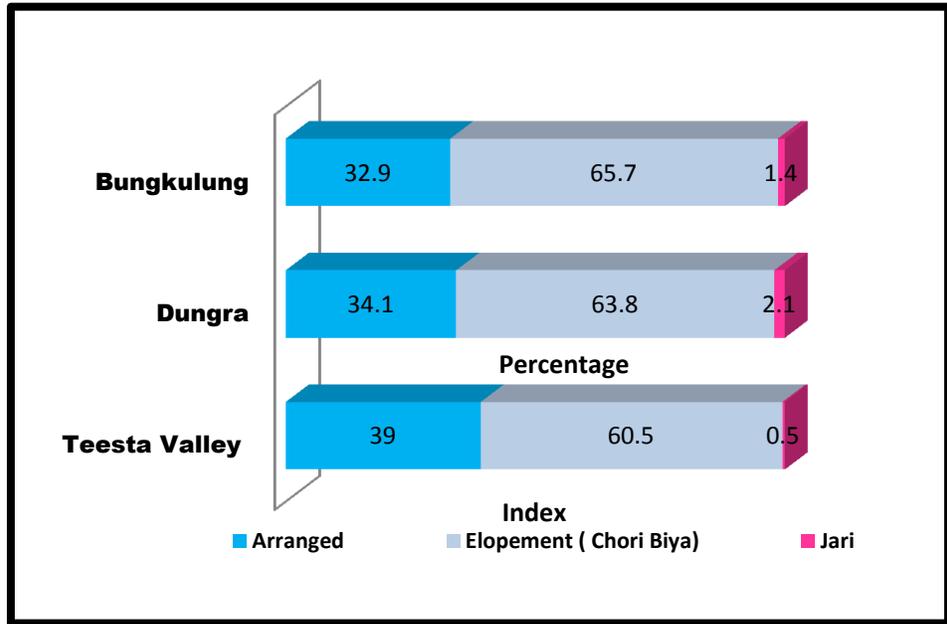
**Table 5.7 Distribution of the Limbu Population in the Study Areas According To Types of Marriage**

No.	Study Areas	Forms of Marriage			
		Arranged( <i>Mangni</i> )	Elopement( <i>Chori</i> )	Jari	Total
1	Teesta Valley Tea Garden	158(39%)	245(60.5%)	2(0.5%)	405 (100%)
2	Dungra Khasmahal	80(34.1%)	150(63.8%)	5(2.1%)	235(100%)
3	Bungkulung	70(32.9%)	140(65.7%)	3(1.4%)	213(100%)

Source: (Field work 2013 – 2017)

The given table 5.4 shows the types of marriages found among the Limbus of the Darjeeling Himalaya under study areas. Marriage by elopement is commonly known as *Chori biha*, Arranged marriage is *Mangni biha* and Marriage by stealing away

someone else wife is called *Jari biha*. *Jari Biha* is very rare but *Chori biha* is the one of the most popular form of marriage among the hill communities.



**Figure 5.5: Showing the Types of Marriage**

In the study areas 39 % of Limbus in Teesta valley, 34.1% in Dungra Khasmahal and 32.9% in Bungkulung had arranged marriage where the consent of the family, relatives was taken into consideration. In this type of marriage both the marital parties have to perform religious as well as social obligated formalities. The rate of elopement marriage is quite high with 60.5 % in Teesta valley, 63.8% in Dungra Khasmahal and 65.7% in Bungkulung.

During elopement decision is taken by the couples themselves to get married. Normally boy takes away the girl without her parents knowing about it and only after three days of elopement sends the message to the family regarding her where about. The message is send along with social obligated rituals, where gifts are taken for girl's family along with the messenger who convey the message regarding the boy's family status. If the girl parents accept the gifts then it means they have given their consent if not then girl is not allowed to come in her natal family house throughout her life. Her family breaks all relation with her if the boy does not fulfill the parent's

desirable qualities. Jari Biha is very rare only 0.5 % of the Limbu population in Teesta valley, 2.1% in Dungra Khasmahal and 1.4% in Bungkulung had this type of marriage.

### **5.3.3.1 Case Studies**

The following are the case studies regarding the marriages among the Limbus of the study areas.

#### **Case Study 1**

##### **Intra Communal Marriage of a Married Woman (*Jari Biha*)**

This case study is of Mrs. Sukmaya Limbu who is married to Mr. K.B Limbu of Dungra Khasmahal, Kalimpong for the last 25 years. This case study shows the status of a woman who had married twice by her own choice. It is seen in Limbu society that every individual has a fair enough choice to choose her mate with whom he/she want to spend his/her life throughout. Mrs. Sukmaya Limbu is bit elderly as compared to her second husband. Before her second marriage she was married to a Limbu man (whose name she reluctant to say, because she don't want to disclose her personal life). But even then due to my curiosity and approach she agreed to narrate down the story to me. It was her decision to elope. She said she was married at quite young age to a man belonging to same village, from which she had two children. Now the question arise how Mr. K.B Limbu met her. She chuckles and smiles recollecting the past memories how they were married to each other. In every society remarriages takes place with both social obligation and personal choice or dissatisfaction with the spouse either biologically or psychological needs.

Mr. K.B Limbu was a bachelor at that time when he made his plan to visit Bhutan for work purpose. It was love at first sight for both of them because her earlier marriage was not of her choice but was by a negotiation. Within a short passage of time both of them had developed friendly and cordial relationship hidden from her husband and in-law's. At the peak juncture of their love affairs she had to make her choice to select in

between these two men. Listening to her heart she decided to elope with Mr. K.B Limbu leaving her entire family in Bhutan. Mr. K.B Limbu brought her in his residence and with proper rituals married her taking the consent of the family and elderly Limbus (*Tumyahang*). As for now they are living a happy life in Dungra. They have one son who is also married with one kid. Both Mr. and Mrs. K.B Limbu are sustaining local village livelihood in Dungra. She believed after her elopement she had lost all her rights in the previous husband and natal place. It has been more than two decade she has not gone back to her village neither heard anything from them too.

## **Case Study 2**

### **Inter Communal Marriage of a Married Man (Arranged or *Mangni* marriage)**

This case study is very unique in nature because it is a *Jari Biha* at first and again the remarriage of the same person through arranged marriage. The case story of marriage is from Bungkulung, a Limbu village in a Kurseong subdivision.

Mr. Prem Bahadur Limbu is sixty years old man, an ex army man from Bungkulung. He is survived by his wife and children. He had married twice in his life. The incident which respondent narrated to me took place somewhat 40 years ago during 1976. In 1976, Prem Bahadur Limbu, a young army lad fell in love with a woman from Soureni busty Mirik and married by eloping. Unaware of the fact, that the woman was already a married one he brought her to his residence. Everyone were excited after three days of elopement as a customary ritual his family send a handful of elderly Limbus to woman native place for the assurance of woman safety and dignity. But the family refused to accept the truth as she was already married. Because she had not told about her past to Prem it was a *Jari Biha* and according to ritual and custom Prem had to pay a fine to her previous husband in cash or kind as *Jarikal*<sup>2</sup>. He paid Rupees sixty one as *Jarikal* in front of village panchayat and took the responsibility of a woman. His family organized a marriage feast where villagers were invited to

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<sup>2</sup> Jarikal is the stipulated amount of money decided by the pancha to be paid by man to his wife previous husband.

rejoice and merry for a new wed couple. After one year of their marriage they became parent to a baby boy Kailash. Being an army man, almost all the year he stayed outside the state and hardly came once in a year. In due course of time his wife started to have an extra marital affair with a man from Marma tea garden. His wife left his child and eloped with her lover. When he came to village to settle the matter his wife's new husband send some of the people to deposit *Jarikal*. He denied taking *Jarikal* and called all the elderly Limbus of the village for a meeting to take initiative steps. He then decided to cut off all his relation with his wife and mutually separate with her. On behalf of family obligations and child responsibility he once again re-married a woman by arranged marriage. He married a Lepcha woman, Sombulu of Mirik busty in 1978. As for now both of them are living a happy and content life.

### **Case Study 3**

#### **Marriage within Intra Community but with Tabooed Clan (*Thar*)**

Marriage is a soulful union of two people bestowed with duties, responsibility and a legacy to continue a lineage. But sometime marriage becomes a curse or sin if it breaks the rule, custom and rituals.

This is the case study of such marriage which is taboo in Limbu community. Cross cousin marriage and marriage within a same clan is highly restricted. During the survey in Teesta valley such case study was found. This story is narrated by a person of village in a fieldwork of Limbu goan in Teesta Valley. This person was the relative of Aakash Limbu (name changed) from affinal side who by mistakenly married a girl belonging to same clan of another village. Aakash Limbu met this girl in Darjeeling because both of them were studying. Without knowing about the clan reality their love crossed all limits. The premarital sex is quite common among the teenagers which created a whole stir in the life of Aakash. The girl became pregnant and was too late to take any steps. Thus left out with no option he married the girl. When the Aakash's family came to know about the truth of clan, they were shocked. They soon called the pancha and elderly Limbus of the village to decide on the fate. In village society a person is always abide to obey the village rules. The Pancha decided that

both the families should boycott their relation and married couple had to leave the village for lifetime. This was the most needed lesson and action by Pancha to ensure the very sustainability of village rules and society. It has been more than three years Aakash has not come to his village. His mother sometimes informally meets him without the consent of his father. He is working somewhere in Kalimpong. Hardly anyone talks about him in the village.

### **5.3.3.2 Marriage Payment and Distance**

Traditionally the Limbu practice bride price system in their marriage. It is customary for them. Earlier the amount of the bride price was high in case of the arrange marriage. Therefore, most of them opted for the love marriage through elopement in which groom has to pay the nominal amount of money to bride's parent.

There are two system of bride price based on *Rupauli* and *Sunnauli* among the Limbus of Eastern Himalaya. *Rupauli and Sunnauli* comprise amount of demand money and gold items fixed by the parents of bride from the groom side. Though bride price is the general practice among the Limbus but recently dowry has emerged as a new adaptive way imbibed from their neighbours. The groom parents never ask for anything but even then bride's parents offer the luxury goods to their daughter. Limbu realize that their forefathers did not follow such a custom, but for some it is a harmless practice as they consider it good for their future. So indirectly dowry is also creeping into Limbu marriage system.

The marriage distance is within the village and other adjoining areas of Darjeeling district. During the field survey it was found most of the aged couples were married within their own village surrounding and adjoining village either through elopement or arranged marriage. It was observed that when the Limbu girl is married to other places her brothers visit her during festivals and family ceremonies.

This short trip sometimes became the meeting avenue for the search of good bride. The married sisters also helped them for selecting the perfect bride. Among the younger generation who marries quite early at the age of twenty or twenty five the social media plays an active role in finding their partner.

**Table 5.8 Showing the Marriage Distance of the Limbus in the Study Areas**

S.No	Distance	Study Areas		
		Teesta Valley Tea Garden	Dungra Khasmahal	Bungkulung
1	Marriage within same village	100 (24.7%)	50 (21.3%)	19 (9%)
2	Marriage within neighboring Village and outside	275 (68%)	175 (74.5%)	190 (89.2%)
3	Marriage within other state	20 (4.9%)	6 (2.5%)	2 (0.9%)
4	Marriage within outside the country	10 (2.4%)	4 (1.7%)	2 (0.9%)
	Total	405 (100%)	235 (100%)	213 (100%)

Source Field Survey (2013 -2017)

The above mentioned table 5.6 shows the marriage distance of the Limbus in the study areas. The choice of marrying within the neighbouring village and different places of Darjeeling is the common practice among the Limbus. In Teesta valley (68%), Dungra Khasmahal (74.5%) and Bungkulung (89.2%) of Limbus had married a woman from in and around places of Darjeeling. The nearby adjoining village is the first preferences because of the easy communication and same social status. Marriage within the village is occurred because of good relation and family. A chunk of Limbu population has found their bride from the state of Sikkim and Assam. In Dungra three households had married a Limbu woman of Tinsukhia place of Assam. The marriage outside country is very rare of which Eastern Nepal and Bhutan is quite popular. In Dungra Khasmahal one of the respondents had married to a Limbu woman of Bhutan.

### **5.3.3.3 Remarriage and Divorce**

The remarriage tradition among Limbus is not so much acceptable and common unlike every other community. They believe the very first marriage is the foundation towards the permanent union of two souls. In very few cases it is seen that male remarrying because of family and social obligations and due to extra marital affairs. The family obligation is related with the barrenness of female, separation and early death of wife. In Limbu society not only male are allow to remarry but widows too

are allowed. Widow Remarriage is a socially acknowledged form of marriage among many tribal communities of Himalayan regions with local variations ( (Sharma, 2000). Among the Limbus in this type of marriage, consent of the elder brother's widow is a must, but at the same time if a widow sister in-law is present, bachelor brother's consent is also taken. Thus the remarriage is possible but the consent is more socially obligated towards the widow.

Divorce among the Limbu community is rare in the study areas. The husband can demand the divorce if his wife is proved to be an unfaithful and do not obey him and the family members always tends to live in her father's house. The wife can claim divorce, if husband's behavior is not good if a problem arises from the in-laws and on the ground of domestic violence. Fertility is another ground for divorce. A divorce from the husband's side is called, *Khemjong* and a divorce from Wife's side is called, *Najong*. Traditionally in olden days, in case if husband seeks divorce from his wife by his own will and if he has not paid the price of his wife in full, he will not have any custody to take his children. But if the man has paid the full amount of bride price and yet divorces her, then he will have no claim for the refund of his bride price from his father-in-law. He can take away his children with him. The children born from divorced wife will be called *Khosa*. The maternal uncle will be their guardian and they will be under his disposal. It is called the rule of, *Kwajani*. But if the man does not want his wife and yet wants his children, then he can do so by legalizing the children under the rule of *Samyok Lung Thim* of the Ten Limbus. The divorced wife will be treated as an unmarried girl and will be allowed to marry again.

#### **5.3.4 Interpersonal Relationship**

The structure of interpersonal relationship needs a special focus in discussing the kinship organization of a Limbu community. There has been a slight change in the interpersonal relationship these days. Though the society changes from time to time but the basic values of Interpersonal relationship remains the same. The relationship structure is based on the hierarchical order allowing seniority first. The senior members of the family is given due respect from the younger generation. The status

of the women in the Limbu society is high and respectful except in few rituals. The Limbu women are subordinate to men. The scenario will be clear from the following discussion on their interpersonal relationship.

**i. Husband and Wife Relationship**

The husband and wife relationship in the Limbu society is based on stability, honesty and cooperation between each other. This ideal relationship is characterized by love, care and intimacy. Being a patriarchal society, the husband is the head of the family and gives his authority both in domestic and extra domestic spheres. Though the wife enjoys the subordinate position but plays an active role in the management of the family and household activity. During the fieldwork in Teesta valley Tea garden wives were the bread earners in the family. Some of them also take part in important decision making of the family. There is a clear division of labour between husband and wife. The husband looks after the economic activities and wife is in charge of domestic chores. In the older generation the wife did not address her husband by name. The field work observation reveals that the younger married couple calls by name to each other.

**ii. Father and Son Relationship**

In patrilineally society the father and son relationship is of paramount importance (Chaudhury, 2004). The father is the owner of the property, house and other values. Before or after the death of the father the property is equally divided among the sons. The birth of male child is celebrated because he is an economic asset who looks after his family. During his old age, the father is usually dependent on his sons. Sons are also expected to carry on their family legacy. Ritually, a son has many obligations to perform particularly after his father's death. The eldest son performs all the relevant rituals.

**iii. Relationship between Brothers**

The relationship between the Limbu brothers is hierarchical in nature. The elder brother has authority and younger ones obey him. In absence of their father, it is the duty and responsibility of the elder brother to look after them. In case of any peer group confrontation of the younger ones, the elder brother handles the situation. Elder

brother controls his younger brother either through force both physical and verbally. The younger brother co-operates with him economically and manually.

**iv. Mother and Son Relationship**

The son is very closely associated with his mother emotionally and lovingly. The son obeys the decision of parents but always shares his problem with his mother. During the marriage of a son, the mother has an important role to play. The son usually shares his view about a girl to his mother. It is the mother who informs the family and makes arrangements for the further proceedings. But after marriage in some cases the son-mother relationship has to go through a tough situation, heated argument between the mother and daughter-in-law. This situation leads a son into dilemma which is also one of the reasons behind the separation from the family.

**v. Father and Daughter Relationship**

In Limbu society daughter is very close to her father. The father being the head of the family equally shared his property among his children. The daughter also inherits the father property. There is no financial problem in the daughter's marriage because of bride price. During my field survey respondents were happy to have a girl child because according to them daughter always look after the parents with utmost care and love even after marriage. The girl child is given educational facility and sophistication by her father in Limbu society.

**vi. Mother and Daughter Relationship**

The mother and daughter bond is the strongest. The daughter helps her mother in domestic chores and also takes care of her siblings. The mother teaches her all the moral values, customs and rituals so that she could prove herself in in-law's house. Daughter also shares her feeling, emotion with her mother.

**vii. Brother and Sister Relationship**

It is marked with goodwill and affection towards each other. The sister respects her elder brother. The elder sister also takes good care of her elder brother. During marriage ceremony brother plays an active role by officiating some of the rituals. Brother provides care and protection to her sister.

**viii. Sister and Sister Relationship**

Sisters are friendly with each other if they are of same age group, they become very good friends. They maintain their contact after marriage and help each other in times of need. In some family it is seen brothers marrying sisters.

**ix. Grandparents and Grandchildren Relationship**

With the birth of new child, grandparents get excited and become happy. The grandchildren spend most of their time with grandfathers. Grandparents told them story, play with them and look after them.

**x. Affinal Relationship**

The Affinal relationship is between the brothers and sister in-law, parents-in- laws, daughter and son-in-law. There is a casual relationship between the brother wife and his younger brother but with the husband elder brother she has to be formal and give due respect. The father-in-law and daughter-in-law are marked with love and respect. Father treats his daughter-in-law as his own daughter. In the absence of the mother-in-law she takes care of him in his old age.

**xi. Joking Relationship**

Every family member has close connection with each others with and shares their feelings. Like, every society there is a unique casual relationship of sharing jokes between husband younger brother and his wife. He is closed to his brother's wife (*bhauju*) they have friendly gestures with each other. But the elder brother maintains the safe distance from younger brother wife.

**5.3.5 Life Cycle and Rituals**

There are numerous rituals Limbus performed in their course of life from birth to death. These rituals are performed by Limbus 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. These rituals are performed by Limbu Shaman *Phedangba* who heals and cure the sufferings of the people.

### 5.3.5.1 Birth (*Sawansingba*)

The birth of a child is regarded as one of the happiest and wonderful moment in the family filled with joy and celebrations. In Limbu society before and after the birth of child, family observes some rituals and purification ceremony. *Sappok Chomen* is a rite of womb worship for the protection of a child in the uterus. It is also a rite of propitiating gods for the good health of the mother and the baby in the womb as well as successful delivery of the baby. It is unique in the sense that no one in the vicinity solemnizes such rituals except Limbus. After the birth of a child family observes pollution period *Sutak*. The family observes *Sutak* very strictly. They refrain from going outside mainly to temples and funeral. The ritual and purification ceremony is slightly different between the new born male child and female child. In case of male child the purification ceremony is done after four days and after three days for female child. In the purification ceremony family calls relatives, friends and close neighbours to their house. The entire household is cleaned with cow dung as a custom. It is applied on the floor and the entire room is sprinkled with drops of holy Ganga water. The mother and new born baby take bath in warm water and wear new clothes. The head of the household conduct religious puja officiated by *Phedangba* where new born is taken to an edge of a door facing outside and a knife is placed on his/her hand. He then asks the mother to take the child outside and inside of the house for three times. The main reason behind this ritual is to bestow the child with blessing of God, Deities and Ancestors. The holding of knife in hand is to protect from danger and harm. Then, the baby is taken inside the house for family blessings. This is the first time villagers see the new born.

The blessing is followed by naming giving ceremony called *Yangdang Phongma*. The naming ceremony among the Limbus is followed by another ceremony of *Takshi* the rice-feeding ceremony usually after six months. In this ceremony, the ceremonial cleansing of the mother, the child and the house is essential before the rituals. The presence of relatives, both paternal and especially the maternal are ensured. The priest in such ceremony worships the Goddess to ensure the child with good health and long life. The child is essentially given some rice, milk and cereals. The final birth

ceremony is the hair cut ceremony after three to five years. The cutting of the hair is usually done by a maternal uncle or even a classificatory uncle can do it. The ceremony also includes the prerequisite of cleaning the house, presence of a priest, followed by feast.

#### **5.3.5.2 Marriage (*Meikhim*)**

There is certain social inclusion amongst the Limbus which they have to follow in the act of marriage. The Limbu marriages forbid marriages on consanguinity ground. The Limbu tradition does not permit incest and child marriage. The traditional Limbu marriage has a series of custom and practices to be performed by both the marital parties in a more reciprocal and socially obligated ways. The Limbu marriages through negotiation or arrange has four Traditional stages namely *Pahilo Kalam*, *Dusro Kalam*, *Tesro Kalam* and *Chautho Kalam* (Pradhan, 2014). In Limbu society, a handful of people from groom side go to the girl's home for a marriage proposal. These people are accompanied by a chief spokesperson called *Ingmeba* who place the proposal along with the *Shagun* (Submissive Gifts) called *Pelifak Hukka* in Limbu language. The girl's family accept the *Pelifak Hukka* if the boy fulfills the desirable qualities and eligibility. When parents agree a coin is tied to the edge of the girl's shawl which is termed as *Thupparung* in Limbu as the sign of acceptance. With the willingness of girl *Ingmeba* offer bottles of *Rakshi* (Liquor) in gratitude and return to share the news at boy's place. *Ingmeba* make another visit to girl's house to meet *Yankisingba*, Chief spokesperson from girl's family to discuss the marriage rituals. Because in Limbu society it is the customary rules for the boy's party to perform following rituals based in accordance to the order of Ten Limbus and Seventeen *thums*. The marriage rituals like *Paja maja*, *Sang waja*, *Thaba yama ja*, *Thumba Janma ja*, *Fanga Chema sa*, *Mekhim seranmg*, *Haktuba sedakappa*, *Tarang thakma*, *Singok Kalma* (ibid). These offering items include certain sum of money in the form of coins, beverages and liquor. This custom of offering to girl's family is called *Yakung Mei khim thim*. With this offering both the boy and girl take the elder

blessing. *Ingmeba* and his assistant return back with a vow to come again on fixed date to take the bride.

When the date is fixed, *Ingmeba* led by some of the people from the groom's side come to take the bride. In Limbu community, customarily the marriage is solemnized at the residence of the groom not the bride. The bride is also accompanied by her friends escorting her to the groom's house. The bride is brought from the parental house a day earlier and kept in a neighbor's house. Her girl companions *Meikesama* stay with her till the marriage ceremony.

On the next day i.e. on the day of marriage the groom's party with all the bridal costumes and Jewellery goes to the place where she is staying. When everything is done both the groom and bride enter the house at the said time given by a Shaman. The groom family and relatives are eagerly waiting to welcome them. The entire house is decorated where all the villagers gather and dance in the tune of *Chyabrun*, a musical instrument of Limbus. The elderly ladies stand in the main entrance of the house with *akshata* and flowers. When the new couple enters the house some of the formalities are performed. The bride is taken inside the house where the head of the family and relatives put *tika* on her forehead symbolizing her inclusion into their clan, family and kinship. In regard to this bride pays her respect to them by touching their feet in humility. On the same day the marriage ceremony is duly solemnized. The *Phedangba* starts the marriage ceremony with the chanting of *Mundhum*. The pair of domestic fowl is sacrificed and the blood is oozed out in banana leaf. If the oozing of the blood is not enough another pair is sacrificed, because Limbus believes that scarce oozing of blood is not an auspicious sign for the couple (Sharma, 2000). After this the newly wed couple is offered *Thi Thongba* local made wine from *kodo* (millet grass) and eight pieces of meat. They take a sip of wine from the bamboo vessel as a customary and touch the pieces of meat by their lips. This auspicious ritual is known as *SangSang*. Then there comes the celebration of the nuptial tie (*Yapparechemma*). In this ritual a silver coin is tied in a corner of the shawl wore by the bride and groom is made to put a vermilion on the parting line of hair of the bride. The couple is

blessed by the *Shaman* for long, happy, and prosperous life. They take a vow of remaining faithful towards each other. Then the couple takes three full circles around the main pole supporting the house. This completes the formalities of a Limbu marriage.

On the next day the bride groom has to go to his in-law's house with his friends taking a complete carcass of a pig or male buffalo with some vessels of *Rakshi* and eighteen rupees as a present known as *Phakhak tane*. The parents of the bride warmly welcome the couple with homely gestures and offers gifts as a token of love from their side. But customarily a Limbu husband becomes entitled for his full claim over his wife only after the ceremony called *Saimundri* which takes place when they are blessed with children or attain the age of forty or above.

The marriage ritual in the contemporary times has changed a bit regarding the considerations of modern generations. The basic premises of the marriage rituals are followed if it is strictly demanded by the elderly members of the family. Otherwise the marriage ceremony is done in the more sophisticated way by arranging feasts in the hotel. The married couples also wear modern outfits. The negotiation party is not required because both the boy and girl directly take consult of their parents.

#### **5.3.4.3 Death (*Sima mapma*)**

Death is the last sorrowful life cycle ceremony. Death ceremonies of Limbu people are differently observed in comparison to neighboring communities. There are two types of death rituals performed by Limbus. One is natural death and another one is unnatural death in accidents or by committing suicide which is termed as *Sogha*. The mourning period of male is four days and for female is three days. During this period family members, kins and relatives observe certain rituals where they only take boiled foods. If someone dies a natural death, there are several rites of various stages (Subba, 1999).

During the natural death, the corpse is kept in front of the room facing westward. The bamboo stretcher (*chedhyap*) is prepared to place the corpse. After some ritual

performance at house, the *Phedangba* (shaman) start the funeral procession. The dead body placed in *chedhyap* is taken to the graveyard. They keep the dead body on the ground placing the head westward. Before placing the death body for burial *Kham-Ingma* ritual is performed by *phedangba*. He puts one rupee coin on the leaves of *caulo* placed in cross position in the coffin and declares that he/she has purchased the piece of ground.

After the *Kham-Ingma* ritual, the death body is placed in the coffin with head facing west. *Sam Loopma ritual* (taking out the soul) of the dead person takes place. In the course of performing this ritual, the plates and silver coins are taken out and kept in a small piece of white shroud. *Sam- Sama* (giving away the soul of the dead person to the ancestors) ritual is performed after the completion of funeral procession. This ritual is done in the house of dead person. A pair of chicken (hen and cock), an egg and *Toongba* is required to perform this ritual. *Kha-Uma* is the final rite of death ceremony. All the relatives and participants of the funeral procession are invited. At last *Minkwa Sangma* ceremony is performed by Samba (shaman). The literal meaning of *Minkwa Sangma* is to wash out the tears or stains of tears from the face and this ritual symbolically indicates the total separation of death soul and forgetting the deceased person. The period between funerals processions (*Chesama*) to the rites of *Minkwa Sangma*, the same clans (*thar*) people do not indulge in any social entertainment because, they are in pollution. After the completion of these rituals they can have entertainment such as marriage ceremony, painting their houses etc.

#### **5.4 Limbu Dance and Songs**

The culture and tradition of Limbus is rich and unique. They have distinctive types of folklores, customs, myths, folksongs and dances. The *yalang*, a traditional Limbu folkdance is a duet performance of female and male youths. It is usually performed during marriage ceremonies, festivals, in fair, and in special occasions. The youths while dancing *yalang* exchange wide varieties of subjects like feelings of love and affection, experiences of pain and pleasure and so on through exceptionally

melodious and heart-rending tune. *Yalang* folkdance has great value and significance for depicting tradition, culture, behavior and life style of the Limbu people.

*Palam* and *Sarek (khyali)* are recreational Limbu folksongs sung in any occasion. This type of recreational song provide a lot of past information, ongoing activities, and upcoming plans and aspirations. *Palam* is a versed folksong traditionally sung only in *yalang* performance. The other kinds of Limbu songs are *hakpare samlo* (esteemed versed song), *namdatte kesam-samlo* (wedding song), *thakptham-samlo* (new home-entry song), *mingwan-samlo* (naming ritual song), *mering-samlo* (separation song), *tamkye-samlo* (agriculture song), *tumyanghang-samlo* (gentlemen song), *angekwa sammet-samlo* (cradle song), *sewa-samlo* (devotion song).

*Kelang* (drum dance) and *yalang* are the most popular dances in Limbu society. *Yalang* being basically a recreational one, it is danced at anywhere and on any occasion by the youths. *Hangsamlang* or the *balang* deserves its space as another ritual dance, and is also known as the majestic power dance of *theba* (grandfather). It is performed displaying weapons like *pheja (khukuri)*, *li bong* (bow and arrow), *kongphe* (sword), *kho* (shield), and danced majestically playing musical instruments such as the *tangke* (kettledrum) and *ta* (cymbals). *Tamkye-lang* (agro-based dance) is performed while weeding corn plant. The ritual or devotional song called *Mang-sewa-samlo* and the dance *manglang* are performed by the follower of *Satyahangma* group. These song and dances have own distinctive importance in the Limbu culture which are gradually fading away.

## **5.5 Religion, Belief and Practices**

Religion plays a vital role in streamlining human behaviour. The Limbu religion does not believe in idol worship but have altars for collective worship known as ‘*Mangkhims*’. The oral tradition of Limbu religion dates back to 9<sup>th</sup> century in the Kingdom of Limbuwan as *Yumasamyo* tradition. This tradition was carried forward by Limbu saints and *phedangba* to perpetuate the philosophy and ideals of *Yumaism* to every Limbus (Jayaraman, 2017).

### **5.5.1 Yumaism**

*Yumaism* is a systematic approach of living of the native Limbus in the Eastern Himalayas. *Yumaism* is a belief on a matriarchy or feminine great Goddess *Tagera Ningwaphuma*. In *Yumaism*, the life span of an individual has been divided into 18 stages, right from the day of birth to death. In these different stages the religious priest (Shaman) guides and performs the rituals for better health and happiness (Subba, 2012). *Yumaism* as a religion is profess and propagated through the medium of *Mundhum*. The majority of the Limbus in the study areas professes *Yumaism* as their religion. The social structure, organization and culture of a Limbu are strongly driven by the aesthetic value of *Yumaism*.

### **5.5.2 Hinduism**

Hinduism is one of the dominant religion of different ethnic groups in Darjeeling Himalaya. Hinduism among Limbus dates back to 17<sup>th</sup> century when the process of assimilation and acculturation among Limbus were common due to the influence of Gorkha Hindu ruler. Still most of the households are professing both, Hinduism and *Yumaism*.

### **5.5.3 Christianity**

In the study areas very few households are professing Christianity. The elderly Limbus strongly condemned the conversion of Limbus into Christianity. Only two Limbu households were found professing Christianity whereas, in the other study area Bungkulung there was no Limbus who was professing Christianity. In recent years such family is socially boycotted from Limbu society because of being disrespect towards one's religion.

### **5.5.4 Satyhangma**

The Limbu association and indigenist writers are the main propagators of mobilizing *Yumaism*. But in order to trace the origin of *Satyhangma* religion one has to look

back to history. In 1931 Limbu leaders gathered and decided to change some of their basic elements of their religion and culture in order to reform and to confront the dominant Hindu religion (Gaenzle, 2011). One of the attendees in the meeting was *Lingden Phalgunanda* (1885 – 1949) the leader of the *Satyahangma* movement represented a kind of process of Sanskritization, where elements of high Hindu traditions were syncretized with Limbu deities and rituals (ibid). During the field survey, found couple of Limbu households in Teesta valley professing this religion because they do not believe in sacrificial rituals. But in case of Kalimpong and Bungkulung researcher hardly found the Limbu households professing *Satyahangma*.

**Table 5.9 Showing the Religion wise distribution of Households**

Study Areas	Religion				
	Yumaism	Hinduism	Satyahangma	Christianity	Total
Teesta Valley Tea Garden	81 (54%)	65 (43.3%)	3 (2%)	1 (0.7%)	150 (100%)
Dungra Khasmahal	79 (70.5%)	30 (26.8%)	-	3 (2.7%)	112 (100%)
Bungkulung	62 (58%)	40 (37.3%)	5 (4.7%)	-	107(100%)
Total	222 (60.2%)	135 (36.5%)	8 (2.2%)	4 (1.1%)	369(100%)

Source: Field Survey (2014 – 2017)

The given table shows the religious practices of Limbus clearly indicating the syncretism among them. The majority households profess *Yumaism* as the core of their religion. They are guided by the philosophy of *Yumaism* propagated through Limbu Shamans *Phedangba*. *Yumaism* believes in nature worshipping. Nearly 60.2 % of the total households of the study areas follow this religion. Hinduism is followed by (36.5%) of the Limbu households where they worship all the God, Goddess and Deities and follows Hindu calendar for following the festivals and rituals. Recently an off shoot religion of *Yumaism* is spreading in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas known as *Satyahangma* whose process and principles are way too different from *Yumaism*. *Satyahangma* believes in non violence and follows the Sanatan Dharma. In the study areas (2.2%) of the households are *Satyahangma* by

religion. So we can say it is the blend of Hinduism and *Yumaism*. Christianity has very less impact among the Limbus in study areas. Only (1.1%) of the Limbu households are professing this religion.



**Plate 5.5 : Showing the Yuma Mangheem ( Temple)**

### **5.5.5 Traditional Limbu Rituals**

The Limbus influenced by certain rituals and pujas. All of the rituals are done in order to please the God, to avoid the misfortunes and bless their field with good harvest. The main cultural and religious practices conducted by Limbu in study areas in relation to nature and household prosperity are as follows.

- a) **Uvauli puja** also known as *Yakwa Tamnang* is one of the important puja for the Limbu. It is done before the plantation of crops. The main purpose of the puja is to ask God to bless their crops and land and protect it from evils. It is carried out in the month of *Baisakh* (April-June).The different offerings made are rice, chicken, eggs and pork.
- b) **Udhauli puja** it is similar to *Uvauli puja*.The only difference is that it is celebrated after the harvest of the crops. It is known as *Chasok Tamnang or Nyayoungi*. It is also said that the New Year of Limbu begins this time onwards. The offerings are made to thank God for good harvest.

- c) **Saune Sankrati** is celebrated in the month of *Shawan* (July-August). They celebrate it as a day to take rest. They do not work in the field and they believe that if they enter in the field the crops might get destroyed.
- d) **Devi puja** forest worshipping is also very important for the Limbus. They have a forest deity known as '*Tampungma*' and it is also called Devi puja. They worship the whole of the forest. They make offering to please God. The offering is done asking the deity to help and protect their crops from the wild animals and also provide them with the strength and save from the misfortunes.
- e) **Mangenna** is an important ceremony among the Limbus. It means an act of worship to raise one's head, a ritual ceremony for a person feeling dejected and suffering in hardship in order to encourage him. It is also done to protect oneself from accident, disputes, envy and jealousy and to succeed in the desired attempts (Subba, 1999). It is performed every six months at the beginning of the winter and summer month or at least once a year.

#### **5.5.5.1 Manghoop Puja – A Case Study**

Tribes and their religious attributes are very closely associated with natural world. The linkage between the nature and supernatural powers is very significant. The Eastern Himalayan region is home for a number of ethnic tribal groups. Limbus, an ethnic tribes of Eastern Himalayas are widely scattered from East Nepal to Darjeeling –Sikkim Himalayas. The authentic tribal culture of Limbus is highly influenced by Hindu-Nepali culture and custom. The process of acculturation among them is clearly visible from their socio-economic background. The average percentage of Limbus living in an urban space has adopted the modern trends of westernization and has huge impact of globalization. The focus is more on the enhancement of education and to be economically sound to thrive in a modern materialistic society. When tribal people opts a modern fashioned lifestyle she/he deviates away from their ethnic tribal culture, rituals and gestures. The intangible tribal heritage seems to be slowly fading away. Is the impact of modernization, acculturation has pushed Limbus into oblivion?

Faith, belief, worshipping and customs are the prime importance to every person. The prayer is same but the mode of operation conducting the rituals differs widely. Every religious ritual, rites are done on account of pleasing God or for the peace, prosperity and happiness of the family. Every puja has its own significance, purpose and mode of offerings. The Limbu association of Kalimpong has organized “*Manghoop puja*” where all the sections of Limbus from the three sub-divisions of Darjeeling were called. The puja was held on the bank of Relli khola in Kalimpong where every facility was properly maintained by the youths of *Chumlung* association, Kalimpong. The important delegates were called along with some media person for the coverage. The glittering cultural dance *dhan nach (yalang dance)* was the main highlights performed by the youths. The gathering of people in the *Manghoop puja* was more than what I had expected. Limbus of every age group from children to old was present for this puja. The puja was conducted by *Phedangba ‘chilikcham’ (clan name)*. On the sides of the river bank I, saw small altars constructed with the help of bamboo where three rocks were laid vertically with flowers on its top. All together there were five altars among which one of them was the largest and was placed in middle of the shallow flowing water. The main offerings were eggs, rice grains and sacrificial domestic fowls.

One of the interesting things to notice was in the offering where individual were writing their names and location on the eggs. At around 10.30 am *Phedangba* started the puja. The very step was worshipping and pleasing of *Mishekh* who is regarded as the spirit of forests. On my enquiry to *phedangba*, worshipping of *Misekh* is done to refrain him from creating barriers for *Manghoop puja*. *Phedangba* slowly started to chant Mundhum and started shivering from where we could know that now he is in the state of trance. He is accompanied by his disciple who reads his signs and symbols as indication regarding what is needed to be done in puja. When he was chanting and uttering people were listening to him but for me it was something really hard to understand because of my inability to understand Limbu language. So therefore, I took a help from an old man for better understanding of the whole phenomenon.

When *phedangba* was done by pleasing *Misekh* he asked the people to break the eggs on a big silver bowl. The offered eggs were used for forecasting the horoscope. People anxiously assembled around the altar to know their horoscope. The person who was engaged in this had to look on the yolk. If the spot would be seen on the yolk he says “*Ramro chaina*” and without spot he says “*Ramro Cha*” spotted egg yolk is the symptom of bad omen whereas without a spot was a good sign. Whosever egg was seen with the spot, he consulted to *phedangba* in order to overcome from it.

After *Misekh*, *Phedangba* moved to next altar of *Yuma*. Every household has *Yuma* altar to worship her. *Phedangba* started with the puja by igniting the *diyo* and special incense collected from Sal tree. *Phedangba* asked for prosperity for whole limbus to *Yuma* and sacrifice two pairs of chickens. The way of sacrifice is by hitting the fowl on its back and offers its blood to *Yuma* which comes out from its beak. Later on the whole dressed chicken was offered to *Yuma* which is called “*pakuwa*”.

After *Yuma*, *Phedangba* moves ahead for *Khola* puja for two main rivers of Darjeeling Himalaya Teesta River and Relli River. Firstly three *diyos* were lite up and *phedangba* held a flower in his hand and took permission from river saying “we all assembled here to seek blessing from you and conducting *Manghoop* so please bestowed us with power and good fortune”. In my observation I found *phedangba* uttering Nepali language. When I asked what is the reason he said he uses *parbate* because river originates from Himalaya (*parbat*) and belongs to everyone. Therefore, he is using common Himalayan language. After *khola puja* he sacrificed two pairs of chickens by *Khukuri* and offered their heads to *khola*.

*Tumphungma* (Forest Deity): Forests are sacred to Limbus. They believe the forest is benevolent because it is helpful in many ways. Therefore, *Tumphungma* or forest worshipping is very significant. *Tumphungma* puja starts with sprinkle of water to a deity by *lain* (small rolled banana leaf) in order to wake her for rituals. *Phedangba* chants *Mundhum* and asked to make sacrifice of three chickens. The altar of

*Tumphungma* comprises of three vertical laid stones because *Tumphungma* are three sisters. The chickens are sacrificed for pleasing *Misekh*, *Khola* and *Tumphungma*.

In Limbu language *Manghoop* means curse, sin given by ancestors or done by our deeds. The main altar was constructed in middle of the river. With the chanting of *Mundhum* by *phedangba*, people assembled on the bank of river from northern side. They hold *acheta* and throws three times in the river. The throwing of *acheta* in the river is to wash away all yours sin and wrong deeds. Duck is the main sacrificial bird for the *Manghoop* altar. The blood is sprinkled all over the altar. The eggs used for forecasting the horoscope is cooked and served to everyone as *prasad*.

The main purpose of *Manghoop* was to revive the traditional religious ritual of Limbus. Limbu who are animist has been faded away from their intangible cultural heritage. The culture globalization has moulded them into a heterogeneous society drifting them to be aloof from traditions, customs and culture. Therefore, in the wake of losing ethnicity the Limbu association and Tummyahang are organizing certain programme to revive Limbu traditions and Cultural Identity.

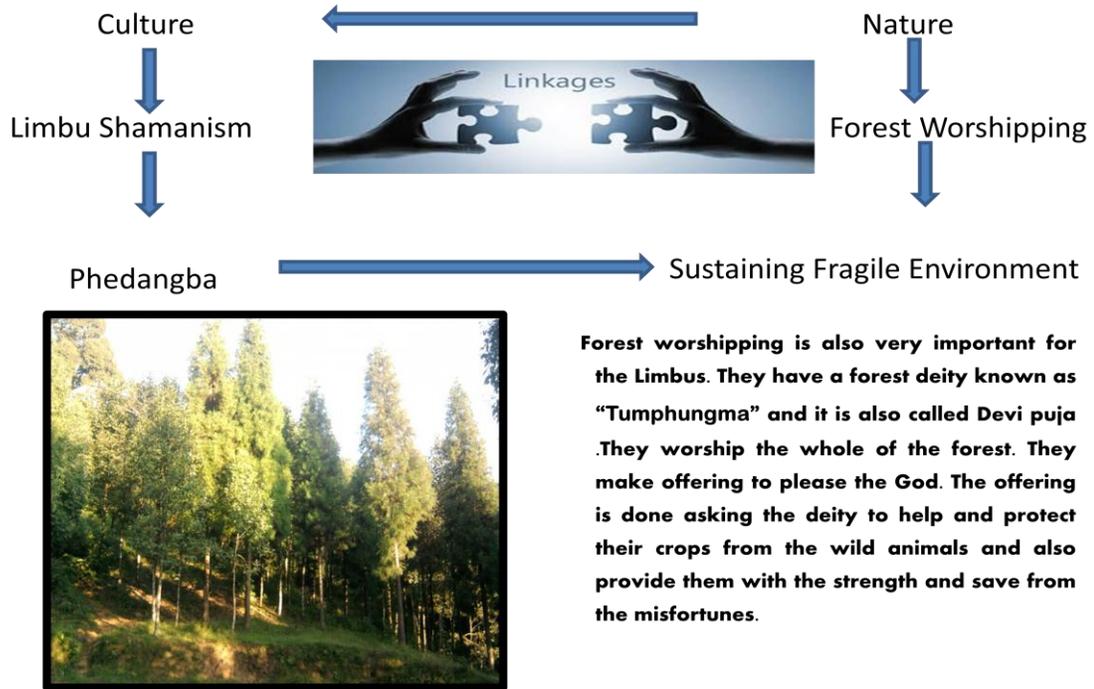


Plate 5.6 : Showing the glimpses of Manghoop Puja at the bank of river Relli

### 5.5.5.2 Limbu Shaman and their Importance

In the study area shamans are mostly the male members who are possessed with healing power of deities. In case of their absence, an elderly and knowledgeable person profoundly knowing *Mundhum* can also do the ceremonies. In Limbu Shamanic structure female shamans are also present who are believed to possess household deity *Yumasam*. They are very few in number and mostly do minor rituals like *Jhar-phook*. There are nine types of *phedangbas* namely *Muhikkum ongshi*, *Phejiri phedangba*, *Sawara yetchnammak samba*, *Sibhak yemi yeba*, *Sibhak yemi yema*, *Yuma sam*, *Sida samba*, *Sam mundhum* and *Yeb mundhum* (Subba, 2012) out of these *phedangbas*, the 1<sup>st</sup> five *phedangbas* are incarnate shaman. The Limbus of the Eastern Nepal recognizes five different kinds of shamans namely *Yeba*, *Yema*, *Samba*, *Phedangma* and *Mangba* (Pappadis, 2001). The *Phedangba* conducts the religious (*Kul*, *pitri*), rituals etc. *Yeba* and *Yema* conduct rites and rituals to do away the souls of unnatural deaths, accident and suicides. *Phedangba* performs the religious ceremony like *Kul- Pitri puja*, religious rites, cults the most important one is the diagnosis and treatment of illness (*Jhaar Phook*). Limbu shamans cure patients in a number of ways. The techniques they use are related to different situations of illness and misfortune.

The most frequent technique used for minor aches and pains is rice divination. A second form of divination, used in cases of extreme illness, requires the shaman to take articles of clothing from the patient and place them at an altar erected for *Yumasam*. The shaman chants the *Mundhum* and goes into a trance where he learns the nature of the illness by divination in the presence of the clothes and seeks help from his tutelary spirit. Limbu shamans mainly *Phedangba* are called upon to officiate at a number of household rituals and life cycle ceremonies (Gulia, 2000). *Yeba* and *Yema* is a specialist in dealing the spirit of people who have died by violence. *Sam Mundhum* and *Yeb Mundhum* are Limbu herbalist and practices ethno-medicine (*Jaribooti*) for curing diseases (Subba, 2012).



*“Phedangba even take credit of being an Environmentalist”*

**Figure 5.6 explaining the relationship between the Nature and *Phedangba***

The ideology of Limbu shamanism is perpetuated from the blessing of Nature deities. They with their divine power bestowed the *Phedangba* the power of healing. The nature entities are pristine and sacred to phedangba in their realms of shamanism. Therefore, they always associate the essence of nature aroma in their ritualistic ceremonies. Their knowledge of ethno medicine and sacred grooves is the outcome of nature bliss. The nature and *Phedangba* culture is so deeply fused that it helps in restoring the charm of nature in its fullest.

**5.5.5.2.1 Case Study of Becoming a Limbu Shaman**

This case study illustrates the emergence of a shaman in a contemporary context. It concerns a man, born in Bijanbari (*nor busty, surman dara*) but living and settled in Teesta valley, who experienced a vocation of shamanic traditions. We will discuss this case study from two main perspectives:

1. His (shaman's) experience itself, a phenomenological view
2. His (shaman's) experience as viewed by a researcher

### **Phenomenological view**

The following account of Limbu *Phejari Phedangba* Jas Hang Limbu is interviewed, with his permission, for an interview conducted by the researcher. He was born (1954) in a small hamlet village of Nor Busty in Bijanbari. Owing to his poor economic condition he is illiterate. He is well known shaman in the valley and practices this art of shamanism from many generations. According to him one becomes a shaman as a result of possession of a deity. The most frequent possession seems to involve *Yumasam* (Gulia, 2000). At first possession is controlled over and the victim seeks a cure by consulting a shaman, who will attempt to pacify the deity with offerings. Simple possession by a deity is not only sign that one is to become a shaman. The signs and symbol to become a *Phedangba* is believed to be hereditary and start to indicate once he is conceived in the mother womb. Once the child reaches the age of 3 years the symptoms become more prominent. Jas Hang Limbu was possessed (*Rojnu*) at the age of 7 years. He said when he was chosen by deity he started to cry, had a sensational feeling, and was in a state of trance with shivers. Later on his parents diagnoses that it was an indication of *phedangba* reincarnation. Out of seven brothers his elder brother Kumar Subba is also a shaman. The tradition of becoming a shaman is followed by generation to generation in his family genealogy. When he attends the age of 12 years his body starts to shivers with trance of unconsciousness. He started to know the effect of spirits in the village before it happens. He was guided by his Guru named Karbari Mangmu, a *Phedangba* from Bijanbari. He learned the skill from his *Guru's* in dream and the learning process was not fixed some may takes 3 months to 3 years depending on the situation. After becoming a *phedangba* few things should be highly restricted the parents should avoid non-vegetarian food and alcohol in the initial stage of possession and mainly the pollution period (*marauu, sutak*). Now he is himself a *Guru* teaching art of shamanism to his apprentice and entrusted them with the confidence that is needed in

dealing with supernatural powers. The *Guru* also teaches the apprentice the causes of illness, the way to diagnose, divination and the means of curing. In his conversation he mentioned the name of his apprentice Sukdeo Limbu from Singla Tea Estates who was possessed by *Yumasam* at the age of 40 years. Sukdeo in his dream learn about the place of his residence in Teesta valley and came to meet him with *Acheta* (*offerings*) when Jas Hang touched the *Acheta* the positive vibes of *Yumasam* was felt and he accepted Sukdeo as his apprentice. Still now Jas Hang acquire knowledge from his Gurus in dream and especially during *Purne, Panchami, Auusi and Eka dasi* his body feels much spiritual vibration from *Yumasam*.

In my opinion I have observed the Limbu shamans and shamanism from historical and traditional, cultural point of view and have tried to relate it with the contemporary situation. Origin of shaman and shamanism practices among Limbus date back to ancient time in the form of Ancestor worship-cum-shamanism. When the nomadic ancestors of folk Limbu society slowly settled and localized at some region of Eastern Himalayas, Limbus shamanism gradually flourished in the Himalayan areas (Subba, 2013). Limbus of far flung rural areas of Darjeeling Himalaya strongly believes in *Phedangba*. The folk Limbu society cannot sustain culturally in absence of *Phedangba*. Therefore, Shaman arise where needs arise (Heinz, 1991) is completely applicable in the study area. The Limbu shaman has a huge demand because of the fading cultural heritage. Every Limbus wants to perform their religious and cultural rituals by shaman in order to maintain their cultural aspects, traditional values and beliefs followed by their forefathers from ages. Thus, the shaman occupies a central position with varied role fused altogether. Jas Hang (Limbu shaman) vocational into the shamanic realm can be viewed from mythological and religious ground. According to him the invocation of shaman is hereditary and this family is believed to be chosen by a deity. Therefore, they carry this legacy of becoming a shaman from generation to generation.



**Plate 5.7 : Showing the Limbu Shaman ( *Phedangba* )**

### **5.6 Folklore, Folktales and Taboos**

Limbus has maintained their individuality as an indigenous group amongst many prevailing factors. Their language, religion, history, practices and folklore are unique in themselves. However, without a written culture, and the strong influence of other more prominent ethnic groups in Darjeeling, the Limbu culture is in need of preservation. The entire myth of creation exists in the *Mundhum*, which is like a holy book. The entire *Mundhum* would take three days and night to recite, and is done during pujas, specifically the sacrifice of a animal and offering of a local brewery (*Rakshi*). It is recited by a Limbu priests *Phedangba*, *Samba* and *Yeba*. The *Mundhum* is recited orally to Limbus as a child, and is passed on through generations in this way.

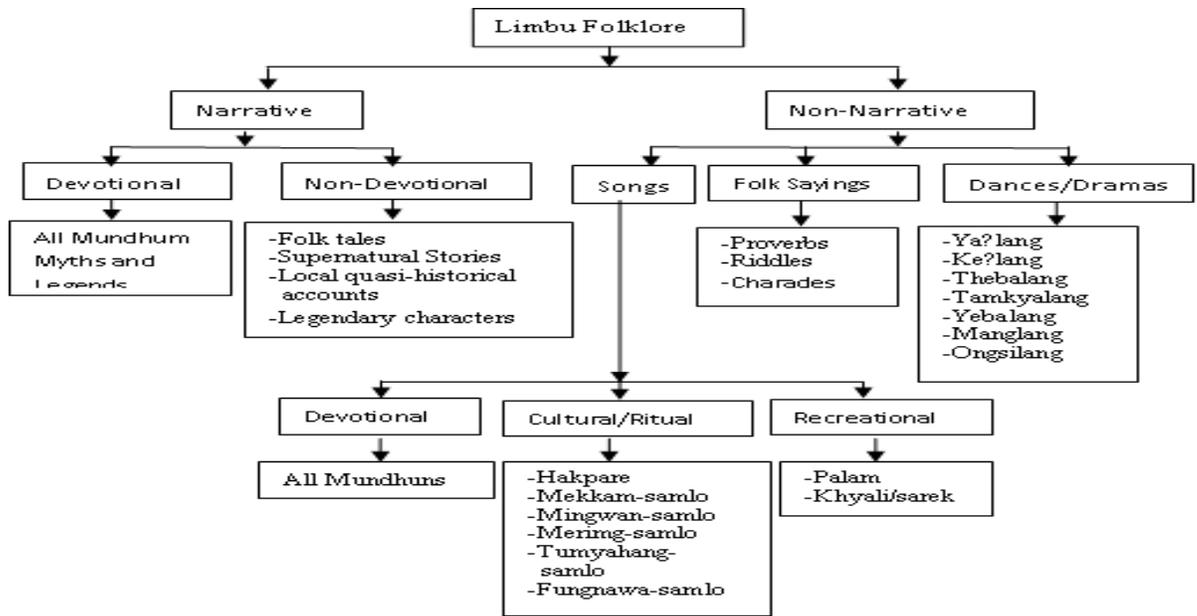


Figure 5.7 Showing the classification of Limbu Folklore.

(Adapted from Limbu,R. K., 2010)

### 5.6.1 Creation of Nature

The Limbu mythology and cosmology believed that at the beginning there was no life in the earth. There was only darkness everywhere with spirits. *Tagera Ningwaphuma*, the God of knowledge and wisdom first created *Porokmi Yambhami*, the God of creation to fulfill the world with beautiful things. *Porokmi Yambhami* first created a spider whose web on water was used by *Tagera Ningwaphuma* for mediate on how to create a life. From her breath, clouds were formed, and from her movement air of was made. As she was mediating, her sweat created more little ponds of water. Then slowly nature started to bloom with its beautiful essence. “The first fish called *Lengya* was created to hold the sea, and the first bird called *Sunjukema* was created to hold the sky. Cows were created for the land, and from their saliva, snakes were formed. Soon all other animals were made. As the cows were drinking the water, their whipping tails flicked specks of water up to the sky. The specks of water landed, and as they stuck in the sky, they became stars. And this is how the earth, sky, and stars were created” (Pappadis, 2001).

### **5.6.2 Creation of Human Beings**

Everything was created except human beings. One day, *Porokmi Yambhami* gathered the most precious diamonds and valuable stones and molded the figure of human being. When a beautiful shining figure was made he tried to speak to it. But it could not speak, because it had no voice, no spirit. Later on he tried with gold and copper but the result was same. But still he was very much determined and tired again to carved out human figure. This time he made use of ashes, dung mixed with soil and water from stone holes. Bamboo shoots were used for feet, sugarcane used for hands, *amlisiyo* plant used for lips and tongue, quartz stone for teeth, and *ritha* fruits for eyes. A gust of wind came and blew breath into the figure. Suddenly the human figure spoke out, and it had a loud voice, and a soul. The human being was finally created out of the Earth. Therefore Limbus designate themselves as *Lungbongba Khambongbasa* meaning the lineage emerged from the rock and the soil. Yuma, the mother Earth is their supreme deity. Since humans were made from ashes and dung, we have to die. If the human had been created from diamonds or gold, he would have been immortal (ibid).

### **5.6.3 Limbu Folktales and its Importance**

Oral tradition of Limbus is rich in folktales. Most of the folktales are related to Mundhum tradition, customs, origin and migration of Limbus. There are many stories in the form of unwritten memories related to certain class of Limbus. Folktales form an important part of oral history, which not only provide a cohesive force to the community at large, but also reflects the process of ethnicity formation.

Once upon a time a lady was wandering into the woods in search of food. Soon she felt so thirsty and drank water filled in the stone. She continued to walk through the forest still hungry and thirsty. Then she came upon a log filled with water. She again drank that water to quench her thirst. After a couple of days she found herself to be pregnant. She figured out the water that she drank from a stone was a urine of tiger and water of the log was urine of man. The lady was so surprised that she had become

pregnant by both a man and animal. After sometime she gave a birth to twin brothers, one was a tiger and the one was a man. As they grew up, they began to hunt together in the jungle. The tiger animal instinct, kept trying to think of ways to eat his brother. The man always thought a good feeling towards his brother. This situation really worried the mother because she loves both the sons and loss of anyone of them would give her so much pain.

One day tiger told her that he would kill his brother and ate him up. On that day mother planted two plants *babari* and *sekhmari* and said among these two flowers if *babari* plant dies she think her son is dead and if *sekhmari* plant dies the tiger is killed. She left everything on destiny. The man and tiger met in jungle but man already knew his brother intention so he climbed up a *Simal* tree for protection. He sat on the ninth branch. The tiger climbed up the same tree and sat on the eighth branch. The man only had one arrow left. So he told the tiger, “I will let you eat me if you close your eyes and open your mouth”. The tiger agreed and shut his eyes and opened his mouth as wide as he could eat his brother. The man shot his arrow straight into the tiger’s mouth, and the tiger fell from the *Simal* tree along its branches. Back in home *sekhmari* plant dies and the mother understood that tiger is killed. The man remained for days in the tree in order to confirm whether the tiger was dead or not. When he saw the flies around the carcass of the tiger he got his confirmation and came down from the tree. He de-skinned the tiger and saw a hollow trunk of *Khamari* tree by which he made a Limbu drum called *Chyabroong*. Then the mother and son did a *Kelang*, a tiger style dance, in honour of the tiger strength. Since, then from that time *sekhmari* plant flower is used in Limbu funeral as sign of respect and remembrance by loved ones.

#### **5.6.3.1 Myanglung (Sacred Landscapes)**

The myth of Myanglung is about a stone which is worshipped by people till now because of its religious significance. The story is like this a landlord working in his fields noticed a black cat following him. Suddenly, the cat jumped in front of the

landlord and transformed into a stone. He was so surprised and shocked and decided to worship the stone seeking it as a blessing of good spirit. So he brought the stone in *Myanglung* bazaar (a place in *Terathum*, Eastern Nepal) and made a temple and kept it there along with the Pipal tree.

One day, a hungry porter from highland collected three stones including the stone of temple to make a fire place to cook his food. But the one stone was shaking which made him angry so he took his *Khukuri* (sharp edged knife) and tried to cut the stone. The stone began to bleed and changed into black cat. He thought it was an ordinary cat but to his surprise it changed into a giant lion and killed him. After killing the porter, the angry lion scratched the stone with its claw and returned back to the temple and disappeared. *Myanglung* in Limbu language means cat stone. *Myang* means cat and *lung* means stone. This stone now also has a giant scratch in it looking like a lion's claw marks. The stone is now worshipped and the temple is called *Singha Bahini*. Limbu people offer pujas to this stone for protection. Even today in some Limbu household stone is kept in front of the house and worshipped to keep the house secure and happy from evil spirit and for the protection of the family members (Pappadis, 2001)

#### **5.6.4 Folk Belief and Taboo**

Limbu refer to the universe as *Choit lungma*, which means heart of nature. They believe that God resides in the earth's natural elements. All of nature is considered highly spiritual. Limbu do not have icons or images of God, altars, or traditional temples. They worship the earth's natural element as the closet place for God. Sun and Fire are thought to be the two main residing places for *Yuma Sammang*, the good spirit, as well as *Tamphungna Sammang* God of the forest and living things and is considered to protect it (Pappadis, 2001).

Limbu believe the voices and sounds of different animals and birds as omens of good or bad events. A few names of animals and birds and belief associated with them are outline below.

1. *Phattimba* (Owl) regarded as a horse of jungle Goddess. It forecasts droughts or famine in the coming year.
2. *Selugwa* (Cuckoo) forecasts the monsoon.
3. *Kakwa* (Crow) different meanings such as a good/bad news or arrival of guests are associated with it.

### **Exchanging of Flower**

In Limbu community exchanging of flower among brother, sister and cousin in rituals are not permissible. According to orthodox Limbus flower represents symbol for love and affection to dear ones and mode of expression to someone whom we love very much. In Mundhum and in many other folk beliefs Limbus exchanging flower with same blood and clan is a taboo.

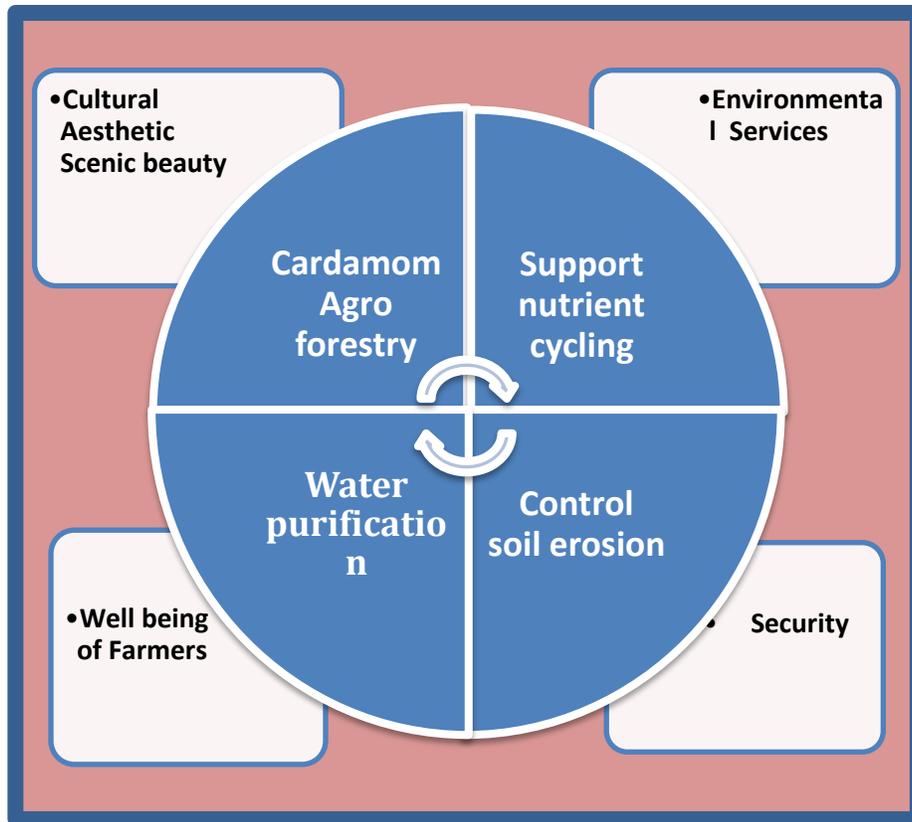
## **5.7 Indigenous Wisdom among Limbus**

### **5.7.1 Indigenous Knowledge of Farming Systems and its Management**

The Limbu farming system is based upon the maintenance of several major categories of land that can be distinguished by their use, location and the pattern of ownership. The major types of farming done by Limbus in the study area are namely Bari (*crop field*), *Suntala Bari* (orchard farming) and *Allaichi Bari* (cardamom agro forestry). Bari are owned by individual families and tend to be established close to the village, often at the undulating terrain which is deeply ploughed and manure, cut into terraces in order to check the soil erosion. Families divide their holding into plots among which cultivation is done by growing different vegetables, cereals, pulses and cash crops. Unlike Bari and orchard farming Limbus practice cardamom agro forestry.



**Plate 5.8 : Showing the Cardamom Plantation and Farmer responding to queries**



**Figure 5.8: Showing the advantages of Cardamom Agro forestry**

This type of farming offers multiple alternatives and opportunities to improve farm production and income. It also provides productive and protective function to the ecosystem which combines the best attributes of forestry and agriculture. Large cardamom is a perennial cash crop grown traditionally beneath the natural forest tree cover on marginal lands and slopes. This system shows how an ecological and economical traditional farming practice has evolved indigenously as the main agro forestry practice in the region.

### **5.7.2 Indigenous Knowledge of Water Resource Management**

Water shade is also one of the traditional systems used by Limbus which helps in the conservation of forest as well as keeping the source of water clean. Water shed forest harbor the headwaters of major water sources and are denoted as scared. They do not throw litter around the water shade. If they do not obey bad things may occur to them. This tradition or belief preserves the forest as well as helps keeping the source clean.

Trees and Banana are grown along the water source area which acts as buffer to improve the quality of water and natural springs. Parallel water diversion from the same stream at different elevation along the slope is a popular method of water delivery in the study areas with help of bamboo and polythene pipes.

### **5.7.3 Limbu Indigenous Food and Its Importance**

Fermentation is one of the oldest and most economical methods for producing and preserving foods done by Limbus and other ethnic groups of Darjeeling Himalaya from time immemorial. In addition to preservation, fermented foods also added the benefits of enhancing flavor, increased digestibility and pharmacological values. Each fermented food is associated with unique group of micro flora which increases the level of protein, vitamins, essential amino acids and fatty acids (Tamang K. J., 2009).

*Kinema* is one of the important components of the diverse food culture of the ethnic communities in the Eastern Himalayan region of Nepal, the Darjeeling and Sikkim in India. The common word *Kinema* is derived from “*Kinambaa*” of the Limbu dialect. Regarding socio- economic factor *Kinema* production is an income generator for some Limbu families. It is sold in all local periodical markets called “*Haat*” in the study area and the money earned from selling it is used for domestic purposes. *Kinema* is the cheapest source of plant protein and cheaper than dairy products. It contains per 100 grams dry matter, 48 grams of protein, 17 grams of fat, 28 grams of carbohydrate and 478 kilocalories (Tamang J. , 2000)

### **5.7.4 Indigenous Knowledge of Limbus in Medicinal Plants:**

Plants have always been an inevitable part of the life and culture of the Limbu people. Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya uses many plants in their day to day life. The traditional herbal and folk medicine used by Limbu people is not documented since it is passed down from one generation to another orally. These Herbal medicine used by them has potential to treat diseases effectively. These medicinal herbs are also used in day to day life of other ethnic communities living in the hilly terrain of Darjeeling Himalaya. This system of Folk and Traditional medicine has gained its importance

due its high potential in curing various diseases with less side effect as compared with synthetic drugs in recent times. During the study, an attempt has been made to document the indigenous Traditional Knowledge of Limbus about various uses of plants in their daily life. The field survey has revealed the information about eleven species. These are enumerated below

**Table 5.10 Showing the Medical Plants and its uses by Limbus of Study Areas**

S.No	Local Name	Limbu Name	Botanical Name	Uses
1	Abhijaalo	Wana	Drymaria diandra	Tonsillitis
2	Bojho	Sedakpa	Acorus calamus	Scabies
3	Chiraito	Sunghingba	Serrate Chirayita	Fever
4	Dubo	Sambok	Cynodon dactylon	Plant juice is useful for controlling diabetes
5	Ghiu kumari	Lupse	Aloe vera	Burns
6	Hadchur	Khewalangba	Viscum album	Paste applied on fracture
7	Phachyang	Kherabe	Zingibar Cassumunar	Stomachache & Headache
8	Padina	Padena	Mentha arvensis	Paste is applied on cut & appetizer
9	Sisnu	Sikwa	Urtica Dioica	Dog bite and High blood pressure
10	Titepati	Namyoba	Artemisia indica	Nose bleeding
11	Alainchi	Arengi	Amomum Sobulatum	Seed and root rhizome paste applied against skin burn

Source: Field Survey 2013-15

## 5.8 Findings

The society and culture of Limbus is deeply rooted with social norms. The village habitat and customs has channelized their interpersonal relationships. The social structure and organization has distinctive characteristics. They have both the traits of Kirati and local traditions. The Limbu society of Darjeeling Himalaya is patriarchal in nature. The social structure of the Limbus is well knitted with clan groups and family relations. The social structure of Limbus encompasses with kinship behaviour,

economic and religious attributes. They have three different types of kinship and family relations based on consanguinity, affinity and descent.

The complex and unique structure of clan and kinship is based on *Thum*, *Thar*, *Bangsa*, *Heem* and *Pariwar*. The norms and customs of clan and kinship are strictly followed. Marriage among the same clan group is highly prohibited. In Limbu society family occupies an important place. The male member is the head of the family in case of his absence female is treated as the head. There is a cordial relationship among the family members. The three types of family were found in the study areas namely joint, nuclear and single family. The nuclear family constituted the major proportion of the Limbu society. The relations among the family are informal in nature. The family size varies from single to family members of more than ten people.

The cultural diversity of a Limbu habitat is distinctly reflected in their pattern, types and settlements. Limbus has their houses in a semi - compact settlement i.e. they stay together within their groups. A cluster of 10 to 20 houses is quite common in each settlement. The household structures of Limbus are of two types, the traditional and modern houses. Traditional houses were found in the interior core of the villages where farming is the main economic activities. These houses are made up of locally available resources. The traditional houses are made up of stone and bamboo latticed wall which are plastered with the cow dung and mud. It has thatched roof slopping towards two sides. The traditional house had a separate hearth. The Modern households were of good designs and conditions. The socially well off Limbus are living in this type of houses.

The culture and tradition of the Limbus has close relationship with the nature. The Limbus follows animism and shamanism based on a body of oral traditions *Mundhum*. These oral traditions are mainly the source of understanding the various floras, fauna, clans, routes of migration, and procedures of conducting rituals. The Limbu religion may be defined as an elementary form of Shamanistic animism in

which the *Bijua* and *Phedangba* play the part of Shaman, the former operating of the demons and latter having for his department the God (Sagant, 1996).

The Limbus has distinct religious rituals from life to death. The social practices, social organization has very interesting characteristics. They follow their own customs regarding birth, death, and marriage conducted by *Phedangba*. The important rituals are *Sappok chomen* (ritual before birth) for the good health of baby, *Yangdang Phongma* (naming of child) *Mangenna* (warding off evil influence). Marriage is one of the important components in the culture dynamics. In the past, marriages were arranged by the families. Neither the bride nor the groom had much to say about the marriage payments or ceremonies. Modern times have changed this, today; both parties have an opportunity to make decisions about the wedding. There are three types of marriages: *Jari*, *Mangni* (arrangement), and *Chori* (elopement). In the case of *Jari* (adultery) compensation must be paid to the previous husband. Funeral rituals differ in its ritual as per the way the particular person has died. According to Limbu tradition, dead bodies are buried. The pollution period of mourning death for male is four days and three days for females. A resting platform *Chauthara* is built and trees are planted within it along the road in the name of dead person.

The basic dress of the Limbus in the study area is no more traditional but their outfit is modern and fashionable. They normally wear their traditional attire during the religious and cultural ceremonies. *Yalang* and *Kelang* are cultural dance of Limbus. The major festivals celebrated by the Limbus are *Balihang Tongnam* and *Chaitey dashain*, *Ubhauri* and *Udhauri* along with Hindu festivals like *Dussehra*, *Diwali* and *Magey sakranti*. The material culture of Limbus is similar to that of Rai community in the study areas. As they live under the similar ecological condition and belong to same Kirati stock of the Darjeeling Himalayas. Lastly, with the changing, of time, Limbu society is also transforming in its every aspect of rites and rituals. Hindu domination in one hand and modernization on the other side has played the central role for their social, economical, educational, cultural changes.

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## ROLE AND STATUS OF LIMBU WOMEN

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### 6.1 Introduction

Women are the central subject of study throughout ages. Their social status, aspirations and desires have always become the topic of discussion throughout the history of mankind (Majumdar, 2004). The changing status and position of a woman in different period have greatly influenced her social background. Geographically, men and women share the same space. Yet they are not treated equally in this world. There still exist inequality in women education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities in the political, economic, social and cultural field. Everywhere in the world, women are accorded a lower status than men (Das, 2013).

One of the least researched themes is the issue of Himalayan women. Despite having a prominent role in hilly communities, women still search for their history. In Darjeeling Himalayan region women occupy different positions in the social structure as they pass through the different phases of their life cycle this is 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) half of them are illiterate (iii) lack of infrastructure development in rural areas has 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. This Chapter studies the status and the different roles played by the Limbu women in the society.

## **6.2 Some Concepts and Approaches**

### **i. Gender**

Gender is a more popular term and a more scientific concept for examining the status of women. Gender is a socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women in a given culture and the societal structure that support them. It is learned behavior, which is dynamic in nature and changes over time. Gender is a concept which deals with the roles and relations between men and women determined by social, political and economic context, not biologically (Mondal, 2004).

### **ii. Women's Empowerment**

Empowerment is the process of generating and building capabilities to exercise control over one's own life. Women empowerment is a model of gender analysis that traces increasing equality of women by empowering them through five phases: welfare, access, participation and control (Mondal, 2004).

### **iii. Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is a concept which means the authority of the father over everything. Patriarchy is perpetuated through a process of institutionalization of social, cultural and religious practices, as well as legitimized through political, legal and economic system of the society. It leads women to internalize as well as to perpetuate patriarchal ways of thinking, both in values and in behavior (Mondal, 2004).

### **iv. Status and Role**

Most people associate status with the prestige of a person's lifestyle, education, or vocation. According to sociologists, status describes the position, a person occupies in a particular setting. We all occupy several status and play the role that may be associated with them. A role is the set of norms, values, behaviors, and personality characteristics attached to a status. Role is a set of expectation for appropriate behaviour associated with a specific status or position in a social system (Vivelo, 1978 & Mondal, 2004).

### **v. Structure – Functional Approach**

It is an etic approach which seeks to understand the inter relations between the women status and the nature of social system. It seeks for the cultural attributes of

women which is indispensable for societal upliftment. It challenges the position of women as a subordinate and advocates the importance of their role and attributes towards the social system. Thereby, peacefully try to maintain division of labour between men and women for the smooth functioning of social and cultural set up.

**vi. Marxist Approach**

This approach helps us to understand how the modes of production determine the lives of women in the household as well as in the society. It shows how the position of women could be properly analyzed on the basis of production and class structure of the society. It highlights the social oppression of women in the society. It advocates women regarding their social justice and awakes them for capitalist domination in the class system. Marxist class frame work is used for analyzing the women oppression and the politics of sexual antagonism within the society (Mondal, 2004).

**vii. Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development enhances the balance between natural resources and biodiversity. It ensures the preservation of culture and moral values of local people. It is economically efficient, socially acceptable and contributes to improvement in the quality of life of the people. Sustainable development leads to sustain livelihood with optimum allocation needs of the people and thereby ensuring the needs of the future generations.

### **6.3 Eastern Himalayan Women at a Glance**

The Eastern Himalayan region presents the unique mosaic of diverse cultural set up. Each community has different social norms where the position of a male and female is ascertained. Himalayan women share a relatively egalitarian relationship with their male counterparts. The women have socially established themselves in this economically marginalized and geographically challenged region.

In Himalayan societies there are variations among communities with respect to the women social position. Some societies, especially the ethnic groups of animist or Buddhist traditions are favourable towards women. The women have a good influential role in the social and economic activities of the family, even though, some

of the ethnic group practice polyandry. Their conditions are better than upper caste Hindu women who face discrimination on the basis of patriarchy and sexual purity. They have well defined roles and positions which are not always favourable to them.

The Himalayan women also certainly suffer from deprivation or exploitation. First, they work for relatively long hours. They are primarily responsible for the collection of fire wood, water and fodder, and thus face great difficulty in the mountain slopes, with harsh climatic condition. As a result, the economic conditions of these women are further degraded, resulting in a much heavier workload.

### **6.3.1 Traditional and Modern Limbu Women**

Limbu women dressed up in traditional attire looks very elegant. The older limbu women in the studied villages were dressed traditionally. They wore *sim* (which is 7 yards long material wrapped in a skirt), a *cholo*, a blouse made of locally hand-woven material of *dhaka*. *Phae* (a long cloth) wrapped around the waist. They always covered their heads with *thakhumya* (a large scarf). They wore a pair of *Nesse* (large flat gold earrings designed), a gold *Mundri* as a nose ring, and *dhungri*, a nose ring. They also use different kinds of ornaments on different occasions, ceremonies and festivals. Some of these ornaments *Phangse* ,(a necklace of nine gold or strings that are strung with glass beads), *Labaphung* (an ornament of gold crescent brooch worn on head), or *Namloi Yogakpa* (a large silver necklace) or *sisiphung nekkhophung* (flower-shaped gold earring stud), *reji* (coin necklace made from old silver coins) and *Swagep* (a gold ring on fingers). Traditional Limbu women like to dance *Yalang* (paddy dance) and *Kelang* (traditional drum dance ) on formal occasions such as weddings and religious ceremonies.



**Plate 6.1: Showing the Traditional Limbu women**

### **Modern Limbu Women**

Modern Limbu society, especially in urban areas, has evolved from the rural society of centuries. Modern society has brought many changes. They do not wear traditional attire or heavy jewellery. They wear different kinds of modern outfit. Previously, Limbu women were usually involved in housekeeping, cooking and parenting. But now, they have wide range of work outside home. Most of them are educated and hold a good position in different work sector. They are building their career outside their houses. Limbu women today, whose mothers and grandmothers may be illiterate or barely literate, could go to college or get specialized training for skilled jobs.

### **6.3.2 Position of Women from Limbu Religious Point of View**

The *Mundhum* refers to the Limbu ritual narrative texts, both in oral and written form, consisting of sacred narratives, legends, folktales, prehistoric accounts, and morals. *Mundhum* always placed the position of women as the creator. Limbu women hold a significant place in religious affairs of daily life. The supreme Limbu Goddess *Yuma* is regarded as the initiator of whole human being. *Yuma* meaning grandmother is regarded as mother of whole universe. Every Limbus worships her, for peace and prosperity of the family. It is believed that Goddess *Tagera Ningwaphuma* is another image of *Yuma* with countless supernatural power and divinity. So in all religious ceremonies the Limbus worships *Yuma*, first of all to get power and permission to

celebrate rituals. Limbus practices many of their own rituals. They believe that lineage is not transmitted paternally. Rather, a woman inherits her mother Gods. According to an informant, it is believed that when a woman marry and starts living with her husband, she brings with her the deities that will then be recognized as the household deities.

#### **6.4 Status of Limbu Women in the Study Areas**

In Limbu society women signifies an honour and respect to her family. The family structure is well knitted by her compassion and tolerant quality. Being in the subordinate position, she maintains herself to cope with every change. The rigid and orthodox norms have restricted to exercise her power and judgement in the daily affairs of village life. The status of Limbu women will be examined from different perspectives of social and cultural life.



**Plate 6.2 Showing the Female Respondents of the Study Areas**

**Table 6.1 Showing the Demographic and Socio – Economic Attributes of Limbu Women of the Study Areas**

S.No	Characteristics	Average interns of Number and Percentage		
		Teesta valley	Dungra	Bungkulung
1	Female Population in Study areas	363 (51.3%)	254(51.2%)	206 (46.7%)
2	Sex Ratio	1052.17	1049.59	876.59
3	Average family size	6	6	6
4	Economic Status			
	Earner	90	30	15
	Dependent	218	169	177
	Earning Dependent	55	55	13
5	Mean Age at Marriage	17	18	18
6	Percentage of Polygamy	0.7%	2.1%	1.4%
7	Percentage of Divorced women	0.2%	1.2%	-
8	Percentage of widow	4%	4.7%	4.1%
9	Average number of Children	3-5	3	3
10	Female Educational Studies			
	Illiterate	84 (23.5%)	28 (11.4%)	27 (13.4%)
	Simple Literate	51 (14.2%)	29 (11.8%)	54 (26.9%)
	Primary Education	51(1%)	(11.8%)	31 (15.4%)
	Secondary Education	35 (9.8%)	49 (20%)	19 (9.5%)
	Higher Secondary	30 (8.4%)	21 (8.5%)	5 (2.5%)
	Graduates	26 (7.3%)	30 (12.2%)	10 (5%)
	Students	81 (22, 6%)	60 (24.4%)	55 (27.3)

Source: Field Survey (2014 – 2017)

Based on the empirical facts noted in the foregoing table 6.1, the position of Limbu women on the basis of their economic, organizational and personality attributes is examined. It was observed that they do not have much higher social status. But their

role in the family affairs and management for preservation of the culture and heritage is remarkable. They have least control over the resources. They lack their participation in the socio-economic spheres of life. They are in a subordinate and marginal position. But their concealed power and position in functioning the Limbu society is a crucial one. Actually the role played by women in Limbu society is invisible. Therefore, social position of a Limbu woman cannot be totally ignored.

#### **6.4.1 Economic Pursuits and Livelihood of Limbu Women**

##### **6.4.1.1 Natural Resources and Women**

The Himalayan womenfolk are involved in much income generating works like petty business and small scale trade. Women, Natural Resource and the Rural – domestic economy are closely interlinked in the Himalayan communities. These linkages have shown three common patterns.

- a. Natural resource management is central to the livelihoods of Limbu community in Darjeeling Himalaya.
- b. Women are the primary gatherers and managers of domestic economy and household chores.
- c. Their roles and responsibilities are pivotal not only in domestic work but also to the management of rural economy.

##### **6.4.1.2 Occupational Pursuits**

Limbu women play a significant role in the economic upbringing of the family. Apart from doing regular household works she also brings cash into her family. In the Tea garden areas, large section of limbu womenfolk are working. They are working as a women labourer in tea garden namely, *line* or main worker and *biga* or temporary workers. *Biga* workers are employed for the tenure of six months mainly for plucking. In another two study areas, mainly Khasmahal village women are involved in farming activities and in Bungkulung women are engaged in eco-tourism. Many of the senior Limbu women are retired employee from plantation area. The Limbu women are

employed in different occupation. They are working as teachers, government employees and in private jobs. They also do small kind of petty business.

#### **6.4.1.3 Limbu Women and Farming**

In the study areas women folk are keenly interested in kitchen gardening. At the backyard of their houses they grow leafy vegetables, corns and local variety of chilly and fruits. It is mainly done for pleasing subsistence needs and for many housewives it is one of the best methods of recreation. Sometimes they also sell their produce like vegetables, local eggs, butter and fowls to local Haat market. Animals like cow, goat, pigs and fowls are reared which provide them with manure and flesh. They are regarded as a sustainable asset of livelihood. They sell them in times of financial crisis.

#### **6.4.1.4 Work Pattern of Limbu Women**

In Darjeeling hills, mostly in the village the nature of a women's daily work depends on her status in the family, whether she is an unmarried girl, a daughter in-law or a mother in-law. For instance, when a new bride enters a family, "she must prove herself by her good work", thus increasing her workload and decreasing that of her elder. The work pattern performed by Limbu women of the study areas are divided into the following categories. These categories includes

- a. Household work:** cooking, childcare, washing and cleaning.
- b. Natural Resource Management:** livestock rearing, fuel and fodder collection from forest, water collection from nearby streams.
- c. Livelihood Activities:** farming, petty business, tea garden workers.
- d. Non-agricultural work:** Jobs outside the home, professional or as labour.
- e. Personal Interest:** Most of the women spend their time in personal leisure after completion of their domestic chores which includes watching TV, chatting with locality and gardening.
- f. Other Works:** Participation in village and development programmes.



Plate 6 .3 : Showing Women carrying water buckets from nearby *dhara* (springs) and doing farm related works

### **A glimpse of a daily work routine of Limbu Woman working in Tea plantation area of Teesta Valley: Case study**

Smt. Sakuntala Subba (45 yrs) works as a labour in the Tea Plantation. She wakes up at 4 am and does her household chores. By 6.30 am she leaves for factory on foot which is 1-2 km away from her village. Her work starts from 8 am to 4 pm in the factory where she goes for plucking of tea leaves. During winter the duration of work is bit less i.e. from 8 am to 12 pm where the main work is weeding and pruning of tea garden. She brings 8 to 10 kg's of tea leaves every day to factory during plucking season and spends nearly eight hours doing garden work. After coming back from work at 5 pm she again goes to forest either to collect firewood or fodder for her cows and fetches water too. She returns from forest at around 6 pm and freshens up. After this she finishes her left over domestic chores. At 7 pm she starts preparing her dinner for family and goes to bed by 8 pm. During Sunday she works in her small farm at the backyard of her house.

## **6.4.2 Social Status**

### **6.4.2.1 Family and Marriage**

Limbu women bear high religious and socio-cultural status. The field observation shows that they generally marry within their own or outside community. Cross-cousin marriage is not allowed. But marriage between a man and the widow of his elder brother can take place if they mutually agree for that. The widow is free to marry outside the clan either by arrangement or by mutual consent. Culturally, the marriage is mostly arranged by the parents. But, the boys and girls are free to marry by eloping with each other. Arranged marriage is an important ceremony. In this system, women can ask for anything including cash and amount of gold, silver etc. (which they called *sunauli/rupauli*) to make consent of their marriage. This confirms the women family that the man is financially secure enough to keep their daughter happy throughout. Limbu women generally marry twice with the same man, the first one is *sunauli*. The second marriage is called *saimundri* which is conducted after giving birth to a child (Younghang, 2011). This also shows that women's socio-cultural status is high in Limbu community.

### **6.4.2.2 Impact of Male Migration**

In the study areas male migration is mainly due to unemployment and economic needs. The male migration has both positive and negative impacts on the limbu womenfolk. The male migration on the one hand tends to improve economic condition in terms of remittance. The unintentionally created a vacuum in family, putting extra work loads and responsibilities on the women folk. The male migration especially to abroad is accepted as a social prestige for the wife and the family. In absence of male member, Limbu women of the study areas are maintaining the family income and domestic needs. The positive side of migration has contributed in the enhancement of women's empowerment, by making them as the head of the household. She copes with circumstances in absence of their male counterpart. Thus, the male migration has brought changes in Limbu women's confidence and attitudes

in the study areas. But a very interesting thing to note here is that, the increased responsibility does not allow them to take important decision because of the presence of the senior old male member in the family (Mondal, 2004). Limbu women of the study areas are making decisions on a daily basis. In the absence of men they do not take decision that affect the position of household in the village.

#### **6.4.2.3 Health Conditions**

In the study areas the health condition of the women depended on the nature of work they performed and the level of economic standard. The main health problem associated with them is arthritis and heart. The rural Limbu women spend most of their time in cooking food in the fire place which has caused breathing problem. They still consult shamans for remedial recovery from diseases and make visit to Government hospitals due to poor economic condition. The strenuous workload has worsened their health and hazard.

#### **6.4.2.4 Gender Inequality – Equality Issues of Limbu Women**

Establishment of Tea gardens in the far flung areas of Darjeeling Himalaya has a huge impact on the economic life of villagers. This economy in the study area of Teesta valley is one of the means of sustaining livelihood in a relative isolation. Limbu women are directly involved in the Tea garden work. They are the bread earner in their family. The economic needs of the household are directly related to women's workload. For Instance, woman working in the Tea garden still spend six to eight hours working and two to four hours in collecting firewood, fodder , fetching water from nearby streams and preparing food for their family. But sometimes their role, potentialities and capabilities is forgotten and ignored by the family. This is one of the disadvantages that Limbu women face in particular.

Another important issue in the economy lies in the gender access to and control over resources and decision making on financial matters. Limbu women rarely have control over the resources. Only few household exist where the female is treated the head of the family and has control over the accessibility of resources along with

decision making power. Since Limbu women and men have different roles, needs and interests, the gender inequality- equality has different implications. The rural economy has different impact on both genders. The income earned by male members of the family gives more mental satisfaction to family as compared to female members. Similarly, it is also found in the social ceremonies like marriage, birth of a child etc. The length of naming ritual and mourning period after death varies depending on the gender.

### **6.5 State of Educational Status and Problems: Some Case Studies**

Education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives; so that we cannot neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment (Hazra, 2011). Socio-economic factors contribute significantly to disparities in literacy and educational attainment among women in rural and urban areas. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population have been discriminated against and confined to the lowest rungs of social and economic hierarchies. As Dreze pointed out, “educational disparities, which contribute a great deal to the persistence of massive inequalities in Indian society, also largely derive from more fundamental inequalities such as those of class, caste and gender,” (Dreze, 2003). High poverty rates and dependence on agriculture, call for increasing rates of child labor force participation among many of the tribes in India. The tribal dropout rate is extremely high relative to the mainstream population Children often enroll in primary education and then drop out of school in order to help the family. This applies more to females than males both among the mainstream, Hindu population and the tribal groups because girls are expected to help out with domestic chores more than boys at a very early age (Nambissan, 2000; Vasavi 2002; Jha and Jhingran, 2002). Traditionally, the Hindu society has demonstrated its preference for sons and has treated boys and girls differently, based on social and cultural norms. Parents often allocate their scarce resources towards the schooling of their sons. For the poorer sections of the population, it is worthwhile investing in the son’s education, as that would generate

income for the family in the future. Daughters are expected to get married early, and parents have to save money for dowry payments. Further, parents do not want to invest in their daughters' schooling because the latter have limited labor market opportunities and earning potential (Sathar and Lloyd, 1994). For the poorer sections of the Indian community, education for girls is often considered to be consumption good rather than an investment good. In rural Darjeeling Himalaya, it is still experienced that Limbu women did not have enough access towards education in the study areas. Limbu women understudied have low level of educational attainment. Most of them have not crossed the school cycle. Further, a huge portion of them were illiterate and same was the condition of just literate women too.

During the field visits it was found that the main causes of educational backwardness. The major causes were: poverty, socially least aware family and general trends. The main reason for their educational backwardness in the olden days was the predominant patriarchal system not providing enough chances for women to get higher education even if they wish. Spending on education and especially for a girl child is still perceived as a waste of money and resources by some orthodox people in the study village. Moreover the lack of schools in the study areas is the main drawback because students had to walk for kilometers to reach school. The security issue of a girl child is also the main reason in the study areas for which many of them left schools and were inclined toward domestic chores of the household which resulted in the high rate of girl dropout.

### **6.5.1 Rural Limbu women and Illiteracy : Case studies**

The percentage of women illiteracy in the study areas is mainly due to social and economic reasons. In order to understand the problem from ground reality the researcher had made a case study through field survey and observation. The case study attempts to highlight the women perceptions about their educational backwardness at the past and the changing situation in contemporary times.

### **6.5.1.1 Case study from Teesta Valley: Focusing in the Traditional Village society**

**Dhannti Limbu**, 87 years old widow from Fulbari, Teesta valley Tea garden says she is illiterate not because of her choice but because of her fate. Born in a rural village family with a meager income, her father was not in a position to send all his children to school. Both parent worked in tea garden; therefore she was left in the house to do domestic chores and take care of her siblings. She shared bitter experience of her childhood regarding school. During her days Darjeeling hills was ruled by colonial Britishers and tea garden was administered by them. They were known as “*Saheb*”. She still remembers how children were refrained from going schools and forcibly made to work in gardens as labourers. Moreover the family economic conditions and rural poverty was the main reasons behind her illiteracy. Her mother had told her a Nepali proverb “*Padi lekhi ke ko kaam halo joti maam*” which means what the use of education? Until and unless you do not plough how will you get your food? This also sometimes made her to think that garden work was important to sustain a livelihood. Therefore she also started to work and remained isolated from books and pen. But for now she said, time and place has changed. Education has become a prime necessity to have a happy life and she encourages her grand daughters to be educated because she does not want them to face the same circumstances.

**Kamalphul Limbu** 60 years old married woman from Limbu goan, Teesta valley Tea garden also narrates the same kind of circumstances as Dhannti Limbu. But the interesting thing that caught my attention was some of her replies which were strange and hilarious. She told me her parents did not send her to school because they thought if she learnt how to read and write she will start to write letters a to her lover and will elope from her house. In olden days, there was stereotype thinking towards women education. Limited schools which were almost kilometers away were also one of the problems on the basis of security issue that refrained rural limbu women from getting education

### **6.5.1.2 Case Study from Dungra: Focusing in the Contemporary Situation**

**Priyanka Subba (Limbu)** 26 years old working woman from Dungra Kalimpong said that the time has changed now. She had never faced an inequality in her upbringing and was sent to a good English medium school. Her parents had always encouraged her to pursue higher education. It was with their support and encouragement; she completed her Masters in Economics and is now employed to one of the Institutions. Priyanka is fully motivated and independent working woman living outside her home. She said completely depends on family background and mental perception of parents how they look upon their daughters. In field visit it was found that the educated parents are concerned for their children education. But on the other hand many young girls in the study areas had stopped going to schools once they failed. **Archana Limbu** 20 years old woman from Teesta Valley said after failing twice in board examination she decided to leave school and started to work as a labour job in tea garden. When I asked what her parents decision were, she said they also agreed with her. This is the gloomy part of the educational backwardness in the study areas in the contemporary times. The general lack of awareness among the womenfolk and encouragement and support from most of the families has made education a negligible factor.

## **6.6 Political Participation and Awareness**

Women's political participation is one of the important issues in the context of empowerment. In conventional analysis it means activities related to electoral politics like voting, campaigning, holding party office and contesting election. But in broader sense it encompasses all voluntary actions intended to influence the making of public policies, the administration of public affairs and the choice of political leaders at all levels of government. Political interventions by women of India today range from movement for peace and good governance to protest against dowry, rape, domestic violence, food adulteration, price rise etc (Desai, 2007). However in this section the researcher discussed participation of rural women in formal politics by analyzing the

indicators like women voters and women elected member of Limbu Community in the local and regional level politics. Many factors are responsible and decisive in the election of Women candidate such as literacy, financial position, liberal family background, support from other members of the family, strong personality. Since most of the women lack access to these, few women gets tickets and even fewer get elected from this handful of women candidates. The participation of limbu women in politics of Darjeeling Hills is remarkable. The first lady MLA of Darjeeling Hills was in fact a Limbu woman Renuleena Subba from Kalimpong who was the member of All India Gorkha League. But for now hardly Limbu woman are found holding an executive post in the local political party in study areas. Also they do not participate much into political discourses. Only recently, women from different ethnic groups including Limbu women have made an immense participation on going Gorkhaland Movement. Though women in Limbu society are relatively free, still there are discriminations (social and psychological) as explained above, yet the women are not much interested into politics. In the study areas majority of the male members were very active in the political affairs. Womenfolk are so busy among their household activities that they hardly give any interest towards it. Some respondents were aware of recent political development in the hills. Very few of them attend political meeting and party rally. Some of the females did not even bother about whether their names were in the electoral role or not. Of course most of the female exercise their franchise in the election and that percentage increases with the rise in educational levels of the Limbu women. Some of the Limbu women cast their vote but choice depends on the decision made by senior male members of the family. So in the study areas women are not so political mobilized and are very much influenced by male members.

### **6.7 Influence of Print and Mass Medias on Limbu Women**

Women of study areas have some access to mass media. Though relatively more percentage of male read newspaper, the Limbu women are also not lagging behind. More than 45 percent of women head reads newspaper daily or occasionally. Both male and female watch different TV programmes either regularly. About 80 per cent

of Limbu women watch TV regularly. Women are fond of Indian serials. The Limbu women of Dungra Khasmahal, Kalimpong liked to watch local channel for local news updates.

### **6.8 Influence of Hinduization on Limbu Women**

The village society in the study areas is composed of heterogeneous elements. The social groups with diverse ethnic and linguistic origin have immense influence upon one another along with adapting nature of the people with particular ecological niches offered by the physiographic and climatic setting of the area. During my field visits and interaction with the womenfolk of the study areas, I found the very Hindu Nepali influence on Limbu women was immensely great. They observe all the Hindu major religious festivals and ceremonies. Their customs, traditions and pattern of lifestyle is more accustomed to Hindu women. They take fast during pujas for the lifelong prosperity of their family and husband. Some women go to temple every Monday for worshipping and observe fast throughout the day. During the month of ‘*Sawan*’, they wear green glass bangles and put ‘*Mehendi*’ on their hands and goes to temple for worship. The Limbu women with green poote (necklace) and a red bangle on her hand symbolize that she is married. She puts scarf on her head as a mark of respect to her elder brother -in -law which is typically observed in the gestures of Nepali Hindu women. The limbu women of the study areas are very much inclined towards Hindu faith and belief in the religious ground. Some old traditional women refrain themselves to call their husband by their name. The Limbu women also follow *Yumaism* and even worship ancestral God and Goddess but influence of Hinduization is also prominent in the study areas.

### **6.9 Social Awareness of Limbu Women**

As most of the women understudied were housewives mainly engaged in household works, their level of social awareness was also found having low status. Many of them were unknown to the political, economical and administrative sectors. Though they focused on the importance of education in life, their educational status was very

low. They were aware of the traditional farming which they adopted from many years as well as their contemporary social and cultural practices but were found unknown to the overall national issues. A questionnaire was prepared to gather some information about their status of social awareness, during the field study. From the data collected from the field, it was found that their level of overall social awareness was low. What many of the informants argued was that this lack of awareness was mainly due to their restriction at household works. An informant said that the couples were of equal mental status during their marriage time. According to her, both of them were from farming background. But, her husband gradually started to be involved in social and political activities at local level. After ten years, he has become a local level political activists but she is still confined to the household work. She shared her experience that she has become dull. This was mainly due to her involvement in household works and making herself limited to it.

The aforementioned discussion helps now to summarize the facts that the women were least aware than the men. The main reason for their status of low level of awareness is their limitation in household work. This is becoming an obligation without any alternatives for them, like many other women of the rural society.

### **6.10 Findings**

Women play an important role in the upliftment of the society. They made lots of contribution and sacrifice for the family. The status generally refers to the position in the society in relation to men. The status of women is generally measured using three indicators: education, employment status and intra-household decision-making power. Women with great decision-making power are supposed to have a higher status in the household (Bhasin, 2013).

The subject of women authority is regarded as a controversial issue in most of the society. The physical weakness and fragile attitudes embarked their incompetent to exercise their power. In the study areas, regarding leadership quality of women, very few gave positive replies. Some said "*Pothi basnu hudaina*" a Nepali proverb saying

“over exercising of power is not good for woman” because they are vulnerable. The above proverb clearly signifies even though Limbu women enjoyed her freedom but certain limitation is drawn. During the field work it was observed, female representatives were not holding an executive position in the village associations

The social status of the Limbu women can be explained from the nature and timing of food intake by them. This shows their position in the family as well as society. Customarily, it is presumed that out of love and affection the mother or sisters in the family take them food after their husband, brothers or children. It however indicates the psychological position of the females in the family in the name of sacrifice. However the unmarried women in the Limbu families take food whenever they think it is necessary and in that sense they are more independent except few married Limbu women.

Paradoxically, in Limbu community Grandmother Goddess “*Yuma*” holds an immense importance for welfare of every people. Each households worship *Yuma* for peace and prosperity. *Yuma* who resemble female fraternity clearly indicates the position of women in Limbu society. In most of the tribal society of the family lineage is matriarchal. Does it make Limbu women to be seen as subordinate, or due to many responsibilities of domestic chores they refrain themselves from such position.

As Jones (1976) has asserted that, within a traditional society of Limbu, women have a greater degree of autonomy than a naive observer might expect. Again the autonomy extends in several directions it may have to do with task performed with roles in ritual, or even with relationships in marriage. Seddon (1983) cites a strong tendency in 'high-caste' Hindu families, and particularly amongst Brahmins, for women to be more oppressed than among the tribal groups, such as the Limbus, Magars, Gurungs, or the 'untouchables.'

Therefore the position and status of Limbu women depends on the existing social and cultural norms of the society. The Limbu women of the study areas have shown the

very good prospects for betterment of society. They are coping with changing circumstances. The elderly womenfolk played a vital role in maintaining cultural life of the Limbus. They are the real protectors of cultural heritage in their society.

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# CHAPTER 7

## DYNAMICS OF LIMBU IDENTITY IN RELATION TO SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF DARJEELING HIMALAYA

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### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter tends to focus on understanding the Identity dynamics and (re) construction of Limbu Identity through religious and cultural attributes. The tribal and non-tribal communities of Darjeeling Himalaya in contemporary situation is urging for cultural revival, seeking roots and routes for tribalism and thereby shaping the new ethnic identities taking social, political and geographical position into consideration. The newly formed tribal development board of Limbu community in Mountainous region of Darjeeling Himalaya has also started the programme for upliftment and preservation of their cultural heritage. In the contemporary ethno-political landscape of the state, we see competing assertions of ethnic identities as part of the desire to be recognized and visible to their surroundings.

Considering these realities the author has attempt to study the formation of Limbu Identity based on religious and cultural transition, showing how the rituals and folk culture has become an important aspect in (re) defining their ethnic identity. The religious ceremonies and rituals like *Ubhauli*, *Udhauli* and *Manghoop puja*, Birthday of Limbu Saint *Sirijunga* organized by the different Limbu associations of Darjeeling Himalayas. The associations' members' acts as cultural promoters which enables the Limbus to further define and re-define religious and cultural aspects in accordance to their interests. Therefore, how the construction of identity narratives is fabricated by ethnic Limbu association (*Chumlung*) among the Limbu geographical space helps us

understand the dynamics of Limbu Identity in relation to Social and Cultural environment of Darjeeling Himalaya.

## **7.2 Identity Dynamics of the Limbus**

The issues of Identity pose a major challenge by creating a sharp strife against the national stability and security in several parts of the world. It is because identities are not singular but multiple and varied from place to place within different community. Identity is become one of the most widely debated issues in the political and academic discourses. The question of identity has been explained beautifully by the pioneers like Charles Horton Colleny (1909), Herbert Mead (1934) and Herbert Blumer (1964) they had examine the interrelationship between individuals, identity and society. Holland (1997), has presented the debate in terms of Universalists and Culturalists. The Universalists argued that, although in the formation of identity culture might have the same role; it is subordinated to universal biological and natural structures. However, the culturalists argued that it is the culture which shaped a person identity through its attributes. Identity is associated mainly with how group thinks about themselves and people surrounding them. Therefore, the notion of ‘we’ and ‘they’ are vital aspect in understanding the notion of identity construction of a group.

According to Mondal (1988) the identity is constructed on the three basis firstly, individual identity which is created through people with whom we interact. Secondly the social identity in which similar traits and characteristics is found. Thirdly, cultural identity indicates the sense of belonging to a particular group and its culture or sub culture. Ethnic identity is categorized from the two main frame works of Primordial and Situational by scholars from different academic disciplines. The Primordial (also known as essentialist) perspective argues that people have innate sense of ethnic identity – it is something people are born with and is instinctive in nature and difficult which persists to change. On the other hand Situational perspective is a social phenomenon which constantly negotiates with the changing circumstances (Chatterjee, 2013).

It is possible to analyze the process of identity formation among the Limbu community of Darjeeling Himalaya through these perspectives. The story of emergence and evolution of Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya as a distinct socio-cultural group provides an interesting subject to understand the Identity dynamics vividly changed through the course of history. Originally a Tibeto Mongoloids group, the Limbus traces their ancestral history from the then province of Limbuwan in Eastern Nepal and West Sikkim, India. During that time Nepal and India were the two independent states in their own context of development. The nation building process in these two countries had directly or indirectly influenced the Limbu.

The construction of the Limbu identity in the past can be linked with the political unification of Nepal in 1774 in the Eastern Nepal, socio-political relation of Namgyal with Limbus of Sikkim and establishment of colonial edifice in Darjeeling. Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is mainly a community migrated from the Eastern Nepal. For historical, political, cultural and many other reasons identities of the Limbus have been constructed into varied forms both by the Limbus and also by the Non – Limbus. Here culture is taken as a major component in constructing the dynamics of identities.

The mixing of Limbus within the larger society of Darjeeling Himalaya had merged them to similar in terms of language, appearance and costumes. As time elapsed they adopted typical Nepali – Hindu gestures and rituals. But at the same time keeping the faith on *Yumaism* and they do the needful Limbu rituals under guidance and direction, regardless the impact of modernization, inter-caste marriages and numerous other socio-economic and religious factor. Limbus still maintains their religious norms, cultural attributes and traditions. They considered Limbu should follow *Yumaism* and should speak *Yakthungpan* (Language) to carry forward their legacy and traditions.

However, the process of diffusion and acculturation here helps to examine and understand the progress and struggle of Limbu society of Darjeeling Himalaya. The local influences on the Limbus can be seen and reflected through their cultural attributes and political identities. Ethnic identity of the Limbus living in Darjeeling

Himalaya is inevitably tied with the acculturation process. Behavioural acculturation among Limbus results mainly due to their absorption in the dominant culture of Nepali society. This includes learning of common language, faith, customs and religion by retaining one's own cultural essence. The structural or socio – economic acculturation is of integrated into a larger society through social, political, cultural and economic attributes. These process of acculturation usually occurred in a linear or straight line and non- linear or circular manner. The process of linear acculturation happens exclusively among the Limbus of urban areas because of their social integration with the other communities. In the circular manner or non – linear acculturation process Limbus are reviving or retaining old cultural tradition and heritage or alternatively combining elements of both traditional Limbu and popular culture.

One of the most important instances of identity formation among the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is the identity, from the regional point of view where migration was the main reason and the second is the religious point of view which is considered as situational and primordial in character respectively. Culturally, it is important to note that history plays an important role in any ethnic mobilization. The Limbu identity of Darjeeling and Sikkim is different from the Limbu of Eastern Nepal origin. Why does Eastern Nepal as a regional point always remain a reference while discussing issues of Limbu identity?

The answer is politically ambiguous because of the open border policy between two nations and migration history. The lack of archival and concrete historical evidence among the Limbus of Darjeeling has made them to depend on Eastern Nepal and Sikkim Himalaya for their ancestry and construing an ethnic identity on the basis of two issues: (a) Land acquisition in Eastern Himalaya and (b) Imperial establishment in Darjeeling Himalaya.

In Eastern Nepal, they have complex history. The forceful assertions of Hinduism have solely altered the cultural and ethnic identity. Moreover, the abolition of Kipat system by the Nepali Hindu ruler deprived the Limbus from their land ownership rights. Their landholdings were occupied by Non- Limbus. Many of the landless Limbus had to suffer atrocities from the then ruler making them to displace from their ancestral homeland. Due to the suffering and plight of Limbus they started to take shelter around the remote parts of the Darjeeling Himalaya. The then, Darjeeling was a part of Sikkim although a large stretch within the Kalimpong sub – division was controlled by the Bhutanese theocratic regime (Bhattacharyya, 2015). The British rulers at that time were going with the shortage of Infrastructure especially the man power to construct their Imperial establishment. Moreover, the Lepchas had shown their resentment in supporting the Colonials. Therefore, the colonials encouraged the bulk of Kirati migration and invested their faith upon them to build their colonial edifice. The Limbus re-settled in the Darjeeling Himalaya and was taken into the consideration of Nepali speaking Gorkha community.

Campbell (1868) in his article “*On the Tribes around Darjeeling*” has referred Limbus as very active, fairly intelligent and generally truthful and honest with a very little taller in stature than the Lepcha, whose average height may be taken at 5 ft 1 inch. He is less fleshy and wirier in the legs with destitute of beard. In fact the present generation of Limbus residing in Darjeeling Himalaya is born in India. They have embraced Hinduism and acculturate into the faith, belief and customs of Gorkha Identity and Nationalism which is situational or constructional in nature. The situational identity of Limbu is mostly mingled on the basis of racial affinity along with the mixing in local habitat. On the other hand the primordial identity of Limbus is based on the cultural revivalism which is rooted with religious tradition and rituals. The Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is divided into the four religious backgrounds namely *Yumaism*, Hinduism, *Satyahangma* and Christians. Identity among all these religious groups varies. *Satyahangma* is the mixture both *Yumaism* and Hinduism and is the peculiar religious groups in terms of acculturate Limbu identity. Limbus

professing *Yumaism* is considered as primordial in nature because it reflects the originality of it in their socio-cultural traditions and customs of being a Limbu.

### **7.3 Socio – Economic Manifestations: Adaptation, Adjustments and Syncretism**

Man by nature is mobile and dynamic who is always susceptible to change with changing time and social environment. In the course of displacement to development Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya went through a series of changes in their social, cultural, religious and political affairs in day to day life. The socio – economic manifestations of Limbus in the study areas of Darjeeling Himalaya, can be traced by historical evidences through their plight of migration to a new environment and thereby developing a new Identity through adjustments and adaptation. Therefore, to understand these processes and its attributes in Limbu community one has to date back to migration history and establishment of Darjeeling as a sanatorium. The traditional habitat of Limbus is the geographically contiguous eastern part of Nepal, western part of Sikkim and the district of Darjeeling (Subba T. B., 2006). But the creation of Darjeeling as a British Sanatorium in 1835 has completely altered the demography and political geography of this Himalayan region through migration and colonial hegemony.

The present day Darjeeling Himalaya before becoming a part of India was a part of Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal at a different juncture of time. Darjeeling was annexed from Sikkim by neighboring Nepal in 1780 and from 1780 to 1816, it remained under Nepalese rule. In 1816, it was added to British India, and then returned to Sikkim in 1817 (Artira Ghosh, 2012). However, Darjeeling had been granted to the British in 1835 by the Raja of Sikkim in return for some concessions and a yearly grant of Rs 3000, the Kalimpong subdivision (now newly created District) had first been lost by the Raja of Sikkim to the Bhutanese after the war in 1706. This area was later annexed along with the Duars by the British in 1865 and included in the present Darjeeling District in 1866 (Chettri M. , 2013). The most prominent migration in Darjeeling was seen mainly from Eastern Nepal and its adjoining region because of

the following three reasons. Firstly, the solidarity of Limbuwan was slowly started to fragment with the invasion and conquest policy of Gorkha Hindu ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah who was into the mission of political unification of Nepal. After being subjugated by a new ruler Limbus lost their political autonomy, their Kipat, their language, religion and culture. The assertion and the process of Hinduization among the Limbus have huge impact in their traditional way of life which forces them to out-migrate and those who choose to stay there were represented as Nepalis, their language was Nepali and their religion was Hinduism. Secondly, the empowerment of *Namgyal* regime (Tibetan) in Sikkim marked the arrival and propagation of Buddhism for greater political autonomy and establishment of theocratic kingship and legacy.

The adoption of new religion was very insignificant among the Limbus because they refrained and resisted any proselytization into Buddhism. “In fact, during the reign of Gyurmed Namgyal in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a massive Limbu rebellion in Sikkim that led to the outmigration of Limbus from Sikkim” (Arora, 2007). But after protesting against the Namgyal hegemonic rule they signed the blood treaty called *Lhomentsongsun* a well diplomatic move of Namgyal ruler to sort out the differences with Lepcha and Limbus by making them a politically subservient in their rule. Thus, the process of Hinduization in East Nepal and Buddhization in Sikkim started to convert Limbus into Hindu and Buddhist identity through the religion syncretism. Thirdly, the establishment of tea and cinchona plantations led different ethnic groups to migrate into Darjeeling for job opportunities and for peaceful livelihood.

As large part of the region was largely uninhabited sparsely population mainly composed of Lepchas. Therefore, bulk of migrant population landed up doing in meager job in the imperial edifice of colonials and adjusted themselves as the occupants in the lowest strata of the economic hierarchy. The exposure of Limbu with other Nepali group and religious heterogeneity started to acculturates them into the larger society of Nepali ethnic groups. The impact of Hindu identity was so strong where they started to hinduised themselves and began to draw a boundary between

them from their earlier animist identities to enhance their social status while some converted to Christianity in the late 20th century. By converting to Hinduism, the Limbus asserted the superiority of having a high caste identity, while some converting themselves to Christianity tried to modernize themselves. “In the late 20th century, the Limbus campaigned for a ‘tribal’ identity by emphasizing their indigenous and animistic identities” (Arora, 2007). Still today these processes of Hinduization, tribalisation and Christianization are occurring simultaneously.

The settlement of Limbus in the study areas of Darjeeling Himalaya as a migrant has changed the course of their Identity construction in a number of ways. Firstly coming as migrant workers in the colonial enterprise alienated their cultural homogeneity by mixing into others ethnic groups. Secondly, the political repercussion of Gorkha ruler in their homeland of Eastern Nepal made as landless and the theocratic regime of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim made them political disabled. Thirdly large sections of Limbus have hinduised their way of life in Hindu faith and gestures, some converted into Christianity under the influence of missionaries giving them a new religious identity. Lastly, the most important was the social and economic interaction with other ethnic groups led to the formation of the Nepali Identity. It was only with the development colonial academic discourse of educated and culturally conscious elite that the Tibeto Burmese speaking Limbu people began to identify as Nepali on the basis of the common denominator amongst all language (Chettri M. , 2013). The process of Limbu syncretism dates back to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century where they lived in relatively inaccessible habitat and nurtured a culture based on nature and nature worship. The scope for growth of cultural, religious or linguistic heterogeneity was limited as they laced interaction with the Non- Limbu communities except the Rai and Lepcha (Subba T. B., 2006)

#### **7.4 Religion and Identity of Limbus in Darjeeling Himalaya**

Religion and religious attributes plays a very vital role in defining a community perception and their socio-economic adjustments in the society. The main essence of

religion is to bind a people together for peace, wisdom and social harmony. Every religion has its own path of propagating the morals, ideals and philosophy of life. But in the present context the religion plays an important parameter for asserting an Identity of a person. Therefore, Religious identity and belonging is a complex issue among the different ethnic groups of Darjeeling Himalaya. During the fieldwork many questions were raised by the respondents regarding religion, caste and clan in which significant knowledge of Limbu dialect and *Mundhum* is very important for understanding the Limbu identity through religious perception. To understand the people's perception it was important to make a good rapport establishment with them to know their religious perception of being a Limbu. Only elderly persons were able to understand the language and religious essence of *Yumaism*. Very few younger generations knew about their religious attributes. Through the field surveys it was found that most of the Limbus follows *Yumaism* and regarded themselves as animist. The members of Limbu associations strongly recommended *Yumaism* as the core religion and philosophy of life. During the press conference on 17 July 2003 General Secretary of the All India Limbu Association B.P Limbu said “*Yumaism* our religion is the basis of our identity. If a conversion to other religions like Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity is not checked, our future will be at stake. This is also the reason why we have not absorbed members of other religions into our community. We want to preserve our Identity” (Chettri V. , 2003).

In the study area it was found that most of the Limbu households were performing certain specific Limbu rituals and practices. The core essence of this ritual practices is to make household deity *Yuma* pleased and to assert the Limbu identity. There are some Limbu households too who worship and practices the pools of different Hindu God and Goddess. They are conducting Hindu pujas at home for the peace and prosperity. The younger generation and some Limbus in the study areas called themselves as Hindus. During field survey it was found that most of the Limbus has specific reasons of converting into the Hinduism. Every household were very much aware of the philosophy of *Yumaism*, an animist religion. It is often seen in most of

the Limbu rituals the sacrifice of animals is the most vital element along with the uses of alcoholic beverages. This was the main reason why most of the Limbus is embracing Hinduism. In order to validate the above mentioned statement focused is made on some of the respondent's interview exclusively on the religious aspect of Limbus.

The settlement pattern of surveyed study area of Dungra Khasmahal was semi – scattered in nature. The men were working in the crop field too helped to locate some of the houses. Among which Mrs. Sarita Limbu house was selected. The house was two storied kutchra building made up of mud with bamboo thatched walls and a tin roof. She was the mother of three daughters of which one was school dropout. Her husband was a farmer and was bit drunk. Most of the men who work in the field are alcoholic by nature. Sarita Limbu hospitality was good and comfortable during conversation one of her eldest daughter point out the poor condition of Limbu women is mainly due to presence of alcoholic father, husband and a brother.

In Limbu religion the use of alcohol is permissible from birth to death and from ceremonies to religious rituals. If the religion could prohibit using of alcohol as sin then most of the conditions of women would not be in a deplorable state. So she likes the teaching of Hinduism and wants to follow the moral and values of it. Similarly interview taken from the Ex-president of Rotary Club Miss Sanjogita Subba (Limbu) and granddaughter of Great Limbu Scholar Late Sri Iman Singh Chemjong, Dr. Shova Chemjong Professor of Kalimpong College enlightens the religious attributes from woman point of view. Both the women hold a respectable and dignified position in the Limbu society. In terms of religious practices they condemned the using of alcohol beverages and animal sacrifices. They believe in Yumaism but since born and brought up in heterogeneous society they are quite liberal in religion propagation. Recently Professor Shova Chemjong had published an article on *Yuma samyo* religion and busy in translating the holy scriptures of Limbu *Mundhum* into Hindi language for better understanding of this community.

The inter-religious practices and faith is creeping into the Limbu society because of these two reasons. Which is quite visible in the Limbu households where every

household has hoisted the red colour triangle shaped flag of Hindu pujas and ritual. In some of the houses Tulsi plant worshipping and hoisting of Buddhist prayers flag *Lungdar* is a common practice. The sect of religion which is embracing and propagated by the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya is *Satyahangma*. The initiation and propagation of this religion was in the *Fidim* district of Panchthar of Eastern Nepal. The Limbus of East Nepal is professing this religion from a long time but the followers of this sect are very negligible in the study areas. This religion is blend of Hinduism and *Yumaism*; often it is criticized on the religious ground of adopting most the morals and ideals similarly like Hinduism. But this religion certain positive things like all hymns of this religion is sung in the Limbu language and is dedicated to *Tagera Ningwaphuma*, the supreme deity of Limbus (Subba T. , 1999). In study areas Limbu professing this religion are the few households in Teesta Valley and Bungkulung. In Bungkulung Sri N.B Limbu who is professing *Satyahangma* from last 35 years. He is pure vegetarian and strictly follows the teaching of Late Mahaguru Swami Phalgunanda. He said this religion is purest and teach every individual about compassion. The stakeholders of this religion are the one who are doing profound works on Limbu literature, language and cultural attributes.

### **7.5 Rituals and Folk Cultures Constructing Limbu Identity**

Culture, ritual, and ecology are inevitable and inseparable part of Limbu cosmology and oral narratives. Traditionally Limbus has the strong connection with the ancestral place and ritual landscapes. The sacred ritual Landscapes holds an immense socio - historical importance in their religious rituals and construing place based identities. Any separation of their connection with the sacred landscapes strikes at the heart of their culture and civilization.

The spatial geographical distribution of Limbus throughout the Eastern Himalayas and their acclimatization with the new cultural environment has mould them in such way , where they have developed new customs, culture and taboos on the location based entity of identifications.

The Limbus of East Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalayas follow the same religion *Yumaism* and binds with same oral narratives, folk culture and sacred landscapes construing their Limbu religious identity based on animism and as a worshipper of Nature. Limbus had preserved the history and traditions in their memories and disseminated through shamans and senior knowledgeable person orally in the form of songs, myths, tales and stories. Shamans are generally called as *Phedangba* in local Limbu dialect. They are the rich source of oral narratives and had major knowledge regarding the different locations of sacred landscapes. Therefore, in this section the author tries to examine and understand the sheer importance of geographical sacred landscapes and emerging new ritual landscapes which authenticate the presence of historical importance for constructing their Identity. The oral narratives of Limbus are studied to know the perceptions about the landscapes and their close affinity to it. Because in the recent times “Contemporary discourses transcend the ‘nature–culture’ dichotomy in treating ‘nature’ as being not merely a resource with use values or representing an arena of economic competition and political conflict by emphasizing its symbolic value for representing identities and articulating interests at both the local and the regional levels” ( Arora, 2006 ). The major changes among the Limbus started long back with the course of political development and change of boundaries along with socio – religious transformation during the nation building process. The Limbus of the study areas is culturally so closely related with the each components of environment. There are myths, folktales and oral narratives regarding the origin of Limbus, which I have collected from the field work in construing the identity. “Narratives are stories that have been shared in everywhere in human culture as a mode of communication, education, preservation of culture and to instill knowledge and values. Hence the people adapt narratives to contour and conceptualize their experiences to render in the form of stories which are nothing than their experiential experiences. The lore embodies the knowledge, beliefs and the institutions that guided the people and communities to retain their identities, their selves from erosion and invasion despite changes in time and space” (Longchar, 2015).

In present situation there is a huge urge for the cultural revivalism among the Limbus signifying them as an indigenous Tribe of Darjeeling Himalaya by reinforcing their assertions through sacred groves and new ritual landscapes followed by the celebrations of Limbus feast and festivals, the celebration of Saint Srijunga birthday by various Limbu association. The commemoration of the different ritualistic pujas and constructions of Limbu temples and museum for preserving the rich heritage by different Limbu ethnic outfits and Development Board is nothing but to affirm their Indigeneity and transforming oneself into the primordial identity of being nature worshipper and environmentalist. Thereby, maintaining the ethnic boundaries with the Nepali Identity.

#### **7.5.1 Rituals Legitimizing the Sacred Entities and Rejuvenating the Identity**

The rituals of Limbus mainly *Mangenna* legitimized them with the kingship and affirm allegiance to the ancestral land or *Kipat*. This ritual is unique and holds a special connection to the ancestral land which is very much sacred to Limbus. This ritual ceremony is for a person to overcome from his misery, unhappiness and hardship. For instance, every year either in the beginning of winter and summer season *Mangenna* is performed by the Limbus of the study areas and offer sacrifices to their ancestors. In this ritual “There are ten separate castles to worship; a person is entitled to make the offering to only one. Which one depends on the location of one’s ancestral land – for the castle of different territories differ. Legend has it that these castles are one each for the ten Limbu kings who came to the country, divided the territory among themselves and settled. It is believed that clans that make offering to the same castle are the descendents of the same king” (Limbu, 2011). Through the ritual of *Mangenna* they remember their ancestral land, *Kipat* and their kinship alliances. These rituals are some of the important elements in the Limbu culture that cannot be alienated because they act as the vehicles to bring past to present. This inalienable wealth for Limbu is ancestral land which is sacred and rejuvenates the Limbu identity through cultural attributes.

## 7.6 Oral Narratives and Legends in Constructing Limbu Identity

An oral narrative is a process that helps us to understand in constructing the expression and meaning in our daily lives. The oral narratives and stories are not just information of the individuals, but it also allows us to examine how identity is constructed within social and cultural landscapes of Darjeeling Himalaya. In the study areas the identity of the Limbus is shaped not only by the interaction but also socially constructed under the influence of their surrounding habitat. In the recent phase the key influence on how Limbu identity is constructed or developed can be well explained and examined by symbolic interaction like Limbu language, pilgrimage to sacred places, rituals and Limbu legends. Underpinning these symbolic representations with oral narratives of the respondents I had made an attempt to explain and construct Limbu identity.

The Limbus of Darjeeling Himalayas is in the process of re-tribalisation by deviating from the manifold of Hindu rituals and customs. The different Limbu outfits are making compulsory religious assertions to the people through teaching of *Yumaism*. The religious and cultural revival among Limbus is so strong that they have started to worship their different pool of deities. There are certain specific observations from my field work which I am narrating to relocate the oral narratives, myths and legends of the Limbus. The elderly respondents' perception of being Limbu is considered for instance because they are the guardians and store keeper of narratives, myths and stories which is in oblivion. The senior or knowledgeable persons are regarded as *Tumyahang* who act as council in various social and cultural life of the Limbus. During the initial days of my research I went for a pilot survey in Dungra, Kalimpong on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013. Firstly I want to meet some of the knowledgeable person of the village for the references and easy accessibility of my work. On my query some of the locals told me to meet Shri Ratna Bahadur Tumsawa who was from a neighboring village of Pudung, somewhat 12 kilometers from Dungra. On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013 I met with Ratna Bahadur Tumsawa 82 year's old man who was an ex-army but had profound knowledge about Limbu culture. He said I am an adherent Limbu and embrace *Yumaism* for me being a Limbu is being a nature worshipper. He was living

a core rural life in a remote village. When I asked about the oral narratives, myths and sacred landscapes of the Limbus, he said in our *Mundhum* a religious and holy book, lies an important lesson of life and also provides the source of myths and sacred things. Since it was verbally transmitted some of the narratives, folklore are faded away which describe who Limbus are? He said millet and rice farming is the material culture of Limbus which is there in the scriptures of *Mundhum*. He said according to folklore our Goddess *Yuma* is the custodian of nature.

### **Narrative 1: Paddy and Millet farming is a Cultural Identity of Limbus**

*Once upon a time there was a man in village who was a farmer. Every day he goes to the field for ploughing, sowing the seeds and harvesting. He used to grow cereals and other vegetables. One day he noticed that something was unearth in the field, seems like someone was doing farming in his absence. He was very much surprised and scared of this unknowing phenomenon which is going around in his field. In order to understand what is happening he decided to go in his field next day before dawn. He then went to field and was astonished to see a lady working in the field planting millet and paddy. The figure was not so clear but resembles like a divine soul. The figure became a mirage and started getting blurred with the streak of dawn rays. The farmer then realized that the divine soul was Yuma who in a disguise was working in his field.*

This narrative reflects the importance of farming in the socio – cultural life of Limbus. According to Sagant (1996) Limbus are agriculturist and the paddy and millet cultivation is the important cultural crops used in marriage to ceremonies and offerings to various deities. The alcoholic beverage made from millet is very important in certain rituals and rites. In the study area of Teesta Valley millet beer popularly known as *Jaad* is used in both marriage and death rituals for purification from the pollution period. Similarly Paddy cultivation has the unique significance in the cultural life. There are many folk dances in the Limbu society of which *Yalang*, paddy dance is very popular and is done in hopes of finding a marriage partner during harvesting season. It is also known as *Dhan Nach*. There is a strict rule during this dance that a boy and girl from the blood relation and clan may not perform. The very

first harvest of paddy and millet is offered to *Yuma* through *naya puja* by shaman. During my field survey in Bungkulung and Dungra most of the Limbus grew these two crops as the part of their material culture and reflecting the cultural identity of Limbus as animist.

### **Narrative 2: Saint Sirijunga as a religious symbol of Limbu Identity**

In this narrative, I will present a local version of inhabitant about Saint Sirijunga, a 9<sup>th</sup> century Limbu prince. Surprisingly each and every household knew about him. He was the crusader of Limbu culture and religion. His contribution and role is well researched by famous Limbu scholars like Iman Singh Chemjong. This narrative is a amalgamation of respondent from three different study areas rendered to me during an interview at their place. The story goes as follows:

*During the 9<sup>th</sup> century there was a birth of Limbu prince Sirijunga in Limbuwan province. Since his childhood he was devotee and always thinks for others. When he grew up he found his countrymen were illiterate and backward. The whole course of Sirijunga life changed with one vision of his dream. His dream was as pure and holy, where he had been accompanied by Hindu Goddess of learning Saraswati. She took him to mountains of learning where the scriptures were written on the wall and stones. He learned those scripts in his dream only. When he sprang from his dream he started to propagate the script among illiterate masses. The scripts were called as Sirijunga script. After his death again the Limbus were interwoven in dark periods. There was no development of language, culture and people. But the rays of hope soon felt at around 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Sirijunga was reincarnated in the Limbuwan. The reincarnated Sirijunga Teyongsi revived the script and Limbu religion Yumaism. He soon started to travel across the Eastern Himalayas propagating Yumaism. He arrived in west Sikkim at the time when Chogyals of Sikkim were imposing religious assertions. His arrival was seen as the threat because Limbus was united and was brought under the Limbu identity by pacifying their religion. The Chogyals then tied Sirijunga Teyongsi to a tree and shot him with the arrows and later on wrapped his body in a bag he was thrown from the cliff into the river. When the bag of dead body*

*was thrown in the river water a white coloured bird flew out and shouted “I will be coming back in future”.*

The narrative reflects the martyrdom of Sirijunga for the sake of Limbus. The ethnic associations throughout the Eastern Himalayas are making Sirijunga a cultural hero and religious symbol of Limbu Identity. The Limbus of the study areas are revitalizing Sirijunga by celebrated his birthday as festivals. The *Mangheem in Martam*, Western Sikkim is dedicated specially to Sirijunga (Gustavsson, 2013). This place in the Sikkim has now become the sacred homage for Limbu pilgrimages.

### **7.7 Role of Sacred Landscapes in Determining Limbu Identity**

It has been already mentioned that the Limbu associations, indigenist writers and the *Tumyhang* are the main propagators of culture, language and identity. The way these associations are channelizing the Limbus either through cultural mobilization or religious motivation has already created a striking differences among Limbu and Non – Limbu Identity. The religious identity movement is not a new thing in history of Limbus. It was there in the past “ In 1931 Limbu leaders gathered and decided to change some of their basic elements of their religion and culture in order to reform their culture to be able to confront the dominant Hindu religion” (Gustavsson, 2013). In the process of identifying as Limbus a new geographical boundaries were drawn to relocate their sacred landscapes pacifying their cultural realms which is the base of their identity. In the study areas the respondents of older generations had Limbuwan Diaspora because of their ancestral history and sacred landscapes. For instance in Bungkulung Mr. N.B Limbu talked about the sacred landscapes of *Silauti* in Fidim district of Panchthar, Eastern Nepal. The place where *Satyahangma* movement started now this place has become the new sacred landscapes and pilgrimage to Limbus following the *Satyahangma* religion. Similarly Bermiock Martam a picturesque pristine Himalayan village of Sikkimese Limbu is another new scared landscapes. The quaint village is a popular and revered religious hub of Limbu people. The village ground still holds the symbol of its rich religious past in the form of the temple *Yuma Samyo Mangheem* a shrine for Yumaism followers. A huge number of devotee visits

the temple every year to remember Guru *Teyongsi Sirijunga* who used to sit there and deliver sermons to his devoted followers (ibid). Recently on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2017, the Chief Minister of Sikkim on 313<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Teyongsi Sirijunga inaugurated the tallest statue which has now become the iconic landmark. Thus the sacred landscapes help the Limbu to re-connect with their past and helps to develop their core Limbu identity aloof from the others.

### **7.8 Role of Limbu Associations and Identity Construction**

The present trend of Limbu Identity and politics is supported by the different existing Limbu associations in undermining the cultural identity and their deliberation of getting more political autonomy in Darjeeling Himalaya within the State of west Bengal. The associations are actively supporting organizations focusing on the development of traditional culture. They are participating in programmes within and outside Darjeeling Himalaya organized by Limbus of different places to strengthen the unity among Limbus. In this context, it is better to highlight the role and profile of some important Limbu associations and organization of Darjeeling Himalaya and other region for incorporating their support and extending their help for betterment of the Limbus. These associations are playing a prominent role in shaping the identity issues of Limbus in the political forefront for safeguarding the interest of the people. Below mentioned are the names of associations who played a major role in culminating the Limbus into one broad umbrella of *Yumaism* and *Yangthumbas*.

- i. ***Sarva Kiranti Chumlung***: This association was initiated in the year 1925 at Dungra village of Kalimpong for imparting the cultural values and was popularly known as Hang Chumlung or a council of kings. But in 1976 it was renamed as Sarva Kiranti Chumlung. This association used to caters the development of Limbu people scattered throughout the states of Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Nepal. Owing to its geographical adversity most of the works always remained in problematic state and was never been successful to achieve its goal (Subba T. , 1999)

- ii. ***All India Kirat Chumlung Association Sabha***: Initially a branch of the Sarva Kiranti Chumlung established in Kalimpong in July 1925, it was only after All India Kirat Chumlung association Sabha's reorganization under new name on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1971 that it began to function actively (Subba T. , 1999). This association was guided by eminent Limbu academician Iman Singh Chemjong from 1931 to 1976. In this not only Limbus but other ethnic groups mainly Rai was there whose culture and religion is very close to Limbus. But with the name of association they had shown their resent and objection. Because they thought the name of association was more Limbu oriented. Thus, the association could not succeed in flourishing its message to common people.
- iii. **All India Limbu Association**: One of the important associations of Darjeeling district is All India Limbu Association. The main head office is in Darjeeling town and most of the small sub branches this association is present in the different parts of Darjeeling. The main objective of this association is to have a holistic development of the Limbus. This association played the very crucial role in achieving of Scheduled Tribe status for Limbus of West Bengal. Now in the present context association lacks in man power as most of the dedicating members had become old. Moreover many of the branches of this association have deviated to the Limbu association of Kalimpong.
- iv. ***Yakthung Shoong Choomvo***: This association of Kalimpong is most popular and big association both in districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The association president is Mr. N.D Limbu. This was the spear head association who started a political intervention for securing a development board in West Bengal. In the study areas of Bungkulung and Teesta Valley Limbu association has their affiliation to *Yakthung Shoong Choomvo*.
- v. ***Akhil Sikkim Kirat Limbu Chumlung***: This association was established on 23<sup>rd</sup> may 1973 in Tharpu West Sikkim one of the dominant Limbu inhabited area. The main issue of this association was to categorized Limbus as Chongs Identity as indigenous tribe of Sikkim instead of Nepali categorization. The crucial and most important initiatives taken by this association was placing a memorandum for inclusion of Limbu community under the Scheduled Tribe status in the Sovereign Secular state of

India. This association also showed a strong resentment against the Bhandari government who was the then Chief Minister of Sikkim for keeping Limbu into oblivion and not fulfilling their aspirations and commitments for restoring the Limbu seat in State legislative assembly and ignoring their draft of Tribe inclusion for the betterment and safeguarding the Limbu interests (Subba T. , 1999).

- vi. ***Kirat Dharma Tatha Sahitya***: This association was established in 1979 at Fidim in the Panthar district of Eastern Nepal. The main objective of this association was not only the holistic development of Limbu society but to popularize the Limbu language, script and culture in a larger domain. The association is propagating the ideals and teaching of Mahaguru Swami Phalgunanda known as Satyahangma Dharma which is a kind of Sankritised form of Hinduism. Due to its ideals and morals it is often criticized of neglecting Limbu religion. But the followers of this association condemned such speculations and glorifies the principles of avoiding to take bride price, non – violence, to give up alcoholism and non- vegetarianism and ensure the gender equality. In the study areas very few households are following Satyahangma religion.

### **7.9 The West Bengal Limbu Development Board and Limbu Identity**

In recent years Darjeeling Himalaya witnesses the huge upsurge of not only environmental problems but also the political unrest and demand of separate development boards to sort out an identity problem of the various ethnic and tribal groups. Every ethnic tribal group is seeking revival for fading cultural heritage and to have a sustainable development through a “Development Boards” enhancing the socio- political conditions of marginal tribal groups. The statehood demand and the formation of Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) as an ultimate solution also could not address to solve the major problems of some tribes. They started to raise their voice for a development board to fulfill their main objective and goal as a panacea to combat their problems facing for a long time. The lack of political support and negligence in the past and present days created a huge rift among the Limbus and the major political party (GJMM) of the Darjeeling Himalaya creating a stir in

statehood demand. The Lepcha tribe strongly protests and stage *dharnas*, fast unto death for demanding separate board within the frame of West Bengal Government. The Lepcha development board was granted to establish on 2013 paves a new milestone in the history of Darjeeling Himalaya

The Development Board sparked a new chapter in the political discourse of Darjeeling and Gorkhaland movement. The then GTA Chairman and leader of GJMM party Sri. Bimal Gurung threatened to launch an agitation for Gorkhaland and had called a 12 hour shutdown on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2013 to protest against the formation of board. They urged State government not to set up such separate interim council based on religious and cultural ground. But State did not pay any heed to their cry and formed the Lepcha Development Board amidst of all political turmoil in the Darjeeling Hills. The formation of Development Board opened a Pandora Box which completely subdue the Gorkhaland Movement and complicated a secular fabric of the hills. Soon clamoring for the formation of such board started to echoes among the different scheduled caste and tribal outfits of Darjeeling Himalaya.

The Limbus too started to initiate the programme and proposal for the formation of Limbu Development Board. The members of the different Limbu association and outfits feels that during the chaotic political agitation back in 1986 and with the formation of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration in 2011. The Limbus was totally ignored in the overall development process and moreover their sentiments were hurt when not a single Limbu representatives was nominated in the newly interim set up of GTA. Because of the apathetic attitude of both DGHC and GTA, Limbus felt a development board is the prerequisite necessity of an hour to enhanced oneself. The different Limbu associations started to strategized and chalk out their programmes. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013 Sri N.D Limbu President of Kalimpong Limbu Association popularly known as Yakthung Chumlung first placed and forwarded the proposal of Board draft personally to Honorable Chief Minister Smt. Mamata Banerjee at St. Alphonsus School premises where she was in her political visit and addressing general public meetings. Understanding the situation and failure of movement, Limbu

began to seek an alternative route to uplift their individual community as Lepchas. During the tenure of GJMM party Limbus felt that they were completely neglected and had understood that their conditions can only improved by proper state intervention and initiatives. Then, on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014 Limbus from all walks of life organized a huge rally under the banner of Kalimpong *Yakthung Chumlung* association supported by other Limbu associations of Darjeeling District and adjoining areas of Duars for demanding separate Limbu Development Board. The rally was conducted in the plains of Siliguri where 15000 Limbus had participated. The rally began from Malluguri via hill cart road to office of Additional District Magistrate and documents along with the board draft were submitted.

“Realizing that the ethnic sentiment could be an immediate political tool to fracture the GJM, Banerjee proposed Tribal Development Boards (TDB) for Darjeeling Hills. This set off a new revivalism among already designated ST groups to get a TDB, and for non-ST groups to intensify their assertion of tribal rather than Gorkha identity” (Sangay Tamang, 2018 ). After three years of repetitive initiatives and five meetings with Government representatives finally the proposed Development board was formed and declared by chief Minister on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2016 at Chowrastha in Darjeeling. Ever since the formation of West Bengal Limbu Development board (WBLDB), one of the agendum of the board is to highlight the cultural specificity. The board emphasized on asserting the religious identity by celebrating Limbu authentic festivals and wearing one’s own cultural dress at least on ceremonial occasions and thereby reviving the lost cultural identity among the Limbus. The major apolitical Limbu outfits also strongly agree on the renewal of intangible cultural heritage. Their main reason is to preserve the unique traditional and Socio-cultural ethos of Limbus. This further refurbished by WBLDB and AILA (All India Limbu Association) recommending following measures to be adopted.

- i. Preservation of Limbu language by encouraging youths and children to trained in Limbu language course disseminated with the help of senior knowledgeable persons.
- ii. Limbus should marry according to the rules prescribed in the Limbu culture.

- iii. Limbus should not marry scheduled caste.
- iv. Limbus should observe their own festivals instead of celebrating Dusserah and Diwali. In prior to this statement few years ago Limbu had boycotted the major Hindu festivals but in later phase they again started to rejoice it.
- v. In addition the Development Board further proposes to construct a Museum and Mangheem (Temple) for the religious purposes.

The Limbu Development Board has already started working on fulfillment of its major goals by allocating and distributing Governments for downtrodden families by constructing houses and materializing the necessary civic amenities required in the far flung remote Limbu villages.

### **7.10 Perceptions of Limbus and Non – Limbus in Perceiving Identity**

The role of state in perceiving the Limbu Identity is more clearly based on the motives of political ground. The Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya was recognized as Scheduled Tribe by State Government in the year 2002. Though being a Scheduled Tribe most of the Limbu are not been able to utilize their tribal benefits because of their educational backwardness. For instance, during the field visits in 2017, it was found many of them doesn't have tribal certificate. Some of them are applying for it, now for their children and themselves after 15 years of recognition. Some respondents opined after having a certificate too they are unable to secure jobs because of competitions. Regarding all this problems I interviewed, Mr. N.D Limbu the Chairman of West Bengal Limbu Development Board regarding how he reunite the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya for greater political cause in a long run and to understand their perception on the Limbu identity issues as an insider view.

I conducted my recent field visits from 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016 almost a month back Limbu Development Board was established by the State Government. On 18.02.2016 I met Sri. Shekhar Subba an Executive member nominate by the Governor of West Bengal. He is an active youth member of this body. Now I am highlighting some of my queries to Shekhar Subba and his response

Question: - When I called you as a Cultural promoter? How did you feel about it?

*Answer:* - He smiles and replied, I am not only the one who is doing to safeguard our culture. But I am getting an immense help from my community. Our intangible Limbu heritage is slowly fading away from its root. We need to save our language and initiation of learning should start from home through senior members who know the language. I am just an individual who is in this learning procedure and looking for the better prospects of Limbus. So the tag of cultural engineer goes to those senior knowledgeable of our community who is constructing the lost identity of Limbus via roots and route of culture.

Question: - What is your opinion regarding the acculturation among the Limbus?

*Answer:* - This kind of process is always there within the community so only Limbu is not only the exceptional case. I don't reject the idea of being acculturated because in a modern era like this global and popular culture always attracts and fascinates the youths. But at the same time we should try from our side to revive the forgotten culture in such a way. So that youths are willing to accept it not by force.

In the mean time I was joined by the active member of the board Miss Sanjogita Limbu who is an entrepreneur by profession. She joined us in our conversation, so I too placed some of my questions to her so that I could have some idea how Limbu women perceive their identity and politics of culture in the Darjeeling region.

Question: - How do you perceive your culture and identity as Limbu?

*Answer:* - She chuckles and said, I love my culture but living in a heterogeneous society I too cannot refrain myself from being influenced by popular culture. In our ancestral home we used to talk in Limbu language and had even learned some of the grammar and vocabulary. When I moved to town for pursuing education, I slowly began to deviate from Limbu culture and got assimilated to Nepali culture and identity. But even though how much I have modernized but still there is an essence of my culture and traditional attributes present in me.

Question: - What is the reason behind the forming a Development Board?

*Answer:* - She replied the survey was carried out by the different Limbu association of Darjeeling Himalaya. It was found majority of the Limbus are poor and deprived of basic civic amenities of life. The formation of board will help these sections of people along with the outmost financial support of the State Government. Because Development Board itself is a state intervention for developing socially weaker section of the society.

The meeting with these two board representatives was very fruitful and they only help to meet the most important member of the Board Chairman under whose supervision whole things was done.

On very next day 19.02.2016 sharp at 11.00 am I reached the temporary office of the Board in lower Dungra. I was dropped by a local taxi in the front of office gate. As the main entrance was closed I thought to call up Chairman Sir but even before I would make a call Chairman Sir Sri. N.D Limbu was there and warmly greeted me. From 11.30 am onwards I started my interview with sir regarding the Limbus and development board. Soon I asked my first questions.

Question:-Was the idea behind the formation of Limbu development is taken from the Lepcha community?

The chairman said we all know among the five main tribes of Darjeeling Limbu, Lepcha, Sherpa, Tamang and Bhutia all four got their board expect us. The idea was not derived from any community but was our necessity to upgrade ourselves educationally and economically. When Lepcha can get it why can't we? Limbu are indigenous tribe living in this region. So having a board is our fundamental right.

Question: - Why the Limbu association of Kalimpong took up this initiative for placing the draft to State Government?

He replied for over years All India Limbu Association of Darjeeling head office is lying inactive. It was the situation of now or never because there was a big question on Limbu fate and destiny.

Question: - Do you want to functions the board under the purview of GTA?

No, because we don't have any expectation and assurance from GTA because it is itself a temporary body.

Question: - What are the recent development works of Board?

After the declaration and formation of Board, the first project is construction of houses for homeless Limbus. It is estimated the total sum of 2 lakhs will be sanctioned to each needy family for making a house. The main purpose of uniting Limbus of different areas by associations is to boost up their political ambition of gaining greater autonomy from Government to strengthen their socio-economic life. Understanding the complex fabric of Limbu social life and authentic culture, the state government also gives a nod to formed Limbu development board after the strict scrutiny in each and every aspect.

The Non – Limbu communities in the study areas have different perspectives regarding the Limbu Identity and formation of development board. The Non – Limbu belonging to different ethnic groups have different opinion and views towards the tribal group of Darjeeling Himalaya. They also wanted to include in Tribal category so they could also enjoys the reservation benefits in the Government services and scholarship facilities in higher education. Since the Government of West Bengal has initiated and implemented various policies for the betterment of Tribal communities through formation of Development Board. This has further strengthened the socio-economic conditions of these people from under privileged to privileged one. These non – tribal communities they are not treated equally as par and has been always discriminated on the ground of reservations.

### **7.11 Hopes, Aspirations and Limbu Development Board**

In the awe of political repercussion formation of the Development board ignite the new hopes and aspirations among the Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya. Limbus from the different stratum of the society has various opinions regarding the implications of the board. During the fieldwork, the researcher interacted with the Limbu youths regarding their expectations from the Board. The majority of the youths especially the study area of Teesta valley Tea Garden hopes that board if could implement certain specific programmes for them so they could stop venturing outside the village. The older generations of Limbus want that the board should take immediate steps for securing the art, culture and customs of Limbus. They believe in the reinforcement of the *Tumyahang* (Limbu Councils) at the earliest.

The Chairman of the Limbu Development Board in his interview with the researcher has shown the concerned about the demands. He too wants to open a Limbu museum where the tangible heritage could be preserved. He talked about the housing development scheme where the board had sanctioned Rupees 2 Lakhs each to the deprived section of Limbus for better housing and living.

Though, the formation of Board had opened the new spectrum of development policy. But implementation of some programmes had attracted the strict surveillance of the people because of its loopholes. The villagers had grievances and strong resentment against the authorities for being partial to their upper hand people. They feel that utmost needy family is debarred and their condition is getting deplorable with each passing day.

### **7.12 Findings**

Centuries prior to and until the formation of modern day Eastern Nepal, Greater Sikkim and Colonial Darjeeling, the Limbus had their own way of life, rules, customs, traditions and land management system in the then province of Limbuwan. With the drastic change in the policy of war and conquest, the whole kingdom of Limbu faced the severe displacement and migration. Limbus, who had migrated to

Darjeeling Himalaya, had gone through a huge loss of political autonomy and loss of traditional identity in their homeland.

The Limbus in the Darjeeling Himalaya had gone through the various changes and upheaval in the course of ethnic identity formation from Shah Rule in the east Nepal to recent political movement of Darjeeling Himalaya. The story of emergence and evolution of Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya as a distinct socio-cultural group provides an interesting subject to understand the Identity dynamics vividly changed through the course of history. Originally a Tibeto Mongoloids group, the Limbus traces their ancestral history from the then province of Limbuwan in Eastern Nepal and West Sikkim, India. The Limbus in the Darjeeling Himalaya had gone through the 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 construction of the Limbu identity in the past can be linked with the political unification of Nepal in 1774 in the Eastern Nepal, socio-political relation of Namgyal with Limbus of Sikkim and establishment of colonial edifice in Darjeeling.

But now in the modern era of 21<sup>st</sup> century they had moved much ahead of their past history and reclaiming their present political autonomy through the process of (re) tribalisation. The field data and analysis followed up with the meeting of representatives of different associations clearly reveals that they want to come in political forefront. As for a long time there was no political support and initiative taken for the betterment of the community from regional party and major state ruling party. Limbu were very much neglected and this negligence attitude prompts the Limbu associations to take immediate measures for uplifting their cultural values and identity.

The main motive of the Associations is to bring all Limbus into one umbrella of *Yumaism* and to follow the core of this religion. The associations' members' acts as promoters, which enables to further define and redefine religious and cultural aspects of the Limbus. Organized pujas like *Manghoop*, *Ubhauri* and *Udhauri* are few

religious ceremonies and practices highlighting the religious identity. These cultural ceremonies are graced to strengthen the unity among Limbus. The important Limbu personalities from politics, academics to different fields from the country are invited. Moreover the energetic youths of the associations are working hard in sensitizing Limbu culture and identity in relation to their habitat.

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# Chapter 8

## MAJOR FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 Dungra 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 deals 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 has perfectly blended with the process of religion syncretism. They worship different Hindu pools of God, Goddess and Deities but they also firmly believe in the supreme power of Limbu deity *Tagera Ningwaphuma*. The senior and knowledgeable Limbu 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 are divulge into other religions. They are celebrating all the major Limbu festivals and rituals essentially to mark a line of difference from other. Even the different Limbu outfits are making their best effort to spread their religion. But during the field visits it was found Limbu were practicing both the religion simultaneously. They had worship place for Hindu Gods and a separate place for *Yuma Than*. Chunks of Limbu population are 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 urban resident 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 function 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 the State perceives Limbu identity? How the Non Limbu of the Study areas perceives their identity? Lastly How Limbu 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 Privity 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.

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## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix I: List of Abbreviations**

**Appendix II: Glossary**

**Appendix III: Publications**

**Appendix IV: Interview Schedule**

**ABBREVIATIONS**

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<b>AILA</b>	All India Limbu Association
<b>BPO</b>	Business Process Outsourcing
<b>ECHS</b>	Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme
<b>GNLF</b>	Gorkha National Liberation Front
<b>GJMM</b>	Gorkha Janmukti Morcha
<b>GTA</b>	Gorkhaland Territorial Administration
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>ICDS</b>	Integrated Child Development Services
<b>LPG</b>	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
<b>MGNREGA</b>	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
<b>MLA</b>	Member of the Legislative Assembly
<b>PHE</b>	Public Health Engineering Department
<b>PMSGY</b>	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
<b>SSK</b>	The Shishu Shiksha Karmasuchi Programme
<b>ST</b>	Schedule Tribe
<b>TDB</b>	Tribal Development Board
<b>WBLDB</b>	West Bengal Limbu Development Board

**GLOSSARY**

<i>Achhut</i>	Untouchables
<i>Adhiya</i>	Sharecropping System under Which the Owner and Labourer Each Receive Half of the Crop
<i>Baisakh</i>	First Month of the Nepali Calendar
<i>Bari</i>	Agricultural Land
<i>Bazaar</i>	Shopping Area in a Village
<i>Bhaje</i>	Grandfather
<i>Biga</i>	Temporary Workers of Tea Garden
<i>Biha</i>	Marriage
<i>Chogyal</i>	The Ruler of Sikkim
<i>Chiyako Bhot</i>	Tea Bushes
<i>Choribiha</i>	Marriage by Elopement
<i>Chedhyap</i>	Bamboo Stretcher
<i>Chhut</i>	Touchable
<i>Dungri</i>	Nose Ring
<i>Dhannach</i>	Paddy Dance
<i>Dhoko</i>	Bamboo Basket
<i>Dhukuti</i>	Granary
<i>Dashain</i>	Festival
<i>Dhura</i>	Settlement of People in Tea Garden

<i>Dharnas</i>	Protest
<i>Fulbari</i>	Garden
<i>Goan</i>	Village
<i>Haat</i>	Periodical Market in Village
<i>Hasia</i>	Sickle
<i>Joongay</i>	Man with a Moustache
<i>Jhora</i>	Small Rivulet
<i>Jaribooti</i>	Ethno Medicine
<i>Jharphook</i>	Healing Treatment by Shaman
<i>Jaad</i>	Millet Beer
<i>Jetha</i>	Eldest Son
<i>Jethi</i>	Eldest Daughter
<i>Jarikal</i>	Compensation or Fine Paid By the Second Husband of A Woman to Her First Husband
<i>Kipat</i>	System of Communal Land Ownership
<i>Khim</i>	House
<i>Khola</i>	River
<i>Khetala</i>	Agricultural Labourer
<i>Khasmahal</i>	Villages Having the Legal Document of Land and Pays Tax to the Government
<i>Katero</i>	Store Room
<i>Khet</i>	Field
<i>Kinema</i>	Fermented Soybeans
<i>Khukuri</i>	Sharp Inwardly Curved Knife.

<b><i>Kutchu</i></b>	Undurable
<b><i>Khanchi</i></b>	Youngest Sibling
<b><i>Khauma</i></b>	Death Rite
<b><i>Khyali</i></b>	Limbu Folk Song
<b><i>Khurpi</i></b>	Small Type of Gardening Implement Used for Weeding.
<b><i>Mangheem</i></b>	Temple
<b><i>Mangenna</i></b>	It is a Limbu Ritual of Holding One's Head High.
<b><i>Mughlan</i></b>	India
<b><i>Matwali</i></b>	Drinking Caste
<b><i>Metkhim</i></b>	Marriage
<b><i>Mundhum</i></b>	Limbu Oral Recitations
<b><i>Maila</i></b>	Actually this is a Word Which Indicates Second One.
<b><i>Mangni</i></b>	Engagement
<b><i>Noon Pani</i></b>	Salt Water
<b><i>Nala</i></b>	Drain
<b><i>Putka</i></b>	Stingless Bee
<b><i>Poote</i></b>	Green Beads Necklace Wore By a Married Woman.
<b><i>Pakure</i></b>	Agricultural Tenant or Care Taker
<b><i>Panchami</i></b>	Fifth Day in Hindu Lunar Calendar.
<b><i>Rupauli</i></b>	A Kind of A Bride Price Paid In A Monetary Value.
<b><i>Rakshi</i></b>	Alcoholic Beverages (Wine)
<b><i>Srijunga Lipi</i></b>	Limbu Scriptures
<b><i>Satyahangma</i></b>	Religion following Both the Principles of Hinduism and Yumaism.

<b><i>Sutak</i></b>	Pollution Period Observed After The Birth of A Child.
<b><i>Sunnauli</i></b>	A Kind of A Bride Price Paid In Terms of Gold Ornaments.
<b><i>Saheb</i></b>	Officer / Tea Garden Manager
<b><i>Tumyanghangs</i></b>	Council of Elderly and Knowledgeable Limbus
<b><i>Tumba</i></b>	Senior Knowledgeable Limbu Man
<b><i>Thi</i></b>	Alcohol
<b><i>Thekka</i></b>	Contract
<b><i>Thar</i></b>	Clan
<b><i>Thum</i></b>	Place \ District
<b><i>Takshi</i></b>	Rice Feeding Ceremony
<b><i>Tagadharis</i></b>	Upper Castes
<b><i>Ubauli &amp; Udauli</i></b>	Religious Puja and Ritual after Crop Harvests
<b><i>Ukhaan</i></b>	Proverb
<b><i>Yakthungpan</i></b>	Limbu Language

## **APPENDIX III**

### **PUBLICATION**

1. Status of Working Limbu Women in Different Plantation Areas of Darjeeling Himalaya: Some Observation  
(UGC REFERRED JOURNAL)

# International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews

An open Access, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed, online and printed International Research Journal



Approved by UGC  
Journal No. 43602

E ISSN 2348-1269  
Print ISSN 2349-5138  
Impact Factor 5.75

## Certificate of Publication

This is to certify that Prof. / Dr. VINAY LIMBU had contributed a paper as author / co-author to

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND ANALYTICAL REVIEWS**

**Impact Factor 5.75fp**

**COSMOS Impact Factor 4.236**

Title Status of Working Limbu Women in Different Plantation Areas of Darjeeling Himalaya: Some Observation

and has got published in volume 5, Issue 3, July - Sept, 2018.

The Editor in Chief & The Editorial Board appreciate the Intellectual Contribution of the author / co-author.

*V.B. Jari*

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# Status of Working Limbu Women in Different Plantation Areas of Darjeeling Himalaya: Some Observation

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Received: June 27 , 2018

Accepted: August 05, 2018

## ABSTRACT

*Women's role in plantation areas of Darjeeling Himalaya is very significant. They contribute about 60 to 70 percent of the labour requirement. In rural areas of Rangli-Rangliot and Kalimpong I block both male and female are employed in this sectors. The women are usually employed in those operations most of which have not been mechanized. They have less access to information and technology due to their poor educational status. But they equally participate in the decision making activities of households and other socio-cultural affairs of daily life. At an average they spend 8 hours a day to work but at the same time manage all the domestic chores of their household. They play a very important role in the family and society. In spite of positive economic role played by the women their overall status in the family as well as society is still subordinate and gender inequality is also rampant. Hence the question arises why women's role is not recognized and why they enjoy the subordinate position? Therefore an attempt has been made to show the status of rural women and their role in overall development of the economy and society. The paper is completely based on empirical research. Field studies were conducted at Teesta Valley Tea Garden and Cinchona Plantation area of Sangser Village (Kalimpong) of Darjeeling Himalaya.*

**Keywords:** *The tribes, General view of their History, sources of information, Local distribution.*

[1]

## Introduction

The Economy of Darjeeling Himalaya highly depends on the plantation sectors. The sections of people who inhabited these plantation areas are living in relative isolation where prime focus is the whole day work with a meager income to look after their family. The lack of the alternative source of income generation and employment opportunities had led the both male and female counterparts of the rural folk community to work in the plantation for providing better amenities in life. The rural womenfolk who are less educated employed themselves as labourer in the plantation areas. These women apart from doing domestic chores also bring cash in family to support their children education. The whole day work of 8 hours has shown their status, strength and positive mentality towards the important economic role played in the society. The rural womenfolk of Himalayan society radical differ from their plain counterparts not only in terms of physiognomy but also in attitudes, social, economic and traditional perspectives. The Limbus is one of the ethnic groups of Darjeeling Himalaya professing *Yumasim* religion as their way of life. The supreme Goddess *Tagera Ningwaphuma* holds an immense important in the life of Limbus who is regarded as the creator of this world. The whole idea belief, faith and customs of Limbu tradition revolves around the worshipping of *Yumasam (female household deity)* for better future and prosperous life. In Limbu society women signifies an honour and respect to her family. The family structure is well knitted by her compassion and tolerant quality. Being in the subordinate position she maintains herself to cope with every change which is beneficial for her family. The rigid social fabric of village is always attached with certain rudiments of orthodox norms which have restricted her to freely exercise her power and judgement in the daily affairs of village life. The plantation sectors has been always been a focus of study to scholars to show various problems associated with owner and labourer. The marginalized sections of these sector women have always remained obscure from the main scenario apart of being an instrumental in the process of productions. The authors have made a modest attempt to study the conditions of Limbu womenfolk of marginalized tribal sections of Darjeeling Himalaya.

## Objectives, Methodology and Study Areas

The present paper is the modest attempt of authors to show the position and status of Limbu women folk of the study areas. The aim objectives of the paper are to study socio-cultural profile of the Limbu women and to analysis how far the educational attainment among them has aroused the level of consciousness. The paper also tends to focus on the positive role played by them in the family and their participation in the

decision making process of the households. The paper uses the both primary and secondary data to evaluate their role and position in the family. However field based interview method is adapted to insight into their social and cultural life in the village. Accordingly a schedule was prepared to collect the primary information and secondary information has gathered from a relevant journal articles. The Teesta Valley Tea garden and Sangser Village under Mungsong Cinchona plantation is selected for the proposed study which falls under the administrative divisions of Rangli-Rangliot block and Kalimpong I block of Darjeeling Himalaya.

[2]

**Limbu Women of the Study areas: a socio-cultural profile**

I start with this phrase “*Women are carrier of tradition to her offspring’s generation*” said by *Pritiful Limbu* an aged old senior lady of the Tea garden. Limbu Women is seen as the torch bearer of her community tradition and morality. The field survey conducted in both the plantation viz Tea and Cinchona plantation shows a very interesting picture of Limbu women encircled with the same problems and few changes in their daily life. The rural Limbu woman had developed a positive attitude towards the recent development going in their local habitat. Some of them had engaged themselves in the women development scheme programmes like *ICDS* where the volunteers aware them about their health. The opening of new schools in the recent times had made them aware of girl child education and its importance. They are working in others formal sectors apart from plantation sectors. Very few of them are highly educated holding a very good place in both the working place and in the locality. The various parameters are taken into consideration to study the socio-cultural aspects which are highlighted below.

**i. Age**

The study areas have quite high proportion of female population according to sample size. The female of all ages were taken into consideration for study purpose to know their views except infant and girl child age ranging between (5-10 years). In the study areas the mean age of the female respondent in Teesta valley tea garden is 32 years and Sangser Village is 31 years respectively.

**ii. Educational Attainment**

Education is prime necessity in women upliftment because it enables empowerment. Women can freely exercise her rights take challenges to confront their traditional role and change her life. So we cannot neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment. But in rural Darjeeling Himalaya, it is still experienced that Limbu women did not have enough access towards education in the study areas. The main reasons for their educational backwardness in the old days were the predominant patriarchal system not providing enough chances for women to have higher education even if they wish. Spending on education and especially for a girl child is still perceived as a waste of money and resources to some orthodox people in the study village. Moreover the lack of schools in the study areas is the main drawback because students have to walk a distance kilometers to reach school. The security issue of a girl child is also the main reason in the study areas for which many of them left the schools and inclined towards domestic chores of the household and results in the high rate of girls’ dropout.

**Table 1. Showing the Educational Attainment of the Limbu womenfolk**

S. No	Category	Teesta Valley	Sangser
1	Illiterate	32%	21%
2	Primary	21%	37%
3	Secondary	14%	24%
4	Graduation	2%	2%
5	Still Studying	33%	16%
6	Total Percentage	100%	100%

(0-4years population is ignored)

Source: Field Survey 2017

**iii. Occupational Pursuits**

A Limbu woman plays a significant role in the economic upbringing of the family. Apart from doing regular household works she also brings cash to her family. In both the plantation areas viz. Tea garden and Cinchona plantation 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 one is *biga* or temporary workers. *Biga* workers are mainly employed for the tenure of six months mainly for plucking. In the Cinchona plantation study area no such division was found by the researcher. Many

of the senior Limbu women are retired employee from plantation area and rest are employed in the different sectors of work place which includes teaching, government and private jobs along with the petty business carried by some rural womenfolk.

**Table 2. Showing the Occupational background of the Limbu womenfolk**

S. No	Category	Teesta Valley	Sangser
1	Housewife	45%	46%
2	Plantation Worker	35%	13%
3	Casual Worker	4%	4%
4	Private Job	1%	6%
5	Petty Business	1%	6%
6	Retired Employee	4%	4%
7	Unemployed	10%	21%
8	Total Percentage	100%	100%

**Source: Field Survey 2017**

#### iv. Marital Status

In Limbu Society marriage is regarded as the social institution bestowed with duties and obligations towards the family responsibility. The woman of the study areas married in quite young age. The two types of marriages are prominent in the study areas *Chori biha (marriage by elopement)* and *Maghi biha (arranged marriage)*. The most common practiced of marriage in the study areas is elopement. In Limbu society woman has right to chose her partner. But marrying within same clan clan group is highly restricted. In my field observation I have found even a divorced woman was living freely in her maternal house and was enjoying the same position as before her marriage. Whereas the widows were also treated well in the family and in some of the family they were the head of the households. Few spinsters who are in late 40's are found in both the study areas. Some of them were working and unemployed with certain physical disability. These unmarried women had never felt as a burden in the family and had been entrusted with certain responsibility.

[3]

#### Family and Domestic Affairs

The Limbu family is well knitted with the patriarchal system where father is the head of the household. Most of the households have Nuclear family very few of them have joint family. In Teesta valley (80%) have nuclear and (20%) have joint family whereas in Sangser (56%) have joint and (44%) have nuclear family. In case of the absence of father senior most female or elder son became the family head. The father takes the important decision in the financial matters but in matter of marriage and other kinship obligations he takes the view of his spouse. The contrasting thing found in the study area of sangser village was female also makes decision in the financial matter of family. The family property is jointly possessed by blood brothers and even unmarried daughters also share some property. In case of absence of son's daughters inherit the father property. The ornaments and jewellery items are possessed by mother, daughters and daughter-in-law. Most of the domestic chores are done by the woman but male members also help them in some of their work. Women folk usually prepare foods, cleaning, washing and caring of children's. They also look after the domestic animals. They also collect firewood's and foddors for animals, fetching water from nearby streams. Women who work as plantation worker do their all domestic chores before leaving for their daily work. After work also she does left out works and prepare food for family at night.

#### Participation of women in Agriculture

In both the study area women folk are keenly interested in Kitchen gardening. At the backyard of their house they grow leafy vegetables, corns and local variety of chilly and fruits. It is mainly done for pleasing subsistence needs and for many housewives it is one of the best methods of recreation. Sometimes they also sell their produce like vegetables, local eggs, butter and fowls to local Haat market. Animals like cow, goat, pigs and fowls are reared which provide them with manure, flesh and regarded as a sustainable assets of livelihood by selling them in times of financial crisis or earning extra income for buying necessary commodities required for domestic chores and supporting their children education.

#### Political Participation

In the study area majority of the male members were very active in the political affairs. Womenfolk are so busy among their household activities so they hardly give any interest towards it. Some respondents are

aware of recent political development in the hills. Very few of them attend political meeting and party rally. Every one cast their vote but choice depends on the decision made by senior male members of the family. So in the study areas women are not so political mobilized and very much influenced by male members.

### **A glimpse into a daily routine of Limbu woman working in cinchona plantation area of Sangser village: Case study**

Mrs Sakuntala Limbu (45 yrs) works as labour in the Cinchona Plantation. She wakes up at 4 am in the morning and does her household chores by 6.30 am she leaves for a factory by walk which is 1-2 km away from her village. In factory she extracts cinchona from the raw materials. She has to bring 26 kg's of raw cinchona every day back to a godown which is located in her village. After coming back from work at 2 pm she again goes to forest either to collect firewood or fodder for her cows. She returns from forest at around 4 pm and freshens herself and finished her left out domestic chores. At 7 pm she prepares her dinner for family and goes to bed at 8 pm. During Sunday she works in her small farm at the backyard of her house.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Women are regarded as the carrier of tradition to next generation. In the study areas senior old woman are passing the knowledge of their rituals, rites and indigenous knowledge to their family and society. They had still retained their belief, customs and habits of growing food. Since these traditions have been passed down from generation to generation orally needs to be documented. Acculturation among limbus is quite high therefore old woman are very much concerned about fading cultural heritage. Limbu society is patriarchal where father is the head of the family. Women are equally treated with respect and dignity but are partially excluded from performing religious ceremonies. Inter caste marriage is permissible but marrying with same clan group is forbidden. All domestic chores are performed by womenfolk. Financial decisions are made by father. Educational levels of women are low compare to their male counter parts. Widows are also treated equally. In most of the household of Sangser village women makes the decision regarding financial matter of the family.

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## APPENDIX IV

Date:

This schedule is prepared in accordance with research work on “Limbus of Darjeeling Himalayas: Aspects of their Economy, Society and Culture in Relation to Habitat”

Name of the Respondent:                      Age:                      Sex:                      Occupation:                      Education:

Address:                      J/L. No:                      Religion:                      Gotra:                      Clan:                      can speak limbu language

Sl.no	Name	Sex	Age	Relation to Head	Marital Status	If Married			Education	Occupation		
						Age at marriage	forms	Distance		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												

## APPENDIX IV

### *Socio-Economic Background of the Respondent*

1. Type of house: a) kutcha    b) pucca    c) semi-pucca
2. Types of family: a) joint    b) nuclear    c) single
3. Source of income:
4. Respondent by assets ownership:

Sl. No	Name of assets	Yes	No ,why
i	House ownership		
ii	Separate kitchen		
iii	Electricity		
iv	Water supply		
v	Toilet		
vi	Radio		
vii	Television		
viii	CD and DVD		
ix	Cable connection		
x	Telephone		
xi	Mobile		
xii	Motorcycle		
xiii	Car/ Jeep/Van		
xiv	Others		

5. Social network: How do you maintain your relationship with family members, relatives and others by sharing and participating in following factors?

Sl.no	Item	Family	Kinship	Others
i	Sharing food			
ii	Helping education			
iii	Giving security			
iv	shelter			

v	Free labour			
vi	Money			

6. Respondent by Credit and Finance.

Sl.no	Type of source	Purpose	Amount	Rate of interest	Repayment method	Repaid
i	Bank					
ii	Moneylender					
iii	Relative, friend					
iv	Chit					
v	Village fund					
vi	Others					

7. Respondent by food consumption (he/she depends)

a) Farm in own land

b) Shop and PDS (public distribution system)

8. Respondent by Expenditure

Sl.no	Types of Expenditure	Rupees	Seasonality of Expenditure
i	Monthly ration cost		
ii	Education		
iii	Clothing		
iv	Health		
v	Transportation		
vi	Wedding and function		
vii	Festivals		
viii	Saving		
ix	Investment		
x	Repaying for loan		
xi	Others		

9. What type of expenditure has increased over time?

***Section II: Land used pattern in terms of cultivation and livestock***

1. Respondent by details on Land.

a) Land status – owned/ leased      b) Total land in bigha /acre-

2. How many crops and cash crops do you cultivate in a year?

3. What are the crops do you cultivate?

Sl.no	Type	Area in acre	Produce	Expense	Income
i	Orange				
ii	Cardamom				
iii	Ginger				
iv	Broomstick				
v	Turmeric				
vi	Maize				
vii	Paddy				
viii	Millet				
ix	Chilli (dalle)				
x	Vegetables				

4. Respondent by duration of agriculture

- a) 4 months      b) 6 months      c) 7 months      d) 8 months

5. Livestock (पशुपलान)

a) Do you have your own domesticated animals? Yes/No then give name of the animal

Sl.no	Types of animals	No. of animals	Income
i	Cow (in milk)		
ii	Non milk giving cow		
iii	Bullock		
iv	Goat		
v	Pig		
vi	Poultry(hens)		
vii	Others		

b) If no, give reason for not rearing animals currently? Explain

c) Who takes care of livestock in your family?

d) How do you use the income from livestock?

- i) Education      ii) Agriculture      iii) Purchase more animal's      iv) **Household** use      v) Others

***Section III: Impact of development Programme on Limbus of Darjeeling Himalaya***

1. Do you know any of the Development programme implemented in village yes/no?

Sl.no	Programme name	Does programme exist	Benefits	Are u working on it	Does you have to pay extra money to get benefits
i	P.M.G.S.Y				
ii	M.R.N.R.E.G.A				
iii	I.C.D.S				
iv	S.H.G				
v	Housing support				
vi	Widow pension				
vii	Old age pension				
vii	100 days work				

e) Whether the programme was useful to the family and village? Yes/ No