

CHAPTER - 4

CHAPTER-4

POLITICAL HISTORY OF SIKKIM : A RELIGIO-POLITICAL  
EVENTUALITY (1641 TO 1975)

4.1. Tibetan Guardianship :

The political history of Sikkim can be discussed by dividing it into three consecutive periods, (a) the period of Tibetan guardianship, (b) contact with the British rulers and British protectorateship, (c) background of the new era and merger in India. In the main stream of all these three stages of political development in Sikkim, Tibetan Buddhism vis-a-vis Lamaism and the Buddhist section of the people played a vital role in shaping its history.

(A) "Sikkim was politically a theocracy till the other day"<sup>1</sup>, - the theocracy which was established by the Tibetan Buddhist Lamas and developed under the guidance and nourishment of Tibet. After inception of the Kingdom in Sikkim, the 5th Dalai Lama, the then Hierarch of Tibet, recognised the newly coronated Cho-gyal Phun-tso Namgyal as the rightful ruler of the State and the political and religious suzerainty of the Tibetan Ruler was established in Sikkim.<sup>2</sup> "The Dalai Lama's blessings and recognition further lent prestige to the new dynasty."<sup>3</sup> Though the Bhutia settlers in Sikkim were mostly the followers of Nying-ma Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the rulers of Sikkim had, from the beginning, accepted Tibet and the

Hierarch Dalai Lama as the rightful guardian. "Sikkim had always looked upon itself as a dependancy, a vassal of Tibet, not because of any compulsion but because of a sort of voluntary submission springing from the Sikkimese Bhutia's origin, religion and above all, the proximity of the two countries."<sup>4</sup>

"As the Maharaja Chogyal Phun-tso Namgyal of Sikkim was also one of the canonized saints of the doctrine, the Dalai Lama condescended to regard the brotherhood thus established and sent the Raja a most friendly and complimentary letter recognizing him as the ruler of the sacred land of the southern slopes ..... These kind and friendly greetings bound the new ruler to the head of the Tibetan government with feelings of gratefulness. And since then whenever this State suffered from any aggression from the neighbouring States, it always looked to the Tibetan government for protection and aid."<sup>5</sup> The Head Lama of the Pema-yangshi Monastery, the Supreme Monastery of Sikkim, had always come from Tibet and administered not only the spiritual affairs but also guided the temporal issues of the Rulers. It was a rigid convention that the first queen of the Sikkim Raja must be a Tibetan Lady of high aristocrat family. Tibet and Sikkim had free trade. The trainee monks of Sikkim were sent to different monasteries in Tibet for their higher studies. Thus Tibet and the Tibetan government, as the father guardian, had protected, given shelter and guided the administration of Sikkim whenever there were any internal or external disturbances.

During the reign of Maharaja Tensung Namgyal and Chhagdor Namgyal, the second and the third Rulers of Sikkim, the Bhutanese, its eastern

neighbour, overran Sikkim.<sup>6</sup> At the time of Bhutanese invasion, Chogyal Chhagdor had to flee for his life and took shelter in Tibet. Under the affectionate patronage of the Sixth Dalai Lama, Chhagdor had learned Buddhism and Astrology in Lhasa, the Capital of Tibet. It is said that he acquired a great deal of the habits of the Lamas. After a long period of stay in Tibet, Chhagdor came back to Sikkim and along with him came Lama Jig-me-pao, a great Lama of Mindolling Monastery in Tibet, to help and guide him in the administration of the State. With the help of Lama Jig-me-pao, Chogyal Chhagdor greatly expanded the monastic system and introduced many innovations in Sikkim. Lama Jig-me-pao mentioned that "worshipper of the faith and its upholder, Chhagdor Namgyal himself only assumes outwardly the garb of worldly person, but inwardly he is most pious and religious devotee."<sup>7</sup>

These religious attitudes of the Rulers of Sikkim were shaping the political administration. No doubt, due to political and religious bond between Tibet and Sikkim, Tibetan settlement went on increasing along with the conversion of the Lepchas into Buddhism. Chogyal Chhagdor also modified the Lepcha alphabets on the line of the Tibetan scripts.<sup>8</sup> Later, on the intervention from Tibet, Deb Raja or the Gyal-po of Bhutan withdrew his forces from Sikkim and maintained friendly relation thereafter. In a letter to Deb Raja, Chhagdor wrote that Tibet was the father, Bhutan the mother and Sikkim the child and three were one family and one nation.<sup>9</sup> Of course, the feeling of that unity was based on the ethnic as well as religious affinity.

Chogyal Chhagdor was believed to be killed by his personal physician under the cover of a conspiracy with Pedi Wangmo, the

step sister of Chhagdor. During that time, the eldest son of Chhagdor was just of the age of ten. Yet that son Gyur-med Nangyal was installed in the throne in the year 1717. Lama Jig-me-pao took the protectorship of the young Raja during his minority and acted as the regent.<sup>10</sup> It is not difficult to understand that a High Lama from Tibet being the incharge of administration, must have had shaped the organization of Sikkim more in the way of Lamaist polity as in Tibet. We may be sure about it from the statement made in the History of Sikkim written by Maharaja Thutob and Maharani Yeshe Dolma, "Lama Jig-me-pao remained in Sikkim for some time after that, occupying his time with repairing and replenishing monasteries and temples, outside and inside, as well as giving religious instructions, initiations and otherwise trying his best to enlighten this hidden sacred land."<sup>11</sup>

Chogyal Gyur-med, from his childhood, "was at all events eccentric, if not actually weak in intellect."<sup>12</sup> He married the youngest daughter of the Hierarch of Mindolling in 1721 under the advice of Lama Jig-me-pao. But the marriage was not happy. Rani left her husband and went back to Tibet.<sup>13</sup> At the same time Limbus, or Tsongs as the Bhutias called them, became hostile to the Bhutias and ruptured the link between the two ethnic groups and finally separated the Land called "Limbuana" in the north west of Sikkim. "Whatever little influence the rulers of Sikkim had over the Limbus of Limbuana was snapped."<sup>14</sup> Chogyal Gyur-med, disgusted with his personal life as well as disturbances in the political administration of the State, fled in disguise of a Monk and went to Tibet. But when he was travelling in Tibet, he was found out by the 12th Avatar of Gyalwa Karmapa of

Kar-gyut-pa sect and was received by him with warm and due honour. This incident had an important effect on the Lamaist history of Sikkim. Raja Gyur-med was so pleased with the Gyalwa Karmapa that he promised to build a monastery of the Kar-gyut-pa Sect in Sikkim. And after returning in Sikkim, he built the Ralong Monastery and conferred landed properties at Burphung and Lingdam for the maintenance of the monastery. Thus the Kar-gyut-pa Sect was established in Sikkim for the first time.<sup>15</sup>

Another important incident occurred during that period which gave a new turn to the history of Sikkim. Chogyal Gyur-med died in 1733 leaving no issue. Naturally the question arose about the heir to succeed the throne. "The high Lamas and councillors were sorely troubled as there were already factions ready to take advantage of such situations. By sheer good luck, a nun was found to be pregnant - by no means a rare phenomenon - and a high Lama had the brainwave to concoct the story that Gyur-med had, before his death, given out that this particular nun had been impregnated by him. The nun obliged by giving birth to a male child not long after, and thus the Namgyal dynasty was given a fresh lease of life."<sup>16</sup>

That child of the nun was given the name Phun-tso and declared as the successor to the throne by the high Lamas. But some of the councillors refused to recognize the legitimacy of the child which ultimately created a great trouble in the State among two factions on the issue. However, the Tibetan government decided the matter in favour of the child Phuntso and recognized him to be the rightful

heir of the throne. The intention of the Tibetan government might be the State's safety in that precarious condition, but one point should not be overlooked that the infant Phuntso was backed by the high Lamas and that was difficult to deny on the part of ~~the~~ Tibet. The Tibetan government also deputed one competent officer, Rabden Sharpa by name, to act as regent until Phuntso attained majority.<sup>17</sup>

Rabden Sharpa's regency was notable for many reforms made in the administration of Sikkim. (1) He reformed the land revenue system and levied tax on the trade. (2) Though in a crude form, yet Rabden Sharpa made the first census in Sikkim. (3) He convened a convention, known as the "Mangsher Duma" and prepared the rules and regulations, defining duties and privileges for the general citizens, government officers, Raiyats and headmen of the villages and those were regarded as the first Constitution of Sikkim and were signed by all the Lamas, headmen, councillors etc. (4) It was during Rabden's regency that the Sikkim-Tibet boundary was also fixed on the north-eastern part of the Himalaya.<sup>18</sup> Rabden Sharpa went back to Tibet after the young Raja Phun-tso attained his majority. Before he left, Lama Kun-zang-Jig-me-Gyatso, who was known as the incarnate of Lama Jig-me-pao, came in Sikkim on his initiative as the Head Lama.

From the above events of the history, we can evidently judge how Sikkim was brought up like a spoiled child under the theocratic nourishment of Tibet. Another aspect to be noted here is that as Tibet looked upon China as its suzerain, the Sikkim Rulers also accepted Chinese superiority and influence as an ally of her guardian State. China

helped Sikkim during Gorkha invasion.<sup>19</sup>

4.2. Rising of the Gorkhas and Invasion in Sikkim :

Towards the end of Phun-tso Namgyal's reign, a new enemy was concentrating the power in westward Sikkim. One Prithvi Narayan Shah, of Rajput origin, united the various tribes of Nepal, under the banner naming "Gorkha" (warrior) and arrived in power by dethroning Newari King of Kathmandu in 1768 A.D.<sup>20</sup> These Gorkhas occupied vast land of Nepal valley upto Limbuana and launched their eyes on Sikkim. They started harassing their peaceful Buddhist neighbours with cattle lifting and slave taking incursions. In 1775-76, Raja Pratap Shah, son and successor of Prithvi Narayan, threatened the invasion of Sikkim, but failed in that attempt by the intervention of Tibet. Tibetan General Deba Patza diverted them from the way of Sikkim. However, they continued repeated invasions and war was waged with varying success for several years.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, Chogyal Phun-tso died and his son Chogyal Tenzing succeeded him in the year 1780.<sup>22</sup> In the year 1788-89 the Gorkha force under General Johar Shing suddenly attacked Rabdense Palace, secretly crossing the Chiabhanjan pass unobserved at midnight. There were no other means of resisting, the Raja and Rani had to fly, precipitately without saving any property, with the help of some loyal officers, and took shelter in the jungles. Gorkha troops overran and held possession of vast land of Sikkim in South and West of the Tista river. After passing through great hardships, Chogyal Tenzing went

to Lhasa to obtain help, and the Tibetan Government promised to render help. But in 1791, Gorkhas attacked Tibet and sacked Tashi-lhunpo monastery. The Chinese army came to the help and defeated the Gorkhas pushing them back to Kathmandu. An ignominious treaty was signed outside the wall of their own capital, Kathmandu.<sup>23</sup>

Chogyal Tenzing died in Lhasa in 1793 and his son Chug-phud was a minor. Thus during the negotiations carried on by the Chinese General Hosi-Thung-Thung on the boarder issue, Sikkim was not represented, and the boundary with Nepal was drawn back to the left bank of Tista.<sup>24</sup> "The Chinese-Tibetan authorities appropriated Chhumbi valley for Tibet and deprived Sikkim Ruler of even his ancestor's estates at Pedi Jong, Hreh-Rinchen-Tse-Jong near Shigatse in Tibet."<sup>25</sup> Tibet Government apparently gave the young son of Tenzing, Chug-phud Namgyal, some presents and sent him back to Sikkim.<sup>26</sup> Sikkim Government as well as the high officials of Sikkim, for the first time, received a rude shock from the Tibetan-Chinese authorities on whom they relied and admitted as the father-guardian.

#### 4.3. Contact with the British and British Protectorateship :

The old traditional socio-political life in Sikkim continued unchanged under the patronage of Tibet till the mid of 19th Century, inspite of Gorkha invasion again and again from the neighbouring State Nepal in the West and Bhutanese aggression and occupation of land in the East. Though the Sikkim ruler and his councillors were not satisfied with the settlement made by the Sino-Nepalese Treaty, over her

territorial loss, but they had no courage to encounter the mandates of powerful China because, first, "one of the results of the Manchu-Chinese intervention in the Nepalese-Tibetan conflict, was the consolidation of the Manchu-Chinese power in Tibet. The Amban took over the frontier-defence, the administration of the finances, and the control of all foreign intercourse and trade. This eventually led to the economic, political and military isolation of Tibet from the outside world."<sup>27</sup> Secondly, another greater power was awaiting near the wall of the tiny kingdom of Sikkim, - the British casting an watching eye just to get an opening to enter there.

The British did not barge in Sikkim and grab her all on a sudden, though it was as easy as hunting an yak for them. Sikkim could be annexed to their Indian Empire, but it was not. Why? Because the ultimate goal of the Britishers was to make the Tibet-China trade relation and the quest for a trade route to Tibet. "The development of Buddhism in the Tibetan environment had earned Tibet the religious leadership not only of the people of Tibetan extraction but of those of Mongolia and China as well. This religious leadership was evidenced by the highly complex nature of the relationship that existed between Tibet and China, Tibet and Mongolia, and Tibet and Himalayan States like Bhutan and Sikkim. The arrival of Britain and Russia on the political scene of Central Asia made the relationship further complicated. The main concern of British policy towards Tibet, therefore, was both to ensure peace and order on the Indo-Tibetan boarder and to forestall any possible hostility on the part of the controlling influence in Lhasa towards India and the boarder States in the Himalayas."<sup>28</sup>

Sikkim had no other attraction for them but to be exploited as the venue for that purpose. For centuries Sikkim had formed a very important trade route between India and Tibet and beyond it deep into Central Asia. "Sikkim is at the focal point of the Himalayas on the Historic Caravan route from Southern Asia to Lhasa in Tibet; the natural <sup>passes</sup> through mountain barriers, the Nathu-La, Jelep-La, Thanka-La and many others have been for centuries the doorways through which the shepherds took their flocks and traders carried their goods. The life line from India to China, these routes have been the centre of intrigue ....."<sup>29</sup> But sudden invasion in Sikkim or possession by force might have jeopardised the real end of the British. So they waited, watched and proceeded step by step.

The attention of the East India Company was attracted towards Sikkim due to its strategic importance, in the year 1814, when it was involved in a war with Nepal. With the sharp political intuition, the Britishers had realized the weakness of Sikkim. And so the opening of relations with Sikkim became a political as well as a military necessity on the following three grounds :- (1) it was easily accessible, (2) it would facilitate communication with China via Tibet since the Rulers of Sikkim were closely connected by matrimonial relations as well as religious affinities with Tibet, (3) to prevent possible Nepalese-Bhutanese intrigues against the Company.<sup>30</sup> "Sikkim was involved in the British diplomacy and was considered an ally of the British in the Anglo-Nepalese war. Nagri-Jong was recaptured in about 1814 and in 1815 the British helped to drive out the Gurkhas from many parts of South West Sikkim."<sup>31</sup>

4.4. Treaty of Titaliya - 1817 : A Trap :

In March, 1817, the Treaty of Titalia was signed between the British and the Sikkim Ruler and the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal was established along the Mechi and Mahanadi rivers and the Singalila mountain range, "all the hilly or mountainous country, situated to the eastward of the Mechi river and to the westward of the Teesta river, formerly possessed by the Raja of Nepaul, but ceded to the Honourable East India Company by the treaty of peace signed at Segoulee in 1814."<sup>32</sup> It is to be noted here that among the signatories on the part of the Sikkim Raja, one Lama, Lama Daichin Longdoo, was the member.<sup>33</sup>

But the Treaty of Titalia was a trap to bind the Sikkim Ruler in the British net. Article 3 of the said Treaty reads, - "That he will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any dispute or question that may arise between his subjects and those of Nepaul or any other neighbouring State, and to abide by the decision of the British Government."<sup>34</sup> The Treaty of Titalia had a great political significance in the history of Sikkim. As it is observed by B.S.K. Grover :-

- "1. It helped to check the Nepalese expansion towards east. Sikkim became a strong buffer State between Nepal and Bhutan with the restoration of the territory between the rivers Mechi and the Teesta.
2. It brought Sikkim for the first time under the influence of the Company and the freedom of action of Sikkim was limited to a great extent by the provisions of the treaty.

3. The Company gained trade privilege, and the right to trade upto Tibetan frontier."<sup>35</sup>

#### 4.5. The Cession of Darjeeling :

Ten years after the above Treaty was signed, disputes again arose in Sikkim-Nepal frontier and were referred to the arbitration of the Governor General. Two Officers, Captain Lloyed and Mr. Grant, were deputed in 1828 to settle the dispute. Captain Lloyed, while travelling in Sikkim, was attracted by seeing a village, "Dorje-Ling", now known as Darjeeling, for its advantageous position.<sup>36</sup>

"Mr. Grant reported accordingly to the Governor General Lord Willium Bentinck the numerous advantages promised by a sanitarium at Darjeeling and also recommended its occupation for military purposes as key of a pass into Nepal."<sup>37</sup> Captain Lloyed was directed to open negotiations about that with Raja of Sikkim on the first convenient occasion. He finally succeeded to make agreed the Raja of Sikkim, ceded the village to the British Government out of friendship. It was executed with a "Deed of Grant" in the year 1835.<sup>38</sup>

The Cession of Darjeeling made the political situation of Sikkim complicated both from external relations and internal interests. "The presence of the British so close to Sikkim also became a source of embarrassment in Sikkim's relations with other Himalayan States of Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet."<sup>39</sup> The Government of Tibet expressed its displeasure by rejecting the right of grazing which the people of North Sikkim had ever since enjoyed in the pasture land in the boarder in Tibet.<sup>40</sup>

The Raja of Sikkim was also not happy with the British Government for not receiving adequate compensation for the cession of Darjeeling. Moreover, "the increasing importance of Darjeeling under free institution was a source of loss and frustration to the Lamas and leading men of Sikkim, headed by Dewan Namgyal."<sup>41</sup> Hence, the relation between the Sikkim Raja and the British Government deteriorated and became quite unfriendly. The Pro-Tibetan, Buddhist Sikkim Raja, Chug-phud stood in the horns of a dilemma, - between the displeasure of Tibetan Government and the diplomacy of the Britishers.

4.6. The British Expedition to Sikkim and the Treaty of 1861 :

Since 1848-49, Raja Chug-phud almost retired due to old age and started to live in the summer residence of the ruling family at Chumbi Valley. The administration of the kingdom was completely left in the hands of the then Dewan, Tokang Namgyal, popularly known as Pagla-Dewan, who was a devout Buddhist, pro-Tibetan and anti-British. Relations with the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling (Campbell) deteriorated over the question of extraditing slaves and criminals migrated from Sikkim to Darjeeling and also over illegal collection of tax in the Sikkim Morang by Deputy Commissioner. This estrangement led to the detention of Dr. Campbell and Dr. John Hooker in 1849 by Dewan Namgyal while travelling in Sikkim.<sup>42</sup> The audacity on the part of a Native Ruler was not tolerable for the Britishers and in its turn, resulted in a punitive expedition after their return and the whole of Darjeeling and Morang being annexed (1850).<sup>43</sup> This annexation brought the loss of 640 square miles of fertile land of Sikkim territory, which covers the

whole of Terai. Another penalty was the stoppage of Rs.6,000/- paid as revenue for Darjeeling.<sup>44</sup>

The retreat of Dr. Campbell and Dr. Hooker was a blow to the British prestige. Thus, the revenge was fulfilled by another expedition followed in 1861 and a Treaty was forced on Sikkim, consisting 23 Articles. The Treaty of 1861 was very significant in the British-Sikkim relation, whereby Sikkim remained Independent just theoretically and had to make vast concessions to the British Government. But it was about this time that the title of "Maharaja" was offered for the rulers of Sikkim. The Treaty was signed by the son of Raja Chug-phud, Sidkeong Namgyal and Sir Ashley Eden.<sup>45</sup>

By the Treaty of 1861 British had gained substantial advantages as it put an end to frontier troubles with Sikkim and secured full freedom for trade and commerce across Sikkim boarder, without having the need to annex her in their Indian Empire. But there were two weaknesses, as it is pointed out by Grover, which manifested themselves within next three decades and were mainly responsible for the subsequent difficulties of the British Government with Tibet. "One was the non-definition of the de-jure status of Sikkim and the other was the privilege granted to the Maharaja of Sikkim under Article 22 to stay in Chumbi for three months in a year."<sup>46</sup> The allegiance of the Sikkim Rulers to Tibet, to their Religious Superior Dalai Lama, was beyond the expectation of the Britishers.

#### 4.7. Changes in the Socio-Political Life in Sikkim After 1861 :

Maharaja Sidkyong Namgyal succeeded his father formally in the year 1863. He was recognized as the incarnate of a high Lama of Karmapa Sect.

The 14th Karmapa Hierarch Theg-chog Dorji conferred the name of the young Kumar as "Kyabgon Sidkeyong Karma Dungyal Tenzing Lhendup Nga" which literally means "the protector of Karmapa devotees, upholder of the faith, increasars, self protector and eminent in the knowledge of Truth." He was also nominated by the Karmapa Hierarch of Thsorpu, in Tibet, as the spiritual and ecclesiastical Head Lama of the monasteries of the Karmapa Sect in Sikkim.<sup>47</sup>

Being the second son, he had to undergo a religious training in the monasteries in his early days. Although he was an incarnate Lama, he had to assume the responsibility of the administration of the State, as his elder brother died.<sup>48</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that because of his intensive religious training in early life, and of his religious faith, he had to suffer in the later part of his life as he failed to grab successfully the various intricacies of the administration of the State. Moreover, he was not well versed in political administration and had no experience of crude British diplomacy. Thus, he did not like to go in confrontation with the British Government. "The rule of Sidkeyong was the most happy period in the British-Sikkim relations."<sup>49</sup>

As it is mentioned before that the British Government was not interested in Sikkim except to use her as their passage to Tibet, so they did not pay much attention in her socio-economic development. Only a road was constructed from Darjeeling to Tibetan frontier, Jelep-La.<sup>50</sup>

But the Britishers brought a vigorous change in the population composition and ethnic integrity of Sikkim State. By the encouragement of the Britishers a huge and rapid influx of Nepali immigrants consisting

of Newars, Limbus, Mangers and other ethnic groups of Nepal started to enter Sikkim and to press forward by clearing and cultivating the large areas of unoccupied land in the southern parts of Sikkim. The Nepalese were more industrious and advanced in agriculture, they were laborious porters to carry heavy loads in the upward journey by mountain tracks, they were faithful and reliable. But there was another secret intention of the Britishers for encouragement behind the hinduite Nepalee immigration in Sikkim, that was their old and very effective "Divide and Rule" Policy. H.H.Risley very openly confessed in The Gazetteer of Sikkim, "Thus race and religion, the prime movers of Asiatic World, will settle the Sikkim difficulties for us, in their own way. We have only to look on and see that the operation of these causes is not artificially hindered by the interference of Tibet or Nepal."<sup>51</sup>

Maharaja Sidkeyong died in 1874 and his half-brother Thutob Namgyal, issue from the fifth wife of Chug-phud, became the Ruler of Sikkim on the recommendation of the British Government.<sup>52</sup> Tibetan Government, as H.H.Risley mentioned, showed no objection or claimed no influence in this regard, "Not a whisper was heard on the frontier of the remonstrance against this vigorous piece of King-making."<sup>53</sup> But the installation ceremony was performed at Chumbi on the traditional religious pattern by a representative body of the Lamas. And valuable presents and greeting letters were received from both Tibetan and Chinese Governments on this auspicious occasion.<sup>54</sup>

Maharaja Thutob was no less a Pro-Tibetan Buddhist by heart and soul, and possessed allegiance to Tibet and China. Though he had risen

to power with British support, he could not stand up to the pressure of the anti-British Bhutias and Tibetans, the ruling class of Sikkim. "He drifted away from the British influence and succumbed to pressure from the anti-British Bhutias and Tibetans. Early in 1886, he abruptly disavowed his subordination to the Government of India, as enjoined by the 1861 treaty."<sup>55</sup> The high Lamas and the Pro-Tibetan Bhutia-Lepcha Buddhist group were trying to undermine the British position in Sikkim by exploiting the resentment of the local people against the settlement of the Nepalese. Hence, the trade route between India and Tibet lying through Sikkim and the question of promoting commercial intercourse with Tibet involved the British Government into a complication.<sup>56</sup>

4.8. Macaulay Mission : The Anglo-Chinese Convention, 1890 :

In 1884, the British Government sent a mission under Colman Macaulay, the then Secretary of Government of Bengal, with a triple object,"(1) To discuss with the Maharaja certain pending questions concerning the administration of his State and his relations to the British Government; (2) to visit the Lachen valley to see if a trade route could be opened up in that direction, with the province of Tsang in Tibet; (3) to endeavour to meet and to establish friendly relations with the Tibetan authorities of the district adjoining Sikkim on the North."<sup>57</sup> In his report, after survey the route through Lachen, Macaulay wrote, "In considering the question of the opening of free commercial relations with Tibet, we have two main factors to deal with - the power of the Chinese, and the influence of the monks of Lhasa."<sup>58</sup> He recommended that application should be made to China for passports and support for

a mixed political and scientific mission to proceed to Lhasa and the removal of obstructions on trade through Sikkim and Darjeeling.<sup>59</sup>

However, on his recommendation, the British Government decided to send a trade mission in 1886 to the formidable land of Tibet. The Tibetan Government was alert. Thutob Namgyal was instructed by them not to allow the British trade mission to enter Tibetan territory through Sikkim.<sup>60</sup> To resist the trade mission, Tibetan Government occupied a strip of land called 'Lingtu' in South of Jelep-la, twenty miles deep in the Sikkim territory and made a fort there.<sup>61</sup> The Tibetan attitude, as described by Richard Temple, was that "they sometimes believe, justly perhaps, that commerce follows the flag, and sometimes the flag follows commerce; therefore, they think that politics have something to do with trade."<sup>62</sup>

The members of the "Tsondu" i.e. Tibetan Parliament, thus took an oath never to allow the British to enter Tibet. And in reply to the letter of the British Government to the Dalai Lama asking him to remove the checkpost of Lingtu, Tibetan "KASHAG" (Cabinet) mentioned that, "There was no harm in protecting one's own territory."<sup>63</sup>

But Maharaja Thutob Namgyal's attitude appeared to be a shock to the British Government, when he supported that "Lingtu" fell within Tibetan territory and that was given to Sikkim by the Tibetan Government on compassionate ground. The land between Jelep-la and Rhenock had always been used as pastures by both Tibetan and Sikkimese shepherds. Even as regards Rhenock, Maharaja Thutob has clearly mentioned in his book, "that it was given by Tibet."<sup>64</sup>

Consequences were inevitable. Pro-Tibetan Party at the Sikkim Darbar was arrogant and had resumed secret negotiations with the Dalai Lama and Amban of China. Maharaja was summoned at Darjeeling to meet the Deputy Commissioner and explain his conduct. Maharaja Thutob Namgyal refused to go and wrote back that he had signed a treaty at Galing, in Tibet, in 1886, on behalf of the "People of Sikkim, Priests and laymen."<sup>65</sup> The British Government was not ready to wait any more. After an ultimatum given to the Dalai Lama, the "Lingtu Fort" was destroyed in September, 1886 and the Tibetan Army was pushed back through Jelep-la.<sup>66</sup> The Chinese Amban came rushing down to Chumbi for talks with the British. "The Amban told the British that 'no marked separation existed formerly between Tibet and Sikkim' and that Tibetans looked on the kingdom as an extension of their own country."<sup>67</sup> And after a prolonged negotiation "The Anglo-Chinese Convention" was signed in March, 1890.<sup>68</sup> Article 2 of the Convention defined the status of Sikkim; "It is admitted that the British Government, whose protectorate over Sikkim State is hereby recognized, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that State, and except through and with the permission of the British Government, neither the ruler of the State nor any of its officer shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal, with any other country."<sup>69</sup> A Protocol to the Convention was signed in 1893 and appended to it relating trade, communication and pastures. Sir John Claud White, appointed as Political Officer in 1889, became the defacto ruler of Sikkim.<sup>70</sup> Thutob Namgyal with his wife Maharani Yeshe Dolma, and some followers tried to escape in

Tibet. But they were caught at Nepal and brought back to Darjeeling and Maharaja was imprisoned in a solitary village named "Ging" there.<sup>71</sup>

Nineteenth century was over. But Sikkim had no experience of modern education, modern life and modern outlook except a glance on the way of living of some British Officers who came over there due to service. While 20th century moved on faster by bringing a drastic change in human history, time remained almost still in Sikkim and life stood far away from the main stream of human progress. From the above assessment of the history of Sikkim, two important aspects should be noticed. First, from the inception of the Kingdom, Sikkim Rulers had spontaneously accepted the subordination of Tibet. Sir Ashley Eden, envoy and special Commissioner of Sikkim, wrote to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal in 8th April, 1861 that "Nepal is tributary to China, Thibet is tributary to China and Sikkim and Bootan are tributary to Thibet and therefore secondarily to China."<sup>71</sup> Maharaja Thutob also executed in 1886 a document, by promising that "in good and evil we will not leave shelter of the feet of China and Tibet."<sup>72</sup> It can not be denied that the root of that allegiance to Tibet on the part of the Sikkim rulers was religious affinity. The Dalai Lamas had not only a political supremacy but also an ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the religion oriented state of Sikkim. Moreover, religion i.e. Mahayani Buddhism was the basic binding factor of the unity among China, Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan and also Nepal.

The second aspect is very important to analyse the political development of Sikkim. The Christian missionaries had always played the

role of heralds or harbingers for the establishment of European imperialism in Afro-Asian countries. But surprisingly enough that they had no significant activity in Sikkim, not even they could penetrate among the hill tribal people and convert them into Christianity. It is said that there had existed a very small body of Scottish and Finland missionaries, but the number of Christian converts were very few.<sup>73</sup> Because the powers and influences of the Lamaist monasteries, which were the real force in moulding the socio-cultural pattern of Sikkim, were insurmountable. Lamaist Buddhism served as the unifying force among Lepcha-Bhutia people. There was no caste distinction among them which could be used as the effective instrument of conversion by the missionaries. As Claud White had mentioned, "The monasteries and the Lamas were a great power in the land."<sup>74</sup> Hence, they might have found it very difficult to break the stronghold of the iron gate of the Buddhist monastic fort in Sikkim. Thus, the Christian missionaries, who had greatly helped in the expansion of western education and culture in each and every part of India, did not get easy way to enter Sikkim till very recently.

#### 4.9. The British Legacy :

Meanwhile the British rulers were able to enter in the forbidden land Tibet reaching upto Lhasa, the capital, by the expedition under the leadership of Colonel Younghusband after a heavy bloodshed of the monks. Though the Tibetan monk army with antique weapons, was no match for the British troop, their spirit was no less powerful than that of the British army. Some of the Tibetan Officers also lost their lives.

At last they were made to surrender without any precondition and the Dalai Lama was forced to sign a Convention, known as "Lhasa Convention" in the Potala Palace in 7th September, 1904.<sup>75</sup> Among other things the Convention confirmed the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet as envisaged in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and also recognized the trade facilities of the British as per 1893 Trade Regulation Protocol. But out of nine Articles of the Convention, Article IX was of paramount importance. This Article specified that without the previous consent of the British Government, the Government of Tibet would strictly maintain that, "(1) No portion of Tibetan territory to be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise given for occupation to any foreign power; (2) No foreign power to intervene in Tibetan affairs; (3) No representative of any foreign power to be admitted to Tibet; (4) No concession for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining, or other rights to be granted to any foreign power; and (5) No Tibetan revenues, whether in kind or cash, to be pledged or assigned to any foreign power or the subject of any foreign power."<sup>76</sup> Hence, this Convention served to intensify Tibet's isolation from the rest of the world.<sup>77</sup>

The Lhasa Convention was followed by the "Peking Convention" in 27th April, 1906 signed at Peking between Great Britain and China, which confirmed Sikkim's de-jure status as the Protectorate of the Government of India. Thus the Chinese and Tibetan hegemony over Sikkim came to a final end.<sup>78</sup> In 1914, a joint convention was signed at Simla by the representatives of Britain, China and Tibet. It ratified the delimitation of the northern boarder of Sikkim, as had been decided in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890.<sup>79</sup>

Sikkim lost her age old father-guardian, the religious guide, Tibet. Maharaja Thutob and the Pro-Tibetan Sikkimese people realised their helplessness by being detached from their spiritual and temporal guide and supporter, the Dalai Lama. Maharaja Thutob had no other way but to surrender to the British Government.

During Maharaja's imprisonment, the Political Officer, John Claud White, established his administrative power in Sikkim. The policy of the British was to seek allies from among the discontented Kazis and courtiers to act against the King. Claud White implemented the plan, largely through the help of the two Khangsarpa brothers, Phodong Lama and Khangsa Dewan, who became leading members of the administrative council presided by White himself. Claud White with his far sight understood that the tight unity of the Buddhists ethnic groups like Lepcha, Bhutia, Tsongs and others, was the real hurdle to be over come. Defection in that religious unity was, thus, his first attempt by forming the council. He managed to defect some more influential men like Tseepa Lama, Tendock Paljor etc. by providing lands and other facilities at Darjeeling. "They were given places on the Council, encouraged to send their children to school in Darjeeling, and provided with opportunities for amassing wealth."<sup>80</sup> The capital was shifted to Gangtok under the initiative taken by Claud White as it was his seat and a centrally located place.

Maharaja Thutob died in 1914 and Sidkeyong Tulku, the second son of his first wife, succeeded him by the recommendation of the British Government. Maharaja's first son Tsoda Namgyal, who was a staunch

pro-Tibetan and living all along in Chumbi, refused to come back from there. Claud White's Council had a chance to set aside the absent Tṣoda's claim to the throne and nominated Sidkeyong as Thutob's heir.<sup>81</sup> Sidkeyong Tulku, an young man with modern education in India and at Oxford, had already been given some charges of some departments of administration and was influencing his father's decision. With his modern and progressive outlook, Sidkeyong Tulku was an exception and with his reformativie zeal he had antagonized both Lamas and Kazis of his State and also Charles Bell, the successor of Claud White. The Lamas were alarmed when Sidkeyong started saying about the social responsibility of the monks. On the other hand, Charles Bell understood that this educated young king would not easily be a puppet in his hand. But just after eight months of his installation in the throne, Sidkeyong met a mysterious death in suspicious circumstances. "His death was as much a relief to the Political Officer as it was to the Kazis and monks."<sup>82</sup>

Tashi Namgyal, the son of Maharaja Thutob and Maharani Yeshe Dolma, half-brother of Sidkeyong, succeeded him in December, 1914 at the age of 21. Maharaja Tashi started his reign under the tutelage of Charles Bell. Tashi Namgyal was also educated in St. Paul's School at Darjeeling and Mayo College of Ajmer.<sup>83</sup>

Two great World Wars brought a vigorous change in the international politics, by heralding the decline of British power among the nations of the world. British Government was more busy to be involved in the wars, than to exercise power in a tiny native kingdom. Hence, the

Ruler of Sikkim was given more powers in the internal administration of the State. No doubt, the British influence brought a change in the Tibetan pattern of political system that prevailed in Sikkim. The overall supervision of the administration was entrusted to a few Secretaries, who remained absolutely responsible to the Ruler and their appointment and service depended at his pleasure. In matters of national importance, the "Lhadi-Medi" consisting of the notable public including Bhutias, Lepchas, the Lamas and also few Nepalese was at the service to advise, guide and assist the Ruler. The Head Lama or the senior representative of the Pemayengshi monastery were all along the members of the State Council which was comprised on the nomination of the Ruler.<sup>84</sup> "Things were thus when, in August, 1947, the British left India, and their paramountcy over Sikkim, as over the Princely Indian States, lapsed. Sikkim suddenly discovered that 20th century had arrived."<sup>85</sup>

In Sikkim, as in Tibet, Buddhism vis-a-vis Lamaism had been the constant shifting equation between tradition and progress. It is still the moving hyphen that has perpetually combined stability with mobility.

#### 4.10. Birth of Political Parties and Beginning of the New Era :

Though Sikkim was not annexed to the British Indian Empire, she was virtually converted to one of the Princely States of India. In the Government of India Act, 1935, one seat was allotted for the State of Sikkim, in the Council of States, mentioned as Division VII.<sup>86</sup> The then Maharaja of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal, had also been enjoying the membership in the Chamber of Indian Princes. But during the declaration

of Independence of India in 1947, the issue of Sikkim's relation to India was left undecided. The delegation of the Maharaja, led by Maharaj Kumar Palden Thondup Namgyal, and his courtiers started to run to Delhi frequently and had held a series of meetings with the Government Officers and the Leaders of India since January, 1947. Finally, they succeeded to get the Constituent Assembly to recognize the special position of Sikkim. Hence, Sikkim escaped from the net of the 'Integration Policy' of Ballav Bhai Patel. Under that circumstances, a "Standstill Agreement" was signed between the Government of Sikkim and that of India on February 27, 1948, whereby all agreements, relations and administrative arrangements as to matters of common concern existing between the Crown and the Sikkim State on August 14, 1947 were deemed to continue pending the conclusion of a new agreement or treaty. <sup>87</sup> The resolution adopted by the Constituent Assembly for examining the special problems of Bhutan and Sikkim was moved by Pandit Nehru, who had a great reverence for Buddhism.

While the Buddhist ruling family and their associates were dreaming to revive the free and sovereign kingdom of Sikkim after the departure of the British, the democratic aspirations of the Sikkimese middle class people were stepping up their activities. The wave of freedom struggle in India began to touch the rocky foundation of Sikkim Society since last forties. The new generation of modern elites, educated in Indian Colleges and Universities, were inspired by the lofty ideals of democracy and sought to free themselves from the clutches of feudalism and hereditary dynasty. In the feudal society of Sikkim, the landlords, known as 'Kazi', were a class apart

and dominated the economic field with their vested interest. There was no check on their powers to be exercised for their personal gains and profits by any means of oppression. As it was described by Tashi Tshering, "The Kazis, who are the landlords, claim to belong to the old nobility and compare themselves with the barons of the feudal system. By long usages they have been accustomed to oppress the people and to expect the utmost subservience from them."<sup>88</sup> The second group was the handful of Palace Courtiers made full use of the Maharaja's patronage at the cost of others.<sup>89</sup> The innocent god-fearing, simple hill people were also accustomed to remain calm and quite like the Sylvan Himalaya, with a vague consciousness of their rights and interests, privileges and necessities for several centuries.

"All these factors contributed towards general dissatisfaction amongst the people. With Buddhism as the State religion, the vast majority of Nepalese, who were Hindus, resented its dominance. Language was yet another issue. Sikkimese was the official language without any roots. It meant a Tibetan Script with a local dialect spoken by less than ten per cent of the population. They who had their own dialect were forced to learn Tibetan in Schools. Yet, the commonly spoken language, even amongst the Bhutias and Lepchas, was Nepalese."<sup>90</sup> In that background, the enlightened members of the common folk commenced for awakening the revolutionary tinder among the common peasantry and forced labourers. Three political parties, viz., Praja Sudharak Samaj, Praja Sammelan and Praja Mandal, at the capital Gangtok and south-western parts, populated mostly by Nepali peasants,

were organized within few months after India's independence, under the leadership of Tashi Tshering, Dhan Bahadur Tewari, and Kazi Lendup Dorji accordingly.<sup>91</sup> It is interesting to know that Kazi Lendup Dorji was himself a member of Landlord family. The leaders of those three parties decided to hold a public meeting at Gangtok. On the 7th December, 1947, Sikkim experienced for the first time, an unprecedented huge public upsurge. On the same evening, three parties merged formally, under the title 'Sikkim State Congress' with Tashi Tshering as the President. Sikkim State Congress placed memorandum with a threefold demand to the Maharaja of Sikkim, viz., "(a) Abolition of Landlordism; (b) formation of an interim government as a necessary precursor of a democratic and responsible government; and (c) accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union."<sup>92</sup>

The Ruler and his coteries were not the silent spectators. They felt that a very powerful force was germinating among the common mass to blow up the whole feudal fabrics of the society. Soon after that public upsurge, a political party named "The National Party" was formed by the Statusquoists elements of the Sikkimese society, backed by direct and effective patronage of Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal, who was then the defacto ruler of Sikkim to encounter the democratic force. The flag of the National Party also resembled the National Flag of Sikkim.<sup>93</sup>

#### 4.11. Tug-of-War Between the New Democratic Force and the Conservative Status-quoists of Buddhist Society :

The struggle continued over long twentyeight years. The demand of accession of Sikkim to India was ruled out immediately by the Ruler and

the associates on various grounds. The National Party passed a resolution on April 30, 1948. It said :

- " (a) Historically, socially, culturally and linguistically, Sikkim has closer affinities with Bhutan and Tibet.
- (b) From the geographical and ethnic points of view Sikkim is not a part of India. She has only political relations with the latter, which were imposed on her.
- (c) From the religious point of view, being Lamaist, she is quite distinct from India.
- (d) The policy of the Party is to maintain intact by all means the indigenous character of Sikkim and to preserve its integrity."<sup>94</sup>

The new Government of India, burdened with various problems, could not pay much attention to Sikkim since independence. Now it was the time for them to be alert about Sikkim. Sikkimese delegation from both sides, - the Buddhist statusquoists with Maharajkumar as their leader and new democratic leaders, had several meetings and discussions at Delhi on the basis of Indo-Sikkim relation. The Government of India was in the horns of a dilemma. "In 1947-48, the Indian Government had signed standstill Agreement with Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. The fact that the standstill agreement had bracketed Sikkim with Nepal and Bhutan, the first an independent country, and the second nearly so, had greatly raised the status of Sikkim."<sup>95</sup> Hence, the visional perplexity of the Government of India could not help agreeing that Sikkim should continue to be a protectorate of India. On 5th December, 1950, the Indo-Sikkim Treaty had been signed, in which Sikkim was allowed to enjoy

autonomy in regard to her internal affairs (Article II) and the Government of India was responsible for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim (Article III).<sup>96</sup>

Sikkim's sovereignty in a way was saved. Now for the sake of political safety of the kingdom, some concessions should have been given to the democratic force, agitating for a popular representation. In 1953, the Maharaja of Sikkim issued a Proclamation, called the Constitutional Proclamation, in which the rules governing the formation of the State Council and the Executive Council, their powers and functions, were specifically laid down. By the formation of these two Councils, the Sikkim Ruler wanted to introduce a type of Diarchy system in the State. The subjects of administration also were divided into two groups, - Reserved and Transferred. But the most important aspect of the Proclamation of 1953 was that it projected the ethnical division based on religions of Buddhism and Hinduism, very openly in the formation of the State Council to be elected. The communal infection started to be spread into the body politic of Sikkim since its first election in 1953.<sup>97</sup> The Buddhist Ruling family and their associates engaged all their efforts to preserve the statusquo, no doubt, the monasteries and the Lamas were the great support behind them. The implementation of Sangha seat in the Proclamation of 1958 proved the truth.<sup>98</sup>

But as the politicians of Sikkim were growing mature by indulging in political maneuvering and internecine clashes by bungling, attacking, counter-attacking, defecting and gaining self-interest or group interest, the international political atmosphere of the surrounding area was also

changing very fast. China invaded Tibet in 1959 and the Dalai Lama had fled from Lhasa with 60,000 Tibetan refugees. The Chinese were fully conscious of the tactical importance of Sikkim. The Chinese Central Command had concentrated the main strength of its forces at Yatung in Chumbi valley. Sikkim was the Protectorate of India. If Sikkim was lost, then eastern India would have been quite unsafe. So the Indian army had to take measures to defend the frontier of this 'Areadian State'.<sup>99</sup> Sikkim's position became very critical all on a sudden on account of her proximity to Tibet. The Sikkim Government agreed to share the responsibility of 5,000 Tibetan refugees with India.<sup>100</sup> One secret intention behind this generous attitude of the Sikkim ruler might have been the hope to increase the number of the Buddhists in the State. On the 2nd October, 1962 an emergency was declared by the Indian Government. Sikkim, because of her strategic geographic boundaries, became a sensitive area. All the Sikkim-Tibet borders were sealed, and Indian Army troops made their posts in those frontiers. The Government of Sikkim also declared a 'State of Emergency' in Sikkim. Hence, the political movement for democratic government in Sikkim had a set back for the time being.

4.12. Chogyal Palden Thondup vs. Kazi Lendup Dorji :  
Face-to-Face in the Power Test :

Maharaja Tashi Namgyal died in December, 1963. Maharaj Kumar Palden Thondup Namgyal was installed in the throne. The Coronation ceremony, according to the Tibetan custom, was celebrated in 1965, with pomp and grandeur. In that celebration, Palden Thondup gave a stunt by declaring

himself as the "Chogyal" - meaning the Dharmaraja, the traditional title of the Tibetan Origin, rejecting the "Maharaja" which was attributed by the British.<sup>101</sup> The inner significance was not understood by any foreign dignitaries or Indian representatives present in that great ceremony. Palden Thondup was already the defacto ruler of Sikkim since 1947, acted as the President of the State Council, and was the active brain behind the National Party. Now he got the formal authority too. To the Buddhists throughout the Himalayas, the Chogyal was already an exalted being. They called him Gyere Rimpoche, prince reincarnate because he was the acknowledged incarnate of both the tenth Chogyal, Sidkeong Tulku, and of Karmapa Lama of Kham, Supreme Pontiff of the Kargyupa Sect of Mahayana Buddhism.<sup>102</sup> Being the second son, he was also installed as Lama and had his training in the religious discipline in Linghbu monastery in Tibet since childhood. He was taken back to temporal life after his elder brother, Crown Prince, Paljor died in a plane crash in 1943.<sup>103</sup> With this background Palden Thondup's attitude towards protection and preservation of traditional system of religion-oriented Statehood, was obviously spontaneous.

On the other side, the State Congress Party was divided due to inner disputes among its leaders,<sup>and</sup> 'on the eve of every election a new political party emerged in the political arena of Sikkim'.<sup>104</sup> A new Party, Sikkim National Congress, formed by Kazi Lendup Dorji, came in the forefront. Interestingly enough, Kazi Lendup Dorji, who used to be addressed as L.D. Kazi, also had commenced Lamahood and was the Head Lama of Phodong monastery. In 1967 Election, his National Congress

Party, proved to be the single largest party by securing 8 seats out of 18 elected seats in the State Council.<sup>105</sup>

Since then, the battle became concentrated in Chogyal Palden Thondup vs. Kazi Lendup Dorji. Other groups joined either of the blocks according to their vested interest and faith. The sentiments of Sikkim politics too, were reflected openly into two opponent blocks,- anti-India and pro-India. Chogyal's anti-Indian gestures were no longer under the mask and he dragged farther his anti-Indian design by forming a "Study Forum" with the young officials, motivated against Indian interference in the internal administration of the State. India should be a good friend, a financial supporter, as Chogyal desired, but not a guardian. With views and ideas of his own, Chogyal, said Rustamji, "considered it highly improper if the political parties sought the intervention of the Political Officer whenever they reached an impasse with the ruler."<sup>106</sup> The Chogyal started subtle propoganda through the local newspapers against the Indian institution. Articles appeared frequently in those papers demanding revision of the Treaty of 1950. Why not Sikkim would get the similar status of Bhutan having same socio-cultural and religious background? "An anti-Indian demonstration on India's national day confirmed Delhi's suspicion of the Chogyal's active involvement."<sup>107</sup>

#### 4.13. Revolution or Agitation :

After the fifth election of Sikkim in 1973, the leaders of the two democratic parties, Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim Janata Congress, again joined together and constituted a Joint Action Committee with Kazi Lendup Dorji as Chairman to mobilize common will for their long standing

demands for popular government, written constitution, fundamental rights, universal franchise etc. The President of the Sikkim Janata Congress was arrested on the charge of sedition. "This action of the Sikkim Durbar further infuriated the agitation of the anti-Chogyal mass and confrontation became imminent between an indomitable people on the one side and an indocile administration on the other."<sup>108</sup> On the 4th of April, 1973, while the Lamas and courtiers of the Durbar were celebrating the 50th birth anniversary of Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal at the "Tshug-lakhang" monastery in the Palace Complex, hundreds of demonstrators were launching agitation on the Gangtok main road facing a direct clash with the police. The situation went out of control and Chogyal finding no other way requested the Indian authority to take charge of law and order. The Indian army took over the charge of law and order. It was flashed in the national newspapers as the "People's Revolution in Sikkim."<sup>109</sup> An eye-witness of that incident just smiled and commented, "anyone may experience such revolution every day in the Calcutta streets". But in the calm and quite, hamlet like capital of Sikkim, that incident was quite unprecedented and shocking to the local people.

#### 4.14. The Tripartite Agreement :

B.S.Das has opined that, "It would be incorrect and misleading to assume that the personality conflicts were responsible for the events of 1973 though they did contribute substantially."<sup>110</sup> True, that personality conflict was not the only factor which turned up side down a three hundred year's old dynasty sanctified by the Buddhist Lamas.

The fact that some constitutional reforms were imperative to adjust the modernity with tradition. But as it is observed by many old leading people of Sikkim, Chogyal made a crucial mistake in his assessment. However, the Indian Foreign Secretary came Sikkim to verify the situation and returned to Delhi. A draft of agreement came from Delhi with a view of conciliation between the Ruler, the political leaders through the Indian Political Officer.

On 8th May, 1973, the famous "May Agreement" was signed by the Chogyal, the Indian Foreign Secretary and the representatives of the three political parties, "whereas the Chogyal and the people of Sikkim are convinced that their interest and the long-term interest of Sikkim as a whole call for"<sup>111</sup> The Agreement provided the basis for the future constitutional set up of Sikkim, to establish a fully responsible Government in Sikkim, with the guarantee of fundamental rights, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and greater legislative and executive powers for the elected representatives of the people, a system of election based on adult suffrage on the principle of one man one vote etc. According to that Agreement, "Chogyal shall perform the functions of his office in accordance with the Constitution of Sikkim as set out in this Agreement"<sup>112</sup>.

#### 4.15. Sequence of Political Development :

Subsequent political developments were hectic. Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim Janata Congress merged into one single party, as the Sikkim Congress with L.D.Kazi as the President. The first election

of Sikkim Assembly of 32 members was held on April, 1974. The Sikkim Congress of L.D. Kazi had a massive majority except one out of the 32 seats, which had swept away all the embankments made by Chogyal, the secular and religious ruler, for preserving the Buddhist hereditary dynasty. Sikkim Assembly passed the Government of Sikkim Bill, 1974 in the form of the Sikkim's Constitution. Chogyal, as the head of the State, assented to the Bill on 4th July, 1974, whereby the institution of Chogyal was maintained just as a titular head of the State. One important aspect of the election of 1974 was that even the monks ditched Chogyal by electing a Sikkim Congress candidate in the reserved seat for Sangha.<sup>113</sup>

On the other side, Parliament of India, by enacting the Constitution (Thirtysixth Amendment) Bill, 1974, accorded Sikkim the Status of an Associate State, accommodating two of its members, one each in both the Houses of Parliament.<sup>114</sup> The Constitution (Thirtysixth Amendment) Bill was vividly criticised in both the Houses of Parliament. But finally it was passed as the Constitution (Thirtyfifth Amendment) Act, 1974, only to keep the people of Sikkim and India separate from each other for some more time and to erect the steps towards voluntary merger on the part of Sikkimese people.

The Government of Sikkim Act, 1974 was challenged in the Central Court at Gangtok. On receipt of the notice from the Court, an emergent meeting of the Assembly was called to consider the matter. It was unanimously agreed that since the Court had no jurisdiction, a question had arisen about the breach of privileges of the House by issuing

summons to the members by the Court. The House passed a historic resolution, "The institution of the Chogyal is hereby abolished and Sikkim shall henceforth be a constituent unit of India, enjoying a democratic and fully responsible Government."<sup>115</sup> On the basis of above resolution, the opinion poll on the question of merger of Sikkim with Union of India was held few days later and the majority vote polled in favour of the resolution. The Indian Parliament passed the Constitution (Thirtysixth Amendment) Act on May 16, 1975 and Sikkim got the legal recognition as the 22nd State of India.<sup>116</sup>

Thus the 300 years reign of Namgyal dynasty was ended. But "Sikkim's traditional monarchy, enthroned in customary law, deriving sanctity from Buddhist faith, solemnized by the oath of Kabi and legitimized by centuries of recognition by China, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Britain and India,"<sup>117</sup> remained in the form of people's government. 1979 election, again, proved that the will of the 32 Member Assembly in 1974, was not the will of the people.

After reviewing the situation of Sikkim politics Narendra Goyal hypothetically commented in 1966 that, "the Indian Government has chosen to lay all its eggs in one basket, namely, the Ruler and it may come to grief some day for its short-sightedness. The Maharaja, himself of Tibetan descent, draws his chief strength in the populace from Bhotias and the landlords who would like Sikkim to become independent!"<sup>118</sup> One of the apprehensions of Goyal that "the danger can not be ruled out that Sikkim National Congress may take up an anti-Indian attitude at

some states"<sup>119</sup>, has been proved to be true in a way. Even after merger the victory of Sikkim Janata Parishad in 1979 and Sikkim Sangram Parishad in 1985 has expressed the view that Sikkim desires a separate identity. Both the parties, led by N.B. Bhandari, were known to be backed by the Statusquoists of Sikkim.

One point must, however, be borne in mind in this connection, that the communal disharmony in Sikkim had not occurred due to any mutual religious animosity or hatred between different communities. The reason behind the communal rivalry was quite different. The Buddhist Bhutia-Lepcha community had all along nourished and nurtured their monarchical institution of hoary tradition, sanctified and blessed by the Lamas of Vajrayana Buddhism of Tibet, with great respect and honour. The ever-increasing flood of Nepali immigrants, therefore, made them seriously anxious and alert for protecting not only their independence but also their religion, culture and tradition. They had rightly apprehended that these influx of hinduite Nepalese would ultimately push their very existence to the peril of extinction in the near future. The main theme of political development of Sikkim, thus, is the story of determined endeavours of the Buddhist Statusquoist to save and protect the independence of a religion-oriented kingdom, which was tiny in size but strategic in position, from being exhausted by the political wave of neighbouring world.

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*Palden Thondup Namgyal  
The last Chogyal.*

*Kazi Lendup Dorji  
The First Chief Minister*

