

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL UNIVERSE

Darjeeling

Darjeeling, the only hill district of West Bengal, is situated between $25^{\circ}33'$ and $27^{\circ}13'$ north latitude and $87^{\circ}59'$ and $89^{\circ}59'$ east longitude. Its total area, according to Dash (1947: 1) is 1300 square miles in round figures and according to Dozy (1922: 37) it is 1164 square miles. In appearance the district looks like an epitome of India. Its extended boundary in the north is attached with Sikkim; its narrow base line in the south divides Purnea and Jalpaiguri districts of Bihar and West Bengal respectively; its eastern part is separated from Bhutan by a small river known as Jaldhaka and on the west lie the Singalila range and Nochi river which divides the boundary between the district and Nepal. Thus, though small in size, it touches two international boundaries with its two shoulders extending towards east and west.

Darjeeling has a considerable variation in rainfall. During June, July and August the rainfall is usually very high - the range varying from 519 millimetre (mm) to about 633 mm. and during November to February the rainfall is minimal - not exceeding 39 mm per month (data from 1967 to 1972). While this is a normal picture a fresh monsoon or a prolonged drought takes place every year or every couple of years. There is considerable variation also in temperature in the 4 sub-divisions of the district

due to the altitude variations within it. The highest recorded temperature in Terai Siliguri subdivision is 104.0°F and the lowest 36.0°F ; in Kaliapong, the highest recorded temperature during December-January is 57°F and the lowest 31.0°F ; in the Sagar subdivision the maximum is 86.1°F during June and the lowest is 19.9°F during February (Dash op cit : 20). The temperature of Kurseong is more stable and slightly less cold than Sagar town.

The Settlement History ✓

✓ The District was a part of Sikkim till the early nineteenth century. Nepal invaded it in 1789 and ruled it (excluding Kaliapong) for about 30 years during when the Raja of Sikkim sought the help of the British to restore the land from the hands of Nepal. Under the Treaty of Titalia (1817) the British restored the land occupied by Nepal to Sikkim and as a kind of gratitude the Raja of Sikkim granted Darjeeling, i.e., all the land south of the Great Rangit River, east of the Balason, Rahail and Little Rangit rivers and west of Rangpo and Mahanadi rivers to the British government in 1835 (Dash, op cit : 57-58). In 1839, Dr. Campbell was deputed to Darjeeling as the Superintendent with wide civil, criminal and fiscal powers. ✓ He was keen on encouraging the Nepalese settlement in the region for various reasons discussed below and was instrumental in changing the demographic structure of the region. The rapid growth in the population of the district

has been shown in the Table 1 given below.

Table 1
Decennial Population Growth in Darjeeling

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Decade variation</u>	<u>% Decade variation</u>
1872	94,712	-	-
1881	1,55,179	60,467	64
1891	2,23,314	68,135	44
1901	2,49,117	25,803	12
1911	2,65,550	16,433	7
1921	2,82,743	17,193	6
1931	3,19,636	36,893	13
1941	3,76,300	56,764	18
1951	4,59,617	83,317	23
1961	6,24,640	1,65,023	33
1971	7,91,777	1,67,137	33
1981	10,08,434	2,16,657	33

Source : Figures upto 1941 (Dash 1947:49); from 1951 to 1971 (Census of India, 1971); and from 1971-1981 (Census of India, 1981 Provisional).

The above figures show that the decennial population growth was very high between 1872-1881 and 1881-1891. This was mainly due to the opening of the tea gardens, building of roads and buildings and extension of cultivation, which attracted the immigrants from Nepal and other surrounding areas in large numbers. After 1891 the growth came down till 1941 but again shows a sharp rise after that. This is mainly due to the fact that the figures after 1951 have been drawn from the Census of India, 1961 which has included the figures of a part of Pargulidewa area which was earlier in Bihar but was included in

Darjeeling District under the State Reorganization Act, 1956.

While the figures on total population - local as well as immigrated - are available there are no up-to-date data on the various castes and communities and their places of origin. The data on the places of origin and population are available upto 1931 only. This is insufficient but still they may be produced here as they give us some idea about the relative strength of people from different places and countries as it stood at that time.

Table 2

Place of Origin and Population in 1931

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>No. of Pop.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Bengal (including Darjeeling District)	2, 13, 935	68.5
Bihar	31, 540	7.7
Sikkim	8, 321	1.7
Elsewhere in India	3, 377	2.6
Nepal ✓	53, 016	13.5
Elsewhere in Asia	2, 052	0.7
Europe, outside UK and Ireland	130	0.033
UK and Ireland	436	0.2
Miscellaneous	873	0.3
Total	3, 19, 636	-

Source : Dash 1947:50

The above table clearly shows that the people in Darjeeling are immigrated from different places and countries. The highest percentage of population had migrated from within

the state (68.6) followed by those from Nepal (18.5) and Bihar (7.7). It may be pointed out here that the immigrants from Nepal have settled mostly in the hill subdivisions while others have settled in the terai Siliguri and the urban areas of the hill subdivisions. The following table (Table 3) shows the population distribution in the district.

Table 3

Distribution of Communities in Darjeeling (1931)

<u>Communities</u>	<u>% in the District</u>	<u>% in the Hill subdivisions</u>	<u>% in Siliguri Terai</u>
Muslims	2.3	6.6	7.7
Scheduled Castes	13.5	1.1	32.7
Plains Hindus	10.4	3.4	32.9
Nepalis	67.6	56.8	6.3
Other Hillmen	5.3	7.0	0.0
Others	0.9	1.0	0.5

Source : Dash 1947:63.

This table gives a very interesting picture of the population distribution of communities in the district on the whole and between the hill and the plains subdivisions. Thus the plains Hindus are concentrated in Siliguri terai but they are very few in the hills. Similarly, the Nepalis are almost negligible in the terai Siliguri but are the most dominant in the hill subdivisions.

Reasons for Migration ✓

The causes of migration are perhaps more important than the places of origin as such or the spatial distribution.

Though no full-fledged study has been as yet conducted on this problem we find plenty of stray references to the migration from Nepal to Darjeeling and Sikkim. Regarding Darjeeling, Munshi (1930: 1-2) mentions of the factors like development of tea industry and the communications as important in causing immigration into this region. He (ibid: 6) says that there were no village settlements in the proper sense of the term earlier in this region but only coolie settlements with separate enclosures. This was perhaps true but of Kurseong and Sagar subdivisions only; Kalimpong and Siliguri had a slightly different history, as it is shown later, which sufficiently indicated the presence of village settlements in these subdivisions. These subdivisions having hardly any tea gardens had little or no scope of giving birth to the coolie settlements.

O'Malley (1907: 29) regards the choice of Darjeeling as a health resort by the British and the subsequent tea plantations as important factors for the development of this region. He but adds (ibid: 37) that the continued migration from the east Nepal is due to the pressure on land there. Furer Hainendorf (1977: 4) also reiterates the idea of the population pressure and the scarcity of land as a major factor for causing migration from Nepal. Kansakar (1930: 1-3) regards the conquest of the Kathmandu valley and the later expansion and unification of Nepal (1769) by King Prithivi Narayan Shah as the major factors in this connection. Another factor he points out is the Rut*

* Rut means a contract of agricultural operation in which the lessee pays a fixed amount of grain to the lessor. This contract may be elastic or rigid depending upon the relationship between the lessor and the lessee.

system of land tenure which impoverished the peasants of Nepal and made them leave their home land. He also talks of the recruitment of the Nepalis in the British and later Indian army as an important factor. Dutt (1931; 1932) talks of the factors like the increasing population, fragmented landholding, indebtedness, ecological crisis and food deficit for causing migration from Nepal. According to him (ibid : same page) the other factors are : the Anglo-Nepalese Friendship Treaty of 1850, the Tripartite Delhi agreement of 1951 and the revised Indo-Nepal Agreement of 1953.

The above contentions on migration from Nepal to Darjeeling and Sikkim clearly show that there are more than one reason for the migration of the people, mainly the Nepalis, from outside. The Nepalis were the most sought people not only as agriculturists but also as soldiers. They were considered (Hodgson, 1874; 41) to be the best soldiers in Asia but due to the unwillingness of the Nepalese Government to allow the British Government to recruit them, the latter adopted several clandestine measures including the act of encouraging the Nepalis to settle in the hill areas of Darjeeling, Bhilloong and Behradun (ibid).

My contention in this regard is that the Nepalese immigration took place mainly because the British enticed them to come here and work not only in their army but also in the tea gardens and other establishments. In all over the world the bringing of labourers from outside to work in plantations and mines, preferably from very far off places, has been a

concomitant features. In some places it may be for indigo plantation and in others for coal mines but the main objective of the employers behind bringing them from such far off places is that they can keep the labourers tied to a strong invisible chain from which it becomes difficult for them to come out.

In certain cases such as import of labour from outside has also been due to the fact that such labour is relatively cheaper as it was the case in Germany in the early 19th century (see Gerth & Mills 1977). In the context of Darjeeling the case was slightly different. The Lepchas who were the earlier settlers here were probably reluctant to leave their forests and the traditional mode of life but the population as such was very low, which was insufficient for meeting the labour needs of the growing tea-industry in the region. Moreover the Lepchas with abundance of forest and cultivable land did not suffer from an economic crisis. Thus the people had to be brought from outside and for this purpose the hills of Nepal were an ideal place to hunt.

My own field interviews also showed that the British had sent people from Darjeeling and Sikkim to bring labourers from Nepal. The father of Lachminchhaj Subba (80), at present a resident of Tanch village in Kalimpong, was also one of such deputies. He is still remembered by his son to have brought 12 families belonging to the Tamang caste from Nepal. For such services the British government rewarded them with revenue-free land and those who excelled in such jobs were also specially

honoured with titles like Naishob. It may be added here that the initial stage of migration was distinctly marked by the relationships of caste, kinship or other such relationships. ✓

✓ A few studies in Nepal (see e.g., Caplan, L. 1970, Caplan, A. 1972) give a clue to the hypothesis that the lower castes have migrated more than the upper castes from Nepal. This is quite expected because the higher castes have appropriated most of the local resources in Nepal leaving the lower castes with the only choice to migrate. ✓ The study of Lionel Caplan in east Nepal, for example, shows a gradual appropriation of the lands of the Limbu, who are relatively a lower caste, by the Brahmins. This is considered to be an important reason for their migration. The study of Patricia Caplan in west Nepal also shows a higher percentage of migration among the lower castes than among the higher castes. More recently, Poffenberger (1960) also finds a similar feature in Nepal. ✓

✓ This may be tested with ^{the} help of data on a few castes presented in the following table (Table 4). Unfortunately, the following table shows a very irregular growth in the population of different castes and does not supplement the above hypothesis. The table, for example, shows that the percentage increase of population among the Chhetris, a high caste, is very high (25.5% on the average). The total number of population of this caste is lower only to the Rai caste. The irregularity in the percentage growth of the various castes is, however, mainly due to the instability of settlement

until recently in certain pockets of the district such as the forest villages.

Table 4
Caste and Population in Darjeeling District

Caste	Population in the year						
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
Chhetri	11,557	12,599	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	30,463	n.a.
%	-	8.6	-	-	-	141.8	-
Devar	5,770	6,927	8,751	10,235	12,323	14,827	n.a.
%	-	20.1	36.3	17.0	19.6	81.1	-
Bal	23,133	29,409	41,833	47,431	56,794	64,743	n.a.
%	-	22.3	2.1	14.9	19.7	14.0	-
Linta	14,305	13,304	14,191	16,233	17,693	19,665	n.a.
%	-	-3.5	2.8	14.8	9.3	11.4	-
Mongar	11,912	12,451	14,034	16,299	17,253	19,413	n.a.
%	-	4.5	19.9	9.1	6.9	12.5	-
Saxung	3,732	9,623	9,575	11,154	15,455	17,804	n.a.
%	-	10.3	-0.6	16.5	33.6	15.6	-
Bhujel	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5,616	5,745	n.a.
%	-	-	-	-	-	-1.2	-
Kami	9,825	10,939	11,779	11,331	16,272	19,432	19,851
%	-	11.3	7.7	-3.8	43.6	19.4	2.3

'n.a.' stands for not available.

Source : Burchi, G.C., 1973 : 54-62.

The above table shows that the Chhetris, a high caste, have quite a high percentage of population, which apparently belies the hypothesis furnished above. But the census of 5 sample villages (see Tables 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) shows that the

percentage of population of the high castes is very low - 15.5%, 14.7%, 13.2%, 1.3% and 0.7% respectively. Though it is true that the high castes are as such very few compared to the lower castes their population seem to have increased only in the later period - after Independence. Table 4 also gives this picture. Moreover, it is a fact that most of the high castes are landless in the lowest ladder of the agrarian class hierarchy in almost all the villages studied here. Therefore, it appears that their initial migration was very limited as they had the highest class position in Nepal but gradually due to population growth and land reforms measures adopted in Nepal, the high castes also had to migrate. ✓

Summary ✓

The traditional form of cultivation in the district was known as jhumi which is also described as swidden or shifting cultivation. The Lepchas who are considered as the earliest settlers* did not have any knowledge of settled cultivation which is regarded a gift of the immigrant Nepalis (Kandell, 1971 : 44; Masshi 1990). Jhuming is no more followed in the region for probably two main reasons : first, the forests were legally protected after the annexation of the region and the land laws were devised and, secondly, they perhaps found the terrace cultivation more beneficial than jhuming (O'Malley 1967 : 64).

* Awasty (1973 : 8) regards the Lepchas of this region to be originally migrated from Sikkim.

The changes in the economy of Darjeeling started mainly after the deputation of Dr. Campbell as the Superintendent there (Dash op cit : 39). He brought about the changes in mainly two ways : by encouraging the immigrants from Nepal and by introducing tea and cinchona cultivation which later became the major sources of attraction for the immigrants and income for the British themselves. Dr. Campbell started the experimental growth of tea in Darjeeling in 1841 with the seeds of Chinese variety first grown in the Kumaon Himalayas. In 1864 cinchona plantation was also started and in the same year St. Paul's school was transferred from Calcutta to Darjeeling. The roads construction was almost completed by then (ibid : 27-28). Before this, 17 thousand bullock carts were engaged in the district, out of which 7 hundred were on hire (Sankritayan 1950:93). The new Hill Cart Road itself sustains this historical reality.

The tea cultivation received great impetus from the British administration. The labour problems were perhaps minimal because the immigrants were ready to work at a low wage and the supply of labour was abundant. The literacy being almost nil among them and the trade unions also being non-existent they were probably as submissive and exploited as one can imagine them to be.

The tea and allied industry started booming in the region rather rapidly. In 1872 there were only 153 tea gardens covering an area of 14 thousand acres but by 1891 the tea garden area had increased from 14 thousand acres to 45 thousand

acres. By 1931, the total population in the tea gardens was 1,45,503 or 39.0% of district population while in the cinchona plantations also the population was 13,507. Still later the total area under tea gardens increased to 1,07,680 acres or 233.75 square miles (ibid : 34-38). In Kalimpong, on the other hand, only 21 square miles out of 403 square miles were tea-garden area, 24 square miles were for agricultural cultivation, 193 sq. miles under Rhasmahal* and the rest was under forest (ibid : 69). Cultivation, however, took place in the Rhasmahal areas also. (In the tea gardens, the Nepali labourers constituted 96% in the hill subdivisions but only 7% in Siliguri taluk (ibid : 74).

(In the history of Darjeeling the year 1860 is very significant because a series of important developments took place after that. First, large areas of forest lands were cleared and made cultivable. Second, the traditional cultivation pattern known as thumling was replaced with a terraced cultivation. Third, new types of crops like tea, cinchona and orange were introduced and cultivated extensively. Fourth, the forest was systematically used and conserved. And, finally, the communication network was improved (Dash op cit : 41).) (These developments have also been incorporated in the writings of O'Malley (1907: 27).

It may be noted, however, that the agricultural development in the modern sense of the term was still very limited in the district until 1972-74 when the SFDA (Small Farmers' Development Agency) was established. During this

* Rhasmahal means the govt. estate or the land on which the control of the govt. is direct.

period, only Rs. 25 thousand was spent on the region out of which Rs. 3 thousand was for the publication of Mhetipati (bulletin on agriculture) (Hill Affairs Report 1977, 1). Thus the development of agriculture through agencies with expertise on the field and with proper financing system seems to be very recent in the region. In 1974, the WBCADP (West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation) opened two of its project centres in the district - one at Kalimpong I which includes Tarek and Purbung also and the other at Nazalbaria-Pansidewa area of Siliguri. This Corporation sets itself forth, as the name goes, to develop the area in a comprehensive way but it still remains to be seen. It may be relevant here to present the following table (Table 5) on land utilization pattern in the district to show the scope of its functioning.

Table 5

Land Utilization in Darjeeling

	Area in thousand acres in				
	1960-61	1962-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68
Total geographical area according to village papers	310.7	310.7	310.7	310.7	310.7
Area under forest	118.8	118.6	118.4	118.6	118.4
Area not available for cultivation	72.9	72.6	72.6	72.6	72.8
Other cultivated land excluding current fallows	16.9	14.9	14.8	14.8	14.8
Current fallows	4.6	1.7	4.7	6.6	8.0
Net area sown	98.0	103.2	100.2	93.2	96.7
Area sown more than once	15.7	13.8	14.5	12.6	11.7

Source : Dist. Stat. Hand., 1974 : 40-41.

This table shows that in 1960-61 the 'area under forest' was quite large (118.4 thousand hectares) while the 'net area sown' was only 93.0 thousand hectares and the 'area sown more than once' was 15.7 thousand hectares. This table also shows that while the land under 'other uncultivable land' excluding 'current fallows' ^{and the} 'net area sown more than once' have decreased in 1967-68, the 'land under current fallows' has increased from 4.6 thousand hectares in 1960-61 to 2.0 thousand hectares in 1967-68. Though no explanation has been furnished in the source regarding the decreasing trend of both the 'net area sown' and the 'area sown more than once' it may not be too improbable to visualize that it is mainly due to the increasing number of houses which are built on the cultivable lands only. The splitting of the joint families into nuclear families has led to the increase in the number of houses built. Yet another reason could be the change of occupation from agricultural to non-agricultural sector on the part of many villagers belonging mostly to the upper classes than the lower classes. Once they are engaged in non-agricultural occupations which are more lucrative than cultivation the land automatically gets neglected but leasing out to any landless person without being fully convinced of his sincerity and loyalty has been less frequent specially after the implementation of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955. As a consequence some of the landowners may have kept their lands or part of them fallow.

It may not be out of place to add here that the land is

less productive in the hills of Darjeeling* but the labour participation ratio is much higher there than at the State level. For example, every one thousand population in the district have 574 workers while at the State level only 332 persons have been counted as workers. The same is true of the labour participation ratio in the rural areas also and the same in urban areas is lower only to the industrial districts of Calcutta, Howrah and Burdwan. Besides also the labour participation among the females is much higher (30.1%) in Darjeeling compared to 9.4% at the State level (Census of India, 1961).

Such a picture may be roughly explained in the following manner. The caste structure in Darjeeling is very lax and there is no social or traditional barrier on any caste or sex to follow any occupation. On the other hand, the relatively caste-ridden society of the rest of Bengal may still have some amount of caste or some social restrictions to follow any occupation. Yet another reason one can possibly visualize is the simple fact that the cost of living is higher in Darjeeling than in the rest of Bengal. This might have necessitated a greater participation of the people in different occupations.

In the hill areas of Darjeeling the economy has been gradually shifting from self-consumption to the market-based, thereby enhancing the importance of market and the businessmen in the local economic activities. Even in the remote villages

* The average yield per acre (in quintals) for paddy, maize, millet and wheat are 5.0, 3.3, 2.5 and 4.5 respectively (IASP, 1982 : 20).

without proper communication facilities, the cultivation of cash crops like ginger is found more and more popular. Such a trend is inevitable in a place where the economy is totally monetised and the need of cash is always growing. But in the process of such change the people who are found to be most benefitted are the business communities like the Marwaris and the Biharis and to some extent the Newars. The market of almost every cash crop produced in the villages is controlled by these people who stay in the towns or by the road side but with capital in hand. The efficacy of the development agencies like Gram Panchayat and the CAAP has not been very appreciable in this regard. A few market surveys by scholars like Macdonald (1930:9) and De (1978:91) on the region supplement the above statement of mine.

Sikkim

Sikkim, the 22nd state of India, lies between $27^{\circ}5'$ and $28^{\circ}9'$ north latitude and $88^{\circ}56'$ east longitude and has an area of 7133 square miles. The altitude varies from 800' a.s.l. to above 28,000' a.s.l. at Kanchenjunga - the second highest peak in the world. The area between 7000' to 14,000' a.s.l. is almost uninhabited except by some seasonal graziers (mainly Bhutias and Sherpas) and above this is usually covered with glaciers which form the source of the two major rivers of Sikkim and Darjeeling - Teesta and Rangit.

Sikkim is surrounded by Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and West Bengal on the north, west, east and south respectively. Thus,

Despite its small size it has these international boundaries with China, Bhutan and Nepal. Historically, this State had a much larger area. In 1864, Sir Ashley Eden had noted its boundaries from Arun river in the west to Taklas Pass on the east, from Tibet on the north to Khasungunge in Purniah (Bihar) on the south (Patterson 1933, 223).

The average rainfall in this State is about 140" per annum with the climate varying from humid in the south to arctic in the north. The altitude between 7000' and 15,000' has an alpine climate. There are plenty of sharp and pointed hills in Sikkim which make it difficult for habitation or cultivation everywhere.

Settlement History

The really authentic settlement history of the Nepalis in this region starts from the mid-nineteenth century or a little earlier. But there are writings which show that there was a Kirat (including the Limbu, Rai and the Yakkha of the Nepalese community) settlement in this area even before the Aryan colonization in India (Chenjong 1966, 8). It is written that before the Aryans advanced towards the eastern India every village in north Bihar, north Bengal and Assam was ruled by the Kirat Kings (ibid, 8). The land to the east of river Trisuli was ruled by the Khas (meaning the Chhetris) tribe and the land to the east by the Kiratas (ibid, 200). Dasgupta (1973, 21) also writes about the interactions of the Aryans and the Kiratas in

this region and the advanced material culture of the latter. Moreover, Saniti Kumar Chatterjee (1951 : 82) gives a very authentic account of the Khas nationality in the northeastern India during the Mahabharata period.

It needs a thorough historical research to trace how and why the Khas nationality in the east and the Khas nationality in the west gradually disintegrated. It is but true that their disintegration took place during the time of the Aryans who also later became weak and could not resist the onslaught of the Muslim invasion. There are profuse references (Wright 1958, Battacharya 1971, Bostney and Morris 1974, Bista 1975, Pradhan 1978, Poffenberger 1980) to show that many Aryans fled from India to Nepal during the Muslim invasion and took refuge there. They were the Brahmins, the Chhetris or the Gurkhas (originally Khas), the Hindu Kowars, etc.

The migration cycle thus started in the western Himalayas which served as the entrance gate to the Indian emigrants into Nepal. The eastern Himalayas were still inaccessible due to the forests and a lack of communication facilities as the long trail of Nepal was very material till 1953 (Kansakar 1980 : 6). That was perhaps why the 19th century immigration took place from the eastern side of Nepal and only very recently migration into Nepal as well as out of it started through this trail region.

The first people to enter into Nepal were the Tibetans during the mid 17th century (Wangyal and Mahapatra op cit : 11).

Chie 1956 : 215). In fact the people of Sikkim and Tibet used to frequent each other's country until 1959 (Lall 1981 : 226) though the boundary had been fixed as early as 1890 by the Anglo-Chinese Convention (Dasgupta 1974:6). The large scale immigration of the Tibetans had taken place mainly during 1950's following the Chinese invasion in Tibet in 1950 (Randall 1971:44).

Of the various Nepalese castes, the Limbus and the Magars are regarded as the original inhabitants of Sikkim (Nangyal and Mahapatra 1968, Chomjong 1968, Sinha 1976). Sinha (ibid:7) classifies the Nepalese community into three sub-cultural stocks - Kirantis, Newaris and Gurkhas and regards the Kirantis (according to him : Limbus, Lepchas, Rais, Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs etc.) as the autochthones of Sikkim. Chomjong also has made elaborate references to prove that the Kirantis are the original inhabitants of this place. Sinha (ibid:7-8) writes that the Khas, Bhutias and the Chhetris had come and settled in Sikkim during the early 19th century. Though Sinha has been ignorant of the fact that the Khas and the Chhetris meant the same, their settlement in the early 19th century is not implausible because Sikkim had been conquered by Nepal and ruled for some thirty years until 1817 when under the Treaty of Titalia the British restored the land to the Sikkimese (Dasg 1947:37).

Among the main communities of Sikkim - Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis - the Lepchas are often regarded as the original inhabitants of Sikkim while the latter two are regarded as later

immigrants (Parkhurst 1946: 13, Coolidge 1967: 13, Gorer 1967: 35, Risley 1972: 27, O'Halley 1979: 136). But there are also some writings giving a different version of the Lepchas. Thus Mackean (1920: 511) writes that the Lepchas came from the east with the Jindars (Kais) who went on to Nepal and settled there and with the Mechas who settled in the foot hills. Waddell (1979) also believed that the Lepchas who were of Indo-Chinese origin came to Sikkim from the east through Assam Valley. The findings of Giger (1967) after 13 years of anthropological fieldwork in Kalimpong, Sikkim and Gt also corroborate the above conventions. Moreover, K.K. Das (1936: 1-5) an authority on the Lepchas, writes that before the Lepchas came to Sikkim there were three tribes called the Ha-ang or Ha-on, the Chang and the Mon already in possession of the country.

My little references work indicates that there has been some serious misunderstanding among these authors. For example, according to General Mainwaring's Dictionary of the Lepcha Language (1938: 139) the word Ha-ang or Ha-on means a foolish class of the Lepchas. The superior Lepchas perhaps called their inferior brethren as ha-on. It should also be remembered here that the word Lepcha is given by their Nepali neighbours and they called and knew themselves as pong. Again the word 'Chang' most probably meant 'Chang' or 'Tsang' meaning the Limbus. The Limbus are still known as Chong or Tsang. Mitra (1953: 66) also noted the Limbus or Chongs as Chang or Tsang. Finally the word 'Mon' probably referred to the Lepchas only because they have often

been referred to as 'Moa' (Nangyal and Maharani op cit : Append. I, Nitra 1953:65).

If the above suggestions are accepted to be correct then Siger's contention (Ibid: 27) that the La-ang or La-ang are perhaps extinct is completely wrong. It may be regarded that the Lepchas, the Limbus and the Mangars are the oldest inhabitants of Sikkim, the Bhutias are later immigrants and most of the Nepalis still later settlers.* This chronological order of migration has been depicted by many authors (White 1909:7-9, Parkhurst 1946:13-15, Goelke 1967:13, Gezer 1967:35, O'Malley 1979). Nangyal and Maharani also write (Ibid: 19) that the Limbus, the Lepchas and the Mangars were in Sikkim when Phuntsog Nangyal and his followers/officers came to Sikkim.

The large scale Nepalese settlement started in Sikkim only after the deputation of J.C.White as the political officer in Sikkim (1928). His entry into Sikkim marks a turning point in the history of Sikkim. He cancelled the traditional form of land tenure system under which the lands either belonged to the Maharaja (King) or the Khasis** by virtue of the deeds of grants

* This is, however, a simplistic conclusion. I have noted in a short article entitled "Eastern Himalayas : A Brief Introduction" (Prakriti Path, Vol.1, No.1 1982) that due to instability of economy characteristic of jhum cultivation, the people were rather migratory. Therefore it is difficult to establish with absolute certainty who are the original inhabitants and who the later immigrants.

** They are big landlords previously with administrative and judicial powers also. Patterson (1963: 232) and Stokes (1973: 232) refer this term to a Khasin judge in matter of religious law.

from Maharaja (Naryal and Maharani op cit : 107). He also opened the waste lands and encouraged the Paharia (Nepalis) settlers in the region. In the process many people were made Thikodars*** with enormous control over the peasants.

The first census in Sikkim took place in 1891. The caste-wise population distribution in 1891 in Sikkim has been furnished in the following table (Table G). This table shows that during 1891 the population of the Lepchas was 18.9% and of the Bhutias 16.1%. Though the recent data on this aspect are not available it is felt that the percentage increase of their population has been slightly lower than that of the Nepalis. It may also be noted that the slaves constituted 1.1% of the population in Sikkim. Slavery is officially abolished now but there can still be seen some slave-like families around the houses of the Kasis.

Table G

Caste/Community and Population in 1891 in Sikkim

Caste/Community	Male	Female	Children	Total	Percentage
Brahmin	521	373	521	1414	4.6
Chhetri	308	253	273	833	2.7
Bovar	340	183	304	727	2.4
Rai	742	601	557	1900	6.0
Limbu	1255	1163	942	3359	11.0
Gurung	1103	1047	756	2906	9.6
Magar	353	343	192	888	3.0
Khamtu (Rai)	723	643	520	1886	6.4
Nami	801	773	1233	2347	7.4
Kaul	635	464	530	1629	5.5
Slaves	124	99	103	326	1.1
Darji	102	92	93	287	0.9
Lepcha	2362	2399	1001	5762	18.9
Bhutia	1966	1930	863	4804	16.1
Miscellaneous					
including troop	330	72	99	501	1.7
Total	11,539	10,663	8,323	30,525	100.0

Source : Mislev 1973, 27.

*** They are also big landlords who enjoyed administrative and judicial powers like the Kasis. Both these categories did not have to pay the land tax and lived very luxuriously by exploiting the seriyats.

The demographic composition of Sikkim has now been almost totally changed. There are a large number of communities settled there specially in the urban areas. The Nepalese settlers have chosen mostly the rural areas. Many of the settlers have more than two hundred years' history in Sikkim but it is surprising to note that they had not been entrusted with the status of a citizen until 1961 when the Sikkim Subject's Regulation Legislation granted the citizenship to the Nepalis* (Karan and Jenkins op cit, 63). The legislation was approved by the Government of India and promulgated by the then Maharaja without the State Council's consent.

It has already been discussed quite in detail regarding the reasons of migration to Darjeeling and Sikkim. It may be added here, with special reference to Sikkim, however, that the scholars have been divided into two groups on the Nepalese immigration : one regarding the British and the other group to the local aristocrats, being responsible for the immigration of the Nepalis. Thus, Rao (1972:65) and Grover (1974: 23-24) write that the British had encouraged the immigrants and for two reasons : to accelerate the economic growth and to counteract the supremacy of the Sikkimese royal family. Karan and Jenkins (1965:63) and Lall (1981:213) pin point to the first political officer, J.C. White, to Sikkim for being responsible for the Nepalese immigration. On the other hand, Dagnot (1974:41-45) writes that it was the councillors and the landlords of Sikkim who played an important

* 'Nepalis' in the official sense did not include the Limbus who are taken as a separate community in Sikkim till now.

role in the area. Dutt (1984:1054) also reiterates this point and makes a special mention of the kakis of Khaugsarpa as being actively involved in the Nepalese settlement since 1870's.

Demographic Profile

The following table gives the population distribution in Sikkim.

Table 7

District and Population Distribution in Sikkim

Item	Unit	North	East	South	West	Sikkim
Area	Sq. kms.	4826	354	750	1136	7096
		53.8	13.4	10.6	16.4	%
Popula- tion	Total	36,300	1,38,085	75,691	74,813	3,14,979
		8.4	43.8	24.0	23.8	%
	Male	14,750	76,767	40,777	39,292	1,71,436
	Female	11,649	61,318	34,914	35,611	1,43,483
Density per Sq. km.		6	145	101	64	44

Source : Bureau of Economics & Statistics, Gangtok 1981.

The above table reveals that in the north district the area is 53.8% but the population only 8.4%, in the east the area is 13.4% and the population 43.8%, in the south the area is 10.6% though the population 24.0%, and in the west the area is 16.4% while the population 23.8%. Thus, the east district is the most populated district and the north the least populated one. The very high percentage of population in the east is perhaps due to the location of the capital, Gangtok, and other urban centres like

Singtam and Rangpo in it while the low population in the north is due to the glacier covered areas to a great extent. This is also partly due to a political factor - the Nepalese were not allowed to settle in the north previously (in Map No. 2) and still in areas like Dzongu, Lachen and Lachung they are not allowed to settle. The east also has better communication, schooling and other employment facilities which automatically attract people but the west and north, which lack these are sparsely populated also.

It may be interesting to note that Sikkim did not have any urban area until 1951 in the sense that the markets there lacked a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or a notified town area, a minimum population of 5 thousand, at least 75% of the male workers engaged in non-agricultural occupations and the density of population at least 4 hundred persons per square kilometre (Sikkim, Prov. Census 1951). In 1961 only the east had some urban population but in 1971 north, south and the west also had 2.5%, 2.5% and 1.9% urban population respectively. In 1981 north and west showed only 3.0% and 2.3% increase of urban population respectively but east and south showed a very high population growth (ibid:6).

While the urban population growth is quite insignificant in the north, the overall population growth has been very high. The decennial population increase in the north per every one thousand in 1961-71 was +354 and in the east, south and west it was +510, +162 and +0 respectively. But in 1971-81 it was +1983

in the north and +013, +123 and +233 in the east, south and the west respectively. The very high growth in the north is mainly due to the people working in military establishments and road constructions which have assumed considerable significance after 1975 as this area lies in the Chinese border.

Nepalis

The shifting cultivation was, like in Darjeeling, the earliest form of cultivation in Sikkim also. The initial immigration of the Tibetans perhaps did not bring about any change in the local economy because they were basically traders and those in the higher rank were engaged in administration. It was only after the Nepalese immigration that there was a change in the economy of Sikkim. The immigrated Nepalis gradually filled up areas like Dullan, Chakung, Nanchi, Nanthan, Tsedan, Rhonock and Pachay-Rhant copper mines. The heaviest flow of immigration was between 1871 and 1888 during when the forests were extensively cleared for agricultural cultivation. The whole area of Sikkim was measured, mapped and assessed for revenue. Grazing grounds were also taxed and the hide trade was made a monopoly of the license holders only (Hargyal and Maharani op cit : 25).

Gradually the markets developed and the shops were taxed which was later enhanced. Roads and bungalows were constructed and dispensaries and schools opened (ibid : 26). The basis of taxation and revenue was finalised by J.C.White

and by 1906 Gangtok was linked with India by a motorable road (Karan and Jenkins op cit: 69). However, until 1947 (from 1907-1947 a British Protectorate), the development in Sikkim was insignificant. The feudal system was in practice, the tax was high, forced labour was in vogue and there was practically no investment on the development of economy (Karan and Jenkins 1963, Patterson 1968, Dasgupt 1974, Singh 1975). Economic development in Sikkim began to take shape only after the Indian independence in 1947 though the active participation of India in the same started only after 1975 when Sikkim merged into India.

The Sikkimese economy is basically agricultural. There are only 2 tea gardens, Terai and Kowling, both of which are located in the south. Attempts are also being made to boost up the local arts and crafts which held a unique market in the whole of India. Directorates of Agriculture and Industry were set up to extend expert guidance to the farmers and the general people in Sikkim (Sikkim, Indus. Dev. 1981 : 1-11).

Agriculture is still the main source of livelihood for the people in Sikkim though the ecological handicaps on its expansion and development are immense. The cultivation takes place usually between 2500' to 5000' only, below 2000' being usually covered with forest and above 5000' with unproductive land and still above with glaciers. The most important crop in Sikkim is maize with 50% of the total cultivated area or 2,00 lakh acres under it. The land under cardamom is 20 thousand

acres, orange 2 thousand and 5 hundred acres and the rest for other minor crops like paddy, wheat, millet, oilseeds, potato, ginger and other vegetables.

The production of any crop is quite low in all over the State though the same in a few production centres like Gyalshing and Darangin has been record breaking : 1330 quintals per acre (wheat) in the Gyalshing seed Multiplication Farm and 3333 quintals per acre (maize) at Darangin. But since such centres are only 9 in the whole State it is still a food deficit State. Its annual food import is 16 thousand to 20 thousand tonnes (Sikkim, Agril. Dev. 1981). The reason for the food deficiency may become clearer if the following table on land utilization in Sikkim is produced. The table shows that the total operated land constitutes only 10.3% of the total land in the State. Forest still occupies 36.3% of the total land in Sikkim, barren and uncultivable land constitute 23.6% and the permanent pastures and grazing land, 14.0%. Therefore, the percentage of land operated in Sikkim like in hilly region is very low.

Table 8

Land Use in Sikkim

Nature of Land	Total area in thousand Hectares	Percentage
Total operated area	70.06	10.3
Barren and uncultivable	209.01	23.6
Land put to non-agril. uses	69.86	9.6
Permanent pastures & grazing land including culturable waste outside operated area	102.49	14.0
Land under miscellaneous tree crops and grooves	4.17	0.6
Forest land	265.21	36.3
Grand Total	782.70	100.0

Source : Sikkim, Agricultural Census 1976-77: 3.

Transport is another obstacle to the rapid development of economy in Sikkim. The State Government is making sincere attempts to connect even the remotest areas but still the communication network is very poor and the local resources have not been properly tapped. The little progress so far made towards a market economy seems only to have benefitted, like in Darjeeling, the business communities from the plains and a few local businessmen like the Newars. In other words, Sikkim represents many features of a dependent economy - concentration of land ownership, sharelessness, credit needs, usury, indebtedness, low levels of agricultural technology etc. as enumerated by Jacoby (1961: 13).

Finally, a word on the economy of the north. The people of the north were basically herdsmen and traders. They used to take their herds across the Tibetan boundary but this was stopped following the Sino-Indian hostilities in 1962 (Lall op cit : 298). They also had to give up their traditional occupation of arts and crafts because the silk, wool and other raw materials required for their occupation were stopped from Tibet. They had to eventually fall back on the settled cultivation which never was favourable in this district due to primarily climatic reasons.

The Village Profiles

Tarek

The Tarek village is situated about 5 kilometres off the Kalimpong town towards south of the Teesta market. The

altitude range of the village is from about 2000' to 2700' a.s.l. It lies on the west facing slope which makes it possible to get the sunshine almost throughout the day. There is, however, a small hamlet called 'Dangconglang' which faces north and thus gets the sunshine for only about 4 to 5 hours a day.

The village boundary is marked on the east by 7th Mile and Fustong villages, on the west by Hengbar Forest and the Fosta river further west, on the north lies the Hengbar Forest's extension and the Hengbai village on further north, and on the south lies the Fashiding village which together with Fanch forms one Gram Panchayat called Fashiding Gram Panchayat. The only notable road that connects the village with the rest of the world is the Kham Road which runs across the Kalingong town and goes towards Foding.

Fanch does not have any recorded history to show who are the earlier inhabitants and who the later immigrants. The terminological explanation gives a clue to an early Lopyha inhabit in the village. The name Fanch, for example, is supposed to be a corrupt form of a Lopyha word Fanyang meaning farms, locally known as higang. But this is not an accurate index to show that the Lopyhas were the earliest inhabitants of the village. Until the first panchayat elections which was held during 1959/60 only the lower portion of the village was called Fanch. It is also reported that some of the Lopyhas in this village had immigrated from Damsonggarh, Sador and other places of Sikkim.

The village was quite prominent during the period when the trade between Tibet and the East India Company was on. There is a main road running across the village, which was used by the traders, the British soldiers and other people including the casual travellers for a long time. A number of shops were also there on the either side of the road. This road is still called Lanzi* road or Lachen-Lachung road by some villagers for the reasons pointed out above. This road is no more used for transactions after the construction of the Meshi Road across Tashiding village. However, the local clubs - Sangam and Jyoti - gather the villagers every year before the Durga Puja and clean this road.

The village had very few households before 60 or 70 years ago but now the number of households has crossed two hundred. This speedy growth in the number of households in the village has been mainly due to two reasons: the immigration of the people from surrounding areas, mainly Sikkim and Nepal and the splitting of joint families. The following table (Table 9)

* Lanzi is a term referring to soldiers (in the present sense the British soldiers).

shows the caste-wise population distribution in Taneik at present.

Table 9

Caste/Community and Population in Taneik

Caste/Community	No. of Households	Male	Female	Total	%
Bahun (Brahmin)	6	22	19	41	3.0
Chhetri	32	97	88	185	13.5
Newar	23	81	83	164	12.0
Raj	23	51	60	111	8.1
Limbu	43	110	121	231	17.0
Yakha	2	3	4	7	0.5
Guzung	3	9	6	15	1.1
Tamang	13	43	43	86	6.3
Magar	13	40	37	77	5.6
Josi	1	1	0	1	0.1
Bhujel	3	13	13	26	2.3
Sunwar	1	5	4	9	0.7
Shorpa	6	12	17	29	2.1
Kaul	3	20	26	46	4.1
Sarki	6	11	11	22	1.6
Danai	2	4	7	11	0.8
Lepcha	41	134	128	262	19.1
Bhutia	3	2	5	7	0.5
Bihari	2	10	9	19	1.4
Muslim	1	4	2	6	0.4
Total	234	637(50.1)	633(49.9)	1270	100.0

The above table shows that the highest percentage of population (19.1) in the village belongs to the Lepchas, followed by the Limbus (17.0), Chhetris (13.5) and the Newars (12.0).

The other castes are numerically less significant. The very high population among the Lopchas and the Limbas may be partially taken as an index to show that they are the oldest inhabitants in the village. This contention seems to be based on inadequate evidence but many of the villagers supported this idea.

It may be added here that about two third (66.0%) of the total number of households in the village are Hindus, followed by 23.5% Buddhists, 11.1% Christians and 0.4% Muslims. Out of 3 or 6.8% of the Christian Chhetri households one has been reconverted into Hinduism. Most of the Christians from the castes like Rai, Limba, Mengar, Sarki and Bawal are first generation converts but 1 Bawal and 19 or 21.4% of the Lopcha households are second generation converts. Tamangs are originally Buddhists but a few of them have preferred to call themselves Hindus.

This is, however, only an official version of the religious distribution of the villagers and in actual relationship the formal religious distinctions are often ignored. The Limbas, for example, are officially Hindus but many of them still profess their traditional religion superficially known as 'animism'. The same is, to a great extent, true of many other castes like the Rai, Yalpa, Bawal and the Mengar. The Tamangs are officially Buddhists but they are also found to be worshipping deities of both the Hindu and the Buddhist gods and goddesses which are kept in their chamras or altars.

Being located at a low altitude Tamak is quite

favourable for cultivation. The major crops grown in the village are paddy, maize, millet, pulses, etc. besides other subsidiary crops like ginger, vegetables, tapioca etc. The total area of this village is 304.24 acres out of which 10.47 acres or 3.9% is homestead land, 127.55 acres or 35.0% is irrigated, 175.96 acres or 49.2% is non-irrigated and 50.26 acres or 13.9% is uncultivable. The irrigated land, locally known as dhya Bhoti or naal Bhoti have some terraced fields where maize is cultivated as a summer crop (Hariboy Boli) and paddy as a winter crop (Hiangoy Boli). The non-irrigated lands are used for cultivating crops other than paddy. The fallow waste lands or uncultivable lands are used for growing and preserving bamboo and other tree grooves or fodder for cattle.

Location

This village is located roughly at an altitude between 2700' to 3400' a.s.l. and is in the west facing slope only. It is surrounded on the east by Development Area and further east by Durbin Military Cantonment, on the west by Enak village, on the north by 7th Mile village and on the south by Nagay and Chhilo villages. The main infra-structural link of this village with the world outside is the Koshi Road only.

This village was previously inhabited predominantly by the Lepchas but now a large number of other castes and communities can be seen in the village, which taken together threw the Lepchas to the minority. Taken the different castes and communities individually the Lepchas are numerically still the

most dominant (30.2%). The next populous caste in the village - Chhetri - constitutes only 13.4%. Other castes and communities in the village are numerically less significant. This can be shown with the help of the following table (Table 10).

Table 10

Caste/Community and Population in Purbong

<u>Caste/Community</u>	<u>No. of Households</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
Bahun	1	3	3	6	1.3
Chhetri	9	30	22	52	13.4
Rai	4	19	17	36	9.3
Limbu	5	13	12	25	6.4
Tamang	3	15	15	30	8.3
Magar	3	17	9	26	6.7
Bhujel	3	13	10	23	5.9
Rami	3	15	17	32	8.3
Banai	3	10	8	18	4.6
Dihori	1	4	4	8	2.1
Anglo-Indian	2	8	6	14	3.6
Lepcha	21	65	52	117	30.2
Total	63	312(54.6)	176(42.4)	339(%)	100.0

By religion, the maximum number of households (44.4%) are Hindus. The percentage of the Buddhist and the Christian households are almost equal - 33.6% and 37.0% respectively and no Muslim household is there in the village. The castes which have Christian converts are Rai (1 or 35.0%), Magar (1 or 33.3%), Bhujel (2 or 66.7%), Anglo-Indian (2 or 100.0%) and the Lepcha (11 or 52.4%). All the Tamang households are Buddhists but

37.5% of the Lachas and Christians which is quite high compared to the figure on Tasek (26.4%).

The economy of Pusbang is slightly different from that of Tasek due to its relatively higher altitude. Though the crops grown in Tasek are also found in this village the net production from these crops is comparatively lower and the time taken by each crop to ripe is also slightly longer. Cash crops are only recently being seen though, the extent is greater than in Tasek. The communication facilities are also better in this village than in Tasek but the problem of firewood and fodder for cattle is more acute in this village than in Tasek. This is so because the Langkat forest which sustains the basic needs of the villagers in this regard is further from Pusbang than from Tasek.

Pusbang has a total land of 91.76 acres out of which only 52.7% is irrigated, 31.4% is non-irrigated, 8.4% is covered with homestead and 0.5 is fallow/waste. Thus despite a higher altitude this village has a higher percentage of irrigated land (52.7) than in Tasek (36.0). This is mainly due to better irrigation facilities in this village than in Tasek. The algarah Jhona which runs along its southern boundary has been tapped with many artificial canals for cultivation, which has not been so much possible for Tasek due to other physical constraints.

The concentration of households is found mainly

along the Beshi Road, which is true of Tarek village also. As a result the villagers staying on the either side of the Beshi Road form one neighbourhood and have a close social interaction. The phenomenon of identifying themselves with their respective villages is found almost non-existent along these settlements.

Rangbali

The Rangbali village lies between about 6400' to 7100' a.s.l. in the Sagar subdivision of Darjeeling. It is about 12 kilometres off the Darjeeling town, 3 kilometres from Choom Jorhangaew town and about the same distance from the Sonada town. Like Tarek, it is also located in the west facing slope but being at an open place gets the sunshine better than Tarek.

The village is surrounded on the east by Sinchel Forest with two famous Sinchel lakes in it and the Tiger Hill on the top, by Doctonish and Kalej Valley tea estates on the west, by the extension of the Sinchel Forest on the north and by the Jorhola hamlet on the south. The D.P. Rai Road (alias Hill Cart Road) and the Darjeeling Rail's extension lines are the two major infra-structures of the village. There is a small market kind of a place within the village but the shops there are meant for replenishing the immediate needs of the villagers and the tea gardeners below it.

The village had developed specially as a labour settlement for Doctonish Tea Estate. Many of the villagers worked there until recently and also paid Rs. 10 per acre as a rent

annually to the owner of the same garden. Later on, the ex-servicemen from military and railway services also came and settled there. Along with them settled some business communities like the Biharis, the Kalnayag (Marwaris) and the Muttias. The village land originally belonged to the tea garden only.

The name Ranbull is also supposed to have come from a Lepcha word Ranspui meaning a Lepcha habitat. This indicates the presence of an early Lepcha settlement in the village. They may have been pushed towards Kalinpong or other parts of Bengal or even Sikkim due to the intrusion of the Nepalis in the area and the expansion of the tea gardens. It has been written (Dist. Cons. Hand. 1961:5) that according to Captain Herbert 12 hundred able bodied Lepchas forming two thirds of the population of Sikkim had been forced by the Raja of Sikkim to leave Darjeeling and its neighbourhood and take refuge in Nepal about 10 years before the annexation took place (1835). However, in absence of any written records pertaining to the village itself, the contention remains, at best, a probable explanation only.

It appears that this village also had an early contact with the British. The British grew vegetables there for supplying to the British soldiers during the Second World War (1939). At present 150 acres of land is occupied by the SPSC (State Potato Seed Multiplication Centre) and 100.70 acres by the villagers. The main crops grown in the village are potato, cabbage and peas only. Paddy cannot be cultivated there

for the lack of irrigated land and maize due to high altitude.

The population composition of the village has been shown in the following table (Table 11).

Table 11

Caste/Community and Population in Raughall

<u>Caste/Community</u>	<u>No. of Households</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Bahun	4	10	3	13	1.0
Thakuri	13	43	59	102	6.0
Chhotari	19	54	66	110	6.8
Devar	7	22	30	52	2.9
Rai	17	100	97	197	11.4
Limbū	15	49	50	99	5.9
Yakha	9	22	23	44	2.6
Gurung	30	33	30	63	3.6
Tamang	104	336	311	647	38.4
Magar	5	9	15	24	1.4
Bhujel	1	1	4	5	0.3
Yolma	1	1	4	5	0.3
Shami	2	7	6	13	0.7
Sanwar	2	3	3	14	0.8
Sharma	7	16	23	44	2.6
Kauli	10	33	43	76	4.4
Sarki	1	2	3	5	0.3
Devai	2	3	3	6	0.3
Lopcha	2	4	2	6	0.4
Bhutiya	3	14	16	30	1.7
Budpa	15	30	34	73	4.1
Kalyan	3	24	30	54	3.1
Sikari	12	33	11	44	2.6
Total	306	906 (51.1)	863 (48.9)	1774 (9)	100.0

It is apparent from the above table that in Raughall the

Tanangs are the most numerous (33.5%), followed by the Bais (11.1%). Other castes are numerically rather insignificant. The Tanangs being the most numerous can be regarded as the oldest settlers of the village. But, as mentioned earlier, this is not a sure index. Moreover, the fact that the Tanangs are divided into a number of subcastes shows an indication that they are not very old inhabitants of the village. They had probably come in groups from different villages.

By religion, the Hindus constitute only 53.6% of the total number of households in the village, the Buddhists represent 43.1%, the Christians 1.6% and the Muslims only 0.7%. The quite high percentage of the Buddhists in the village is primarily due to a high percentage of the Tanangs (33.5%). Besides, there are many castes and communities like the Sukpas, the Lopchas, the Bhutias and the Shompas who are Buddhists.

Takathang

Takathang is a village located in a very remote place in west Sikkim. It is located at an altitude of about 2300' to 3000' a.s.l. and faces north. As a result, obviously the sun comes late in the morning but sets rather early in the afternoon. It is surrounded on the north by Rishi river and on the further north by Don and Jil Hatheydhanga, on the south by Serethang Reserve Forest and Sigang and Makong villages beyond it, on the east lies the Chachen village and on the west lies the Parong Gap. A khamba (unpitched) road called Rishi-Sinchinpong Road constructed recently starts from the Rishi Hat, runs across the

village and ends up at Kinchiapong village.

The following table (Table 12) gives the caste/community-wise population distribution in Tabuthang.

Table 12

Caste/Community and Population in Tabuthang

<u>Caste/Community</u>	<u>No. of Households</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Hokun	1	•	2	2	0.1
Chhetri	2	3	3	6	1.2
Rai	23	52	58	110	21.8
Limbu	6	16	11	27	5.4
Tamang	31	63	58	121	24.3
Kangra	17	42	53	106	21.0
Guzung	3	7	8	15	3.0
Shorpa	3	5	7	12	2.4
Bengali	1	2	1	3	0.6
Dihari	1	2	•	2	0.4
Kuni	4	14	8	22	4.4
Lepcha	4	14	11	25	5.0
Bhutia	9	34	35	69	13.7
Total	94	237 (50.9)	242 (49.1)	479 (5)	100.0

This table shows that in Tabuthang the Tamangs are the most numerous (24.3%) followed by Rais (21.8%) and Kangras (21.0%). It is also to be noted that six households constituting 6.4% of the total number of households staying in the village are in government services in the schools, dispensaries and other establishments.

The religious distribution in this village is very

simple. The Hindus constitute 61.7% and the Buddhists 38.3%. The only castes which are Buddhists are Tameng, Sherpa, Lepcha and Bhutia and all the rest are Hindus. Christians and Muslims are still unheard of.

The economy of Takuthang is predominantly agricultural. The occupational diversification in this village is minimal and the crops are grown mainly for domestic consumption and only very recently the ginger has started going to the market at Beshi Hat or Jorhang town. The absence of a market economy in the village is mainly due to the agricultural backwardness and the remoteness of the village from the nearest market. It takes about two and half hours to reach the Beshi Hat and about 3 hours to return as the road is very steep. The Jorhang town is about 16 kms away from Beshi Hat and no regular transport service is available.

The main crops grown in the village are maize, millet and barley besides some subsidiary crops like paddy, tapioca, ginger, cardamom and pulses. Most of the land is dry and the paddy cultivation is not possible except along the river side. Out of 362.61 acres in the village 0.6% is homestead, 4.3% is irrigated, 84.7% is non-irrigated and 10.4% is fallow/waste land.

Chuchen

This is an adjoining village of Takuthang and has many features in common. The altitude, area and the aspect of this village are same as Takuthang. It is surrounded on the north by Beshi river and on the further north by Dom and Jil Hathoythung,.

on the south by Corothang Reserve Forest and Sigong and Nabong villages beyond it, on the east lies the Kenling village and on the west lies the Takithang village itself. The Rong-Rinchinpong Road which passes across Takithang also runs through this village. These two villages are divided by a small stream called Kachcha Khola.

There is another similarity between these two villages. Like Takithang the spatial distribution of houses in this village is considerable. The only difference with the former is that Takithang has a conspicuous cluster at a hamlet called Mangalbaria whereas no such cluster can be seen in Chuchen. It is reported that a hat used to take place at this hamlet every Tuesday (that is why the name Mangalbaria) until a couple of decades ago but since the villagers indulged in drink and quarrels in every hat it was later on stopped totally. But in fact it was probably due to greater facilities offered by Rong Hat that this market gradually disappeared.

The following table (Table 13) gives the caste/communitywise population distribution in this village.

Table 13

Caste/Community and Population in Chuchen

<u>Caste/Community</u>	<u>No. of Households</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Chhetri	1	1	2	3	0.7
Rai	24	63	55	118	27.8
Tamang	32	98	93	191	44.9
Magar	3	6	6	12	2.9
Garung	7	17	18	35	8.2
Sunwar	1	3	1	4	4.1
Kaul	3	12	5	17	4.0
Lepcha	4	9	8	17	4.0
Bhotia	3	15	13	28	6.6
Total	82	224 (52.7)	201 (47.3)	425 (8)	100.0

The above table shows that the Tamangs constitute the largest percentage (44.9) in Chuchen followed by the Rais (27.8%). Besides these two castes the other castes in the village are numerically insignificant.

Like Takathang, Chuchen also has a very simple distribution of population according to religion. The Hindus constitute 46.9% of the total households in the village and the Buddhists 53.7%. The higher percentage of the Buddhists in this village is due to a higher percentage (39.0%) of Tamangs and partly also due to the Lepchas, and the Shabdas who together constitute 13.6% of the households in the village. There is not a single Christian or Muslim household in this village.

The economy of Chuchen is in every way similar with that of Takathang. The crops grown are exactly the same with the only exception that ginger cultivation is found to be more popular in this village than in Takathang. This is probably due to greater proximity to the market (Nashil Hat). The percentage of irrigated land in Chuchen, like in Takathang village, is also very low - 2.7%. The homestead land in Chuchen constitutes 0.6%, the non-irrigated 96.0% and the waste/fallow 1.7%.

The general survey of the economy and population of the region, the religion and other aspects of the five villages points out some interesting features which have a relevance to the caste and agrarian class studies. The differences in altitude, economy, levels of agricultural development and urbanization, socio-ethnic composition and other such factors influence the agrarian structure

and subsequently the caste relations in different ways. In the subsequent chapters these aspects and their role in shaping the caste-class relations in the area have been discussed.

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