

ABSTRACT

MANGARS IN JALPAIGURI AND DARJEELING DISTRICT: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE (19th - 20th Century)

The Kiratas, one of the living representatives of the primitive non- Aryans race, construct a wide scope for making of historical study of their culture and civilization. According to G.P. Singh, the present scenario reflects that they are widely scattered and divided. In ancient times the “North Eastern, North Western, Central and Deccan regions” were the cradles of the Kirata culture. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee has observed that the original Mongoloid incomers were a very primitive people, being mostly hunters and food-gatherers who also used caves for habitation. The Tibetans, according to a late Buddhist tradition, are said to have entered their country during the life-time of Buddha- about the middle of the 1st millennium B.C. They may have been preceded by earlier tribes who formed the nucleus or basis of the ‘Himalayan’ Mongoloids of Nepal, speaking languages like Newari, Lepcha, **Magar** and Gurung and the ‘pronominalised’ languages like Dhimal, Khambu, Kanawari and others. The speakers of the ‘pronominalised’ dialects probably represent the earliest waves: and the Newars, Lepchas, **Magars**, Gurungs, etc., represent late arrivals. The Himalayan groups of Indo-Mongoloids were thus probably the first to be established in India, and settled in Nepal, and pushed as far west as Garhwal and Kumaon, and further to the west; but they have remained largely in a very primitive state: except Newars.

The Magars or Mangars, one of the aborigines of Sikkim and Nepal, belong to the Kirata community of the Eastern Himalayas. They are one of the oldest tribes of Sikkim. Rajesh Verma has reasonably stated that the Kiratis include Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Mangar and Tamang tribe of Sikkim. According to Suman Raj Timsina, the Mangars, Limbus and Lepcha are the earliest settlers of ancient Sikkim. Iman Singh Chemjong has stated that a place called Shin in the northern part of the Himalayas was the original home of the Mangars, The Magars are described by Hamilton (1819) as a Himalayan Tribe “Wallowing in all the ancient abominations of the mountaineers”, and found anywhere in the Himalayan region. John Dalton Hooker, who conducted a scientific exploration in Sikkim in 1848-49, has mentioned that “Mangars, a tribe now confined to Nepal west of Arun, are the aborigines of Sikkim, whence they were driven by the Lepchas westward into the country of the Limboos and by this latter further west (Nepal) still. They are said to have been savages and not of Tibetan origin and are now

converted to Hinduism.” H.H. Risley, while dealing with the ‘*History of Sikkim and its Rules*’ also mentioned about the rule of the Magar kings or chiefs in Sikkim. J.R. Subba, opines that the Mangars inhabited and ruled at least some parts of Sikkim before establishment of ‘The Greater Sikkim.’ Through “*Lho- Mon- Tsong Sum*” *Tripatite Treaty* it is evident that the Mangar Chiefs opposed the supremacy of the Bhutia rulers and formation of ‘The Greater Sikkim,’ and were crushed by the force and the chief, disappeared, or killed. The History of Mangars is shrouded in mystery after their dispersion from Sikkim, however the settlement of Mangar in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri is evident in the 19th century through different historical records.

In the 20th century, the identity aspirations and sense of identity have offered a new dimension to the assertiveness of the ethnic groups and similarly to this community. Consequently, several associations were formed to preserve the traditional, cultural rites, ritual, and ceremonies of Mangar namely, Magar Samaj Darjeeling, 1939, Mangar Sewa Samaj, 1984, which was renamed as Mangar Lafa Sangh Kurseong in 1990 followed by Dooars Mangar Lafa Sangh, 1995. At the end of 20th century, a unanimous effort for the foundation of one unified body were initiated. The formation of All India Mangar Association or Akhil Bharatiya Mangar Sangh in 2002 at Kalimpong was the outcome and efforts of Mangars to strengthen their demand for gratification of ‘Tribal Status’ of Mangars based on the features laid down by the Government of India, i.e.,

- They possess an old dialect and language.
- They have their traditional language and scripts.
- They have a traditional dress code distinct from others
- The rituals and customs are unique which do not resemble with others.

The history and culture of the Aryans have been extensively dealt by different scholars but the description of the non-Aryans or the aboriginal tribes still hold obscurity either it is about their contribution to the primitive history of India or facts of their origin in the Indian sub- continent. Hence, the dissertation attempts to find the history of Mangars, their origin, settlement, Socio- Economic, and Cultural perspective in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling in the 19th to 20th century.