

Chapter 2

LIMBUS OF DARJEELING HIMALAYA: A SOCIO - HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

2.2 The Limbu: Etymology

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

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

2.3 Spatial Distribution of Limbus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to the Census report of 1881 the total population of Limbus was 2429 in the district of Darjeeling (Risley, 1891). Then, the total number of the Limbus in Darjeeling was 14,305 in 1901. But even after 50 years their populations are recorded to be 19,835 only. The reasons for such a slow growth are, however, not properly understood. One possible reason is that many of them must have later declared their mother-tongue to be Nepali for the census figures based on mother tongue counts (Subba, 1989). It is also estimated that the Limbu population in the Seven North Eastern states is about 20,000. The total Limbu population of Nepal and India is about 302186 persons inclusive of 45000 persons of Sikkim (Subba, 1999). A rough estimate conducted by All India Limbu Association, Darjeeling, West Bengal, indicated that the present Limbu population (1997) of West Bengal is 40,000 persons only. The Limbu population according to the recent census of 2011 is 46847 in Darjeeling Himalaya. The rural and urban population composition is 36908 and 9939. The majority of Limbu population is concentrated in rural areas with 18452 males and 18456 females populations. In urban areas population is very low with 4847 males and 5092 females. The female population is slightly higher in both the areas

2.4 The Origin of Limbus

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

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

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

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

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

2.4.1 Notion of Kirata Origin

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

2.4.2 Notion of Tibetan Origin

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

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

2.4.3 Notion of Chinese Origin

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

2.4.4 Notion of Migration

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

2.5 Kirant and Kirata People of Eastern Himalayas

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

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

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

2.6 Limbu and Kirata Connection

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

2.7 Historical Retrospection of Limbuwan

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

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

2.7.1 Origin of Limbuwan

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

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

2.7.2 Territorial Boundary of Limbuwan

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

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

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

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

2.7.3 Reign of Kings in Limbuwan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.7.4 Tripartite Treaty of Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum

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

2.7.5 Role of Limbus in Sikkimese warfare

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

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

2.7.6 Decline Status of Limbus

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

2.8 Loss of Limbuwan Territory from Sikkim -Darjeeling

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

2.8.1 Subjugation of Limbuwan by Gorkha Ruler

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

2.8.1.1 Limbuwan Gorkha War:

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

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

2.8.1.2 Limbuwan Gorkha Treaty 1774 A.D

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

2.8.2 Limbus of Contemporary Darjeeling Himalaya

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

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

2.9 Findings

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

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

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

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

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