

CHAPTER – VI

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6.1 THE POLITICS OF KAZI LHENDUP DORJEE KHANGSARPA (1974 – 1979)

While the father of the nation is Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nascent democracy in Sikkim is Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa or Kazi Saheb – a pioneer, visionary with Political enlightenment and maturity is one of those who make a difference. Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa was born in the year 1904 at Pakyong, East Sikkim, while Col. Younghusband led the British Mission to Tibet and changed the course of History of Sikkim. In fact, in his childhood, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa entered the spiritual life i.e., when he was 6 years old. He was educated as a monk (Lama – *Buddhabikshu*) at Rumtek Monastery of East Sikkim, situated very near to capital Gangtok. He was a disciple and student of his own uncle Tshufuk Lama Rabdon Dorji – the Head Lama of Rumtek Monastery. The then *Maharaja* of Sikkim, Sikyong Tulku – during his visit to Rumtek Monastery showed a great liking and was attracted by the cute and young monk Lhendup, took him to Gangtok and put him in a Tibetan School.

In his 16th year Lhendup Dorjee returned to Rumtek Monastery to undergo two years rigorous training in Lamaism of *Mahayana-Buddhism* (Lamaism is a combination of both *Tantrayana* and *Mantrayana*). Finally, he succeeded in his teen age to Lama Ugen Tenzing to preach as Head Lama of Rumtek Monastery for about eight years. Leaving monastic life young Kazi had joined 'Young Men's Buddhist Association' founded by his brother Kazi Phag Tshering in Darjeeling. Simultaneously both brothers founded a large number of schools in West Sikkim and also brought about various social and other reforms in Sikkim. He stood for the cause of 1973 Revolution and the architect of May 8, 1973 Agreement made among P.T. Namgyal – the *Chogyal* of Sikkim, Government of India and the leaders of the Political Parties of Sikkim.

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa's entry into the Politics of Sikkim can be traced back to 1940s. In the year 1945, he founded a Political Party viz., 'Sikkim Praja Mandal' and he was the first President of it. This Party took the initiative of creating and spreading democratic awareness in Sikkim. Once again he founded yet another new Party namely, 'Sikkim State Congress' and held its Presidentship till 1958. The primary motto of his democratic movement was to abolish land-lordism and the feudal order in Sikkim. As a leader he led a delegation of 'Sikkim State Congress' to Delhi and met the first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in order to discuss various issues relating to socio-economic and Political, reforms for which the people of Sikkim were longing for. Listening to him patiently Pandit Nehru assured Kazi Saheb to extend all assistance for the Political progress, socio-economic reforms and to promote the welfare of the people of Sikkim. That was the time where there existed a difference of opinion among the people of Sikkim and grew communal feeling. Therefore, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa in 1962 formed another new Political Party popularly known as 'Sikkim National Congress' to bring about Peace, Progress and Prosperity in the country and for the people of Sikkim.

In the election held during this time to the State Council Kazi's Party was able to secure only 8 out of 18 seats and was in the opposition bench. In the election held in 1970 Kazi was not only elected, but was chosen and appointed as Executive Councillor to hold the portfolios of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Transport. During his tenure as a Councillor, Kazi Saheb introduced certain new reforms to ameliorate the economic conditions of the poor farmers and agriculturists.

He finally relinquished his Councillorship in the year 1972 and undertook a honeymoon trip to Europe with his Belgium born wife Elisa Maria (In fact, Elisa Maria, Hope Cook and Indira Gandhi were the three important women who had played a vital role in the Political history of Sikkim before its merger with the Indian Federal Party). Immediately after his return from Europe, Kazi contested the election held in the year 1973 from Sikkim National Congress Party. The result was unsatisfactory owing to the fact and it

is believed that the election in Sikkim was not held in a fair manner. Therefore, both Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim Janata Congress got united and that accounted to 31 out of 32 seats in the name of 'Sikkim Congress' – perhaps a massive mandate. A bill was also simultaneously prepared and introduced to make Sikkim an 'Associate State of India' in the year 1974 rather than a 'Protectorate of India'.

The 'Sikkim State Congress' since then slowly started establishing links with the Indian National Congress (INC) and attended its annual sessions. Keeping in view the conditions prevalent during the time, the 'Sikkim State Congress' ultimately not only got merged with INC at Kamagatamarunagar, but took a decision and decided to make Sikkim a part of the Indian Union. The Amendment Act of 1975 to the Constitution of India finally made Sikkim as 22nd State of the Indian Union doing away with more than 333 years of Namgyal Dynastic rule, that is what vexed Nar Bahadur Bhandari to call Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa as *Desh Bechuwa (Country seller)*.

Rajendar Sachar was sworn-in as the acting Chief Justice of Sikkim. B.B. Lal took oath as first Governor of Sikkim and Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa as the first Chief Minister of Sikkim on 16th May, 1975 (belonging to Indian National Congress).

The merger of Sikkim Congress to Indian National Congress was nothing, but an enbloc defection and the phenomenon of defection was a chronic disease in Sikkim till 1999. The 'State Day of Sikkim' is observed on 16th May every year. Immediately after the merger, the Government of India funded sufficiently enough in the Annual Plans of Sikkim. An anti-corruption branch, Frontier Railway Passenger Out Agency (to book Railway tickets from Gangtok to all parts of India), Sikkim Nationalised Transport (SNT) by 1975 were established. Later Temi Tea Factory, Gangtok Water Treatment Plant, Gangtok Chungthang Bus Service, Divisional Telephone Office, ITI Rangpo, Foundation Stone by Indira Gandhi to construct Tashiling (Secretariat Building), the Sirwani Bridge near Singtam named after Kazi Lhendup Dorjee

Khangsarpa, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Government Degree (Day) College, etc. were also introduced during the time of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa. By and large, one is able to trace the initial democratic forays and infrastructural developments in Sikkim during the Chief Ministership of Kazi. Indira Gandhi's visit followed by Mother Teresa between 1975 and 1976 were a great boon for the people of Sikkim. It is unfortunate to note on her return to New Delhi, that Indira Gandhi and Indian National Congress were completely routed in the Parliamentary elections of 1977 by the combined efforts of Janata Party. Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister of India overthrowing 30 years rule of Congress. Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa on the advice of the Eliza Maria enbloc joined the band wagon of Janata Government along with his Ministerial colleagues and earned hostility of Indira Gandhi – an unforgettable episode and depicted heights of defection in the State of Sikkim. But, Kazi's Government could not survive because of the fact he was continuing in power exceeding five years tenure and resignation of some of his colleagues. Ultimately it caused the imposition of President's Rule in 1979 and even that President's rule was unable to continue as because that was not ratified by either House of the Union Parliament of India, which was not in session. In fact, even B.B. Lal the then Governor of Sikkim continued in the extended period of sixth year.

However, L. D. Kazi Khangsarpa played a very important role in establishing the Democratic right in Sikkim. With the integration of Sikkim into the Indian Union in 1975, Sikkim was categorized as a special category State of India, which has a provision to provide 90% of Plan funds as Grant and 10% as Loan. Thus, the Plan funds for overall development of the State started flowing enormously, and this laid the foundation of Infrastructural Development in Sikkim. During Namgyal Dynasty (1642-1975), the Tibetan was the official language of the country. The Lepcha, the Bhutia and the Nepali languages have been recognized as the official languages of Sikkim in 1977.

(Source : Subba J.R., 'History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim', Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi 2008, pp 68-69)

Sikkim was compelled to face fresh election in 1979. Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa and his Party Colleagues of INC were utterly defeated by N.B. Bhandari's 'Janata Parishad', the candidates of Sikkim Congress Revolutionary (SCR) founded by R.C. Poudyal, 'Sikkim Prajatantra Congress' headed by N.B. Khatiwara and Independent *Sangha* Candidate. N.B. Bhandari with the support of *Sangha* became the second Chief Minister of Sikkim with a team of young leaders (mostly school teachers). Even Pawan Chamling was one of them elected from the SSP of Bhandari in 1985. He was given a Chairmanship and later a Cabinet berth in Bhandari's Ministry.

Ultimately, thus, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa was defeated and was unable to come back to power in the last 28 years. Since then he had been leading a peaceful life at Chakung House, Kalimpong, West Bengal.

By and large, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa stood for friendly relation both within and outside Sikkim, always ready to help persons in difficulty and distress, a cementing factor of fragile unity and communal harmony of all three ethnic communities of Sikkim – i.e., Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis besides other people who have been living in Sikkim since long.

After 30 years of Sikkim becoming a Part of the Indian Union, Government of India in recognition of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa's contribution awarded him, the second highest Civilian Award *Padma Vibushan* in the year 2005. Pawan Chamling, the Chief Minister of Sikkim also awarded to Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa *Sikkim Ratna* for his outstanding contribution to establish democracy, rule of law, emancipation of Sikkim from feudal masters, service to the people of Sikkim and introduction of *one man one vote* doing away with the *communal voting system* on 57th Independence Day celebration in Sikkim. *Sikkim Ratna* was containing a citation, cash award and a monthly pension. Moreover, we hope the Government of India, will confer on Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa *Bharat Ratna* posthumously – but too late.

Though his contributions to Sikkim were immeasurable. Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa is responsible along with N.B. Bhandari in doing away with the reserved seats of Nepalis of Sikkimese origin in Sikkim Legislative Assembly. In fact both of them and their Parties should not have contested 1979 October Elections to the Assembly based on the delimitation of Constituencies of the Presidential Ordinance, 1979 and the Bill No. 79 of 1979 – a black bill condemned by R.C. Poudyal of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary). R.C. Poudyal did not contest the election (1979) as a mark of protest. Today, the Nepalis and all Political Parties are still fighting for the restoration of the reserved seats for the Nepalis in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly – a main agenda of election manifestoes of all Political Parties of Sikkim.

However, Smt. D.K. Bhandari and N.B. Bhandari are to be saluted for their greatest contribution to receive the Constitutional recognition of the *Lingua franca* of the State of Sikkim in the year 1992, viz., Nepali language.

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa's footprints in the Politics of Sikkim spans for more than 60 to 70 years. He saw to that the identity of Sikkim is always assured by giving special status to Sikkim under Article 371F of the Constitution of India since 1975, though not at par with Article 370 relating to J & K. In his own words to quote "Sikkim's identity can not be changed, it remains unique and perfect". Without the name of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa, the name of Sikkim will remain incomplete and unknown to the rest of India.

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa passed away on July 28, 2007 at his Chakung House, Kalimpong, West Bengal and was cremated as per his will and wish near Rumtek Monastery (old). He passed away in his ripe age (103 years) and only Statesman and Politician who lived for more than 'one hundred years' in India. In his passing away, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa left behind a piece of history of one century. He lived a full life. A repository of information is no more.³ B.B. Lal, the first Governor of

Sikkim, who took over the Gubernatorial Office and administered the oath of Office and Secrecy to the First Chief Minister, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa and his Cabinet colleagues in the year 1975 also passed away on June 6, 2008 at the ripening age of 91 years.⁴ As a Governor, he also played a very important role in the development of the State. He had taken pains to understand the problems of Sikkim and he had taken a keen interest in solving them.⁵ Thus, the Governmental Machinery being set up by the Constitution of India, Sikkim started traversing the path of democracy.⁶

Here the question arises that integration and merger of even Sovereign Countries among themselves is neither illegal nor new in the modern times. On the other hand, it is very much in vogue. Who can, after all, stop a Country or a State from merging with another with the will of its people?⁷ Thus, B.B. Lal had taken the helm of the affairs on May 16, 1975 of a new State which had decided to merge with Indian Union thereby ending the monarchical institution.⁸ The contribution made by B.B. Lal to project the image of a tiny and beautiful State of Sikkim to the rest of our glorious nation is unforgettable.⁹ In 1974, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa reminded to the Indian Government that the Indian diplomacy should be directed at removing any fear of Indian domination that might lurk in the minds of the Sikkimese, who may be sensitive to the fact that their southern neighbour is a big and dominant Country.¹⁰ The Kazi always upheld for popular causes and sympathised with the democratic aspirations of the masses.¹¹ The younger generation of Sikkim is yet to follow his concerted efforts (though not found in black and white) to build a strong democracy in Sikkim. Let us all put our efforts to safeguard the hard won freedom and democracy founded by him in Sikkim. His sacrifices in both political and public domains still echoes in all the hills of Sikkim including the *mount Kang-chen-dzonga*.

It is surprising that no National Newspapers covered his demise as a headline neither there was any editorial nor any coverage in any weekly, fortnightly and monthly National Magazines. Even the electronic media coverage on Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa was negligible (excepting local print and electronic media) – almost treated him as if Kazi Lhendup Dorjee

Khangsarpa is unwanted, neglected and forgotten leader who gave a huge piece of territory to expand India and strengthening its defence security.

Hopes are still high that the Government of Sikkim will take steps to see there will be statues of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa in all four districts, in front of Sikkim Legislative Assembly and in front of Check Post at Rangpo, besides naming the road leading to his native place to be named after him.¹² The light is no more, but still Sikkim remains bright because Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa projected the State in the mainstream of India and made democracy open to the future generation. Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa *AMAR RAHE*. (L.D. Kazi – May long live).

6.2 The Politics of Nar Bahadur Bhandari (1979-1993)

A Gentleman who used to stroll up and down on the M.G. Marg, Gangtok, invariably every evening, Nar Bahadur Bhandari was opposed and upset in the merger of Sikkim with India and suffered in the torture of CRPF and application of MISA on him. N.B. Bhandari was one of the first graduates of his generation and was basically serving as a Nepali teacher in Sikkim Government School (s). He was dismissed from his teacher's post because of his Political involvement. However, he seasoned himself as a politician to enter into politics of Sikkim and founded Sikkim Janata Party. He quietly revived it and established a new Regional Party namely Janata Parishad. Later, it was Christianed Sikkim Janata Parishad. Bhandari contested with a team of young Politicians (who were also mostly school teachers) in October 1979 Sikkim Legislative Assembly elections. A good orator in Nepali and opposed to the first Chief Minister of post merger Sikkim, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee whom N.B. Bhandari branded as *Desh Bechuwa* (the man who sold the Country). The Janata Parishad headed by N.B. Bhandari urged for the immediate election to the Assembly to be held by October 1979 owing to the Constitutional crisis as because the imposition of President's rule for the first time in Sikkim under Article 356 of the Constitution by the then President of India since it was not approved by either House of the Union Parliament of India.

The Party leader, Bhandari, gave a new inspiring slogan! "It is only the People of Sikkim who can mould their destiny, and none else." That, infact, clinched the issues.¹

The newly formed Janata Parishad under the leadership of N.B. Bhandari contested the first ever democratic election to Sikkim Legislative Assembly, 1979 of the post-merger Sikkim. It was conducted under the Constitution of India on the basis of Universal Adult Franchise under the supervision of Election Commission of India applying the principles laid in the Presidential Ordinance of Reconstitution of the Territorial Constituencies (Bill No. 79 of 1979) of the Assembly in Sikkim. The Territorial Constituencies were reorganized as follows² :

Table - I

SIKKIM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

a. 1974 Prior to Merger		b. 1979 Post Merger	
15	Reserved for Nepalis	General Seats	17
15	Bhutia-Lepcha Seats	Bhutia-Lepcha Seats	12
1	Scheduled Caste (Nepalis)	Scheduled Caste (Nepalis)	2
1	<i>Sangha</i>	<i>Sangha</i>	1
Total : 32			32

Source : Sengupta, N., *State Government and Politics in Sikkim*, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985, pp. 93-94 and 99-100.

For the first time in the Political History of Sikkim, both the Parliamentary and Sikkim Legislative Assembly Elections were conducted on the basis of the Electoral Identity Card. A Sample of it is given below :-

1979

ELECTORAL IDENTITY CARD
(Issued under the authority of the Election Commission of India)

STATE - SIKKIM

Part No. of Electoral Roll: 2

Sl. No. of Elector in that Part: 305

Name of Elector: Manoj Lal Verma

Father's/Mother's Name: Manorath Verma

Husband's Name: _____

Sex: M Age: 39 (as on 1-1-1979)

Address: _____ Block: Tentek

House No.: _____

Ragdong: Tentek

Electoral Registration Officer: _____

Assembly Constituency: _____

1994

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA
IDENTITY CARD

Director's Name: _____

Father's/Mother's Name: _____

Husband's Name: _____

Sex: _____

Age: _____

The tactical strategy and Party Manifesto of Janata Parishad with its symbol Horse and continuation of bi-coloured Red-White Flag of the Palace promised "Ushering in Democracy, destroy communalism, discontinue divisive policy and we are ready to lay down our lives. We will obtain the RIGHTS OF THE SIKKIMESE. This Party if returned to power, is committed to giving the SIKKIMESE PEOPLE BACK THEIR SELF-RESPECT AND SENSE OF DIGNITY"³ This remained only a promise and unable to undo merger. That was an eight-cornered contest of Janata Parishad, Indian National Congress (U), Janata Party, Sikkim Scheduled Caste League, CPI (M), Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary, S.C. (R), Sikkim Prajatantra Congress (SPC) and Independents in 1979 election. For the first time Plainsmen contested in this election, electoral identity cards were provided to the electors that were not made a precondition to cast votes or exercise franchise. Altogether 9 women candidates contested the election. Election was held for 31 Constituencies and in Khamdong it was countermanded owing to the demise of one of the contesting candidates. The main rivals were Janata Parishad and Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) (SCR).

On the other hand, the Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) maintained in its manifesto that "Democracy, Secularism and Socialism. Down with Bill No. 79, down with Communalism."⁴ Fight for your Rights." R.C. Poudyal, the leader of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) did not contest 1979 Assembly Election as a mark of protest against Bill No. 79.

The Janata Parishad headed by N.B. Bhandari won 16 seats and took the support of the *Sangha* Independent Candidate in the formation of Ministry. The Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) won 11 seats and Sikkim Prajatantra Congress (SPC) won 3 seats. B.B. Goroong of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) won from both Chakung (West) and Jorethang (South) Constituencies. The INC (U) Party headed by Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa was completely routed out. Both N.B. Bhandari and L.B. Basnet bagged highest number of votes from Soreng (West) and Gangtok (East) Constituencies.

The Ministry with an eight member Cabinet rank including the Independent *Sangha* MLA headed by Nar Bahadur Bhandari assumed office⁵ and took oath of their offices. N.B. Bhandari became the second Chief Minister of Sikkim heading a Regional Political Party, Sonam Tshering⁶ assumed the office of the Speaker followed by L.B. Basnet as Deputy Speaker.⁷

The pending bye-elections to Khamdong (SC Constituency) and Chakung Constituency (West) were held along with the election to the lone Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency in January, 1980. Pahalman Subba (once again a School Teacher) won the election defeating his immediate rival R.C. Poudyal of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) in the Lok Sabha election from Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency. In the bye-election to Khamdong and Chakung Constituencies of the Assembly, Dal Bahadur Darnal of SPC and Chandra Bahadur Rai of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) were declared elected. By 1980 usual politics of defection started (a general feature in the politics of Sikkim i.e., Defection from among Regional Parties to National Political Party which is in power at the Centre) and the strength of the ruling Sikkim Janata Parishad in the Assembly was raised to 20, Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) to 11 and SPC to one only.⁸ Once again on July 7, 1981 there was an enbloc defection of Sikkim Janata Parishad to Congress (I) and Nar Bahadur Bhandari became Congress (I) Chief Minister of Sikkim, commanding strength of 23 MLAs on the floor of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Even the prominent leader of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) B.B. Goroong had defected to Congress (I) and became the Finance Minister in Bhandari's Cabinet. Once again there was an increase of defection from Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) to Congress (I) and as a result Bhandari commanded 26, Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) – 2, and SPC – 1 seat. In the meanwhile, since the Independent Candidate Dugo Bhutia resigned from the Rakdong-Tintek Constituency. The bye-election to Assembly in the year 1983, Sonam Tshering of Congress (I) was declared elected defeating Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) and SPC candidates and also the Independent Candidate Dugo Bhutia. The success to Congress (I) in the bye-election was because of Bhandari's leadership.⁹ As a face-saving device, leaders of the

Political Parties who suffered a humiliating defeat in the hustings, once again tried in vain boycotted the swearing-in ceremony of the new Parishad Ministry by raising a bogey of the so called anti-national stance of the Sikkim Janata Parishad.

The then and first Governor of Sikkim B.B. Lal briefed the other leaders who approached him that the speeches made by Bhandari during election campaign in 1979 could not seriously be taken into consideration as they only reflected the surcharged emotions expressed by public leaders to influence the electorates. He, however, assured them that he would keep a constant watch on the style of functioning of the new Ministry and not to work against the established conventions of the Indian Constitution. The hollowness of those leaders' charge was thoroughly exposed when the President of the Sikkim Janata Parishad, Bhandari, announced in clear terms Sikkim's merger with India was *fait accompli*, and the facts of history could not be nullified'. He declared that his Ministry would work within the parameters of the Indian Constitution, and attempts by the vested interests to reverse the course of history would be severely dealt with as an anti-national move. It was added further, Sikkim which was integrated into the national mainstream for historical reasons, considered itself fortunate in working together with the fellow countrymen for building up a new prosperous resurgent India". Soon after capturing political power, the Sikkim Janata Parishad had declared to promote a cordial Centre-State relations and to uplift the chronic socio-economic backwardness of Sikkim, agrarian reforms amending the Sikkim Cultivators' Protection (Temporary, Proven) Act to extent security to hundreds of landless cultivators, revitalization of Panchayats to involve the people in the decision-making process at the grass-root level and to assign them rural development programme. Welfare programme to solve acute housing problem, infrastructure for the marketing of agricultural produce, dairy farming, dairy development, assessment of livestock, to control cattle diseases, multi-pronged development strategy to cover sectors like industry, power, road communication and education, son of the soil policy, to protect the interest of the local people, increase of literacy rate, incentives to teachers, setting up of cottage industries, registration of as many as 46 industrial units, self

employment ventures and cottage industries. The most important and striking aspect of Sikkim Janata Parishad on assuming power was to replace CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) by SAP (Sikkim Armed Police) in all State Government Offices and other places of Security. Further, another incident was to replace B.B. Lal, the then Governor (by reminding the Centre that he had crossed his fixed tenure of five years as Governor of Sikkim) and bringing H.J.H. Taleyar Khan, a flamboyant personality as new Governor of Sikkim, who ultimately became an ambitious man to play the ouster game and toppled N.B. Bhandari. Using discretionary power and pleasure of the Governor, he dismissed N.B. Bhandari and appointed B.B. Goroong as third Chief Minister of Sikkim in the year 1984. The move proved to be a damp squib and the Governor had no alternative except to recommend for the imposition of President's rule in the State by 25th May, 1984 (Source : *Sikkim : Sikkim Govt. Gazette* (Ext.Gaz), No. 69 (25th May, 1984), Gangtok, Sikkim Govt. Press, pp. 1-2).

The tactful strategy of removing Bhandari from power was a shocking surprise to the people of Sikkim in spite of the fact he had commanded three-fourths majority on the floor of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. It is believed that he was removed because of vital security interests and loss of confidence by the Party legislators owing to the fact that he was becoming a dictator and disobedience to Congress (I) high command. According to Party observer P. Venkatsubbaiah the then Union Minister for Home Affairs, Bhandari was asked to give up his demands and when he stuck to his position, the dismissal order without assigning any reason, was reportedly served on him. Further, it was said by AICC Observer P. Venkatasubbiah that Bhandari was removed as a majority of the State Legislators had lost their confidence in him and on whom several corruption charges had been levelled. To Bhandari that was not a surprise as because he was not ready to compromise with regard to his demands on seat reservation, grant of citizenship to the State less people and recognition of Nepali language. The action of the then Governor H.J.H. Taleyar Khan was described by Bhandari as unconstitutional and unprecedented in the annals of Constitutional democracy.¹⁰ The immediate reason was that Bhandari was

intentionally engaging himself into direct and open confrontation with the Centre and Party high command. The Karfektar convention held in Jorethang, South Sikkim, was the culminating factor which made the Centre to ponder seriously over the change of leadership in Sikkim in the year 1984 and that is branded as Bhandari's Waterloo. No seat, No vote, empty threats to the Centre, having refused to resign and corruption charges ultimately led to the ouster of N.B. Bhandari and to effect the change in the Party leadership. Furthermore, the restoration of seats for Nepalis in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly remained a forgotten story. However, inclusion of Nepali language in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution and opposing to the extension of Central Direct Taxes Act over Sikkim (in spite of the fact it was welcomed by N.B. Bhandari) were gaining momentum and received mass public support. The increasing influx of people and citizenship for State less people in Sikkim remained uncared and unanswered and the pleas went on deaf ears.

On removing N.B. Bhandari the then Congress (I) Chief Minister of Sikkim, B.B. Gooroong was appointed by H.J.H. Taleyar Khan, the Governor of Sikkim, as the third Chief Minister on 11th May, 1984. Despite the Centralized administrative powers and corruption charges, Bhandari was able to contribute to the socio-economic development for the State of Sikkim.

Sikkim Legislative Assembly and Seat Reservation :

Historically speaking, it is a matter of fact that the Legislators of Council in the pre-merger period had the experiences of Panchayats and local Government. Later, in the post-merger period some Council Members were elected to the Assembly. Since 1979 mostly young and educated leaders have been elected to the Legislative Assembly. In spite of the fact *parity* is an abolished ethnocentrism remains a major factor in the leadership formation. The agricultural group does not find a place in the Assembly since post merger period. The caste and religious representation is waning out. Ruralisation and indigenisation of leadership seem to be evident. Most of the present leaders do not represent local bodies, but are new entrants to Politics of Sikkim and they have no link with older Political order and former socio-political order.

Seat Reservation in Sikkim Legislative Assembly : A Basic Issue :

The promulgation of the Sikkim Subject Regulation in 1961 clearly defined the status of the Sikkim subjects, his/her rights and privileges. Under this regulation, a Sikkim Subject Register was maintained containing records of all the Subjects of the Kingdom. Thus, it is abundantly clear that the society developed into a multi-ethnic community with diverse social, cultural and religious ethos. However, the statutory regulation of 1961 clearly identified who the subjects of Sikkim as distinguishable from similar ethnic communities living in the surrounding areas of West Bengal as well as Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet.

With the Sikkim Citizenship Order of 1975, enacted after the merger, all Sikkim Subjects were deemed to have become citizens of India on that date. In this context, Sikkim Subjects are defined as those persons who were registered as Subjects of Sikkim in the erstwhile Kingdom.

At the outset, it must, therefore, be clearly emphasized that when we talk about the rights and interests of the Sikkimese people, we are not speaking of any one community of people, but the Sikkimese people identified as Subjects of Sikkim belonging to these communities. Unfortunately, due to both ignorance as well as Political machinery, it has often been misrepresented that the demands for the people of Sikkim are for persons other than those recorded and identified as Subjects of Sikkim. It must be categorically emphasized that all the demands made for the people of Sikkim are only in respect of people who were citizens of erstwhile Kingdom.

Since, there were various Political forces at work by the mid-60s and in 1972, there was an upsurge in this land following persistent demands for Political reforms. The unprecedented violence came to an end with the signing of an agreement on 23.04. 1973 between *Chogyal* of Sikkim and Political Leaders and the Government of India. The agreement laid down the following pertinent and important points :

1. (a) Though a minority in its ancestral land, the Bhutia-Lepcha community has established and maintained the identity of Sikkim in the past and has always enjoyed certain legal rights and privileges necessary to develop its distinctive culture. At the same time, for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin also, Sikkim is their homeland. The interest of both these communities has to be safeguarded.
 - i. The essential considerations set out in part (a) above require the establishment of a Constitutional and administrative frame work which guarantees :
 1. the unimpaired development of the religion, traditions and culture of the Bhutia-Lepcha community without detriment to the religion, tradition and culture of any other community;
 2. the acquisition by the majority community of Political, Governmental, legal and economic rights and opportunity equal to those of any Sikkimese Subject without detriment to the legitimate interests or legal rights of the Bhutia-Lepcha Community as set out in (a) above.

This agreement formed the basis of the accord signed on 8th May, 1973, between the *Chogyal* of Sikkim, the Government of India and leaders of the Political Parties representing the people of Sikkim. The agreement also specifically laid down that :

“WHEREAS the *Chogyal* and the People of Sikkim are convinced that their interest and long-term interest of Sikkim as a whole call for :

1. A system of election based on Adult Suffrage which will give equitable representation to all sections of the people on the basis of the principle of *one man one vote*.

2. The system of election shall be so organized so as to make the Assembly adequately representative of the various sections of the Population. The size and composition of the Assembly and of the Executive Council shall be such as may be prescribed from time to time, care being taken to ensure that no single section of the Population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin, and that the rights and interests of the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepchas origin and of Sikkimese Nepali, which includes *Tsongs* and Scheduled Castes by origin, are fully protected.
3. This accord, now known as the "May 8th Agreement" provides for a system of elections giving equitable representation to all sections of the People on the basis of the principle of *one man one vote*. It also provides for a system of elections of the Population with the size and composition of the Assembly and of the Executive Council, as prescribed from time to time, with care being taken that no single section of the Population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin and that the rights and interests of Bhutia-Lepchas of Sikkimese origin and of the Sikkimese-Nepalis which includes *Tsongs* and Scheduled Castes are fully protected. The Proclamation of 6th February, 1973 was issued wherein representation in the State Assembly was as follows :
- (i) 16 seats were reserved for Sikkimese of Bhutias-Lepchas origin of which one was reserved for the *Sangha*.
 - (ii) 16 seats were reserved for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin including one seat for *Tsongs* and Scheduled Castes.

The major change was that the *Tsongs* were included with the Nepalis as a number of Political Parties felt that providing for a separate set for the *Tsongs* was an attempt on the part of the *Darbar* to further divide the Nepalis People. The Government of Sikkim Act, 1974, was issued on 6th April, 1974 and embodied the principles decided upon the historic Agreement of 8th

May, 1973. It is to be pointed out here that the Agreement of 8th May, 1973, was the last undisputed agreement entered into by the *Chogyal* of Sikkim, the Government of India and the Political Parties of Sikkim.

The Constitutional developments then progressed at a rapid pace in the next few years and Sikkim became an Associate State and thereafter 22nd State of the Indian Union with the passage of the 36th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1975, (w.e.f. 26.04.1975). This Constitutional Amendment inserted a new Article 371F in the Constitution wherein a special provision was provided for with respect to the State of Sikkim. The special provision was inserted keeping in mind the historical, social, cultural and Political backgrounds of the State and the keen desire of the Government of India to ensure development of the State according to its own natural genius. These intentions found expression in the lengthy debate in both the houses of Parliament when the Constitutional Amendment Bill was moved. The age-old arrangement for equitable distribution of power among the various ethnic communities found expression in Article 371F of the Constitution, whereby it was provided that "PARLIAMENT MAY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROTECTING THE RIGHTS AND INTEREST OF THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION OF SIKKIM MAKE PROVISIONS IN THE NUMBER OF SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF SIKKIM WHICH MAY BE FILLED BY CANDIDATES BELONGING TO SUCH SECTIONS ALONE MAY STAND FOR ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SIKKIM AND ARTICLE 371 F (g) ALSO EMPOWERED THE GOVERNOR OF SIKKIM TO MAKE PROVISIONS FOR THE EQUITABLE ARRANGEMENTS IN ENSURING THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS OF THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION OF SIKKIM". As a matter of fact Article 371 F which contains 13 (thirteen) sections, all provide for safeguarding the distinct identity and character of Sikkim. In pursuance of this the Representation of People Act of 1950-51 was amended giving full protection to the three ethnic groups of Sikkim. Clause 5 (a) of the Act reads as follows :

“5A. Qualification for Membership of Legislative Assembly of Sikkim – Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 5, a person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim (deemed to be the Legislative Assembly of that State duly constituted under the Constitution) unless :

- a. In the case of seat reserved for Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin, he is a person either of Bhutia or Lepcha origin and is an elector for any Assembly Constituency in the State other than the Constituency reserved for the *Sanghas*.
- b. In the case of seat reserved for Sikkimese of Nepali origin, he is a person of Nepali origin and is an elector for any Assembly Constituency in the State.
- c. In the case of a seat reserved for Scheduled Castes, he is a member of any of the castes specified in the Representation of Sikkim Subjects Act 1974, and is an elector for any Assembly Constituency in the State; and
- d. In the case of seat reserved for *Sangha*, he is an elector of the *Sangha Constituency*”.

The Constitutional 36th Amendment Act, by which Sikkim became 22nd State of the Union of India, also provided that the Assembly for Sikkim, formed as a result of the elections held in the 1974 with 32 members elected in the said election, was deemed to be the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim duly constituted under the Constitution and sitting members were deemed to be the members of the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim.

However, there was some satisfaction in those trouble times as the new Constitutional provisions took into full account of the past history of Sikkim and the affairs of the State continued to be administered in the manner it had developed in the past by the insertion of a special provision in the Constitution vide Article 371 F. Unfortunately, the immaturity of the Legislators and the inexperience of the bureaucrats assigned to the helm of affairs in the net scenario saw a gradual dilution of the spirit and content of

the special provisions for the State. This was only compounded by the heavy handed and partisan attitude of the then Governor and the few people assigned to the State on deputation to steer the administration through the intricacies of the new system. Various Central Laws were arbitrarily extended to the State in spite of the case in fact questioned the very insertion of the Special Provisions for the State and contended that such provisions are violative of the Constitution. Further, contended that seats could not be reserved for Bhutia-Lepcha as ethnic group but only as Scheduled Tribes, thereby restricting reservation to the numerical strength. The reservations of seats for *Sangha* were also based on religion, and thus, were violative of Article 14, 15, 178, 325, 326 and 332 of the Constitution.

He also contended that the Special Provisions violated the basic structure of the Constitution and Part III in particular. The petition in fact sought to do away with the special status of Sikkim and prayed for application of the general provisions of the Constitution. The Government of India in its affidavit explained in detail the full legality of the provisions of Article 371 F and in denying all allegations of R.C. Poudyal only seemed to stress more and more than absolute and Constitutional validity of the provisions made for Sikkim in the past. The Statement of Objections and Reasons in introducing the Bill more than amplifies this. Even in the debates in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, the Government of India was forced to concede that the amendments were being made to meet the legal requirements of constituting a fresh Assembly in the State of Sikkim as Article 371 F provided for the continuance of the then Sikkim Assembly after the merger as the State Assembly, constituted under the Constitution.

This limited purpose could well have been achieved without the changes sought to be brought out by the Constitution with the Amendment. The State Government, as well as organizations of Bhutia-Lepcha sought to refute the allegations made in the court as they were made Parties and consistently prayed that the Special Provisions for the State of Sikkim were Constitutionally legal and that the reservation for all ethnic communities be restored in keeping with the spirit of the merger and the Constitutional

developments in the past. However, the mood of the people can well be gauged by the fact that not a single Political Party, inadvertently or otherwise, supporting the changes has been able to make any impact in the elections held since 1979 when the Constitutional amendment was first made. The people have been steadily supporting the successive Governments year after year as one of its Primary Party objectives as enunciated in all its manifestoes has been the restoration of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. It is, therefore, obvious that the hasty action taken in bringing out the amendment only sought to annoy and displease every section of the people of Sikkim.

The reservation of Bhutia-Lepchas was in fact done away with the fact that the amendment sought to make reservation for Scheduled Tribes which include Bhutia-Lepcha as well as other communities Sherpas, Tibetan, Kagatey, Yolmo, who are all ethnically a different group. In fact not only were the seats reserved for them reduced from 16 to 13 but other ethnic groups were now clubbed with them for the reduced number of seats. The Nepalis were shocked that the reservation of seats for them was completely done away with in spite of the fact that they were recognized and respected as a separate ethnic group in Sikkim whose rights and interests were given due protection by successive Governments in the State. It was strongly contended that the Article 371 F was not intended to deprive the people of their existing rights, but to protect them. Instead of negating all that had been developed over the years for a limited purpose as enunciated in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the Government of India could have had a more positive approach; if the entire issue had been studied with an open mind.

It is, therefore, seen from the historical perspective that the evolution of the Political system in the State had been conditioned by the exigencies of the Political, social and economic environments in the State and manner in which it was radically changed, had been done without much thought and foresight. The statistics available in the Census figures has only compounded the apprehension that soon the State would be inundated by way of new immigrants thereby causing severe dislocation in the demographical character of the Population. This apprehension found reflections in the

statement of the Chief Minister, who proclaimed that Sikkim had merged with India but did not want to be submerged. This is the core of the matter.

During the course of the debate on the Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha the then Union Law Minister, Shiv Shankar stated in Parliament on 02.02. 1980 that :

“The suggestions that have been made can be considered for future elections, but in as much the elections have already been held, I commended to the House the acceptance of this Bill on its stands. Otherwise, the elections themselves will be imperilled. If it is a case of revising the reservations for the future, that is a matter which can be taken cognizance of. The hopes and aspirations of the people can also be considered and a new policy evolved. No doubt, valuable suggestions with reference to reservations have been made by the other side, but they can be considered at the appropriate stage, and since the purpose of this Bill is very much limited, to validate the elections already held under the Ordinance, I request that the House may kindly accept this Bill”.

Similarly the demands made for the reservation in the Rajya Sabha on 5th February, 1980 elicited the following observations from the Minister.

“There is something perhaps that will have to be considered in a wider perspective and it does not call for any consideration at this stage. As I said, primarily we are intending to revalidate the elections that have taken place under the Ordinance”.

What is clear from these statements, as well as the facts stated above, is that there is no legal or Constitutional hindrance to the demand for the reservation of seats in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim and that the Provisions under Article 371F clearly provides for these demands. The Ordinance and subsequent Bill was enacted for a specific purpose as a short

term measure and the pronouncement of the Government in Parliament clearly indicates that the genuine aspirations of the people could be considered at a later date. This was reiterated by the Governor of Sikkim in his address to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly on 10.03. 1980. The relevant extract of the address is as under :

“A law to replace the aforesaid Ordinance, namely the Representation of Peoples’ (Amendment) Act, 1980 has since been duly made by Parliament in its session recently concluded. To give proper legal and Constitutional cover to the continued existence of this House, the enactment of the aforesaid law was an imperative necessity. A proposal for modification of the scheme of representation provided for therein so as to bring it more in conformity with the desire and aspirations of the People of Sikkim had to be advisedly postponed as any deviation just now from the scheme of representation on the basis of which the elections had been held and conducted, might well have raised legal problems and jeopardize the very continuance of this House as now constituted.”¹¹

The demand for the reservation of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly is, therefore, a demand for the restoration of the reserved seats as provided for the Constitution. Further, the Tamangs and Limboos, the newly inducted tribals of Sikkim are expected to get their seat reservation in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly later or sooner with the untiring efforts of the State Government that has already been apprised to the Central Government time and again.

6.3 ROLE OF GOVERNOR *VIS-a-VIS* CONSTITUTIONAL VALIDITY

14 Days' Ministry of B.B. Goroong¹² :

B.B. Goroong who defected from Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) became Congress (I) Finance Minister of Bhandari's Cabinet was chosen by the then Governor of Sikkim Homi, J.H. Taleyar Khan as the Chief Minister in the place of N.B. Bhandari on May 2, 1984. Goroong was appointed as Chief Minister in accordance with article 164 (1) of the Constitution of India and in the pleasure of the Governor. Goroong's Ministry had 9 members' Cabinet. In his press conference after becoming the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Goroong reiterated that his Government would continue to fight for the just demands of the People of Sikkim, but stated that his approach with the Centre in dealing with various problems of the State would be co-operation and consultation and not confrontation. Goroong's long Political career, despite occasional defections, Political flings reflect his identification and support for both the majority and minority communities of Sikkim in regard to various issues. His Ministry, lasted hardly a fortnight or so. Owing to instability and lack of support, the then Governor recommended for the imposition of President's rule in Sikkim.

It was historical that the President's rule was imposed for the second time in Sikkim on May 25, 1984. Whatever may be the intention of the Centre in imposing President's rule in Sikkim, the people welcomed the dissolution of the Assembly which proves that the representatives of the people no longer cared for the peoples' welfare, but cared only to their own greed and growing ambitions. However, they did not serve the interests of the people. It is high time for the people to reaffirm and to strengthen the ethical, spiritual and Political beliefs. Since 1975, the democratic experience under these leaders was a shattering experience to the Himalayan State of Sikkim.

B.B. Goroong was born on 11th October 1929 at Chakung, West Sikkim. He graduated from Calcutta University in humanities/arts and initially served as a school teacher at Turnbull School, Darjeeling and later one year in Rangpo High School between 1951 and 1955. Leaving teaching profession

Gooroong joined journalism and worked as a Staff Reporter to the Calcutta based *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He was also associated with Nepali Magazine and edited a Nepali Magazine *Kanchenjunga*. He also edited a book titled *Sikkim : Past and Present*. Gooroong took active participation in Politics of Sikkim and because of his Political inclination he joined in his 20s Sikkim Rajya Congress under the leadership of Kashi Raj Pradhan and became General Secretary of the Party. He came under the influence and association of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa, led Sikkim Rashtriya (National) Party and was elected a Councillor for the first time from his native Constituency Chakung. As a result he was appointed an Executive Councillor by the then *Chogyal* to look after Education, Forest and Transport Departments – that he carried out with utmost satisfaction of *Chogyal* and the people of Sikkim.

In reality, the Political upheaval that sparkled off after the Fifth General Election and in 1972 under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa led Sikkim National Congress caused complete breakdown of law and order in Sikkim. Gooroong joined this pre-democratic movement of Sikkim and was one of the signatories to sign the historic May 8 Agreement, 1973 – the Tripartite Agreement of the *Chogyal*, by the leaders of Political Parties and the Government of India to establish a Constitutional monarchy based on Parliamentary Democracy in Sikkim to frame a Constitution, to guarantee fundamental rights, rule of law, Independence of Judiciary legislature and Executive powers to elected representatives and Adult Suffrage based on *one man – one vote*.

Having been as one of the responsible signatories along with Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa, K.C. Pradhan and others to the agreement, B.B. Gooroong stood for the cause to introducing a clear cut *Parity* in the Sikkim Assembly by which new *Parity Formula* got evolved to reserve 15 seats for Bhutia-Lepcha, 15 for Nepalis (of Sikkim origin) 1 for *Sangha* and 2 for Scheduled Castes (Nepalis-Nepalis of Sikkim origin).

The Election to the Sikkim Assembly under the 1973 May Agreement was held in 1974 and Gooroong was elected to it. He was one among the 31 members of

Sikkim National Congress under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa. Later from October 1977 to 1979, Goroong was appointed Speaker on the demise of C.S. Roy, the then Speaker of the Assembly. Goroong was quite active in the Politics of Sikkim between 1973 and 1975 and was instrumental in making Sikkim an Associate State of India in 1974 and later a part of Indian federal polity *i.e.* 22nd State of the Indian Union in the year 1975.

In the historically significant 1979 October Sikkim Legislative Election, B.B. Goroong was elected from two Constituencies *viz.*, Chakung and Jorethang and established for the first time a record and a singular distinction of winning from two Constituencies. He retained Jorethang Constituency and served as an MLA. of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) of R.C. Poudyal. When N.B. Bhandari's Sikkim Janata Parishad defected to Congress (I) Goroong also defected to Congress (I) and who offered a Cabinet Ministerial berth in the year 1983 to hold the portfolio of Finance Department.

In a surprise move, the then Governor of Sikkim Homi J.H. Taleyar Khan dismissed N.B. Bhandari as Chief Minister under Article 164 (1) of the Indian Constitution on the ground that Bhandari ceased to command the pleasure of the Governor and the same Governor under the same provision of the Constitution of India appointed B.B. Goroong as the third Chief Minister of Sikkim on 11th day of May. Goroong's 14 days' Ministry consisted of 9 Cabinet Ministers. Soon after assuming the Office of the Chief Minister, Goroong reiterated that this Government supports the demands of the people of Sikkim and continue to fight for the 'just demands' of the people. He also Stated that his approach with the Centre in dealing with various problems of the State would be of cooperation and consultation but confrontation was not invited.

B.B. Goroong in his short tenure as Chief Minister of Sikkim accorded to an order to the Central Bureau of Investigation to pursue and investigate the alleged charges of corruption against N.B. Bhandari. Under

Delhi Police Establishment Act, 1946, it was directed by Goroong's Cabinet to take up cases by CBI for investigation relating to various offences committed by Bhandari had acquired amassing wealth/assets disproportionate to his known sources of income in his name and wife. B.B. Goroong along with Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa sought the direct intervention through the then Prime Minister P.V. Narashima Rao on Bhandari and the then RDD Secretary P.K. Pradhan, Government of Sikkim.

Since, Goroong's Political career despite occasional defections, his Political flings reflect his identification for protection of both minority and majority communities of Sikkim pertaining to various issues. Rather, it was misfortune owing to lack of support and instability, finally, the then Governor of Sikkim recommended for imposition of President's rule in the State of Sikkim under Article 356 of the Constitution of India on 25th May 1984. As a shrewd man of politics, B.B. Goroong exudes an aura of confidence in all situations and always injects courage in those who are dithering. After a short Political break between 1984 and 1993 once again B.B. Goroong took active part in the Politics of Sikkim and joined his hands in the Pawan Chamling's move of restoring democracy and establishment of the Party namely, Sikkim Democratic Front. In SDF Government, B.B. Goroong has been appointed as Political Adviser to the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Pawan Chamling.

B.B. Goroong stands for protection of Article 371F of the Constitution of India that protects and guarantees the rights and sentiments of the people of Sikkim. (As narrated by B.B. Goroong). He was conferred *Padmashree* title in the year 2005 by the Government of India. Bhandari was a master tactician that he started move after move to strengthen his Party's position in the State Assembly as an effective counter to the opposition's sinister Political game. In a clever move, he started persuading the opposition legislators to join his ruling Sikkim Janata Parishad. One by one, they started joining the ruling Party from Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) and SPC. As the influx continued, the ruling Party's strength in the State Assembly went on swelling up. By autumn session 1980, the opposition Party leader B.B. Goroong tabled a no-confidence motion against the Parishad Government.

The attempt proved a damp squid as the House rejected the motion by 19 votes to 10 with one abstention. The ruling Party stood united and unassailable without any cross voting. A number of attempts were made to destabilise still the Parishad Government every time remained stronger than before. The opposition was completely crestfallen with a low profile. After having consolidated and to provide a broad national factional base there came an opportunity for Sikkim Janata Parishad to merge his Party with Indian National Congress (I) and convinced his Party colleagues for the merger with Congress (I). It was pointed out that the merger into Congress (I) was to help create rapport with the ruling Party at the Centre and liberal Central assistance for the State's all round development. When Bhandari stole the thunder, a process of disintegration took place in the Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) resulting in its erosion.

It is very interesting to note that when a number of Central Acts and the Excise Acts were extended to Sikkim, the estrangement of relationship reached a flashpoint. Prior to the extension of these Acts, a number of Industrial units manufacturing of cigarettes (Wills India) and cosmetics (Ponds India Ltd.) had come up in the State, taking advantage of the situation in Sikkim where no excise duty was levied on the production of these items. It created a disastrous effect on the process of industrialization of this backward State Sikkim and workers out of employment. This had culminated in the move of grooming a tribal leader from North Sikkim as the Chief Minister of the State and division of the Bureaucracy into two groups – one nursing loyalty to the then Governor and the other to the Chief Minister.

One of the important observations was that except inducing B.B. Gooroong as Finance Minister and Ram Lepcha as Minister for Local Self Government, Bhandari did not reshuffle his Cabinet and the Bureaucracy. Another interesting feature was to establish Secretariats to various Departments and in particular appointment of Secretary to the Department of Education. The strength of the Cabinet was kept at ten members. The victory of Bhandari in 1979 election symbolized the triumph of anti-merger forces whose main objective can best be expressed in these words *Sikkim for*

Sikkimese. Therefore, Bhandari was not so important in himself but what he represented. Members of his Party disintegrated and his personal loss of credibility stem from the fact that he had drifted far beyond the people's widest expectations on the stand that the Party had initially taken. The promise of the Party remained a distant dream and it was unable to giving the Sikkimese people back to their self-respect and the sense of dignity. The Party also assured that if given chance to punish the corrupt regime of the Kazi Government for all its corruption, favouritism and nepotism practised since 1974. Unfortunately corruption and nepotism of Bhandari himself led to his downfall. The *Sons of the Soil* policy formulated and propagated did not make much headway to protect the local interests and sentiments in giving Government jobs. It was his own henchmen who later formed a nucleus, which ultimately influenced the formation of a dissident group to knock him down. People did not anticipate Bhandari's betrayal on the basic issues concerning the people, which finally resulted in quoting the oft-repeated phrase *Kazi sold the body, Bhandari sold the soul*. This brought the gradual erosion in the distinctive character of Sikkimese way of life.

To look back one can see enough evidence to justify the fact that N.B. Bhandari and his team unconsciously became victims of circumstances and Political intrigues that finally broke them into pieces and shattered every hope of them coming together on the same plant they once stood unitedly. The anti-merger issue had largely ceased to motivate any major Political force that is a significant change and a new phenomenon in Sikkim's contemporary Political development. Loosing charismatic leadership and loosing power are best known in various parts of the country. Such happenings for Bhandari in Sikkim must be understood from the Sikkimese context, if one to have a deeper understanding and inner insight into the situations prevailed in Sikkim. Bhandari's removal and departure from leadership in 1984 symbolizes the end of an era in the Political history of the Himalayan State of Sikkim.

No sooner Bhandari was dismissed, he left Congress (I) in disgust along with his majority legislators and once again hoisted his red and white flag to start a new Regional Party viz. Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP)

with elephant as its election symbol on 24th May, 1984. At the outset he welcomed the dismissal of Gooroong's Ministry and welcomed President's Rule in the State (for the second time in the State) and further stated that the Party had emerged as a result of illegal and undemocratic dismissal of his Government, due to which the whole fabric of democratic institutions and Constitutional norms in Sikkim were put at peril. Moreover, the SSP with a promise to protect and preserve the interests and rights of the Sikkimese pledged itself to foster communal harmony, national integration, secularism and development of Sikkim with a focus on safeguarding the edifice of the hard won freedom and democracy. The Sikkim Sangram Parishad included this time the old henchmen of Sikkim Janata Parishad and other new young leaders including Pawan Chamling. The newly founded SSP contested December 1984 Lok Sabha Election and March, 1985 Sikkim Assembly Election with a new manifesto consisting of the following five main issues :

Restoration of Seat Reservation :

To restore *parity* and maintain reserved seats for Sikkimese Nepalis as originally contained before merger and under Article 371 F of the Constitution of India.

Citizenship :

For the people rendered Stateless in Sikkim and to fix the cut off year 1970.

A son of soil policy :

To safeguard, to preserve local identify and to give all Government jobs and trade licenses to the identified Sikkimese origin.

Constitutional recognition :

To the State's *lingua-franca viz.*, Nepali Language commonly spoken by all and majority of the People of Sikkim and to get its Constitutional recognition as well as inclusion in the VIIIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

To alter Centre-State relations :

For demanding more financial and Political freedom for the States of the Indian Union and to extend support for Constitutional Amendment (taking into account the role played by Governors of Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh and J & K in the year 1984) to the concept of the State Government continuing in power in the pleasure of the Governor.¹³

The newly founded Sikkim Sangram Parishad with elephant as its election symbol and red and white flag contested the Lok Sabha election in December, 1984. The President of SSP, N.B. Bhandari himself contested the election and the result was as shown below.¹⁴

Table – II

Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency Election, 1984 (December)

Name of the Candidate	Votes Polled
Ashok Subba (Janata)	604
N.B. Bhandari (SSP)	56,614
P. Subba INC (I)	21,234
B. K. Rai (Ind)	1,717
L.B. Basnet (Ind)	936
B.B. Mishra CPI (M)	843
P.T. Lepcha (Ind)	495
B.R. Harijan (Ind)	110

Source : Chakaravarthi, K.R., *Verdict in Sikkim (1979-1985)*, Gangtok, Himalindia Publications, Nam Nam Road, Gangtok (Sikkim), 1988, p. 7.

Thus, Bhandari himself won the election and became Member of the Lok Sabha. In the March, 1985 Sikkim Legislative Assembly Election, N.B. Bhandari and his team SSP contested against Congress (I), Janata Party, CPI, CPI (M), Sikkim Prajatantra Congress, Himali Congress, Gorkha League and a number of Independent candidates and the results were :

Table – III

Sikkim Legislative Assembly Results, 1985 (March)

Name of the Parties	Party-wise Results
Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP)	30
Congress (I)	01
Independent	01
Total	32

Source : *Ibid.*, p. 9.

From the most prestigious Gangtok Constituency, D.K. Bhandari (wife of N.B. Bhandari) and 11 other candidates contested. D.K. Bhandari was defeated by a plainsman and ex-Chairman of Gangtok Municipal Corporation, namely Balchand Sarma who was solidly backed by mercantile vote bank, Government employees and plainsmen votes. In Kabi Tingda Constituency of North Sikkim the Congress (I) candidate won the Election. The success of Congress (I) here was a progress for it in the stage of Sikkim since the solitary success was a reflection of its own. That one seat for Congress (I) had given a footing for it in Sikkim's Politics that was absent earlier.¹⁵ The success to SSP in 1985 was nothing, but an expression of Bhandari wave and the quality of his triumph in the election was an expression of public disapproval of the gubernatorial coup of 1984.

N.B. Bhandari for the second time assumed the Office as Fourth Chief Minister of Sikkim with an 11 Members' Cabinet team. The Council of Ministers including the leader of the Party N.B. Bhandari comprised of the following members :

Chamla Tshering
 Padam Bahadur Gurung
 Dorjee Tshering Bhutia
 Sanchaman Limboo
 Padam Lal Gurung
 Khara Nanda Upreti
 Thuckchuk Lachungpa

Taraman Rai

Sonam Choyda Lepcha

Sonam Dupden Lepcha.¹⁶

T.R. Sharma was appointed as Speaker of Sikkim Legislative Assembly and Ram Lepcha as Deputy Speaker. Further, the Sikkim Government Gazette No. 40, March 25, 1985 notified the list of Chairman of various State Organizations. Pawan Chamling, MLA, was made Chairman, Sikkim Distilleries Ltd., Rangpo.

D.K. Bhandari left SSP and joined Congress (I) in 1988-89 on the grounds of her husband's reckless infidelity and to inject new blood into the Party's prospect for making a President in SSP's hegemony in the State. In spite of it, the overall Congress machinery in Sikkim was unequal to the task of coping with Bhandari's growing arrogance and the militancy of his commando forces. Even the murder and mysterious disappearance of Dharamdatta Sharma, rising Congress leader from Timberbong, West Sikkim, failed to rouse the Congress and its followers to make a bold stand against the growing on atrocities of the Sangram goons. D.K. Bhandari remained a Congress Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) from Sikkim.

In the meanwhile, Election to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly took place. Altogether 118 candidates contested the election. The Sikkim Sangram Parishad, Congress (I), the Rising Sun Party of R.C. Poudyal and some Independent candidates were in the fray. In all 32 Constituencies the Sikkim Sangram Parishad swept the poll.

Table - IV

Results Of The Sikkim Legislative Assembly Election : December, 1989	
Sikkim Sangram Parishad	94,078
Rising Sun Party	11,472
Denzong Chogpa	298
Congress (I)	24,124
Independents	3,647

Source : Pradhan, P.K., *Report on General Elections in Sikkim : House of the People and Sikkim Legislative Assembly, 1989*, Gangtok, Sikkim Govt. Press, 1990.

The success of SSP securing all the 32 seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly without any opposition in 1989 was a record in the post-merger Government and Politics of Sikkim. All Political Parties in the State contested with the same programme such as seat reservation, recognition of Nepali language, to promote Cordial Centre-State relations and son of the soil policy. To bring rapid socio-economic development in various sectors of the newly born State, the Central Government started pumping massive funds in the Annual Plans of the State Government. There was some major visible progress in the State owing to flow of the enormous outlay provided for its planned economic development, but not to the extent, it should have been. During the rules of SJP and SSP headed by N.B. Bhandari between 1979 and 1994, his Government made achievements in different fields of developmental and welfare activities. It was projected to be multi-dimensional. Universal free education so as to make education accessible to the poor and free distribution of text books and exercise books upto Class XII, extension of basic health needs to the doorsteps of the rural mass with an improvement in Primary Health Centres and Sub-Centres all over the State, progress in the field of power generation, rural electrification, agricultural, industrial, rural and urban transport developments in the State. To provide network of roads and bridges, protection of weaker sections of the Society, equal treatment to all and *Sons of the Soil* policy. In addition, the Bhandari Government granted and issued the Indian Citizenship Certificates to the genuine Sikkimese as per the information given below :

Table No. V

Total applied for	Consideration date-wise		Rejected
74,966	07.08. 1990	40,083	345
	08.04. 1991	33,348	
	10.01. 1994	1,290	
Total	74,621		345

The above Certificates were granted and issued to those citizens, who were :

1. Having their names in Sikkim Subject Register but not attained SSC;
2. descendants of SSC holders;
3. Persons holding landed properties in rural areas within Sikkim;
4. descendants of serial no. 3.

Source : T.N. Dhakal, SCS, Addl. Secretary, Law Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, dated 26.06. 2007 and Home Department, Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok, dated 26.06. 2007.

Further, the most conspicuous achievement of SSP headed by N.B. Bhandari and his wife D.K. Bhandari was the then Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) to achieve and receive the Constitutional recognition of Nepali language and its inclusion under the VIIIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution on August 20th 1992.¹⁷

As a Chief Minister, Bhandari symbolises the Centre of his power. As such, he often finds himself surrounded by those elements that unabashedly hanker after accoutrements of pelf and privileges.¹⁸

However, Sikkim saw a tremendous achievement on infrastructural development of roads and bridges and housing, culture, ecclesiastical affairs, education, finance, food and civil supplies, forest, health and family welfare, home, power development, justice, health engineering, social welfare, urban development and tourism. The Limboo Language has been recognized as one of the official languages of Sikkim in 1983. The Nepali language has been included in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution on 20th August, 1992.

(Source : Subba: J.R., 'History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim', Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2008, p. 70)

N.B. Bhandari after winning the election again assumed the Office for the third time as the Chief Minister of Sikkim. The Ministry consisted of 11 members at the Cabinet rank. The efforts of *Rising Sun Party* went in vain and the identity of the Congress (I) was completely uprooted because of people's continuous allegiance to the leadership of Bhandari and

SSP. Bhandari in a span of 14 years leadership became uncrowned monarch of Sikkim. His coming to power repeatedly reflected people's preference for a Regional Party.

For the first time, Pawan Chamling was inducted in the Council of Ministers of Bhandari and he was offered a Cabinet berth holding Industries, Information and Public Relations and Printing Departments in the Government of Sikkim.

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SIKKIM, Sikkim Govt. Gazette, Ext. No. 58, May 11th 1984,
SIKKIM, Sikkim Govt. Gazette, Ext. Gaz. No. 59, May 11th 1984,
Gangtok, Sikkim Govt. Press, 1984. According to the above
Government Notifications under Article 164 (1) of the Constitution of
India, the then Governor of Sikkim, Homi J.H. Taleyerkhan dismissed
the then Congress (I) Chief Minister of Sikkim and dissolved his

Cabinet (due to the fact that he ceased to command the pleasure of the Governor) forthwith. On the same day, that was May 11th 1984, the then Governor of Sikkim under Article 164 (1) appointed B.B. Goroong from Congress (I) as the third Chief Minister of Sikkim. B.B. Goroong's Ministry consisted of nine Cabinet Ministers. Owing to instability, the then Governor finally recommended for the imposition of President's Rule under the provision of Article 356 of the Indian Constitution in the State of Sikkim. For details see, Sikkim Govt. (Ext.) Gazette No. 70, May 25th 1984, Gangtok. Sikkim Government Press.

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