CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The name *Kirata or Cirata* is for the first time found in the Yajurveda (*Sukla Yajurveda, Vajasaneyi Samhita,* XXX, 16; also, *Krsna Yajurveda, Taittriya Brahmana*, III, 4.12.1. Macdonell and Keith have the following note in their *Vedic Index on Kirata: 'Kirata* is a name applied to a people living in the caves of the mountains, as appears clearly from the dedication of the *Kirata* to caves (*guha)* in the *Vajasaneyi Samhita (also Taittiriya Brahmana),* and from the reference in the Atharvaveda to Kirata girl *(kairatika*), who digs a remedy on the ridges of the mountains.' Later the people called Kiratas were located in Eastern Nepal, But the name seems to have been applied to any hill folk, no doubt aborigines, though the Manava Dharma- Sastra regarded them as degraded Ksatriyas (ref.X,44)'. [1] The *Kiratas* pre-eminently figure among the tribes described in ancient Indian and Classical (Greek and Latin) literature, which constitute one of the major segments of the tribal communities living in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan regions, forest tracts, Mountainous area and the Gangetic plains, valleys and delta of India, have been a subject of least important. [2] However, the subject has been accorded the prominence by the ancient Indian writers, classical geographers and historians while dealing with the primitive races of India.

G.P. Singh opined that in the post- Vedic times the epics-the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were the most useful sources where the *Balkanda* and the *Kiskindhaa Kanda* of Valmiki *Ramayana* dealt with their origins, movement, physical characteristic, dwellings in the marshy region near the sea- coast, etc. Tulsidasa also referred to the Kirata and Khasa together in the Uttarkanda of his *Ramacharitamanasa.* Similarly, *Mahabharata* – a semi historical work also provides a very clear and reliable account of the Kiratas. Out of the eighteen Parvas of the Mahabharata, ten are valuable

for the study of Kiratas. The puranic records comprising both the *Mahapuranas* and the *Up-Puranas* are the repository of historical information about ancient Indian tribes and races. It is true that the traditional accounts, contained in the *Puranas* have been vitiated by mythological details interpolations exaggeration the religious bias and other anomalies. However, despite many obvious defects the Puranic accounts cannot be regarded as wholly untrustworthy. The Kiratas have been described in different *Puranas,* which supply very positive information about different aspects of the life and culture of the Kiratas. They have been described as the peoples, the countries and *Janapadas* of the eastern, northern or *Uttarapatha*, southern western and mountainous regions of India. [3]

The Buddhist Pali texts, *Sasanavamsa Himavantapadesa, Apadana* (11.358-9), Two Pali commentaries- *Sumangala- Vilasini* on *Digha Nikaya* (1.176) and *Sammoha-Vinodani* on *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (388) and *Milinda-Panho*(IV.8.94) composed by the Buddhist scholar Nagasena before C. 400 A.D. [4] also refer the Kiratas as sub-joined. The secular literature comprising the Dharma- Sutras and Smritis popularly known as *Dharmasastras* also deals with the subject- matter. The *Manu Smriti* or *Manava-dharmasastra* (B.C. 200-100A.D.) [5] refer to the Ksatriya origin of the Kiratas, which has sparked off lots of controversy among scholars. The *Mudraraksasa* of *Visakhadatta* (placed between 5th and 6th century A.D.), a historical play, is an important source of information about the Kiratas of the Mauryan age despite controversial time frame. Similarly, *Varahmihara* ascribed to the 5th century A.D. has also mentioned about the Kiratas in his famous astronomical work *Brhatsamhita*. [6] Rajtarangini of Kalhana, the chronicle of Kashmir and the first celebrated historian of ancient India between A.D. 1140 to 1150 A.D., mentions Kiratas as associated with some other aboriginals' tribes living in the Vindhya hills and Rajputana.[7] According to G.P.Singh, the *Subhasitavali*

of Vallabhadeva of Kashmir (not earlier than 15th century A.D.) describes the Kiratas as degraded mountain tribe, who lived mostly by hunting. The *Vijyaditika* of Sumati and Hemchandra"s *Abhidadhanacintamaniparisista*(1088-1172 A.D.) have also slightly touched the subject.[8]

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (first century A.D.) by an anonymous writer is a trustworthy document like the journals of Marco-Polo, Columbus, and Vespucci in the field of geographical discovery. The appellation *'Cirrhadae* and *'Besatae'* as referred to in this source have been fairly identified with the Kiratas. For the purpose of determining their location and position in different Himalayan and sub- Himalayan regions, identifying them with several hill- tribes of north-east India and describing their trade and commerce, origin, settlement, expansion etc. the careful study of this document is very essential.[9] Another Text, *The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythraean Sea,* [10] is also of importance regarding the trade and commerce of the Kirradai (Sanskrit Kirata). Ronnow Kasten's article *Kirata- A Study on some Ancient Indian Tribe,* [11] is also helpful in finding the graphic description of the origin, migration, settlement, expansion, etc. of the *Kiratas* inhabiting different region of India. G.P. Singh also gives credits to him in preserving the detailed account of the subject as well as for critically examining the views of different scholars regarding the Indo-Mongoloid theory of the origin of *Kirata*. Sylvain Levi's Work [12] marked by all its intelligibility, can definitely be taken as reliable treatise on the origin of the Indo-Mongoloid tribes of the Himalayan region of north-east India, their migration to Nepal in the post Bharata War period, invasion of Nepal by the *Kiratas* of Assam of primeval antiquity, their political and cultural triumph over Austro-Asiatic and other indigenous tribes and Indo-Aryans of Nepal in ancient times anterior to the 8th century C.E., the outline of the history of their dynastic rule, etc.

The history and culture of the Aryans have been extensively dealt by different scholars but the description of the non-Aryans or the aboriginal tribes still hold obscurity either it is about their contribution to the primitive history of India or facts of their origin in the Indian sub- continent. There is no doubt that the non-Aryan tribe has a distinct place in the ethnographic history of ancient India. The careful and dispassionate study reveals that there are a good number of valuable data and account to recreate for historical study of the subject dwelt upon here. J. Talboys Wheeler has correctly stated that the races who occupied India prior to the Vedic Aryans have been excluded from the division of the ancient Indian history into Vedic and Brahminic times. Indeed, they have no history apart from Vedic and Brahminic traditions. The remains of so- called aboriginal races may be treasured up as memorials of Primitive man but they furnish few data which are available for the purpose of history. For ages their relics have been turning to dust in caves or cromlechs, or lying buried beneath the shapeless mounds. During ages many of the primitive races may have been incorporated in the general population, and form in the present day the lower strata of the Hindu social system...Living representatives of the primitive races are still, however, lingering in secluded and difficult regions, but they have long ceased to play any important part in the annals of humanity. They represent humans in its earliest childhood...In the later annals of India some of the tribes occasionally rise to the surface and then drop back into their old obscurity and it will accordingly suffice to describe them as they individually appear. [13]

Schlegal also observes: “in the background of old, mighty, and civilized nations we can almost always trace the primeval inhabitants of the country, who dispossessed of their territory have been reduced to servitude by their conquerors or have gradually been incorporated with them. These primitive

> inhabitants, when compared with their later or more civilized conquerors appear in general rule as barbarous; though we find among them a certain number of ancient customs and arts, which by no means tend to confirm the notion of an original and savage state of nature." [14]

The *Kiratas*, one of the living representatives of the primitive non- Aryans race, construct a wide scope for making of historical study of their culture and civilization. The present scenario reflects that they are widely scattered and divided. In ancient times the "North Eastern, North Western, Central and Deccan regions" were the cradles of the Kirata culture.[15] Suniti Kumar Chatterjee has observed that the original Mongoloid incomers were a very primitive people, being mostly hunters and food-gatherers who also used caves for habitation. The Tibetans, according to a late Buddhist tradition which is of very doubtful historical value, are said to have entered their country during the life-time of Buddha- say about the middle of the 1st millennium B.C. They may have been preceded by earlier tribes who formed the nucleus or basis of the 'Himalayan' Mongloids of Nepal, speaking languages like Newari, Lepcha, Magar and Gurung and the '*pronominalised*' languages like Dhimal, Khambu, Kanawari and others. The speakers of the '*pronominlised'* dialects probably represent the earliest waves: and the Newars, Lepchas, Magars, Gurungs, etc., represent late arrivals. The Himalayan groups of Indo- Mongoloids were thus probably the first to be established in India, and settled in Nepal, and pushed as far west as Garhwal and Kumaon, and further to the west; but they have remained largely in a very primitive state: except Newars.[16] Therefore, in order to have a clear understanding of the various phases of the growth of Indian culture and civilization, the scientific study of such history of ancient India is essential. The remnants of the ancient Kiratas are still visible in different tribal's belt of India.

S.K.Chatterjee mentioned that all Indo- Mongloids tribes, speaking the various languages of both the Tibeto-Burman and Siamese- Chinese branches of the same 'Sino- Tibetan speech family numbered within the Union of India was 3,183,505 as per Census of 1961 persons excluding several more millions in Nepal along with India Proper, Bangladesh and Pakistan, as well as Ceylon, fall within the Indian orbit. The Mongoloids tribes speaking dialects of the Tibeto- Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech- family would appear to have found a center of dispersion in some tract to the east of Tibet and north-east of Assam, from where they began to spread into India and Tibet; and the movement may have started, as suggested before, prior to 1000 B.C, at least. [17]

The Magars or Mangars,[18] one of the aborigines of Sikkim and Nepal, belong to the Kirata community of the Eastern Himalayas. They are one of the oldest tribes of Sikkim. Rajesh Verma has reasonably stated that the Kiratis include Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Mangar and Tamang tribe of Sikkim.[19]The Mangars, Limbus and Lepcha are the earliest settlers of ancient Sikkim.[20] Iman Singh Chemjong has stated that a place called Shin in the northern part of the Himalayas was the original home of the Mangars. [21] The Magars are described by Hamilton (1819) as a Himalayan Tribe "Wallowing in all the ancient abominations of the mountaineers", and found anywhere in the Himalayan region.[22] Iman Singh Chemjong has further stated that In the East Nepal and Sikkim the Mangars are so called because they were the children of Mang, Mong or Mongol people. The Chinese and Burmese people call Mang or Mong for Mongolians and ar or arui means children. So, Mangar means the Children of Mongols....their complexion proves that they are no other than scattered Mongolians.[23] On the authority of Madhya Asia ko Itihas (History of Central Asia) by Rahul Sanskrityayan, the learned author has identified the Ancient Mangar Kirat tribe of

Sikkim and Nepal with *Kirait*, one of the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. He says that long before the adoption of the name Mongol or Mongolians (in the 12th or 13th century A.D.) in Central Asia, one branch of the tribe *Kirait* and Mongku tribe of Central Asia spread towards Suchuwang, Yunan, Burma, Eastern India, and Nepal. They did neither hear the name Mongol nor do they claim to be of their origin. The Mangar tribe of Nepal, he says, must be from the composite group of Kirait and Mongku who came to Sikkim and became Mangar.[24] The Mangars or Magars after having settled in Sikkim in Ancient times roughly before the 5th century ruled in its various parts independently like the Lepchas and Limbus.[25]

John Dalton Hooker, who conducted a scientific exploration in Sikkim in 1848-49, has mentioned that "Mangars, a tribe now confined to Nepal west of Arun, are the aborigines of Sikkim, whence they were driven by the Lepchas westward into the country of the Limboos and by this latter further west (Nepal) still. They are said to have been savages and not of Tibetan origin and are now converted to Hindooism."[26] H.H. Risley, while dealing with the 'History of Sikkim and its Rules' also mentioned about the rule of the Magar kings or chiefs in Sikkim.[27] During 1600 A.D. or so the chief Santu Pati Sen had established a Magarjong at Mangsari, West Sikkim, and ruled surrounding areas many years. The ruins of Mangarjong at Mangsari, West Sikkim is still there. Similarly, ruins of many Mangarjong such as Sukhia Pokhari of Darjeeling; Mansong Mangarjong of Suldung, Kamrung, Famtham, Sudunglakha, Berthang-Berfok Mangarjong and Rateypani Kateng Mangarjong, are the historical and archaeological significance.[28]

A Copper Plate Inscription of Shivadeva, dated 221 Newar Era (1110CE) has been discovered.[29] On it is mentioned the name of a *vishaya*, or province, called Mangavara. Scholars believe that the name was an archaic form of Magar. Michael

Witzel mentions, “Magars were apparently known already to the Mahabharata as Maga, to the Purnas under the name of Mangara and in a Nepalese copper plate inscription of 1100/1AD as Mangvara”. [30] They came into prominence as a great power in about 1100 A.D., when Mukunda Sena, the Magar King of Nepal invaded and conquered the Nepal Valley and committed terrible atrocities during the reign of Hari Deva, King of Nepal.[31]

They are now found over most parts of Nepal and in Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Sikkim, and other districts of West Bengal. They are mostly concentrated in Dooars, Darjeeling Hills, Dehradun, Bhaksu, also in Assam especially in Naga Hills and few are scattered in other parts of India. The 1901 Census figures for the Magars or Mangars were 3214 in Jalpaiguri and 11,174 in Darjeeling.[32] There were 3709 Mangars in Jalpaiguri district in the 1911 Census figures.[33] As per the census of 1931, the Mangar population in the West Bengal was 24,042, out of which 14,613 were in Darjeeling District alone. The Census of 1951 gives the figure of Mangars in West Bengal as 42,663 and in Darjeeling Hills as 34,350.[34]

Jalpaiguri has been a homeland for different cultural groups. Mangar being one among them enriched with their rich ancient culture and rituals have settled in tea-plantation and agriculture areas like Kalchini, Lankapara, Bandapani, Dalsingpara, Washabari T.E., Kumargram etc. In Darjeeling, they are found in almost every part of the district but mostly concentrated in Rangbhang Valley Tea Estate, Magarjong, and Sukhia Pokhari etc. in Kursong Pankhabari Tea Estate, Babukaman and in Kalimpong, Samalbong Busty, and Kumai T.E. Chiboo Busty etc. Most of the people of the Mangar community in these regions are farmers or peasants or tea-plantation laborer.[35] According to Iman Singh Chemjong, the Mangar tribe in India, were in Sikkim and ruled there before the Bhutia of Sikkim. In 16th century, Santu Pati Sen had built a vast kingdom in Western Sikkim. With the passage of time the various socio-economic and

religious factors contributed to their fall from a powerful and glorious past to a little-known backward cast of Nepali community and so as of Indian society.[36] Most of the people from this community earn their livelihood from hand to mouth engaging themselves in occupations mostly in tea plantation and cultivation.

The Limbus and Magars were identified as ethnic groups in Sikkim in 1642. B.C. Das observes that the ethnic scene of Sikkim began to undergo a rapid change with the advent of the British. Till 1780, Darjeeling was a part of Sikkim. During 1780-1816 it remained under Nepal. In 1816, for implementing the Indo- Nepal Treaty or Segauli treaty, it was ceded to the British.[37] From the Maharaja's History of Sikkim, it reveals that the Mangars were in Sikkim prior to 1642 as evident from the account of a travel of the first Chogyal Phuntsho Namgyal of Sikkim, who was consecrated in 1642, across the Kingdom. [38] Shiva Kumar Rai has correctly stated that "some parts of Nepal were under Sikkim once and likewise some parts of Sikkim were Under Nepal....Therefore, it is natural that the various communities living in Sikkim and Nepal...freely moved and settled in various parts of Sikkim and Nepal. [39] Hence, the settlement of Mangars in Darjeeling, once an adjacent part of Sikkim and Jalpaiguri, a neighboring foothill of it, might also be a natural process whence they were driven by the Bhutia chief in Sikkim.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]Chatterjee S.K.1951, *Kirata- Jana- Kriti, The Indo- Mongoloids: Their Contribution to the History and Culture of India,* The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, pp.27-28.

[2] Singh G. P.2008, *Researches into the History and Civilisation of the Kiratas,* Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, p.2.

[3] Singh G.P., *op.cit*., pp.,24-25.

[4] Ibid., p. 26 and *Cf.* B.C. Law, IEFBJ, pp. 85-86.

[5] The Laws of *Manu* X. 43- 44.

[6] Singh G. P., *op.cit*., p.30.

[7] Stein M.A. (trans), pp.71, 417.

[8] Singh G. P., *op.cit*., p.31

[9] Pp. 47, 63-65, 253-54, 256, 266-67, 278-79, 281 from the translated and annotated text by W.H. Schoff is of great value. Vincent's *Periplus of Erythracan Sea*, Vol. II pp 523-28.

10 Cf. J.W. Mc Crindle (translated and annotated), pp.145, and 148-49.

[11] Ronnow, K 1936, *Kirata: A study on some Ancient Indian Tribe*, Le- Monde Oriental, Vol. XXX, pp.90-170.

[12] Le Nepal Etude Historique d'un Royaume Hindou (3 Vols. 1905-9), Vol. II, pp.72-78 and Singh G.P. 1983, *Some newly discovered on the Sources of History and Culture of North-East India,* PNEIHA, 4th Session, pp.,26-27.

[13] Wheeler J.T.1874, *The History of India from the Earliest Ages,* Vol.III, (History of India). pp.10-11.

[14] Quoted in Mrs. C. Speir, *Phases of Indian Civilization (A Historical and Cultural Outline),* p.17.

[15] Singh G. P.2008, *op.cit,,* p.6.

[16] Chatterjee S.K.1951, *op.cit.,* Kolkata, p. 41.

[17] Ibid pp., 40-41.

[18] Grierson A. G.1909, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. 3, Part-I, Calcutta. the name of the tribe is sometimes spelt Magar and sometimes Mangar. The latter form is apparently common in Darjeeling.p.206.

[19] Verma Rajesh,2015, Sikkim: *A Guide and Handbook*, NBC Press, New Delhi, p.71.

[20] Timsina Suman Raj, 1998, *Nepali community in India*, Manak Publication, New Delhi, p.22.

[21]Chemjong Iman Singh,1967, *History and Culture of Kirat People*, Kanchan Printing Press, Kathmandu, 4th edition, 2003, pp.70-71.

[22] Vansittart Eden, 1896, *Notes on Nepal*, Government Printing India, Calcutta p.104

[23] Chemjong Iman Singh, *op.cit.,* p.73.

[24] Chemjong Iman Singh, *op.cit,,* pp.,74-75.

[25] Singh G. P., *op.cit*, p. 96.

[26] Hooker J.D.1848, *Himalayan Journals, Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal, the Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas, the Khasia Mount London*, Vol. I, p-130.

[27] *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, 1894, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta pp.10 and 38.

[28] Allay Santosh, 2003, *Mangar Jati ko Itihas Ani Sanskriti: Sikkim ko Sandharbha ma*, (in Nepali), Darpan Publication, Darjeeling, p.69.

[29] Pradhan Kumar,1991, *The Gorkha Conquests, the process and consequences of the Unification of Nepal, with reference to Eastern Nepal,* Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 2nd edition, 2009, p.35.

[30] Michael Witzel, E.J. *Kham* Magar *shamanism of Nepal*, Kathmandu,1991, p.18.

[31] Vansittart Eden,1896, *op.cit.,* Calcutta p.103.

[32] Grierson A. G.1909, *op.cit.,* Vol-3, part-, p.206.

[33] Grunning, J.F.,1911, *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteer, Jalpaiguri*, Allahabad First Edition, p.41.

[34] Mitra A., 1954, *Census of India: District Handbooks Darjeeling*, Calcutta, Tables1:19, 20, pp. 72-92.

[35] Official Records, 2002, Akhil Bhartiya Mangar Sangh, Darjeeling and Asudha Mangar, 2020, *Mangars: Origin and Settlement in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling,* Karatoya, N.B.U. Vol. 13, p.120.

[36] Chemjong Iman Singh, *op.cit,* p.142.

[37] Timsina Suman Raj, *op.cit.,* pp. 35, 42, 43.

[38] Subba J.R.2008, *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, p.347.

[39] Singh G. P., *op.cit*, p. 87.