

Chapter IV

Subject Construction

The question of originality and its lack seems to haunt much of the work on colonialism and the post-colonial condition at the current juncture. The preoccupation with originality and secondariness has of course a history, one that is frequently rehearsed. Its origin can be traced back to Macaulay's notorious "Minutes on English Education" of 1835, which defined what Gayatri Spivak has termed the 'Subject Constituting Project'¹ of colonialism as the production of secondariness: 'western subjects, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.' Frantz Fanon in his book titled "*Black skin, White masks*" writes on the conflictual economics of colonialism and racism: "For the black man there is only one destiny, and it is white".² Diana Fuss suggests that Black under colonial rule finds himself relegated to a position other than the other. ...Black may be a protean imaginary other for white, but for itself it is a stationary 'object' "Objecthood, substituting for true alterity, blocks the migration through the other necessary for subjectivity to take place."³

More recently Homi Bhaba⁴ has sought an entry into questions of originality and repetition through Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstruction. But where Fanon sees the command to mimic as a subjective death sentence, Bhaba plays with the deconstructive possibilities of that colonial stereotype.

He theorises colonial mimicry as the representation of a partial presence that disrupts the colonizers narcissistic aspirations and subjects Englishness to profound strain, whereby the "familiar, transported to distant pasts, becomes uncannily transformed, the imitation subverts the identity of that which being represented, and the relation of power, if not altogether reversed, certainly begins to vacillate."⁵ The ambivalence that undergirds the procedure of colonial mimicry produces simultaneous and incommensurable effects, destabilizing English and Indian identities as part of the same operation. This insight has proved enormously useful for scholars of colonial discourse and indeed has found significant purchase among a large number of feminists.

Even the post-colonial scholars whose work ostensibly remote from debates on identity politics have been engaged with the problematic that for want of better term - one might call "philosophical or epistemic secondariness." Many of the debates about these issues have cohered not so much around individual subjects or identities as around the question of nation, but in terms that resonate quite powerfully with debates on identity formation, whether in the metropolis or elsewhere. Specially, the debates on nation formation have focused on the nation's failure to "come into its own" in decolonization. The "failure" of the nation that Ranajit Guha ⁶ had identified as key to an understanding of Indian postcoloniality is thus the effect of an aporia, transfixed as the nation is between an incomplete originality and an incomplete imitativeness.

The question of originality and its other has thus been an irreducible if sometimes camouflaged component of our models of colonial and postcolonial elite identity formation as well as of nation formation. Paroma Roy ⁷ in her *Indian Traffic* tries to foreground it as such. The model of identity formation proffered by the trope of mimic man has been, it should be noted, subject to same friendly criticism. Feminists, while sympathetic to theorizations of colonial mimicry, have pointed to the provenance of this figure and have noted Bhabha's silence about crucial feminists theorization of mimicry. Benita Parry ⁸ criticizes that Bhabha deploys to stage "the tropes of mimicry", "sly civility" and "hybridity" what he identifies as the ambivalence of colonial discourse all derived from the colonial production of an educated class of natives. But the colonial mimicry and identification also allow the question of sexuality, gender, religion and class.

The effects of colonial mimicry are all too often read exultingly as menacing without sufficient attention to the double and contradictory charge of operation, despite Bhabha's careful delineation of the dual charge of the operation, too many critics have been willing to read mimicry as another name for subversion. Without disregarding the uncovenanted and unsettling effects that are a by-product of mimicry, we would do well to remind ourselves at the same time to the enormous profitability to the colonial enterprise of the mimic man, mimicry can be harnessed to retrogressive ends and produce retrogressive consummations in addition to progressive ones. Professions of hybridity and liminality - which are sometimes claimed as the badge of disenfranchised and oppositional groups - can be marshaled quite easily and presumably for the self-aggrandizing cause of colonialism.⁹

In the context of the above mentioned post colonial discourse I intend to situate the crisis of identities in the Sikkimi society in colonial Sikkim within the immense and heterogeneous terrain of socio-political, ethnic, religious, legal and mythic discourses that have mediated Sikkimi and the British experience during the colonial period. With the establishment of British Political Office in Gangtok in 1889, the colonial cultural penetration started to plough its way towards cultural subversion. As the British Political Officer became the guiding spirit of the administration of Sikkim, it was the demand of the situation that the princes of the royal family and the traditional feudal lords should be taught under western system of education. Sidkeong Tulku (whom the British Political Officer had chosen to be the future ruler of the state) and three of his *kazi* friends were sent to England for Higher education. Other feudal lords were equally sent to other parts of India for English studies. A 'mimic' culture had grown up among the members of the feudal lords and the royal prince because of their close association with the Europeans.

Simultaneously, the British created second category of landlords under the new land lease system. They were the *Newar Thikadars*. They were also chosen for learning English. Because of their close association with the Europeans not only their minds but also their bodies were 'colonized.' But at the same time another force started to work. The 'mimicry' can be harnessed to retrogressive ends and to produce retrogressive accomplishment in addition to progressive ones. Naturally as a result of this retrogression or a search for authenticity, a hybrid culture developed in Sikkim more particularly among the members of the feudal lords. Broadly speaking the cultural identity of the members of the *kazis* and the *Newar Thikadars* of Sikkim has differentiated themselves from their ancient traditional system. The theoretical position that the logic of the argument implies is:

- (a) Subject making in Sikkim.
- (b) The elimination of the alterity.
- (c) The construction of the native informer by a trope.

I

British motive for the 'construction of Subjects'

However, the situation in Sikkim during the colonial period was different in comparison with other colonial situations. In other colonial situations the British remained the rulers and the process of westernization took place with complete political authority whereas in Sikkim they were only the administrators. Therefore the British had conducted the forces of cultural penetration in a very different and intelligent way. The British Political Officers under the influence of colonial requirement and for practical purposes appeared to be initiating the process of westernization, and the forces released by them slowly gathered momentum. At the same time the British found it difficult to realise their objectives unless the *Maharaja* was disconnected from the Tibetan affiliation. Considering the fact that the British administration could have used Sikkim for its safe route for the Tibetan trade- the resistance from the local traditional elite was sought to be eliminated in all possible ways. Therefore, to realise all these, the rulers were reduced to the position of a puppet king and the process of 'making subject' was intended to suit their interest in the state.

Before the extension of the British administration in Sikkim the rulers and the elite led their lives in a traditional way. There was no European influence and it was more indigenous in character. Sikkimi feudal lords and the members of the royal family were mostly guided by the practices of Tibetan theocracy. The first British Political Officer Claude White ¹⁰ says in his writing about the traditional way of living of the three main communities of Sikkim. He says the Lepchas "originally worshipped the spirits of the mountains, rivers and forests, a natural outcome of their surroundings". He further says that they led solitary and isolated lives. The next race, according to White was the Bhutias. They "are not so reserved or so fond of isolation as the Lepchas". "Their religion is Buddhism or *Lamaism* and their language is a dialect of Tibetan." The third and final category of people was the Pahariyas. "They are almost all Hindus by religion, with innumerable castes". Few professed Buddhism also. The system of education prevalent in Sikkim before the extension of the British administration was a traditional *Lamaistic* system and it was purely theocratic in order. The Sikkimi princes and feudal lords were quite untouched with the western system of education.

One of the motives of the British in Sikkim was the “Construction of Subjects” to materialize cultural transformation in the state. The existing traditional set of elite was found unfit to suit British interest in the state. Claude White the first British Political Officer commented thus: though Gangtok, Tassithing, and Entchi “Kazis belonged to the leading families who had come into the country in the retinue of the Sikkim Rajas, they were, at the same time of very little account, belonging to the old school, not carrying much for anything that went on and given to getting very drunk, but not withstanding, they were good-natured and ready to do anything that was wanted of them to the best of their ability”.¹¹

C.W. Bolten, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal commented, “the remarks of both the Political Officer and the Commissioner show that the removal of some of the members of the council and the appointment of others more efficient and more likely to take an active interest in the work of administration is desirable. Mr. White states that very few men suitable for the council are to be found in the state, but the commissioner will be desired to see, in consultation with him and the Raja, whether it is not possible to introduce some new and competent members”.¹² In view of the above mentioned comments of the British Officials we can come to the conclusion that they wanted the Sikkimi elite to be moulded as per British interest. The motive of the British to send Claude White as Political Officer for administrative reforms was more cultural than political. With an avowed objective of cultural transformation the Political Officers involved themselves in the reformative venture. British education played a very important role in the process of the construction of ‘subjects’. The origin of the Colonial construction of ‘subjects’ can be traced back in Sikkim to the opening of schools in 1906.¹³

It is very interesting to know here why the British became so interested to create a set of elite different from the traditional one in the state? Presumably, the answer is to fulfill the British requirement of cultural transformation along with their commercial needs. Sikkim was conceptually treated as British colony, for they tried to transform it into a proto-type British Colony. They viewed that the native culture was not a unified culture. It consisted of fragmented elements in it. They gave more stress on fragmentation aspect to prove oriental culture and religion inferior to occidental in all respects. The main cultural claim of the British during the

Colonial period was that orientals were internally so fragmented, so heterogeneous, such a mosaic of languages and ethnicities that it needed a centralizing language, centralizing dynamic to introduce elements of cohesiveness. Therefore, only English language could unify the fragmented elements.¹⁴ The British further viewed that the Orientals were backward, degenerate, uncivilized, savage, retarded, incapable of acquiring values of enlightenment, irrational, illogical, sceptic, inveterate liars, lethargic, suspicious, unnatural, orthodox, uncultured etc. Therefore they needed to be trained in the modes of civilization. They further viewed that non-western culture was irrational and false when judged in terms of western criteria of rationality or truth.¹⁵ The British subscribed to the view that the Occidentals were superior to the Orientals in all respects. European identity was considered superior to all the non-European people and cultures.¹⁶ The Orientals were considered as 'Subject Races': Subject Races did not have it in them to know what was good for them because of being Orientals. The Orientals were almost the same everywhere.¹⁷

In the context of the above mentioned post Colonial understanding of the Colonial mind I intend to situate the motive of the British interest in the process of 'Subject Construction' in Sikkim. Sikkim, being an Oriental state, it was considered orthodox, backward, and uncultured. According to the Colonial mind Sikkimi society was spiritualistic and fragmented with elements such as Karmapa, Ningmapa, Kargupa, Gelukpa amongst the Tibetans and Nepali, Bhutia, and Lepcha etc. Therefore, only western influence could unite these fragmented elements for their growth. In fact British interest and their views targeted to detibetanise the traditional society in order to prove their willful construction as legitimate in the state.

Under the prevailing situation in Sikkim the British realized that the British line of thinking and their efforts of reforms would automatically make the region congenial for the continuity of their control in the state. It was also the compulsion on their part to create 'mimic' and involve themselves in the reformative process at that point of time. Therefore, they intended to construct a group of people who could be easily molded in the British ways. The British examined elite's line of thinking, and whether they could be suited/fitted as per British line were also carefully examined. They also examined the inherent qualities of the person. Thus, the British wanted a set of people who had borrowed a high class family background and at the same

time their line of thinking was not contradictory to the British interest. If the elite were found against the British opinion and morality he was outright rejected.¹⁸ From the above account, it is evident that the British wanted to create a set of people Sikkimese "in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect".¹⁹

With the establishment of their Political Office at Gangtok in 1889 the British started to interfere in the educational policies of Sikkim. What will be the learning medium, who will be the private tutors of the prince, where the prince and *Kazi's* sons will be sent for higher education was all decided by the British administrators. The British also interfered in the question of succession. The British Government in India desired to see the Sikkim throne being decorated by the kings possessing the British sentiment. When Claude White was appointed as the first British Political Officer, the eldest prince Tchoda Namgyal was undergoing *lamaistic* education in Tibet. The British was totally against prince's education being guided by the Tibetans. The Political Officer became worried of the development but wanted to bring Tchoda Namgyal to Sikkim "before his sympathies became entirely Tibetan".²⁰

The *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal was against the British idea of bringing the prince to Sikkim. But on the other hand the Political Officer suggested that if the *Maharaja* failed to bring back his eldest son to Sikkim for education his allowance should be stopped as part of the government's pressure on the *Maharaja*. The members of the council were also motivated to support his proposals.²¹ The government of Bengal was convinced with the proposals of the Political Officer and directed the Commissioner of Rajshahi division to make effort to disconnect pro-Tibetan *kazis* to establish anti-British move in consultation with the *Maharaja* in future. Further, all the British officials including Darjeeling Commissioner and Rajshahi Commissioner asked the *Maharaja* to bring back the eldest prince to Sikkim to be educated in Indian school. But the *Maharaja* failed to bring back his son to Sikkim.²²

When the *Maharaja* failed to act according to the British proposals, he was deposed temporarily and the British decided to educate the second prince Sidkeong Tulku under English education. In view of the British interest in cultural transformation Claude White thought that if Sidkeong Tulku could be trained in English education he would be fully influenced by

the western ideas and would easily imbibe the British ideas of reformation in the state. The *kumar* Sidkeong Tulku would be a 'bad monk and a good ruler' under the influence of the western education. This would definitely help the British to transform Sikkimese society in their terms.²³ With the motive of transforming the Sikkimese society, Sidkeong Tulku was sent to Darjeeling to be educated in the English school. Similarly, the British also intended to educate the sons of higher-class *kazis* and *lamas* under the English system. Accordingly, along with the *kumar* eighteen other boys belonging to the *kazi* and *lamas* families were also sent to Darjeeling for English education. They were also given financial aid to pursue their studies. The interest of the British to educate these young boys in English school was presumably to prepare a set of future elite who would be very helpful in the British project of socio-cultural transformation in the state. Though these young boys did not acquire higher education still they were expected to help the British design of cultural transformation.²⁴ The *kumar* was expected to be instrumental for the transformation of pre-colonial socio-cultural structure of the state. Therefore, it was further proposed that the *kumar* would be sent to London for higher education. Claude White was of the opinion that:

"The Maharaj kumar is now 26 years of age, his present surrounding in Sikkim being narrow and limited and breathing an atmosphere of ignorance and superstition, are not calculated to improve him; he is himself conscious of this and is very anxious to obtain that knowledge of men and matters which will enable him in the future to use it for the good of his country. He wishes to complete his education in England where he will mix with men of his own age and of good education, with whom he could discuss on various subjects and so have opportunities of enlarging his ideas and fitting himself for the tasks of governing his state in a creditable manner. It is not possible for him to obtain all these benefits in Sikkim and to send him to any of the schools or colleges in India are out of question. Besides the Maharaj kumar is very keen on visiting England and completing his education there among surroundings that are entirely English and I think his wishes should be considered. It would remove him from the benifil influence and the sordid intrigues of the palace and would make him more independent, more confident of himself, and more manly. The maharaja kumar also wishes that the three young men, should be allowed to accompany him and share in his studies, so that on their return

they may take up positions of trust and importance in the affairs of the state and generally help him in carrying out many needed reforms. I see no objection to this proposal, in fact I think it is a very sound suggestion that will be productive of much good." ²⁵

The mindset of the British Government in India in regard to the education of sons of the Chiefs in England can be glanced back as such:

*The Government of India feel a peculiar responsibility for the education of young men when they may be called upon some day to recognize as the rulers of Native states *** The Government of India feel bound therefore to state that they know of no case in which the education of a young Indian chief at an English University, particularly if it is the first time that he has visited England, has been attended with anything but unfortunate consequences. The youth is exposed, even when surrounded by the advantages of home life to great risks and temptation; he is served from the states and habits of his people, and is rendered either discontented with his position upon his return to his native state..."* ²⁶

From the above-cited mind-set of the British we can come to the conclusion that the British wanted to bring the Indian chiefs under western education to fulfill their expectations. But in many cases the consequences were against British interest. The British harboured the idea that on their arrival in Sikkim there was no one who could take the responsibilities of the administration in a systematic way. Therefore, they wanted to create a set of people under British education and influence. British idea of construction can also be supplemented by a letter of the Political Officer to the Secretary, Foreign Department. J.C. White communicated for the need of the English education as such. The letter says:

"as there are no persons in the state either capable or trustworthy who could be entrusted with such a responsibility. A proposal has been submitted to send the Maharaj Kumar and three others to England to complete their education, and on their return this question might be considered with a view to giving them some employment and testing their abilities" ²⁷

After the completion of his studies in Darjeeling and Sikkim, the Political Officer decided to send the Kumar and three of his Kazi friends namely (a) Nari kazi, grandson of Khangsa Dewan, (b) Dowgay kazi, son of Biksithan kazi and (c) Kazang, the grandson of Talung kazi of Samdung to Oxford. During his stay in Oxford the Kumar was taught in all elements of

British culture along with the course in electricity and machinery.²⁸ British interest to send the *Kumar* to Oxford can be glanced from a note by W.H.C. Wylie, Political Aide-De-Camp. The note states:

"The Kumar is anxious to go to Oxford and it is thought that the life he would lead there is more calculated to benefit him than a prolonged residence in London." The note further states, *"Mr. White is very anxious that the Maharaj Kumar should go through a practical course in electricity and electric machinery in addition to his ordinary studies, and this Mr. Blakiston is arranging for, as far as possible at Oxford."* *"I may add that the Maharaj Kumar takes an intelligent interest in English life, is very observant (though his brain works slowly), has agreeable manners, and has made a pleasant impression in the few country houses where he has been invited to stay."*²⁹

Earlier Claude White sent a letter to the Political Aide-De-Camp in this regard. The letter states:

"I have now after much trouble with the help of Mr. Gerald Ritchie, made arrangements on his return to London for him to go through a practical electricity in which he will also to learn some of the theory and this I consider the best means of interesting him and filling in his time profitably during the next few months. This course will in no way interfere with his English, Mathematics, History and all of which studies will be carried on as hitherto by Mr. Blakiston." *"Mr. Gerald Ritchie has shown the greatest interest in the Kumar and has taken infinite trouble in arranging for him to go to the practical course and in securing a tutor for the electrical work and will, I am sure, undertake to supervise him while in town."* *"It must be carefully kept in view that the main object of his visit to England is to educate him up to taking a practical interest in the affairs and progress of his state and to that end I consider that electricity with its enormous potentialities and of dairy farming as carried on in Switzerland, the country most like his own are the best."*³⁰

Presumably the main object of the *Kumar's* visit to London was to educate him in the western system, a kind of culture, which would help the British to realise their interest of socio- cultural transformation in the state. Similarly the sons of the *Kazis* and the *Lamas* were also taught western culture and it was expected that these boys in future would be instrumental to realise British objective of all kinds in the state.³¹

Next to the royal family, *Kazis* and *Lamas*, the British targeted the *Newar Thikadars*. These *Newar Thikadars* were chosen as local elite on the

basis of their family background. They belong to one of the princely estates of Kathmandu. Luchmidas Pradhan belonged to Bhatgoan estate of Kathmandu and almost all the *Newar* elite were the decedents of Luchmidas-Chandrabir of Turuk and Chandrabir Maskey of Pakyong. The *Newars* were inducted in the elite list because of this reason only.³²

From the above account it is evident that the British mainly chose three categories of elite *viz.* the royal prince, *Kazis/Lamas* and the *Newar Thikadars* to realise their objectives in the state. The reason why they had chosen the elite was because they could be easily westernised under the English system and could be moulded without much difficulty. The other reason for the selection of these elite was that they had better link with the masses than the other families at that given point of time and situation. Therefore, the British found these elite the most suitable people to realise their objectives in Sikkim. In fact, these elite never opposed the British policy and always remained loyal to the colonial master during the period of study. Thus, the British became successful in their mission by the 'Construction of Subject' in the shape of local elite.

II

The role of English language and the British influence for cultural transformation:

English language and literature played a significant role for the cultural transformation of the state during the period under study. The discipline of English came into its own in an age of colonialism, as well as to argue that no serious account of its growth and development can afford to ignore the imperial mission of educating and civilising colonial subjects in the literature and thought of England, a mission that in the long run served to strengthen western cultural hegemony in enormously complex ways.³³ With the establishment of the British Political Office at Gangtok, the British administrators started to interfere with the educational policy of the government of Sikkim. Major policies in the field of education began to be decided by the British.³⁴ The British administrators also decided to impart education by establishing schools according to the curriculum followed in the neighbouring state of Bengal because the British had already implemented English education in Bengal and it would be a futile exercise to frame a new syllabus in Sikkim.³⁵ Thus by 1906 the British became

successful to establish two English schools *viz.* Bhutia boarding school and Nepali boarding school at Gangtok. They also became successful to divert a number of higher-class feudal lords toward English education. The establishment of boarding schools at Gangtok was the beginning of the process of transformation in the state. This effort of the British administration was indirectly supplemented by the Scottish and the Scandinavian Alliance Mission to a large extent by establishing a number of schools in the rural area. These missionaries had different intentions. They wanted to convert the Sikkimese to Christianity through these schools. However they remained confined to the opening of primary schools only at the initial state. On the other hand the British administration did not directly involve itself in the conversion process. But the fact is that the missionaries worked under the shadow of the British administration. In spite of much effort they could hardly convert a very small section of the Sikkimese population. This was because of the fact that the royal family was very conservative and the *Maharaja* did not allow the missionaries to convert the people. They were only allowed to impart education provided the teaching faculty was staffed with the local teachers.³⁶

With the establishment of two important boarding schools at Gangtok and missionary schools in the rural area, English language and literature was made compulsory to all the children in these schools along with Bhutia and Nepali languages. The British realized that without English language they would not be successful to realize their objectives. English was introduced as the medium of instruction from the year 1906. Between 1906 and 1947 English language played an important role in the administration also. English language slowly overshadowed the regional languages *viz.* Nepali and Bhutia. English knowing people began to be considered cultured people and most of the administrative posts were given to them. Gradually the English fashion influenced the indigenous English educated people. Some of them began to dress themselves with English shirt, pant, coat and tie neglecting their traditional dress. Though the number of 'mimic' was very little still they imitated English way of life to make themselves suitable for Government jobs. According to some of the senior citizens, English language influenced the Nepali educated people more than the other ethnic communities in the state because they were susceptible to cultural manipulation. It took more time to mould the Bhutias and the Lepchas

because of their reserved attitude. They still considered their culture superior to the western culture. But, after Tashi Namgyal was restored to full administrative power in 1918 even the Bhutias and the Lepchas also began to imitate western style of living. However, the influence of western culture did not cause any extreme polarization as in other colonial situations. The skikkimi elite, on the contrary, sought to integrate modernisation with tradition in a mature way of cultural amalgamation. Some of them endeavoured to preserve the traditional culture also. Example could be cited from Hari Prasad Pradhan of Ratepani, South Sikkim. He was the first law Post Graduate from Sikkim. He maintained the tradition inspite of acquiring higher English education.³⁷ With the passage of time the impact of English culture through western education began to engulf the state. The number of 'mimic' also began to grow slowly. The influence of English culture was slow but steady in the beginning but it gained momentum in the later years. After the lapse of colonial domination the degree of western influence increased extremely. The impact of western education was felt by the feudal elements in the beginning because the first group of English educated people mostly belonged to this category only. It is also the fact that the commoners could not avail the chance of education because of their poverty. As a result, they were hardly influenced by the western education and culture. Though, education was made free to all the people, it could be availed by the feudal elements and others who had easy access to the *Durbar* and to the British.³⁸

The effect of the English education began to bear fruits with the return of the *Kumar* Sidkeong Namgyal and his *kazi* friends from London. Being influenced by the western culture the *kumar* tried to mould the Sikkimese society in modern terms. He tried to reshape the social structure of the state. He introduced a number of reforms and through these reforms the state was made to imbibe slowly the western culture. It was through English education the British tried to teach the local sikkimese about the British style of living. Secondary, English educated people were given a high position in administration. Sonam Topden, Martam Topden, *Rai Bahadur* Tashi Dadul Demsepa, Tempo Namgyal Barfungpa, *Rai Bahadur* Topzang Choden, Manbir Singh, *Rai Sahib* Lambodhar Pradhan, Babu Ratna Bahadur Pradhan, *Rai Sahib* Hari Prasad Pradhan, Kazi Sonam Dadul, Delly Singh Ghale, *Rai Sahib* Bhim Bhadur Pradhan and many others were

entrusted with the responsibilities of Secretaries, Estate Manager, *Dewan*, Forest Manager and many others in different echelon of administration. With the coming of the British Political Office English was made the official language in the state, and only the English knowing people could hold important positions in the state and administration. However, these English educated elite had very little or no say in the decision making process during the period. They had to comply with the British directives. They were the only administrative machinery of the British administration. During the colonial period (1889-1947) the main policy in the administration was determined by the Political Officer and the other British officials only. The other feature of the period was that it was difficult to get highly educated people in the state. Therefore, even matriculates were considered qualified to discharge the responsibilities in the administration. Once the people acquired minimum English knowledge they were given responsibilities in the administration. English educated people were fully influenced by the British system and the ideas. Sikkimi elite having English knowledge was fully utilized as instrument to implement the British ideas of cultural transformation.³⁹

With the extension of English education a distinct class of people who can be viewed as a class of people Sikkimese in blood and color but English in taste came into existence. They can be termed as 'mimics'. These people were ever ready to represent British interest in Sikkim. Before the extension of English education the Sikkimi elite quite unaware about the British system, the administration and their educational system were only exposed to the principle of Tibetan theocracy. But once the selected Sikkimese were trained under British education they were fully influenced by the western ideas. Some of the feudal family members were also sent abroad for education. It is true that some of the London educated people on their return to Sikkim tried to segregate them from the traditional culture. Their dress, food habits and the way of life changed. But during festivals and other important occasions they preferred to attire in traditional outfit to reiterate their cultural moorings. In short it can be presumed that English education played a significant role to change the mind-set of a section of the Sikkimi people.⁴⁰

English education produced two different sets of 'mimics' in Sikkim. (a) Those who went to England and to public schools for better English education developed a different type of mentality and alienated themselves

from the traditional society. These 'mimics' could not play much role in the socio-cultural transformation process of the British. (b) Secondly, the other group of people who were educated in the local government schools and had English type of education became instrumental in the socio-economic transformation process in the later years. They took major part in the British policy of socio-economic development in the state. The first group of the people started their education under complete British system right from kindergarten to higher level and were slowly alienated from the traditional life. They did not come in touch with the local people and could not become very effective instrument in realizing the objectives of administration. After their return to Sikkim they remained confined to their personal engagements and high government employment. This was one kind of situation in which these 'mimics' could not be found to play any significant role to implement the British policy to bring about in the socio-economic transformation in Sikkim. However, the degree of 'mimicry' in Sikkim was not much complete as it was in other colonial situations. It was observed at the initial phase of the cultural encounter and so was only a phenomenon of temporarily cultural trauma. The London educated feudals tried to behave as Englishmen probably harbouring the idea that they had no 'other fate than an English fate'. Some of them even married English girls. Others, though did not marry English ladies, still imitated British culture and enforced it not only in the administration but also in their day-to-day life. The entire situation was a typical to the Fanonian epigrammatic syndrome, 'White mask and black skin'. They became interested in white colour jobs and the British style of living only. Nevertheless, a handful of people imitated British culture in toto. One of the positive aspects of the 'mimics' was that they endeavored to teach the general Sikkimese a hygienic life. The second category of 'mimics' as above cited, played a significant role both in administration and the socio-cultural transformation process in the state. They were moved from the stage of 'mimicry' to 'hybridity'. The British utilized this group of people to realize their objectives.⁴¹ after the stabilization of the British administration and the success, which they had achieved in cultural penetration a reaction presumably had set in amongst the English educated Sikkimese. Instead of submitting to the process of westernization in full as it was done at the first stage some cultural compromise was struck. Consequently a cultural metamorphosis from 'mimicry' to 'hybridity' appeared

to have dominated the cultural scenario. Far from seeking to thwart British cultural subversiveness these elite remained very loyal to the British policies throughout the period of our study. Immediately after the extension of the British administration the British decided to teach the local gentry the importance of humanism and rationalism in an otherwise surcharged atmosphere of Buddhist religious obscurantism. These elite together with the first generation 'mimics' had released the forces of new social structuration in Sikkim.

The structure of pre-colonial society was somewhat egalitarian in nature. But certainly it had fewer complexes than the one, which had emerged after westernization. The erstwhile society was composed of elements like the (a) Royalty (b) feudal lords (c) the priestly communities (*lamas*) and the laity (commoners) spread over the ethnic, religious and sectoral difference in an intermingling spectrum of rudimentary peasant economy. The society that grew out of the British cultural experiment was complex in the sense that it gave rise to professional, cultural and ideologically oriented strata in addition to the agricultural, pastoral economy defined strata in the sikkimi society. The middle class that was totally absent in the previous society came into existence. The industrial activities though not too widespread nevertheless could attract immigrant labour to help develop in course of time an industrial labour class. The so called mosaic character of the social structure due to the occurrence of diverse sects amongst the Bhutias, the diverse sects amongst the Lepchas, the diverse castes amongst the Nepalese and the complexity of multiple religions *viz*, Buddhism, Hinduism, animism assured a very complex character since western education was introduced. The cultural divide between the western educated and the traditional was very pronounced resulting in the formation of two broad strata namely (i) westernized and (ii) traditional. The divide was further accentuated not only in their social outlook but also in their livelihood.

On the eve of the British penetration Sikkim was very poor. Houses were made up of local materials such as bamboo, wood and mud. The ceiling was roofed with straw and dry grass. Even the palace of the *Maharaja* was constructed with bamboo sticks. According to L.D Kazi and K.C Pradhan ⁴² the British wanted that important offices, palace and residence of the political officer should be constructed as per the British

design and technology. J.C. white wanted that the palace should be designed after the British style. Not only that he had also instructed all feudal lords i.e. *kazis* and the *Thikadars* that they should construct their residential houses similar to the British cottage. All the elite should make a drawing room of round shape. The feudal lords having been influenced by the British idea began to construct their houses with a round drawing room. The coming of the round drawing-room in Sikkim was a British style of architecture. Slowly all the *Kazis* and the *Thikadars* began to construct their residential houses according to the British style i.e. round house with a round drawing room. This was one of the steps of the British to transform the cultural life of the people. The 'mimics' had imitated the British style of architecture. In the name of imitating the western architecture some of the English educated people began to construct hybrid architectural structure. Thus in the field of architecture also imitation of the west set in.

The next effort of the British was to modernize health and sanitation. The British considered Oriental savage and uncivilized. They also viewed that the Orientals were not fully educated to maintain a hygienic life. The oriental was considered irrational, depraved, childlike, different opposed to the Europeans who were considered rational, virtuous, mature and normal.⁴³ In view of this colonial theory the British might be responsible to introduce a number of changes in the life style of Sikkimi people. The feudal lords were instructed to make provisions for a toilet with British commode and a washing basin in the bathroom. The British also deputed number of trained health workers to the interior villages to educate people about health and sanitation. The villagers were instructed to make toilet with bricks and arrange the system as per British line. Similarly the British also constructed number of guesthouses in the British architectural style in the interior villages. In the rest houses also they made provision for round room, commode system of toilet and a separate bathroom. In the villages British system of health and sanitation could inspire the villagers to maintain a hygienic life.⁴⁴

Next to the health and sanitation, the 'mimics' imitated food habits of the British. Mostly the elites were affected by the food habits of the west. Before the British cultural penetration Sikkimese elite followed their traditional dietary and table manners. With British penetration they imitated the art of using spoon, fork and knife while taking food. It will not

be correct to say that the whole of sikkimi populace were influenced by the western system. Only a section of the people who had easily approached the British had imitated British system of living and their food culture. They also imitated British dress (coat, pant and tie). Hardly six to eight percent of the local people could be influenced by the British. Only the *Kazis*, the *Thikadars* and other high officials who had easy access to the British imitated the western culture. Some enlightened people such as the members of Luchmidas family, Chandrabi Maskey family, Khangsa family, Tobden family, Sonam Dadul family, Barfungpa family, Gyaltzen kazi family, Gangtok kazi family (nearly eight to nine families) were drawn towards the western life at the beginning of the 20th century.⁴⁵ Gradually other elite also followed the cultural ethos of the west. When Delhi *Durbar* was arranged by the British nearly thirty three members attended the same in 1911. They belonged mostly to the *Kazis*, *Thikadars* and the royal household.⁴⁶

The British culture was imitated, as we have already discussed, by the *Kumar Sidkeong Tulku* to a greater extent. He was fully influenced by the western ideas of reformation. The degree of 'mimicry' raised to such an extent that the *Kumar* tried to mould the Sikkimese traditional society in the British line. As a result of the efforts of the *Kumar* a number of changes were noticed in the traditional system. He played an important role to establish English schools in the state. The *Kumar*, fully influenced by the western ideas, acted as an instrument in the proposed transformation process. He arranged to educate his sister Chumi Wangmo (who was undergoing monastic education) under modern and western education. He had a firm belief on western education and life style. He abolished polyandry and also reduced marriage expenses through the resolution of the council. The monasteries and their functioning were also updated in a rational way.⁴⁷ His successor Tashi Namgyal was also educated in the British school in Gangtok, Darjeeling and finally at Ajmer. He was also thoroughly influenced by the western ideas of liberalism. All the members of the royal family received western education. When Tashi Namgyal came to power in February 1915 it was seen that the resistance from the royal family towards the British came to an end. Thus, the major effort of the British to bring the royal family towards westernization was realized.⁴⁸

Not only their minds but also their bodies were colonized. The feudal lords tried to educate their children in English school. They further

endeavored to bring up the young ones into a western pattern of life. Some of the feudal children were trained to ride, to play polo, tennis, and to shoot. The feudal boys were also trained in the field of hockey, football, cricket and boxing as well. Sir Basil Gold the second last British Political Officer personally supervised the construction of the pologround in Gangtok and encouraged the youth to play polo. Drill, manual training and gymnastics—all manly sports were incorporated in the school curriculum. The feudal youths became so interested in the western games and sports that not only their minds but also physically intended to conform to the western norms. Traditional games such as archery, war dance, and sword dance etc were not given importance. As the result of the western cultural exchange English educated sikkimese became so modern that some of them were segregated from the traditional way of living.⁴⁹ The others tried to make a compromise between the tradition and the west and this was the stage of hybridization.

From the above account it is evident that the English language and culture played a significant role to impart western orientations to the traditional society. The initial target of the British was the royal princes, *kazis*, *lamas* and the *thikadars*. Later the target shifted to the relatively more affluent section of the people. Every member of the elite family tried to become English in culture, in taste, in habits and in nature. Naturally a 'mimic' culture grew among the feudal society. But at the same time another current was working among them. Though few of them became too much English some others apparently looked at the English culture with admiration but their mind was not entirely possessed with it. They still tried to compromise modernity with tradition and this was the beginning of hybridity and at the same time a search for authenticity. Consequently, westernization assumed a more friendly character than was formerly the case and willful participation of larger number of people in the westernization process was achieved. One of the notable features in Sikkim was that inspite of the efforts of the Christian missionaries and the British administrators there was very little impact of Christianity. A very small section mostly the Lepchas and lower caste Nepali could be converted to Christianity. One of the reasons, which it can be attributed, was that of royal family activities and so the missionaries could not carry on their work.

As the aspects of mimicry were harnessed to a retrogressive accomplishment, a need for authenticity as a reaction took place among the

members of Sikkimi feudal lords and the royal family. *Kumar Sidkeong Namgyal* was well versed in English language and was largely acquainted with the culture and customs of western society but he was opposed to conversion to Christianity. He worked hard for the unity of all Buddhist (northern and southern). He strove to make the monasteries alive to their social duties.⁵⁰ He deputed Trachi Gaychen whom he believed to be a true Buddhist to explain Buddhist religion to all the pupils of each monastery in the state.⁵¹ Though the *Kumar* paid special attention to the establishment of English school, nevertheless, he loved his mother tongue and opened vernacular schools at Namchi, Rhenock, and Pathing in 1909 under his personal supervision. He also took steps to open indigenous industrial school at Gangtok. He was very fond of traditional items.⁵² Though he was western in his ideas but he was entirely Sikkimi at heart. In spite of the complete western influences he never married a western girl. Most of the time he used traditional dress. Though he behaved like Englishmen he never smoked as was done by them. He believed that the habit of smoking would ruin health and waste money. He further conveyed the message that smoking was opposed to the tenets of the Buddhist religion.⁵³ Though both of the princes *viz Kumar Sidkeang Namgyal* and *Kumar Tashi Namgyal* were groomed under western education they were fully dedicated and devoted to the traditional customs and rites. When the *Maharani* died in December 1910 the cremation was conducted in a traditional way. The eldest prince Tashi Namgyal was then undergoing education in India, voluntarily came to Sikkim and performed the ceremony in a completely traditional way.⁵⁴ At a level the exercise involved a lot of paradoxes no doubt but the reality of the situation was such that such paradoxes were unavoidable.

On the other hand among the feudal lords Hari Prasad Pradhan in spite of acquiring western education of a higher degree dressed up himself in a traditional way. P.S. Subba⁵⁵ says: "Hari Parasad Pradhan of Ratepani was the first law Post Graduate from Sikkim under western education he used to come to attend any function in a traditional Nepali dress. In spite of acquiring western education he preferred traditional food and dress. He never encouraged complete western style of living". However he was not against modernization.

The government of India arranged Delhi *Durbar* in 1911. Nearly thirty three delegates including the members of royal house hold, the *Kazis* and

the *Thikadars* attended the meeting. Almost all of them went to Delhi in traditional dress though majority of them were English educated. They still preserved the traditional setting.⁵⁶

The search for authenticity among the Sikkimese can also be traced from, when the installation of the *Maharaja* Tashi Namgyal took place on 15th may 1915. Tashi Namgyal was educated in St. Paul's school in Darjeeling and Mayo College at Ajmer. He was well versed in English and fully acquainted with the western culture and society.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he followed traditional customs perfectly. The official ceremony, which took place on 15 may 1916, was attended by a number of European guest including the Political Officer Charles Bell. The *Durbar* hall in the palace was tastefully decorated with the traditional design, and the walls were hung with pictures in silk depicting the life of Buddha. All the state officials including the *Kazis*, the *Thikadars* and headmen dressed up in traditional costume. They made speeches in Sikkimese language. All guests were served with Tibetan tea. Head *Lama* and attendant priests offered His Highness blessings and scarves according to Buddhist rites. The members of the royal family, *Kazis*, *Thikadars* and all the Sikkim gentry offered traditional scarves (*khada*) to His Highness. Even the Europeans offered scarves. His Highness advanced from the "*Gaddi*" to the altar and placed thereon a silk scarf and made obeisance to the shrine of Buddha. His Highness's speech also read in Sikkimese by one of the councilors.

Next day when the Political Officer arranged a feast party, Tibetan archery with whistling arrows, and plantain tree cutting with *Khukuris* amused the guests, while traditional music was supplied by bands of Bhutia and Nepali musicians. The Sikkim sword dance or war dance was also arranged. This dance is specific to Sikkim and it formed a part of the annual religious dance, dedicated to the worship of Kanchanjunga and was performed by the younger *Kazis*. Not a single European item was exhibited in the function. All traditional items covered the scene.⁵⁸

Thus, the current of authenticity of the indigenous tradition was also moving parallel to the 'mimics'. No doubt the process of the 'Subject making' of the British in Sikkim led to the emergence of 'mimicry' at the initial stage but ultimately it had matured to hybridity. On the whole, the impact of colonial culture penetration was marginal and it was confined to the external imitation only.

III

The role of Sikkimi elite for the stabilization of colonial domination in Sikkim:

The consequences of course were not too negligible to be ignored. The 'mimics' identified the British metropolitan culture with modernity and the indigenous one as traditional. Therefore, they wanted to update it in modern terms. The term of modernization was not only confined to the social forum it was as well extended to administrative reforms. Western knowledge, which was imitated by the *Kumar Sidkeang Namgyal*, was injected in the form of forest reformation along with social reformation at the formative period. Along with social reforms he attempted to reform forestry. In those days the idea of forest conservation and its utilization was not even known in the Himalayan region. Thus, fully inspired by the rational idea of reformation, Sidkeang Tulku determined to employ some forest officers to demarcate the entire forest. Delly Singh Ghale was brought to Sikkim in 1909 as forest officer. He was assisted by some of the surveyors to complete the work. Sidkeang Tulku himself supervised the work. The entire team was busy for the survey work between 1909 and 1912. Major activities of the survey work was completed by 1912.⁵⁹ In 1915 the entire state was finally surveyed and maps were prepared to demarcate the forest. The idea of Tulku was not to allow the people to settle beyond 6000' altitude. Therefore, the landmass above 6000' was demarcated as state property. The *Kumar* viewed that the British idea of forest reformation would certainly modernize the state in administrative terms.⁶⁰ His successor sir Tashi Namgyal followed the policy of his predecessor in many respects. Under the British influence and guidance he brought a number of reforms in the state.⁶¹

The next group of 'mimics' to help the British for the stabilization of colonial domination were the *Newar Thikadars* mainly Luchmidas Pradhan and Chadrabir Maskey families. These Thikadars being influenced by the British, worked in the later's interests. They helped the British administration for the enhancement of revenue in the state. Luchmidas and Chandrabir played a significant role in the economic transformation in the state. In fact, Pradhan brothers were pioneers of the land revenue system in the state. The British encouraged the *Pradhans* to clear forest, make the fallow land fit for cultivation and settle new Nepalese. Thus the colonizer received positive response from them.⁶²

The other 'mimics' who helped the British to realize their objectives were the *Kazis*. The prominent *Kazis* to help and implement British policy were *Rai Bahadur* Tashi Dadul Densapa, Sonam Tobten (British Trade Agent), Tempo Namgyal Barfungpa, Libing Kazi, *Rai Bahadur* Lopzang Choden, Gyaltzen Kazi, Lingmo Kazi, Khagsa brothers, Phodung Lama, Daramdin Kazi and *Rai Sahib* Renock Kazi. Other *Kazis* also helped the British but to a lesser extent. *Rai Sahib* Rhenock Kazi helped the British administration to resolve land dispute in the North Sikkim. Sonam Tobden (B.T.A.) equally helped the British to enrich British - Tibet trade. Gyaltzen kazi also played a prominent role in the implementation of judicial reform in Sikkim. Apart from the above mentioned *Kazis* some other individuals who were fully influenced by the western ideas also helped the British for the stabilization of colonial control in the state.⁶³

A group of senior citizens⁶⁴ are of the opinion that the elite who were fully influenced by the British metropolitan culture played important role to transform the indigenous culture of the state. At the same time they remained a bit selfish in the process of transformation. They segregated themselves as separate class of their own and for the continuation of their identity they felt the presence of the British necessary. They helped the British to save their interest by supplying labourers and other necessities. During the first and second world wars these elite arranged to supply soldiers and other necessary items to the British. In return the British awarded the elite with the title of *Rai Bahadur*, *Rai Sahib* etc. In lieu of their services the British also handed over the estates to the elite on contractual basis and the later enjoyed the same subject to the payment of certain revenue to the British and the state as a whole. Thus, the 'mimics' desired the continuation of the British domination and control in the state.

IV

Reaction from the natives – both towards the British and the Anglicized elite:

As has already been discussed that the situation in Sikkim during the colonial period was not similar to other colonial situations so the reaction was also different. The nature of reaction against the British 'construction' was raised only by the ruler (Thutob Namgyal) and his "loyalists elements like the Pemiongchi lamas"⁶⁵ and that too on political issues at the initial

stage. Among the three rulers who ruled during colonial period *viz* Thutob Namgyal, Sidkeong Namgyal and Tashi Namgyal only Thutob Namgyal had unfriendly relations with the British. According to the version of *Sikkim Chronicle* British penetration into Sikkim and the establishment of a Political Office at Gangtok with Claude White as Political Officer disheartened Thutob Namgyal. When the latter could not be a puppet king the British decided to make an alternative arrangement to suit their interest. The *Maharaja* could not oppose the British directly and so he decided to retreat to Lagyap en route to Chumbi. In the meantime White stormed the palace, drove out *Maharaja's* loyal officials and formed a council of three composed of himself and the Khangsa brothers who had usurped the governmental authority. All sources of income of the ruler were frozen. Thutob was persuaded to return from Chumbi. On his arrival at the capital, White demanded that the ruler should act according to the advice of the khangsapa brothers. *Maharaja's* pension was also reduced. After sometime the royal couple were arrested and taken down to Kalimpong. In Kalimpong the ruler was confronted by White and the British Officers. The ruler was asked to bring back his sons from Chumbi and also explain the Tibetan presents and the Chinese title he had received. The British also stopped the Tibet-Sikkim barter to open up the trade themselves. The British resented the acceptance of the Chinese button while they themselves were negotiating with the Chinese on matters that related to Tibet trade and Sikkim-Tibet borders.

Claude White acted as the de-facto ruler of the state during the *Maharaja's* absence. He created a council and through this council a number of reformative measures were adopted. In 1890 Claude White approached Thutob with the deeds of landgrants by which new landlords were created. Since these grants were made without consulting the ruler and since several acts of injustice were perpetrated Thutob refused to affix his seal or signature.⁶⁶

Thutob was frustrated when his powers were handed over to the newly created council. As a result, he decided to go on a pilgrimage. But the British also denied this when he was arrested by the Nepalese soldiers and handed over to the British. Thutob was kept in a solitary confinement in Darjeeling and Kurseong till 1885.

Thutob Namgyal opposed the British policy of new Nepalese settlement and the "Construction of Subjects". But pro-British elite helped

the British whenever and wherever required. Thutob however, resisted the pressure of the British deputy commissioner (Darjeeling) who "recommended the Khangsa policy of settling"⁶⁷ the people in Sikkim. On the other hand the British had already created a group of elite who had presumably proved instrumental to the implementation of their policy in the state.⁶⁸ The British also wanted to make the ruler into an agent to settle the Tibetan issue. As has already been discussed that the motives of the British penetration into Sikkim was their trade with the Tibet and the British wanted to utilize the Sikkim ruler to negotiate with the Tibetans in favour of the British.⁶⁹ The *Maharaja* was however, inclined to maintain a balance between the British and the Tibetans.⁷⁰

The *Maharaja* also opposed the British idea of educating his second son Sidkeong Tulku under the English system on the ground that the prince was an *avatar* (incarnation) of a *Lama* of Pemiongchi,⁷¹ although he did not oppose the new education policy as such. Understandably, the *Maharaja's* objection was turned down by the British. Further he was pressurized to bring back his eldest son Tchoda Namgyal from Tibet. The *Maharaja* could not bring back the prince to Gangtok. As a result the British decided to depose the *Maharaja* for a period of three years and the Sikkim affairs was handled by the Political Officer and the State Council as it was done during his absence.⁷² When Thutob accepted British proposals he was restored to the throne in 1895.⁷³

The two later rulers *viz* Sidkeong Tulku and Sir Tashi Namgyal were completely moulded in the British way of thinking. Therefore, they did not react to the British policy of 'Construction'. However, in the later phase of Tashi Namgyal's period when the British created *Thikadari* system reached the climax the *Maharani* and the crown prince Paljor Namgyal resented the system. In Sikkim the natives did not react against the British directly because majority of the natives were so illiterate that they even did not know whether the British were the real administrators. The resentment against the system of the British could notice during the 30s of the 20th century. During this phase of Colonialism people started showing annoyance against the *Zamindari* system. Therefore, the resentment of the natives was not directly focused on the British but it was against the *Zamindars* who happened to be their creation.

When the British had extended their administrative control in Sikkim they introduced a new system of administrative set-up with the help of

Khangsa Dewan, Phodung Lama and the other pro-British Sikkimi feudal.⁷⁴ This system can be called the pro-British *Thikadari* or *Zamindari* system. Under the system a group of feudal lords were created and they were empowered to such an extent that they could make law of their own and exercised the powers in their favour. These landlords under the shadow of the British, implemented tenancy regulations. Various kinds of tenants such as *Adhiyars*, *Kutdars*, *Pakhuriyas*, and *Chakuriyas* (tenants and sub-tenants) were created. These tenants under the system were not getting adequate returns from their inputs and labour.⁷⁵ Therefore, they resented the system.

Secondly, the people also resented the taxation policy of the British. Apart from the heavy cash taxation the system also introduced certain other taxes such as *Kalobhari*, *Jharlangi*, *Kurwa*, *Bethi* and *Theki-Salami* etc. People resented and raised their annoyance against these taxes to a greater degree. During the 40s of the 20th century people's resentment reached the climax.⁷⁶

The *raiya*s very much disliked the rental policy of the British created *Zamindari* system. Under the system majority of the Sikkimi people irrespective of caste and creed were exploited. According to critics ⁷⁷ the *Thikadars* enriched themselves by realizing all kinds of taxes, cash as well as in kind and labour. All taxes including land tax and house tax were very high. The *raiya*s had to work hard ceaselessly to pay such high tax. The net result of the system was that the poor *raiya*s became poorer whereas the feudal lords became richer. The *raiya*s also resented the legal and other systems introduced during the Colonial period in the state.

V

Nature of Resentment

The critics further argued that during the last phase of Colonial period exploitation of the *Zamindars* became truly unbearable. Therefore, the peasants began to revolt. A number of revolutionary groups were formed by the peasants to oppose the oppressive British created *Zamindari* system. People began to assemble in the *jungles* since they were not allowed to organize any meeting in the daylight to explore means to redress their grievances. The first reactionary movement of the peasants against the *Zamindari* system was launched from Namthang *Ilakha* because the

Thikadar of Namthang was considered to be the most oppressive among all the *Thikadars* in the state.⁷⁸ The oppressive measures of Baburam was challenged for the first time by Kharannanda Dahal, Dharnidhar Dahal, Zerman Lepcha, and Dida Lepcha of Namthang. They organized anti-*Thikadari* meetings and criticized the oppressive policy of the *Zamindari* system. In fact this was the first democratic movement against the 'mimicry' in the state. It was known as *Member Party*. This party played a significant role in articulating an organized protest against the *Thikadari* system.⁷⁹

In due course similar movements started from Temi Tarku under the leadership of Dhan Bahadur Tiwari and Goverdhan Pradhan. These movements of the peasants led to the formation of a political party in July 1947 and the party named *Praja Samelan* was the first organized political party in the State. The sole objective of this party was to oppose the *Thikadari* system. It represented of memorandum to the *Durbar* demanding abolition of *Kalobhari*, *Jharlangi*, *Bethi* and *Kurwa*. It also opposed the monopoly of the *Kazis* and *Thikadars*.⁸⁰

Similarly *Prajamandal Party* was formed at Chakhung in 1946 under the Presidentship of Kazi Lendup Dorjee. This party also demanded the abolition of the *Zamindari* system in Sikkim. Meetings were organized to popularize the movement.⁸¹ Being influenced by the message of the members of the party a third group was also formed in Gangtok in 1947. It was named *Praja Sudhar Samaj Party*. All the leaders of these three parties viz. *Praja Samelan*, *Praja Mandal* and *Praja Sudhar Samaj* decided to unite themselves to fight against the British economic and cultural subversiveness. On December 7th, 1947, all the leaders of the parties met in the Pologround (Gangtok) and a historical *State Congress* was formed. Nearly five thousand people took part in the meeting.⁸²

The meeting appointed Tashi Tshering as the President of the Working Committee. Two vice-presidents viz. Sonam Tshering and Raghbir Basnett were appointed. The newly constituted *Sikkim State Congress* resolved to eradicate the British created *Zamindari* system. A five-member delegation was sent to the *Maharaja* on December 9th, 1947.⁸³ As a result of the pressure of the *State Congress* the *Maharaja* abolished *Kalobhari*, *Jharlangi*, and *Kurwa* in the same year.⁸⁴

Interestingly enough the *Maharani* and the Crown prince Paljor Namgyal also disliked the *Zamindari* system.⁸⁵ They decided to help the

people to eradicate *Jharlangi*. Unfortunately the crown prince died in an air operation during the Second World War, as he was a personel in the Royal Air Force. It was also because of the resentment of the peasants and the political parties that the *Maharaja* made *Jharlangi* illegal in 1947. The critics argued that inspite of the measures taken by the *Maharaja* to eradicate the system; the *Zamindars* still continued to realize forced labour and extra taxes from the *raiyats*. Therefore, the *Maharani* decided to oppose the system openly. She was educated in a Cambridge School of Calcutta and was fully influenced by the anti-British wave of the revolutionaries of Bengal. Her first attack was against the British created *Zamindari* system in the state, though it was very difficult to uproot the system then. Being created by Claude White the *Zamindari* system gradually struck deep in the state. Therefore, without the help of the British it was impossible to eradicate it. Hence the *Maharani* decided to take the help of the then Political Officer to achieve the goal. She met the Political Officer and apprised him about the excesses of the *Thikadars*.⁸⁶ When this became known to the *Thikadars* including *Lamas* and *Kazis* they tried to create a plot against the *Maharani*. They brought a charge against the later that she had established illicit relationship with the half-brother of the *Maharaja* Tashi Namgyal.⁸⁷ The *Maharaja* separated the *Maharani* on the advice of the landlords. The *Maharaja* was compelled to do all these because almost all the councilors hailed from the *Kazis* and *Thikadars* origin and they had a significant role in the administration. After the crown prince Paljor Namgyal became mature he came to know about the separation of his parents and he decided to fight against the so-called *Zamindari* system. He toured the villages, met the people and ultimately found that the landlords had really oppressed the people. He even punished some of the oppressive *Zamindars*. When the *Kazis* and *Thikadars* came to know about the attitude of the prince they further decided to create another plot to separate the prince from his mother. The *Zamindars* conveyed to the British that the *Kumar* was against the British Policy in the state. Being influenced by the charges raised by the *Zamindars*, the British decided to engage the prince elsewhere. The British advised the prince that he should be trained as a disciplined Air Force Officer to become a good ruler. It was because of these reasons the *Kumar* joined as V.C.O in the British Air Force in June 1941. Unfortunately after six months of his appointment he met with an accident in an air crash near

Rawalpindi in December 1941. The oppressed peasants were frustrated with the accident. But they did not lose heart. They continued to oppose the system till their goal was achieved.⁸⁸

From the above account it is evident that the natives did not directly react against the British but they certainly resented the British policy and the 'mimicry'. Thutob Namgyal reacted on political grounds only. His reaction was addressed to his power and family, whereas the *Maharani* and Paljor Namgyal, the prince reacted wholeheartedly against the excesses of *Zamindari* system. At the initial stage the reaction was expressed at an individual level and not in an organized form. The British became successful to divide the people of the state. They created a group of elite who were very loyal to the British. The common natives were quite unaware of the policies of the British. The state was politically weak to oppose the British. Under the prevailing situation the ruler only tried to maintain a balance between the British and Tibet. Therefore, he was helpless and finally surrendered to the will of the British. The later rulers were completely moulded in the British line and therefore, they supported the British idea of 'Subject Construction'. However, the resentment against the British created system, was launched by the peasants during the 30s and 40s of the 20th century and they fought tooth and nail to eradicate the system introduced during the colonial period in the state. With the withdrawal of Colonial domination it was observed that some of the excesses of the *Zamindari* system could be eradicated but the more effective steps were taken after the 1950s.

Notes and References

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18. *Author's interview with K.C. Pradhan.*
K.C Pradhan was the Chief Secretary to the Government of Sikkim between 1989 to1991. He is also the son of *Rai Sahib* Bhim Bahadur Pradhan, who was Forest Manager of the Sikkim state between 1919 and 1954. He possessed a sound knowledge of the colonial administration in Sikkim.
19. Fanon Frantz, *Black skin White masks* (trans) Charles Lam Markamann, New York, 1952, p. 10.
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21. *Ibid*, No.4.
22. Namgyal Thutob & Dolma Yeshe, *History of Sikkim* (mimeograph), 1909, pp. 230-231.
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25. *Letter from J.C. White, Political Officer, Sikkim, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, Dated 20th March, 1906, F.D.P. External 'A', October 1906, Nos. 42-43.*
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31. *F.P.P. External, op cit, October 1906, No. 41.*
32. *Authors interview with K.C. Pradhan op cit and Tilak Pradhan.*

Tilak Pradhan is the son of *Raisahib* Hari Prasad Pradhan of

Ratepani, South Sikkim and a descendent of Luchmidas Pradhan. Two prominent Pradhan families viz Luchmidas-Chandrabir (Turuk-Sumbuk) and Chandrabir Maskey of Pakyong held almost all the important positions among the Pradhan elite. Unfortunately the role of Luchimadas-Chandrabir and Chandrabir Maskey was not highlighted in the *History of Sikkim*. But it is an acknowledged fact that Luchimadas- his family and Chandrabir Maskey family helped the British to a great extent in their plan for cultural transformation in the state. Once these Pradhans came to Sikkim they forgot their ancestral country and amalgamated with the Sikkimi society. They concentrated mostly on the socio-economic development of the state. However, some of the *Newar Thikadars* could not follow the footsteps of Luchmidas. They took undue advantage of the power and as a result, the government withdrew the *Thikadari* powers in the later part of our study.

33. Viswanath Gauri, *Masks of conquests, literary study and British rule in India*, Delhi, 1998. p.2.
34. L.G.P.P. (j) 'A' category of August 1896, No 1.
35. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1907-08*, p.9.
36. *Scottish Universities Mission, Sikkim, Report for the year 1993 in E.H.M. Report*, p.56.
37. *Author's interview with Tilak Pradhan and P.S. Subba. Hari Prasad Pradhan of Ratepani was a descendent of Luchmidas Pradhan. He was the first postgraduate in law in the state. He worked as a chief justice in the Nepal high court for some time. He was a very liberal person, encouraged upliftment of the society including number of reforms in his estate. Interview with Jigdel Densapa. Jigdel Dinsepa is one of the descendants from Barmick Rai Bahadur family. He retired as additional chief secretary to the government of Sikkim in 1998.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Author's interview with Sonam Wangdi and R.P. Uprati. Sonam Wangdi was the Chief Secretary to the government of Sikkim from 1998 to 2000. He possessed a sound knowledge of the functioning of the British administration. R.P. Uprati a senior citizen has*

experienced the functioning of the *Zamindari* system introduced by the British. He remained a member of *Panchayat* in different capacities for a number of years. He also possesses a sound knowledge of the administration in the state.

40. *Author's interview with K.C Pradhan, op cit and R.P. Uprati.*
41. *Authors interview op cit, with K.C.Pradhan, P.S. Subba, Tilak Pradhan and R.P. Uprati.*
42. *Author's interview with L.D. Kazi and K.C. Pradhan.* L.D. Kazi was the first Chief Minister of Sikkim after its merger with India. He remained the chief Minister between 1974 and 1978. He is a descendent of Khangsa Dewan, one of the first councilors during the colonial period. He had also married an English lady. He possesses a sound knowledge of the colonial administration in Sikkim.
43. Said W. Edward, *Orientalism*, London, 1978, p. 3.
44. *Author's interview with K.C. Pradhan and P.S. Subba.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1911-12, p. 1.*
47. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1912-13 pp. 3-4.*
48. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1914-15, p.1.*
49. *Author's interview with K.C. Pradhan and P.S. Subba.*
50. *Sikkim- A Concise Chronicle, Gangtok, 1963, p.20.*
51. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1911-12, p.1.*
52. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1909-10, pp. 18-19.*
53. *Minutes of the Maharaja in council, Government of Sikkim, 1 August 1912, Gangtok.*
54. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1911-12, p.1.*
55. *Author's interview with P.S. Subba, op cit.*
56. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1911-12, p.1.*
57. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1909-*

- 10, p.1.
58. *Installation ceremony 15 may 1916 cited in Administration report of the government of Sikkim, 1916-17, pp. 11-12*
59. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1912-13, p.5.*
60. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1915-16, pp. 6-8.*
61. *Administration report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1918-19, pp.6-11.*
62. *Author's interview with K.C. Pradhan and S. Wangdi, op cit.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Author's interview with P.S. Subba, R.P. Uprati and Dharnidhar Dahal.*
 P.S. Subba is one of the leading literary figures in the state- a member of 'APATUN' (Agam Singh Giri, Padam Singh Subba, Tulshi Bahadur Chhetri and Nain Tshering Lepcha). Apart from the literary association he had also worked under different capacities in the administration of Sikkim. He possesses a very sound knowledge and experience of the British administration in the state. Dharnidhar Dahal was one of the founder members of the 'Member party'. He also remained the president of the party. This was the first political party in the state. He took active part to eradicate the evils (social, political and economic) of the British created *Zamindari* system in Sikkim- author of *Sikkim Ko Rajnaitik Itihas*.
65. *Sikkim- A concise chronicle, op cit, p.14*
66. *Ibid, pp.14 -16.*
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70. *Namgyal Thutob and Dolma Veshi, op cit 1909, Gangtok, p. 136.*
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74. *Sikkim- Chronicle, op cit, p.12.*
75. *Report of the Committee on Land Reforms, Government of Sikkim,*

Department of Land Revenue, January 1975, p.30.

76. *Prajatantrik Andolan Ko Itihas* (ed) Gopal Gaonley and Samiran Chhetri, Gangtok, 1997, pp.18-19.

The etymological meaning of *Kalobhari* is black porter load. This kind of tax was introduced for the first time during Younghusband expedition to Tibet in 1903.

Since Sikkim -Tibet trade route was full of snow and under such situation labourers were engaged for transportation of load. All such load was packed by black trapolin. Such packets were either sent to Tibet or brought from Tibet to Sikkim. D.P. Rajalim, *Atit Ra Vartaman*, Namchi, p. 10. This black packet was popularly known as *Kalobhari*. The British entrusted the *Thikadars* to arrange labourers to carry these loads on certain payment. But the *Thikadars* kept the amount themselves and forced the *Raiyats* to carry the load without any payment. This kind of tax continued in the state even after the expiry of the Younghusband expedition to Tibet. More or less similar to *Kalobhari* another tax in kind was *Jharlangi*, which was also realized by the *Thikadars* during the period of our study. The intention of the British to introduce *Jharlangi* was to ensure the safety of the roads for British trade and other administrative and military purposes. Being a hilly state Sikkim-Tibet route had been disturbed because of landslide at several points in the frontier region. It was to be repaired timely. Therefore, the British also entrusted the landlords with the repair work on certain payment. But the *Raiyats* were forced to clear the road without payment. They were to be ready to perform *Jharlangi* at any time at any place at their own expense. If the *Raiyats* denied to render *Jharlangi* they were severely punished. The other objective of *Jharlangi* system was that the reserved labourers were utilized to carry the luggage of the government officers whenever they were transferred from one place to the other without any payment. *Prajatantrik Andolan ko Itihas*, *op cit*, pp. 18-19.

The other tax in kind was *Theki-Bethi*. Under the *Zamindari* system the *Thikadars* were empowered to appoint a number of junior officers such as *Mukhtiyar*, *Mandal*, *Karbari*, etc. These officers helped the *Thikadars* to collect the revenue from their respective *Ilakhas*. The *Raiyats* had to offer special gifts such as meat, chicken,

curd, banana etc. packed in a wooden pot to these junior officers during festivals. This offering was popularly known as *Theki-Bethi*. In addition to this, the *Raiyats* were also forced to work for the *Mandals* and *Thikadars* whenever required. The *Zamindars* did not even supply food to the *Raiyats* whenever the later worked in their field and were forced to work without payment. Similar to this the *Zamindars* also realized another type of tax in kind known as *Kurwa* (obliged labour in attendance at strategic points in anticipation of officials and tourists). Under this category also the *Zamindars* forced the *Raiyats* to carry loads for the British without any payment. *Ibid*, p.19.

77. *Prajatantrik Andolan ko Itihas, op cit*, pp. 19-20, the landlords constructed a special type of jail in their respective *Ilakha*. The *Raiyats* who refused to comply with their orders were imprisoned in this jail. This particular jail was made of wooden and iron materials. Inside the jail a small cell was prepared where the culprit was kept being tied to his hands and feet tightly. He was kept there for a number of days for not obeying the orders. This kind of punishment was known as *Thirguro*. *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

During the period of Tashi Namgyal (1914-1962) people in general had to experience the state of exploitation. There was no justice. The *Thikadars* were empowered to decide all kinds of cases. They punished the people indiscriminately. There was no written code of law. In some places the *Thikadars* appointed *Muktiyars* to decide cases. Other minor officers appointed by *Thikadars* such as *Subedar*, *Havildar*, writer and constable were very cruel and punished the people in a very cruel manner. These officers were however, not paid but they were entitled to the free labour from the *Raiyats*. Peasants were forced to work for these officials. Thus the condition of the people was miserable. Common people hardly got any facility for education. People were not allowed to voice their grievances against the *Kazis* and *Thikadars*. Prem Thulung, *Kabi Agam Singh Tamang Ra Unka Kriti*, Namchi, 1993, pp.1-2. However, the condition of Namthang *Ilakha* was more critical. Baburam Kasaju, *Thikadar* of Namthang was the most oppressive *Thikadar*. He had his own style of working. Forced labour and *Jharlangi* were realized in full swing under his *Thikadari*. He took undue advantage of the powers

conferred on him. *Janapakcha, Special issue, 1988, Gangtok*(ed) Mahananda Paudyal in *Sikkim ko Rajnaitik Itihas* by Dharnidar Dahal, Namchi 1998. *Correspondence with Dharnidar Dahal.*

78. *Janapakcha, special issue, 1988, op cit, pp.14-16.*

79. *Ibid, pp. 14-16.*

The revolutionaries openly distributed food grains from the paddy field of the *Thikadar* to the needy peasants. Peasant leaders were fully influenced by the democratic movements of Kalimpong and Darjeeling. The leaders, more particularly the Dahal brothers, Zerman Lepcha, and Vrihaspati Parsain worked hard to popularize the movement. It could touch the sentiment of the oppressed people. Later on Man Singh Limbu, Trilochan Sapkota, and Jainarayan Sapkota supported this movement wholeheartedly. Mansingh Limbu was arrested. Later on when he was released he left Sikkim with frustration. *Ibid, pp.14-16.* The other leaders made tours to Namchi, Pandem, Barmiok, Lingbong, Rhenock, Chujachan and Malli organizing meetings against the oppressive policy of the *Thikadars*. They appealed to the peasants not to plough *Zamindar's* land, not to obey their orders and not to pay any kind of tax including *Jharlangi, Bethi and Salami*. They also urged the people to start social boycott against the *Zamindars* and their officials. The peasants as a whole supported the Member Party. The activities of the *Member Party* alarmed Babu Ram and his officials. The godown of the *Thikadars* was looted, servants were severely beaten and they were expelled from the *Ilakha*. In 1946-47 a large part of Namthang *Ilakha* remained barren because the peasants were not allowed to cultivate *Zamindar's* land. Thus the Member Party revolutionized the entire area. *Ibid, pp.14-16.*

80. *Prajatantrik Andolan, op cit, pp. 20-21.*

Prominent leaders of *Praja Samelan* were Dhan Bahadur Tiwari, Govardhan Pradhan, Jaslal Rajalim, Vishnubhakta Dhungel, Kharka Bahadur Basnett, Chuk Tshering Bhutia, Baladas Singha, Bhadru Magar, Chatraman Rai, Baghbir Rai, Nar Bahadur Karki, and Tenasdas Rajalim. *Ibid pp. 20-21.*

81. *Ibid, pp. 20-21.*

Prominent leaders of *Prajamandal Party* were Kazi Lendup

Dorjee, Birkha Bahadur Gurung, Chandra Bahadur Gurung, Sher Bahadur Gurung, Nar Bahadur Gurung, Sangay Lama, Narbir Gomden Lama, Tashi Tshering, Ram Jiwan Babu, Bhagawan Lal, Dhanpat Roy, Kaluram Lhakhotia, Gaden Tashi, Gandhi Buda, Palden Dorjee, Premlal Tiwari, Chuk Chuk Sangdarpa, Tekman Chettri, Niraula Baje, Manorath, Trilok Singh Subba and Bishnu Kumar Pradhan, *ibid* pp. 20-21

82. *Ibid*, pp. 20-21.

Prominent leaders of *Sikkim Praja Sudhar Samaj Party* were Tashi Tshering, Sonam Tshering, Captain Dimik Singh Lepcha, Raghuvir Basnet and Rashmi Prasad Alley.

83. *Ibid*, pp 20-21.

84. Sikkim – chronicle, *op cit*, p. 23.

85. Dahal Dharnidhar, *Sikkim ko Rajnaitik Itihas*, Sunsari, Nepal, 2000, p. 183.

86. *Ibid*, p. 183.

87. *Ibid*, p. 183-184.

88. *Ibid*, pp. 183-184, *Author's interview with Dharnidhar Dahal and R.P. Uprati*.