

ETHNO HISTORY AND FLUID IDENTITY OF THE LIMBOO TRIBE OF SIKKIM

THESIS

SUBMITTED TO

**BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY
(A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)**

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Gracy Maria Subba

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Prof. S. Victor Babu

HEAD

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY
(A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)**

VIDYA VIHAR, RAEBARELI ROAD

LUCKNOW-226 025

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**ETHNO HISTORY AND FLUID IDENTITY OF THE LIMBOO TRIBE OF SIKKIM**” submitted by **Ms. Gracy Maria Subba, Enrolment No.220/11,** is an original work and has not been previously submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma in this or any other University. The thesis submitted to the Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University is in fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*.

Prof. S. Victor Babu
(Head of the Department)
Department of History
School of Ambedkar Studies
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar
University, Lucknow

Prof. S. Victor Babu
(Supervisor)
Department of History
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar
University, Lucknow

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**ETHNO HISTORY AND FLUID IDENTITY OF THE LIMBOO TRIBE OF SIKKIM**” submitted by me for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in History, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by me during the period August, 2011 to July 2015, under the guidance and supervision of **Professor S. Victor Babu**, Professor, Department of History, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, and that the thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or other similar title; and that it is an independent work done by me. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

(GRACY MARIA SUBBA)

Place: Lucknow

Date:

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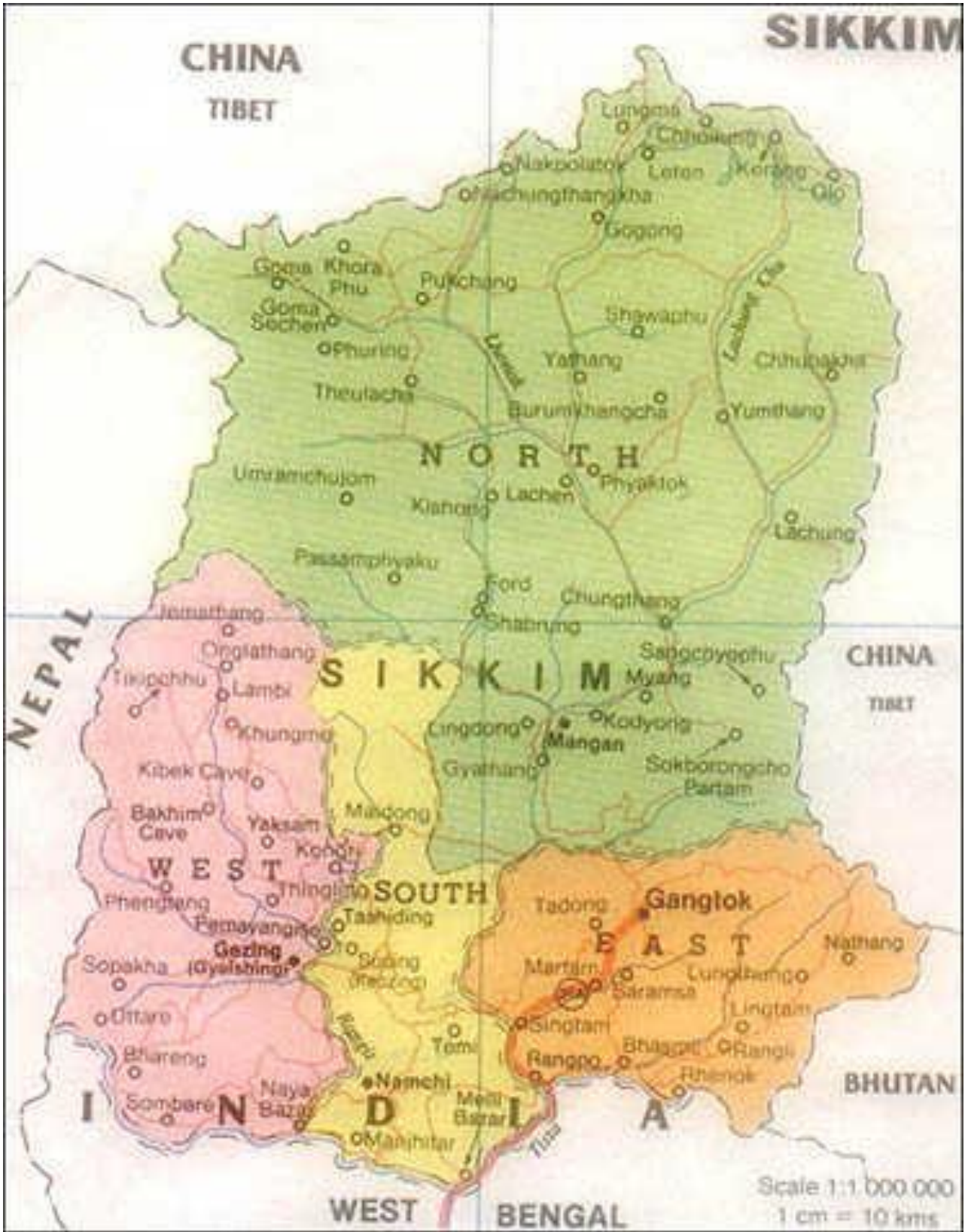
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LMT	Lho Mon Tsong sum
ST	Scheduled Tribe
OBC	Other Backward Classes
SEBC	Socially & Educationally Backward Classes
MLA	Members of the Legislative Assembly
SDF	Sikkim Democratic Front
TMYMC	Tey-Men Yakthung Ma Chumbo
SYSS	Sukhim Yakthung Sapsok Songjumbho
SYSP	Sirijunga Yakthung Sukhim Phojumbhu
SYWC	Sukhim Yakthung Wenchu Chumbo
SYSC	Sukhim Yakthung Saplon Chumbo
SYNSS	Sukhim Yakthung Nichamsa Sapsok Singjumbho
AIR	All India Radio
SSC	Sikkim State Congress
SNP	Sikkim National Party
SNC	Sikkim National Congress
SJC	Sikkim Janata Congress



Map of Sikkim

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE STUDY

This research work is an attempt to examine the forces that are playing decisive role in making the Limboo tribesmen search for their distinct identity. As there are various factors that play vital role in ethnic formation, what we need to investigate in this thesis is the interplay of various forces such as religion, culture, society, polity, economy etc. that has led to the marginalization of this tribe. This marginal hill tribe is now asserting distinctiveness through various processes, which is making them revive their past culture and tradition that helps them create distinctiveness from other communities living in Sikkim. It is also important to understand the reason behind the emergence of various Limboo associations that are busy working for the preservation of their culture, tradition, language etc. In order to understand the formation of such associations, it becomes necessary to understand the socio-religious as well as political factors and their traditional values that have been sustained through time, the rise of Buddhism as well as Hinduism and their influence, policies of the various Governments and lastly the emergence of Limboo identity consciousness.

History is present in all the communities, even powerless and unknown group have their histories¹. Such little known is the history of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim. Though it is difficult to start the ethno-history of this fringe tribe without presenting their detailed history, we would like to first discuss on the concept of ethnicity and its importance felt in the globalised World of today before addressing the narratives of this community. It is not that the issue of ethnicity was not felt as important in the past but the emergence of the ethnic

¹ Saikai, Yasmin (2004). *Fragmented Memories: Struggle to be Tai Ahom in India*: Duke University Press.

identity as a major social and political issue in Sikkim is leading to the emergence of various ethnic groupings trying to revive their old forgotten tradition. There are stories which attempt to show that the ethnic groups in Sikkim are more interrelated than divided. The process of synthesis and acculturation has been going on between people for centuries. The study of ethnicity and identity becomes relevant for understanding the emerging need felt among the Limboo tribe to preserve and reconstruct their identity.

Scholars have given variety of approach to ethnicity. Ethnicity is a recent concept in social sciences, even though the word 'ethnic' has been used in the English language since the mid 14th century. Its meaning have changed radically throughout history; originally referring to the heathens, pagans or gentiles, it acquired radical characteristics in the 19th century and was used in the 20th century U.S. as a way to refer to those immigrants of non northern or Western Europe descent. It first grew in importance in the social sciences as anthropologists tried to make sense of the emergent social and cultural formations within Africa and other parts of the Third World in the 1960. Hence ethnic group took a new meaning, namely the idea of tribe, formerly used to refer to socio-political units whose members are related by kinship ties. This shift in meaning took place as many social scientists attempted to critique Eurocentric discourse in which the people of the developing world were referred to as 'tribes' while those in the developed world remained 'peoples' or even 'nations'. This latest incarnation of ethnicity meant that, for the first time in the history of the word, it was and continues to be applied universally across the globe.

Ethnic group can be defined as "a segment of larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/or others to have a common origin, to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participates in shared activities in which the

common origin and culture are significant ingredients². The so-called primordial school of ethnicity holds that ethnicity is so deeply engrained in human history and experience that it cannot be denied that it exists, objectively and subjectively, and that it should, therefore, be considered a fact of life in relations between individuals and groups, who all have an ethnic identity. The instrumentalist's school of ethnicity argues that ethnicity is by no means an indisputable historical fact. Rather, instrumentalists suggest that ethnicity is first and foremost a resource in hands of leaders to mobilize followers in pursuit of other interest such as physical security, economic gain or political power³. The circumstantialists on the other hand stress the voluntary nature of ethnicity, and define it as 'an identity based on social acceptance and subjective identification of internal and external social conditions; and is thus defined by circumstances and constructed to achieve specific goals specially in situation of ethnic competition'⁴. For Rosaldo⁵, ethnicity is neither completely expressive (and primordial) nor completely instrumental (and situational); rather, it 'usually is both instrumental and expressive, and theories that opposes the two perspectives have posed a false dichotomy'. On occasions of cultural 'get-together', ethnic identity 'thickens' while the traditions are selectively re-enacted, not simply repeated. Ethnicity enables an individual to define his sense of belongingness and helps him to acquire a measure of self-esteem; its persistence is explicable⁶.

² Yinger, J. Milton (1997). *Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* : Rawat Publications.

³ Subba, T.B. 2009. (et.at). *Indian Nepalis-Issues and Perspectives*: Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

⁴ Sabharwal, Gopal (2006). *Ethnicity and Class- Social Division in an Indian City*: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Kwok-bun, Chan (2005). *Chinese Identities, Ethnicity & Cosmopolitanism*: Routledge Publication.

⁶ Jha, Shasikant. eds. (1998). *Ethnicity and Nation Building in Eastern Europe*: Radiant Publisher.

Ethnicity is also a term used to classify groups. However, rather than being based on colour or rooted in biological notions, although genetic inheritance and certain traits are characteristics of ethnic groups, the term ethnicity relates more to a group's cultural traditions, geographical ties, common language and other commonalities. It is used as a means to better understand the experience of assorted groups across the globe⁷. Ethnicity has in fact become core and central issue in the socio-political life of the people in the world today. It has been held responsible for virtually everything, from the break-up of nations to the outcome of elections⁸. In the modern scenario, we see lot of ethnic awareness, ethnic sentiment, and ethnic talk; despite the fact that it was supposed to wither away with the rise of modernity. It was believed in the western democracies that the spread of education, industrialization, mass struggles and the economic demands over the length of time would erode ethnic consciousness. But this did not happen. Universal literacy and massive industrialization did not prevent the genocide of Jews in Nazi Germany and the ethnic upsurge of the Khazaks in USSR etc.⁹. Not only is ethnicity felt as primordial sentiment, an emotional attachment to 'my people', a valuable tool for protection or enhancement of the status. It is in addition, a way of trying to deal with the experience of anomie and feeling of alienation¹⁰. The process of modernization, introduction of modern education, competition for jobs, growing awareness of social, political and economic disparity, the growing consciousness among the people for the need to preserve their culture and heritage etc. have all contributed towards the growth of ethnic consciousness. Instead of disappearance,

⁷Gabbidon, Shaun L. (2010). *Race, Ethnicity, Crime and Justice- An International Dilemma*: Sage Publication.

⁸ Sabharwal, Gopal (2006). *Ethnicity and Class- Social Division in an Indian City*: Oxford University Press.

⁹ Roy Burman, B.K. (1989). *Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development in North-East India: Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol.24, No.13, pp.636-697.

¹⁰ Yinger. J. Milton (1985). *Ethnicity: Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.11.

modernization is further helping in making ethnicity one of the major elements of the society. Modernization and nation-building with all its emphasis on materialism, technology and industrialization and too much urbanization have been responsible for alienation among workers of the world. In developed societies, in particular, this becomes so acute that it gives rise to a search for identity. The revival to ethnicism is a by-product of the reaction against this alienation born out of modern civilization¹¹.

A common assumption of ‘developmentalism’ as modernizing project and ideology has been that ethnicity is destined to wither away as an anachronism, to give way to a totally secular social order where particularism of colour, creed and language will not impede full social participation. This assumption of post ethnic consciousness in the developmental paradigm sees ethnic distinction as losing force either to a working class consciousness (as in Marxism), or to an emphasis on ‘nation-building’ as a norm in which the state and the market come to replace older ethnic identities. Yet history does not seem to be following this developmental path to secular identities. The more rapid the development of a region, the more modernized its infrastructure, the ethnic identities seem to deepen, and ethnic conflicts seem to intensify. The usual explanation for the ethnic conflicts is to assume that difference breeds conflict, and to go into the history of regions, linguistic and regional clashes and communal tension in the past¹².

Ethnicity is related to man’s quest for belonging. This quest has been intensified in the context of the contemporary crisis of civilization, which for sometime put competitiveness rather than reciprocity, profit rather than satisfaction, contract rather than

¹¹ Singh, Anand K.. (2008). *Ethnicity & Security of India*: Anubhav Publishing House.

¹² Kothari writes that the scholars in Srilanka studies Tamil-Sinhala differences and the scholars in India studies Hindu-Muslim tensions as conveyors of past. For more details see Kothari, Rajni (1989). *Ethnicity; in Identity, conflict & Crisis* ed by Kumar David and Santasilan Kudirgamar: Arena press Hong Kong.

companionate relation at the highest pedestal, and which has created a condition, wherein survival of life on the planet has become a doubtful proposition¹³. Ethnicity has become one of the several factors in determining identity and it develops as people mobilize their social and cultural resources as their defense. It is a readily definable way of expressing a real sense of group identity that links the member of 'we' because it emphasizes their difference from 'them'¹⁴.

Kashyap¹⁵ is of the opinion that under the system of representative democracy, in fact, ethnic group survives as a potent force in political processes simply because they are able to extract benefits from the state on grounds of their ethnic organization. The competitive electoral politics the natural clamour for building vote banks dictate a search for narrower identities. Religion, language, caste or tribe all comes handy for building group loyalties as means of power. Ethnicity becomes a cohesive force for political power ends. It is said that even in Sikkim the formation of political parties based on ethnic grounds basically led to the involvement of ethnicity¹⁶. But if seen, ethno-politics alone does not prepare a ground for the birth of ethnicity. Political discourse constitutes only one element in the overall process of ethnic identity production¹⁷. In fact, ethnicity does not occur in vacuum but even socio-

¹³ Roy Burman, B.K. (1989). Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development In North-East India: Economic & Political Weekly, Vol.24, No.13, pp.636-697.

¹⁴ Jha, Shasikant. eds. (1998). Ethnicity and Nation Building in Eastern Europe: Radiant Publisher.

¹⁵ Kashyap, Subhas C. (1998). "Ethnicity and Constitutional Reforms in India". In Ethnicity and Constitutional Reform in South Asia, edited by Iftekharuzzaman: Manohar Publishers.

¹⁶ Sankrityayana says that that the involvement of ethnicity in the political parties started only after the formation of Sikkim National Party on 30th April, 1948, supported by the then Maharaja of Sikkim. For details see Sankrityayana, Jeta (1994). "Development without Shocks: A Himalayan Experience". In Sikkim - Society, Polity, Economy/Environment. edited by Mahendra P. Lama: Indus Publishing Company, ND.

¹⁷ Shneiderman, Sara. (2009). Ethnic (P) reservations- Comparing Thangami Ethnic Activism in Nepal and India; in Governance, Conflict and Civil Action, Vol II ed. By David N. Gellner: Sage Publication.

economic, cultural, religious issues etc. are held responsible for its outburst. The threat of minorization, the problem of migration, issue of economic insecurity, religious and cultural issues, growing awareness and the ideas of equal rights and man's quest for belongings might also lead to the rise of ethnic consciousness. The ethnic groupings in Sikkim which once was class based has been turned into caste based, where caste groups are divided on the basis of deep rooted history and cultural division. One can see the formation of numerous caste based associations who seem busy reviving their old forgotten tradition and culture. Such ethnic groupings have always been the way of bargaining with the State. Ethnic groups are those human groups that entertain subjective belief in the common descent because of similarities of physical type of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exist¹⁸. If in the past, religion has played an important role thereby dividing the people into numerous groups, at present caste¹⁹ seems to surpass the importance religion had played in the past. Looking closely one can say that there are various factors that give rise to ethnicity. It may be due to differential treatment given by the State, inequality imposed by the society, revival of primordialism, ambition of the elite of the minority group for political power, manipulation by the leadership of the state, external support, nationalism itself, uneven distribution of power and resources and neglect of the ethnic group. Not one factor can be singled out as the primary factor. It is the interplay of all these factors, which may be held responsible for the rise of ethno-nationalism and thereby, ethnic conflicts²⁰. Economic issues like underdevelopment, deteriorating economic

¹⁸ Guibernau, Montserrat & John Rex. eds. (1997). *The Ethnicity Reader- Nationalism, Multiculturalism & Migration*: Polity Press.

¹⁹ If seen in a wider perspective, the people of Sikkim are divided castewise, but no doubt the Limboos are being seen divided among themselves by the religious factors.

²⁰ Singh, Anand K. (2008). *Ethnicity & Security of India*: Anubhav Publishing House.

conditions, over population, land alienation, competition for scarce resources, growth of poverty, problem of unemployment etc are usually cited as a factors contributing to ethnic tensions. Other problems like denial of opportunity for state building, policy of assimilation, and political discrimination, violation of human rights, etc. also generate ethnic feelings among the marginalized communities against the oppressors²¹. Ethnicity is an exclusivist product of the modern nation-state emerging only within clearly demarcated national boundaries, on the other hand, the narrative of ‘de-territorialization’ suggests that due to constant border-crossing movements including transnational labour migration, conflict induced displacement, and cosmopolitan jet-setting, locality and national borders are no longer the primary factors in shaping ethnic identity. Ethnicity is at once shaped strongly by country specific concepts, yet also dependent on a dialogue across state borders²².

Time has, in fact, played a crucial role in changing the mode of ethnicity. Recent history shows how in 1947, in the Indian sub-continent ethnicity based on religion seemed to be most important and even led to the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, but few years later identities based on language and different culture lessened the tie of religion and led to the partition of Pakistan into Pakistan and Bangladesh²³. Writing in early 1990s, the then Director General of the Anthropological Survey of India K.S. Singh found ethnicity in India generally being interpreted as recognition of rights of the community to maintain its identity, of pluralism, a return to the roots of life and culture, for participative

²¹Srikanth, H. (2005). “Resolving Ethnic Conflicts in the Northeast: Need for Radical Civil Forums”. In *Inter-Ethnic Conflict in North East India*. edited by Girin Phukon: South East Asia Publication.

²² Shneiderman writes about the rise of ethnic identity among the Thangami community of Nepal and India, where ethnicity is shaped by country-specific concepts. For details see Shneiderman, Sara (2009). “Ethnic (P) reservations- Comparing Thangami Ethnic Activism in Nepal and India”. In *Governance, Conflict and Civil Action*. Vol II edited by David N. Gellner: Sage Publication.

²³ Narayanan, Leila. 1989. *Ethnicity in Urban Context- The Gujaratis in Madras City*; Rawat Publication.

democracy, and for genuine federal and decentralized polity. Furthermore, he noted that ‘ethnicity in India generally means tribal ethnicity, which is largely concerned with articulation of tribal aspirations for political power through creation of autonomous areas or separate state’²⁴. Brass defines the concept in terms of cultural markers such as language or dialect, distinctive dress or diet or custom, religion or race²⁵. It has nothing to do with nation, state, majority or minority. Any individual can belong to more than one ethnic group, depending upon the interest with which an individual wants to identify himself. But in India, as Varma notes, there is clear distinction between ethnic and minority communities. Punjabis and Gujaritis, for example, are ethnic groups that are distinguished by language, dress and diet. Schedule castes and Muslim or Christians, on the other hand, are minority groups that have either been discriminated against or believed themselves to be the objects of discrimination²⁶. The rise of ethnic consciousness and the growth of ethnic groupings have led to distortion rather than protection sometimes even creating the feeling of negative communalism based on exclusivist identity and in fact tearing apart societies.

The spectre of ethnicity is variously expressed as assertion of cultures, communal upsurges, and revivalism of religions, voices and movements of marginalized peoples, regions and nationalities. It represents the affirmation of diversity, of indigenous authenticity, of organic as against televised or musemised cultures- or classicized cultures as found in ancient texts. But it takes others and quite opposite forms too. In its defiance of the modern nation-state and Western technology, it too takes a homonised and monotheistic forms, destroys diverse boundaries and identities that come in a way of its messianic sweep, gets militarized, and stresses revenge and martyrdom in the cause of ‘victory’ rather than

²⁴ Subba, T.B. 2009. (et.at). Indian Nepalis-Issues and Perspectives: Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

²⁵ Singh, Anand K. (2008). Ethnicity & Security of India: Anubhav Publishing House.

²⁶ Saran, Parmatma, and Edwin Eames, eds. (1980). The New Ethnics: Asian Indians in United States. New York: Praeger Publishers

sublimation and transcendence of the immediate. In doing so it undermines the finer qualities of the sacred and the mystical and emphasized hard ‘fundamentalist’ notions of religiosity, culture and ethnicity. At the present juncture of world history ethnicity takes on centralizing and decentralizing, dominating and liberating forms. Its more humane version respects plurality and ‘includes’ other identities. It’s more angry and defiant version is monotheistic and excludes others. What is more, the two are found to be caught in a strange partnership against the more secular and scientific drives of the modern state and the modern capitalism. So long as this happens to be the case, the future of ethnicity as a mode of shaping human prospects will remain unclear. Equally unclear is how ferocious and aggrandizing or temperate and compassionate it will turn out to be.²⁷

The rise of ethnic consciousness is visible among almost all the communities residing in Sikkim. In fact, the issue of gaining tribal status has made their cultural revival of utmost importance, and it serves as a means of economic gain. In this process culture is changed rather than preserved in the name of attaining indigenous rights²⁸. The post-democracy in Sikkim has helped the rise of ethnic groupings rather than help it wither away, which in future may cause ethnic conflict. Each group is trying to revive and retain their culture and tradition, encouraged by their strong desire to improve their status as De Vos defines ethnicity as ‘consisting of the subjective symbolic or emblematic use by a group of

²⁷Kothari, Rajni (1989). *Ethnicity; in Identity, Conflict & Crisis*. edited by Kumar David and Santasilan Kudirgamar: Arena press Hong Kong.

²⁸Shneiderman (2009) while discussing the Thangami ethnic activism in Nepal and India writes as how the Thangami welfare association decided to consume mouse as marker of Thangami cultural identity. See Shneiderman, Sara (2009). “Ethnic (P) reservations- Comparing Thangami Ethnic Activism in Nepal and India”. In *Governance, Conflict and Civil Action*. Vol II edited by David N. Gellner: Sage Publication.

people...of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups'²⁹. Basically, there are two criteria that influence the makeup of ethnic groups. The first criterion is objective and non-political in nature and secondly, the subjective criterion which is cultivated for the sake of group formation and politicization of ethnic groups³⁰.

Ethnic attachments are variously seen as ways to preserve a precious cultural heritage; to soften class lines; to protect or to win economic and political advantages for disadvantaged groups, to furnish a more intimate and flavourful connection with large, impersonal societies; and to retard the shift of overwhelming power to the State. It would sometimes appear, however, that in social sciences as in the physical world, for every action there is equal and opposite reaction. The strong emphasis in the last twenty years on the importance of ethnicity has been countered- although by a relatively small number of persons-on both evidential and ideological ground. Sociologically, a more powerful argument is the contention that the current stress on ethnicity is divisive and inequalitarian in its effects. Current attention to ethnicity, Stienberg argues (1981), tends to bind us to the structures of discrimination. It leads to cultural rather than to 'opportunity' explanations of inequality. Orlando Patterson argues that emphasis on ethnicity is inherently conservative, even though its proponents may believe it to be liberal. At its worst, he says, it is 'vulgar chauvinistic polemics', and even at its best it is "a sophisticated attack on the modern industrial civilization"³¹.

The Limboo tribe of Sikkim too, is working to re-establish their distinct identity within Sikkim. Though an aboriginal indigenous of Sikkim, they have been treated as

²⁹ Palanithurai, G. (2005). *Ethnic Identity & National Loyalty of an Ethnic Group - A Case Study of Tamil Nadu*: Concept Publishing Company.

³⁰ Mishra, S.S. (1995). *Ethnic Conflict and Security Crisis in Sri Lanka*: Kalinga Publication, Delhi.

³¹ Yinger, J. Milton (1985). *Ethnicity: Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.11.

migrants, which is further intensifying their creed for distinctiveness. The Limboos have been living in Sikkim from the time immemorial, and have played great roles in the formation of Sikkimese Kingdom, often occupying high position in the Namgyal court³². But with time, they began to lose their distinct identity through the process of acculturation which was further intensified by their political lumping with the so-called migrant Nepalese³³. Historical writing has no way helped them gain back their lost identity as most of the writers have either tagged them with the migrant Nepali group or have confused the readers by making distinction between the Tsongs³⁴ and the Limboos. Historical writings too, have rather given them fluid identity. The Limboos are no where identified, either it be tourist pamphlets or paintings and posters that represent the ethnic communities of Sikkim. Thus, the marginalization of this community is making them want for the revival of history, culture, tradition and to get back their unique identity and position that they believe to have enjoyed in the past; for which this tribe has been using their ethnic symbols such as language, dress, ornaments, food, musical instruments etc. during cultural programmes as well as tourism festivals to preserve their unique identity; consciously or unconsciously highlighting their difference from the other communities living in Sikkim.

The obligations of satisfying primordial and universal needs of security, identity, recognition and development for the establishment of stable politics are some of the reasons

³² Mullard (2011) writes about the Lepchas and Limboos occupying high position such as Limboo Yong Lim and Lepcha A'dengs. Even during his presentation held at Rachana book House, Gangtok on 12th Nov. 2012, he discussed on the Sikkimese class based society during the Namgyal dynasty providing examples of high level Limboo individuals. Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

³³ I have used the term Nepali/Nepalese to designate all the caste groups residing in Sikkim except plainsmen, Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo. The caste groups like Chettri, Bahun, Newar, Rai, Mangar, Gurung, Tamang, Bhujel, schedule caste etc. are designated as Nepalese.

³⁴ The Bhutia tribe of Sikkim refers to the Limboos as Tsongs/ Gtsong as they believe that the Limboos in some period of time had migrated to Sikkim from the Tsang province of Tibet.

for the formation of the ethnic groupings. Ethnic identity is necessarily an elusive and complex concept. The term often involves a variety of objective and subjective realities³⁵. Ethnic variations bring richness to the society and to individuals if it occurs in a context that also brings unity to a society and to humankind and allows freedom of choice to individuals. Culture contains many glorious elements, but they may also be encumbered with the flotsam and jetsam of the historical passage. If the ethnic structure freezes each group in “the good old ways”- ethnocentric at best; sexist; racist, and chauvinistic at worst- we shall certainly not be able to adapt to life on this small and crowded planet.³⁶

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholars differ in their view regarding the history of Limboo tribe in the Himalayan state of Sikkim, India and adjoining areas. Here are the excerpts on the Limboo tribe presented by some of the eminent authors.

Risley. H.H. (1894) is said to be an authentic account on the history of the Sikkim Himalayan kingdom. It provides valuable information on the Namgyal dynasty and later interference of the British Government in the affairs of Sikkim and even brings out the purpose of British involvement in Sikkim. Risley writes that race and religion would play an important role in Sikkim. Here, Limboo indignity is based on their gotra. This work is also blamed for distorting the history of Limboos.

Chie Nakane (1966) with two months of field work in the eastern part of Sikkim has written exclusively on Lepchas, where they are termed as autochthonous inhabitant of Sikkim, and the migrant Bhutias and the Nepalese. While writing on the role played by the

³⁵ Hutnik, Nimmi (1991). *Ethnic Minority Identity- A Social Psychological Perspective*: Clarendon Press-Oxford.

³⁶Yinger, J. Milton (1997). *Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* : Rawat Publications.

migrant Bhutias on the formation of Sikkim kingdom and the process of Tibetanization, Nakane fails to mention the treaty of Lho-Mon-Tsong sum and the role played by the Limboos in the formation of Sikkimese Kingdom. The limited period of two months might have kept the author aloof from the Limboo community who are found in majority in the western part of Sikkim.

Chemjong (1967) has divided his work into two parts. The first part contains the history of the Kirat people, their religion, culture and various dance forms. This work then goes on to discuss the coming of the Limboos, the birth of their name and the establishment of Limbuwan i.e. the land of the Limboos. The second part deals with various Kirat Kings and the achievements of the Kirats as well as the Gurkha invasion. Chemjong claims Phuntsok Namgyal to be the Kirat King of Northern Limbuwan. He asserts that in the beginning the Kirat people were rationalistic idolaters who had neither temples nor any images. They worshipped those spirits, believed to be residents of fire and sun and later during the integration of Nepal; the land of Limbuwan was gradually incorporated into Prithive Narayan Shah's fold through a negotiation settlement between Prithivi Narayan Shah and local chiefs rather than by outright conquest.

Basnet, L.B. (1974) has divided the book into two parts. The first part deals with the geography and the inhabitants of Sikkim, the Gurkha immigration and the British yoke in Sikkim. The second part deals with the interplay of political parties, the Sikkim Durbar and the Government of India on the political stage of Sikkim, since 1947 till the May agreement of 1973. Basnet further writes that the emergence of the Sikkim National Party in 1948 led to the rise of ethnic symbols for political purpose. The author here claims that the name Sikkim itself is the gift of Nepalese and that this name was given by Limboo bride who was married to a Lepcha chief; he further writes that Limboos also known as Tsongs were the migrants from Tsangpo valley who migrated to Sikkim and Limbuwan in eastern Nepal.

Dahal, Dharnidhar's (1984) work deals with the political aspect of Sikkim. According to this work, the Tsongs (Limboos) were the inhabitants of south east Tibet and were the followers of Yuma (nature God). It was the religious convulsion that led to the migration of the Tsongs via Bhutan towards western Sikkim. He further writes that at present majority of Tsongs follow Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism with a little proportion of population who still follows their own traditional religion called 'Mundhum'.

Sanyal, Charu Chandra (1979) studies one of the kirat communities i.e. the Limboos. Moving into the ancient period, Sanyal describes the migration of the Kirats into India before 1000 B.C. and their settlement in the lower Himalayas moving forward to be the first ruling dynasty of the Kingdom of Nepal. Through this work Sanyal brings us to the present status of the Limboos, who have discarded their old Yumaist faith and have accepted Buddhism, though their customs are more inclined towards Brahmanism and Shamanism. This work studies their domestic life and their language.

Singh, K.S. (1993) has given different meanings to the titles of Limboos. Considering them to be an offshoot of Kirats who emigrated from Tsang province of Tibet to eastern Nepal and finally to Sikkim, the author defines Limboos to be the earliest settlers of Sikkim. The tradition, culture and the Limboo way of life have been focused.

Subba, Cahitanya (1998) deals with the language, literature, customs, religion, cultural conservation and changing aspects of the Limboos. This work also emphasizes on the theory of Hinduization but is limited to the study of the Limboos of Nepal.

Subba, J.R. (1998) describes the belief system and the philosophical doctrines of Yuma Samyo, where a belief system is traditionally handed over to the descendents through Mundhum (Oral Tradition). It provides brief account of the creation of the Universe and the human race by Goddesses Tagera Ningwaphuma. It further describes the eight dens (layers)

of the Universe. According to this study, the Limboo believes that there are nine worlds above the earth and nine below in this Universe. Yumaism believes that there are two supernatural powers- malevolent and benevolent to reattribute and reward the vicious and the virtuous deeds of human being. This work also describes the Limboo religious priests who fulfill both the role of religious priests as well as local healers.

Subba, J.R. (1999) has written comprehensively on account of the custom, culture and tradition of the Limboos. Most part of the writing is devoted to the Limboo religion and its underlying philosophy and teaching. Going back to the year 1642 and talking about the unified treaty of Lho-Men-Tsong sum, this work claims that this treaty remained only in papers. The Limboo subjects faced harassment during the long reign of later Chogyals further helping them get marginalized with the advent of British protectorate and the influx of the Nepalese and lastly the merger of the Sikkimese kingdom with the Indian Union.

Subba, T.B. (1999) explicitly deals with the three Kirat communities i.e. Limboo, Rai & Yakkhas of the Eastern Himalayas; their language, religion, polity, culture, economy and society. Subba further discusses as how the Limboos have suffered domination and finally got assimilated with the dominant groups, thus losing their identity while trying to adjust themselves to the new environment. This work focuses more on eastern Nepal than Sikkim.

Arora, Vibha (2007) studies the tribes of contemporary Sikkim i.e. the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Limboos. It discusses the identity politics of being and becoming tribal in India. According to the author, tribalism reflects empowerment and political assertion in Sikkim. Arora discusses at length, the marginalization of the Limboos and argues that it was not the 333 years of Namgyal rule but the Hinduisation of the Limboos and the policies of the Colonial Government that led to their marginalization. Lastly, the author displays that how at present the Limboos are citing their myths and legends and trying to assert their indigeneity.

Wanchuk & Zulca (2007) researched on the historical, mythological and cultural aspects of the mountain Khangchendzonga. It reminds us of the attachment of the Limboos with Jannu i.e. an important western outlier of Khangchendzonga, showing the mistake made by Risley (1894) while writing 'Gazetter of Sikkim'. It deals with the introduction, spread and suppression of the Limboo language and script and great pioneering leaders associated with it. In the concluding portion of one of the chapters, the author discusses as how the Limboos in spite of being an aboriginal community of Sikkim has been marginalized to a great extend.

Balikci, Anna (2008) studies the ritual within the Bhutia community of the agricultural Tinchim village in North Sikkim. Though her work explicitly explores the rituals and relationship between the Buddhist and Shamanistic priests, this work also divides the Limboos into two groups i.e. the early and the later migrants, thereby giving important information about the aboriginal Tsongs and the later migrant Limboos of Sikkim.

Sinah, A.C. (2008) deals with the long history of theocratic & feudal rule and also studies the socio-political change that has occurred during the last three decades in Sikkim. Sinah denotes Limboos to be the marginalized aboriginal indigenous community of Sikkim whose marginality was recognized by the last Chogyal of Sikkim, who granted Limboos the Tsong seat in the State assembly which was later on abolished with the signing of May 8th Agreement.

Mullard, Saul (2011) describes the process of State formation and the socio-political situation in the region during the early days of Sikkim's history. He describes the presence of Lepcha, Bhutia and the Limboo chiefs ruling the proto-states and the oath of allegiance taken before the consecration of Phuntsok Namgyal as the first Chogyal of Sikkim. He rejects the year 1642 to be the year of the formation of the Sikkimese Kingdom as it is impossible to

establish and consolidate a state within a year. The formation of a state or kingdom takes place through a gradual process. The introduction of early state structure, social stratification and taxation are also addressed.

Fitzpatrick (2011) has reconstructed the history of class formation in the traditional Limboo village of Mamangkhe. It discusses about the introduction of cardamom production, change in wealth distribution in the village and the migration of non-Limboos that made the Limboo population lose their land in the hand of the non-Limboo population. This work gives an account of the cardamom cultivation and the emergence of economic differentiation. This work, thus, gives an account of socio-cultural and economic life of the Limboos in the village of eastern Nepal.

Mullard, Saul (2012) though characterizing Sikkimese history to be intertwined with the history of its neighbours, brings forth the uniqueness of Sikkim in itself. Focus is made on the documentary evidence, thereby denying the historiography of Sikkim based on supernaturalism. The chronological difference within texts written during 17th cen. has been focused bringing forth the narratives, whereby Sikkimese historical writing was re-interpreted, enhancing the position of Lha tsun Chenpo and diminishing the position of Nadag Phuntsok Rinzing. He also describes the treaty of Lho-Mon-Tsong sum, showing that the rule of Phuntsok Namgyal did not remain uncontested but was challenged by the rebellion of the Lepchas and the Limboos.

Subba, J.R. (2012) explicitly explains the concept of Yumaism. Explaining the Yumaist concept, he brings out the similarity between the Christian and Yumaist theory of Trinitarianism, while bringing out the difference in the Yumaist and the Hindu concept of soul existence in animate and inanimate objects. He explains the existence of seven sheaths of sub-soul which surrounds the human soul. He has even documented the food and

livelihood bio-resource of Limboo tribe, the cultural symbol, which seems to be disappearing with the process of modernization as well as the increase in the population caused by the migration of people in large number from the neighbouring areas.

Bhattarcharya, Arpana focuses on the society and polity of Sikkim, the rise of Buddhism and its impact on the political aspects of Sikkim and the traditional system of administration. This work also contain few lines on the Limboos where the author on one hand writes that the Limboo migration took place during the reign of Maharaja Sidkeyong Namgyal and on the other writes that Tsong are the aboriginal people of Sikkim. This reveals that the author is unaware of the fact that Tsong was the name given to the Limboos by the Bhutias.

Closely observing the earlier works, it seems that not much effort is made regarding the study of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim in particular. Earlier studies were done taking into account the history, society, geography, economy and politics of Sikkim, thereby giving little or no emphasis to the history of the Limboos. Even if little is written on the Limboos, they have treated Limboos as the later migrants there by distorting their history. For instance, authors like Rose³⁷ has written that large proportion of Nepali immigrants in Sikkim are Limboos from the eastern most hill district of Nepal who have had a long historical relationship with the Lepchas of Sikkim and whose assimilation in the Sikkimese society and polity was more easily achieved than other Nepali ethnic groups. Likewise, writers like Joshi³⁸ has gone to an extend of writing that the Limboos are original settlers of Tsangpo valley (Tibet) which once formed the Limbuwan district of present Nepal and the then

³⁷ Rose, Leo E. (1963). *The Himalayan Border States- "Buffer" in Transistion*: Published by University of California Press. *Asian Survey*, Vol.3' No.2 pp. 116-122.

³⁸ Joshi, H.G. eds. (2004). *Sikkim-Past and Present*: Mittal Publication.

western Sikkim. He further writes that the Limboo community at present is equally divided between the Lepchas and the Bhutias. He has used the name Tsong in two ways. Firstly, to denote a community from the Tsangpo valley in Tibet and secondly, as a substitute for the word 'Nepali', saying that the term Tsong was used to denote the Nepalese citizenry of Sikkim for the political purpose. Some writers have even designated them as a low caste Nepalese. In addition, the division of the land of the Limboos between two countries of Nepal and India (Sikkim) has made most of the writers quote them as immigrants from east Nepal. The avowed task of distinguishing between the true and untrue has remained undone. Thus, the voice of the Sikkimese Limboo is left unheard. No in-depth historical work has been published on their origin, society, polity of Limboos during the Namgyal era and after the merger with the Indian Union. A long history of their marginalization has in fact remained undocumented.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sikkim is culturally and ethnically, a multi-ethnic and a multi-lingual society. The predominant group in Sikkim today, both numerically and in political terms, is that of Nepalese, with the smaller ethnic aboriginal groups of Lepchas and Bhutias. Here, it is important to note that in spite of being an aboriginal indigenous group of Sikkim, the Limboos have been merged with the later Nepalese migrants. The appointment of J.C. White as the political officer of Sikkim led to the large scale migration of the Nepalese. As the country was sparsely populated he encouraged the hard working and cheap labour force Nepalese to immigrate and put more land under cultivation. The Limboos thus began to lose their land in the hands of migrant Nepalese and along with their land they were drawn into Hindu society through the process of Hinduization and Sanskritization.

To begin with, the abolition of Tsong seat in the State Assembly during the May 8th Agreement of 1973, the influence of Hinduism, introduction of Nepali language as the lingua franca of Sikkim etc., have led to considerable loss of their identity symbols and their political lumping with the migrant groups made them almost invisible to the outsiders. The Limboo society has also experienced religious disintegration in the past years. The use of Brahmin priests and the Buddhist monk while performing their religious ceremonies has not been completely excluded. Though at present while trying to revive their culture they have started using their own priest namely Phedangba, Yeba etc. and have started giving Limboo name to their children. Some Limboos have even resolved that the celebration of Dusshera, which they had been celebrating couple of years ago with enthusiasm, doesnot belong to the Limboos. Dusshera for the Limboos is viewed by them primarily as an occasion for family get together. If on one hand, Dusshera is said to be a time for the family get together on the other hand, Diwali is celebrated with the singing of carol proclaiming the name of their great King Bali Hang.

Today, Limboos are suffering from lack of cultural symbols, which would represent them and simultaneously differentiate them from the migrant Nepalese. Interaction between these two groups for over hundreds of years now has made the symbol of differences less powerful. Long years of Buddhist domination and Hindu migration have made them lose their distinct identity and gradually get marginalized. Limboo identity is on the verge of extinction. Even during the celebration of Diwali, apart from the singing of carol in the name of Bali Hang there is nothing as such which distinguishes their Diwali celebration from the Diwali celebration of Nepali Hindus. Another important festival of the Limboo is Kokphekwa Tummyen (Limboo New Year) but it is also no less different from Maghi Sakranti of the Hindus and even falls on the same day. It is only the celebration of the birthday of

Sirijonga Tyeongsi in the month of December that seems to mark the Limboo identity in the state of Sikkim.

In spite of all such problems, Limboo community is making an effort to build their distinct identity. The search for the past to construct the symbols of difference is not an easy task with long years of assimilation and acculturation. Thus, various factors have to be analyzed to understand such process, like, what the Limboos should do and are doing for promoting their cultural aspects? How and in what ways are they maintaining their ethnic solidarity? The dead history of Limboo community is to be brought into living memory. This work thus deals with the Limboo community who through their little voice is seeking a distinct identity in present day. This way such repressed little voice and their fragmented memories is inserted in a wider mainstream history. It has been investigated as how the Limboos in Sikkim has been using memory history in order to make claims and assert their identity. But it should be kept in mind that the memory histories are sometimes fluid and constantly changing. Identity formation is ongoing process that variously interprets the meaning of being 'Limboo'. Limboo identity has become fluid and flexible as they now begin to depend on the memories which could be reshaped at any time by various agents.

AREA OF STUDY

Limboos are one of the aboriginal indigenous people of Sikkim. Their historical kingdom of Limbuwan, through the processes of time got divided into two making the Limboos straddle between the two countries of modern Nepal and India (Sikkim). Though the Limboo population is found scattered in both the lands of Nepal and India, my research work completely focuses on the Limboos of Sikkim. Sikkim lies between 27 degree 5' and 28 degree 10' north latitude and 88 degree 4' and 88 degree 58' east longitude. It has a total area of 7096 sq.km. The physical shape is somewhat rectangular about 113 kilometers long and 64

kilometers wide. It is squeezed between Nepal on the west, Bhutan in the east, West Bengal in the south and People's Republic of China in the north. It was once an independent kingdom ruled by the Namgyal dynasty but was merged with the Indian Union as the 22nd state of India, with effect from 26th April 1975 by the thirty-six amendment act of the constitution, thereby enacting Article 371 F with a view to make special provision to the administration.

My research area includes those places in Sikkim in which Limboos are found in majority such as west Sikkim, some areas of south, east and north Sikkim. Efforts have been made to visit both the places where Limboos are found in majority as well as in minority in order to see the variation in their tradition and cultural change. Few names of the area and the informants have been changed to protect their identity.

METHODOLOGY

This research work intends to historicise the settlement of Limboos in the Himalayan state of Sikkim. In various histories written on Limboos, there is lot of debate regarding their migration and settlement in the state of Sikkim. Thus the prime focus of this work is to address various theories that talks about their settlement. Throughout the work different events and themes will be brought to limelight which relates to the changing identity of the Limboos along with the change from the Kingdom of Sikkim to the state under the Indian Government. The changing identity of the Limboo, their assimilation as well as acculturation with different communities residing in Sikkim and their recent assertion for distinct identity will be the main foci of this work.

The research work thus studies the ethno-history of the Limboos of Sikkim, their migration stories, their life and development under the Namgyal rule and the democratic Indian Government, the problems they had and have and the issues raised by them, their

process of marginalization and the various symbolic forces which the Limboos of Sikkim possessed as well as adopted in their march for maintaining a distinct identity different from other communities residing in Sikkim and especially the Nepalese. Here, culture has been viewed as a symbols used by the Limboos to make themselves similar or different from the other communities. Their myths as well as their oral tradition have been taken into account.

The Archives has been visited. The Proceedings, memorandums, minutes as well as letters have been collected from both the Government as well as private archives. The prominent books as well as journals, Gazetteers and Government orders from various departments of Government of Sikkim, Reports of committees constituted by Government of Sikkim, Royal Decrees issued by the Chogyals of Namgyal Dynasty and census has been accessed. Interviews have been conducted, mostly unstructured interviews. Oral history was supplemented by archival sources.

The Limboo villages as well as their historic places have been visited; ceremonial functions have been attended, religious priests as well as Tumyanghangs (Limboo elderly men) have been interviewed. For making the study effective, those Limboo populated areas have been selected where Limboos are found in majority and the data collected in these areas were compared to the data collected from the areas where Limboos are found in minority. Those areas have been frequently visited where people were prepared to share their feelings and opinions. All category of Limboo religious priests were interviewed, the family members of those Limboo headmen (mandals) who used to be in high administrative position during the reign of Namgyal dynasty were visited and interviewed. Leaders and founders of various associations, past and present political leaders belonging to various communities of Sikkim were interviewed and their interviews were supplemented by the documentary sources. Those individuals who were the contemporaries of the Namgyal dynasty were interviewed as it helps in showing the fate of ordinary people during the time of merger. This helps in understanding

the opinion of the ordinary which had remained silent for many years. Apart from the interviews, even folksongs have been taken into account as it contributes to our understanding of culture, geography, history of injustice as well as exploitation etc.

The secondary sources for the study were chiefly consulted from the Libraries of Nehru Museum and Library at Teen Murti Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University at New Delhi, the Central Library of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, various District Libraries of the State of Sikkim, National Institute of Tibetology and various other academic and public libraries of the state as well as centre. Some primary sources have been accessed through internet as in case of the online resources of JStore etc.

Thus, this work involves the use of both the primary and secondary data. The qualitative and quantitative data were collected through documents, participant observation, case studies etc.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the research will be to describe the historical settlement of the Limboos in the present areas of Sikkim, their condition during the rise and fall of Namgyal dynasty, the loss of their distinct identity and the processes by which the Limboos of Sikkim are trying to construct distinct identity thereby using various symbols for preserving their distinctiveness.

The main objectives of the study will be:

- To historicise the settlement of the Limboo tribe in the Himalayan state of Sikkim.
- To investigate into the condition of the Limboos during the reign of Namgyal dynasty and after Sikkim's merger with India.
- To examine the interplay of various forces such as religion, society, culture and polity on the marginalization of the Limboos.

- To describe both forceful as well as peaceful encounter of the Limboos with various community and diverse religion.
- To analyze the assertion of Limboo cultural and social symbols for preserving their distinctness.
- To understand the factors behind the emerging need felt among the Limboos to preserve their identity on the basis of historical as well as cultural roots.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Limboos are the indigenous community of Sikkim and they have played a vital role in the formation of the Sikkimese Kingdom.
- Their land, Limbuwan, was divided between Nepal and Sikkim during 16th century.
- Later on, some Limboos immigrated permanently or temporarily into Sikkim, from modern Nepal in search of their livelihood.
- Their historical memory is fragmented in the absence of proper historical account.
- They are neither Hindus nor Buddhist but are Yumaist by faith.
- Various processes were at work to marginalize the Limboos.

CHAPTERISATION

- Chapter I: Introduction.
- Chapter II: Theories of Migration.
- Chapter III: Perspective of Limboos towards the Namgyal Dynasty.
- Chapter IV: The Dawn of Democracy.
- Chapter V: Limboo way of Life, Getting Marginalised.
- Chapter VI: It will deal with the summary of the finding.

Organization of the study has a vital role to play in research work. This work is thus divided into six parts. The first chapter 'Introduction' deals with the introduction where it deals with the basic concept of ethnicity, the factors that contribute to the rise of ethnic awareness among the Limboo populants of Sikkim.

The second chapter 'Theories of Immigration' examines different theories laid down by several authors regarding the origin and migration issues. The first part is the narration of the stories regarding the original homeland of the Limboos which has been told by various historians and writers and their writing has now become a dominant story. Here, it can be noted that some of the stories seems to be constructed over time and might continue to be constructed in the future. Such narratives made by various agents form the base of who the Limboos really are. It also examines the continuously re-defined and re-interpreted identity issue of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim. The researcher have argued that none of the explanation seems to be definitive and it seems that number of explanation that has been put forward doesnot seem appropriate. The chapter starts with what Limboos believes to be their historical land; battles and conquest and the drawing of the geographical boundaries which made the Limboo population straddle between the two nations of Nepal and India. The name of places in Sikkim have been collected which in some way authenticate the presence of Limboos in the land of Sikkim from time immemorial.

The third chapter 'Perspective of Limboos towards Namgyal Dynasty' is intended to provide an account of the Limboo contemporaries of the Namgyal era and their opinion about monarchical form of Government and Democratic form of Government. The voice of illiterate as well as semi literate people who could only convey their experience orally is brought to the surface. Silent experiences are brought out through this chapter. The main objective of this chapter is to find out the status of Limboos during the pre-merger period and their opinion regarding the rule of the Namgyal dynasty. It also helps in understanding the

Perspective of Limboos towards the monarchy and their support or rejection towards the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union.

The fourth chapter 'The Dawn of Democracy' critically examines whether the Sikkim's merger with Indian Union was boon or curse on the Limboo populants of Sikkim. Here, the researcher have explored as how the Indian Government has led to the destruction of the Limboo identity in the state of Sikkim and the reason that has led to the rise of separate identity awareness among the Limboos of Sikkim. Identity production, here, seems a political process. It also focuses on the steps that are being taken by various Limboo organizations in order to preserve their identity and cultural heritage, the problem that has crept into the Tsong society and the programmes made by the Tsong association for relieving their community from such kind of problems. Limboo identity also involves imaginations as well as expectations of their so termed local leaders who seem busy working on various agendas of their associations.

The fifth chapter 'Limboo Way of Life, Getting Marginalised', is an attempt to study the Limboo past culture and tradition, the process of disintegration as well as their division due to the outcome of different religious philosophy. The Limboos like other tribes and communities are very rich in their culture and tradition, but their ancestral tradition is beginning to withered away perhaps due to various processes such as acculturation, modernization etc. The fear of disintegration has made them revive their past tradition which in turn has further started disintegrating their society. So, this chapter focuses on their religion and the reason behind the process of their assimilation and the outcome of their assimilation process. It discusses in length the effect of modernization on the Limboos.

Lastly, the sixth chapter 'Conclusion' deals with the summary of the findings. Through this work the unknown history of the Limboos would be brought into living memory.

CHAPTER: 2

THEORIES OF IMMIGRATION

The first chapter dealt with the definitions of ethnicity and the causes that led to the rise of ethnic consciousness among the people of the state of Sikkim and especially among the Limboos. So, this chapter will deal with the fluidity of the identity of the Limboos that have been one of the reasons for the rise of ethnic consciousness. Drawing on the theories laid down by several authors, this chapter examines the continuously re-defined and re-interpreted identity issue of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim. The chapter starts with what Limboos believe to be their historical land; battles and conquest and the drawing of the geographical boundaries which made the Limboo population straddle between the two nations of Nepal and India. Such fluidity of the geographical boundaries has confused these tribesmen and has made them search for their identity. The history writing has given various designations to them and has further added to their confusion. So, the chapter deals with those theories given by several authors regarding the origin and migration stories of this tribe. The old members of this tribe believe that there are several places in Sikkim which were named by their ancestors, thus those names have been collected which in some ways authenticate the presence of Limboos in the land of Sikkim from the time immemorial.

HISTORICAL LAND OF THE LIMBOOS

The history of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim is the history of little known which might need a lengthy introduction. Such unknown history makes it important for the researcher to inform the readers, their land and location before going on to explain their changing identity. In fact, the relation between the land and the people is fundamental to understanding of history. At every turn of events the land exerts its influence, sometimes broad and obvious, at

other times subtle. But this influence is always there. The land influences the people themselves. There is a mutual relationship between a people and the land they inhabit. Just as the people mould and use the land to suit their purposes, so the land itself forces an adaptation on the people, even shaping their thinking and outlook on life; also making them change their location and ultimately their identity. The influence that land exerts on the people makes it important to start the narratives of the Limboo with their land and the part of the community within which they live. The pressure of the land and its environment on the Limboos are seen in their very nature, food habits, culture, tradition, religion and their identity formation.

The oral narratives term the historical land of Limboo as Limbuwan¹, thereby claiming modern eastern Nepal and modern western Sikkim to be their homeland. No doubt, the worship of Mt. Khangchendzonga by the Limboos itself certifies that this community has been living in the place flanking on both sides of this mountain, since the time immemorial. Mt.Khangchendzonga occupies an important place among them. The mountain is revered by this people on all their occasions, whether sowing the seed or while reaping the fruit of their labour. Even the Limboo priests talk about the presence of their ancestral home² in the areas around the holy mountain. The use of the word Limbuwan to depict their homeland might have been due to the frequent use of the word 'Li-abu'. Such frequent use of the word 'Li-abu' meaning bow and arrow by the Limboos as their important weapon might have made their neighbour designate them as Limboo and their land as Limbuwan. As the word 'Li' in the Limboo language refers to bow and 'abu' means arrow. In fact, bow and arrow is used in Limboo rituals such as marriage, religious ritual and most importantly for asking blessing

¹ The Limboo claims modern east Nepal and modern western Sikkim (India) to be their ancestral land. Here, the word Limbuwan has been used as constructed by the Limboos.

² When searching for the spirit of their deceased ancestor, the Limboo priest goes beyond the mountain of Khangchedzonga whether to help an individual raise his head high or help a deceased get their way on their death.

from God for the protection of man-kind. Even their King Sirijunga Hang³ is seen to be carrying bow and arrow as his weapon in the pictures and images that are found in Limboo houses.

According to their oral narratives, Limbuwan was divided into seventeen thums (districts) and was ruled by the ten powerful chiefs. This land of Limbuwan is said to be conquered by them through the use of bows and arrows. Though their oral narration talks about the ten Limboo chiefs, it never discusses about their supreme king⁴. The absence of the supreme King might have made the Limboos get attached to Sikkim through an annual tribute; thereby accepting the suzerainty of Phuntsok Namgyal, the first king of Sikkim. As Mullard⁵ writes that *'by and large the areas directly under the control of Phuntsok Namgyal can be identified with the regions in modern western Sikkim, small parts of eastern Nepal (namely parts of Limbuwan) and the areas just east of Ravangla (now in modern south Sikkim administrative division)'*.

The treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum⁶ signed by the three ethnic communities of Sikkim i.e. the Bhutias, Lepchas and Limboos, itself certifies the early settlement and the importance of Limboos in the early Sikkimese history. Though the treaty reflects the victory of the Lho

³ Sirijunga Hang is credited to have invented the Limboo script and his incarnation Sirijunga Tyeongsi is credited to have revived the Limboo script and religion for which he is believed to have been killed by the Ta sang monks of the Pemayangtse monastery.

⁴ There are narrations of the presence of their Kings like Bali Hang and Sirijunga Hang, but not much is said about their reign or their successors. It remains obscure whether they were chiefs or the kings. Sirijunga Hang is credited to have invented Limboo script with the help of the God of knowledge.

⁵ Mullard writes that there are number of documents in Sikkimese Palace Archives, which details the taxes collected in Sikkim in what is now eastern Nepal and that all the sources seem to indicate that Morang, Ilam and Taplejung districts of modern Nepal was about the Sikkimese influence in Eastern Nepal. for details see Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

⁶ For more detail on the treaty of Lho Men Tsong sum see Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication

or the Bhutias over the Mon (Lepchas) and Tsong (Limboos), this treaty however does not mean the end of the domain of the Limboo chiefs. The Limboo chiefs continued to rule over their domain where their overall suzerain power was the Namgyal ruler. Sometime later, these Limboo chiefs changed their allegiance, when some supported the Namgyal rulers; others sided with the rulers of Nepal or were brought into Gurkha fold when Prithivi Narayan Shah⁷ and his successors started conquering the Himalayan foothills as far as Sikkim.

The Limboos constitute a populous group which remained virtually autonomous until the 1780s. Although, as early as the beginning of sixteenth century, portions of Limbuwan came to fall under suzerainty of the Sen Kingdoms of Makwanpur (in the present day Narayani Zone) and Vijaypur (3 Km. East of present day Dharan, Nepal) or owed allegiance to the Maharajas of Sikkim. Limbuwan before the Gurkha conquest in fact consisted of many local independent Limboo kingdoms which were fiercely defended against intruders⁸. Van Driem further writes that the Limboos were last to be conquered by the successors of Prithivi Narayan Shah and incorporated into the state of Nepal. With the passage of time, the Gurkha invasion as well as the willing submission through a generous treaty changed the boundaries of Sikkim and modern Nepal. There are the stories of (das) ten Limboos who fought with the Gurkhas for twelve years after which they got defeated. The Gurkhas there killed all the Limboos for which they had to hide in the mountain to abstain from cruelty and oppression of the Gurkhas⁹. Though Stiller¹⁰ is of the opinion that by 1774 Nepal had gained the whole of

⁷ Prithivi Narayan Shah became the king of Gurkha, a small kingdom in the modern day Gurkha district about 50 miles north-west to Katmandu in 1743. He is responsible for extending his Kingdom's rule and creating a momentum towards a unified country for which he is termed as the architect of modern Nepal.

⁸ Van Driem, George (1990). The Fall and Rise of the Phoneme /r/ in Eastern Kiranti- Sound Change in Tibeto-Burman: Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies. University of London. Vol.53, No.1 (1990) pp.83-86: Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of School of Oriental & African Studies.

⁹ Fitzpatrick, Ian Carlos (2011). Cardamom & Class- A Limbu Village and its extension In East Nepal: Vajra Publications.

eastern hills, including all the territory of Singalila watershed and controlled the entire territory as far east as river Teesta, it should be kept in mind that the boundaries of Nepal and Sikkim as they are today were only set down much later with the treaty of Sigauli in 1816¹¹. The Gorkhalis conquered the Darjeeling hills and the portion of western Sikkim in the 1780, and held on to these territories until the 1816¹². The war between Nepal and the British east India Company, thus ended with the treaty of Sigauli outlining the new borders.

Indeed, east Nepal was one of the last areas of Nepal to be conquered by the Gurkha army in the late 18th and 19th century. Only after the death of Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1775, did the Gurkha army made the first substantial foray into east Nepal with the battle of Chinapur in 1776. Later, Limboos began to be recruited in the Gurkha army as early as the battle of Chinapur and in 1776 many Limboos fought in the Gurkhali side against their own people. Victory in the battle of Chinapur against the Sikkimese King, led the Gurkhalis to increase their control of east Nepal, but due to the strong Limboo resistance and continued presence of Limboo forces, it was only in 1786 that the annexation of further Kirat was completed and the war in Limbuwan ended¹³. While Fitzpatrick talks of such battles between the Gurkhali force and the Limboos, Risley (1894)¹⁴ has quite a different story to tell. Risley suggests that the political tension within Sikkim led the fourth King of Sikkim Gyurmed

¹⁰ Stiller, Ludwig F. (1995). *The Rise of the House of Gorkhas*. Human Resource Development Research Centre: Published by HRD Research Centre

¹¹ It has to be kept in mind that throughout the history of Sikkim, their territorial possessions have been frequently changed whether it be in the western side caused by attack from Nepal and Bhutan or in the northern part due to the interference of Tibet etc.

¹² See Gellner, David N., Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka & John Whelpton, eds. (1997). *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom - The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*: Harwood Academic Publishers.

¹³ Fitzpatrick, Ian Carlos (2011). *Cardamom & Class- A Limbu Village and its extension In East Nepal*: Vajra Publications.

¹⁴ Risley, H.H. (1894). *Gazetteer of Sikkim*: B.R. Pub., New Delhi.

Namgyal demand too much from the Limboos who switched their allegiance to Nepal. Apart from the policies of the Namgyal rulers towards the Limboos, their administration was quite weak which made it easier for the neighbouring countries to raid on them quite often. The neighbouring countries such as Nepal and Bhutan kept on attacking Sikkim where both were successful in number of occasions. In fact, the ambition of the Gurkhas to control trade route to Tibet had lured them to conquer the part of Limbuwan (present east Nepal) for which the Gurkha rulers lured the Limboo chiefs with the kipat tenure¹⁵ which was finally abolished with the land reform act of 1964. Such battles of conquest and conspiracies made the land of the Limboos get divided into two making the Limboos straddle between the two nations of modern Nepal and India (Sikkim), thereby giving the Limboos two distinct identity i.e. the Nepalese and Indian identity.

LAND AND THE PEOPLE OF SIKKIM- THE PRESENT SENARIO

Sikkim is situated in the north eastern part of Indian sub-continent. Once a smallest kingdom in the world, enclosed and protected by Mt. Khangchendzonga; Sikkim was ruled by the Namgyal dynasty for more than three hundred years when it was finally merged with the Indian Union as the 22nd state of India. Sikkim joined the main stream India with effect from 26th April 1975 by thirty - six amendment act of the constitution, thereby enacting Article 371F with a view to make special provision in administration. It has a strong tradition of regional political parties and thus it is barely identified as a mainstream of the Indian system.

The word 'Sikkim' comes from 'Su-Him', which is a Limboo word means 'new-house'. According to the local narratives, when Tensung Namgyal married the daughter of Limboo chief Yo Yo Hang and built the palace of Rabdentse¹⁶ for her, she named it Su-Him.

¹⁵ Kipat is the communal land ownership issued by the Nepali Government by which individuals had right to the land by the virtue of being members of particular social unit. It was abolished by the Land Reform Act of 1964.

¹⁶ The ruins of Rabdentse palace could be seen in west Sikkim.

Sikkim, believed to have been blessed by host of supreme being and place to have set foot by lotus born Guru Padmasambhava¹⁷ is believed to be once large enough to cover Thang La near Phari in Tibet, in east upto Tagong La near Paro in Bhutan, in south Kishangunj in Purnia district of Bihar and in west to Timar Chorten on Tamar river in Nepal. Partly due to the ambitious intruders and partly due to the British interference, Sikkim got squeezed into a small mass proving to be the second smallest state of India, being lost in the vast Indian sub-continent. The present day state of Sikkim covers 7096 square kilometer. Having an area of 7096 sq. km; the state is almost rectangular running 114 km long and 64 km wide. It lies between 27 to 28 degree north latitude and 88 to 89 degree east longitude.

The location of Sikkim along the Himalayan crossroads has been, historically, both a blessing and curse for Sikkim and its people. While Sikkim profited from trade with all of its neighbours its favourable location has also been a desirable prize for its stronger neighbours to both the east and the west. As a result of this, the history of Sikkim is not a peaceful one. Instead it is characterized by, almost, continual warfare with either Nepal (following the establishment of the Gorkha kingdom) or Bhutan. As such the history of Sikkim, like most states, is intertwined with the histories of its neighbours. Events that play a prominent role in the histories of other states of the Tibetan and Himalayan region also are significant in the history of Sikkim. Many specialists of Tibet and the Himalaya know that Sikkim is considered as a hidden land, theoretically and spiritually separated from the world at large. Yet contrary to the theoretical model, interaction between Sikkim and the wider region was prevalent¹⁸.

¹⁷ Also known as second Buddha is said to be the manifestation of the mind of Avalokitesvara, the speech of Amitabha and body of the Sakya muni Buddha.

¹⁸ Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

The population of Sikkim in the present day includes Aryan as well as non-Aryan linguistic and cultural groups belonging to multi-religious communities. It is perhaps the geographical location of Sikkim bordered by Nepal in the west, People's Republic of China in the north, Bhutan in the east and the Indian state of West Bengal in the south that gives it a multi-ethnic look. Though located in the frontier zone and being the place worthy of tourist attraction, the frontierization has never generated the state of restlessness giving the population a feeling of peace. The population of Sikkim as figured by Richard Temple¹⁹ was 5000 of which 2500 were Lepchas, 1000 Limboos and 1500 Bhutias but such small group soon got outnumbered by the migrant communities increasing the population to 610577 in the year 2011. The first population of Sikkim undertaken in the year 1891 numbered the Lepchas as 5762, Bhutia as 4894, Limboos as 3356 and Nepalese as 15,458. Continuous migration of people from surrounding states as well as neighbouring countries has made Sikkim a home of numerous ethnic groups, the largest being the Nepali speaking group²⁰ comprising the Hindu population. The multiple communities that have emerged in the state of Sikkim live in peace and tranquility. The largest group in Sikkim is the Nepali speaking community comprising of variety of ethnic and religious groups. Everyone have contributed respective share towards the growth and development of the state. Unlike the other north-eastern states, the Christian missionaries have little or no impact on the land of Buddhism. It is only recently that Christianity has flourished ranging about 7.64% of the total population. It was the religion of Hinduism brought by the migrant communities that has an immense impact on the Buddhist and the animist indigenous population accounting around 59.98% of the total population.

¹⁹ Sharma S.K. & Usha Sharma (2005). Documents on North-East India - An exhaustive survey Vol.X-Sikkim: Mittal Publication, N.D.

²⁰ Here, it should be noted that the high caste Nepali speaks their mother tongue Nepali and almost all the caste groups in Sikkim have their own mother tongues but they hardly speak in their language and they are being introduced in the school curriculum only recently.

Sikkim has since the past never experienced the assertion of identity movement as in the other states of north-east India. The identity politics of contemporary Sikkim is layered and complicated by the cultural, religious, linguistic and racial diversity of the twenty groups residing there, and the class, educational and the occupational differentiation within them. The cultural linguistic differences exist between these groups. However, these broad categorizations underplay the competing definitions, the internal variations, and the intersections between the diverse ethnic groups in Sikkim. Instead of strict demarcations and absolute hostilities between ethnic groups, there are degrees of inclusion and exclusions, which determine ethnic relations in Sikkim. The situational selectivity of ethnic identity plays a crucial role in inter-ethnic relations. These also serve as a buffer and a bridge between conflicting ethnic groups²¹.

Though almost all the caste groups have distinctive culture and tradition and are seen reviving it, there is no evidence of violent outbreaks, which did not happen in the past or at present. Throughout the state, different caste groups are busy making caste based associations, the making of the Limboo associations also couldn't be ruled out. The reviving of their culture and the making of associations testifies the rise of the ethnic consciousness which in future might prove fatal. Apart from Bhutia-Lepcha, the so called Nepalese denotes multi-ethnic groups and the assertion of any of the ethnic group as a separate entity in the future, might lead to internal breakdown, which may prove beneficial to other communities living in Sikkim.

Sikkim is dominated by Buddhism as well as Hinduism, but religious difference has never occurred and peace has always prevailed. It is only recently with the rise of ethnic

²¹ Arora, Vibha (2007). Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim: Sociological Bulletin

consciousness that almost all the communities in Sikkim are trying to go back to the roots of their origin and trying to get back their lost culture and tradition. The assimilation as well as acculturation of the Limboos of Sikkim with the so called Nepali migrant communities has made the Limboos get lumped with them although they like the Nepalese never migrated²² from the post-boundary Nepal but have settled here from time immemorial; it is only that their land got divided between modern Nepal and Sikkim.

HISTORY AND IDENTITY

The migration of the Nepalese group into Sikkim engineered by the British colonial power changed the fate of the Limboos to a great extent. Acculturation between these two groups was to such an extent that any outsider would fail to distinguish between these two groups. In addition, the abolition of the Tsong seat²³ in the state assembly and the political lumping of Limboos with the Nepalese might have made some of the writers designate the Limboos as Nepalese. Archival research for the period 1830 to 1917 reveals that the British administrators were conscious that the Limboos were indigenous to Sikkim. In 1835, when the British raj annexed the Darjeeling hills, the officers commented that *'they were practically uninhabited excepting a few hundred Lepchas and Limboo'*. A map of British Sikkim drawn by Captian W.S. Sherwille in 1852 states, *'this mountainous countries from 1500 to 4000 feet above the sea level is inhabited by a warlike beardless race termed Limboos'*.

²² Balikci (2008) talks about a dozen of Limboo migrants who migrated from the Nepal region of Dhankuta who were given land at the northern part of Sikkim. Balikci has categorised the Limboos as Tsongs, the aboriginal inhabitants and the later migrant Limboos who lately migrated to Sikkim. For more detail see Balikci, Anna (2008). *Lamas, Shamans & Ancestors - Village Religion in Sikkim*: Brill Publication.

²³ In the general election of 1967, the last king of Sikkim, Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal provided reservation of one seat for the Limboos out of 24 member seats in the Council of Ministers.

Another British archival map showing the approximate race distribution in Sikkim in 1892 demarcates the ethnic settlement of the Lepchas, the Bhutias, the Limboos and the Paharias (Nepalese) in Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills. A statement printed on the map clearly stresses ethnic-settlement: '*Line north of which Paharias are not allowed to settle*'²⁴.

Tracing the ethnic roots of these ethnic categories in the past, one finds that during the 1891 Census of Sikkim its population was ethnically differentiated into thirteen groups. However, after 1891, the imperial administration delineated four groups namely, the Lepchas-Bhutias, the Limboos, the Nepalese and the others. In 1915, when the land revenue rates were finalized, the imperial regime differentiated between only the Bhutias-Lepchas and the Nepalese. From 1931 onwards, they progressively categorized all groups, excluding the Lepchas-Bhutias, as Nepalese. If colonial policies protected and transformed the the Lepchas and the Bhutias into the indigenous group of Sikkim, the other policies discriminated against the Limboos, who were indigenous to Sikkim, by treating them as Nepalese immigrants.

Various histories that have been put forward terms Limboos either as an immigrant from the Tsang province of Tibet or from the region of eastern Nepal. Unfortunately, the history of the Sikkimese Limboos has not been well documented, perhaps due to numerous reasons. It is the theory of Limboo migration from the Tsang province of Tibet which is accepted on the ground that their Tibetan migration has made the Lepcha and the Bhutia tribes of Sikkim designate the Limboos as Tsong. Even in the eyes of the British official, the Limboos were a member of a Tibeto-Burmese mountain tribe²⁵. Further, Leo E Rose (1963)²⁶

²⁴ Arora, Vibha (2007). Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim: Sociological Bulletin.

²⁵ Sagant, Philippe (1996). The Dozing Shaman- The Limbus of Eastern Nepal: Delhi Oxford University Press.

²⁶ Rose, Leo E. (1963). The Himalayan Border States- "Buffer" in Transition: Published by University of California Press. Asian Survey, Vol.3' No.2 pp. 116-122.

writes that large proportion of Nepalese immigrants in Sikkim is Limboos from eastern most hill districts of Nepal, having a long historical relationship with the Lepchas of Sikkim. Even the politician of Sikkim like Basnet (1974)²⁷ in his work '**Sikkim- A Short Political History**' claims the name Sikkim to be of Nepali origin while the accepted fact is that the name 'Sikkim' was the name given by the Limboo Queen of the second Chogyal Tensung Namgyal. Being a politician, it might have been his political move to make the fate of the Nepalese safe in the atmosphere of the then political turmoil. The Limboos are now being treated as the migrant groups and are debarred from those facilities which they should have got otherwise. Several writings on Sikkim have termed the Limboo as migrants from Nepal and some have even gone to an extent of terming them as lower caste Nepalese.

The social and political processes too have added to the quest for distinct identity among this tribe. In addition, the flexibility of the geographical boundaries, battles of conquest, conspiracies and acquisition, and the theories of their originality have confused this community and has made them search for their identity. While gaining in rhetorical power, as people becomes more conscious and confused about their identity, identity study as a phenomenon is losing its historical foundation. Instead of emphasizing the process of identity formation, recent scholarships have abstracted the process of negotiating the tensions and discourses of labels that occurs in the site of globalised world. "Imagined communities", to borrow Benedict Anderson's term, are regularly emerging, thus making identity look like a "thing" that can be lost and found like checked baggage within sites of power and disempowerment²⁸. While asserting for the distinct identity, the Limboos do turn to their past memories and bring into forefront their unheard voices into the living memory. But such

²⁷ Basnet, L.B. (1974). Sikkim a Short Political History: S. Chand, New Delhi.

²⁸ Saikai, Yasmin (2004). Fragmented Memories: Struggle to be Tai Ahom in India: Duke University Press

memories too could be constructed in an individual's mind- it may not always convey truth, which makes it unreliable for understanding the past and their root cause for studying identity studies. Rather than the past narratives, the reason for the identity assertion can be found in the socio-economic as well as political policies of the concerned Governments.

Their quest for their identity can be easily reflected from their actions. During the visit to the different Limboo villages, the elderly men as well as the youths assisted the researcher. Having the researcher belonged to the same community, the research generated interest in them too. They saw in the researcher the one who could further their quest in making of their identity. They kept the researcher in their house, fed the researcher, organized meeting with the Tumyanghangs²⁹ and even presented the researcher with their genealogies. Limboo identity has always remained flexible as it is based on oral tradition which gets erased with time. So, in this thesis the researcher have explored the theories given by various historians and writers on the origin and migration of the Limboos and have analysed how history writing, process of acculturation and assimilation have brought about changes in their identity over time. When the researcher initially started collecting the narratives of their origin and migration the researcher was petrified as the researcher felt that the sole responsibility of giving the Limboos a distinct identity would rest on the researcher as the story of their original homeland has always been a matter of discussion among Sikkimese Limboos. Now it was the researcher's task to tell them their story. Now the researcher became their voice, on the other hand the researcher feared that the researcher's Christian identity would create distrust. Though the researcher was born in a Limboo family but was also a Christian, who had no idea about the Limboo culture and tradition. So, the researcher started participating in their ceremonies, used archival sources along with their oral history and interviewed large section of Limboos. The researcher even started learning their language

²⁹ The Limboo elderly men are termed as Tumyanghangs.

and script, though it was a difficult task. In all, the Limboos were extremely helpful and took delight in teaching the researcher their language and script. Not only did they helped the researcher in teaching language but even provided with the documents and accompanied the researcher in several places.

MIGRATION THEORY

Hidden beneath the histories of great Kingdoms, war and conquest is the history of a fringe tribe, and their resistance and survival. Believed to be brave and cruel in battle, putting the old and weak to sword, carrying the younger to the slavery and killing on the march such captives who are unable to proceed³⁰; this marginal hill tribe collaborated with the state building processes both in Nepal and Sikkim. Political antagonism has resulted in their land being divided into two, thereby making the Limboos, a community which straddles the two nations of Nepal and India. Great battles were fought, political boundaries changed, old system of Governance was replaced by new ones; this ethnic group, however, has managed to survive despite such sharp changes.

The identity of this community have been continuously re-defined and re-interpreted, which have made this tribe sustain fluid identity under their changing history. The history of the Limboos particularly rests on the narration of stories of their ancestors by different agents in different periods of time, sometimes constructed by people on the basis of their preferences. It is this fragmented memories that has gained acceptance in present day. Though researchers like Vansittart reports that Phedap³¹ was the original homeland of

³⁰ Hooker, J.D (1999) .Himalayan Journal Vol I: Natraj Publishers Dhera Dun.

³¹ It's a place in modern eastern Nepal, bounded on the west by Tamor Arun watershed and on the south by Lumba River.

Limboos, several authors have alleged their own theories explaining the origin and migration of the Sikkimese Limboos.

The origin and migration issue of the Sikkimese Limboos is still a matter of debate and controversies and, without relevant documentary sources, has not, nor seems likely to be elucidated by the historians. The oral tradition of the Limboos mentions their creation by their god by mixing bamboo ashes and bird's stool. Though they are said to be among the earliest settlers of the land of Sikkim, their ancestors do have migrated from somewhere, sometimes back, as their oral tradition makes repeated mention of the migration of their ancestors. Although Xaxa³² holds that terming of tribals of India as an indigenous does not reflect an empirical reality and is more a political construction, I am terming the Limboos of Sikkim as an aboriginal indigenous people of Sikkim on the ground that they inhabited the landmass of Sikkim even before they were conquered by the people from outside and have been marginalised as an aftermath of conquest.

Limboo population is sometimes divided into three groups on the basis of their migration. The ones who did not migrate anywhere after getting settled in Limbuwan were known as Bhuiphuta or Khambongba Lungbongba; and the ones who migrated from Limbuwan region into Tibet and Kasi and came back to Limbuwan are known as Lasha gotra and Kasi gotra respectively. Such division amongst the Limboos is rejected by the elderly members of this community and terms such division to be a process that might have been adopted by their ancestors to get sanskriticized. Rather, it would have been the shifting of the villages by the Limboos to cope up with the ecological constraints that might have divided this community into such groups.

³² Xaxa, Virginius (1999). Tribes as Indigenous People of India: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 34, No. 51, pp.3538-3595.

THEORY OF KIRATA ORIGIN

The first and the widely accepted theory, is the theory of the Kirata³³ origin which is perhaps quite a wider concept as Kirata denotes wide range of ethnic community. According to the Kirata theory, the Limboos are descended from family of Kirat-asura, who once fought against the Aryans. Designating the Limboos as Kirata and varying in the issue of the migration, the authors have put forward different stories to support their theory. Kotturan³⁴, quoting from the Rigveda '*drive back the Kirats to the caravans*', says that the Limboos are the descendents from the ten brothers who decided to leave their home at the Indo-gangetic plains, due to the onslaught of Aryan invaders and settled down in the mountains of Eastern Himalayas. While Kotturan talks of the migration from Gangetic to the Himalayas, Sanyal³⁵, terming them as the inhabitants of the lower Himalayas, talks about their migration from Assam along the river Brahmaputra to India, some period before 1000 B.C. Sanyal writes '*a Mongolian tribe called the Limboos, a constituent of the great Kirat race that once inhabited the lower Himalayas from Punjab to eastern end of Assam, to Burma and Cacher, floated down from the high Himalayas as a great human stream to settle in south-eastern portion of modern Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Darjeeling district*'. Sinah³⁶, supports the view of Sanyal, whereby the migration of this tribe started from north-east of Assam into India and Tibet.

³³ In Sikkimese context Kirata comprises of many communities such as Rai, Yakkha and many others communities of mongoloid descent.

³⁴ Kotturan, George (1983). *The Himalayan Gateway-History and Culture of Sikkim*: Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd.

³⁵ Sanyal, Charu Chandra (1979). *The Limboos - A South Eastern Himalayan Kirata people*: Printed by-Dipti Printing & Binding Works 13M, Ariff Road, Calcutta-67.

³⁶ Sinah, A.C. (1994). *North-eastern Frontier of India - Structural Imperatives & Aspects of Change*: Indus Publishing House.

Quite different is the view of Gurung and Lama³⁷, who at one time quotes Swami Prapanacharya and designates the Limboos as the true Aryans having their own kingdom of Limbuwan, bordering the land of Rongs or the Lepchas. On the other, they state that the Limboos were one of the branches of Kirata tribes who according to Rig Veda, resided along the Kangra Valley of Northern India and even fought with the Aryans for forty years. Moving further, Gurung and Lama, discuss the presence of a cruel Limboo King Phurumpho, which resulted in Limboo's easy acceptance of the Namgyal Dynasty. But their theory fails to explain the process of migration of the Limboos from Kangra to Sikkim.

Likewise Subba³⁸, on one hand relates Limboo with the people of Indus Valley Civilization, claiming them to be the offshoot of ancient Indian race, who at the arrival of Aryans migrated to eastern Tibet and back to Limbuwan via Walangchuk and again on the other, he gives contrary opinion designating them as the nomads to have wandered in the various places of inner south-Asia. A highly civilized Harappans are again given a nomadic identity. It is quite unsure whether he is trying to explain that the Limboos after the coming of Aryans left their land and became wandering nomads or whether he is referring to something else.

If one goes by the theory put forward by Chemjong³⁹ whereby the term Kirata is used to define a race, one cannot talk about the sole identity of the Limboos. Chemjong (1966) is the first author who embarked on such a hypothetical archaeological and etymological synthesis

³⁷ Gurung M.M. & R.P. Lama. (2004). Sikkim-Study Series, Culture Part-I Vol.III. edited by M.P. Lama: Information & Public Relations Dept. Government of Sikkim.

³⁸ Subba (1999) relates Limboos with the people of Indus Civilization on the basis of similarity in their religious belief. For more details see Subba, J.R. (1999). The Limboos of the Eastern Himalayas - With Special Reference to Sikkim: Published by Sikkim Yakthung Mundhum Saplopa, Gangtok Sikkim.

³⁹ Chemjong, Iman Singh (1966). History and Culture of the Kirat People, 3rd ed. Publisher- Tumeng Hang Limbuwan East Nepal, Mechi Anchal.

and adopting Chaterjee's terminology, he regroups all mongoloid populations under the category of Kirata and perceives them as an essence⁴⁰. Wherever behavior, attitude, and culture are the topics of discussion, the use of race except as a symbolic marker for other lines of distinction is inappropriate. Race, also differs in culture- not just as a result of different histories, but intrinsically, as part of their very nature⁴¹. In fact the use of term Kirata to denote the mongoloid group seems to be constructed one as Schlemmer writes that Kirata indigenist try to write their own attested history by setting themselves up as dignified nation. Chemjong lists various hypothesis which makes him to see Kirata origin and influence in all the ancient civilizations from the Mediterranean Sea to Mongol or Cambodi and to him and his numerous followers, the historical anchorage and the guiding thread of their re-written history are confirmed by the word Kirata, thereby offering Kiratas a glorious perspectives⁴².

Though the oral tradition demarcates the southern boundary of the Limboos to the plains of India and the Indian Ocean, it never talks about their Indian ancestors. In fact the theory of Limboo migration from the plains of India to the Himalayas is not acceptable as the culture, customs, dress, food habits etc of this group is opposite to the Indians. The theory put forward by Subba (1999)⁴³, regarding their migration via Walungchuk is a common story that runs among this tribe and there are also stories of Walungpa being brought into Limboo fold.

⁴⁰ Schlemmer, Gregoire (2003/04). New Past for the sake of Better Future- Re inventing the history of Kirant in East Nepal: European Bulletin of Himalayan Research 25/26: 119-144.

⁴¹ Yinger, J. Milton (1997). Source of Strength? Source of Conflict? : Rawat Publications.

⁴² Schlemmer, Gregoire (2003/04). New Past for the sake of Better Future- Re inventing the history of Kirant in East Nepal: European Bulletin of Himalayan Research 25/26: 119-144.

⁴³ Subba, J.R. (1999). The Limboos of the Eastern Himalayas - With Special Reference to Sikkim: Published by Sikkim Yakthung Mundhum Saplopa, Gangtok Sikkim

Such conversion of people into Limboo fold is supported by their ritual of Chokphung, whereby many people are brought to their ethnic fold, but such ritual is no longer in practice. No doubt the Walungpas mostly settled in western part of Sikkim does share close relation with the Limboos and the ones who have recently migrated from Walung to Sikkim even speaks fluently in Limboo language; sometimes even translating the word Wa-Lung to be of Limboo origin as Wa in Limboo refers to fowl and Lung - stone, often rectifying that it refers to hen like stone.

THEORY OF CHINESE ORIGIN

The second theory, which is termed as the theory of Chinese origin, explains the migration of the Limboos from China. Chemjong⁴⁴ categorizing the Limboos as the Kiratas considers them to be the migrants from the Sichuan Yunan province of China, who left their native place due to the tribal antagonism and settled in a place called Nam Maw in north Burma under the leadership of Pongbo Hang. Further multiplying this group spread to east, west and south. A branch which spread to south-west settled in a place called Mokwan and began to address themselves as Shan Mokwan. Shan Mokwan migrated towards the hilly terrain of present East Nepal and came across the land of eight Kirata chiefs. Settled under the sovereignty of Kirata chiefs, they were suppressed which made the war inevitable. The Shan Mokwan emerged victorious, seized the country and fixed its boundaries as Tibet in the North, Jalalgarh near Purnea in the south, River Tista in the east and River Dudkosi in the west. Terming their land as Limbuwan, they divided the conquered land among the ten chiefs

⁴⁴ Chemjong, Iman Singh (1966). History and Culture of the Kirat People, 3rd ed. Publisher- Tumeng HANG Limbuwan East Nepal, Mechi Anchal.

and changed their name from Shan Mokwan into Yakha Thumba⁴⁵, meaning the head of hill tribes.

Chemjong⁴⁶ also accepts the similarity between the Limboos and the Karen, natives of Arakan and brings out the similarity in their culture, dress and military tactics. Strengthening his theory, he further writes that the compact mass of Limboos settled mostly in the western part of Sikkim signifies the existence of their historical kingdom of Limbuwan which later on was jeopardized by various invasions. There is no doubt in the argument that the bulk of Limboos are found in the western part of present day Sikkim and present east Nepal, and that this land at some point of time formed the land of the Limboos, so termed by the Limboos as Limbuwan, but it seems quite exaggerated as it is unable for a migrant group to win over the existing authority of the eight chiefs.

Subba⁴⁷ too is of the opinion that the Limboo progenitors were created through the process of biogenesis in the North East Asia during the ice age and started descending downward following Yellow River of north China and Yangtse River of south China. Collecting finger millets and dry paddy seeds on the way, this hunter-gatherer nomadic tribe arrived in the Himalayan region during the archaic period or as early as 25,000 years ago, bringing with them their practice of soyabean cultivation. Subba further writes that their Mundhum⁴⁸ demarcates their land as China-Tibet (Sinyuk Muden) in the north, the plains of India and Indian Ocean in the south (Teymen Worong), Arun River in the west (Aruna-

⁴⁵ The Limboos call themselves Yakhathumba, meaning the head of the hill tribes.

⁴⁶ Chemjong, Iman Singh (1966). History and Culture of the Kirat People, 3rd ed. Publisher- Tumeng HANG Limbuwan East Nepal, Mechi Anchal.

⁴⁷ Subba. J.R. (2012). Yumaism, the Limboo way of Life- A Philosophical Analysis: Yakthung Mundhum Saplappa, Gangtok Sikkim.

⁴⁸ Mundhum is the spiritual instruction from the Limboo ancestor which is passed down orally from generation to generation, through the institution of Shamans.

Baruna) and Brahmaputra in the east (Tusroti Umroti). After occupying the land of Limbuwan, they remain isolated from the rest of the world when finally they came into contact with the people of Sikkim in 1642 and Nepal in 1774. Having no strong monarchical system, this community managed their political, religious and social affairs through the social and religious council of Tumyanghang and Yehang respectively. No wonder that this tribe had come down from China but their isolated sustenance seems quite unacceptable.

THEORY OF TIBETAN ORIGIN

The third and the most accepted theory in Sikkimese context is the theory of Tibetan⁴⁹ origin, which upholds the view that the Limboos are the immigrants from the Tsang province of Tibet. This theory has always found favour in the Sikkimese historical writings as the Limboos are known as Tsong in the local Bhutia dialect⁵⁰, for having been migrated from the Tsang province of Tibet. The designation of Limboos as Tsong has often been a matter of confusion and controversy, which has contributed to the misleading identity formation of the Limboos, often confusing the writers like Bhattacharya and Joshi⁵¹. Leaving behind the state of confusion, the researcher goes on to explain the theory of the Tibetan origin. Authors like Risley (1894), Hooker (1999), Sagant (1996), Balikci (2008), Das (1902), Dutta Roy (1984), Subba (1999), Wangchuk and Zulca (2007) etc. have all supported this theory.

⁴⁹ Though Tibet now has become the part of People's Republic of China, in the above context I am talking of an independent Tibetan empire prior to the conquest of Tibet by China.

⁵⁰ Limboos are referred as Tsong by the Bhutias and Chung by the Lepchas, the same way Limboos refer to Bhutias as Mudenba and Lepchas as Emmeypa in their local dialect.

⁵¹ The writing of Bhattacharya and Joshi often creates confusion among the readers as in their work they have separated the Tsong from the Limboos. It seems that they were unaware that the name Tsong, Limboo, Subba and Yakhathumba denotes a single tribe. For details see Bhattacharya, Arpana. *The Prayer Wheel and Sceptre: Nachiketa Publications Ltd.* And Joshi, H.G. eds. (2004). *Sikkim-Past and Present: Mittal Publication.*

Comparing Nahangma, the Limboo goddesses, with God dgra-lha, of the nameless religion of Tibet, Sagant⁵² brings out similarity among the Limboos and the Tibetans. God dgra-lha is named by the word which means chief or a king and the word 'hang' used by the Limboos resembles the Tibetan power, 'dbang'. The Limboo goddesses Nahangma sitting at the top of the mountain resembles the sacred Tibetan mountain war gods. The powers feared by the Tibetan have their seats in all places: in the right shoulder, dgra-lha; in the right armpit, mo-lha; in the heart, zhang-lha. These Tibetan conceptions correspond to those of the Limboos. For Limboos and for Tibetans alike, 'the souls are hardly different from the gods'. And in Tibet, around 1900, the ga-ra butchers slaughtered their pigs in the same way as the Limboos by piercing the heart with the boar-spear⁵³.

Not only are the Gods and Goddesses similar among the Limboos and the Tibetans, but Wangchuk and Zulca (2007)⁵⁴ also talks about the Limboo ancestral affinity with the Tibetans. They are of the opinion that Uba Hang, who is said to have revived Yuma Samyo and discouraged Buddhism among the Limboos was the one who led the campaign in April 846CE southwards into Limbuwan and carved a new kingdom for himself. Even today the festival of Tong-Sum-Tong-Nam is celebrated in his name. If Wangchuk & Zulca talks about the royal origin of the Limboo ancestor, Sarat Chandra Das (1902) records the popular belief that Tibetan ancestors of Yakhathumbas, migrated into present Limbuwan through Kangla pass following the lost Yak and made their first settlement in Yangma valley of Tamar Khola region⁵⁵. Jones & Jones (1776) writes that the ten Kingdoms of Limbuwan corresponds to the

⁵² Sagant, Philippe (1996). *The Dozing Shaman- The Limbus of Eastern Nepal*: Delhi Oxford University Press.

⁵³ *ibid*

⁵⁴ Wangchuk Pema & Mita Zulca (2007). *Khangchendzonga - Sacred Summit*: Little Kingdom Pvt Ltd, Gangtok

⁵⁵ Subba, J.R. (1999). *The Limboos of the Eastern Himalayas - With Special Reference to Sikkim*: Published by Sikkim Yakhung Mundhum Saplopa, Gangtok Sikkim.

legendary founding of the Limbuwan by ten brothers who are believed to have migrated from Tibet and India. According to him, there were three brothers namely Khampen Hang, Tokle Hang and Murek Hang. It was the second brother Tokle Hang who travelled to Assam crossing river Teesta and it was his descendants who defeated the Lepchas and ruled over Limbuwan⁵⁶.

Dahal⁵⁷, talks about the religious convulsion that led to the mass migration of Limboos from Tibet to Bhutan and Nepal. According to him, the spread of Buddhism in Tibet led to the conversion of some Limboos into the new Buddhist fold. This led to the religious division among the Limboos, as the Buddhist Limboos got closer to other ethnic Tibetans belonging to the same fold. The dominated non- Buddhist Limboos were forced to migrate to Bhutan and Nepal. Again during 7th century A.D. Guru Padmasambhava arrived in Bhutan and tried to bring Limboos into Buddhist fold, discarded by the Limboos the Guru returned back north. This angered the Tibetan Buddhist who made attack on the Limboo settlement in Bhutan. They massacred the Limboos and the place in which this incident occurred is named as Tsong sa Dzong by the Dukpas of Bhutan. Then the remaining refugee Limboos moved eastward and settled down in Sikkim, which was under the domain of the Lepcha panu. The theory put forward by Dahal seems quite unacceptable as the Buddhist groups are shown to have travelled too far chasing the Limboos.

When one tradition talks about the migration of Limboos with the pioneer Lama Katog from the Tsang province, the shamans that researcher met during the field visit narrated the story about their migration from the Tibetan land along with their Guru Lha tsun

⁵⁶ Fitzpatrick, Ian Carlos (2011). Cardamom & Class- A Limbu Village and its extension In East Nepal: Vajra Publications.

⁵⁷ Dahal, Dharni Dhar (1984). Sikkim Ko Rajnitik Ithiaas: Vol. 1, Subba Prakashan Gangtok.

Chen po. According to this narration, Lha tsun Chen po, during his journey to the hidden land was accompanied by the Limboo followers. On the way, he climbs the mountain of Khangchendzonga (Phoktanglungma) for meditation and for conferring with the Sikkimese guardian deities. As he doesn't return for several days, the Limboos believing him to be dead begins to mourn but he finally returns back adding joy to the Limboos, and then they enter into Sikkim. This story of the Khamdaks⁵⁸ coincide with the Buddhist belief, which speaks of the place in the vicinity of Jannu where one of the monk who discovered Sikkim in the mid-seventeenth century, Lha tsun Chen po, meditated and conferred upon the Sikkim's guardian deities before opening the northern gate to the hidden land. The Khamdaks (Limboo subgroup), mostly settled in western Sikkim talks of their migration from the Tibetan region following their Guru Lha tsun Chen po. Even during the Manghenna⁵⁹, the Shamans once used to take their soul to the region of Kham in Tibet⁶⁰. Travelling through the rough road for an hour from Darap towards Rimbi in western Sikkim, two pine trees resembling the pine of the Dubde monastery can be seen from the distance. Having survived for hundreds of years, these trees are about 100ft high and 30ft wide. They believe that those pine seeds were given by their Guru Lha tsun Chen po to their ancestors Mana and Tojey. The elderly among the Limboos still pronounces Rimbi as Limbith, meaning 'a doubt whether the seed would grow into tree or not'. Below the pine trees is a Buddhist stupa (manay), which is quite surprising to be found among the Yumaist⁶¹ Limboos. The Khamdaks, though Yumaist by faith still calls upon the Buddhist monks for their rituals and Buddhist flags could be seen flanking in

⁵⁸ Khamdaks are one of the Limboo sub-groups.

⁵⁹ It is a Limboo ritual of holding one's head high. During the performance of Manghenna the soul of a person for whom the ritual is being performed enters the body of the Shamans. The Shaman in the trance takes his/her soul to the place of the ancestor, often uttering the voice of supernatural.

⁶⁰ But these days the Khamdaks claim Rimbi in western Sikkim to be their ancestral homeland. It might be a constructed local narrative, though not historically correct and might reflect other realities.

⁶¹ The Limboos are Yumaist by faith. They believe in their supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma.

the front porch of their houses. Not only do they profess Buddhism but even talked of their grandparents who were Buddhist monks by profession. But the presence of such pine trees all over western Sikkim especially at places such as Yuksam, Darap, Pelling and Geyzing creates doubt in such oral stories.

Even their migration with Guru Lha tsun Chen po seems constructed as on the basis of the evidence it appears that Lha tsun Chen po departed Tibet in the fifth month of 1646 (Fire dog Year) and arrived in Sikkim in the tenth month of the same year and it was around this time that he met the first Sikkimese Chogyal (King) in Yuksam near Narbugang, where he offered him the ritual ornaments of Chakravatin⁶². This evidence makes it impossible to accept the theory of Limboo migration following their Guru Lha tsun Chen po, and if it would have been true then there in fact would have been no need of signing the treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum, which shows that the rule of Phuntsok Namgyal did not remain uncontested but was challenged by the rebellion or war. Further, Lha tsun Chen po explains his reason for leaving Tibet to be the prevailing political climate in Tibet. While there is no specific evidence of individual persecution, the political climate in Tibet during the late 1630s and the early 1640s was a period of extreme upheaval, both in terms of Political organization and religious participation. It implies that at the time Lha tsun Chen po fled Tibet, he, his teachers or his religious traditions were under threat from the change in the balance of power in Central Tibet and the arrival of powerful Mongolian army and secondly, the consolidation of the Gelugpa⁶³ state, the coming of the age of Dalai Lama and his liberal attitude towards the

⁶² Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication

⁶³ Gelugpa means the 'virtuous tradition'. It is associated with His Holiness Dalai Lama. In the 17th century, the Gelugpa school became the most powerful institution in Tibet and it remained so until China took control of Tibet in 1950s.

Nyingmapa⁶⁴ traditions. It was the consolidating period of Central Tibet by forces loyal to the Dalai Lama and after the establishment of the Gelugpa dominance in Lhasa in 1642, that Lha tsun Chen po left for Sikkim⁶⁵.

THEORY OF POST-BOUNDARY MIGRATION

The fourth theory indeed is of the recent origin and speaks of the migration of the Limboos from the region of modern Nepal to modern Sikkim. Balikci⁶⁶ divides the Limboo population in Sikkim as early and later migrants. According to her, the Tsongs of the western Sikkim, belonging mostly to Lasha gotra and Buddhist by faith are the early settlers of Sikkim and has close affinity with the Bhutias and the Lepchas. The later migration took place during the reign of Sir Tashi Namgyal, when in 1938 a dozen of Limboos from Dhankuta in east Nepal who did the construction of Tsuk-La-khang (the royal Chapel) were later granted permission to settle and open fields within the Phodong Estate of Mangshila. The Limboos thus worked on rebuilding of the Gangtok Palace and its chapel after which Sir. Tashi Namgyal gave them permission to settle at the place of their choice on monastery land within the Phodong estate where the Lapos had asked for help in clearing the jungle of dangerous animals. They were paid in kind until cash was introduced in 1990. They initially worked as labourers for the Tingchim Lhopos in return for food until they had cleared sufficient fields for themselves. They cleared the jungle of dangerous beasts and helped

⁶⁴ Nyingmapa literally means 'ancient'. It is the oldest school of Buddhism and was started in Tibet by Guru Padmasambhava. This Red Hat sect of Buddhism incorporates local religious practices, local dieties, elements of Shamanism which is shared with Bon.

⁶⁵ Mullard has provided a detailed and interesting account of Lha tsun Chen po. For more details see Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

⁶⁶ Balikci, Anna (2008). *Lamas, Shamans & Ancestors - Village Religion in Sikkim*: Brill Publication.

Tingchim villagers carve paddy traces below the lake, and like Nepalese did everywhere in Sikkim, taught them how to plough and practice permanent irrigated agriculture. The most significant changes brought about in Tingchim by the arrival of the Limboo settlers were first in the expansion of methods of cultivation and later in the transformation of the whole economic structure of region. Among all the different ethnic communities represented in Sikkim, the Limboos are those who are the ones Tingchim Lhopos feel closest to and get on with best. Limboos are perceived as being sincere, adaptable and even respectful and grateful for working for the Lhopo landowners. The Limboo population of neighbourhood Mangshila has increased at much faster rate than the Lhopos.

Mangshila has close to two thousand Limboo inhabitants while Tingchim's Lhopos population of around two hundred and twenty has barely doubled since the 1920s, the increase in population is not only due to their high birth rate but also due to the constant flow of the new immigrants from Nepal in search of the economic opportunities in Sikkim. At first, there were only two Limboo families in the early 60s, relatives from Nepal of the Mangshila Limboos, but year after, more seasonal workers came and stayed after being offered the opportunity to cultivate one or more of a Lhopo's grain fields. While some families worked for Lhopos, others found work in building or road construction for the army or the state. Among the Limboos, settled in North Sikkim, none is from the Buddhist Tsong community. A few Limboo families in Tingchim belonging to the Lasha gotra consider themselves partly Buddhist and claim their origin in Tibet while the great majority of Tingchim Limboos are Hindus, belonging to the kashi gotra and claiming their origin in Varanasi, India.

This view of Balikci is supported by Sagant⁶⁷ who talks about the transformation of the Kipat land in East Nepal and the successive wave of immigration favored by the existing legislation which reduced the land available for farming and forced the Limboos to emigrate to Assam and Sikkim. The plot of land left by the Limboos who emigrated to Assam or Sikkim went with the office of the Subba, who lost no time in selling it in order to avoid trouble, should the emigrant return and challenge the transaction. Each year many people migrate from the village. They go down to Assam or Sikkim for a few months, looking for work to make up the deficit from their inadequate farms. There they join relatives who have been there for several generations. Caplan writes that if on one hand the Gurkha rulers sought to placate the Limboos, ever jealous of their rights, by providing safeguards of their lands. On the other hand, they lost no opportunity to reduce the area under Kipat tenure and at the same time convert these lands to raikar tenure (government land). The 'eating' of the Kipat land, as Limboo puts it, was possible because the documents confirming Kipat holdings did not specify the areas and boundaries: they simply said '*lands being cultivated from the time of your ancestors*'⁶⁸. So, in east Nepal, when the Hindus came as immigrant settlers they have tried, by fair means and foul, and with conspicuous success, to 'eat' Limboo land. So, the landless Limboo had no other choice but had to flee. Some migrants settled permanently as there was no longer enough land in Nepal and they were overhead and ears in debt. For poor there was only one solution: flight to Sikkim or Assam. Sinah⁶⁹ writes that during the cold

⁶⁷ For detail see Sagant, Philippe (1996). *The Dozing Shaman- The Limbus of Eastern Nepal*: Delhi Oxford University Press pg. 128.

⁶⁸ Subba, T.B. (1999). "Limbu Nationalism and Integration". In *Ethnicity, Nationalism & Integration*. edited by Ajit K. Danda: The Asiatic Society

⁶⁹ Sinah, A.C. (1994). *North-eastern Frontier of India - Structural Imperatives & Aspects of Change*: Indus Publishing House.

weather many Gurkhalis of martial castes, Rais, Limboos, come to work as sawyers in the Assam forest. Very few of them, however, settle down permanently in Assam.

The case study provided by Fitzpatrick⁷⁰ also talks about the migration of the Limboos from Nepal to Sikkim mostly as cardamom labourers, which enabled and still enables a section of the Limboo society in the villages of east Nepal to become wealthy and either buy a land or pay back the debts that they incurred, thereby reclaiming their land. Apart from the labour migration, Fitzpatrick also discusses the people fleeing away from their villages to abstain from the punishment. An example of a marriage between the eldest daughter of a Jaisi Chettri and a Limboo villager at the village of Mamangkhe, east Nepal goes on to prove the fact. This couple had run away from the village to get married and lived in Sikkim for seven years after which they returned back. If this study talks of temporary migration, there are also studies of Limboo couples who had to leave their village on marrying among the closed ones. Such couples had travelled and worked in Sikkim, often never returning back. Fitzpatrick even writes about the households of Jhapa, Nepal having the longest trend to have members who either worked in the army or in Sikkim. Hard hit by economic or else social problems, the Limboo chose Sikkim as their safest destination, and their choice for Sikkim might be due to cultural similarity as well as the presence of their kin group in that distant land.

Firzpatrick writes: *‘With the abolition of the Kipat land, the Limboo in the region of east Nepal began to turn to the Hindus for financial assistance in forms of loan which would be given in exchange for temporary possession of the Kipat land as mortgage, until the Hindu*

⁷⁰ Fitzpatrick, Ian Carlos (2011). Cardamom & Class- A Limbu Village and its extension In East Nepal: Vajra Publications.

creditor was repaid in full, with access to kiptat land covering the interest in loan. Increased debt led to the increased amount of Kiptat land being mortgaged, which in turn led to the increased debt. The Limboos, thus began to lose their land in the hand of the migrant Brahmin-Chettri settlers, whom the Limboos designate as cunning and industrious, and who were historically encouraged by the Gurkha state to settle in the east as a means of extending political and cultural control over unconsolidated territory. Ultimately, this all led to many Limboo becoming landless and obliged to work on other people's land as sharecroppers, find wage labour as agricultural workers, government employees or Gurkha soldiers or migrate else-where'.

The late migration of Limboos in Sikkim is temporary as well as permanent. During the researcher's field visit, the researcher came across few households viewed as the later migrants. They had come as the labourers among whom some of them have settled permanently while others returned back to their own homeland. This wave of early and later migrants is often denoted as U-Tsong and Khar-Tsong respectively. It is in fact this wave of continuous migration from the region of modern Nepal that might have made the writers designate them as the Nepalese. The Limboos claim present eastern Nepal and western Sikkim to be their ancestral land and that they have been living there since the time immemorial. The elderly Limboos believed that the names of places given below are those names that were given by their ancestors.

The name of the places in Sikkim believed to be of Limboo origin are as follows:

Table 1: The name of the places in Sikkim believed to be of Limboo origin

Limboo Name	Distorted Name	Meaning
Tumlabong	Tumlebong	Trees with large leaves from where the thread is produced
Mik-moo	Mikmoo ⁷¹	Shape of eyes
Lungak	Lungay	Place where big stone has to be crossed
So-hum	Som Dara	Hills
Si-dengbung	Siddey bong	Place where <i>Rubus ellipticus</i> is grown
Ip-sing	Ip-sing	Hidden Hills
La-khey	Lagay	Merry making land
Yoiksum ⁷²	Yuksam	Yiok means fort and sum means three in local Limboo dialect
Mang-sa-bung	Mangsabung	Place of Gods
Ting-ting lek lekpa	Ting ting	When one of the branches of the Limboo tribe arrived in this place, they came along a stone which produces sound like the tingling of the bell
Tharpu	Tharpu	Temporary tented place
Wa-jek	Bajek	Drizzling water
Phu Kam den	Daramdin ⁷³	Making earthen pots
Keray Thangay	Gerethang	Buck wheat cultivation
Chong lang	Chongrang	Place where millet is grown and harvested
La bing	Laring	Full moon
Mang-shela	Mangshila	Place of worship
Terap	Darap	Flat and fertile land
Sing-phereng	Singpheng	Place where log is dissected into two halves
Nambu	Nombu	Warm place to rest (Mana, the ancestor of one of the

⁷¹ There are some names which are in its original version.

⁷² It is quite difficult to put conclusion on some of the names such as Yuksam and Geyzing as Lepchas claim Yuksam to be of their origin meaning three monks in their regional dialect and the Bhutia writes Geyzing as Gyalshing which means Royal field in their local dialect. The Bhutia terminology seems quite appropriate as Gyalshing stands just below Rabdentse, the Sikkim Palace.

⁷³ The Lepchas refers to this place as Daramdin, the damaged lake.

		Limboo sub-group is believed to have rested on Nambu on his journey from Tibet)
Saryong	Soreng	Banana Orchard
Chezing	Geyzing	Place where dead bodies are kept
Tendam	Dentam	Place for fair
Hee-ma-phang-phey	Heegoan	Place to roam around
Saray-ba-dem	Siribadam	Scattered village
Chung ⁷⁴	Chung (Tsong)	Cold village
Limbith	Rimbik	Doubt whether the pine seeds given by Guru Lha tsun Chenpo would grow or not
Lungsugang	Lunsugoan	Place of stones
Nessa	Nessa	Spiritual cave
Tinglayang	Thingling	Place of throns
Parthang	Bhaluthang	Gifts
Lapchengee	Rabdentse	Place that resembles foot bone
Yangsum	Yangsum	Place for money collection
Mangdokbung	Mantabung	Place for millet cultivation
Lungyam	Lungyam	Stone

THE CHANGING IDENTITY – FROM LIMBOO TO NEPALESE

If in Limbuwan, east Nepal, the Gurkha state attached major importance to invite immigration to the hills and settle down in uninhabited country for helping it economically,

⁷⁴ The name of this place is pronounced as ‘Chung’ but it is written as ‘Tsong’.

socially and politically; the influx of what Bhasin⁷⁵ puts up as invasive Nepalese into Sikkim was greatly accelerated by the British for raising the state revenues and strengthening their position. White writes *'the coffers were empty and the first thing to be done was to devise some means by which we could raise the revenue'*. John C. White on being the Political Officer at Gangtok seriously took up the job of economic development for which he took up the Nepalese under his wing at the cost of alienating even the royal couple. This appears to have been part of the British ethnic policy in the eastern Himalayas in the 1890s. The sturdy and hard working class might have attracted the attention of the British for they were ready to take up any role that was provided to them. The Nepalese not only turned out to be a strong ally and mercenary force but also became pioneers of the British penetration into the eastern Himalayas⁷⁶. They were considered as an inexpensive labour force for the economic development of the eastern Himalayan marches⁷⁷. O'Malley writes *'the Nepalese are capable, cheerful and alert people, and are essentially a virile race. Though quick tempered and keen to resent an injustice, they are remarkably willing and loyal, if treated with consideration...Though small in stature, these Nepalese have big hearts...Naturally vigorous, excitable and aggressive, they are law abiding'*⁷⁸. The Nepalese were meant to support the British and thereby support their colonial interest. These hard working cultivators settled down on and cultivate any land he may find unoccupied without going through any

⁷⁵ Bhasin, Veena (1989). Ecology, Culture & Change - Tribals of Sikkim Himalayas: Inter India Publications, New Delhi

⁷⁶ Sinah, A.C. (1994). North-eastern Frontier of India - Structural Imperatives & Aspects of Change: Indus Publishing House.

⁷⁷ Sinah, A.C. (2007). "Communities in Search of Identities in Sikkim". In Problems of Ethnicity in North-East India. edited by Dr. B.B. Kumar: Concept Publishing Company.

⁷⁸ Sinah, A.C. (1994). North-eastern Frontier of India - Structural Imperatives & Aspects of Change: Indus Publishing House.

formality whatever, and once he occupied the land, and it was no one but only the Raja who could turn them out⁷⁹. The expansionist British also granted to the Sikkim ruler, Sidkeong Namgyal, the salute of fifteen guns and it was he who agreed to the first lease of land to the Nepalese settlement in Sikkim⁸⁰. Nepalese immigrants into the state of Sikkim began in the later half of the 19th century, and reached such proportions that laws were promulgated by the Sikkimese authorities to check the flow⁸¹.

Hutt writes that the whole of Nepalese 'diaspora' community is descended from emigrants from Nepal in Sikkim, for before the immigration of Nepalese into Sikkim there were probably villages inhabited by Limboos and Mangars (people now being classified as Nepalese), as well as the autochthonous Lepchas, during the seventeenth century⁸². With the exception of Lepchas, Limboos and to some extent Bhutias, all the communities in Sikkim are the migrants from Nepal during the last two hundred years or so. Some of them have moved to Sikkim during the Gurkha invasion in 1770s. Thus, none of them can claim distinct territory in Sikkim⁸³.

If in Limbuwan, modern east Nepal, the relationship between the Limboos and the migrant Hindu neighbours can be understood in the context of the confrontation over the land

⁷⁹ Edgar, J. Ware (1969). Report on a Visit to Sikkim & the Thibetan Frontier in Oct, Nov, Dec 1873, edited by H.K. Kuloy: Manjusri Pub house.

⁸⁰ Sinah, A.C. (2008). Sikkim Feudal and Democratic: Indus Publishing Company.

⁸¹ Caplan, Lionel (1970). Land and Social Change in East Nepal - A study of Hindu Tribals Relationship: University of California Press Berkeley & Los Angeles California, Printed in Great Britain

⁸² Hutt, Michael (1997). "Being Nepali without Nepal: Reflection on a South Asian Diaspora". In Nationalism & Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom- The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal, edited by David N Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka & John Whelpton: Harwood Academic Publishers.

⁸³ Sinah, A.C. (2007). "Communities in Search of Identities in Sikkim". In Problems of Ethnicity in North-East India. edited by Dr. B.B. Kumar: Concept Publishing Company.

as narrated by the Limboos themselves, the relationship between the Nepalese and Limboos in Sikkim were of mutual trust. The Limboos mingled with the so called Nepalese section of Sikkimese citizenry over the period of time testifying their openness and high degree of tolerance, living side by side, unable to keep themselves largely to themselves. It seems that the preponderant Nepalese culture against the Limboos never worried them until they submerged strongly within the Nepalese fold where their own ethnic markers faded in the process. They intermingled to such an extent that made authors like Basnet⁸⁴ to believe that the very name 'Sikkim' was the gift of the Nepalese. The history of Limboos seems to be misinterpreted for political ends.

They have adopted a new way of life influenced especially by the Hindu caste members, subjected to the process of Hinduization. The Hindu religion replaced their tribal faith whose oral tradition could not legitimize their tribal religion of Yumaism. Here, one can agree with Nari Rustomji's view that puts up 'tribal population is thinly spread. The influx, therefore, of even a handful of alien culture has an immediate impact, psychological as much as physical on indigenous population'⁸⁵.

Not only have the Limboos adopted the ways of Nepalese but even the Nepalese seems to have adopted some of the Limboo practices. One can view in some villages that the Nepalese have adopted the Limboo way of life to such an extent that they have become an inseparable part of the Limboo community. The researcher was quite amazed to see a Chettri village having accepted Yuma, the Limboo pantheon as their saviour. These Nepalese with a great capacity of acculturation have even adopted the language of the Limboos. Such people

⁸⁴ Basnet, L.B. (1974). *Sikkim a Short Political History*: S. Chand, New Delhi.

⁸⁵ Ghosh, Lipi (1997). "Ethnicity, Religion and Identity Question - A Northeast Indian Profile". In *Politics of Identity & Nation Building in Northeast India* by Girin Phukon and N.L. Dutta: South Asian Publishers Pvt Ltd, ND.

are more Limboo in their way of life than those Limboos who have converted themselves to Christianity, thereby forgetting their ancestral belief. The ones converted to Christianity have gradually started forgetting their traditional social and cultural traits as what Phukon⁸⁶ rightly puts it that cultural crisis is accentuated together with the increasing acceptance of the concept of 'modernity'.

The Limboos have disowned their traditional dress, often perceived as a marker of identity, and have been greatly influenced by western tradition. The influence of modernisation is clearly visible among this ethnic group. It is only recently while struggling for their rights and resources that they have started specifying their culture and religion as a dagger in fighting their distinct identity. They have started rejecting the Hindu notions, reformed their religion and have even erected new religious structures. Marginalisation of Limboos has perhaps sharpened their ethnic identities and now they are trying to protect their identity from the onslaught of other culture.

It seems that with the passage of time, their attachment of being Nepalese moved them away from the Namgyals ruling over them. Thus, the attachment between the ruler and the ruled also widened making the Limboos feel neglected and suppressed politically, culturally, and economically as well as linguistically making poverty a part of their life. Some young Limboo generation of today even think that had the Chogyal been able to win the heart of the majority of the Limboos, he could have prevented the merger of Sikkim. However, it remains doubtful as majority of the Limboos at that time was poverty stricken, uneducated and lacked nationalistic sentiment. Change in government would have made little or no difference to them. Infact, in the eyes of Palden Thendup Namgyal, the last Namgyal ruler of Sikkim, the Limboos were the aboriginals of Sikkim having a distinct identity and had close

⁸⁶ Phukon, Girin (2003). *Ethnicisation of Politics in North East India*: South Asian Publishers.

affinity with the Bhutias and Lepchas. And when the power began to shift from the hands of Chogyal to the Indian government, the Limboos politically merged in the Nepalese group when their Tsong seat in the State Assembly was abolished, thinking them to be the part of Nepalese. Limboos thus, lost their last hope of having distinct identity when Sikkim became a part of the Indian Union making Palden Thendup Namgyal, the last Chogyal of Sikkim stand up alone in his battle for holding up Sikkim's identity.

Migration is defined as a permanent or semi- permanent change of residence, usually across some type of administrative boundary. Unlike the singular demographic events of birth and death, a person can migrate many times, for varied durations, and across numerous territorial divisions. The inherent complexity of most migrations-especially those within and between poor countries hinders our understanding of the ways migration affects and is affected by economic development and inters- national relations. In the large, migration studies range from micro scale psychological analyses of migrant decision-making to macro scale economic models of labor flows between the periphery and the core of the world economy. Although most migration theories accent economic factors at the expense of coercive elements, some theorists are taking into account cultural, ethnic, and political influences. Of the many who have limited opportunities or who are oppressed in their home communities, only a fraction will actually decide to relocate, and an even smaller fraction will have the means to do so⁸⁷. Sometimes environmental factors or socio-economic as well as political conditions which are so brutal to threaten one's life may also lead to the population dislocations. Such brutal conditions force people to migrate for survival. If some migrations are caused by life threatening problems, there are migrations which are caused by the desire of the people to lead a better life or say for the material gain. Wars, revolutions, the

⁸⁷ Gardner, Robert W. (1981). "Macro Level Influences on the Migration Decision Making Process". In DeJong G.F. and R W. Gardner eds Migration Decision Making. New York: Pergamon Press.

rapid development of an international economy, desolate political and economic conditions in many countries, perceived opportunities abroad, and threatened population decline or shortage of workers in several developed countries are among the forces that have sent tens of millions of immigrants, guest workers, refugees, and illegal migrants across state lines. Some have moved willingly, even gladly; others reluctantly; and still others under threat of violence⁸⁸. For the Limboos, they began to be viewed as migrants because the boundaries of the place within which they lived shifted.

The migration is based on the decisions of individual families responding to basic human needs, and consequent disruptions have to be balanced against these families' (and villages') existing hopelessness and marginality. With migration, families of these regions are often able to improve their income positions vis a vis those of more economically advanced regions. Furthermore, unlike other inter- national flows into such regions, remittances reach the hands of thousands of migrant families, rather than families of a few entrepreneurs or social leaders. The decision-making power behind migration and behind the spending of remittance earnings is similarly dispersed. Contrast this with the concentration of decision making in other matters that profoundly affect the lives of rural poor in developing nations, such as agricultural credit and infrastructural improvements by national and state government officials, establishment of local industry and commerce by entrepreneurs, provision of adequate city services by local government officials, social and political leadership by local elites, and so forth. It follows that for the poor international migration may be more certain and secure pathway to economic and social mobility than local opportunities within the existing system⁸⁹.

⁸⁸ Yinger, J. Milton (1997). *Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* : Rawat Publications

⁸⁹ Grindle, M.S. (1988). *Searching For Rural Development: Labor Migration and Employment in Mexico*. Ithaca. N.Y. : Cornell University Press.

The fluid and changing boundaries led to the fluidity in the identity of the Limboos of Sikkim, sometimes giving them the indigenous identity and at the same time defining them as a migrant group. Sometimes shifting the village in order to cope up with the ecological constraints does make historians to term their shifting of village as a migration caused by economic or religious-political order. But in the case of Limboo it seems that more than their shifting, their border land has shifted. Mullard describes the early Sikkimese areas directly and indirectly under the rule of Phuntsok Namgyal with the regions in the modern west Sikkim, small parts of eastern Nepal (namely parts of Limbuwan) and areas just east of Ravangla. There are number of documents in the palace archives, which details the taxes collected by Sikkim in what is now eastern Nepal⁹⁰. It suggests that some of the land of the Limboos was under the authority of the Namgyal Dynasty. The policies of war and conquest has in fact re-defined the boundaries and made the Limboos straddle between the two nations of modern Nepal and India. The Limboos have not migrated but the boundaries of the land within which they lived have shifted. Hermanns writes *'Tradition holds that, after the Lepchas, the Limboos are the oldest inhabitants of the place having settled there even before the Tibetans and the Nepalese came to settle in the land'*⁹¹. Though it can't be denied that the humans originated in Africa but it can be estimated that the Limboos have been living in the land of what Limboos term as Limbuwan since time immemorial. So, with the division of the land and the fixing up of new boundaries, the Limboos themselves got divided into two as the Sikkimese and the Nepali Limboos. So what is called migration appears to be the change in borderland caused by various reasons. But such change in the boundary has been in the later

⁹⁰ Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication

⁹¹ Hermanns, Fr. Matthew (1954). *The Indo-Tibetans*: Printed by J.S. Pereira at the Examiner Press, Bombay & Published by K.L. Fernandes, Bandra, Bombay 20.

years interpreted differently, thereby terming the Limboos as immigrants into the areas of Sikkim. Limboos has therefore been made the victims of such historical writings.

Apparently, the land of Limboos has been an important juncture of trade in the early times between India-Nepal and Tibet. The trade network that they carried out made them move towards the region of Tibet, often marrying the Tibetans and settling there. It was from Tibet that some of the Limboos migrated to Sikkim in the later years making them designate as Tsongs. James S. Olson in his 'ethno-historical dictionary of China' writes: '*Historically there has been a great deal of contact between Tibetans and the Limboos because of their Himalayan passes from Sikkim into Tibet's Chumbi valley...today because of their historical commercial relationship and the current proximity to the Tibetan border and the Himalayan trade routes, it is likely that at any given time hundreds of Limboos are living in the Tibetan region of the People's Republic of China*'⁹².

The word 'Tsong' might have also been used to designate the trader⁹³ class. The oral narration also talks about Limboos who traded in cattle. The people in western Sikkim narrate that their forefathers were small agricultural traders. Even Waddel explains that the Limboos came to Sikkim with the cattle trade and became 'the chief cattle merchants and butchers of Sikkim'⁹⁴. The Limboos might have settled in the eastern Himalayan belt from the time immemorial, and it was their trading business which made them shift their location during those time when boundaries were flexible; mostly settling in the region which now falls under East Nepal and western Sikkim. The war of conquest and the fixation of the new boundaries,

⁹² Olson, James S. 1998. An Ethno-historical Dictionary of China: Greenwood Publishing Group.

⁹³ In Bhutia dialect trader is referred as Tsong pen and in Lepchas dialect trader is referred as Tsong bun.

⁹⁴ Risley, H.H. (1894). Gazetteer of Sikkim: B.R. Pub., New Delhi.

led to the misleading identity formation of the Limboos. It seems misleading to view such change in the demarcation from the context of migration.

Thus, the change in the boundaries, trading occupation, shifting of the villages, scarcity of food and resources and the process of acculturation made the Limboos gain different identity in the modern era. With the influx of inexpensive Nepalese labour force by the British for raising the state revenues, the Limboos began to get acculturated into their fold, with the abolition of Tsong seat in the State Assembly they began to lose their distinct identity and finally got submerged into the Nepalese fold. Though they are acknowledged to be one of the earliest settlers of the Sikkim along with the Lepchas but the colonial administrative discourse progressively classified them as Nepalese when the land revenue rates were finalized. It was only a small proportion of Limboos who migrated to Sikkim in the 19th century⁹⁵ but this later migration of the Limboos in small amount also to some extent changed the fate of the Limboos from being indigenous to migrant.

⁹⁵ Arora, Vibha (2007). Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim: Sociological Bulletin.

CHAPTER 3

PERSPECTIVE OF LIMBOOS TOWARDS NAMGYAL DYNASTY

The previous chapter dealt with several migration theories that give different identity to the Limboos of Sikkim. Although, they had migrated in some period of time but they are the ones to have resided in the state of Sikkim even before there was Sikkim itself and have contributed in the state – building process. Even the name ‘Sikkim’ belongs to the Limboos, which means new house in Limboo language. This chapter deals with the formation of Sikkim and the rise of the Namgyal dynasty, the Namgyal rule and the conditions of the Limboos under their reign. The chapter then concludes with the end of the Namgyal rule, the merger of Sikkim into the Indian Union and finally the perspective of Limboos towards the Namgyal dynasty.

COLLECTING PAST MEMORIES- THE TALE OF THEIR HEROES

The Mundhum mentions that Uba Hang, the son of King of Tibet Lasa Hang was forced to migrate to Limbuwan¹. Uba Hang with the spiritual guidance of Yuma led his campaign southwards and carved out the Kingdom of Limbuwan. The Limboo tradition narrates that in the beginning ten Limboo settlers had divided up the country, each taking a position as he arrived. A stone was erected in the ground to mark the boundry. Remains of such stone can still be seen in Mewa and Tamur valleys of East Nepal². There are the

¹ Uba Hang, the son of Tibetan King Lasa Hang had to migrate to Limbuwan region after his father was murdered by a monk in 839 CE. See Wangchuk, Pema & Mita Zulca (2007). Khangchendzonga - Sacred Summit: Little Kingdom Pvt Ltd, Gangtok

² Sagant, Philippe (1996). The Dozing Shaman- The Limbus of Eastern Nepal: Delhi Oxford University Press.

narratives which suggest the existence of ten head-men ruling over seventeen districts (thums). The Limboo tradition says that they are descendants from ten brothers whose descendants multiplied so quickly that they became a nation, and a powerful one. The Limboos are viewed as a ferocious natural warrior. Their bravery made the Nepalese ruler had hard time dislodging them. Their land and the surroundings have made them the natural warrior tribe. The colonial records term them to be cruel and brave which made the Rajah of Nepal employ them in his army. Hooker³ writes that they are more slender and swiney than the Lepchas and the striped kirtle of the Lepchas are substituted by the loose cotton trouser and a tight jacket; a sash is worn round the middle and on the head a small cotton cap.

The oral narrative of the Limboos speaks of their ten chiefs. According to the narratives, the land of the Limboos was divided into ten districts which were held under the ten chiefs. Each chief had built his fort and fixed the boundaries of his district. The divided lands are as follows:

1. Samlupli Samba Hang was elected king of Tambar district who built Tambar fort. He ruled his district occupied by Phenduwa, Patlungwa, Potangwa, Tawa, Bantawa, Paksangwa, La bung, Sam sing bung, and other tribes.
2. Si si yen shering Hang was elected king for the district of Mewa and Maiwa. Formerly, Maiwa state was a separate district, but after the war it was combined to Mewa district. The king of this district built his fort at Meringden and ruled Shering, Chong bang, li bang, Fa go, No go, Nal bo, Tho long, Samba and other tribes.
3. Thok tok Ang bo Hang was elected king of Athrai district. Formerly, this district was a part of Phedap district. But it being a very big district, it was made separate from Phedap district and placed it under a separate king. He built his fort at Poma Jong and

³ Hooker, J.D (1999) .Himalayan Journal Vol I: Natraj Publishers Dhera Dun.

- ruled Ang bo Hang, Kon dongwa, Ing nam phen, Yok sho ba, Sen dang, Poma, Loktam and Iwa and other tribes.
4. Tin do lung khokya Hang was elected king for Yang war ok district. He built his fort at Hastapur and ruled Mabo, Thebe, Loksom, Setling, Tamling, Saling, Kambang and other tribes.
 5. Ye nga so Papo Hang was elected king for Panchthar district. He built his fort at Yashok and Pheden and ruled Tumbapo, Tumrok, Angdembe, Shermali, Song bang phe, Kurung bang, Nem bang, Thegim, Makhim, Lauti, Miyong and other tribes. He fixed his southern boundary at river Samba was and not as the present river Na wa.
 6. Sheng Sen gum Phedap Habg was elected king for Phedap district, who built his fort at Pokla bang and ruled Pong yangu, Ningleku Song bang phe, Pangen Hang, Ka we pung, Phom bo, Chong bang and other tribes.
 7. Mung Tai chi Emey Hang was elected king of Elam Phakphok or Char Khola district who ruled Rong or Lapcha, Lingdom, Loktam, Photro, Patrey, Songmi, Rongong, Kabo, Taknel, Mechi, Guling, Sang pheng, Sangut, Yong ya hang and other tribes. He built his fort at Angdang and Elam.
 8. Soi yak Lado Hang was elected king of Chaubis or Bodhey district who ruled over Chemjong, Song yok, Vaji or Waji, Tharu, Dhimal, Koche, and other tribes. He built his fort at Shanguri and fixed his northern and southern boundaries in Samba wa and Jalal Garh near Purnea.
 9. Tampe so Perung Hang was elected king for Terah Thum district. This district was also included in Phedap district in the former days. But after the third revolution of the Kirat people, this district was separated and placed it under the separate king who built his fort at Thala and ruled Tum bangphe, Sho demba, Teyungba, Phedop, Kobyak and other tribes.

10. Taklung Khewa Hang was elected king for the Chhethar district. The western boundary of this district in those days had extended as far as river Dud koshi. He built his Chamling Chimling fort at Khotang and ruled Maden, Tumba, Chongbang Tegla, Mangyak, Anglabang, Chamling and other Khambongba Kirat tribes⁴.

After the partition of their land of Limbuwan into ten districts, these leaders gathered, assembled and decided to name themselves as Yakhathumba or head of the hill tribes. The narrative of their rulers suggests that their rulers were looked upon to have divine powers. The story of their famous kings Bali Hang, Sirijunga Hang and his incarnation Sirijunga Tyeongsi reflects the notion of King's divine powers.

THE HIDDEN LAND

Sikkim, with its geographical location has been important seat of trade making it desired for its neighbours. Such desired location has made Sikkim a seat not only of trade but of continual warfare. From some of the earliest written documents of Sikkim references are made of three different and clearly identifiable ethnic groups: the Lho po or Tibeto-Sikkimese, the Lepcha or Rong and the Limboo⁵. Though civilization in Sikkim has started as early as 10,000-5,000 B.C., but the history of Sikkim revolves around the coming of the Lamas and the formation of the Namgyal dynasty. Sikkim before the Namgyal Dynasty was a patchwork of autonomous region ruled independently by the Lepchas and Limboos. The Tibetan traders, farmers and lamas were in search of new areas for colonization long before the 15th century. Sikkim at that time was very sparsely populated by the Lepchas and the

⁴Chemjong, Iman Singh (1966). History and Culture of the Kirat People, 3rd ed. Publisher- Tumeng HANG Limbuwan East Nepal, Mechi Anchal.

⁵ Mullard, Saul (2011). Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History: Brill Publication.

Limboos⁶. During 15th cen. the Bhutia rulers had been able to subjugate the Lepchas easily because of their latter conversion to Lamaism and the Limboos had been contained to the great extent. Prior to the arrival of Tibetan Lamas, Sikkim was a stateless society and that these lamas are wholly responsible for introducing state structures by plucking a lowly farmer from Gangtok to rule over a diverse population in western Sikkim. Many specialist of Tibet and the Himalaya know that Sikkim is considered as a hidden land, theoretically and spiritually separated from the world at large. Yet contrary to the theoretical model, interaction between Sikkim and the wider region was prevalent⁷. The history of Sikkim therefore begins with the coming of the three Lamas to the hidden land and the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty. The coming of the lamas and the founding of the new dynasty was the cause of what Mullard⁸ defines as ‘degeneration time’ in Tibet. The Mongolin and the political instability as well as the conflict between the Red Hat and Yellow Hat sect of Buddhism in Tibet that made many fortunate people to take refuge in the hidden land. The hidden land was then opened by the four Yogins- from the north came Lha tsun Namkha jigmed (1597-1653); from the west came the teacher known as Kahthog pa Kun zangpo (1615-1672); from the south came the sovereign Lord, Ngadag sempa chen po Phuntsok rigzin (1604-1670)⁹. Ngadag Sempo’s proclaim to be the ruler of the hidden land being the descendent from the lineage of Khri srong de san was shattered by the prophetic tradition of the Nyingmapa stating that the

⁶ Sinah, A.C. (2008). *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*: Indus Publishing Company.

⁷ Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

⁸ Mullard, Saul (2005). The ‘Tibetan’ formation of Sikkim: religion, politics and the construction of a coronation myth: *Bulletin of Tibetology*; Vol.41 No. 2.

⁹ The words Lhasun Namkha jigmed will be further written as Lha tsun Chenpo, Khathog pa Kun zangpo as Kahthog Zangpo and Ngadag sempa chen po Phuntsok rigzin as Ngadak Sempo throughout this thesis. For more details see Ehrhard, Franz-Karl (2005). The mNga’ bdag family and the tradition of Rig ‘ dzin zhig po gling pa (1524-1583) in Sikkim.

fourth person coming from the easterly direction should be made the king. Thus Phuntsok Namgyal was made the Dharmaraja of Sikkim¹⁰ and it was his descendant who ruled over the hidden land for more than three hundred years when it was finally merged with the Indian Union in the year 1975.

The formation of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim was not of a peaceful one, there were competition from both the rival groups i.e. the Lepchas and the Limboos. The ritual of making Phuntsok Namgyal, the legitimate ruler was done at Yuksam. Surveying these areas of Yuksam, one can still find the majority of Bhutias, Lepchas and Limboos in this region which makes it clear that all these three communities played an important role in the formation of the Namgyal dynasty and that Phuntsok Namgyal had to conduct the ritual in order to assert his supremacy amidst the Limboo and Lepchas. Had there been a peaceful establishment of the Namgyal dynasty, there would have been no ritual for seeking legitimacy or the signing of any treaty. The battle between the three forces and the Namgyals winning over the battle might have led to the signing of the treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum.

TREATY OF LHO MON TSONG SUM

Though there is paucity of information regarding the Limboos but they entered the historical documents as early as the 15th century in the treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum. This treaty might be taken as an early reference of the Limboo chiefs who had fought with the Bhutias and were later obliged to sign the treaty. Tsong refers to the same group of Limboos as addressed in the Bhutia dialect. In the context, war might have occurred among what Mullard calls Proto states under Phuntsok Namgyal. Defeated by Phuntsok Namgyal, the Lepcha and Limboo signatories have signed the treaty, thereby abiding to live by a single

¹⁰ Mullard, Saul (2005). The 'Tibetan' formation of Sikkim: religion, politics and the construction of a coronation myth: Bulletin of Tibetology; Vol.41 No. 2.

government. This is a useful way to understand the polity of early proto state. The Limboos were strong enough to challenge the Bhutia overlordship, which they tried to win over by marital alliance and religious conversion and by establishing hereditary rights over their land. It is certain that the first Chogyal by Royal Proclamation granted to the chiefs of Limbuwan full internal autonomy which was further strengthened by the matrimonial alliance made during the reign of second Chogyal Tensung Namgyal¹¹.

According to the treaty of LMT, the Lho, Mon and Tsong without their body, speech or mind distracted were to assemble in the hidden land of Guru Rinpoche¹², in their wrathful forms and observe their events. Even the deities and guardians worshipped by these three communities were to witness the event. This treaty was basically meant to unify the three communities under the supreme government as it was believed that only through the unification of these three communities great benefits would be bestowed on them. This treaty also gives the evidence that in the earlier phase there had been a rebellion among the Lho, Mon and Tsong as according to the treaty any one who would act against the law of the treaty in future would be punished by the deities. The deities would appear in their wrathful form and witness their punishment. The punishment would be to pay three measures of gold to the legal officer, physical torture and even death. The Lho Mon and Tsong were to respect each other's deities and act in accordance to the wishes and commands of the Chogyal and serve him in all times. This treaty also reminds that belief in the supernatural powers were strong enough to create fear in the mind of the people and bind them together.

Now, what is unsure about is whether this war was a rebellion against Phuntsok Namgyal by groups under his authority or a war directed by independent fiefdoms against a

¹¹ Kotturan, George (1983). *The Himalayan Gateway-History and Culture of Sikkim*: Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd.

¹² Guru Padmasambhava or lotus born Buddha.

mutually recognizable threat to the existing balance of power in the region; that is, a war against Phuntsok Namgyal and his expanding dominion. The language used seems to illustrate a rebellion as it stated in the treaty that the signatories must abide by the Chogyal's commands, which indicates that the rebellious groups did not do earlier. It is clear, however, that this document was in all likelihood written after the end of the hostilities and after Phuntsok Namgyal had consolidated his control of the area. In short, it could be read as peace treaty of sorts, recognizing the new political reality of seventeenth century western Sikkim¹³. This treaty as well as Tensung Namgyal's marriage with the daughter of the Limboo chieftain conforms the significance of Limboo chiefs who had earlier questioned and as well as denied the authority of Namgyal dynasty.

Thus, in the late 1650s Lepcha and Limboo rebellion occurred against the rule of Phuntsok Namgyal which led to the signing of the treaty of LMT and thereby the acceptance of the rule of Phuntsok Namgyal by the Lepcha, Limboo and Tibeto-Sikkimese and thus was the peaceful establishment of Sikkimese state in accordance with the prophetic tradition of Guru Rinpoche¹⁴. The treaty of LMT stands upright reminding of the old brotherhood treaty among the Lepchas, Bhutias and the Limboos. These three communities had taken a solemn oath that they would not fight among themselves and would remain united with one another. In order to avoid rebellion from the local leaders, the king gave them hereditary rights over the land in exchange for military duties and constant flow of revenue through taxes on produce and services¹⁵. The kingdom was divided into 12 Dzongs (districts) and placed under 12 Lepcha Dzongpons (governors). He also appointed 12 Kalons (ministers) from the

¹³Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

influential Bhutia families of Sikkim and formed a Council of 12 ministers¹⁶. The state administration is said to have consisted of twelve Lhopo ministers and twelve Lepcha Dzungpons, creating bi-ethnic political class. There is no mention of the Limboo ministers or dzongpon. If the Lepcha land was placed under twelve Dzungpons the King might have given full autonomy to the Limboo chiefs whose land was divided into ten districts. It was during the Gurkha expansion under Prithivi Narayan Shah that led to the loss of all the Lepcha and Tsong lands.

The treaty of Lho Men Tsong tsum has been reproduced as follows¹⁷:

Please take heed, Please observe, Please listen! From Dharmakaya Samanthabhadra, who, from the beginning, was the protector [to] the root Guru [and] the highest dharma protectors, who have been bound by vow are requested to form a great assembly and without body, speech or mind distracted elsewhere, arise in your wrathful form and observe [this event]; and with the Male and female dharma protectors and the personal deities of the father and son, the Mchod yon and the Chos rgyal [Chogyal] are requested to form a great assembly, without your body, speech or mind distracted elsewhere and having [appeared] in your wrathful form please observe [this event].

The glorious protector Mahakala, the supreme Ma ning nag po, the protectors who have been motivated by the dharma and who possess the precious qualities of the Body, speech and mind; Ra hu la, the eight classes of gods and demons of the phenomenal world and without your body distracted elsewhere please observe [this event].

The Chos rgyal chen po, all his consorts, ministers and subjects to whom Guru Rinpoche gave his commands and his retinue of the three classes of

¹⁶Kazi, Jigme N. eds. (1993). No seat No vote - Spotlight of Sikkim: Creative & Investigative Journalism.

¹⁷Mullard, Saul (2011). Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History: Brill Publication.

earthly gods [bdud btsan and klu], rdo rje shugs ldan, rdo rje dgra 'dul, pe har rgyal po, the rgyal po of recent and ancient times and the eight classes of violent deities being assembled together, without body speech or mind distracted elsewhere appear in wrathful form and please observe [this event].

The great treasure holder of this supreme hidden land, Mdzod inga stag rtse, Thang lha, Ga bur Gang btsan, the twelve local goddesses, the female possessor bdud lcam dral, the sri in this [land], the protectress of the teachings: Ekajati, the female guardians, the guardians of the middle valley [of] Dpa' bo hum ri and the hundred thousand armies of Lha, btsan, bdud and klu may also appear in their wrathful form and without their body speech or mind distracted elsewhere, please observe [this event].

The guardian dieties of Sgrub sde gsang sngags rdo rje ldan holding the lienage of Rdzogs pa chen po, the armies of bdud, btsan and klu residing in the mountains, valleys, trees rocks, lands and pastures, The guardian dieties and treasure holders of Theg chog yang rtse, Padma yang rtse, Rab ldan rtse, Brag dkar bkra shis sdings and so fourth should assemble together, in this hidden land of Guru Rinpoche, in their wrathful forms and observe [this event].

All the deities and guardians worshipped by us the people of four parts of Bkr shis steng kha, and all the districts [of this land such as] 'Bar spungs, Ling dam, and the protector dieties and the patron of the religions of Gtsong¹⁸ and Mon without their minds distracted else-where, please observe [this event].

Hence fourth conforming to the command of his majesty, the humble ministers and leaders of Lho, Mon, Gtsong have met here with the desire for unification and solidarity and hereby make the statement that there shall not be separate governments of Lho, Mon or Gtsong.

During the previous Mon pa war [people] from all the different ethnic groups intentionally rebelled and this has been remembered. Henceforth from this year of the Water Hare year take hold [of this order] and in accordance with the orders of the Lord the Chos rgyal [The Lord who is the aggregates of the

¹⁸ Here Tsong has been written as Gtsong, as in the translation.

mchod yon, father and son] laid down the affirmation and grasped the solution and so the humble and dedicated minister Dag shar [affixed his] seal.

The eight clans of Tibeto-Sikkimese and the people of Lho Mon Gtsong will have one destiny without separate governments. And so great benefits will come to those people who are united.

If [the Lho Mon and Gtsong cause] misery form the exterior to come within the unregistered enemies, who donot abide by this agreement, cause the disturbance of the exterior to come into Sikkim and oppose the dharma etc the Lho Mon Gtsong will act from the point of view of the single government. The actual deities[as mentioned above] will see the truth and appear in their wrathful forms and shout Hum phat¹⁹ and they will see and they are requested to eat the flesh, blood and heart etc. without delaying for a year, month or day and cause them to be overcome with madness. Kha ram kha yi!

The Lho Mon Gtsong, who are without separate Government, should respect what is contained within this document and respect the deities mentioned in accordance with the command. [If] the humble ministers fulfill this statement and [act] in accordance with the wishes and intent of the Chos rgyal and serve whatever arises [whether peaceful, physical or war] and also fully serve in accordance to the single unity [of this land], whenever need arises; The above mentioned deities will see this and are requested to bestow upon those longevity, wealth and glorious merit [i.e. those who fulfill the obligations of this agreement] like the waxing moon.

In particular if this agreement is broken it will be done like this. Having followed the unofficial rules [i.e. rules which are not sanctioned by the government], if any one from the Lho Mon or Gtsong follow the illegal laws or act in this way, whoever they are will, if they have the ability to pay three measures of gold to the legal official, be released from the violation, otherwise the punishment [for breaking this law] is death or [in the case of]

¹⁹ This is the mantra which has the power to destroy an enemy

small [violation] physical torture. With no doubt at all, each individual must keep this in their mind!

The representatives have signed and affixed their seals in accordance with this agreement.

The seal of the Sikkimese Minister Gra shar; The seal of the leader of Bkra shis steng ka, the chamberlain Bde chen rnam rgyal; The seal of the leader, the representative Thar' thing of 'Bar spung; the seal of the leader and representative, Rdo leg. The seal of Bstan chos from Lingdam, the seal of the representative Chos' grug; the seal of the representative 'Guru, from 'Grang sdod; the seal of Snag po the representative of Bod 'grong; The seal of 'Bang sha hi from the Gtsong shu spu; The seal of the Limbu 'Yug shugs.

The seal of Mo nang; The seal of Brtsa itas; The seal of sig brtse; the seal of spo ging; The seal of Ma brtse rta; The seal of La 'thung; The seal of The pha ku' dis. The seal of A dzam; The seal of Mo ldan pa; The seal of Pad kha. The seal of 'Bo lo 'bir; The seal of Rta sa A rgod of Rathong chu; The seal of Rta sashu pang of Ring' bigs chung; The seal of Rta pa mgon sba bus, who was summoned from Ga lad chung; The seal of Pad lo.

Thus on the (X) day of the (X) month of the Water Hare year, in the marvellous new house of Sikkim²⁰ [the agreement] was made.

GLIMPSES OF THE NAMGYAL RULERS

The rise of the Namgyal dynasty which ruled Sikkim for more than 300 years begins with the meeting of Khye Bhumsa and Tekong Tek, the Lepcha wizard as well as chief. Khye Bhumsa, known to be the man of strength was without a child. He then hears that in the land of present day Sikkim lived a man named Tekong Tek, a Lepcha wizard who can solve his problem and gift him with children. Khye Bhumsa thus enters Sikkim with his followers. He

²⁰ Rabdentse palace was built in the year 1649; this place was described by the Limboos as Su him, which translates in the Tibetan as Khang gsar, could also be read as: in the new house of the marvellous (land) of Sikkim; of this agreement was complied a fresh (in) the house of the marvellous (land) of Sikkim on the (X) day of the (X) month of the Water Rabbit (year).

meets Tekong Tek who helps him by bestowing him with three sons. After the birth of his third son, Khye comes down from Chumbi to meet Thekong and offer thanks giving and reinforce his friendship with the Lepcha chief. Gradually, Khye extends his control over the Lepchas. Later one of his son named Mipon rab becomes influential. Mipon has four sons and it was from one of his sons Guru Tenzing that the ruler of Sikkim Phuntsok Namgyal is born.

Phuntsok Namgyal, thus, became the first Chogyal of Sikkim. Though the Sikkim history talks of his lowly origin as a farmer, as all other rulers of the Indian history he too claimed the divine as well as royal status. He is said to have actually belonged to the Minyak dynasty of Tibet and that his consecration by the three Lamas took place at Yuksam Narbugang located in western part of Sikkim. If on one occasion, the Chogyal is said to have belonged to the Minyak dynasty of Tibet, there are also narratives in which the Sikkimese royal family is said to be of the Indian origin and thus, the descendets of Indrabodhi, the Indian Dharamaraja. Mullard is of the opinion that the ultimate rejection of the 'India' myth in Sikkimese narratives may have been for number of reasons, most notable of which may have been the desire to associate the Sikkimese state 'historically' with Tibet and the Tibetan empire, rather than the holy image of India as a seat of Buddhism, which was less relevant in the period when narratives were constructed. The narratives of the origin and formation of the Namgyal dynasty has become imbued with authenticity as an extension of the religious tradition it uses to authenticate its facts, events and contents. On account of this it becomes part of the local belief system, something which cannot be the subject of enquiry: an article of faith. Any criticism to this 'history' is criticism of those who uphold it and any thing which

casts even a shadow of doubt over the complete accuracy of this tradition becomes tantamount to a declaration that the believers or propagators of this history are liars²¹.

Though Mullard is of the opinion that the territory of Sikkim during the reign of Phuntsok Namgyal was quite small comprising of west Sikkim, small parts of eastern Nepal and the areas around Ravangla in southern Sikkim, the Sikkim Chronicle²² exaggerates the extent of territory and makes it as far as Thang La (near Phari, Tibet) in the north, in the east Tagong La (near Paro, Bhutan), in the south Titalia (near the borders of Bihar and Bengal, India) and in the west Tamar Chorten (Tamar river, Nepal). Though there occurred a war in the beginning of his reign but with the signing of the treaty of LMT, there was peaceful establishment of Sikkimese state in accordance with the prophetic tradition of Guru Rinpoche. In order to avoid rebellion from the local leaders, the king gave them hereditary rights over the land in exchange for military duties and constant flow of revenue through taxes on produce and services²³.

From the Maharaja's history, it reveals that the Limboos were not given any official post and were treated merely as a common people since the beginning of the Namgyal dynasty. They integrated their land resources and signed the tripartite treaty of LMT and participated in the formation of "The Greater Sikkim" but were not given their due share either in the administration in the beginning of the Namgyal Dynasty not abiding the pledge of the tripartite treaty²⁴. According to this opinion, from the powerful chiefs they were

²¹ Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

²² Sikkim- A Concise Chronicle (March 20th,1963): Published by the Royal Wedding Committee and Printed by The Sikkim Darbar Press.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Subba, J.R. (2008). *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*: Gyan Publishing House.

reduced to the laymen who did not have any hand in the state building process. The story of the unequal treatment of the Namgals towards the Limboos doesn't seem true. The Limboos might have been allowed to continue their reign in their region of modern day eastern Nepal and western Sikkim. In fact the Limboos were given special privileges and the Namgyal rulers tried to win their support at all times whether by making a peace treaty or through the matrimonial alliances. There is an instance where the second Chogyal Tensung Namgyal married the daughter of a Limboo chieftain and along with him twelve Kazis are said to have married the Limboo ladies. It was through such matrimonial alliances that the Namgyals tried to resist invasion and conquest.

Phuntsok Namgyal was succeeded by his son Tensung Namgyal. Tensung Namgyal married thrice. His third wife was a daughter of a Limboo chieftain. According to the narratives, this Limboo queen after her marriage converted to Buddhism for which she meditated for three years and three months after which she got enlightened and exclaimed 'Su him' meaning happy new house in Limboo language; which later began to depict the entire Kingdom of Sikkim. It seems that in the past Sikkim only denoted the palace of Rabdentse. Tensung Namgyal also built the Sangacholing monastery for the sake of Limboos and Lepchas in west Sikkim. Waddel²⁵ writes '*as Sangacholin is open to members of all classes of Sikkim- Bhutias, Lepchas, Limboos and also females and even deformed persons*'. There are also narratives which mention the presence of Lhaday Miday government. Though there is no record to indicate the presence of such a council but the Denjong Lhaday Yongki Tshogchen (the world Fellowship of Buddhists, Sikkim regional centre) mentions of having Sikkimese Parliament long before the coming of British and the migration of the Nepalese. They mention of the three ethnic tribes that resided in Sikkim i.e. the Lhorig (Sikkimese Bhutia), Monrig (Sikkimese Lepcha) and Tsongrig (Sikkimese Limboos) having thirty-six

²⁵ Waddell, L.A. (1979). Rept. Among the Himalayas. Mittal Pub., New Delhi.

representative, twelve from each community which formed the back-bone of the Sikkim Government. This system of governing in those days was known as Lhaday Miday as out of thirty-six members eighteen were to be monks from the monasteries (Lhaday) and eighteen were to be lay persons (Miday). Out of these thirty-six representatives nine members were elected to form the Council of ministers i.e. three from each ethnic community and the Prime Minister was elected from amongst them. The whole structure was believed to be an intensive democratic set up, comprising essentially spiritual people. Even under the 1958 Proclamation of the Maharaja of Sikkim; a seat in the Sikkim Council was reserved for the Shangas (Monks). Kazi²⁶ writes that the Sanga was an important unit to the policy-making body called 'Lhadi-Medi', which existed in Sikkim for several centuries prior to the formation of Sikkim Council in the latter part of the 19th century. The main function of this body was to advise and guide the ruler in the running of the country.

Tensung Namgyal was succeeded by his son Chaddor Namgyal. His reign was marked by the raids and conspiracy. His childhood was spend in fear of being raided by the Bhutanese king Dev Zidar, which made him flee to Lasha (Tibet) via Illam (modern Nepal) and Walong (modern Nepal) after handing over the charge of Sikkim Durbar to Yak Thub Arup. Legeng says that during this time it was the Lepchas and the Limboos who carried the minor king on the way to Lasha. The Bhutanese occupied Sikkim for eight years and finally withdrew from the palace of Rabdentse after eight years on the mediation of the Tibetan Government. Upon the death of sixth Dalai Lama in 1707 Chador returned back from Tibet around 1708 jointly administered Sikkim along with Jigmed pa. They together founded the great monastery of Pemayangtse, the largest in Sikkim and wholly Tibetan in character. He made it compulsory for every family to allot one of the members to be a full-fledged monk.

²⁶ Kazi, Jigme N. (2009). Sikkim for Sikkimese - Distinct Identity within the Union: A Collection of My Work-Vol.I: Hill Media Pub.

On the death of Chador Namgyal, Gyurmed Namgyal was enthroned by Jigmed pa. His rule of 17 years is seen as the years of increasing involvement of Tibetan influence in Sikkim as well as long period of disappointment among the Limboos and thereby political disintegration. The failure of the marriage of thirteen years old king with the Princess of Tibet made the King take refuge in Tibet. The king was better towards the Lepchas than the Limboos which dissatisfied the Limboo chiefs who began to proclaim their independence. In addition to the dissatisfaction, the King Gyurmed Namgyal showed little attention to the consolidation of his kingdom. The Limboos chiefs began to proclaim their own independence and thus there was a breakaway of the Kingdom even before the Gurkha expansion. White, the British political Officer writes that since his wife was exceedingly ugly he abandoned his throne and fled disguised as mendicant.

Gyurmed Namgyal was succeeded by his son Namgyal Phuntso in the year 1733 who was opposed on the plea of illegitimacy. He was born out of the Tibetan nun and was recognized as the son of Gyurmed Namgyal. His succession created faction in the Namgyal court between Tamdin who opposed the accession of Namgyal Phuntso against the Garbang. It was during the civil war that broke out in Sikkim, the death of Sirijunga Teyongsi occurred. During his reign the relationship between the Bhutia ruling class and the Limboo subject reached the heights of utmost dissatisfaction. The death of Sirijonga Teyongsi horrified the Limboos. In about 1772, a Tsong uprising took place which was put down and loyalty gained back²⁷.

Namgyal Phuntso was succeeded by his son Tenzing Namgyal. His reign witnessed the repeated invasion by the Gurkhas where the combined forces of Tsong, Lepcha and Bhutia expelled the aggression and succeeded considerably. The Gorkha force invaded Sikkim and captured Rabdentse which made the King flee to Tibet for help. Finally in 1791,

²⁷ Sikkim- A Concise Chronicle (March 20th,1963): Published by the Royal Wedding Committee and Printed by The Sikkim Darbar Press.

the Gorkhas made war with Tibet and the year after they were defeated by the Chinese force. This helped Sikkim get back a small portion of her state, but was obliged to pay the Gurkhas tribute to Nepal until 1815, when the latter was defeated and driven out by the British, who in 1817 restored west Sikkim and the Terai to the Raja²⁸. The Gurkha invasion made Tenzing Namgyal retired to Lasha. The Nepalese pressure relaxed somewhat due to Nepalese involvement in Tibet, while the three forces of Tsong, Lepcha and Bhutia combined against the Gurkhas to expel the aggressore with considerable success.

Tsugphud Namgyal succeeded Tenzing Namgyal. He had the longest reign. It was during his reign that the Gurkha force increased their might. His reign witnessed the penetration of the British power into the Himalayas and the British trade efforts across the Himalayas into Tibet. In 1817, the treaty of Titalia was signed between the British and Nepal whereby the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal was laid along the Mahanadi and Mechi rivers and the Singalila range. In 1814, Rabdentse being close to the Nepalese frontier was shifted to Tumlong. He had even prohibited the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim.

Thutob Namgyal succeeded Tsugphud Namgyal. Claude White came to Sikkim in 1887 as the leader of British expedition. Claude White was embarked upon the policy of destroying the ancient economy of Sikkim. A number of lessee landlords were created and enbloc settlement of Nepalese in different areas was made; often the Bhutia, Lepcha and Tsongs were deprived of their land. The British had their quest for smooth passage to Tibet. During his reign, the Nepalese migration took place in such a great number that the frustrated King had to retreat to Chumbi, his summer capital²⁹.

²⁸ White, J. Claude (1971). *Sikkim & Bhutan-Twenty one Years on the North East Frontier 1887-1908*: Vivek Publishing House.

²⁹ Subba, J.R. (1999). *The Limboos of the Eastern Himalayas - With Special Reference to Sikkim*: Published by Sikkim Yakthung Mundhum Saplopa, Gangtok Sikkim.

Sidkeong Tulku succeeded Thutob Namgyal. Studied in Oxford, he was the main man behind the abolition of imprisonment as a penalty for non-payment of debts (1913) and the other was the record in the Council Proceedings of the ban on the settlement of plainsmen. He even tried to liquidate landlordism which created stern enemies among a large number of landlords³⁰.

The tragic death of Sidkeong Tulku made the 25 years old Tashi Namgyal the eleventh ruler of Sikkim. Though he succeeded his brother on 19th Feb 1915, he was consecrated the eleventh Chogyal of Sikkim on 15th May, 1916. Highly educated, he took up the subject of social and religious reform movement. The judicial and magisterial functions of the landlords were completely abolished by 1948, public gambling was made illegal in 1921, the use of the unpaid labour was prohibited by 1924, jharlangi³¹ was abolished by 1946, Kuruwa³² was abolished by 1947. Land was surveyed and he crippled the power of the landlords and the people were made to pay taxes directly to the government. He had great plans for the development of his country. In 1944 he introduced Sikkim Nationalised Transport, which even today constitutes the source of revenue.

Palden Thendup Namgyal, the incarnation of Sidkeong Tulku, his late uncle was the last ruler of the Namgyal dynasty. As his elder brother and the Crown Prince Paljor Namgyal, died in an air crash, Palden Thendup Namgyal was declared to be his father's successor. He joined the administration as early as 1947 and effectively ruled Sikkim for 16 years on behalf of his father Tashi Namgyal till 1963, after which he became the King of Sikkim. He was

³⁰ Sikkim- A Concise Chronicle (March 20th, 1963): Published by the Royal Wedding Committee and Printed by The Sikkim Darbar Press.

³¹ Jharlangi was a forced labour which was imposed by the Kazi and the Thekadars in the eastwhile Sikkim to the Sikkimese Peasantry.

³² Kuruwa literally means to wait in the Nepali language. Kuruwa thus signifies a peasant who had to wait for several days, to carry a load of goods known as Khalo Bhari for which they were not even paid.

against the democratization of Sikkim and also formed Sikkim National Party. He was madly in love with Sikkim and was actually obsessed with Sikkim, but his Sikkim was necessarily only for the Bhutias; may be even for the Lepchas, and could even be stretched out for the Tsongs. He failed to understand that in his 'independent Sikkim' even the word 'Sikkim' did not belong to the Bhutias and he never ceased of dreaming and striving for a sovereign Sikkim³³. For him, the Nepalese (here, Limboo is not included) were unauthentic citizen of Sikkim.

The state comprises a complex set of ideas and institutions over which different groups becomes engaged in a struggle for control. In this phase of state undergoing modernization and secularization process, it becomes both a resources and promoter of new values in the society. Ultimately, the state and its policies are a potential benefits to some groups and communities. But they are also a threat to other groups like elites and communities whose values differ from those of the secular, modernizing and industrialising state. Hence, by means of preferential policy, the ruling elite of the state seeks to extend its influence over a particular ethnic group whose interests are promoted vigorously. This gives rise to sense of deprivation among other groups who carry forward their own identity and interest as counter to the all-encompassing state interests. Ultimately, the state is confronted with serious group clashes leading to ethnic conflicts³⁴.

THE RISE OF THE GORKHAS

The expansionist Gorkha ruler looked at a small kingdom in the lap of Khangchendzonga with a covetous eyes making western part of Sikkim a problematic borderland. The fast emerging Gorkha power in Nepal was posing a serious threat to

³³ Sinah, A.C. (2008). Sikkim Feudal and Democratic: Indus Publishing Company.

³⁴ Mishra, S.S. (1995). Ethnic Conflict and Security Crisis in Sri Lanka: Kalinga Publication, Delhi.

Sikkim's security. By 1780s and 1790s Sikkim came under the pressure of the Gorkha's expansionist policy. The Shah rulers of Nepal invaded Sikkim from 1770 to 1810 and came to river Tista. Sikkim lost the region known as Limbuwan. By 1772, the armies of Prithivi Narayan Shah, having subdued the valley of Katmandu, began their advance into Kiranti country. In 1774 Illam fell. The invaders erected there a series of forts to secure communication with the plains and from which to launch an eastern offensive. By 1810 they reached the banks of the Tista River in Sikkim. Only the intervention of British stopped their advance and in 1817 Nepal's eastern boundary was put back to Mechi River, where it had remained since³⁵.

The land of the Limboos has always been a strategic trade route to Tibet which might have lured the Gurkhas. Following fierce resistance and given the strategic location of Limbuwan at a sensitive border, the early Nepali state had granted far reaching autonomy to the Limboo headman in 1774 royal decree. Not all the Limboo chiefs willingly joined the Gorkha force which is evident from the Gorkha record of Yong Ya Hang, the chief of Yangrup district, who persuaded the 5th Chogyal of Sikkim Namgyal Phuntso to help him for resisting the occupation of Limbuwan by the Gorkhas. But the combined force of Limboo and Sikkim Bhutia force suffered defeats at Chinapur, at the battlefield to the east of Arun River and again on the bank of Tambar river. The Sikkimese force withdrew to the east of Singalil, leaving their ally the Limboo chief of Ilam, Hangsu Phuba to surrender to Prithivi Narayan's successor Pratap Singh Shah³⁶. The military strength of Chandzod Chothup, son of Lepcha leader Chandzod Karwang beated the Gorkha incursion as many as seventeen times which earned him the title of 'Satrajit'. The renewed Gorkha invasion during the reign of

³⁵ Caplan, Lionel (1970). Land and Social Change in East Nepal - A study of Hindu Tribals Relationship: University of California Press Berkeley & Los Angeles California, Printed in Great Britain.

³⁶ Subba, J.R. (1999). The Limboos of the Eastern Himalayas - With Special Reference to Sikkim: Published by Sikkim Yakthung Mundhum Saplopa, Gangtok Sikkim.

Tenzing Namgyal made him retire to Khabi and thence to Lasha. This time the invaders made a lightning raid on Rabdentse. It is said that they had to flee so precipitately that the only thing they could carry was a mask of Kanchenjunga which the queen carried it off in the bosom of her dress. The baby prince Tsugphud Namgyal too was carried away finally soughting asylum in Tibet wandering after a year³⁷. The penetration of Gorkha army into Tibet in 1791, sacking Tashilunpo monastery led to the Chinese intervention. Thus, the Nepalese pressure relaxed somewhat due to Neplalese involvement in Tibet, while three forces Tsong, Lepcha and Bhutia, combined against the Gorkhas to expel their aggressors with considerable success.

The defeat of the Gorkhas by China led to the signing of Sino-Neplause Treaty which is said to have reduced the territory of Sikkim. According to this treaty the boundary of Nepal was diverted to the left bank of river Tista, thereby making Sikkim lose a big chunk of territory to Nepal. It was until 1815 Pemayangtse that all the inhabitants of South Tista tract were obliged to pay tribute to Nepal.

Sikkim was subjugated by Nepal for some years in the end of 18th cen. and more prominently after the treaty of Segowlee signed in 1815³⁸. After the death of Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1775 at the age of 47 years, his successor over ran the territories between river Sutlej in the west to river Teesta in the east and Kutli pass in the Tibet in the north to Gangetic plains in the south. At long last they collided with the British East India Company, ruling over India resulting in the treaty of Sugauli in 1817. Within four decades after the death of the great nation builder Prithivi Narayan Shah, territorial limits of modern Nepal was fixed³⁹. They

³⁷ Kotturan, George (1983). *The Himalayan Gateway-History and Culture of Sikkim*: Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd.

³⁸ Sinah, A.C. (2007). "Communities in Search of Identities in Sikkim". In *Problems of Ethnicity in North-East India*. edited by Dr. B.B. Kumar: Concept Publishing Company.

³⁹ Ibid.

used their language and their religion as a dagger in subduing the aboriginals of Sikkim. Prithivi Narayan Shah, after subjugating the Limboos, issued a royal order in July 1774 confirming “the customs and traditions, rights and previlages” of the Limboos. This order further says that “(i)n case we consficate your land, may our ancestral god destroy our kingdom”⁴⁰. Such concession and promises on the part of the Gurkha ruler lured the Limboo chieftains and this resulted in the breaking of some of the Limboo chieftains from the region of Sikkim and thereby joining hands with the Nepalese Government.

BREAKING AWAY OF THE LIMBOOS

Throughout the early 18th century, the Limboos alternated their allegiance between Sikkim and Nepal. Risley⁴¹ suggests that political tension within Sikkim had led the King to demand too much from the Limboo who switched their allegiance to Nepal. Throughout the commotion the Raja harried and distressed his Limboo subjects so much by calling them out unnecessarily to fight and again to build forts and walls, that in despair they threw off their allegiance and joined Nepal, so thus Sikkim began to lose the Limbuwan country⁴². The Gurkhas on the other side were prepared to offer any facilities to make the Limboo chiefs side with them⁴³. But it isn't that the Gurkha had good time bringing Limbuwan into their control. It was only by 1786 that the Gurkhas could make substantial control over Limbuwan.

⁴⁰ T.B. (1999). “Limbu Nationalism and Integration”. In *Ethnicity, Nationalism & Integration*. edited by Ajit K. Danda: The Asiatic Society.

⁴¹ Risley, H.H. (1894). *Gazetteer of Sikkim*: B.R. Pub., New Delhi

⁴² Fitzpatrick, Ian Carlos (2011). *Cardamom & Class- A Limbu Village and its extension In East Nepal*: Vajra Publications.

⁴³ See Chemjong, Iman Singh (1966). *History and Culture of the Kirat People*, 3rd ed. Publisher- Tumeng HANG Limbuwan East Nepal, Mechi Anchal.

It isn't that the Limboos were only dominated during the reign of Chogyals, there are instances of Limboo acquiring important status in the Namgyal era. The account of Shing Gabir⁴⁴ tells us the importance played by the Limboos as pastoralist. Note worthy is the account of Nam Hiri Tsong, the Limboo aristocrat of Barakheley⁴⁵ who was even exempted from tax. It is said that during 1860s there were clearly identified fourteen Limboo aristocrats when there was only twelve Bhutias and Lepchas⁴⁶.

Gyurmed Namgyal is also held responsible for making the Limboos break away from the Namgyal dominance. The failure of the marriage of thirteen years old king with the Princess of Tibet made the King take refuge in Tibet. The king was better towards the Lepchas than the Limboos which dissatisfied the Limboo chiefs who began to proclaim their independence. In addition to the dissatisfaction, the King Gyurmed Namgyal showed little attention to the consolidation of his kingdom. The Limboos chiefs began to proclaim their own independence and thus there was a breakaway of the Kingdom even before the Gurkha expansion.

Gyurmed Namgyal was succeeded by his son Namgyal Phuntso in the year 1733 who was opposed on the plea of illegitimacy. He was born out of the Tibetan nun and was recognized as the son of Gyurmed Namgyal. During his reign the relationship between the Bhutia ruling class and the Limboo subject reached the heights of utmost dissatisfaction. The death of Sirijonga Teyongsi by ta sang lamas horrified the Limboos. About 1772, a Tsong

⁴⁴ Mullard in his seminar held at Rachana Book House, Gangtok threw light on the important role Limboos played in the Namgyal era. He gave an insight into the account of two Limboo personals Shing Gabir, the pastoralist (PD/9.5/001 & 002). The document states that Shing Gabir was quite wealthy who even used his wealth for temple building and during the time of political chaos.

⁴⁵ Barakheley is now a place in western Sikkim.

⁴⁶ Mullard on the same seminar at Rachana Book House also talked about Nam Hiri Tsong through the sources that he found at palace archives. He said PD/1.1/002 gives account of the Limboo aristocrats of the Namgyal era.

uprising took place which was put down and loyalty gained back⁴⁷. During his reign Limboo subjects were harassed. However, the Limbuwan area between Mechi and Tista comprising the present Darjeeling district of West Bengal, the west and south district and parts of north district of Sikkim and the Illam district of Nepal remained under the control of Namgyal dynasty till 1774 AD when these areas were also surrendered to the administration of Greater Nepal⁴⁸.

The breaking away of the land of the Limboo rests not purely on the so viewed factionalism in the Namgyal court but also on the vision of political consolidation of Nepal. Stiller⁴⁹ estimates that in an area covering roughly seven hundred miles from east to west and approximately one hundred miles from north to south, there existed in Greater Nepal no fewer than eighty separate political entities. All of these were in the state of constant flux and their borders underwent frequent modification. Alliances were made and broken, marriage alliances contracted, expansionary skirmishes, and encroachments. And there was constant political fragmentation. Larger states became smaller, and the smaller states became smaller still. Such political fragmentation and the dream of the Gurkha rulers for the unification of such fragmented political entity might have led to political chaos, war and conquest; all these factors added to the reason behind the breaking up the land of Limboos.

Added to this, the frequent attack by the Gurkhas and the shifting of the capital from Rabdentse to Tumlong by the seventh Chogyal Tsugpu Namgyal kept the Limboos away from the political circle which might have made them feel insecure. With the shifting of the

⁴⁷ Sikkim- A Concise Chronicle (March 20th,1963): Published by the Royal Wedding Committee and Printed by The Sikkim Darbar Press.

⁴⁸ Wangyal, Sonam- History of Darjeeling as researched and proposed by Dr. Sonam Wangyal (GJSTA Seminar, Kurseong).

⁴⁹ Stiller gives detail accounts of the petty kingdoms that existed in Greater Nepal. for more details see.

capital, the Limboos could not have got their chance to bargain with the ruling elites and participate in the decision making process which would have been beneficial for their community. So, they started proclaiming themselves independent.

Later there was forceful invasion by the Gurkhas but the advantageous rights given to the Limboos by the Gurkha rulers cannot be ruled out. The incorporation of Limbuwan into the Nepal state was a result both of negotiation and of conquest. The eastward expansion of the Hindu armies in the 1770s resulted in the series of alliances with potentially troublesome Limboo chiefs flanking them on all sides. In a Royal declaration issued by the first King of Nepal, Prithivi Narayan Shah, the Limboos in return for support, were assured a measure of internal rule under their chiefs and guaranteed their rights to ancestral land⁵⁰. The form of land tenure known as Kipat was prevalent in the Eastern hills of modern day Nepal. Not only were the Limboos entitled with the Kipat but they were also entrusted with the charge of revenue collection and given the title of 'Subba'. The role of Subba was apparently two-fold. As regard the collection of the revenue he was under the Dewan, while for the military and police matters he was subordinate to the sardar. In his revenue collecting functions he was assisted by zamindars, who received a grant of land as remuneration for their work and in addition were entitled to farm as much of the waste land as they wished without the payment of any added tax. When they were called on by the raja, they were expected to provide a certain number of irregular militia⁵¹. The weak administrative organization of the Namgyals as well as diplomatic tactics on the side of the Gurkha rulers led to the winning away of Limboo populated territories to their side.

⁵⁰ Caplan, Lionel (1970). *Land and Social Change in East Nepal - A study of Hindu Tribals Relationship*: University of California Press Berkeley & Los Angeles California, Printed in Great Britain.

⁵¹ Stiller, Ludwig F. (1995). *The Rise of the House of Gorkhas*. Human Resource Development Research Centre: Published by HRD Research Centre.

MERGER WITH THE INDIAN UNION

The excerpt from Risley lays bare the British ethnic policy in Sikkim. Consequently, from 1891 to 1986 the Nepalese population in Sikkim had increased phenomenally. With a view to creating a better future, they joined movement for democratization against the feudal anachronism. It was primarily a movement by the Nepalese peasants led by semi-educated persons of lower middle class. Neither did they have any ideological sophistication nor organizational skill. They altogether lacked a sense of larger political Perspective. It was confused movements against vague targets. Their slogans, symbols and programmes were largely irrelevant to the local situations. That is why when the Political officer of independent movement dismissed the first popular government in Sikkim in May 1949, the Sikkim State Congress's leadership was thoroughly puzzled. This dismissal was, in the typical British Colonial style, in utter disregard of the fact that the State Congress was practically the Sikkimese branch of the Indian National Congress which was ruling India at that time. In the new situation, Sikkim meant the Maharaja of Sikkim, and not the people of Sikkim. Thus, the administration was once more handed over to the paternalistic care of the ICS, who saw to it that the staggering feudal structure was strengthened at the cost of democratic forces⁵².

The Kazis in Sikkim were the most influential and exercise jurisdiction over specific tracts of land. They do keep the greater portion of revenue for him, paying over to Raja a certain fixed contribution. In fact the demarcation of boundary reveal that Sikkim had temporarily merged with the Indian Union before its final merger. The political turmoil of 1949 in Sikkim led to the formation of Sikkim's popular ministry. With Tashi Tshering (President of Sikkim State Congress) as Chief Minister, four other members were sworn in on

⁵² Sinah, A.C. (1994). North-eastern Frontier of India - Structural Imperatives & Aspects of Change: Indus Publishing House.

May 9, 1949. Due to various political factors and differences amongst different political parties in the state, the ministry came to a sudden end in June 1949. Because of the political instability in Sikkim, the Government of India, after being requested by the Maharaja, appointed an Indian Dewan in Sikkim to take over the administration of the State until the situation improved. The first Dewan, J.S. Lall, took office in August 1949⁵³ and also in 1973 when political upheaval sparked off after the fifth general election. Even then in 1973, the Indian Government had taken over the control of Sikkim.

The boundary of Sikkim was clearly demarcated during the British days in the line with the other Indian territories. The treaty of 1950 envisaging India's political frontiers covering Sikkim and the statement made by the British Secretary of State for India in 1924 clearly indicates the position of Sikkim. This statement of 1924: '*Bhutan then is not at present a part of India; the frontier of India runs along the foothills and not as in Sikkim on the main Himalayan range*', clearly indicate Sikkim's boundary with Tibet being the Indian boundary and consequently Sikkim being a part of India. Otherwise she would not have been shown as an Indian state under the Govt. of India Act of 1935 nor could the Maharaja of Sikkim have been a member of Chamber of Princes (the Chamber of Princes was a body of Indian states of which the Maharaja of Sikkim was a member)⁵⁴.

It was only while Delhi was in weak position following the cartographic war by China showing Sikkim as a part of Chinese territory despite the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, Chinese occupation of Tibet leading to the escape of Dalai Lama into India in 1959 and the Sino-Indian war of 1962, Chogyal taking an opportunity began to demand for the revision of

⁵³ Kazi, Jigme N. (2009). Sikkim for Sikkimese - Distinct Identity within the Union: A Collection of My Work-Vol.I: Hill Media Pub.

⁵⁴ Das, B.S (1983). The Sikkim Saga: Vikas publishing House.

the treaty of 1950 and seeking to acquire for Sikkim similar status to Bhutan, thereby gaining Independence and sovereignty. Sensing the Chogyal's anti-Indian mood, India supported the mass based anti-Chogyal parties who were clamouring for a democratic set up, who had no attachment with the ruler of Tibetan origin.

The community itself was divided into two in the verge of merger. The group, feeling neglected and suppressed joined the mainstream being assured of their economic and cultural interest fully protected. The feudalistic rule of the Chogyal led to the dissatisfaction of the Limboos also making a ground for the revolt against the economic disparities. In addition to this, the story of the murder of their prophet Sirijunga Teyongsi has always served in creating anti Bhutia feeling among the Limboos, who might have easily gone to the side of the Nepalese. With a view to create a better future, they joined the movement of democracy. The death of Sirijunga Tyeongsi which took place at the time when civil war (1734-1741) was going on in Sikkim, when factionalism took place in Sikkim following the death of the fourth Chogyal of Sikkim Gyurmed Namgyal, who died without a hier. On his death bed he had claimed to have impregnated a nun from Tibet and that Namgyal Phuntso was his son and the legal hier to the throne of Sikkim. The ones opposing Namgyal Phuntso proposed that the Namgyal throne to be passed to the Sikkimese aristocracy family. Civil war broke out between the supporters of Karwang against Tamdin, the supporter of Namgyal Phuntso. Karwang's lobby with the Tibetan Government help him win against the Tamdin and finally led to the establishment of Lepcha aristocrasy in the ruling class in the politics of Sikkim.

In March 1975, the Chogyal attended the coronation of Nepal's King Birendra in Katmandu. While there, he met with Chinese and Pakistani representatives, seeking their support. He also gave a press conference in Katmandu criticizing India's moves and challenging the legality of Sikkim's new status as an Indian territory. The meeting with Chinese and Pakistani representative sealed the Chogyal's fame and provided the pretext

India had been waiting for to move ahead with the full cooperation of Sikkim. On April 10th 1975, Sikkim's Assembly called for the Chogyal's removal and full merger with India. A referendum was quickly organised, resulting in overwhelming support for both moves. On April 29th, 1975, Sikkim was incorporated into the Republic of India as a full state. Sikkim's monarchy was abolished and the region became the state of India operating under the administrative and constitutional rules applicable to other Indian States. The new government new laws designed to suit their interest that was blind to the marginalization of the ethnic stock like the Limboos. The insensitivity of the Indian government gave birth to the miseries of the Limboos. This memory is still etched in the mind of the Limboos who lived through the sadness of the Indian Government's insensitivity towards them.

In Sikkim, the major political differences and the atmosphere of the merger started since the formation of the Sikkim State Congress in 1947, which was affiliated to the Indian National Congress. The Sikkim National Party came into existence on April 30, 1948 as an opposition to the demands of SSC. The SNP opposed accession to India but desired a Treaty relationship which was much like the previous system, which existed between Sikkim and the British Government in India. The main aim of the SNP was the desire to preserve the national identity of Sikkim and also to work for the friendly and lasting relationship with India. The gradual fiction within the two major political parties led to the formation of Sikkim National Congress (SNC) in 1960. The major political parties in Sikkim like SNC and SJC (Sikkim Janata Congress formed on the eve of the 1973 elections under the leadership of Nahakul Pradhan), put forward the demand for the full-fledged democracy in Sikkim, a written Constitution, fundamental rights, adoption of adult franchise and also the abolition of parity system, which was viewed as an attempt of the Chogyal to stop the majority Napalese from taking the administration in Sikkim. Preparations to the first elections to the Legislative Assembly were being made in accordance with the tripartite agreement of 1973. The SNC

and SJC merged to form a new party known as Sikkim Congress. Election under the 1973 Agreement was held in April 1974. The Sikkim Congress captured 31 seats in the house of 32. On June 20th, 1974, the Sikkim Assembly approved the Government of Sikkim Bill 1974, which contemplated more powers to the legislature and the Council of Ministers and intended to make Chogyal a titular head. The Bill was passed in the Sikkim Assembly in Gangtok on June 28th, 1974. There was much opposition to this Bill from the Bhutias-Lepchas and certain sections of the Nepalese communities. But all attempts to stop the members from signing the bill failed. The Chogyal had his own reservations for giving his assent to the Bill. There were many things which needed thorough discussion before coming to any specific conclusion. But due to the political pressure exerted on him from various quarters, the Chogyal finally, signed the Bill on July 4, 1974. The bill made Sikkim an associate State of India. Even after the formation of the Kazi Ministry⁵⁵ and subsequent Associate status relationship with India, the political climate in Sikkim was far from being stable. The situation grew worse and finally the State Assembly, in an emergency session on April 10, 1975, passed a resolution abolishing the institution of the Chogyal. It also declared Sikkim to be a constituent unit of India, thus putting a sudden end to the Associate status enjoyed for almost a year. The resolution was then placed before the people for its approval. The majority of the people voted for the resolution, which was then placed before the Indian Government for consideration. After a few days, the Indian Parliament passed the Constitution Act, 1975, which made Sikkim the 22nd State of the Indian Union with effect from April 26th, 1975⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ Ministry led by Kazi Lhendup Dorjee.

⁵⁶ Kazi, Jigme N. (2009). Sikkim for Sikkimese - Distinct Identity within the Union: A Collection of My Work-Vol.I: Hill Media Pub.

The story of Sikkim's merger with the Indian Union is narrated differently by the Sikkimese. While some talk of the forceful merger, some are even today unaware of the fact that Sikkim is now the part of Indian Union. Das⁵⁷, holds the Chogyal as a reason for the Sikkim's merger with India. He says,

'Morarji Desai's statement as Prime Minister that he was against Sikkim's merger reflects the guilt complex of some Indians on moral grounds. The issue was not moral. Judged in the historical Perspective or even legally, Sikkim was always a part of India till 1947. The Sikkimese people had wanted a merger then like any other Princely states. They expressed the same view in 1975. The moral aspect, therefore, had no relevance. Had Sikkim been an independent entity and India had tried to annex it, one would be with those suffering from a guilt complex. The situation in Sikkim was different. One could also not ignore the very vital national interests which governed Delhi's moves. Sikkim's location and not size was the governing factor. The Chogyal had every right to resist Delhi as he did. No one could deny him this privilege or honour. But, he chose the wrong grounds. Instead of fighting through the people, he chose first to fight against them and then Delhi'.

If seen closely the British administrators had sowed the seeds of the end of the Namgyal rule in Sikkim. They had decided to treat Sikkim as an open window to reach the Chinese in general and Tibetans in particular for the purpose of trade. The British within a hundred and thirty years (from 1817-1947) turned the Bhutia principality of Sikkim into the Indian State. First, they appeared as the uninvited benefactor of Sikkim in 1817, when they gave back Sikkimese territory secured as war booty from Nepal. Secondly, Darjeeling was secured as a health resort and turned into a thriving frontier trading centre within twenty-five years, which made the Himalayan Kingdom envious. Then was the Hooker-Campbell controversy of 1849. The fleeing of the Sikkime citizens to Darjeeling, the British settlement,

⁵⁷ Das, B.S (1983). The Sikkim Saga: Vikas publishing House.

in order to seek refuge from the bonded labour on Sikkimese estates was feared by the Sikkimese government. The Sikkimese government opposition to the British government providing asylum to those Sikkim subjects was refused by the British. This led to Sikkimese government retaliate with the arrest of Hooker and Campbell, when they entered the Sikkimese territory. This event saw the annexation of all the Sikkimese territory south of the Rangeet River. If the controversy of 1849 led Sikkim to surrender its lands in the plains and Darjeeling, the treaty of 1861 guaranteed British supremacy in the hills and in effect placed serious restrictions on the Government of Sikkim and by 1880s Sikkim was reduced to protectorate with the real power being wielded by the British representative, John Claud White⁵⁸. Next, the British got the Nepalese settled in Sikkim, and when the king and his courtiers opposed the move, they were simply removed from political scene of Sikkim. The British brought the die-hard imperialist, J.C. White, as a Political officer, who ruled Sikkim for the last two decades. White had secured Sikkim so well within the British empire that half a dozen political officers had just to follow the routine for the next forty years before they left the famous 'note' for the successor Indian Union, which perhaps determined the Indian approach to the early events in Sikkim. In order to raise the state revenue of the state, White surveyed the districts for assessing the potential for taxation. For that he visited every nook and corner of Sikkim, even the most remote, and he became acquainted with every head man and almost with every villager. He administered the State efficiently and left it on healthy financial position, when he retired. He introduced horticulture, cottage industries, sericulture, forestry and fruit cultivation. He cut the roads in roadless mountainous country. Raised the revenue and settled the Nepalese with an eye to increase the cash revenue of the State. Once

⁵⁸ Mullard, Saul (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*: Brill Publication.

White was appointed to administer the affairs of Sikkim, he found his own reason for the further immigration of the Nepalese to Sikkim in his words:

“Chaos reigned everywhere, there was no revenue system, the Maharaja taking what he required from the people, those nearest the capital having to contribute large share, while those more remote had toll taken from them by the local officials in the name of the Raja, though little found his way to him; no court of justice, no police, no public works, no education for younger generation. The task before me was difficult one, but very fascinating; the country was a new one and everything was in my hands...the coffers were empty, and the first (thing) to be done was to devise some means by which we could raise the revenue. A commencement was made by roughly surveying the different districts and assessing them at so much per acre, taking into account the nature of the soil etc. This was a most arduous task in the mountainous country, covered with dense undergrowth, which made survey work anything but easy and necessitated cutting lines in every direction. It was, however, accomplished in five years, and thus the basis of taxation was established. At the same time the forests were placed under control, excise was introduced, and by these means in about ten years the revenue was raised from Rs. 8000 to Rs. 200,000. But the country was very sparsely populated, and in order to bring more land under cultivation, it was necessary to encourage immigration, and this was done by giving land on favourable terms to Nepalese, who, as soon as they knew it was to be had, came freely in. Earlier in my service I had spent a year in Nepal on special duty and had learnt something of the people and their ways which proved now to be useful in dealing with them”.

White also trained Sidkeong Tulku, to take over the charge of administration from his father. He led the royal entourage to Delhi Durbar in 1905. Under White’s stewardship Sikkim turned out to be a well integrated, peaceful corner of British India. The Maharaja, who received White’s appointment with resentment, had traditionally favoured Tibetan

business and family connections, by 1900s had himself become a constructive part of White's administration⁵⁹.

With the merger of Sikkim with India, it lost its theocratic political outlook based on the Lamaist pattern of Tibet. The ruler of Sikkim apart from being a political head, he was also a secular head of the State, ruling his subjects on the basis of the Dharma. The Indian government based on the principles of democracy made the people adopts new rules, where secular rules vanished and new socio-political orientation grabbed the scenario of Sikkim.

The merger of Sikkim with India was later resented by the people when there was a large influx of the Indians through the Indianisation of the Sikkim's administration. It was then the Kazi's leadership was questioned. It was this time when a school teacher turned politician Nar Bahadur Bhandari, formed the Sikkim Janata Parishad (later merged in Indian National Congress), against the Kazi. He applied slogans against Kazi like 'desh bechwas' (a Nepali term which means the one who sold his country). It was the time that the Chogyal supported him against his old enemy. Though he managed to win over Kazi, he was later dismissed from his office on the charges of corruption. Later he again formed a regional political party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad and won 31 out of 32 seats in the Assembly and again formed the Government.

POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Though Limboos had better position in the early phrase of the Namgyal dynasty, their position gradually declined in the later phrase. They were never given equal treatment in the administration or in taxation. They were always equated with the Nepalese. The first general election of 1953 was held without a Limboo candidate which made the six Limboo mandals

⁵⁹ Sinah, A.C. (2008). Sikkim Feudal and Democratic: Indus Publishing Company.

namely Bharna Dhoj Limboo of Tikjyek, Lalman Singh Subba of Lingchom, Tilok Singh Limboo of Timburbong, Damber Singh Limboo of Darap, Thar Singh Limboo of Sakyong and Indra Prasad Limboo⁶⁰ request Chogyal Tashi Namgyal for reservation of Limboo seat in the Council of Ministers in Sikkim Durbar and for starting a formal Limboo language education in the Government aided schools of Sikkim. But it was said that the king didnot pay any heed to their request. It was the second general election of 1958 which finally saw Indra Prasad Limboo in the council of ministers at Sikkim Durbar.

No doubt, in 1961 Tashi Namgyal provided Sikkim subject certificates which certified the Sikkimese citizenship to the Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo. It was during this time that the Limboos were recognized as the earliest and legal settlers of Sikkim in opposed to Nepalese who formed 70% of the Sikkim's population. Such denial on the part of the King created disturbance in the Kingdom and it was only later that they were recognized and granted Sikkimese status after initial resistance from the anti-Nepalese ruling elites. It was, only from 16th January 1962 that this regulatuion was further amended thereby providing Sikkimese citizenship to other remaining Nepalese communities.

The long forgotten Limboos were given a thought only in the third general election of the State Assembly. The pre-merger Proclamation of December 21st 1966 divided Sikkim into five territorial constituencies, one General constituency and one Sangha. The General constituency comprised whole of Sikkim where three members were to be elected, one seat was to be general seat, one schedule caste and one Tsong seat. The Chogyal reiterated that the Tsongs were not Nepalese although they had been 'lumped' with the Nepalese. The introduction of Tsong seat was not welcomed by Sikkim State Congress and the Sikkim National Congress. They felt that the introduction of communalism and casteism would

⁶⁰ All the said men belonged to western part of Sikkim.

disintegrate the people of Sikkim. However, the National Party supported the reservation⁶¹. Thus, in the General election of 1967, Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal provided reservation of one seat for Tsongs out of twenty-four member seats in the Council of Ministers, where Harkd Dhoj Mandal was elected. He even approved the introduction of Limboo language upto class II as an optional subject in the Government schools of Sikkim. To keep himself strong, the Chogyal needed the cooperation of the Bhutias, Lepchas and the Limboos; the same three communities which in the past had led to the firm foundation of the Namgyal Dynasty. The 1973, General election was held for eighteen seats and six seats were nominated by the Chogyal. The reserved seat of Tsong from Sikkim National Party was filled by Padam Singh Limboo. But during the counting of the vote problem arose followed by the agitation of the people asking for one man one vote re-election. This led to the signing of May 8th agreement between the leaders of National Congress, National Party, Janata Congress, Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal and Kewal Singh as the representative Government of India. Thus, this agreement signed between the Indian representative, Chogyal and the three political parties shunned the presence of Limboo candidate, changed the ethnic composition of Limboos and then alienated the Limboos of their rights.

With the signing of the tripartite Agreement of May 8th 1973 and the emergence of Sikkim National Congress as an effective force under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee, Sikkim was again divided into thirty-one territorial constituencies and one Sangha. Out of thirty-one territorial constituencies, sixteen was reserved for the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin and one Sangha, the remaining sixteen constituencies were reserved for the Sikkimese of Nepali origin, which even included Tsong and Schedule caste⁶². Though the agreement

⁶¹ Kazi, Jigme N. (2009). Sikkim for Sikkimese - Distinct Identity within the Union: A Collection of My Work-Vol.I: Hill Media Pub.

⁶² Bhattacharya, Arpana. The Prayer Wheel and Sceptre: Nachiketa Publications Ltd.

states that the population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin, this statement remained unused in case of the Limboo populants. Finally, the Election Commission of India came up with the plan in which thirty-two seats in the State Assembly was divided as fifteen for Bhutia-Lepcha, fifteen for Nepalese, one Sangha and one Schedule caste. Separate seat for the Tsong was withdrawn and they were lumped with the Nepalese. The claim for the separate representation of Tsong was rejected on the ground that they have always been part of Nepalese.

On the basis of the letter⁶³ that was written by Netuk Tshering Lama, the then President of National Party, before the signing of May agreement; it can be presumed that the Indian Government never paid heed to the protection of the rights of the Limboos. The letter details that the Limboo community should be provided with separate seat and that this community have been living in Sikkim for ages and holds a separate entity and that this fact should not escape their kind attention. Though the Agreement has been termed as represented by the people's popular force, the situations of the Limboos make it false. The mistakes committed by the ruling elites in the past for not giving those rights to the Limboos which they deserve went uncorrected; instead the independent Indian Government added fuel to the aspirations of the Limboo community and left their cause unnoticed and uncared. The abolition of the Tsong seat to a certain extent rests squarely on the shoulders of the Indian Government. Chaudari⁶⁴ remarks that if politics in Sikkim today is entirely communal, the responsibility rests squarely on the shoulders of Indian Government. The circumstances in which the annexation was secured and the methods that were employed to secure the annexation made such circumstances inevitable. Some Limboos when asked about their lone seat says that they would never forget and forgive the leaders of the then Congress Party and

⁶³ The letter was collected from the private archives.

⁶⁴ Chaudari, Sachin (1979). Verdict in Sikkim: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.14, No.42/43 (Oct. 27th, 1979) pp. 1737-1738.

the then Chief administrator B.B. Lal for the injustice done to them, some shows their contentment as the abolition of their Tsong seat gave more advantage to the Limboos. For some, Tsong seat gave them only one seat in the General Assembly but the abolition of their seat and their merging with the Nepals helped to procure more than one seat in the State Assembly.

The political turn of Planden Thendup Namgyal was never clearly articulated. Some view it to be the political aim of the Chogyal to strengthen his position; what L.B. Basnet puts it that this seat had been allotted to the Tsongs on their reliability as props to the National Party⁶⁵. Chogyal Planden Thendup Namgyal had dreamt of sovereign Sikkim. He saw Sikkim only as a Bhutia principality, in which he was agreeable to grant some role to Lepchas and Tsongs, but to nobody else, a situation unacceptable to the bulk of Nepamul Sikkimese⁶⁶. The Chogyal even reiterated that the Tsongs were not Nepalese although they had been ‘lumped’ with the Nepalese⁶⁷. He was even reluctant in accepting the May 8th Agreement.

The fate of Tsong seat was thus short lived. It has been viewed that it was the religion that kept Bhutias and Lepchas intact while alienating the Yumaist and so viewed Hindu Limboos. As seen Limboos seems to have resisted the attempts made by the Buddhist rulers to interfere into the religious and cultural life of the Limboos. The Lepchas’ affinities with the Bhutias exist mainly in the identity of their religion, around which their entire cultural life revolves⁶⁸. Thus, the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union led to the changes in the

⁶⁵ Bhattacharya, Arpana. *The Prayer Wheel and Sceptre*: Nachiketa Publications Ltd.

⁶⁶ Sinah, A.C. (2008). *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*: Indus Publishing Company.

⁶⁷ Kazi, Jigme N. (2009). *Sikkim for Sikkimese - Distinct Identity within the Union: A Collection of My Work*-Vol.I: Hill Media Pub.

⁶⁸ Sinah, A.C. (2008). *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*: Indus Publishing Company.

election pattern and special provisions were made whereby the reservation of seat for the Tsong was abolished. Das⁶⁹ writes

“...the schedule castes and the caste called Tsongs, who though Nepalese in origin, claimed to be distinct ethnic group...As a compromise formula, we decided to offer a package deal. There would be thirty-two members instead of thirty in the new Assembly with reserved seats- one for the Scheduled Castes and the other for the monasterie. This maintained the parity, the Scheduled castes being of Nepalese origin and the monk coming from the Bhutia-Lepcha group. The offer was finally accepted by all the parties. We rejected the claim of the Tsongs as they had always been a part of the Nepalese”.

Article 5 of the agreement envisaging full protection of the rights of the Tsongs remained only in papers. The Government of India issued Ordinance 7, 1979 and finally abolished the lone seat of the Tsongs. It was in some respect injustice to this community. Though the Indian Government talks about the political, social as well as political welfare of the people, the question remains that whether the abolition of the Tsong seat did any political welfare to the Limboos or not? This act on the part of the Indian Government is viewed by some of the Limboos as unconstitutional. It was only after winning their recognition as a tribe of Sikkim; they are more concerned for gaining tribal seat in the State Assembly along with the Tamangs as Article 330,332 &334 of the Indian Constitution provides for reservation of seats for the STs in the House of People and State Legislatures for a certain period of time. But the reservation of seat in the State Assembly has not been provided to this community.

ORAL HISTORY AND MEMORY- IN THEIR OWN VOICE

It was Ranke who familiarized scholars with the use of archival materials; of documentary sources generated by the political actors of the past, whether they are emperors or kings; or statement or warriors; or popes or prelates. The crucial innovation which Ranke

⁶⁹ Das, B.S (1983). The Sikkim Saga: Vikas publishing House.

introduced was rigorous reliance on the written materials created by the political actors of the past, to the exclusion of later accounts of events and happenings. Prior to Ranke, historians had indiscriminately utilized contemporary sources, as well as sources generated after the occurrence of an event, in reconstructing the past. Ranke rejected such a method as unscholarly and unscientific. He sought to reconstruct the past 'as it actually was'. He, therefore, believed that only written materials generated during the occurrence of an event could be utilized as the basis of scientific works of historiography. Ranke was firmly committed to positivism; to the belief that through utilizing archival records for reconstructing the past, he could create knowledge which was no less rigorous than the knowledge created by the natural scientists who were involved in the exploration of inanimate matter. Ranke's historiography rested on the assumption that the men who mattered in society-the actual wielders of power- were a fortunate few, perched at the apex of the polity, whose records, as preserved in the archival repositories of Europe, could reveal the assiduous scholar and subtleties of the historical process. To reconstruct history from below, as we call it, the historian is obliged to take recourse to ingenious methods; to legitimize new source materials as the basis of his research. Not infrequently, ordinary men and women in centuries past were illiterate. To the extent this is true, it would be impossible for the historians, if they were to take Ranke's prescription literally, to write about such faces in the crowd. Now the scholars need to accept that oral sources do play an increasingly important role in the reconstruction of the past⁷⁰.

Paul Thompson, among others, charts the prehistory of modern oral history movement, explaining that historians from ancient times relied upon eye-witnesses accounts of significant events, until the nineteenth century development of an academic history discipline led to the primacy of archival research and documentary sources, and a

⁷⁰ UGC seminar on- Concept and Value of Oral History in Modern Histriography, 15th-17th September 1983

marginalization of oral evidence. Gradual acceptance of usefulness and validity of oral evidence, and the increasing availability of portable tape recorders, underpinned a revival of oral history after the Second World War. The timing and pattern of this revival differed markedly around the world. In Britain in 1950s and 1960s oral history pioneers were more interested in recording the experiences of so called ‘ordinary’ working people and this interest fused with political commitment to a ‘history from below’ among many social historians in Britain and around the world from the 1960s⁷¹.

Even when we go through the history of Sikkim, it can be visualized that the history of the ordinary people of Sikkim has been left out. There is also an absence of autobiographical writing as most of them were illiterate at that time. Therefore, the majority of the population who had participated in the social as well as political activity has been left out in the historical writing. Limboos are rich in their oral culture and sources. So in order to bring the history of the Limboo’s of Sikkim into living memory oral sources along with the other form of evidence must be collected to find out the truth about the past. Oral sources are one of the powerful tools for reconstructing reality of the past. It helps in including many voices and not just powerful or dominant ones. It helps us understand not just what happened, but how those telling the story understood what happened and what they may now think of it. Exploring many sides of an issue through multiple first hand individual accounts offers the opportunity to uncover layers of meaning embedded in the stories and insights into how people understand and interpret the past and their place in it⁷². Oral history is a medium by which people actively participate in connecting with the past and with each other. Oral

⁷¹ Perks, Robert & Thomson Alistair. eds. (2006). *The Oral History Reader*: Routledge.

⁷² Sommer and Quinlam (2002) also distinguish between the oral tradition and oral history. Oral tradition is a “living stories” repeated generation after generation. Oral traditions do not meet the definition of oral history because the narrators are not first hand participants in the events they describe. For more details see Sommer, Barbara W. & Mary Kay Quinlam (2002). *The Oral History Manual*: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

history is frequently used to promote or celebrate a common identity- that is to say, a sense of community- with a particular social group. This occurs particularly when a group, or a community, has been silenced, threatened, or destroyed. Interviews, often invoke loss, thus became acts of cultural survival; programmes and projects based on them, important means of maintaining or re-establishing connections and nourishing hope for the more human future⁷³. Oral interview provides lots of information for understanding the view of ordinary people in the wake of Sikkim's merger with India. Hearing the stories narrated by these people, it could be understood that as in other parts of north-east India, there was people who supported the merger but there were also people who vehemently opposed it.

As in a newly created political Union of India, the north-east was not the only region that did not seem to fit. Glaring differences between the various communities that constituted the Indian populace were more visible than the similarities, and there was no glue to bind them together. In fact, challenges to the national states emerged immediately after independence. In the northeast many groups of Nagas revolted against their inclusion in India, and in the north the Kashmiris asserted their right to autonomy. In south India, in the early 1960s, the Tamil movement emerged and challenged the cultural and political hegemony of north India. The demand for Khalistan in Punjab in the 1980s marked the rising tide of secessionist movements. Many more regional and local nationalist movement emerged in many pockets of India and challenged the hegemony of Delhi. In 1979 in Assam the All Assam Student's Union launched an identity movement demanding the deportation of all the immigrants from Assam to safeguard Assamese identity. The Assamese identity movement led the way for the emergence of new and parochial movements in the region. These include the Bodoland movement, which emerged in 1987 to demand a separate autonomous state

⁷³ Hamilton, Paula & Linda Shopes. eds. (2008). *Oral History & Public memoirs*: Temple University Press.

within Assam; the movement launched in 1989 by the United Liberation Front of Assam to secede Assam from India; and the Tai Ahom movement for the separation of identity of the Assamese and the Indians. Recently, groups of Dimasas and Karbis in Assam have also launched their own identity movements⁷⁴.

The opposition to join the Indian Union was not only specific to other parts of India. The state of Sikkim has its own interesting story about the merger. With relation to the details regarding the merger, the administrative accounts and the oral stories differ. If the administrative accounts tell one story, the people have a different story to tell. The administrative documents reveal that the merger of Sikkim with India was supported by almost all the sections of the Sikkimese. The administrative documents state that the practice of feudacry in Sikkim was responsible for the agitation of the people against the Namgyals. Winds of change of liberal democracy emanating from adjoining parts of India blew over the hills and dales of Sikkim in the late thirties and gained more momentum in the forties of the 20th century. Some of the feudal privileges had to be shorn off particularly during the Second World War. Even then the Kazis and Thekadars were confronted by the massive revolt during the 1948-50. Not only the commoners among the Bhutias and the Lepchas participated in the revolt, even the sections of Bhutias-Lepchas actively participated in it. A process of defeudalisation set in motion and it appeared that the new era of liberal democracy was at the door step. By the early 1960s the anti-India, anti-democracy forces had gained enough strength to enable the king to switch onto the title Chogyal and to decisively assert distance from the political establishment of India. However, this did not go unchallenged. In 1973 the democratic forces bounded back; feudarchy was cornered but not vanquished. To break the

⁷⁴ Saikai, Yasmin (2004). *Fragmented Memories: Struggle to be Tai Ahom in India*: Duke University Press.

statement India had to step in, but due to the geo-political constraint had to agree to the compromise arrangement.

The administrative accounts reflect that the people of the then Sikkim were more than ready to merge with India but the oral accounts tell some other story. Oral history interviews can be understood as part of broader process of negotiation a relationship with a difficult, sometimes brutal past; made public; they are way of gaining recognition for suffering endured⁷⁵. Oral history also depends upon the spirit in which it is used, though it will certainly transform the content of the history. The agitation the pro-Sikkimese made during the merger can be only understood through the use of the oral sources. Talking of the merger a man said “I still don’t consider Sikkim to be the part of the Indian Union, for me Sikkim is still a Kingdom, though our King has left us for heavenly abode”. Another one speaks out the traumas he faced during the merger time, where he talks about himself being head of the Sikkim Guard and pro-Chogyal, he was chased by the armies for which he had to hide in the jungle for three days and was even termed as ‘Chogyal’s dalal’. He was finally caught at Singtam and jailed for a day, after which he was released the next day with Kazi’s order. He says that his heart still saddens to think of the Sikkim’s merger with India. Many old people talk of the day when they voted for India. They say that they were forced by the Indian military men to vote against the Chogyal though they didn’t want the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union. When most of the interviewed people were against the merger, there were some who even are unaware of the fact that Sikkim is no longer ruled by the Namgyals. It seems that for the older generation living in the remotest part of Sikkim the change in the Government hardly mattered. Such past memories of the people has been hidden from the history of Sikkim. Interviews with such people provided an invaluable source for uncovering

⁷⁵ Hamilton, Paula & Linda Shopes. eds. (2008). *Oral History & Public memoirs*: Temple University Press.

and exploring experiences which have been 'hidden from history'. Used in this way, oral history could be a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory-how people make sense of the past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them⁷⁶. Finally in the general election that followed the agreement, the feudal forces were completely routed. Except one, no representative of the pro-feudal parties could be elected. In 1975 on demand of elected council monarchy was abolished but the political privileges of the Bhutia-Lepcha were not touched.

Sikkim, before the coming of the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty was occupied by the Lepchas and the Limboos who were ruled by their own chiefs. The tension prevailing in the Tibet made the people flee their home towards the land of Sikkim which at that time was sparsely populated. The Tibetan monks led to the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty which ruled Sikkim for more than three hundred years. It was only after the coming of the Namgyal rulers in Sikkim that the state formation took place. Sikkim, being a trade route made the rule of the Namgyals unfavourable as the Gurkha from the neighbouring country of Nepal and the ruler of Bhutan frequently disturbed the Namgyal rule, against which the Namgyals were favoured by the Tibetan government.

The Limboos occupied better position in the early Namgyal court, but their condition began to deteriorate during the rule of the later Namgyals. The Limboos were favoured by the last Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thendup Namgyal who made political arrangements for them by giving them a lone seat in the State Assembly. Further, the migration of the Nepalese, engineered by the British made the Limboos lump with them which deprived them of those privileges that otherwise belonged to them. The political privilege given to them by the

⁷⁶ Perks, Robert & Thomson Alistair. eds. (2006). *The Oral History Reader*: Routledge

Chogyal was short lived. Their lone seat was later lumped with the Nepalese seat treating the Limboos as a part of the Nepalese community, when Sikkim merged with the Indian Union. Though the administrative sources talks about the will of most of the people in joining the Indian Union, oral accounts reflects different reality.

CHAPTER 4

THE DAWN OF DEMOCRACY

The last chapter dealt with the establishment and the end of Namgyal rule and the conditions of the Limboos under the Namgyal regime. The chapter ended with the end of the Namgyal rule and the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union. So, this chapter will focus on changes that the Limboo community underwent with the rise of democracy and the measures they used to bargain with the newly formed democratic Government. It has been noticed that the process of maintaining the distinct identity was greatly accelerated with the birth of democracy and the end of monarchy. It deals with the phenomenon which is used as a symbol for asserting ethnic identity, through the formation of associations by the members of this community. As it is observed that when nothing worked out these associations came forward with various demands, thereby helping the Limboos gain the rights and privileges which the Limboos feel that they should have got long before. The different Limboo associations catered to the different need of the Limboos and have been an important instrument for preserving those ethnic markers which would have otherwise been eroded by the winds of modernization, assimilation and acculturation.

TRACKING IDENTITY- SELF AWARENESS AMONG THE LIMBOOS

The memory of ancestry, the Kings and Kingdoms have in course of time given the Limboos an extremely powerful sense of ethnic identity. Karl Deutsch opined that the ethnic identity would wither away with growing modernization process in the form of urbanization, industrialization, and development in communication, transport and education. The paradox of modernization is that instead of helping religious, linguistic and cultural identities wither away, it has actually hardened them and provoked ethnic conflicts and communal violence; at

its worse, it has transferred positively expressed identity and diversity into negative identities¹. With the dawn of democracy, the Limboos began to bargain with the newly formed democratic government, through the newly formed associations. In spite of individual differences, the sense of common ethnicity never remained excluded as what Harold Issac puts up that ethnicity is all about ‘primodal affinities and attachment’². With the coming up of democratic government or say perhaps before that, Limboos had already started coming under the so called ‘Nepalese’ fold. But the process of maintaining the distinct identity was greatly accelerated with the birth of democracy and the end of monarchy. When during the reign of Kazis and Thekadars, the Limboos had remained united with the Nepalese but the post merger period saw the breaking away of the Limboos from the same.

The influx of Nepalese has in some way led to the erosion of Limboo language, culture and tradition to certain extent. One can hardly find Limboo speaking people except in the remote villages of western Sikkim. It was quite surprising to find among the school students, taking up Limboo as their subject in the school curriculum, that they were not able to speak their language fluently. They could write well but couldn’t speak well. If in the past there was speaking public now one can see the writing public who can hardly speak. Limboos prefers to speak in Nepali rather than in their own language and takes pride in following the sanskritized culture and tradition of the Hindus rather than their own. It is only recently, that they have started to take pride in their own culture and tradition and are beginning to take up measures for the preservation of the same. In fact, their feeling that Nepalisation and Hinduization had and has created for them, a meaningless identity activated their quest for

¹ Dutta, Anup (2000). “Modernization and Ethno-national Identities State - Civil Society Conflict in North East India”. In Political Dynamics of North East India- Essay in Honour of Prof. Barrister Pakem, edited by Girin Phukon: South East Asian Publishers.

² Kashyap, Subhas C. (1998). “Ethnicity and Constitutional Reforms in India”. In Ethnicity and Constitutional Reform in South Asia, edited by Iftekharuzzaman: Manohar Publishers.

their roots. Passion began to be seen among them for establishing separate identity, thereby claiming greater share in the power structure, status and benefits. Increasing tendency started to be seen among the Limboos for rediscovering or inventing distinct identity for personal identification, emotional security and communal anchorage. Attempts were made for de-sanskritisation. If in Nepal various mongoloid ethnic castes are forming united associations like NEFEN³, maintaining anti-Brahmin attitude; the case is different in Sikkim. The Limboos here are trying to maintain distinct identity even distinguishing themselves away from their mongoloid counterparts. The Limboo associations were formed which initiated steps in preserving their cultural heritage. The establishment of Manghim⁴ and the Limboo Bhawan (house) signifies the contribution made by these associations. The Government of Sikkim is also seen to have taken initiative for helping this community preserve their cultural heritage. The Sirijunga Hang museum at Tharpu, West Sikkim and the ongoing construction of a huge statue of Sirijunga Teyongsi at Hee Bermoik, West Sikkim testifies their help and support.

STRUGGLE FOR INDIGENITY

The Constitution (Sikkim) Schedule Tribes Order, 1978 under its schedule listed the Schedule Tribes of Sikkim as Bhutia (including Chumbipa, Dophapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa, Yolmo) and Lepcha. So, the Limboos being left out made the Limboos of Sikkim claim for ST status. The Limboos started demanding for the recognition of ST status right from the year 1981. The Limboos felt that they were the ones to suffer

³ NEFEN was founded as a federation of seven different organisations: four represented Newars, Tamang, Mangars and Gurungs, and the other three were Kiranti bodies, one representing Limboos and two Rais. For more details see Sinah, A.C. (2007). "Communities in Search of Identities in Sikkim". In Problems of Ethnicity in North-East India. edited by Dr. B.B. Kumar: Concept Publishing Company,

⁴ Limboo prayer house.

unequal treatment in the pre as well as post merger period. If in the pre-merger period, in terms of tax collection the Limboos were equated with the migrant group and some of the Kazis even used them as unpaid labourers; in the post-merger period they were left behind and could not receive ample facilities that their counterparts Bhutias and Lepchas were enjoying. They felt that constructing a distinct ethnic identity would help them gain all those benefits which they were supposed to get it much earlier. Returning to the roots of life and culture and claiming for tribal status in Sikkim is mostly concerned with the achievement of political and economic power as Ronan has remarked in a more general Third World context, “*ethnic identity (during the 1960s) had become an organisational form, a weapon, a tool, and/or a means for the attainment of goals*⁵”.

The Limboo delegation led by Sanchaman Limboo claimed that they constitute 25% of the Sikkimese population and are one of the indigenous inhabitants of the state and that they should be granted tribal status. In their memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, they deliberately mentioned the treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum and their lone Tsong seat in the State Assembly. They also focused on the educational as well as economic backwardness of their community and thereby their absence in the Government services. It was further notified that there are hardly half a dozen post graduate and around just a handful of Limboo graduates in the state of Sikkim and that the Limboos lived isolated lives and could not even properly understand and speak other languages except their own which had led to their backwardness in the past but the recognition of their language as one of the official languages of Sikkim and the introduction of their language in the schools of Sikkim had helped them improve to some extent but they still had a long way to go. It was further

⁵ The line has been cited in Hutt (1997). Hutt, Michael (1997). “Being Nepali without Nepal: Reflection on a South Asian Diaspora”. In *Nationalism & Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom- The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*, edited by David N Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka & John Whelpton: Harwood Academic Publishers.

said that the Limboos were economically so unsound that majority of them barely had enough to eat and drinking liquor, an integral part of the Limboo social life was blamed for their poverty. They felt that it was only after providing them the tribal status; this community would be able to rise in par with the other communities of Sikkim.

If in the earlier phrase the Limboos were emphasising on the treaty and their lone seat in the State Assembly, later they also brought to the forefront their distinctiveness in culture, tradition, language and script. Not only did they press the government for granting them tribal status but even for their seat reservation in the state Assembly to the Chief Minister in the year 1983. Sanchaman Limboo's presence in the ruling Government served boon for them. It became easier for them to put forth their demands through him, he holding the office of Health & Family Welfare & Social Welfare, Schedule Castes & Schedule Tribes Welfare. As their demands were not seen yielding good results, they started emphasising their similarity between them and the Lepchas and other tribes of the north-eastern part of India.

Limboos of Sikkim feels that amongst the three indigenous community of Sikkim (i.e. the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Limboos), they are the ones to have suffered domination in both pre-merger as well as post-merger Sikkim. Sikkim Kirat Tsong Chumlung led by K.B Limboo continued to press the Government for their recognition as Schedule Tribe. Quoting from various writers and historians, they started agitating against the Government for not giving ears to their problems and thus denying them their rights. Not only were the claim being made by the Limboo associations but even the Lepcha-Bhutia association like Denzong Tribal Yargay Chogpa were of the view that the Limboos should be granted tribal status and six seats should be reserved for them in the State Assembly. Such grouping between these three communities was viewed by others as the revival of age-old ties between those three communities who inhabited the state prior to the immigration of Nepalese and also most importantly as the rise of Limboos as a strong political force in the State. Amongst all, the

reaction of the then Chief Minister N.B. Bhandari was worth noticing. The use of the words like 'illiterate, poverty stricken, vulnerable', while describing themselves by the Limboos was protested by Bhandari. He questioned as how education being free right upto the College level could not help in educating the Limboos. The line 'unequally yoked with the Nepalese majority' in the memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India angered Bhandari to such an extent that he urged Sanchaman Limboo and Bir Bal Subba to put fourth their explanation within two days. Thus, he who championed the interest of the Nepalese threatened to quit his post as the party chief or else his two MLAs Sanchaman Limboo and Bir Bal Subba had to resign for violating party conduct by being part of the Limboo activist and supporting the cause of the Limboos. Such opposition from the party chief did not seem to make effect to the Limboos as when Bhandari was campaigning for the inclusion of Nepali language in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, the three communities Limboo, Bhutia and Lepcha started raising their demand for the same. Such pressure from this group had made the Indian Government take steps for the inclusion of Limboo as ST at par with the Lepchas and Bhutias⁶. But the strong opposition from the political circle of Sikkim made it impossible for this community to get the Tribal status. In fact, during the Chief Ministership of N.B. Bhandari, the Indian Government was asked not to include this community in the list of Schedule Tribe fearing that it might divide the Nepalese community.

Bhandari was not only against the Limboo getting the tribal status but even refused to implement Mandal Commission in the state of Sikkim on the ground that it would cause disharmony among the ethnic communities of Sikkim. This was termed by the Limboo association as an act aimed to appease the upper caste Nepalese Hindus in Sikkim. The

⁶ In the letter to the Chief Secretary, T.S. Gyaltzen vide D.O. No.BC 12016/24/75-SCT V dated 21st July, 1976 the Govt. of India clearly mentions to consider Limboos in par with the Bhutias and Lepchas in the list of Schedule Tribe.

unification of the three ethnic communities and the opposition of Mandal commission might have played one of the important factors in creating new trend of political stage in Sikkim that led to the rise of new party led by Pawan Kumar Chamling. The SDF party took this opportunity for seeking the support of the Limboos by guaranteeing their fullest support to achieve the demand of the Limboos.

The 2nd of June, 1994 changed the fate of the Limboos from being General to Other Backwards Class. N.B. Bhandari was voted out from his office on May 19th, 1994 and Sanchanam Limboo was appointed the new Chief Minister. The first move of the Sanchanam Government was to recommend to the Union Government to include seven communities from among the Sikkimese of Nepalese origin as OBC. Consequently, Bhujel, Gurung, Limbu, Mangar, Rai, Sunwar and Tamang were declared as OBC in the State of Sikkim on June 2nd, 1994⁷. Thus, after having examined the recommendation of the Mandal Commission with respect to declaring Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) in Sikkim, the State Government recognised and declared Bhujel, Gurung, Limbu, Mangar, Rai, Sunwar and Tamang as SEBC or OBC for the state of Sikkim.

But being counted as OBC did not satisfy the Limboos who began to press the Government for the recognition of their status as Schedule Tribe. They felt that they deserve much more than what they have achieved and their demand for the ST became stronger when they became quite sure that their demand for the seat reservation in the State Assembly could not be met out. The Limboos thought that once they are termed as tribe they would automatically be entitled to seat reservation as in other parts of India. Being tribe in India has

⁷ Sinah, A.C. (2007). "Communities in Search of Identities in Sikkim". In Problems of Ethnicity in North-East India. edited by Dr. B.B. Kumar: Concept Publishing Company.

and will always serve as a medium for gaining control of land, resources and political power for the disposed groups and here, particularly for the Limboos who does feel marginalised in their own home land.

As their demand for acquiring tribal status was delayed, the Limboos started organising more meetings to reach their goal. They even formed an adhoc Action Committee to carry on their work often collecting funds from among themselves for acquiring ST status. Finally the Constitution Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2003 (No. 10 of 2003) dated January 8, 2003 included Limboos and Tamangs in the list of Schedule Tribes by the amendment of the Constitution (Sikkim) Schedule Tribes Order, 1978 after entry 2, namely “3. Limboo and 4. Tamang”. Though being recognized as Tribal should make them automatically entitled to reservation of seats in the State Legislative Assembly as envisaged under Article 332(1) of the Constitution of India, such provision hasn’t been introduced in the State of Sikkim. The transformation of a group into Scheduled tribe conferred special entitlements to the Limboo community, which range from reservation of seats in the Legislative Assembly to quotas in Government employment and educational institutions, and various other concessions. Other special provisions include the right of Scheduled tribes to use their own language for education, and to profess their own religious faith and customary practices. The fifth and sixth schedules of the Indian Constitution contain special provisions for protecting the tribes and administration of tribal dominated areas. Recognition as Scheduled tribes indicates the group’s political strength and its powers to influence the regime of representation in order to claim preferential entitlements and resources.

The Limboos community used their history, religion and language as important symbolic sources for furthering ethnic-national claims of tribal identity and indigeneity. The struggle to be recognized as ‘Scheduled tribe’ in Sikkim indicates that tribal identity is no

longer a sign and symbol of subalternity and oppression but political consciousness. There is need to critically examine the political and administrative process around the recognition and conferment of tribal status to groups.

SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY

Becoming ST did not satisfy the Limboos who began to ask for the reservation in the State Assembly. The Limboos could not forget their lone seat granted by the Chogyal through the representative of Sikkim Subject Regulation issued in 1966 which had increased the total number of seat in the State Assembly to twenty-four thereby allocating one seat to the Limboos known as Tsong seat. With the inclusion of the Limboos in the category of Schedule tribes of India, they began to further their demand by asking for the allocation of seats for them in the State Assembly on the basis of their population. Prior to the Limboos getting the status of Schedule Tribe, the non-reservation of seats for the STs was not creating any problem in Sikkim as the two tribes of Sikkim Lepchas and Bhutias were provided reservation of twelve seats in the State assembly in accordance to the Section 7(1A) of the Representation of the People Act 1950. However, the specification of Limboo and Tamang as ST created anomaly as these two communities could not contest elections from the seats reserved for the Sikkimese of Bhutia and Lepcha origin, nor had there been seats reserved for them.

When the Delimitation Commission held public sittings in the state of Sikkim in connection with the Delimitation Assembly and Parliamentary Constituencies on the basis of 2001 census figures, the commission received a large number of representatives from Limboo and Tamang community seeking reservation of seats for these two tribal communities in

Sikkim Legislative Assembly. In their letters⁸ to the Government of India, the Limboo representatives put fourth their grievances regarding the errors made in the historical writings and asked help from the Government to take favourable action for correcting the historical facts of the Limboos. They were grieved to see that the history of the Limboos have been distorted which is not only damaging their seat reservation case but even making them lose their distinct identity. Meetings were held by the Limboo associations with an agenda for correcting the historical records.

Committees were formed who looked into the situation and are trying to help the Limboos get seats as no allocation of seats have been made for the newly formed STs of Sikkim. Since attempts have been made in Sikkim to ensure that no ethnic group comes into dominant position over the other, it was decided that the seats in the state assembly to be increased from 32 to 40 without encroaching upon the earlier seats allocated to various other communities. The Commission had even written to the Central Government as early as the year 2003 to make appropriate legal provisions to grant the demand of the Limboo and Tamang community. Not only are they asking for the seats reservation in the State Assembly but they are even requesting for the reservation of seats in the job sector⁹ and provisions in the higher education. There has been ongoing dialogue between the State and the Central Government on this issue.

⁸ Burman Commission is blamed for adopting negative approach for not recording substantial historical facts in the report. The history of reservation of the Tsong seat as well as the tripartite agreement of Lho Mon Tsong sum was not recorded by Burman Commission.

⁹ The Government of Sikkim has allocated separate seats in Job sector as well as education for the Limboos and Tamangs. At present the seat for the earlier tribal communities of Sikkim such as Bhutia, Lepcha, Sherpa etc is termed as BL and the Limboo-Tamang seat is termed as ST seat.

NEW IDENTITIES IN MAKING

Growing interest in one's culture, the search for origins, new cultural projects, public discussions of culture, cultural comparison and cultural competition come about through a variety of processes¹⁰. While studying the Limboo community, the researcher has noticed that the threatening of their identity has made them search for their identity and clarify their history and culture. Being conscious about their identity, attempts have been made for de-sanskritisation and the Limboos are seen trying to revive their old age practices associated with their ancient belief, thereby asserting their rights. Issues of preservation of their identity, culture and tradition have raised the ethnic consciousness to such a high level that many Limboo associations belonging to both national as well as state level have been formed in Sikkim. In fact, the establishment of such ethnic groupings has been one way of bargaining with the state. In addition, cultural identity has become a means of economic survival. Such organisation can be seen all around Sikkim whether based on caste, community or religion. As Subba¹¹ observes, in the geographically contiguous areas of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Nepal there has been a mushrooming of organisations which seek to preserve and develop their indigenous culture, language and religion. More than half a dozen such groups in Nepal have established their branches wherever their members live, another half a dozen registered associations of Limboos emerged in Sikkim. Though Akhil Sikkim Kirat Limbu Chumlung, an organisation of the Sikkim Limbus was established as early as 1973¹², most of other

¹⁰ Dollfus, Pascale & Marie Lecomte-Tilouine, eds. (2003). *Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil - Identities and Representations in the Himalayas*: Oxford University Press

¹¹ Subba, T.B. (1999). *Politics of Culture - A Study of Three Kirata Communities in the Eastern Himalayas*: Orient Longman.

¹² Choudhury (2006) writes that this organisation has passed resolution in their very first meeting that Tsongs were not Nepalese but one of the indigenous tribes of Sikkim. For more details see Choudhury, Maitreyee (2006). *Sikkim-Geographical Perspective*: Mittal Publication, New Delhi.

associations rose with the rise of Democracy. The Akhil Sikkim Kirat Limboo Chumlung emphasised on the use of Tsong instead of Limboos as their title, but it seems no one at that time understood the importance of being indigenous. The Limboos at that time felt that the use of Subba and Limboo would be better than the use of Tsong. They still regret for not using their title as Tsong and feel that had they used Tsong as their title, they would be still recognised as an indigenous of the state of Sikkim along with the Lepchas and the Bhutias.

The dawn of democracy, the process of acculturation as well as assimilation etc might have led to the growth of ethnic consciousness which might have necessitated the formation of various associations which would help in their ethnic preservation. As Chan Kwok-bun¹³ says '*ethnicity is cumulative over time , maintaining and preserving the condition prior to the point of cultural contact as well as resisting and defending attempts at cultural penetration, dilution or absorption by a dominant group*'. The members of ethnic group started gathering together and so by doing in 'a state of healthy vitality and well being', using Rolando's phrase, the group becomes 'strong and thick'. Such organizations are necessary for the community development as well as for the preservation of identity symbol. Such organization have till date haven't created any trouble and it has been regarded by the members of the community to be a platform for the enrichment and preservation of their culture and tradition. There are all together six important Limboo associations mostly focusing to work on the culture and language preservation as language and culture forms the two most important bases for the ethnic group formation. If one works for the promotion of literature other works for the preservation of culture and as such. The names of these associations are as follows:

- Tey-Men Yakthung Ma Chumbo(Bharitya Limboo association)
- Sukhim Yakthung Sapsok Songjumbho (Limboo Literary association)

¹³ Kwok-bun, Chan (2005). Chinese Identities, Ethnicity & Cosmopolitanism: Routledge Publication

- Sirijunga Yakthung Sukhim Phojumbhu (Limboo Cultural association)
- Sukhim Yakthung Wenchu Chumbo (Sikkim Limboo Youth association)
- Sukhim Yakthung Saplon Chumbo (Sikkim Limboo Publishing Society)
- Sukhim Yakthung Nichamsa Sapsok Singjumbho (Sikkim Limboo Students Literary Association)

Among these associations, TMYMC works at the national level while other five are state level associations. Years of problems faced by the state level Limboo associations all over India had brought together the Limboo delegates throughout India to form a national level association. On 20th July 2002, few Limboo intellectuals from different parts of India gathered in a small village of Luksan, in Duars (West Bengal, India) with the banner of development of the Limboo society, thereby turning this small unknown village to be the hub of intense discussion. With a view to preserve their identity and codify their cultural practices, this association in course of time discussed their problems and even drafted their constitution. The purpose of this gathering was to discuss the problems faced by the state level Limboo associations and to bring out the strategy and to sort out those problems.

This association finally got registered at Gangtok, Sikkim on 20th December 2003 as an apex body of Indian Limboo associations, thereby selecting Shri S.R. Khajum as its President. Its head office became Gangtok. The Limboo participant from all over India agreed that this association should serve as a backbone for gaining economic goal, preservation of their culture, language and literature, establishments of Limboo worship place and in making demands for the inclusion of Limboo language in the eight schedule of the Indian Constitution. At present this association has been successful in establishing Manghims in different parts of the country as well as in spreading Limboo language. Thus, TMYMC has become the hub of the development of Limboo language in those areas where

state government pays little or no attention for the development of their language. Every year during winter holidays, language knowing teachers as well as the college students from Sikkim is sent to other parts of India for teaching their language and their cultural heritage to those Limboos who are quite unacquainted with their tradition, living in various parts of the country. TMYMC also does the work of publishing Limboo calendar which like the Tibetan calendar has a period of twelve year cycle denoting each year by different animals having their own significance. The TMYMC caters to the need of the Limboos all over India. The youths working for this association and taking pain to go to various places to teach their language reflects the rise of consciousness for identity preservation even among the younger generation, as language has always been a medium for preserving identity. This association has even made their flag. The tri coloured flag of blue, white and green have now been accepted by All Indian Limboo association. If TMYMC is working for the religious and linguistic preservation, there are some other groups working for the preservation of their culture.

PRESERVING CULTURE

Culture is one of the most important resource to determine human interaction. It may be compared to the material kind of resource which is exportable or importable over social, ethnic and political border. It has a social, ethnic and political price and its acceptance rate depends on promoter's potential and interest to expand its sphere of influence¹⁴. Growing interest in one's own culture, the search for origins, new cultural projects, public discussions of culture, cultural comparison and cultural competition come about through a variety of processes. Partly, members of minorities react to earlier neglect of their cultures in official rhetoric. Furthermore, tactical manoeuvres by activists may result in highlighting particular

¹⁴ Phukon, Girin (2003). *Ethnicisation of Politics in North East India*: South Asian Publishers.

symbols at the expense of others. Also, searching the roots of one own community may be pursued as a hobby among intelligentsia. While struggling for rights and resources some members of minorities have taken recourse to ‘cultural’ arguments¹⁵. Culture is instrumentally being wielded as a weapon to politically affirm the ‘tribal’ self and challenge the domination of others by reconstructing identities in history to claim a historiocity¹⁶.

The celebration of Sirijung foundation day on 23rd of August traces its beginning with the life of Man Bahadur Khewa (Captian). The memories of village Tumyanghangs have provided an invaluable source of experience and information which had been long time hidden from main stream history. Oral history here helps in documenting much previously undocumented information about communities, organizations, businesses, events or the lives of individuals. It can compliment or supplement information already on the record, fill gaps in the historical record, bring out new and previously unknown information, help us understand how people view and understand the past, and, at times, correct or provide new insight into existing information or clarify confusing accounts. It can also uncover complexities and add new dimensions to what was generally perceived as simple, straightforward recitation of the past¹⁷. The establishment of SYSS which seemed easy in the beginning changed after hearing the memory of Mr. Man Bahadur Khewa. It has helped in uncovering the complexities he and his fellow friends faced in the initial phase when being farsighted, they were busy in making plans for the preservation of their culture. The hardships he faced would make anyone emotional. Every document or any books would seem dull in

¹⁵ Lecomte-Tilouine, Marie & Pascale Dollfus (2003). *Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil Identities and Representation in the Himalayas*: Oxford University Press.

¹⁶ Arora, Vibha (2007). *Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim*: Sociological Bulletin.

¹⁷ Sommer, Barbara W. & Mary Kay Quinlam (2002). *The Oral History Manual*: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

comparison to the story he narrated from his lived experience. While hearing his story, the researcher got so emerged in his story that the researcher could not make out the hours that had passed by. The exact dates and even the day that he mentioned in his narration would mesmerize the hearers. It seems that his old age has brought to him greater memory¹⁸. The story recited by the Tumyanghangs gives an insight into the farsightedness they had for the preservation of their culture from the very beginning. It seems that they from the very beginning had known the outcome of Sanskritization as well as Westernization. The story of an old man reflects the hardship he faced in the past when he actually wanted to make his fellow friends aware of the importance of cultural preservation. When Man Bahadur was of fifteen years of age he heard the story of Sirijunga Hang from his elders. The story of Sirijunga Hang who was taught Limboo script by Nissam Mang (Goddesses of knowledge) and his incarnation Sirinjunga Tyeongsi, who faced death when he came to Sikkim teaching Limboo script to the Limboos greatly, inspired him. After hearing about such difficulties faced by the Limboos, he decided to establish an organisation in the name of Sirijunga Hang for preserving Limboo culture and tradition. He would excitedly think of forming such association all the time.

Once he went to attend a Limboo marriage where he performed Limboo Key ¹⁹dance. He was criticised by boys of his age. He was disheartened by such act on the part of the Limboos. This made him realize that if the Limboos of today are themselves criticizing their own tradition, what would be the fate of their culture and tradition with the rapid rise of modernity. Many question regarding the preservation of culture and tradition stuck his mind. His dream of preserving his tradition and culture through dance and music started getting encouraged when he got elected as a village Panchayat. In those days, there was a trend

¹⁸ The story that was narrated by Man Bahadur Khewa has been compared with the documents.

¹⁹ Dance which is performed with the use of a drum, carried by the dancer .

among the Panchayats to attend the birthday of Chogyal. The officers at Gangtok asked him to perform Paddy²⁰ as well as Key dance during the celebration. After this, he began to continue to take his dance during Chogyal's birthday except in the year 1973 due to agitation in Sikkim. The preservation of two dance forms i.e. Paddy and Key dance became an integral part of his dream.

With the downfall of Chogyal rule, there was the rise of democratic Government led by Kazi Lhendup Dorjee. But the rule of Kazi was thought to be unbeneficial to the development of the Limboos. In addition, the Limboos were then quite acquainted with the democratic form of Government which had taken away their lone seat in the State Assembly. Seeing all this, few Limboos decided to write an application for the introduction of Limboo script in the higher classes as well as for the re-introduction of Tsong seat in the State Assembly. Forty-five Limboos went to meet Kazi, who replied that their case will be decided later. But nothing was done during the tenure of Kazi that benefitted the Limboos. The Kazi Government was then overtaken by N. B. Bhandari.

Man Bahadur had a great dream of visiting Delhi. During the rule of N.B. Bhandari he wrote a personal letter to the Chief Minister where he talked of having no electricity at his village. Thereby, he demanded for gas light and also for Limboo dancer's uniform and money for the purchase of musical instruments. Though he couldnot have chance of meeting the Chief Minister, but he could meet his personal secretary. During his second attempt, he met the Chief Minister and provided him with the copy of application. The application reached the Cultural Department and Rs. 5000²¹ was sanctioned in his name. A notice was sent to him for the submission of the registered documents. Now there was a need for the formation as

²⁰ The dance is performed while threshing paddy. The dance is slow where both men and women continuously sing duet love songs. Such dances are now even performed on the stages as well.

²¹ SYSP received letter no. 7/24/Sikkim/87-88/2300, dated 21/6/88 and the enclosed cheque amounting Rs. 5000 as grant-in-aid to the society from Sangeet Natak Academy, New Delhi.

well as registration of the association. In the month of March, 1980, an association was formed. After the formation of the association, he was sent to the Land Revenue department for the registration of his association. He then was sent to the cultural department, where he was asked to make a memorandum for his association. The officers at the cultural department helped him in making the memorandum. He stayed for around six days at Gangtok. The vendor charged him Rs. 15 for typing his memorandum. But the memorandum made by him got rejected at the office, which frustrated him. He charged the officers at the office for not supporting him. He then went to Ashok Tsonq for help, who took him to the Lawyer's office. The Lawyer charged him Rs. 50 for helping him with the memorandum. As he did not have sufficient money, he returned back home. Back at home, on hearing about the charge of Rs. 50 his friends got frustrated and the association nearly broke down.

Then after he met P.S. Muringla in the morning of 15th August, 1980 and asked him for help. They started the task of framing memorandum for the association from 16th August. The first name they had thought for this association was Ni-Sammang Sirijunga Yakthung Sukhim Phojumbhu. Thinking it to be too long, the word Ni-Sammang was removed. Framing of the memorandum was completed by 19th of August and on the next day i.e. 20th August, 1980; the memorandum was submitted to the Land Revenue Department. On 23rd August, 1980 the association was finally registered²² with the registration no. 56. With the registration of the association the members were chosen, Purna Kumar Khewa was chosen President, Man Bahadur Tamling as Vice-President, Man Bahadur Khewa as Secretary, Partiman Khewa as Joint Secretary, B.B. Khewa as Treasurer and Dhan Man Nembang and Bhim Bahadur Nembang as important advisors. After the registration of the association was completed, he went to the Cultural office where he was handed over Rs. 5000. He brought

²² With reference to the application dated 12th August 1980, SYSP was registered under item no. 56 Vol no. I under notification no. 2602 A/H dated 25th March, 1960 on 23rd August 1980.

few cultural items worth Rs. 4500 and remaining Rs.500 was given to the treasurer for future use. Then they decided to celebrate 23rd August as Limboo Jayanti. In the initial stage they celebrated this day at anM Bahadur's house. Once they had a chance to go to Tripura for a cultural tour. This tour proved to be an encouragement to them. After coming back from Tripura, they decided to build a Limboo Cultural Bhawan (Community centre). On 14th March, 1983 they demanded the government for the construction of suitable Bhawan. Purna Kumar Subba agreed to donate land in the name of his deceased wife and mother-in-law, for the said purpose. Thus, they started the celebration of this day i.e 23rd August, as Cultural day though at times problems prevailed. At one occasion few people asked for the change of the date as 23rd August falls on the rainy season and there are problems of landslide etc. but however the date couldnot be changed. The association often faced financial problems. Man Bahadur Khewa tells that he even sold his paddy several times in order to cope up with the expenses of the celebration.

Their dream for the construction of Cultural Bhawan became a reality with the coming of the SDF government. Laying the foundation of the Cultural Bhawan, the Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling sanctioned money for the construction of the Bhawan. The cultural bhawan has been completed and now it functions as Limboo museum as well. The Bhawan now has a small library which caters the need of the students of the nearby Schools.

The aim of this association is to carry out research into the origin, history and development of Limboo culture and to preserve and spread age old Limboo culture and customs by organizing cultural activities with collaboration with other cultural organization of the state. It also created congenial atmosphere for healthy growth and prosperity of Limboo culture. This association has also thought of undertaking the task of carrying out research regarding the origin, history and the development of Limboo culture and help preserve Limboo cultural heritage and also propagates the richness of Key dance and Paddy

dance. Not only does this association works for the preservation of Limboo culture but even helps preserve Nepali culture. The celebration of the Sirijunga foundation day also includes the performance of various Nepali cultural programmes.

Since there has been great influence of west on the dress and it seems that their ethnic clothes, goods and ornaments have diminished, such associations like SYSP has helped in both reviving and preserving these items perceived as a marker of their identity. One can see that one of the most important ingredients of culture i.e. dress of the Limboos being preserved through such organization. The dress not only helps in marking their identity but even reflect different aspects of their lives and their close affinity with their neighbour. The traditionl items which once was thought to be old fashioned now seems to be in vogue among the people of Sikkim and such vogue is especially seen among the younger generation.

The document that has been preserved in the SYSS bhawan or at the Government archives does not give us a vivid description about the making of the SYSS a reality. Even in societies where written word occupyes a dominant place, documents tell us little about the groups further removed from power, or do so from a very biased point of view, about whole layers of social life, and even individuals. Generally speaking, oral accounts provide a wider window on day to day life and can therefore call into question or enrich institutional history. Their content, which may relate at times to personal experience, at times of popular tradition, may adjoin myth, recognized now as ‘a component much more than the enemy’ of history. Interviews, allow for exploration of less known periods or aspects of lives of influential persons. They throw light on the informal networks and real decision making processes, and people’s motivations, matters which are just as essential as the results, and can even sound out the ‘facts’ from the contemporary, and then retrospective point of view²³.

²³ Perks, Robert & Thomson Alistair. eds. (2006). *The Oral History Reader*: Routledge.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE

The theme 'linguistic' itself have been instrumental in shaping the identity of various tribes and communities. Likewise, language and script has played important role in framing the identity of the Limboos, a marginal hill tribe of Sikkim. The development of Limboo script also known as Sirijunga script in the State of Sikkim can be known through the narratives derived from the lived experiences. Though the government had initiated the introduction of the Limboo language in the school curriculum early during the time of the Chogyal but the development had undergone a complex process in the multi-lingual and multi-cultural society of Sikkim. The development of this language has said to have undergone suppression during the reign of early Namgyal dynasty, but the subaltern groups have played an important role in reviving their lost tradition. Linguistic features within a variety are key element in the indexing and reproduction of ethnic identity, just as they are for other aspects of identity, such as gender and social class. Language may have highly imputed symbolic value for an ethnic group, despite the fact that few people have access to learning it and so cannot choose to use this particular resource²⁴.

The birth of Limboo script is credited to the great king Sirijunga Hang who lived during the second half of 9th century AD. The oral narrative takes us to the mountainous region of Mt. Khangchendzonga, if one has to talk about the introduction of Limboo script. These narratives glorify their King Sirijunga Hang for introducing Limboo script. According to the oral narratives, Sirijunga Hang was taught Limboo script by the goddess of Knowledge, for three months. After three months he returned back to his kingdom and unveiled the Limboo script and helped the Limboos acquire knowledge and wisdom. The incarnation of Sirijunga Hang, Sirijunga Tyeongsi born at Sinam Yangwarok in Nepal came

²⁴ Fought, Carmen (2006). *Language and Ethnicity*: Cambridge University Press.

to Martan, West Sikkim in 1734 and revived the old Limboo script also reviving their religion of Yuma Samyo. Thus, it was Sirijunga Hang who invented the script, but it was revived by Sirijunga Tyeongsi. Originally it is said to have twenty big and ten small letters. At present there are 25 big and 11 small letters. According to Sprigg, its scripts show similarity with the Tibetan and Lepcha script, although it was later influenced more by Devanagari script. During the first half of 18th century, there had been renaissance of Limboo literature both in Sikkim and Limbuwan under the guidance of Sirijunga Tyeongsi, the incarnation. According to the narratives, he and his disciples were killed for spreading Limboo literature and culture. It is said that after his death, the spread of Limboo literature was totally stopped for a period of about two hundred years. During 19th cen an English scholar B.H. Hodgson collected about 100 Limboo manuscripts written during the 17th and 18th centuries from different places and villages of Sikkim and Limbuwan (Nepal) and preserved them in India Office Library, London. This was slightly elaborate version of a script originally invented in the early 18th century by Sirijunga Tyeongsi who was also known as the ‘Lama of Yangrup’. Limboo books were destroyed both in Sikkim and later in Nepal by the Rana regime and it was only because B.H. Hodgson & R.K. Sprigg managed to salvage a small number of books in the 1950s and take them to London, that the script was saved and reintroduced year later. The only other available work on the original Limboo script was that of A. Campbell who in 1855 had published a copy of the script²⁵. Another foreign scholar who took keen interest in Limboo language and literature was Dr. Campbell, who was posted as Superintendent of Darjeeling during the middle of 19th cen. He even prepared Limboo-English dictionary. Modern day Limboo literature made a great stride in its development with the advent of Late

²⁵ Fitzpatrick, Ian Carlos (2011). Cardamom & Class- A Limbu Village and its extension In East Nepal: Vajra Publications.

Iman Singh Chemjong in the field of Limboo literature. The Limboo script used today was revived in the early 1970s by the Limboo scholar Iman Singh Chemjong

In 1968 the late Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal was pleased to issue a government notification allowing the Limboo student to take up Limboo language as an additional/ optional subject upto class II in the state of Sikkim. This act on the part of Chogyal was great encouragement which laid the foundation towards the development of their language. The Government, in order to cope up with the problem of teaching materials, established the Limboo text book unit under the Directorate of Education as early as 1975. The State Government has been helping towards the development of Limboo language by publishing the Sikkim Herald (Govt news bulletin) in Limboo language since 1983. However, the greatest achievement was the recognition of Limboo language as one of the official languages of Sikkim by the act entitled 'the Sikkim Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 1981'. Limboo programme was broadcasted since 1983. In the beginning it was bi weekly programme of 15 minutes but since 1996 it has been made daily programme of 30 mins. Now the Limboos through their association are pressing the government for the inclusion of their language in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution.

The development of Limboo script had stepped in during the Counsellorship of Harka Dhoj Limboo, helped by the then Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal and Gyalmo Cope Hook. Gyalmo after coming to Sikkim took over the responsibility of educating the masses of Sikkim, thereby revising the textbook to be taught in the Sikkimese schools. B.B. Muringla became the text book writer and even went to Benaras to attend the workshop which led to the establishment of the literary society. After coming back to Sikkim, he established the literary association in 1979. Some of the Limboos such as P.M. Subba, P.S. Subba, R.B. Khewa, A.P. Subba, S.P. Subba, Omang Hang Subba formed the committee. P.M. Subba

became its first President. SYSS²⁶ was formed in 1978 with the adhoc executive body. The main purpose for the formation of SYSS was to look into the ways and means for the preservation of the Limboo culture and literature. They aimed to make printing and press available to the Limboo populants, publication of Limboo periodicals, establishment of library as well as the improvement of Limboo vocabulary. The association worked hard for the upliftment of Limboo language upto the level of class VIII and their work bore fruits in the year 1980, when the language was introduced to the class VIII level after one year of the formation of the association. The first steps towards the introduction of Limboo language in the school curriculum started as early as 1966-68 when Limboo language was introduced as optional subjects in the schools up to class II²⁷. There after by 1975, formal Limboo language education started upto class V and by 1980 it became a compulsory vernacular subject till class VIII. During the same period, request was made for the inclusion of Limboo language up to classes IX and X under CBSE. Thus, by 1980 formal Limboo language was taught in the school upto classes IX and X. In the year 1981 and 1983²⁸ the CBSE recognized Limboo as a compulsory subject for classes IX, X, XI & XII respectively. The language was later on made compulsory additional language in the University of North Bengal for under-graduate study²⁹. Some Limboos even started attending and still attends the seminars held in Sikkim as well as Nepal for the development of their language.

The formation of SYSS has helped this community in their linguistic development. When the contacts of the Limboos became more frequent with the other ethnic groups, their

²⁶ Sukhim Yakthung Sapsok Songjumbho was registered in State Government's Land Revenue Department No. 37 in the month of March, 1979.

²⁷ Appointment of the first Limboo teacher vide memo no. (32) 62/990 Edn dated 11.03.1968

²⁸ Education made available up to Classes X and XII vide letter no.11/F.I. (2)X and XII 81/49983 dated 17.12.1983

²⁹Vide reference no. 312/UG. 2000 dated 17.07.2000.

dialects had begun to vanish. This association thus focuses on the development of Limboo language, literature, script, religion, culture, tradition, customs and socio-economic aspect of their community. The formation of such associations has always helped communities gain their desired goal. An important step taken by SYSS was the publication of a quarterly newspaper 'Ingsa'. Ingsa, a quarterly newspaper was published by this association in Limboo as well as English. SYSS even requested the Government that their Limboo bi-weekly programme by AIR in Gangtok, should be made into a daily programme. Since the members of SYSS was convinced that the absence of press was a hurdle to the spread of their literature efforts were made for the establishment of press where B.B. Muringla was entrusted to design the model letters of all the Limboo alphabets and make it available to Sanchaman Limboo for setting up of printing press. Later, Sanchaman Limboo was provided with National Award from the Government of India for design of Tsong or the Limboo Script in 1982. Its main achievement is the establishment of Tsong Jumbho or Limboo house, where they are planning to start a library as well as museum. It was decided that if any members possesses periodicals, books, documents etc they should voluntarily donate it to the library. The hard work done by their forerunners was kept alive by the members of this association. B.B. Muringla is a true pioneer of Limboo literature. Besides improving the Limboo alphabet, he wrote number of books in Limboo language. Though an administrator by profession, this man has done incredible work on Limboo literature and is on his way to complete the Limboo-english-nepali dictionary. This dictionary is intended to make language learning easy for the learners. He narrates the early phase of his struggle when he talks of the hardship as well as the discrimination that he faced when he took up the cause to develop the Limboo script. Apart from Muringla, the names such as H.B. Khamdhak, Chandra Mangyung and Mohan Phurumboo are equally important as they were the ones to work hard writing books when the Limboo language got upgraded at the schools in the state of Sikkim.

The association Like SYSS not only worked for the development of Limboo literature but even worked in other areas as well. One of the main targets of this association was the inclusion of Limboos in the list of Schedule tribe of Indian Union. On 22nd April,2000 this association submitted application to L.K. Advani, the then Home Minister for the inclusion of Limboos along with the Tamangs in the list of ST. They even handed over the book ‘The Limboos of Eastern Himalayas with special reference to Sikkim’ written by J.R. Subba, the President himself as an evidence to support their demand³⁰. Their letter to Advani embodied their grievances such as the abolition of their Tsong seat, murder of their leader Sirijunga Tyeongsi, story of their poverty³¹, low level of literacy, their backwardness etc. This association also talked of minute matters like naming a child by Limboo name, celebration of Kokphekwa Tongnam in the month of January as Limboo New Year, writing of Limboo religion as Yuma Samyo and not Hinduism, introduction of Limboo language even in those schools run by the private individuals and using the spelling Limboo instead of Limbu as used by the Indian Government. SYSS made ample progress in the field of education. Under the Presidentship of Pahalman Subba several achievements were made. Limboo language was raised from Primary upto Graduate level. Under the guidance of this association, Limboo language was recognized as an official language. Even other associations like SYWC, SYSC and SYNSS caters to different needs for the upliftment of the community.

The Limboos themselves have worked for attaining the rights and privileges that belonged to them but was denied. They worked through their associations, which fighting for their rights also worked for the preservation of their culture and traditions. Their associations have been successful in preserving those important ethnic markers which helps Limboos in

³⁰An application was also written to the President on 4th, December 2002 for inclusion of limboos in the list of ST.

³¹ Economic survey conducted by Bureau of Economics and Statistics during 1995 suggests that about 80.32% of the Limboo households are having annual income of less than Rs. 11000.

claiming distinct identity. The associations became the voice of the Limboos that raised important questions about the representation and rights of the Limboos. These associations want the National Government to address their concerns and provide some kind of necessary solutions. Their effort is not to reduce to separatist group but to create a situation to associate themselves as a group and to form powerful members who represent a specific group.

Finding it important to have a distinct identity, revivalism started taking place among the Limboos. Feeling it important to incorporate various elements while being involved in identity politics and trying to express their grievances; their religious elements became an important ethnic marker. Manghim began to be constructed and the worship of Yuma gained ground.

CHAPTER 5

LIMBOO WAY OF LIFE, GETTING MARGINALISED

The last chapter dealt with the changes that the Limboo community underwent with the rise of democracy and the measures they used to bargain with the newly formed democratic Government. While trying to bargain with the Government, the Limboos began to use various ethnic markers to distinguish themselves from the ‘others’. The Limboos like other tribes and communities are very rich in their culture and tradition, so they began to revive their past culture and tradition which has to some extent withered away perhaps due to various processes such as acculturation, modernization etc. As they are trying to revive their past tradition, the community unity is being threatened and is seen to be divided as an outcome of difference in their philosophy. So, this chapter deals with their past culture and tradition, their ethnic markers and division within the community that is beginning to take place due to the outcome of different religious philosophy.

THE MOUNTAIN WORSHIPPERS

Limbuwan, the land of the Limboos, which at present got divided between Sikkim and Nepal, spans from Arun River in eastern Nepal to western parts of Sikkim, flanking both sides of Mt. Khangchendzonga¹. Their Mundhum², which has been transmitted orally from generation to generation, testifies the importance and holiness of Mt. Khangchendzonga in

¹ Wangchuk. Pema & Mita Zulca (2007). Khangchendzonga - Sacred Summit: Little Kingdom Pvt Ltd, Gangtok.

² **The word** ‘Mundhum’ means the power of great strength, true, powerful and holy. It is the oral narratives chanted by the Shamans and has been passed on from generation to generation.

the Limboo way of life. Limboos are related to Mt. Khangchendzonga so much so that their oral tradition speaks of the origin of the Limboos in the base of this very mountain. Thus, the ritualistic practices of the Limboos, their myths and legends, revolve around the sacredness of Mt. Khangchendzonga.

Mt. Khangchendzonga is invoked by the Limboos to bless them signifying their faith towards the mountain god. The ritualistic belief of the Limboos surrounds the notion of going with 'one's head held high'; referring to the performance of Manghenna, Nahangma and Pitchomma, which in the Nepali language can be termed as 'sir uthaunu'. These rituals are performed irrespective of the age, though slight variation in ritual is made during the time of performance where the spirit of a person reaches various stages of Mt. Khangchendzonga depending upon their importance. Through the recitation³ of the Mundhum, the Shaman⁴ takes the spirit of the person for which the ritual has been performed to the mountain. It starts from the fireplace, termed as 'akwanama⁵' in the Limboo dialect, of the household, and moves towards different places where their ancestors had once lived. The Shaman in trance climbs the mountain to reach the place of the Limboo ancestor. Climbing through the stiff rugged peaks of Phok tang lungma, Cham jong lungma and Nang jong lungma; when finally reaching the peaks of Chom fut lungma, the ritualistic performer rests for sometime worshipping the peak for its power, strength and glory. Then comes the highest place termed

³ With the recitation of the Mundhum, the Shamans goes into trance and takes the spirit of any individual for which the ritual has been performed ,through the mountainous region to the place of their ancestors.

⁴ Here, the term Shaman denotes a social functionary who is the religious expert, part time professionals, priest and a doctor possessed by the voluntary as well as non-voluntary spirit possession and who acquire their power through the divine intervention.

⁵ Akwanama is believed to be located in the centre of the world and is paid tribute each time a new house is built. The centre post of the new house is thought to be connected to the centre of the world through this rite, and each year a Limboo household should set aside a day of ritual to this god.

as Sewa lungma⁶. The spirit taken by the Limboo Shamans even go beyond Mt. Khangchendzonga, walking through the slippery ways, the Shamans crosses the desert and then reaches the land of flowers where the spirits of their ancestor lives. Such performance is not only limited for performing the ritual of holding one's head high but even for the performances of death ceremony.

The legend of Sirijunga Hang, the Limboo King also testifies the divinity of Mt. Khangchendzonga. Legend held that he was taught the Limboo alphabet by Ni-Sammang, the God of Knowledge, in the cave lying between Phok thang lungma and Nang jong lungma somewhere in Chom jung lungma; where he stayed for three months. Phok thang lungma is once again remembered by the Limboos to be the place of meditation where the divine monk Lha tsun Chen po meditated and conferred with the Sikkimese guardian deities on the way from Tsang province of Tibet. The Limboos consider themselves to be those fifteen followers with whom Lha tsun Chen po left Kong po for the hidden land.

Along with other deities and divinities, Mt. Khangchendzonga is worshipped twice a year during the time of sowing and harvest, which falls on the month of February-March and August-September respectively. Once, during the researcher's visit to a village in western Sikkim on the day of Phang Lhab Sol⁷, the grass on the pathway had been cleared which according to their explanation was done in respect of the Chogyals. According to one of the Tumyanghangs the reason behind the clearing was that during the days of Chogyal it was the same way through which the landlord and the village heads used to travel in the horse on their way to celebrate the day of Phang Lhab Sol. Walking through the clean pathway, on reaching the house of Tumyahang the ritual of worshipping Mt. Kangchendzonga was

⁶ Lung in the Limboo language refers to stone. Phok thang lungma, Cham jong lungma, Nang jong lungma, Chom fut lungma and Sewa lungma refers to the different peaks of Mt. Kangchendzonga.

⁷ This festival marks the blood-brotherhood treaty of the Bhutias and Lepchas.

performed. Though on the eve of modernization Limboos might have forgotten their old age rituals, it is the elder generations who still keep up the faith living intact with their ancestors.

But, today apart from the belief and contribution of the old generation, the symbolism of Mt. Khangchendzonga as the divine mountain God seems to wither away. The relation between the Limboos and the mountain is becoming less passionate with the passage of time, perhaps due to the coming up of new communities and the process of assimilation as well as acculturation. Among almost all the younger Limboo generation the importance of the mountain is almost unknown. Even their Mundhum which at one point of time had served as a tool to save their vernacular also seems to be on the verge of decline. In the period when the Limboo language and the script was suppressed in the nation building processes underway in Nepal and Sikkim in the 18th century, the Mundhum reverted to becoming an orally transmitted knowledge base⁸. It is obvious that their Mundhum does play increasingly important role in reconstructing their past, but the Mundhum itself is being lost at the present scenario.

Apart from nature god and Mundhum, the importance of folksongs interwoven with the aspiration of this community cannot be ruled out. The songs and dances, conveying the sentiments of their ancestor which had always helped in knowing about their social life seems to wither away. Injustice, oppression and exploitation faced by their ancestors are reflected in their folk stories. The Limboos are rich in their culture and tradition but modernization seems to be possessing threat to their richness. Their traditional dances and songs might have entertained at one time but with the advancement of modernisation their traditional culture is beginning to decay. Once during the Limboo marriage in a village, the researcher could see few elderly people performing dance, singing by themselves. The researcher too joined them

⁸ Wangchuk Pema & Mita Zulca (2007). Khangchendzonga - Sacred Summit: Little Kingdom Pvt Ltd, Gangtok.

in their dance. There were altogether two groups where the researcher joined one of them. These two groups were actually debating through the song that they were singing. It was fun but it was also really disheartening to see that none of the youths were there for dance and it made the researcher feel that those songs and dances would remain only for some years and would be lost in no time. It however doesn't mean that the Limboo dances are not performed by the younger generation; they do perform dances and songs. But the new kind of dances and their pop songs does not surpass the original old ones, uninfluenced by the world of modernization. It has been like the older pure culture versus the modern impure culture. If on one hand side the older generation does not take interest in the newer form of dances and songs, the younger generation is busy in modernizing their culture and tradition. Seeing their pure tradition on the verge of disappearance, few Limboos are taking steps to revive as well as preserve their forgotten tradition. The seminars on subjects like folklore, oral tradition etc are also being conducted, making the younger generations conscious regarding the importance of their culture and tradition.

ADOPTION OF NEW RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL TRADITION

Although political, military and economic affairs receive most of the headlines, religious developments of recent years have also been of major significance, particularly when an entire factor is involved. Indeed in many countries, political, military and economic trends cannot be understood without full attention to challenging or supporting ethno-religious trends. The natures of religious challenges to the ethnic order of the society vary widely, depending upon the religious traditions involved and the structure of power connecting the ethnic groups. When the use of the aboriginal language declines in an ethnic group, when what is felt as a cultural invasion by powerful outsiders persist - often bringing nearly irresistible technologies and even customs - then ancestral religious forms and new but

indigenous religious movements come to the fore. They have heavier share in the task of ethnic definition and self preservation⁹. Religion has been playing an important role in defining one's identity and also serves as a medium for differentiating the ethnic groups.

Historically, the Limboos were animist as well as Yumaist¹⁰ by faith. Though religion itself provide symbols of identity to people and help them find their identity but the absence of religious marker made religion of less value for defining the ethnic identity of the Yumaist Limboos. They don't even have idol of their supreme God. Such lack of religious symbolism creates suspicion as to what their ancestral religion really is. Along with the lack of religious symbols, the establishment of the Buddhist kingdom and the migration of the Hindu Nepalese into Sikkim added much flavor to the Limboo cult, so much so that, today in spite of their efforts of revivalism, the Limboos are not being able to return to their old tradition. If the conquest of 1774 by the Hindu colonizers strongly influenced and altered the Limboo way of life in Nepal; in Sikkim both Hinduism as well as Buddhism marks their deep impact. It has been observed that during the interaction between the Hindus, Buddhists and the Yumaist Limboos, what emerged is the hinduisation of Limboos, though it could not totally destroy the Limboo cultural traits. It is only the Limboos settled in the western part of Sikkim near Pemayangtse, Sangacholing and Dubde who have accepted the Buddhist faith, moreover the Limboos are hinduised and when asked about their religion they identify themselves as Hindu rather than Yuma.

The consolidation of Nepalese state into a Hindu kingdom by Prithivi Narayan Shah, whose ancestors claimed to have migrated from Chittorgrah in Rajasthan, have hinduised the so called Nepalese populants to great extend. The unification of Greater Nepal led to the

⁹ Yinger, J. Milton (1997). Source of Strength? Source of Conflict? : Rawat Publications.

¹⁰ The Limboos believe in their supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma.

gradual assimilation of many such communities into Hindu fold as religious bonding is one of the essential elements in the process of the final unification of the two or more communities or the nation as a whole. The immigration of these hinduised migrants from Nepal as well as their Buddhist neighbours has greatly influenced them. What could earlier be interpreted either as outcomes of prolonged acculturation processes or of fascinating cultural devices allowing for peaceful accommodation, in multicultural settings emerges, at least to some extent, as a ground of cultural struggles over the politics of representation. Signs of acculturation have tended to transform partly, into symbols of oppression, of subordination and of enforced acculturation. The Namgyal rulers are also sometimes blamed to have forged their Buddhist religion on the Lepchas and Limboos. Sirijunga Tyeongsi is said to have sacrificed his life for reviving the Yuma religion and language of the Limboos. With time they adopted more cultured and developed religion of Hindus as well as Buddhist and lately Christianity.

Subba¹¹ claims that the title 'Tsong' given to the Limboos for having been thought to have migrated from Tsang province of Tibet along with their Guru Matog Lama might have made many of the European writers to describe them as Buddhist for there is no other proof of the Limboos being Buddhist. But if seen closely one can notice that Buddhism has greater influence on the Limboos settled in western part of Sikkim, probably due to the presence of great Buddhist monasteries such as Pemayangtse, Sangacholing and Dubde. The Limboo villagers of west Sikkim still profess Buddhism and one can see Buddhist flag flanking high in the front porch of their house. When asked they replied that though they worship their God Tagera Ningwaphuma and use Limboo priest but hasn't completely condemned the Buddhist tradition. Few of them even talked about their deceased grandparents who were trained to be

¹¹ Subba T.B. (1999). *Politics of Culture - A Study of Three Kirata Communities in the Eastern Himalayas*: Orient Longman.

Buddhist monk. One of the informant's grandfathers was known in his village as Dorje Lama for he was trained in a Buddhist culture and happened to be a Buddhist monk. Some even invite the Buddhist monks for the ceremonial ritual. An old Bhutia monk of the Kechoperi¹² monastery still goes to the Limboo houses in the nearby villages for performing the Buddhist rituals and still trains Limboo boys for monkhood. A statue of a monk known as Kung Hada in the same monastery seems to be controversial. Kung Hada refers to the making of his own image. According to the narratives, Kung Hada was a Tamling (Limboo sub-caste) monk of Kechoperi and the statue that was at the monastery was actually made by the monk himself. According to the narratives, the monk made several idol of himself and at last he succeeded in accomplishing his task. So, the idol at that monastery was actually the same idol he made and named it 'Kung Hada'. According to the Kechoperi monk the statue is of the Tibetan guru but Limboos supported by Pemayangtse monks denies and believes the statue to be of Limboo ancestor¹³. Sangacholing monastery too is not devoid of the Limboo monks. It is only in the Pemayangtse monastery in western Sikkim that there is no presence of Limboo monks as this monastery is meant to teach the royal births which consist of twelve sub caste of the Bhutia community who are said to be the ultimate descendent of Khye Bhumsa.

The influence of Buddhism and Hinduism has such profound effect on the religious life of the Limboos that in spite of their every effort, they are failing to go back to their old age faith of Yumism in pure form. Though they talk of themselves having faith in the unseen God, they are also not being able to move their faith from the Hindu Gods and Goddesses. In addition the ornament of their religious priests wearing a garland of rudraksha beads of one

¹² Kechoperi village is located in western part of Sikkim.

¹³ Another controversy lies with the statue of a monk at Dubde monastery. This monastery is believed to have been founded by the reverend monk Lha tsun Chen po. There are several statues inside this monastery among which one of the statues is believed by the Limboos to have belonged to their ancestor. But when I asked the Dubde monks about the statue he said that it belonged to one of their Tibetan monks and not Limboo.

hundred and eight in numbers makes one remember the Hindu God Lord Shiva and the Limboo belief in one's Karma is no way different from the Buddhist philosophy of Karma. In addition, the Limboo altar is supposed to possess a copper plate, a flower vase with grass and flowers and candle light but the presence of Buddhist flag flanking high in the front porch of their house and the images of Hindu as well as Buddhist Gods and Goddesses in their house being offered prayer every morning and evening makes an outsider view Limboos as Buddhist or Hindu as they themselves do not have any images or any effective identity markers which would prove them to be Yumaist. The Limboo festivals also coincide with the festivals of the Hindus. The festival of Tihar (Diwali) of Limboos is actually different from the Diwali celebration of the Hindus. They actually celebrate Diwali to commemorate the long life of their great King Bali Hang.

According to the Limboo legend, there lived a kind King Bali Hang, who knew that he was to die soon. The news of his death spread among his people who began to pray throughout the night for the long life of the King and finally their love for the King won over his death. The people then celebrated their happiness going from house to house spreading the message of happiness and observing the festival of Tihar which coincided with the Diwali of the Hindus. So, even the Diwali celebrations of the Limboos having their specific local meanings do coincide with the Diwali celebration of the Hindus. Apart from the Diwali celebration, the Limboo New Year festival of Kaok-Phekwa-La-Gaenge coincides with the Hindu Maghne Sakranti and Sisekpa La-gaenge with the Sawaney Sankranti.

In spite of such influences, the Limboo faith in their ancestral God Tagera Ningwaphuma did not cease completely. Along with the acceptance of Hindu as well as Buddhist tradition, they also do believe in supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma, the omnipotent and eternal; who with her divine power created not only the universe and all forms of life on earth but even other god and goddesses. Like the Christian belief of God's

messenger on earth, the Limboos too believe that ‘Yuma¹⁴’ is the messenger of Tagera Ningwaphuma. The so-called Limboo intelligentsia put up great efforts to determine their distinct religious way of life. In this process, the Limboos started the construction of Manghim; the religious temple only in the last quarter of 20th cen. At the time when some signs of identity marker had become invisible, due to their intimacy with other religious groups, this newly constructed religious structure acted as strong symbol. The simultaneity of assimilation to new, dominant culture and revitalization of one’s own odd one results in paradox: but the search for distinction and uniqueness creates somehow a unifying factor in the national perspective, as if those seeking to distinguish themselves are striving to establish a common denominator at the same time. This is one of the outcomes of the national exchange in which well educated activists play a prominent role. Such exchanges tend to result in shared models of action: when activists of particular group successfully start to put forward specific notion, there is a tendency that similar practices will be adopted by other groups: rejection of Hindu notions; reinterpretation of the historical accounts, social and cultural reforms, a greater care in religious expression, including the erection of new religious structures.

The architect of Mangheem, Jagat Subba is said to have designed the Manghim on the basis of the Mundhum. The first Manghim was constructed at Mangshila in north Sikkim under the supervision of SYSS. Manghim bears nothing but a structure having nine level towers tapering at the top, each having their own significance. Above the earth are the nine dens and below exist the nine dens. It is believed that the world is sandwiched between eighteen dens. Sangram Pedang den is the highest place where the supreme diety Tagera Ningwaphuma resides. It is the highest place and the place of eternal peace and happiness. It is the place where the soul becomes immortal. Next is the, Sang-Sang den which is the sacred

¹⁴ The word ‘Yuma’ in Limboo language signifies old woman. Yuma too is unseen.

abode of the creator God Sigerah Yahundin Hang Pokokmi Yamdhami Hang. Then comes Mang Khoma den, a place for meditation where the gods and goddesses meditate and ask the supreme deity Tagera Ningwaphuma to bestow power and knowledge upon them. After Mang Khoma den is Sey Sywa den which is the abode of the Mangs and Sammangs or gods and goddesses. Then is Sunaing Tong den, which is the abode of seven wise deities who maintain the records of all human activities. After this is Muthang Khara den, a place of judgement where the guilty are given a second chance to repent for the sins that they have committed. Then is Torong Tangen den, the place is the place for the judgement. It is here, where the acts of the deceased are judged by the God and if found guilty are sent back to the Khemding Yogsong den for punishing them. It is followed by Samyukna den, where the dead souls are taken by the Limboo priests and the souls of the deceased reside there till the time of judgment. The Iksading Khamdek den is the lowest place, in the upper part of the earth. It is just above the ground where the human beings and the spirit of gods and goddess live. Below the earth are nine more dens. The first level just below the Iksading Khamdek den is Khambongba Lungbongba Yukna den or the world of souls. Then is Muroplung Kheroplung den or the world of rocks. The world of rocks is followed by the world of metals or Muguplung Theguplung den. Below the world of metals is Murupli Kherupli den, the abode of Akwanama Mang, who can even cause destruction to the earth if not worshipped in proper manner. The surface below the world of metals is filled with water, Mujingna Kheyonna den where the goddess Mujingna Kheyonna, the teacher of Mundhum resides. Below this den is Musekha Sekhana den, a big lake where the god of water resides. Below the lake is the ocean, Tungutlung Haralung den. Then is the marshy land, Sumbadoma Lekwadoma den. The last place also termed as Khemding Yogsong den is a hell which is described as full of fire and the humans committing sins in the world are punished here.

The importance of nine level tower representing nine dens are also reflected in their counting as eight days for the male and nine for the females while performing the death ritual. This ceremony is termed as Kusiring ba. There is a belief among them that the soul of a deceased person has to pass through eight worlds to reach heaven from the earth which gets reflected in this tapering tower. Limboos believe in each person possessing eight souls. Here, it should be noted that even the five sense organ of a person are considered as separate soul. Any devout coming to the Manghim requires rounding this altar in anti clock wise direction thrice and is suppose to offer prayer facing east. A little variation can be seen, for in some Manghim one can see key drum while in other it doesn't. But it seemed quite disappointing as the Manghims remain close most of the time and is opened to the Limboos only in the festive occasion. This has happened due to the fact that unlike the Hindu pandits and Buddhist monks, the Limboo religious priests are family man bearing different jobs for earning their livelihood and are not full time priest. Though there are few Limboo priests who have left the Government jobs hoping that they would pay more attention to their religious functions, they still stay at home with their family rather than in the Manghim.

The Limboos are further confused with the birth of their new faith, which has been termed as little tradition¹⁵. Most of the Limboos are confused with Darap Yuma and Yuma religion in general. Several people were asked the same question as to which religion they belong to. Their reply would be Hinduism and when I further inquired and asked the question that isn't they the follower of Yuma, their ancient cult. Their reply would be no, as according to them, they have not accepted Darap Yuma and they still follow the Phedangma tradition. For the Limboos especially living in the villages, Yuma signify Darap Yuma and not their ancient pantheon.

¹⁵ The term 'little tradition' has been used to denote the new Limboo religion introduced by a girl claiming herself to be the incarnate of Yuma, at Darap, west Sikkim.

THE BIRTH OF NEW TRADITION

When a race lies crushed and groaning beneath an alien yoke, how natural is the dream of a redeemer, who shall return from exile or awake from the long sleep to drive out the usurper and win back for the people what they have lost. The hope becomes a faith and the faith becomes the creed of priests and prophets, until the hero is God and the dream a religion, looking to some great miracle of nature for its culmination and accomplishment¹⁶. The year 2004 marked a new phrase for some members of this community as for them this year witnessed the coming of an incarnate ‘Yuma’, the Limboo religious saviour¹⁷. Darap Yuma narrates her story as *“Like other migrant labourers, my mother and father had come to Sikkim from Phidim in east Nepal and stayed in Darap, west Sikkim for several years. In course of time they gave birth to me and I am the incarnate of Yuma. A spirit had appeared in the dreams of my parents conveying the message of the birth of savior among the Limboos. The same spirit had directed my parents to leave Phandim so that I would be born in another place. Thus was my birth in Darap, west Sikkim miles away from my native homeland”*. The Darap Yuma further explains that since her early childhood she started being filled by the Holy Spirit. She used to walk in dreams when she was actually taken by the spirits to the holy places which made her neighbours view her as a psychic. She even could attend her school only till class IV. She is sometimes mocked for being little educated and trying to be the so – called revivalist. Finally at the age of sixteen, after meditating for a month, she became popular among the Limboo subjects as Shri Shri Shri Yuma Mang.

¹⁶ Yinger, J. Milton (1997). *Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* : Rawat Publications.

¹⁷ The Limboos are Yumaist by faith, they believe in their supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma. But recently the birth of a girl in Darap, a small village in western Sikkim, claiming to be the Limboo saviour has led to the religious fragmentation of this community. So, this new sect has been referred as Darap Yumaism or new tradition and similarly the old faith has been referred as old or Phedangma tradition.

The birth of this new tradition has created disturbance within the community. This new tradition has been blamed for having tried to destroy the Limboo tradition in the name of revivalism and is viewed by the orthodox section to be an instrument of creating division within the community. If some of the orthodox section don't even want to hear her name, there are few who says that had Yuma called herself by the name of Yuma Sam¹⁸ instead of Yuma Mang and had kept herself away from the old tradition and customs that they have been following since ages, they would have accepted her. The use of fruits and sweets in the performance of religious rites instead of blood or meat and keeping themselves away from consuming fermented food has been mocked for trying to follow the Hindu Brahmanical tradition.

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY

Closely watched, it can be seen that the nature of interaction between the animist Limboos and the sanskritised Hindus and Buddhist in Sikkim was one of the peaceful co existences¹⁹ rather than one of conquest and subjugation. The interaction between the ruling Buddhist, migrant Neplalese and the Limboos can be seen as a process of peaceful acculturation. The Limboo villages go to prove this fact where the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese have assimilated with Limboos in such a way that they have become the inseparable part of the community. These Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese with a great capacity of assimilation have adopted the language and culture of the Limboos. Though the system of

¹⁸ Yuma Mang refers to God and Yuma Sam refers to the spirit of God being possessed by an individual. Few Limboos says that god doesn't come to this earth in her own form. Instead God comes to this earth in the form of a person. So, if Darap Yuma had said that she is being possessed by the spirit of god rather than claiming that she is god, they would have accepted her.

¹⁹ It is only sometimes the Limboos says that they were forced to accept Buddhism during the Namgyal rule and their great Saint Sirijunga Tyeongsi was killed by Ts-sang Lamas, apart from such stories there are no instances of forced religious conversion in the State of Sikkim. Even the treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum certifies religious acceptance and tolerance in the part of the Namgyal rulers.

adopting the outsider into their community is no more practiced among the Limboos, the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese in the Limboo majority villages have indirectly adopted themselves to the Limboo way of life. The adoption of Nepalese into Limboo fold has become more visible with the coming of new tradition where many teenagers of the Nepali community has adopted the new tradition as their religion thereby accepting Darap Yuma as their ultimate God and saviour. Not only have they accepted her but has even become her devout follower by becoming her Suingneeme²⁰. The researcher came across many Nepalese high caste Suingneem girls. Once a girl fainted in front of the researcher, thr researcher and her friends got afraid by sudden fainting of that girl, then a believer of Darap Yuma came to the spot and took her to Yuma and later on she became Suingneem. When asked they say that they see vision to be her follower. Suingneem having vision of Yuma in their dream usually comes to visit the incarnate Yuma and stays there for around a month dedicating a short span of their life in devotion to Yuma.

On Darap Yuma's birthday many Suingneem as well as followers belonging to various caste groups could be seen. Some have even started learning Limboo language and script thinking it might be a great help for preaching the gospel of their Yuma. Many people of different caste groups were seen going into trance. One of the most astonishing scenes was of a small boy of around fifteen years of age who was in trance and his parents told that he hadn't spoken a single word for around three days, which they believed to be a sign to become a Suingneem. Such effect centered not only among the youngsters but even among

²⁰ The word 'suingneem' is a newly created word, created by the new tradition. It was explained by the followers of new tradition that this word is derived from the word Mangmuk, they are said to have come to this earth to spread the message of Yuma. They are vegetarian and are not allowed to consume alcohol, garlic and fermented food. They are encouraged to remain unmarried and if they do marry they lose their chance of getting re-incarnated in their next life as Suingneem. There are usually five categories of Suingneem i.e. Samnudang, Yammudang, Singwadang, Phungwadang and Mukwadang. It is the colour of the dress they wear that determines their seniority.

the older generations. Most of the people usually become Suingneem when they go to attend religious mass at their village. A chettri²¹ Suingneem girl when asked about her conversion to Yumaist faith said '*I had been to my neighbour's house to attend the religious mass, as the ritual started I went into trance and got the vision to become Suingneem*'. The ones who go into trance are made Suingneem, but once they become Suingneem, they have to attend the classes that usually take during summer or winter vacation²². During their classes they are taught religious rituals as well as the recitation of their written Mundhum. Through the institute of Suingneem, this new sect has further bridged the gap between the Limboos and the Nepali caste groups. The religious practices of this new tradition are almost like that of the Hindus. Offering of fruits, practice of non-violence opposite to the blood sacrifice of the Phedangma tradition makes them almost similar to the Hindu tradition. Such similarity in the religious rituals of Darap Yuma and Hinduism might have attracted many young Hindu girls and boys into their fold. Having a close look on the rituals performed by the newly formed Darap Yumaism, one can assume that the Limboos following this tradition has more or less adopted Hindu way of religious life. Not only is their traditional religion being withered away but even their symbols of culture don't seem safe.

The Limboos in the villages talks about the importance of their house and narrated the importance of Murumsitlang, the pillar at the centre of their house. Murumsitlang is unique to the Limboos and was not seen among other communities living in Sikkim. This centre pillar is important for conducting household rituals. But the Limboos today like any other people lives in buildings and one could hardly see Murumsitlang except in few houses. The pillar was missing in most of the houses and when asked they replied that they do have constructed Murumsitlang underneath the ground i.e. the in the foundation ground, invisible from the

²¹Upper caste in the hindu caste hierarchy. They belong to the Kshatriya caste in the Hindu caste hierarchy.

²² The schools and colleges of Sikkim remain close for a week during summers and for two months during winters. Since most of the Suingneem are students they are given religious training during their holidays.

outer place. This made it harder to distinguish the Limboo and other houses. Further, the Darap Yuma tradition discourages the construction of Murumsitlang in the house of their members and says that one should not worship any other god other than Tagera Ningwaphuma, the supreme diety.

Apart from their religious places and practices, the idea of being Limboo can also be facilitated through their language and script. Apart from the villages in western part of Sikkim, the Limboos staying outside villages has forgotten their mother language to such an extent that the Limboos began to be recorded in the Government reports as the Nepali speakers. The Limboos has by now almost forgotten their culture, tradition and their language. It's only recently that the Limboos are seen to show immense concern in learning their language and script. Not only is their language taught in the Government schools but even the private schools run by the private individuals are made to adopt Limboo language in their school curriculum. Even those Limboos working in the Government sector are seen to give their time in helping the owners of private schools find suitable Limboo language teachers for their school. Most of such interviews are held on holidays for making their presence possible. They are seen to have keen interest in taking interviews for better selection.

There are the stories of the Limboos who used to dance entire night and day; sometime even meeting their spouse through the art of dance. But the older generation complains that the newer generation who generally prefers to live in the town area away from the villages doesn't know to dance like them nor seems to show any interest in learning. The Limboos have certain markers of identity such as houses, clothing, ornaments, food, festivals, folk tales, myths etc said to be distinct from other tribes and communities but modernization has such an impact on them that they no longer wear traditional clothes or eat traditional food or live in traditional houses. The Limboos have disowned their traditional dress, often

perceived as a marker of their identity, and have been greatly influenced by western tradition. The influence of western industrialization is clearly visible among this ethnic group. We can agree with Nari Rustomji's views- "tribal population are thinly spread. The influx, therefore, of even a handful of alien culture has an immediate impact, psychological as much as physical on indigenous population"²³. Some even goes to the extent of viewing tribes as a dimension of little tradition that cannot be adequately understood unless it is seen in relation to greater tradition²⁴.

If watched closely, it is perceived that what Limboos insist to be unique to them is actually shared among different communities. They could neither distinguish themselves from the Nepalese Hindus or the tribal Buddhist. There has been social, political, cultural change with time in their community. In fact such social, cultural as well as political forms seems to be fluid and liable to change through the process of assimilation, acculturation as well as modernisation. It is only recently while struggling for their rights and resources that they have started specifying their cultural and religious symbols as a dagger in fighting their distinct identity. They have started rejecting the Hindu notions, reformed their age old culture, revived their religion and have even erected new religious structures. Marginalization of Limboos has perhaps sharpened their ethnic identities and now they are trying to protect their identity from the onslaught of migrant culture as Limboos have been culturally invaded by powerful invaders. When they failed to distinguish themselves from the other groups, with the fading of their ethnic markers; along with their language and script, it was only their religious priests who served a fertile ground for their identity marker.

²³ Ghosh, Lipi (1997). "Ethnicity, Religion and Identity Question - A Northeast Indian Profile". In Politics of Identity & Nation Building in Northeast India by Girin Phukon and N.L. Dutta: South Asian Publishers Pvt Ltd, ND.

²⁴ Xaxa, Virginius (1999). Tribes as Indigenous People of India: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 34, No. 51, pp.3538-3595.

SHAMANS- THE IDENTITY MAKER

The religion of Limboo moulds the elements of supernaturalism in such a way, giving it great opportunity for Shamans to place themselves as a supreme being. In spite of their degrading status of traditional Shamans with the birth of new tradition, the practice of shamanism in the Limboo society has never been completely wiped off. In fact, the land of Sikkim and its history have to certain extent helped the Limboos preserve their rich oral tradition and belief in their supernatural powers. The treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum itself defines the belief of the Sikkimese people in the supernatural power. Host of deities belonging to the Lho, Mon and Tsong witnessing the treaty of Lho Mon Tsong sum, the belief on Khye Bhumsa having the strength of 10,000 men, sons born through the witchcraft of the Lepcha chief Thekong Tek, fall of the prophetic letter from the sky are all the story of supernatural elements found in Sikkim. The Limboos thereby has immense faith in the supernatural powers and on their Shamans who seems to be the store house of supernaturalism.

Limboos of Sikkim recognize four category of Shaman of both the sexes namely Phedangma, Samba, Yeba and Yema, having minute and unimportant distinctions²⁵. Though hard for an outsider to distinguish, they are expert in their own particular field. While Phedangmas performs household rituals and prevents misfortune, the Sambas specialize in Mundhum and Yea cures those diseases caused by the spirit of Nahen-the spirit of envy and jealousy. But these days they perform several ritualistic functions on accord to their

²⁵ Shamans can be male as well as female. The difference between the male and female is indicated by –‘ma’ for female and –‘ba’ for male. But here it should be noted that –ma suffix of Phedangma stands for male rather than female as only men can become Phedangma. Phedangma, Shamba and Yeba are male and Yema is female. The Yeba and Yema are collectively known as Yea. The difference between the Shamans can be traced out from their costumes. While Yea can be seen wearing a skirt with the necklace of rudraksha, bells and flowers, cowrie shells, bondliers, feather head dress, leather belts with sickle and series of bells and robes; Phedangma and Shamba wears only necklace made of rudraksha.

availability. Though oral tradition while ranking these Shamans places Phedangma as the oldest to have been descended from the sky and Yea as the youngest, Sambas are the most powerful and performs the most complicated rituals often taking the soul of living and the dead to the paradise. Shaman often used in broad sense of medicine man and magician are more than this to the Limboos. Emboldened by a divine power, Shaman are perceived as a divine being having been sent by their supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma for educating the living beings and saving them from the clutches of the evil spirits who are believed to be hovering everywhere. Assuming an altered state of consciousness through the incorporation of an alien form, the Shamans through Tutelary possession²⁶ incorporates in themselves the soul of both living and the dead. Not only do they guide the human in earth but even takes the responsibility of guiding their soul to the paradise of their ancestors or to the heavenly abode.

The Limboo belief of illness in itself provides a ground for the utmost position of the Shamans in the Limboo way of life. Rather than a natural phenomenon, illness among the Limboos are attributed either to the supernatural power of evil spirits lurking in any awkward region of their neighborhood or as a punishment given by the discontent angry Gods and Goddesses. Sins committed through conscious mind, too is believed to be the cause of diseases and even death. Even Tamphungma, the forest spirit is believed to be the source of evil. As pointed by Sagant²⁷, more illness and bad luck is attributed to this spirit than any other Limboo divinity. Tamphungma lives on the outskirts of homesteads, on the edge of forests, and along trails. She has power over numerous nature divinities, which she uses to harm people who fail to placate her demands with frequent offerings. She should be

²⁶ Tutelary possession is periodic and specific where the spirit takes over the body for the duration of the ritual or ceremony. The place in which the activities are conducted as a result of spirit possession is sporadic and unspecified and is determined solely by the individual choice or situational demands. For more details Hitchcock, John T. & Rex L. Jones. eds. (1994). *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas*: Vikas Pub. House.

²⁷ Sagant, Philippe (1996). *The Dozing Shaman- The Limbus of Eastern Nepal*: Delhi Oxford University Press.

worshipped on all other ritual occasions or she will become angry and harm those who forget her. In addition, each household should set aside a special time once a year to worship her alone. This is usually done on the edge of the forests or in the fields, and although a shaman should perform the ritual and make the sacrifice of a chicken or other animal²⁸. Sometimes this ritual is also performed by the head of the household.

A mere ritual performed by Shaman with the prayerful offering of thi (local millet beer), flowers, fruits, tubers, bamboo and leaves are believed to nullify the sin and pave the way for recovery from the suffering and sometimes adding life to an individual. The system of cause, effect and cure is thus the circular and enclosed system of knowledge. The cause is the spirit, the effect is the spirit possession and the cure is the controlled spirit possession²⁹. The ritual of Manghenna³⁰ practiced among the Limboos makes us quite aware that not only does a Shaman cure the human illness but even helps an individual gain respect and position in the society. Many stories of the presence of powerful Shamans run among this tribe, if one talks of a Shaman healing diseases by their chants other speaks of Shaman who even prevented thunderstorms in the past.

The possession of spirit among the Limboo is quite different from the way Jones³¹ have perceived where the spirit possession occurs more frequently among those category of down trodden people who are often in search of economic as well as social advancement. This type of peripheral possession where the possession is unknown, spontaneous and

²⁸ Hitchcock, John T. & Rex L. Jones. eds. (1994). Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas: Vikas Pub. House.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Manghenna is a rite practiced by the Limboos for holding their head high. For detail see Sagant, Philippe (1996). The Dozing Shaman- The Limbus of Eastern Nepal: Delhi Oxford University Press.

³¹ Jones (1994) giving an example of poor women of Eastern Nepal has perceived the notion that the spirit possession usually occurs among the downtrodden. For more detail see Hitchcock, John T. & Rex L. Jones. eds. (1994). Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas: Vikas Pub. House.

uncontrolled; might be a popular case among the people but to become a Shaman one needs to be possessed by the spirit of Siray sam. Simple possession by a deity is not the only sign that one is to become a Shaman. It becomes important to acquire a teacher through the will of supreme deity. Without a teacher, a person possessed is merely a person that is ill. Limboo Shamanism is not just matter of teaching and learning procedure. Without the call through possession by the spirit, the person can never become a Shaman, regardless of how much he learns about divination and curing rituals. Possession and teaching are both essential to the profession. In fact the school of spirit possession among the Limboo is hereditary. An individual becomes Shaman once they are possessed by the Siray Sam, the spirit of their ancestor who is guided by their master spirit Yakma Thungma in their journey to the body of their chosen descendant.

Hitchcock & Jones³² suggests that the spirit possession in general occurs more frequently among the categories of people who are denied social status and traditional means of social advancement in Nepal society. This is especially the case with women in Nepal, who more frequently than any other social category, find themselves relegated to inferior positions in society with little or no hope of social and institutional advancement. Women of lower castes and tribes would by definition be in relatively inferior social position to women of higher castes who, through marriage and education, are in position of respect. Unmarried women, widows and women in servants' position are more likely to become possessed by spirits than married women with children, a family and successful marriage. Spirit possession, as pointed out by Lewis (1971), provides an 'oblique aggressive strategy' to such socially deprived categories of people. The system of spirit possession not only functions as a system of explanation for misfortune and disaster, but it also functions as a means by which individuals are capable of achieving social positions and respect otherwise denied.

³² *ibid*

During the field visit, the Shamans that the researcher met were Govt. job holders, some still in job and a few who had left their jobs for giving more time to their spiritual profession. A Samba earlier a policemen when asked about his resignation said *“Limboo Shamans unlike the Hindu Pandits and Buddhist monks are jobholders and give little or no time to their religious activities which might make a Limboo family call upon the Pandits and the Buddhist monks for performing their household rituals. I don’t want a Limboo child to be named Ram or Karma, he/she should be named as Samyog Hang, Meeksoma Hangma and as such.”* Shamans even take credit of being an environmentalist. A Shaman when asked about their contribution to the Limboo society said *“it’s the fear that we created in the mind of the people of God’s divine reprisal in case of non adherence of their order that have saved our planet. We are the ones who asked the people to worship the trees and to keep the streams clean, preaching them about the holiness of those sacred places. Without us the people would have by now wiped off the jungle and made the drinking water scarce”*. Such an immense role of the Shamans in everyday life of Limboos makes their presence inevitable. But the birth of a new tradition³³ among the Limboos has to some extent possessed threat to the institution of Shaman.

SHAMANISTIC DANCE AND THE HEALING OF DISEASES

Shamanistic dance have always served as an indigenous medicine to the Limboo tribe and especially to the Limboo agricultural folk, thereby healing and soothing them over centuries and perhaps ensuring safety to the community at large. The dance of the Shaman depends on the prediction and cause of the disease³⁴. The prediction of disease is done by two ways. Firstly, with the help of their Guru who enters their soul and helps them predict the

³³ With the birth of a girl in Darap, a small village in western Sikkim, the institution of Shamanism has been looked down upon. This girl claims to be Yuma mang, who have been sent by the supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma for saving the Limboos.

³⁴ The Shamans are usually found dancing when they heal those people affected by peripheral possession.

disease and their cause. This Guru, though unseen is said to have taught them Mundhum through supernatural ways. And secondly, by going into the trance, enquiring about the sins committed by the affected and asking ways of forgiveness to both the good as well as the evil spirit, thereby appeasing the affected and cleaning him of his sins. They dance as per the type of sickness. A dance is usually performed when the person is affected by some serious disease caused by uncanny supernatural being. A shaman, dancing around the altar starts with a mild beating of brass plate and Yegak (drum) and slowly becomes so excited that they leap around chanting and arguing with the spirits, often creating a sense of terror among the visitors. After sometime with the possession of the spirit of the diseased or deceased they shake fanatically, sweating and uttering the voice of a supernatural accompanied by the divine hallucination.

The Shamans shuns dances and depends only on the chanting of Mundhum if the sickness is simple. An example of a woman throws light on the Shamanistic way of curing in a simple way. She narrated her story, about the time of her pregnancy. During the period of pregnancy her legs has swollen up and she was taken to the Shaman, the Shaman instead of dancing and performing rituals advised her for herbal treatment. She then was given few leaves which were to be smoked and applied on the affected parts, the advice was worthy and she was healed. Another such example is of Purna Subba who when suffered from pneumonia was treated by the Shaman Dharam Dhoj by giving him a bamboo soup followed by the recitation of mundhum.

The Shamans not only heals but even performs the task of prevention. There are many rituals which are performed for the prevention of diseases and misfortune. Right from the time a baby gets conceived in the mother's womb; the Shaman starts the performance of rituals for the well being of the mother and child and continues till the death and even after. Once during the death rites of a Yuma (grandma) in a village of western Sikkim, four Shamans performed the rites. They started with the beating of brass plate dancing and

revolving around their altar. After some time their beating of plates became vigorous, three of the Shamans rested for sometime while the fourth one started shaking and sweating. After some time he in a trance began to speak on behalf of the deceased and began to shout saying 'Thi abirayna' (asked for local beer in their dialect), after asking for thi for around five minutes the shaman himself came out of trance and was again joined by his three counterparts. This ritual took place for around three days. This was done to pacify the spirit and save the family of deceased from the misfortune. On the last day a fowl was sacrificed. The system of blood sacrifices among the Limboos seems to be quite different. They usually sacrifice fowl blood not to appease their God but to tempt the evil spirits that they meet in the way while taking the soul of the diseased or deceased person to the place of their ancestor.

Apart from the fowl, Yegak (drum) and brass plate, the most frequently used things are grass, plant (*artemisa vulgaris*), rice and oil. In fact the use of grass (Samyok) and plant in almost all the ritual is inevitable. Not only do they use this plant for the performance of ritual but even decorate their altar with this plant in addition to the light. This plant believed to be having mystical properties is used in purifying themselves. Apart from this plant, the importance of Samyok could not be ruled out. The mother of Chandra Hang (a child from a village in western Sikkim) gives two evidences of her son who was healed twice by the Shaman using Samyok. Once when suffered from cavity he was taken to a Shaman instead of Dentist. Shaman took out a white paper hanging in his room wall and using Samyok and chanting his Mundhum took out insect from the child's teeth and dropped it down in the paper and burned it. Since then the child now studying in 8th standard have never complaint of his tooth ache. Another incident related to the same child was when he suffered from jaundice. The child's stomach had enlarged and his eyes had acquired yellowish tint, worried by the enlargement of the stomach his mother took him to the nearby Shaman. The Shaman then checking his pulse and beating the stomach diagnosed his disease and told the mother to come early in the morning before sunrise with a bottle of pure mustard oil, Samyok and brass

bowl. Early in the morning the next day, this shaman kept the brass bowl in the child's head and poured oil in it. Chanting the Mundhum he began to shuffle the oil with the help of Samyok, after sometime the oil started becoming very greasy and then hard. This process continued for a week and the boy was cured. One often gets to hear such divine way of cure in the Limboo villages. But now the death of such divine Shamans are causing concern among the Limboos as such divinity is being lost along with their death. Having little divine knowledge, the Shamans of today are being forced to take the help of their indigenous medicine for healing, thereby keeping the way of Shamanism alive.

DECLINE OF BELIEF IN THE POWER OF SHAMANS

The place of Shaman used to be different during earlier times but with the process of modernization, the institution of Shaman has been looked down upon. The position of Shamans in one period of time was of utmost importance, as they were believed to possess immense supernatural power. The old people narrates that there were times when the Shamans through their power not only performed rituals taking the spirit of people to the high mountainous regions uplifting their head high during the time of distress and helping people throughout their life and even after; but they even had power to help people get rid of diseases through their immense power. In fact, along with the ritualistic performances even their ability of curing the diseases through supernatural ways might have given the Shamans an important place in Limboo society.

Limboo shamans at some period of time avoided the use of medicine for curing diseases, believing that all the illness and misfortune were to be of supernatural origin, and used to look for divine remedies for all sort of illness. The oral history that they narrates makes it impossible even for the science to deny the efficiency of the Shamanistic diagnosis, prescription and cure, whereby providing the best alternative for treatment of diseases. A testament of 85 years old man goes to support this fact. He narrates the story of his sister who

was once bitten by a mad dog and was taken to a village Shaman named Melum Dhoj. Shaman, through his Mundhum invoked the divine power thereby taking out insects from the victim's body and burned it, thereby healing her. Though the Shaman, Melum Dhoj and such divine power no more exists, the woman is still alive and now lives in Tekjek, a village in western Sikkim. But with their degrading power they are now in one way forced to use the medicine for treatment of diseases.

The tumyanghangs³⁵ do tell about the great power of Shaman who once used to heal just by their supernatural powers when at that times it was only Theba Samba (Limboo medicine man) who used to practice herbal medicine in the Limboo society. Now they are saddened to find that no such Shamans exist at present. The unavailability of such powerful Shamans is highly attributed to lack of Shamanistic institution as well as their system of oral tradition whereby their Mundhum containing supernatural power is transferred orally from generation to generation from the Guru to his disciple. Secondly, it is attributed to those Gurus who taught their disciples half heartedly fearing that they might be replaced by their own disciple. So, with the lost in their supernatural powers they had to seek the help of medicine.

Among other functions performed by the Shamans, their power of healing seems to be important for binding together the Limboos in unity as there were many testimonies of the people who seem to have lost their faith in their local God Tagera Ningwaphuma due to the Shaman's failure of healing. It isn't that all the Limboo Christians have been converted due to the Shamans losing their power but some have been so. The downfall of the power of Shamans is thereby directly attached to their faith in their God. Had the Shamans not lost their healing power, those disease infected Limboos who have converted to Christianity, would still have been following their own cult. The Shamans have not only performed

³⁵ Tumyanghang are a collective body of Limboo elderly men, expert in Mundhum and all the Limboo rites and rituals.

sacrifices, religious rituals, helped them held their head high and cured their diseases but even served as an important element for keeping up their religion as well as their distinct identity. With the loss in their divine power of healing, they began to accompany their half-known magical knowledge by the medicine and kept alive the culture of Shamanism.

Table 2: List of the local species/other products used by shamans for treatment of various diseases

Local medicine (Local Limboo name)	Scientific name	Uses
Thay Phung	<i>Costus speciosus</i>	Juice of the plant leaves is taken during menstruation pain and when there is problem in the urinary bladder
Hon-dok Phung	<i>Equisetum diffusam</i>	Leaves are crushed and applied in severe wound
Kham shet-shet Phung	<i>Erigeron Sp.</i>	Crushed juice is taken during snake bite and when affected by larva
Kham bok la	<i>Pogonatherum paniceum</i>	Polio
Wa-na	<i>Drymeria cordata</i>	Cold, Cough and tonsil
Mikri Phung	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>	Gout
Kham buk wa Phung	<i>Kaempferia rotunda</i>	Fractured bone
Itchi Phung	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	Worm in the stomach
Piku ma	<i>Aconitum ferox</i>	Jaundice, fever and hepatitis
Mik yun dey Phung	<i>Calotropis gigantia</i>	Believed that this plant gives sound sleep
Ok tang Phung	-----	Eye irritation
Sung khing	<i>Swertia chirata</i>	Boiled and taken during head ache, body ache and fever
Wa rik ma	<i>Zanthoxylum alatum</i>	Used to treat Gastric
Kha nak pa	<i>Heradeum wallithii</i>	Smoked and taken during vomiting and diarrhea
Thay lekh khama	<i>Sinarundinaria microphylla</i>	Effective in Pneumonia
Yeng jrama	<i>Arythrina variegrata</i>	Smoked and applied in swollen areas
Yang luk ma	<i>Paa liebigii</i>	Cough and bronchitis
Hang wa rupkay	<i>Bofo sp.</i>	Severe fever
Mak simma	<i>Myiophoneus caeruleus</i>	Used to treat Piles
Pek was sha	<i>Moschus saturates</i>	Low blood pressure
Phak sot (Fats of Pork)	-----	Remove the marks caused by chicken-pox

The institution of Shamans might have been deteriorated perhaps due to the absence of the educational institution of Shaman and their method of oral tradition. If they would have written records, they would still have immense power like in the past. In today's world due to modernization people usually move out of their villages to receive western education and thereby miss the opportunity to be trained as a Shaman. In order to become a Shaman, it is important to have mastery in the Limboo language but such modern education debarred an individual from learning Limboo language poses threat on an individual becoming Shaman. In spite of their degrading power, the Shamans to certain extent have served as a distinct identity maker but now the birth of a separate religious group from amongst the old one is posing threat to the place, Shamans have acquired in their community.

RELIGIOUS DEVIATION

Religious deviation and the introduction of what have been termed as new tradition discards the presence of traditional Shaman as well as the use of herbal medicine. This tradition claims to have revived the ancient way of healing i.e. healing through magic and divinity. According to the new tradition, Suingneem are taught mantras by their Yuma and can even heal diseases. So according to them, their divine power of healing lies in their mantras. One of the Suingneems even presented me with their mantra book. They say that their belief in their philosophy of knowing "one's own soul" makes the use of herbal medicine unnecessary. They believe that if one knows his soul through meditation there is no need of the use of medicine. If on one hand, this little tradition discards the use of medicine on the other they say that their savior Yuma also possesses the knowledge of different herbal medicine which she acquired during meditation, but her power of divinity makes the use of these medicines unnecessary. Unlike the old tradition, this group discards the use of blood

sacrifices and lays emphasis on the performance of rituals through Lungling Toming (with the lighting of 108 candles).

This tradition mentions the availability of different mantras for curing different types of diseases. There are evidences of many people belonging to this fold who are said to have been cured through the mantras either performed by Yuma herself or by Suingneem. A father of a VIIth standard boy complains about the repeated problem faced by his son due to nose bleeding. He took him to the hospitals at Gangtok, Siliguri as well as Kalimpong but none of the medicine worked and it was lastly the mantras performed by Yuma which cured his sickness. I was quite surprised to hear from two different persons about how their skin was healed when they got burned by fire, through the power of divinity. There are several other evidences of Yuma and her Suingneem curing diseases through their divine mantras. If on one hand, the new tradition talks of their divine way of healing, some of the villagers in Darap were seen to be complaining about the Darap Yuma's inability to heal diseases and even criticized her for her absence during death rites.

The rise of incarnate Yuma disturbed the orthodox Limboo elderly people as the ways directed by the incarnate Yuma differed from the old age Limboo rituals whether it be the rites and rituals related to marriage, birth, death or the use of the religious priests etc. The new tradition lays utmost importance on non-injury to living beings including animals. For the new sect being vegetarian and keeping oneself away from alcohol symbolize being civilized. This sect blames alcoholism to be the main cause for the Limboo backwardness. While the new sect avoided the use of liquor and blood sacrifice the old sect emphasized on the use of the same. In fact, liquor and meat constitute an important element among the Phedangma ritualistic practice. They even purify themselves with the help of liquor. It is noticeable that the new sect opposing the use of liquor, meat and blood sacrifice generated conflict within the Limboo community. The new sect believes that it was the consumption of

the liquor and meat that have destroyed the Limboo way of life and deteriorated their economy. But if seen, rituals in pre-Darap Yuma time could not be performed without the use of the meat and alcohol. The orthodox group opposes such principle of the new sect tracing examples of various wealthy people saying that the use of meat, liquor and blood sacrifice had nothing to do with the rise and fall of one's economic status. Whenever cultural forms are made official or public, specificities or 'inconsistencies' fall prey to the different process of cultural translation. Traditionalism tends to simplify tradition for the same reason. Traditional elements to be displayed are selected after culture is subjected to careful scrutiny. If shamanism-fascinating for tourist but embarrassing to many among the Nepalese intelligentsia- is to be considered an intrinsic part of the tradition, shamanism without a blood sacrifice may appear as a compromise solution in the process of adopting a progressive outlook³⁶. Darap Yuma in one way originated to bring about moral correction to the trends of alcoholism as well as meat consumption among the Limboos. Here, religion can be seen as a major engine of change, ready to sacrifice those things that would transform and society and make it better.

The consumption of liquor is so much avoided that it can be analyzed from an example of a Christian boy of around nineteen years old. When asked about his reason for conversion he narrated his story about a marriage function in his neighbourhood when he was found drunk by the members of the new sect. As he was not allowed to enter the Mangheem he joined Christianity in the fits of anger and seems to be enjoying the Christian way of life and says that from the day of his conversion to Christianity he have not even touched alcoholic drinks. Such switching reflects a weakening of ethnic attachment whether it is from

³⁶ Lecomte-Tilouine, Marie & Pascale Dollfus (2003). *Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil Identities and Representation in the Himalayas*: Oxford University Press.

Yumaism to Christianity or any other religion or from old tradition to the new one or vice-versa.

The old tradition in no way wants to accept her as Yuma Mang as they believe that the God is unseen and never occurs in human form. They believe that this new tradition in no time would erode Limboo traditions and there by their identity as rituals and traditions have always explained and affirm community origin. They are even tensed that their important Chyabrung dance would soon be lost in vicinity as the drum is made up of animal skin which would thereby oppose the new tradition of ahimsa. Unlike the old tradition, the presence of key drum inside the temple is forbidden by the new tradition which seems to disturb the old ones. The most important conflict between the two groups is perhaps regarding the Shamanistic culture. The Shamans in most of the rituals use blood sacrifices, but now the popular belief of Shamans performing the rituals without a single drop of blood on his altar is greatly popularized by the new sect. The new tradition rather uses fruits to substantiate blood; which is again criticised by the old tradition as they view such action of the new group to be influenced by the Brahmanical Hindus. Thus, the birth of Darap Yuma created ethno-religious conflict as this led to the development of groups having radically different views.

Apart from the ritualistic practices and different religious principles adopted by the new tradition, even the use of the new Limboos words seems to anger the old traditions. The adoption of new words like 'Mimingsa' and 'Suingneem' is looked down upon. Limboos greet one another with the word "sewaro" and returns the greeting as 'asewaro' but now the word Mimingsi referred as 'one with God' used by the new tradition while greeting seems to be quite disturbing to the old tradition as the word 'Sewaro' have always reflected their identity. Especially the use of word Suingneem troubles the old sect. Once when the researcher used the word Suingneem (mentioning that the word is new to the Limboo language), the orthodox section got so angry that they asked the researcher to find the word in

the Limboo dictionary and even concluded that the researcher would never find it, the word is newly constructed and out of the dictionary and that as a researcher one should never use the word 'Suingneem'. The displacement of Shamanistic institute by the Suingneem amongst the new tradition might have made them disturbed and angry. Even marriage ceremony among the Phedangma tradition remains undone without the performance of blood sacrifice and marking of the bride's forehead with vermilion but this new sect not only rejects the blood sacrifice but even wears white powder over their forehead in their marriage ceremony. Rituals without blood sacrifice is seen by this group as a process of adopting a progressive outlook.

The old sect feels that whenever there was powerful cultural and religious invasion their ancestral religious practices carried forward by the institution of Shaman have always resisted such powerful force and helped them maintain their distinct identity; thereby proving religion to have a heavier share in the task of ethnic definition and self-preservation. Therefore, the Tumyahangs disturbed by the new sect calls the new tradition to be the religion of the teenagers and not the old and intellectuals. They believe that a person knowing about the religion Yuma samyo in depth would never accept this new sect. Had she claimed to be Yuma sam instead of Yuma mang, they would have accepted her. An eighty-five year old Tumyahang said that even before her many girls were born claiming themselves to be the incarnate of Yuma but as soon as they reached the age of maturity they left their life of Yuma and got married. So they no longer have faith in such incarnate Yuma. The Limboo religious priests such as Phedangma, Samba, Yeba and Yema too seem to be dissatisfied as the new sect does not give any importance to them and instead use their own religious priest i.e Suingneem.

This new tradition, on the other hand, talk of bringing transformation in the society and uplifting them form the grip of darkness. It seems that the redeemer returns from the long

exile to save her people and teach them all those rituals and customs which they have lost. Darap Yuma says that the people have been living a different life, different from how God wanted them to live, so she had to come to this earth to teach them the right ways. It seems as what Yinger (1997)³⁷ puts '*the hope becomes a faith and the faith becomes a creed of priests and prophets, until the hero is God and the dream a religion, looking to some great miracle of nature for its culmination and accomplishment*'. This religious movement between the old and the new tradition seems to bring nothing but trampled customs and disintegrating culture.

When the popularity of still newer faith among the Limboos has aroused a feeling of insecurity among the people of older generation, another new branch known as Sattelangma is beginning to flourish in Sikkim. Though there are fewer houses at present but there is always a chance of increase. This group sprang up in Nepal and slowly gained its popularity in Sikkim too. This sect is said to have emerged due to their quest for 'satya marg' i.e. true path to devote themselves to their God Tagera Ningwaphuma. This faith was introduced for the first time in 18th century by Mahaguru Phalgunanda at Illam, Nepal. He too like the Darap Yuma of Sikkim gave impression to the people that he was the incarnate of Yuma. According to the narratives, the use of meat and liquor in all the rituals was the main cause for the backwardness of this community. So, their leader Phalgunanda tried to reform their society by teaching them the true way to reach their God Tagera Ningwaphuma. His way was to abstain oneself from the use of meat and liquor. He even wrote down rules for the ritualistic performances and established Manghims. He was succeeded by the Guru Atmananda Lingden who continued his incomplete preaching.

This new Guru also made this sect known to the world as 'Hangsam Samyo' or 'Kirat Dharma'. Sattelangma, syncretises the elements of high caste Hindus with the Limboo

³⁷ Yinger, J. Milton (1997). Source of Strength? Source of Conflict? : Rawat Publications.

dieties, thereby emphasizing the sanskritisation of the Limboos. Unlike old tradition, this sect has their own religious priest Sewasaba, who are suppose to undertake two years of training. In those years they are to learn Mundhum which are in written form like that of Darap Yuma. But there are the stories of Shamans of old tradition being used by the Sattehangma followers. They say that in case of unavailability as well as emergency, they do sometimes use the Shamans of old tradition. But there is no case of Suingneems being used by them. This sect too hasn't forgotten their rituals and traditions like the old tradition, but they do vary in the methods of performance³⁸. This sect is said to have helped in disseminating Limboo language, this might have been in case of Nepal but not in Sikkim. In fact, this sect opposes Darap Yuma for introducing new words among their tribe. Like the old tradition, this sect too seems dissatisfied with the use of the word 'Mimingsa' instead of 'Sewaro', which might pose threat to their distinct identity. Though this sect too, on one hand avoids the consumption meat as well as blood sacrifices but on the other hand criticises Darap Yuma followers for destroying their culture. They say that they have preserved their cultural tradition by making use of instruments such as Chabrung and Nagera in their ceremonies which Darap Yuma usually avoids.

Satteahangma to me seemed closer to Darap Yuma in their belief. Like Darap Yuma, Sattehangma focuses on reforming their society, as both of the groups blame the use of meat and alcohol to be the main cause of Limboos being backward and uncivilised. For them too, reforming as well as being civilised is related to abstaining from the use of meat and liquor. According to the followers of Satteahangma, the Limboo community has been committing sin through their rituals as they used to sacrifice blood to the God, which was opposite to what God really wants them to do. When the researcher visited the Limboo dominated villages she

³⁸ In all the ritualistic performances they avoid the use of meat and alcohol. Unlike the old tradition, this sect performs same kind of death rituals whether it be natural as well as unnatural deaths.

got to know about the news of Limboos fighting amongst themselves due to varied religious practices. More than the branches among the Yuma fold; the ones converted to Christianity have completely forgotten their traditional social and cultural traits. In fact cultural crisis is accentuated together with the increasing acceptance of the concept of ‘modernity’³⁹.

Cultural and religious practices have always served as a fertile ground for an identity production amongst the Sikkimese Limboos. With time as the Limboos became more confused about their identity, they began to emphasise more on cultural and religious preservation, thereby initiating their rites and rituals to be an influential element in the process of identity formation, thus making their culture a living tradition. Though at particular point of time this tribe had adopted both the elements of Hinduism as well as Buddhism; their ancient⁴⁰ religion has served as a potential medium for differentiating them from other ethnic groups. Though religion is seen as a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problem of human life- suffering, injustice and meaninglessness. It expresses their refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration, to allow hostility to tear apart their human associations. The quality of being religious, seen from individual point of view, implies two things: a belief that evil, pain, bewilderment, and injustice are fundamental facts of existence; and the set of practices and related sanctified beliefs that express a conviction that he or she and all of those with whom one is most fundamentally connected can ultimately be saved from those facts⁴¹; it seems to be different for this community. Religion instead of becoming an important medium for differentiating the Limboos from other ethnic groups is rather tearing up this tribe. It

³⁹ Phukon, Girin (2003). *Ethnicisation of Politics in North East India*: South Asian Publishers.

⁴⁰ Looking closely into their religion one can say that this tribe is animist, shamanist as well as Yumaist. They worship nature as well as keep faith in their God Tagera Ningwaphuma.

⁴¹ Yinger, J. Milton (1997). *Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* : Rawat Publications.

seems that the new religious movements would rather create a new group from amongst those who once had shared common set of ethnicity. Religion has become more important than what Marxist have perceived to be a part of dependent 'superstructure'. For the Limboos it is the religion that shapes their economy, culture, society as well as polity. Religion seems to play a negative role instead of becoming a potential force in binding them together. The so-called revivalism brought about by the Darap-Yuma is now being blamed for further bringing division among the Limboos rather than bringing monothesisist view and softening the lines of division among the Limboos. The Limboos following the Phedangma tradition says that they find nothing religious in the new faith. The so-called revivalism in religion sometimes becomes wholly rootless, appropriating cultural symbols and metaphors that can be invoked in period of growing insecurity all around. With this goes the whole space that was preserved for the sacred and the revered and the mythical. Instead it becomes a take-religion-to-the street affair⁴².

⁴² Kothari, Rajni (1989). "Ethnicity". In *Identity, Conflict & Crisis*. edited by Kumar David and Santasilan Kudirgamar: Arena press Hong Kong.

CONCLUSION

Sikkim, before the formation of the Namgyal Dynasty was occupied by the Lepchas and the Limboos ruled independently by their own chiefs. The political tension prevailing in Tibet made the Tibetan monks flee to Sikkim which led to the establishment of the Namgyal Dynasty and this dynasty unified the three ethnic communities of Lepcha, Bhutia and the Limboos under one umbrella, established what is now known as ‘Sikkim’ and ruled this region for more than three hundred years. In the beginning, the Limboos opposed the rule of the Namgyals, fought against them but ended with their acceptance of the Namgyal rule, for they were offered better position by their ruler. Later, the rise of the Gorkhas and the interference of the colonial power changed the territory of Sikkim, thereby dividing the land, where the Limboos had occupied from time immemorial, between the two countries of modern Nepal and modern Sikkim (India). With the migration of the so called Nepalese, the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union and neglect of the scholarly works dealing with the history writing, Limboos became migrants in their own homeland.

One of the most important problems that have contributed in giving them divergent identity is their geographical location. They being divided amongst themselves between the two countries of Nepal and India have led to divergent identity; it seems that such historical problems have failed to give the Limboos an identity that would have stabilize their presence in the historical land of Sikkim. Due to such varying identity the Limboos of Sikkim do feel that they have been denied of their rights as aboriginals of Sikkim which they should have shared with the Lepchas. During the Namgyal era, the Limboos were sometimes clubbed with the Nepalese and at the other they were seen as Bhutia-Lepcha counterparts. If during the period of anti Namgyal struggle, the Limboos were encouraged to side with the Nepalese as anti-Chogyal aspirants and aggrieved people of Sikkim, even the new government led by

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee, the champion of democracy, who had opposed the Namgyal rule also turned deaf ear to the Limboos. The newly formed Government showed no interest in them. After winning the battle against the monarchy, the concept of 'we Nepalese' seemed to wither away and the concept of 'we a distinct group' gained ground. After the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union, the Limboos became the voiceless subjects until their voice was heard to certain extent in the year 2002, when they were accorded the tribal status.

The identity of Limboos in the state of Sikkim thus became a highly debatable issue. In Sikkim, Limboos are designated as an ethnic group who had migrated either from Tibet or Nepal and settled in Sikkim. Later on with the rise of the colonial power in Sikkim, and with the migration of the Nepalese, they began to be erased from the administrative memory. The role, the Limboos played during the formation of the Namgyal dynasty and even after was neglected, forgotten and over time silenced in the historical records. It's only recently that the educated Limboos are forming associations in order to create community identity, help preserve their culture and tradition and fight for their rights and privileges. These associations to a certain level are helping in claiming distinct identity, though without success, in the state of Sikkim; an identity distinct from the other Nepalese counterparts. These associations' raises question about the representation and they were the ones who raised their voice for the inclusion of Limboos in the list of Scheduled tribe. After being entitled as ST, they are now asking for seats in the State Assembly. Securing a distinct identity for the Limboos does not seem simply the creation of 'we Limboo' identity; it also does not seem a cultural identity movement but even political and social movement as well. Looking at the history and polity of the Limboos it has been examined that their identity has been changed time and again in the Namgyal era and after its downfall, in the way which would best suit the interest of the time. Their identity has been defined in different ways fulfilling different need of the hour. This has made the researcher conclude that the Limboos were the aboriginal inhabitants of

Sikkim who had undergone changes with change in time, thereby changing their identity. Their identity has been impermanent.

The researcher have argued on the basis of the treaty of the Lho Mon Tsong tsum that the Limboos occupied the land of Sikkim and participated in state building process. The community identity was known and recognized during the early phrase of the Namgyal rule but as 'identity' is an ongoing process and is not permanent and remains fluid, their identity too changed with time. If one goes back to the Namgyal era, there are stories of the Limboos who had contributed in the formation of the Namgyal dynasty, often fighting the invaders who posed harm to their Namgyal rulers. If in the past, the beginning of the state formation in Sikkim talks of only three communities who were united against the invaders whether the invasion was from Bhutan or Nepal. All these three communities at that time had a 'same enemy' and the 'single motive', their motive to safeguard the Namgyals and the enemy of their Namgyal ruler was their enemy. Namgyal dynasty had in fact unified the three distinct communities under one umbrella. But with the coming of the British in Sikkim and the gradual migration of so called Nepalese, the notion of 'we Nepalese' aroused even encompassing the Limboo into the Nepalese fold. Over time a Limboo identity submerged with the Nepalese identity, becoming voiceless subjects. The Limboos were drawn into the hinduised fold. Though religion was not the main attribute of identification, but when their society of 'us' was hinduised, there was transformation in their identity to some extent.

Overtime, the concept of 'we Nepalese' was attached to particularistic identities, becoming voiceless subjects in the state of Sikkim. If on one hand, the Limboos of Sikkim got the tag of 'we Nepalese', the majority of Limboos of Sikkim actually does not accept the label as they feel that such identity erased their past and they understood that this identity was imposed on them. It has created a historical memory that was quite alien to them. This has been explained by some of the Limboos themselves as 'marginalization'. The Limboos have

suffered under the Land revenue No 1¹ order issued by Charles Bell in May 1917 as well as the parity formula. Deprived of all such facilities and the feeling of being marginalized in their own homeland, the made the Limboos form associations that would help them preserve their culture and tradition and at the same time help in bargaining with the Government. Such ethnic groupings reflect the growth of ethnic conscious among the Limboos, in the state of Sikkim.

Many scholars working on ethnicity have recognized the role of colonialism in constructing ethnic identities and in reinforcing ethnic divisions among the indigenous communities in different parts of the globe. For their exploitation the colonial powers artificially divided the continent into numerous states without taking into consideration the history and ethnic composition of the people. Through military, bureaucratic measures, the colonial states sought to bring the warring communities under one political rule. In some countries the colonial powers patronized certain communities and use them against other communities inhabiting the state. In certain countries they bought bounded workers from other countries and employed them in their industries and plantations. Such measures perpetuated the ethnic divisions and stood as obstacles in the path of nationalist forces trying to unite all the ethnic communities against colonialism. After the colonial power withdrew, the ethnic tensions mounted in many post colonial countries and led to the redrawing of the political map of some of those countries². Even in the state of Sikkim, the mistakes that the colonial ruler committed have made the Limboos denied of their rights as an indigenous population of the land.

¹ This order gives the land ownership rights to the Bhutias and Lepchas.

² Srikanth, H.(2005). "Resolving Ethnic Conflicts in the Northeast: Need for Radical Civil Forums". In Inter-Ethnic Conflict in North East India. edited by Girin Phukon: South East Asia Publication.

So, now they have been fighting for equality and cultural respect. Culture has been preserved through religion, festivals, other special occasion and preservation of their language. Though their original culture and tradition have undergone several changes overtime, but the sense of distinctive identity continues to persist. As it has been observed that, the emphasis of all constitutional and legal policies since independence, was on economic development in the tribal areas, rather than on preservation of tribal cultures; the process of accommodation of tribals through distribution of resources and patronage, the policy of appreciation of tribal protest movements, and ‘development’ were stunted by massive emigration and corruption by unscrupulous traders, or mining operators, or contractors, who evicted tribals from their land³. Had Bell issued his order even for the Limboos, they would have at least protected their land. The Limboos in the past might have had large acres of land, but now due to their economic problem they have sold out most of their land to other communities living in the state of Sikkim. Their struggle for acquiring ST status, the establishment of association and cultural symbols etc. within the state of Sikkim looks like an attraction meant to draw the attention to the lack of power, economic marginalization and political peripheralization that they feel they have been imposed upon. The rise of ethnic consciousness among the Limboos is rooted in their memory, history and identity.

Sikkim, till today has been fortunate enough as here, the ethnicity continues to be a minor melody. If in case in future, ethnicity presumes to take a major turn, the people belonging to different ethnic group will be negativised and the condition in which the diverse groups had once shared a social space will wither away. People, then will tend to divide

³ Dutta, Anup (2000). “Modernization and Ethno-national Identities State - Civil Society Conflict in North East India”. In Political Dynamics of North East India- Essay in Honour of Prof. Barrister Pakem, edited by Girin Phukon: South East Asian Publishers.

themselves by caste, religion, language etc and bring about fragmentation in the society. In addition, ethnic groups define themselves by reference to their history and culture in a particular territory as their homeland. On the basis of their homeland idea, they strive to retain their culture, language and territory in the face of an alien ethnic group controlling the borders of the state. In the wake of any conflict between the state and this particular group opposing state interference in these areas, the ethnic nationalist demands of that group take the form of secessionist or separatist movements within the state⁴ as in the case of Darjeeling and Nepal. According to John Burton unless identity needs are met in multi-ethnic societies, unless in every social system there is distributive justice, a sense of control, and prospects for the pursuit of all other human societal developmental needs, instability and conflict are inevitable. Several scholars also stressed the importance of preventive diplomacy in averting ethnic conflicts. However, in the extreme cases where the contradictions between the parties in conflict becomes irreconcilable, separation is seen as the only alternative left for ensuring peace⁵.

Sikkimese society is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Ethnicity in Sikkim has not taken political form, but if not taken seriously might assume political or any problematic form and get associated with separatist movement endangering peace and security and threatening social peace and stability in the regional as well as on national scale. As Kashyap puts, there is a general scenario of politicization of ethnicity and ethnicization of democratic politics. This is bound to be more so in grossly underdeveloped and developing countries like India where a modern political party system has not emerged, where the political battle is not being fought on any economic agenda or ideological or programmatic grounds and where the

⁴ Mishra, S.S. (1995). *Ethnic Conflict and Security Crisis in Sri Lanka*: Kalinga Publication, Delhi.

⁵ Srikanth, H.(2005). "Resolving Ethnic Conflicts in the Northeast: Need for Radical Civil Forums". In *Inter-Ethnic Conflict in North East India*. edited by Girin Phukon: South East Asia Publication.

electorate is largely poor, illiterate and largely capable of appreciating ideological differences between parties, even there were any. The masses can be easily swayed on narrower regional, linguistic, communal, religious and tribal or caste grounds.

The development and introduction of various regional languages in the school level too suggests the rise of the ethnic consciousness amongst the people of Sikkim as language has been an important unifying forces especially in situation where communications have been sub divided by occupation and religion. Uniqueness of the language and its script has acquired significance such that they have become a mark of cultural uniqueness: ‘without a language of one’s own, there is no distinct culture, and hence, there can be no people/nation. Where there are no scripts they are being invented and where scripts were modified, a fetish of originality is evident.⁶ Celebration of one’s own cultural festivals in large scale, revival of one’s age old religion etc. suggests that ethnic consciousness is beginning to emerge in this region. The interplay of several factors might be held responsible for rise of identity discourses such as revival of primordialism, ambitions of the political elites, the reaction against the alienation born out of modern societies etc. It seems that in the state of Sikkim, ethnic lines will continue to persist in the near future. The ethnic lines begin to draw more sharply. Ethnic groups in conflict mutually reinforce their antagonistic identities. In the midst of collapsing states and empires, old dream of their own nation state become vivid for many long suffering ethnic minorities. In less conflicting settings, the continuing need for more personal identity in a culturally complex and rapidly changing world persists. Even in the most open and tolerant societies, where forces of assimilation are strong, “symbolic”, “affective”, “side stream” “emergent,” “situational” ethnicity, to note the variety of terms that have been used to refer to a more open, flexible, even changeable identity, will continue. In

⁶ Arora, Vibha (2007). Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim: Sociological Bulletin.

spite of identity shifts and high rates of intermarriage in some settings, some ethnic lines will remain sharp and some individuals will think first of their ethnic group when they apprise their own identities. At this period in history, at any rate, it is not the matter of assimilation versus ethnicity, but of assimilation and ethnicity⁷. Without ethnicity social movements fail to address themselves to the issue of re-building the community as a political instrument for curbing the power and greed of dominant groups and individuals. The positive promise of ethnicity lies not in 'a return to the tribe' or a mere 'revival' of a particular culture. That, quite clearly, is not even possible. It lies; instead, in the building of social order which celebrates diversity and organic unity, and is organized around the principles of equity, justice, peace and dignity as new social movements are redefining these concepts in a new framework of social context and intellectual search⁸.

⁷ Yinger, J. Milton (1997). *Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* : Rawat Publica.

⁸ Kothari, Rajni (1989). *Ethnicity; in Identity, Conflict & Crisis*. edited by Kumar David and Santasilan Kudirgamar: Arena press Hong Kong.

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GLOSSARY

- Chogyal - The ruler of Sikkim
- Bhawan - House
- Dharmaraja - Spiritual as well as political head
- Dzongpons - Governor
- Gyalmo - Queen
- Kalons - Minister
- Kazi - Landlord as well as ministers
- Lamas - Buddhist Monks
- Manghenna - It is a Limboo ritual of holding one's head high. During the performance of Manghenna the soul of a person for whom the ritual is being performed enters the body of the Shamans. The Shaman in the trance takes his/her soul to the place of the ancestor, often uttering the voice of supernatural.
- Manghim - Limboo Prayer House
- Mundhum - Mundhum is the spiritual instruction from the Limboo ancestor which is passed down orally from generation to generation, through the institution of Shamans.
- Thekadar - Landlord
- Thum - It means district in limbo dialect
- Tumyanghangs - The Limboo elderly men

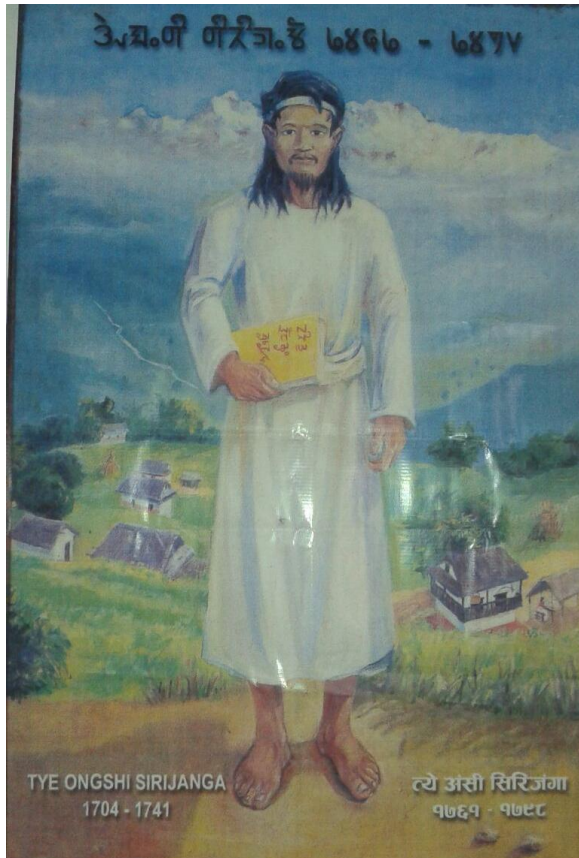
APPENDIX



Sirijunga Hang



Dens (Altar)



Sirijunga Tyeongsi



Manghim (Limboo Temple)



Darap Yuma

Fluid Boundaries and Fluid Identities- The Study of Limboo Tribe of Sikkim

Gracy Maria Subba

Research Scholar Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow

Abstract: Drawing on the theories laid down by several authors, this article examines the continuously re-defined and re-interpreted identity issue of the Limboo tribe of Sikkim. The origin and migration issue of the Sikkimese Limboos is still a matter of debate and controversies and, without relevant documentary sources, has not, nor seems likely to be elucidated by the historians. Straddled between the two countries of Nepal and India, this fringe tribe has sustained fluid identity under the changing history. The flexibility of the geographical boundaries, battles of conquest, conspiracies and acquisition, and the theories of their originality have confused this community and has caused them to search for their identity. The onset of democracy has further marginalized them. The Limboos have been classified as Nepali linking this community with the later Nepali migrants in Sikkim, which the Limboos consider as a threat to their distinct identity

Key words: migration, theories, boundaries, aboriginality

I. Introduction

Hidden beneath the histories of great Kingdoms, war and conquest is the history of a fringe tribe, and their resistance and survival. Believed to be brave and cruel in battle, putting the old and weak to sword, carrying the younger to the slavery and killing on the march such captives as are unable to proceed¹; this marginal hill tribe collaborated with the state building processes both in Nepal and Sikkim. Political antagonism has resulted in their land being divided into two, thereby making the Limboos, a community which straddles the two nations of Nepal and India. Great battles were fought, political boundaries changed, old system of Governance was replaced by new ones; this ethnic group, however, has managed to survive despite such sharp changes. Barring the bulk of Limboo population in east Nepal and focusing more on the Limboos of Sikkim, this paper deals with the theories laid down by several authors regarding their origin and migration and it is these theories that shapes their identity.

The origin and migration issue of the Sikkimese Limboos is still a matter of debate and controversies and, without relevant documentary sources, has not, nor seems likely to be elucidated by the historians. Though they are said to be among the earliest settlers of the land of Sikkim, their ancestors do have migrated from somewhere, sometimes back, as their oral tradition makes repeated mention of the migration of their ancestors. Their oral narratives categorized them as Kasi, Lasha and Bhuiphuta gotra² on the basis of their migration. Such division amongst the Limboo is highly rejected by this community on the ground that it is a hinduised and a theoretical construct and not a historically accurate one. The history of this tribe rests on the narration of their stories by different agents in different periods of time; and it is these fragmented memories that have gained acceptance in present day. Several authors have alleged their own theories explaining the origin and migration of the Sikkimese Limboos.

Theory of Kirata Origin

The first and the widely accepted theory, is the theory of the Kirata origin which in my view is quite a wider concept as Kirata denotes wide range of ethnic community. According to the Kirata theory, the Limboos are descended from family of Kirat-asura, who once fought against the Aryans. Designating the Limboos as Kirata and varying in the issue of the migration, the authors have put forward different stories to support their theory. Kotturan (1983), quoting from the Rigveda 'drive back the Kirats to the caravans', says that the Limboos are the descendent from the ten brothers who decided to leave their home at the Indo-gangetic plains, due to the onslaught of Aryan invaders and settled down in the mountains of Eastern Himalayas. While Kotturan talks of the migration from Gangetic to the Himalayas, Sanyal (1979), terming them as the inhabitants of the lower Himalayas, talks about their migration from Assam along the river Brahmaputra to India, some period before 1000 B.C. Sinah (1994), supports the view of Sanyal, whereby the migration of this tribe started from north-east

¹ Hooker. Himalayan Journal vol-I

² The non-beef eaters' hinduized ones who migrated to Kasi Beneras and back to Limbuwan are termed as Kasi gotra. The beef eaters who migrated from Limbuwan into Tibet and back are termed as Lasha gotra. The ones who neither migrated to Kasi nor to Tibet but remained in

of Assam into India and Tibet. Quite different is the view of Gurung and Lama, who at one time quotes Swami Prapanacharya and designates the Limboos as the true Aryans having their own kingdom of Limbuwan, bordering the land of Rongs or the Lepchas. On the other, they state that the Limboos were one of the branches of Kirata tribes who according to Rig Veda, resided along the Kangra Valley of Northern India and even fought with the Aryans for forty years. Moving further, Gurung and Lama, discuss the presence of a cruel Limboo King Phurumpho, which resulted in Limboo's easy acceptance of the Namgyal Dynasty. But their theory fails to explain the process of migration of the Limboos from Kangra to Sikkim.

Likewise Subba(1999)³, on one hand relates Limboo with the people of Indus Valley Civilization, claiming them to be the off shoot of ancient Indian race, who at the arrival of Aryans migrated to eastern Tibet and back to Limbuwan via Walangchuk and again on the other, he gives a contradictory opinion designating them as the nomads to have wandered in the various places of inner south-Asia. It is quite unsure whether he is trying to explain that the Limboos after the coming of Aryans left their land and became wandering nomads or whether he is referring to something else.

If one goes by the theory put forward by Chemjong (1967) whereby the term Kirata⁴ is used to define a race, one cannot talk about the sole identity of the Limboos. Chemjong (1967) is the first author who embarked on such a hypothetical archaeological and etymological synthesis and adopting Chatterjee's terminology, he regroups all mongoloid populations under the category of kirata and perceives them as an essence (Schlemmer: 2003/04). Wherever behavior, attitude, and culture are the topics of discussion, the use of race except as a symbolic marker for other lines of distinction is inappropriate. Race, also differs in culture- not just as a result of different histories, but intrinsically, as part of their very nature.⁵ In fact the use of term Kirata to denote the mongoloid group is a constructed one as what Schlemmer writes Kirata indigenist try to write their own attested history by setting themselves up as dignified nation.⁶ Chemjong lists various hypothesis which lead him to see a Kirant origin and influence in all the ancient civilizations from the Mediterranean Sea to Mongol or Cambodia...and to him and his numerous followers, the historical anchorage and the guiding thread of their re-written history are confirmed by the word Kirata, thereby offering Kiratas a glorious perspectives (Schlemmer: 2003/04).

The theory of Limboo migration from the plains of India to the Himalayas is not acceptable as the culture, customs, dress, food habits etc of this group is opposite to the Indians. Though the oral tradition demarcates the southern boundary of the Limboos to the plains of India and the Indian Ocean, it never talks about their Indian ancestors. The theory put forward by Subba (1999), regarding their migration via Walungchuk is a common story that runs among this tribe and there are also stories of Walungpa being brought into Limboo fold. Such conversion of people into Limboo fold is supported by their ritual of Chokphung, whereby many people are brought to their ethnic fold, but such ritual is no longer in practice. No doubt the Walungpas mostly settled in western part of Sikkim does share close relation with the Limboos and the ones who have recently migrated from Walung to Sikkim speaks fluently in Limboo language; sometimes even translating the word Wa-Lung to be of Limboo origin as Wa in Limboo refers to fowl and Lung-Stone, often rectifying that it refers to hen like stone.

The Theory of Chinese Origin

The second theory, which I shall call the theory of Chinese origin, explains the migration of the Limboos from China. Chemjong (1966) categorizing the Limboos as the Kiratas considers them to be the migrants from the Sichuan Yunan province of China, who left their native place due to the tribal antagonism and settled in a place called Nam Maw in north Burma under the leadership of Pongbo Hang. Further multiplying this group spread to east, west and south. A branch which spread to south-west settled in a place called Mokwan and began to address them as Shan Mokwan. Shan Mokwan, migrated towards the hilly terrain of present East Nepal and came across the land of eight Kirata chiefs. Settled under the sovereignty of Kirat chiefs, they were suppressed which made the war inevitable. The Shan Mokwan emerged victorious, seized the country and fixed its boundaries as Tibet in the North, Jalalgarh near Purnea in the south, River Tista in the east and River Dudkosi in the west. Terming their land as Limbuwan, they divided the conquered land among the ten chiefs and changed their name from Shan Mokwan into Yakha Thumba⁷, meaning the head of hill tribes. Supporting the view of Hooker, Chemjong (1966) also accepts the similarity between the Limboos and the Karen, natives of Arakan and brings out the similarity in their culture, dress and military tactics. Strengthening his theory, he further writes that the compact mass of Limboos settled mostly in the western part of Sikkim

³ Subba (1999) relates Limboos with the people of Indus Civilization on the basis of similarity in their religious belief. For more details see Subba (1999).

⁴ In Sikkimese context Kirata comprises many communities such as Rai, Yakha and many others of mongoloid descent.

⁵ Yinger 1997

⁶ The term Kirat is also written as Kirata and Kirant. For more detail see Schlemmer 2003/2004

signifies the existence of their historical kingdom of Limbuwan which later on was jeopardized by various invasions. There is no doubt in the argument that the bulk of Limboos are found in the western part of present day Sikkim and present east Nepal, and that this land at some point of time formed the land of the Limboos, so termed by the Limboos as Limbuwan but it seems quite exaggerated as it is unable for a migrant group to win over the existing authority of the eight chiefs.

Subba (2012) too is of the opinion that the Limboo progenitors were created through the process of biogenesis in the north east Asia during the ice age and started descending downward following Yellow river of north China and Yangtse river of south China. Collecting finger millets and dry paddy seeds on the way, this hunter-gatherer nomadic tribe arrived in the Himalayan region during the archaic period or as early as 25,000 years ago, bringing with them their practice of soyabean cultivation. Subba further says that their Mundhum⁸ demarcates their land as China-Tibet (Sinyuk Muden) in the north, the plains of India and Indian Ocean in the south (Teymen Worong), Arun river in the west (Aruna-Baruna) and Brahmaputra in the east (Tusroti Umroti). After occupying the land of Limbuwan, they remain isolated from the rest of the world when finally they came into contact with the people of Sikkim in 1642 and Nepal in 1774. Having no strong monarchical system, this community managed their political, religious and social affairs through the social and religious council of Tumyanghang and Yehang respectively. No wonder that this tribe had come down from China but their isolated sustenance seems quite unacceptable.

Theory of Tibetan Origin

The third and the most accepted theory in Sikkimese context is the theory of Tibetan⁹ origin, which upholds the view that the Limboos are the immigrants from the Tsang province of Tibet. This theory has always found favour in the Sikkimese historical writings as the Limboos are known as Gtsong in the local Bhutia dialect¹⁰, for having been migrated from the Tsang province of Tibet. The designation of Limboos as Gtsong has often been a matter of confusion and controversy, which has contributed to the misleading identity formation of the Limboos, often confusing the writers like Bhattacharya and Joshi¹¹ (2004). Leaving behind the state of confusion, I go on to explain the theory of the Tibetan origin. Authors like Risley, Sinah, Jones & Jones, Temple, Hooker, Sagant, Balikci, Das, Dutta Roy, Subba, Wangchuk and Zulca etc. have all supported this theory.

Comparing Nahangma, the Limboo goddesses, with God dgra-lha, of the nameless religion of Tibet, Sagant (1996) brings out similarity among the Limboos and the Tibetans. God dgra-lha is named by the word which means chief or a king and the word 'hang' used by the Limboos resembles the Tibetan power, 'dbang'. The Limboo goddesses Nahangma sitting at the top of the mountain resembles the sacred Tibetan mountain war gods. The powers feared by the Tibetan have their seats in all places: in the right shoulder, dgra-lha; in the right armpit, mo-lha; in the heart, zhang-lha. These Tibetan conceptions correspond to those of the Limboos. For Limboos and for Tibetans alike, 'the souls are hardly different from the gods'. And in Tibet, around 1900, the ga-ra butchers slaughtered their pigs in the same way as the Limboos by piercing the heart with the boar-spear (ibid). Not only are the Gods and Goddesses similar among the Limboos and the Tibetans, but Wangchuk and Zulca (2007) also talks about the Limboo ancestral affinity with the Tibetans. They are of the opinion that Uba Hang, who is said to have revived Yuma Samyo and discouraged Buddhism among the Limboos was the one who led the campaign in April 846CE southwards into Limbuwan and carved a new kingdom for himself. Even today the festival of Tong-Sum-Tong-Nam is celebrated in his name. If Wangchuk & Zulca talk about the royal origin of the Limboo ancestor, Sarat Chandra Das (1902) records the popular belief that Tibetan ancestors of Yakhungbas, migrated into present Limbuwan through Kangla pass following the lost Yak and made their first settlement in Yangma valley of Tamar Khola region (Subba: 1999). Jones & Jones (1776) writes that the ten Kingdoms of Limbuwan corresponds to the legendary founding of the Limbuwan by ten brothers who are believed to have migrated from Tibet and India. According to him, there were three brothers namely Khampen Hang, Tokle Hang and Murek Hang. It was the second brother Tokle Hang who travelled to Assam crossing river Teesta and it was his descendants who defeated the Lepchas and ruled over Limbuwan (Fitzpatrick: 2011). Dahal, talks about the religious convulsion that led to the mass migration of Limboos from Tibet to Bhutan and Nepal. According to him, the spread of Buddhism in Tibet led to the conversion of some Limboos into the new Buddhist fold. This led to the religious division among the Limboos, as the Buddhist Limboos got closer to other ethnic Tibetans belonging to the same fold. The dominated non- Buddhist Limboos were forced to migrate

⁸ Mundhum is the spiritual instruction from the Limboo ancestor which is passed down orally from generation to generation, through the institution of Shamans.

⁹ Though Tibet now has become the part of People's Republic of China, in the above context I am talking of an independent Tibetan empire prior to the conquest of Tibet by China.

¹⁰ Limboos are referred as Gtsong by the Bhutias and Chung by the Lepchas, the same way Limboos refer to Bhutias as Mudenba and Lepchas as Emmeypa in their local dialect.

¹¹ The writing of Bhattacharya and Joshi often creates confusion among the readers as in their work they have separated the Gtsong from

to Bhutan and Nepal. Again during 7th century A.D. Guru Padmasambhava arrived in Bhutan and tried to bring Limboos into Buddhist fold, discarded by the Limboos the Guru returned back north. This angered the Tibetan Buddhist who made them attack on the Limboo settlement in Bhutan. They massacred the Limboos and the place in which this incident occurred is named as Tsong sa Dzong by the Dukpas of Bhutan. Then the remaining refugee Limboos moved eastward and settled down in Sikkim, which was under the domain of the Lepcha panu. The theory put forward by Dahal seems quite unacceptable as the Buddhist groups are shown to have travelled too far chasing the Limboos.

When one tradition talks about the migration of Limboos with the pioneer Lama Katog from the Tsang province, the shamans that I met during my field visit narrated me the story about their migration from the Tibetan land along with their Guru Lha tsun Chenpo. According to this narration, Lha tsun Chenpo, during his journey to the hidden land was accompanied by the Limboo followers. On the way, he climbs the mountain of Kangchengjunga (Phoktanglungma) for meditation and conferring with the Sikkimese guardian deities. As he doesn't return for several days, the Limboos believing him to be dead begins to mourn but he finally returns back adding joy to the Limboos, thereby they enter into Sikkim. The Khamdaks (Limboo sub-group), mostly settled in western Sikkim talks of their migration from the Tibetan region following their Guru Lha tsun Chenpo. Even during the Manghenna¹², the Shamans once used to take their soul to the region of Kham in Tibet¹³. Travelling through the rough road for an hour from Darap towards Rimbi in western Sikkim, two pine trees resembling the pine of the Dubde monastery can be seen from the distance. Having survived for hundreds of years, these trees are about 100ft high and 30ft wide. They believe that those pine seeds were given by their Guru Lha tsun Chenpo to their ancestors Mana and Tojey. The elderly among the Limboos still pronounces Rimbi as Limbith, meaning 'a doubt whether the seed would grow into tree or not'. Below the pine trees is a Buddhist stupa (manay), which is quite surprising to be found among the Yumaist¹⁴ Limboos. I was amazed to see that the Khamdaks, though Yumaist by faith still calls upon the Buddhist monks for their rituals and Buddhist flags could be seen flanking in the front porch of their houses. Not only do they profess Buddhism but even talked of their grandparents who were Buddhist monks by profession. But the presence of such pine trees all over western Sikkim especially at places such as Yuksam, Darap, Pelling and Geyzing creates doubt in such oral stories.

Even their migration with Guru Lha tsun Chenpo seems constructed as on the basis of the evidence it appears that Lha tsun Chenpo departed Tibet in the fifth month of 1646 (Fire dog Year) and arrived in Sikkim in the tenth month of the same year and it was around this time that he met the first Sikkimese Chogyal in Yuksam near Narbugang, where he offered him the ritual ornaments of Chakravatin (Mullard: 2012 p.128). This evidence makes it impossible to accept the theory of Limboo migration following their Guru Lha tsun Chenpo, and if it would have been true then there in fact would have been no need of signing the treaty of Lho Mon Gtsong tsum¹⁵, which shows that the rule of Phuntsok Namgyal did not remain uncontested but was challenged by the rebellion or war (ibid).

The theory of Post-boundary migration

The fourth theory indeed is of the recent origin and speaks of the migration of the Limboos from the region of modern Nepal to modern Sikkim. Balikci(2008) divides the Limboo population in Sikkim as an early and later migrants. According to her, the Gtsongs of the western Sikkim, belonging mostly to Lasha gotra and Buddhist by faith are the early settlers of Sikkim and has close affinity with the Bhutias and the Lepchas. The later migration took place during the reign of Sir Tashi Namgyal, when in 1938 a dozen of Limboos from Dhankuta in east Nepal who did the construction of Tsuk-La-khang(the royal Chapel) were later granted permission to settle and open fields within the Phodong Estate of Mangshila. They initially worked as labourers for the Tingchim Lhopos in return for food until they had cleared sufficient fields for themselves. They cleared the jungle of dangerous beasts and helped Tingchim villagers carve paddy traces below the lake, and like Nepalese did everywhere in Sikkim, taught them how to plough and practice permanent irrigated agriculture. The most significant changes brought about in Tingchim by the arrival of the Limboo settlers were first in the expansion of methods of cultivation and later in the transformation of the whole economic structure of region. The Limboo population of neighbourhood Mangshila has increased at much faster rate than the Lhopos. Mangshila has close to two thousand Limboo inhabitants while Tingchim's Lhopos population of around two hundred and twenty has barely doubled since the 1920s.

¹² It is a Limboo ritual of holding one's head high. During the performance of Manghenna the soul of a person for whom the ritual is being done enters the body of the Shamans. The Shaman in the trance takes his/her soul to the place of the ancestor, often uttering the voice of supernatural.

¹³ But these days the Khamdaks claim Rimbi in western Sikkim to be their ancestral homeland. It might be a constructed local narrative, though not historically correct and might reflect other realities.

¹⁴ The Limboos are Yumaist by faith. They believe in their supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma.

This view of Balikci is supported by Sagant (1996) who talks about the transformation of the Kipat¹⁶ land in East Nepal and the successive wave of immigration favored by the existing legislation which reduced the land available for farming and forced the Limboos to emigrate to Assam and Sikkim¹⁷. The plot of land left by the Limboos who emigrated to Assam or Sikkim went with the office of the Subba, who lost no time in selling it in order to avoid trouble, should the emigrant return and challenge the transaction. Each year many people migrate from the village. They go down to Assam or Sikkim for a few months, looking for work to make up the deficit from their inadequate farms. There they join relatives who have been there for several generations. Some migrants settle permanently as there is no longer enough land in Nepal and they are overhead and ears in debt. For poor there was only one solution: flight to Sikkim or Assam.

The case study provided by Fitzpatrick (2011) also talks about the migration of the Limboos from Nepal to Sikkim mostly as cardamom labourers, which enabled and still enables a section of the Limboo society in the villages of east Nepal to become wealthy and either buy a land or pay back the debts that they incurred, thereby reclaiming their land. Apart from the labour migration, Fitzpatrick also discusses the people fleeing away from their villages to abstain from the punishment. The example of a marriage between the eldest daughter of a Jaisi Chettri and a Limboo villager at the village of Mamangkhe, east Nepal goes on to prove the fact. This couple had run away from the village to get married and lived in Sikkim for seven years after which they returned back. If this study talks of temporary migration, there are also studies of Limboo couples who had to leave their village on marrying among the closed ones. Such couples had travelled and worked in Sikkim, often never returning back. Fitzpatrick even writes about the households of Jhapa, Nepal having the longest trend to have members who either worked in the army or in Sikkim. Hard hit by economic or else social problems, the Limboo chose Sikkim as their safest destination, and their choice for Sikkim might be due to cultural similarity as well as the presence of their kin group in that distant land.

Fitzpatrick writes: *'With the abolition of the Kipat land, the Limboo in the region of east Nepal began to turn to the Hindus for financial assistance in forms of loan which would be given in exchange for temporary possession of the Kipat land as mortgage, until the Hindu creditor was repaid in full, with access to kipat land covering the interest in loan. Increased debt led to the increased amount of Kipat land being mortgaged, which in turn led to the increased debt. The Limboos, thus began to lose their land in the hand of the migrant Brahmin-Chettri settlers, whom the Limboos designate as cunning and industrious, and who were historically encouraged by the Gurkha state to settle in the east as a means of extending political and cultural control over unconsolidated territory. Ultimately, this all led to many Limboo becoming landless and obliged to work on other people's land as sharecroppers, find wage labour as agricultural workers, government employees or Gurkha soldiers or migrate else-where'*.

The late migration of Limboos in Sikkim is temporary as well as permanent. During my field work, I came across few households viewed as the later migrants. They had come as the labourers among whom some of them have settled permanently while others returned back to their own homeland. This wave of early and later migrants is often denoted as U-Tsong and Khar-Tsong respectively. It is in fact this wave of continuous migration from the region of modern Nepal that might have made the writers designate them as the Nepalese. Rose (1963) writes that large proportion of Nepali immigrant in Sikkim is Limboos from the eastern most hill district of Nepal, having a long historical relation with the Lepchas of Sikkim. Basnet (1974) clubbing the Limboos with the Nepalese, has claimed that the name 'Sikkim' is of the Nepali origin. Being a politician, it might have been his political move to make the fate of the Nepalese secure in the atmosphere of the then political turmoil. As the accepted fact is that the name Sikkim is of the Limboo origin, 'Su'-'new' and 'him'-'house' and it was named by the Limbooni Queen of the second Chogyal Tensung Namgyal. The Limboos claim present eastern Nepal and western Sikkim to be their ancestral land and that they have been living there from the time immemorial. The elderly Limboos believed that the names given below are those names that were given by their ancestors.

¹⁶ Kipat is the communal land ownership issued by the Nepali Government by which individuals had right to the land by the virtue of being members of particular social unit. It was abolished by the Land Reform Act of 1964.

The names of the places in Sikkim believed to be of Limboo origin are as follows:

Names in Limboo dialect	Distorted Name	Meaning
Tumlabong	Tumlebong	Trees with large leaves from where the thread is produced
Mik-moo	Mikmoo ¹⁸	Shape of eyes
Lungak	Lungay	Place where big stone has to be crossed
So-hum	Som Dara	Hills
Si-dengbung	Siddey bong	Place where <i>Rubus ellipticus</i> is grown
Ip-sing	Ip-sing	Hidden Hills
La-khey	Lagay	Merry making land
Yoiksum ¹⁹	Yuksam	Yiok means fort and sum means three in local Limboo dialect
Mang-sa-bung	Mangsabung	Place of Gods
Ting-ting lek lekpa	Ting ting	When one of the branches of the Limboo tribe arrived in this place, they came along a stone which produces sound like the tingling of the bell
Tharpu	Tharpu	Temporary tented place
Wa-jek	Bajek	Drizzling water
Phu Kam den	Daramdin ²⁰	Making earthen pots
Keray Thangay	Gerethang	Buck wheat cultivation
Chong lang	Chongrang	Place where millet is grown and harvested
La bing	Laring	Full moon
Mang-shela	Mangshila	Place of worship
Terap	Darap	Flat and fertile land
Sing-phereing	Singpheng	Place where log is dissected into two halves
Nambu	Nombu	Warm place to rest (Mana, the ancestor of one of the Limboo sub-group rested on Nambu on his journey from Tibet)

¹⁸ There are some names which are in its original version.

¹⁹ It is quite difficult to put conclusion on some of the names such as Yuksam and Geyzing as Lepchas claim Yuksam to be of their origin meaning three monks in their regional dialect and the Bhutia writes Geyzing as Gyalshing which means Royal field in their local dialect. The Bhutia terminology seems quite appropriate as Gyalshing stands just below Rabdentse, the Sikkim Palace.

Saryong	Soreng	Banana Orchard
Chezang	Geyzing	Place where dead bodies are kept
Tendam	Dentam	Place for fair
Hee-ma-phang-phey	Heegoan	Place to roam around
Saray-ba-dem	Siribadam	Scattered village
Chung ²¹	Chung (Tsong)	Cold village
Limbith	Rimbik	Doubt whether the pine seeds given by Guru Lha tsun Chenpo would grow or not
Lungsugang	Lunsugoan	Place of stones
Nessa	Nessa	Spiritual cave
Tinglayang	Thingling	Place of thrones
Parthang	Bhaluthang	Gifts
Lapchengee	Rabdentse	Place that resembles foot bone
Yangsum	Yangsum	Place for money collection
Mangdokbung	Mantabung	Place for millet cultivation

II. Conclusion

The fluid and changing boundaries led to the fluidity in the identity of the Limboos of Sikkim, sometimes giving them the indigenous identity and at the same time defining them as a migrant group. Sometimes shifting the village in order to cope up with the ecological constraints does make historians to term their shifting of village as a migration caused by economy or religious-political order. But in the case of Limboo it seems that more than their shifting, their border land has shifted. Mullard (2012) describes the early Sikkimese areas directly and indirectly under the rule of Phuntsok Namgyal with the regions in the modern west Sikkim, small parts of eastern Nepal (namely parts of Limbuwan) and areas just east of Ravangla. It suggests that some of the land of the Limboos was under the authority of the Namgyal Dynasty. The policies of war and conquest has in fact re-defined the boundaries and made the Limboos straddle between the two nations of modern Nepal and India. The Limboos have not migrated but the boundaries of the land within which they lived were shifted. Though it can't be denied that the humans originated in Africa but it can be estimated that the Limboos have been living in the land of what Limboos term as Limbuwan since time immemorial. So, with the division of the land and the fixing up of new boundaries, the Limboos themselves got divided into two as the Sikkimese and the Nepali Limboos.

Apparently, the land of Limboos has been an important juncture of trade in the early times between India-Nepal and Tibet. The trade network that they carried out made them move towards the region of Tibet, often marrying the Tibetans and settling there. It was from Tibet that some of the Limboos migrated to Sikkim in the later years making them designate as Gtsongs. James S. Olson in his 'ethno-historical dictionary of China' writes:

'Historically there has been a great deal of contact between Tibetans and the Limboos because of their Himalayan passes from Sikkim into Tibet's Chumbi valley...today because of their historical commercial relationship and the current proximity to the Tibetan border and the Himalayan trade routes, it is likely that at any given time hundreds of Limboos are living in the Tibetan region of the People's Republic of China'.

The word 'Gtsong' might have been used to designate the trader²² class. The oral narration also talks about Limboos who traded in cattle. The people in western Sikkim narrate about their forefathers who were small agricultural traders. Even Waddel explains that the Limboos came to Sikkim with the cattle trade and became 'the chief cattle merchants and butchers of Sikkim (Risley: 1884). The Limboos might have settled in the eastern Himalayan belt from the time immemorial, and it was their trading business which made them shift their location during those time when boundaries were flexible; mostly settling in the region which now falls under

²¹ The name of this place is pronounced as 'Chung' but it is written as 'Tsong'.

East Nepal and western Sikkim. The war of conquest and the fixation of the new boundaries, led to the misleading identity formation of the Limboos.

Thus, the change in the boundaries, shifting of the villages and the process of acculturation made the Limboos gain different identity in the modern era. With the influx of inexpensive Nepalese labour force by the British for raising the state revenues, the Limboos began to get acculturated into their fold, with the abolition of Tsong seat in the state assembly they got politically lumped with the migrant groups, thereby losing their distinct identity and finally got submerged into the Nepalese fold.

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e-mail: dominantbooks@gmail.com
info@dominantbooks.com

Dedicated to the Memory of
My Brother Raju (Narasimha)
(1983-2013)

Chapter 17

Shamans and their Ethno-Medicinal Practices Among the Limboo Tribe of Sikkim

Gracy Maria Subba

Introduction

Limboos are the indigenous aboriginal tribe of Sikkim living there even before the formation of Sikkimese kingdom. Once, they had their own kingdom of Limbuwan, which got tied to Sikkim through annual tribute. By and large the areas directly under the control of Phuntsok Namgyal, the first Chogyal (King) of Sikkim can be identified with the regions in modern western Sikkim, small parts of eastern Nepal (namely parts of Limbuwan) and the areas just east of Ravangla (now in modern south Sikkim administrative division).¹ With the passage of time, the Gurkha invasion as well as the willing submission through a generous treaty changed the boundaries of Sikkim and modern Nepal. By 1774 Nepal had gained the whole of the eastern hills, including all the territory west of the Singalila watershed. In the Terai the Gorkhals controlled the entire territory as far east as the river Teesta. Thereby, the land of the Limboos got divided into two between the great nations of modern Nepal and the then Sikkim² making the Limboos straddle between the two nations. The Limboos have played great roles in the formation of the Sikkimese Kingdom under the Namgyal dynasty, occupying high position in the Namgyal court³. In fact, the name Sikkim itself is of Limboo origin- Su (new) and Him (house). But with the rise of the British rule and migration of the Nepalese into Sikkim, they began to lose their distinct identity, when they

got acculturated with the migrants and later on got politically lumped with the groups.

Their rich culture and ethnicity in which they had pride, is so mushrooming away perhaps due to the process of acculturation. Though Sikkim was established through the desire for unification of three communities of Lho (Bhutias), Mon (Lepchas), Gtsong (Limboos)⁴; this blessed land is now populated by the Bhutias, Lepchas, Limboos and the Nepalese having different culture and tradition, thereby making it quite difficult for the Limboos to preserve their ethnic culture and tradition. History writing too have helped them lose their distinct identity, where most of the writers have either tagged them as the migrant Nepali group or have confused the readers by separating Gtsong⁵ from the Limboos. The Limboos are nowhere identified, either by the tourist pamphlets or the paintings and posters that represent the ethnic communities of Sikkim.

In spite of their degrading status; the practice of shamanism in the Limboo society has never been completely wiped off. Here, I am using the term Shamans to denote a social functionary who is the religious expert, part time professional priest and a doctor possessed by the voluntary as well as non-voluntary spirit possession and who acquire their power by the divine intervention. In fact, the land of Sikkim and its history have to certain extent helped the Limboos to preserve their rich oral tradition and belief in their supernatural powers. The treaty of Lho Mon Gtsong sum itself defines the belief of the Sikkimese people in the supernatural power. Host of deities belonging to the Lho, Mon and Gtsong witnessing the treaty of Lho Mon Gtsong tsum, the belief on Klum Bhumsa having the strength of 10,000 men, sons born through the witchcraft of the Lepcha chief Thekong Tek, fall of the prophetic letter from the sky are the story of supernatural elements found in Sikkim. The Limboos thereby have immense faith in the supernatural powers and on their Shamans who seem to be the store house of supernaturalism.

Place of Shamans among the Limboo Tribe

Limboos are Yumaist⁶ by faith and they believe in the matriarchy of the female Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma. Their religion moulds the elements of supernaturalism in such a way, giving it a great opportunity for Shamans to place themselves as a supreme being. Limboos of Sikkim recognize five categories of Shaman of both the sexes namely Phedangba, Samba, Yeba and Yema, having minute and unimportant distinctions⁷. Though hard for outsiders to distinguish, they are expert in their own particular field. When Phedangbas perform household rituals and prevent misfortune, the Sam

specializes in Mundhum⁸ and Yea cures those diseases caused by the spirit of Nahen-the spirit of envy and jealousy. But these days they perform several ritualistic functions on accord to their availability. Though oral tradition while ranking these Shamans places Phedangba as the oldest to have been descended from the sky and Yea as the youngest, Sambas are the most powerful and performs the most complicated rituals often taking the soul of living and the dead to the paradise. Shaman often used in broad sense of medicine man and magician are more than this to the Limboos. Emboldened by a divine power, Shamans are perceived as a divine being having been sent by their supreme God Tagera Ningwaphuma for educating the living beings and saving them from the clutches of the evil spirits who are believed to be hovering everywhere. Assuming an altered state of consciousness through the incorporation of an alien form, the Shamans through Tutelary possession⁹ incorporates in themselves the soul of both living and the dead. Not only do they guide the human in earth but even takes the responsibility of guiding their soul to the paradise of their ancestors or to the heavenly abode.

The Limboo belief of illness in itself provides a ground for the utmost position of the Shamans in the Limboo way of life. Rather than a natural phenomenon, illness among the Limboos are attributed either to the supernatural power of evil spirits lurking in any awkward region of their neighborhood or as a punishment given by the discontent angry Gods and Goddesses. Sins committed through conscious mind, too is believed to be the cause of diseases and even death. A mere ritual performed by Shaman with the prayerful offering of thi (local millet beer), flowers, fruits, tubers, bamboo and leaves are believed to nullify the sin and pave the way for recovery from the suffering and sometimes adding life to an individual. The system of cause, effect and cure is thus the circular and enclosed system of knowledge. The cause is the spirit, the effect is the spirit possession and the cure is the controlled spirit possession.¹⁰ The ritual of Manghenna¹¹ practiced among the Limboos makes us quite aware they not only does a Shaman cure the human illness but even helps an individual gain respect and position in the society.

The possession of spirit among the Limboo is quite different from the way Jones¹² have perceived where the spirit possession occurs more frequently among those category of down trodden people who are often in search of economic as well as social advancement. This type of peripheral possession where the possession is unknown, spontaneous and uncontrolled; might be a popular case among the people but to become a Shaman one needs to be possessed by the spirit of Siray sam. Simple possession by a deity is not the only sign that one is to become a Shaman. It becomes important to acquire

a teacher through the will of supreme deity. Without a teacher, a person possessed is merely a person that is ill. Limboo Shamanism is not just matter of teaching and learning procedure. Without the call through possession of the spirit, the person can never become a Shaman, regardless of how much he learns about divination and curing rituals. Possession and teaching are both essential to the profession. In fact the school of spirit possession among Limboos is hereditary. An individual becomes Shaman once they are possessed by the Siray Sam, the spirit of their ancestor who is guided by their master spirit Yakma Thungma in their journey to the body of their chosen descendant.

During my field work, the Shamans that I met were Govt. job holders, some still in job and a few who had left their jobs for giving more time to their spiritual profession. A Samba earlier a policeman when asked about his resignation said "Limboo Shamans unlike the Hindu Pandits and Buddhist monks are jobholders and give little or no time to their religious activities while they might make a Limboo family call upon the Pandits and the Buddhist monks performing their household rituals. I don't want a Limboo child to be named Ram or Karma, he/she should be named as Samyog Hang, Meeksoma Hang and as such." Shamans even take credit of being an environmentalist. A Shaman when asked about their contribution to the Limboo society said "It's the forest that we created in the mind of the people of God's divine reprisal in case of non adherence of their order that have saved our planet. We are the ones who asked the people to worship the trees and to keep the streams clean, preach to them about the holiness of those sacred places. Without us the people would have by now wiped off the jungle and made the drinking water scarce." Such an immense role of the Shamans in everyday life of Limboos makes their presence inevitable. They not only make the people get rid of the diseases through their chants and dance but have even disciplined the humans.

Shamanistic Dance and the Cure of Diseases

Shamanistic dance has always served as an indigenous medicine to the Limboo tribe and especially to the Limboo agricultural folk, thereby healing and soothing them over centuries and perhaps ensuring safety to the community at large. The dance of the Shaman depends on the prediction and cause of disease.¹³ The prediction of disease is done by two ways. Firstly, with the help of their Guru who enters their soul and helps them predict the disease and its cause. This Guru, though unseen is said to have taught them Mundhum through supernatural ways. And secondly, by going into the trance, enquiring about the sins committed by the affected and asking ways of forgiveness both the good as well as the evil spirit, thereby appeasing the affected and

cleaning him of his sins. They dance as per the type of sickness. A dance is usually performed when the person is affected by some serious disease caused by uncanny supernatural being. A shaman, dancing around the altar starts with a mild beating of brass plate and Yegak (drum) and slowly becomes so excited that they leap around chanting and arguing with the spirits, often creating a sense of terror among the visitors. After sometime with the possession of the spirit of the diseased or deceased they shake fanatically, sweating and uttering the voice of a supernatural accompanied by the divine hallucination.

The Shamans shuns dances and depends only on the chanting of Mundhum if the sickness is simple. An example of a woman throws light on the Shamanistic way of curing in a simple way. She narrated her story, about the time of her pregnancy. During the period of pregnancy her legs has swollen up and she was taken to the Shaman, the Shaman instead of dancing and performing rituals advised her for herbal treatment. She then was given few leaves which were to be smoked and applied on the affected parts, the advice was worthy and she was healed. Another such example is of Purna Subba who when suffered from pneumonia was treated by the Shaman Dharam Dhoj by giving him a bamboo soup followed by the recitation of mundhum.

The Shamans not only heals but even performs the task of prevention. There are many rituals which are performed for the prevention of diseases and misfortune. Right from the time a baby gets conceived in the mother's womb; the Shaman starts the performance of rituals for the well being of the mother and child and continues till the death and even after. Once during the death rites of a Yuma (grandma) in a village of western Sikkim, four Shamans performed the rites. They started with the beating of brass plate dancing and revolving around their altar. After some time their beating of plates became vigorous, three of the Shamans rested for sometime while the fourth one started shaking and sweating. After some time he in a trance began to speak on behalf of the deceased and began to shout saying 'Thi abirayna' (asked for local beer in their dialect), after asking for this for around five minutes the shaman himself came out of trance and was again joined by his three counterparts. This ritual took place for around three days. This was done to pacify the spirit and save the family of deceased from the misfortune. On the last day a fowl was sacrificed. The system of blood sacrifices among the Limboos seems to be quite different. They usually sacrifice fowl blood not to appease their God but to tempt the evil spirits that they meet in the way while taking the soul of the diseased or deceased person to the place of their ancestor.

Apart from the fowl, Yegak (drum) and brass plate, the most frequently used things are grass, plant (*artemisa vulgaris*), rice and oil. In fact the use

of grass (Samyok) and plant in almost all the ritual is inevitable. Not only do they use this plant for the performance of ritual but even decorate the altar with this plant in addition to the light. This plant believed to be having mystical properties is used in purifying themselves. Apart from this plant the importance of Samyok could not be ruled out. The mother of Chan Hang (a child from a village in western Sikkim) gives two evidences of a person who was healed twice by the Shaman using Samyok. Once when suffering from cavity he was taken to a Shaman instead of Dentist. Shaman took out a white paper hanging in his room wall and using Samyok and chanting Mundhum took out insect from the child's teeth and dropped it down in the paper and burned it. Since then the child now studying in 8th standard has never complaint of his tooth ache. Another incident related to the same child was when he suffered from jaundice. The child's stomach had enlarged and his eyes had acquired yellowish tint, worried by the enlargement of the stomach his mother took him to the nearby Shaman. The Shaman then checking the pulse and beating the stomach diagnosed his disease and told the mother to come early in the morning before sunrise with a bottle of pure mustard oil, Samyok and brass bowl. Early in the morning the next day, this shaman kept the brass bowl in the child's head and poured oil in it. Chanting the Mundhum he began to shuffle the oil with the help of Samyok, after sometime the oil started becoming very greasy and then hard. This process continued for a week and the boy was cured. One often gets to hear such divine way of curing in the Limboo villages. But now the death of such divine Shamans are causing concern among the Limboos as such divinity is being lost along with their death. Having little divine knowledge, the Shamans of today are being forced to take the help of their indigenous medicine for healing, thereby keeping the way of Shamanism alive.

Deteriorating Power and the Introduction of Medicine

The concept of Shaman and medicine used to be different during early times but with the process of modernization, the institution of Shaman and medicine men are in no way different from one another. Limboo shamans some period of time avoided the use of medicine for curing diseases, believing that all the illness and misfortune were to be of supernatural origin, and used to look for divine remedies for all sort of illness. The oral history that they narrates makes it impossible even for the science to deny the efficiency of the Shamanistic diagnosis, prescription and cure, whereby providing the best alternative for treatment of diseases. The testament of 85 years old man goes to support this fact. He narrates the story of his sister who was once bitten

a mad dog and was taken to a village Shaman named Melum Dhoj. Shaman, through his Mundhum invoked the divine power thereby taking out insects from the victim's body and burned it, thereby healing her. Though the Shaman, Melum Dhoj and such divine power no more exists, the woman is still alive and now lives in Tekjek, a village in western Sikkim. But with their degrading power they are now in one way forced to use the medicine for treatment of diseases.

The tumyanghangs¹⁴ do tell about the great power of Shaman who once used to heal just by their supernatural powers when at that times it was only Theba Samba (Limboo medicine man) who used to practice herbal medicine in the Limboo society. Now they are saddened to find that no such Shamans exist at present. The unavailability of such powerful Shamans is highly attributed to their system of oral tradition whereby their Mundhum containing supernatural power of is transferred orally from generation to generation from the Guru to his disciple. Secondly, it is attributed to those Gurus who taught their disciples half heartedly fearing that they might be replaced by their own disciple. So, with the lost in their supernatural powers they had to seek the help of medicine. Thus, they began to accompany their half-known magical knowledge by the medicine and kept alive the culture of Shamanism.

Table: List of the local species/other products used by shamans for treatment of various diseases

Local medicine (Local Limboo name)	Scientific name	Uses
Thay Phung	<i>Costus speciosus</i>	Juice of the plant leaves is taken during menstruation pain and when there is problem in the urinary bladder
Hon-dok Phung	<i>Equisetum diffusum</i>	Leaves are crushed and applied in severe wound
Kham shet-shet Phung	<i>Erigeron Sp.</i>	Crushed juice is taken during snake bite and when affected by larva
Kham bok la	<i>Pogonatherum paniceum</i>	Polio
Wa-na	<i>Drymeria cordata</i>	Cold, Cough and tonsil
Mikri Phung	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>	Gout
Kham buk wa Phung	<i>Kaempferia rotunda</i>	Fractured bone

Itchi Phung	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	Worm in the stomach
Piku ma	<i>Aconitum ferox</i>	Jaundice, fever and hepatitis
Mik yun dey Phung	<i>Calotropis gigantia</i>	Believed that this plant gives sound sleep
Ok tang Phung	-----	Eye irritation
Sung khing	<i>Swertia chirata</i>	Boiled and taken during head ache body ache and fever
Wa rik ma	<i>Zanthoxylum alatum</i>	Used to treat Gastric
Kha nak pa	<i>Heradeum wallithii</i>	Smoked and taken during vomitin and diarrhoea
Thay lekh khama	<i>Sinarundinaria microphylla</i>	Effective in Pneumonia
Yeng jrama	<i>Arythrina variegata</i>	Smoked and applied in swollen areas
Yang luk ma	<i>Paa liebigii</i>	Cough and bronchitis
Hang wa rupkay	<i>Bofo sp.</i>	Severe fever
Mak simma	<i>Myiophoneus caeruleus</i>	Used to treat Piles
Pek was sha	<i>Moschus saturates</i>	Low blood pressure
Phak sot (Fats of Pork)	-----	Remove the marks caused by chicken-pox

Conclusion

It seems that the deteriorating power of Shaman as well as the spread education has brought out the Limboos from deep rooted age old belief supernaturalism. The 2006 census report estimates the percentage of literate Limboo population as 76.52% with 83.19% male and 69.32% female. The diseases and disorders which at one point of time thought to be the output sins and attack of supernatural being is now looked upon in more scientific perspective. The missionaries and the Government of India contributed the early development of western medicine in Sikkim. By 1915 considerable progress had been made towards the indigenization of Western medicine in Sikkim and used medicine as a tool of the empire¹⁵, even converting many Limboos to Christianity. Unlike the western medicinal programmes, the indigenous practices among the Limboos are neither supported by the Gov funds nor thought to be effective way of curing diseases. Instead, the uses of the herbal medicines through the advice of Shamans are looked down upon in the

modernized society. With the spread of western medicine and establishment of fee free Government hospitals even in the remotest areas of Sikkim, the Shamans no longer have to seek help of the supernatural being whom they used to invoke by simple offering of tubers, fruits and flowers. The modernization in one way seems to minimize the faith in the efficiency of Shamans especially among the section of intellectuals though it has not been able to wipe it out completely.

Apart from the effect of modernization and the degradation in the power of Shaman, the failure to detect and diagnose some of the dreaded disease like cancer etc. have arouse concern among the Limboos regarding the use of shamans and their medicine. At present the Shamans themselves are beginning to make clear distinctions between diseases that are amended to them and that which are to the modern medicinal practitioners. Looking at this, it has been my intention to suggest that the Shamans should cultivate a network of activities in relation to the cure of diseases in the traditional way, which would never make the people question their ability and also keep their tradition alive. State as well as the Central Govt. should take necessary steps in including the local voices in the developmental process and help this tribe preserve their rich culture of Shamanism and healing.

Ultimately, it has been the aim of this article to point attention again to how the lost of the divine power is making the Shamans depend on the indigenous medicine in the present days, serving as an evidence of the intimate relation between Shamans and the traditional medicine. With time, it seems that scientific technology would erode away the Limboo traditional way of healing and role of the Shamans would be lost in the vicinity.

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2. Here I am talking about the independent Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim prior to the merger of Sikkim with the India.
3. Mullard (2011) writes about the Lepchas and Limboos occupying high position as Limboo yong Lim and Lepcha Adengs. Even during his paper presentation at Rachana book house, Gangtok on 12th Nov. 2012, he discussed on the Sikkim based society during the Namgyal dynasty providing examples of high level individuals.
4. The treaty of Lho Mon Gtsong tsum was signed by the three ethnic groups i.e. Bhutia, Lepcha and the Limboo by which they acknowledged the rule of Namgyal as their single political head. For details on the formation of the kingdom and the treaty of Lho Mon Gtsong tsum see Mullard (2011)
5. The Limboos are referred as Gtsong by the Bhutias believing that they have come from the Tsang province of eastern Tibet.
6. For detail on the religion of the Limboos, see Subba, J.R., 'Yumaism- The Limboo Life- A Philosophical Analysis', *Yakthung Mundhum Saplappa*, Gangtok, Sikkim.
7. Shamans can be male as well as female. Phedangba, Shamba and Yeba are Yema is female. Yeba and Yema are collectively known as Yea. The difference between the Shamans can be traced out from their costumes. While Yea can be seen wearing a skirt with the necklace of rudraksha, bells and flowers, cowrie shells, bondlier head dress, leather belts with sickle and series of bells and robes; Phedangba wears only necklace made of rudraksha.
8. Mundhums are the spiritual instructions of the ancestors which have been passed orally from generation to generation, through the system of Shamans.
9. Tutelary possession is periodic and specific where the spirit takes over the body during the duration of the ritual or ceremony. The place in which the activities are conducted, the result of spirit possession is sporadic and unspecified and is determined solely by individual choice or situational demands (see Hitchcock & Jones ed.: 1994 p.4)
10. Hitchcock, John T. & Rex L. Jones (ed), *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalaya*, Publication House, 1994.
11. Manghenna is a rite practiced by the Limboos for holding their head high. For details see Sagant, Philippe, *The Dozing Shaman The Limbus of Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1996.
12. Jones (1994) giving an example of poor women of Eastern Nepal has perceived that the spirit possession usually occurs among the downtrodden. For detail see Hitchcock & Jones(ed), 1994, *Limbu Spirit Possession- A Case Study*
13. The Shamans are usually found dancing when they heal those people affected by peripheral possession.
14. Tumyanghang are a collective body of Limboo elderly men, expert in Mundhu the Limboo rites and rituals.
15. McKay, Alex, 'The Indigenisation of Western Medicine in Sikkim', *Bulletin of Tibetology* Vol. 40 No.2, (Nov.), 2004.