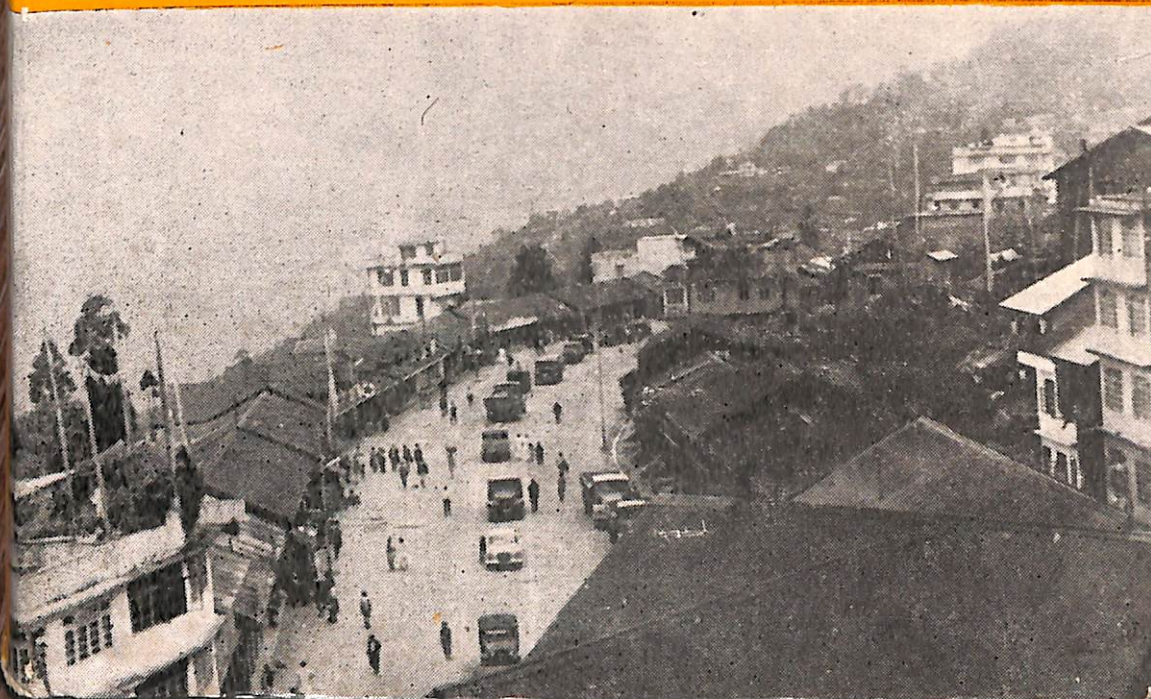


# SIKKIM

*Problems and Prospects of Development*

MANAS DAS GUPTA



S-54167

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MANAS DAS GUPTA  
Professor of Economics  
North Bengal University, Dist. Darjeeling



INDUS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
NEW DELHI

## Preface

Sikkim is one of the smallest states of Indian Union. It is a mountainous state and thus the development of this region is a challenging task. The development programmes which are applicable elsewhere need suitable modifications considering the ecology of this region and ethnic diversity. This book is an attempt to study the problems and prospects of development of Sikkim.

This book probably would not have been written without the valuable insights into Sikkim's economic problems provided by my colleagues at the Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University. In this respect I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. B.P. Misra, Dr. Ranju Dhamala, Dr. Ranghadur Sahu, Smt. Karubaki Datta, Sri Ugen Lama and Dr. Tanka Bahadur Subba of the Centre. I am also grateful to my students Dr. Sitaram Sah, Dr. Abdus Samad, Smt. Saraja Rai for the help they rendered to me.

It is rather difficult to get information on Sikkim, but my students and colleagues steadily supplied me with facts and information on Sikkim. I owe a deep gratitude to Sri J. M. Majumdar of the Centre for Himalayan Studies who allowed me to get all the relevant material from the Centre's library. I am also grateful to Dr. D.P. Boot for the help he rendered to me.

I would like to take this opportunity of recording my gratitude to my colleagues and students of the Department of Economics, North Bengal University. I express my thanks to Dr. J.C. Debnath whose work on Sikkim inspired me to do further investigation in this area. I also thank Dr. Hillol Chakrabarty, Dr. R. N. Bhattacharyya, Dr. Pinaki Chakraborty, Sri Jeta Sankritayayana and Smt. Sanchari Mukherjee for all the help and assistance they gave me



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# 1

## Introduction

Sikkim is a small state of the Indian Union in the eastern Himalaya surrounded by vast stretches of Tibetan plateau in the north, the Chumbi valley of Tibet and kingdom of Bhutan in the east, Darjeeling district of West Bengal in the south and kingdom of Nepal in the west. The state being a part of the inner ranges of mountains of Himalaya, has no open valleys and no plains but varied elevations ranging from 300 to 5500 metres above the mean sea level. It can be stated that the terrain is hilly without flat area. The state is almost rectangular, 114 kms long and 64 kms wide. As one goes from south to north the altitude becomes higher and higher. About one-third of the total area of Sikkim is under forest and nearly half of it is perpetually under snow. The snow-bound areas are largely in the North district but some parts are in the West and East districts also. As such the habitation of the areas of extreme north, east and west is very thin. According to variation of physical features of the state the density of population varies. At present majority of the people are from Nepalese stock. The Bhutias and Lepchas may be considered to be next in importance. Plains-men are late comers from different states of India and are mainly found in the urban centres especially in Gangtok.<sup>1</sup>

The early history of Sikkim is unknown to us. The early literature that is available to us is mainly in the form of travel accounts and official reports. The *Sikkim Gazetteer* was compiled by H.H. Risley in 1899. In this Gazette we get a glimpse of Sikkim's different ethnic groups. But before 1899, one official of the British East

India Company, J.D. Herbert wrote a valuable travel accounts of Sikkim, namely *Particulars of Visit to the Siccim Hills* (1830). From these accounts we come to know that the Bhutias migrated to Sikkim and succeeded in setting up a government in 1642. The Bhutia kings were keen to propagate Tibetan Buddhism and brought Sikkim within the fold of Lamaistic Buddhism and Tibetan culture.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally accepted that the Lepchas and Limbus are the original inhabitants of Sikkim. But the Lepchas and Limbus lost their control after the arrival of the Bhutias. It is known that the mild, timid and peaceful Lepchas tried to adjust themselves with the more powerful immigrants, namely Bhutias and various stories are available about the "plight" of the Lepchas in their attempts of adjustment.<sup>3</sup>

An interesting book *History of Sikkim* is available now. It was originally written in Tibetan by the Royal couple Maharaja Thutob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshay Dolma in 1908. They traced back the history of Sikkim as far back as the fourth century. In this book it was pointed out that the Tibetans regarded Sikkim as a "paradise" because of its beauty. This book also deals how the Bhutanese Chief Phuntsog Namgyal came to the throne in 1642. Further it gave details of achievements of the kings, and how Buddhism spread and monasteries were built, and the economic policies adopted by the kings. About this important book Ms Karubaki Datta writes "As a piece of history it does not rise above the standard of flat narration of events in a chronological sequence. Also based entirely on Tibetan sources its approach is partisan viz upholding the point of view of the ruling Tibetan elite alone. Nevertheless, its importance lies elsewhere. As an account based on the Tibetan sources and family chronicles, it throws light on many aspects of Sikkim's history e.g. Sikkim-Bhutan relation. Nepal's bid to conquer Sikkim etc which otherwise would have remained little known . . ." (K. Datta, 'A Note on the Present State of Histories of Sikkim' in *Himalayan Miscellany*, 5:1, 1991, pp. 21-22).<sup>4</sup>

The ruler of Sikkim maintained close relationship with Tibet for religious guidance. This close relation with Tibet was not liked by the British. The political developments of the early nineteenth

century ultimately reduced Sikkim to a British protectorate. After 1947, Sikkim became very close to India and in 1975 it was merged with India. Incidents relating to merger have been written exhaustively by different writers like by P.R. Rao, *The Story of Integration with India* (1978), by B.S. Das, *Smash and Grab* (1983), by S.K. Datta Ray, *Annexation of Sikkim* (1984), by N. Sen Gupta, *State Government and Politics* (1985) and by N. Rustomji, *Sikkim: A Himalayan Tragedy* (1987). All these books have discussed in details the problems of Sikkim before and after merger from different standpoints.<sup>5</sup>

Sikkim is divided into four districts: Mangan (North), Gangtok (East), Gyalshing (West), and Namchi (South). The division of the districts is based on the dividing lines of the two river systems—Tista and Rangit. There are variations among the districts in respect to size, density of population and economic characteristics. The Mangan district is the largest (1736 sq. miles), followed by West district Gyalshing (445 sq. miles), thereafter Gangtok in the east (367 sq. miles) and Namchi in the south (270 sq. miles). The North district covers more than 60 per cent of land area of Sikkim but the population density is very low, i.e. only 6 percent of the population of Sikkim lives in this district. Another 40.9 percent lives in Gangtok or the eastern district, 28 percent in Gyalshing or the western district, and the rest 25.1 percent inhabit the Namchi or the southern district. One of the main causes of the variation of density in the different areas is due to distribution of forests. The forest area covers about 40 percent of the South (Namchi), 64 percent of the West (Gyalshing) and 54 percent in the East (Gangtok) districts. The North or the Mangan district is situated mainly under forests and glaciers. The density of population is thus the lowest in North.<sup>6</sup>

Population of Sikkim according to 1981 census is 3,14,999 out of which 84 percent live in the rural areas and 16 percent in the urban areas. It should be mentioned that Sikkim had only a few urban areas before 1951. After 1951 certain centres emerged as towns, namely Mangan, Gangtok, Singtam, Namchi, Jorethang, Gyalshing and Nayabazar. Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, is classified as a class III town in the population size of 20,000-49,999. Gangtok's population was 13,308 in 1971 and in 1981 it is about



36,768. All other towns are classified under the category of class VI i.e. population size of less than 5000. It seems that according to census of 1981, 72 percent of the urban people live in Gangtok alone. Predominantly, Sikkim is a rural state and about 84 percent of people live in rural areas.<sup>7</sup>

There has been a continuous growth in the population of Sikkim, particularly a substantial increases in the decade 1971-81. Decadal increase of rural population jumped from 224 (in 1961-71) to 388 (in 1971-81) and of urban population from 1872 to 1500 per 1000 persons. However, it should be stated that in urban areas growth of population has remained continuously high since 1951.

Rural-urban decennial increase for every 1000 persons is shown in Table 1.1. It is seen that North district is the only district with very high population increase of 1028 persons per 1000 persons during the decade of 1971-81. In other words 1000 population of 1971 in North district has reached 2028 in 1981. Similarly, its rural population increased at a high rate in the decade 1971-81 as compared to the earlier decade of 1961-71. East and South districts also have comparatively higher growth rate for rural population than the West district. Urban growth rate in West district also regis-

TABLE 1.1

**Rural-urban decennial population increase for every 1000 persons  
in the districts of Sikkim (1961-81)**

		1961-71	1971-81
North district	Total	+334	+1028
	Rural	+300	+1019
	Urban	—	+1357
East district	Total	+510	+613
	Rural	+376	+383
	Urban	+1485	+1542
South district	Total	+162	+423
	Rural	+136	+353
	Urban	—	+3391
West district	Total	—	+289
	Rural	—	+284
	Urban	—	+553

tered comparatively low growth rate during the decade of 1971-81 whereas South district recorded the highest growth rate during 1971-81.<sup>8</sup>

Further, it can be seen from the census reports that East district is having the highest population with 1,38,762 persons in 128 revenue blocks (one uninhabited) and 2 towns. The West district has recorded a population of 75,197 persons residing in 120 revenue blocks (one uninhabited) and 2 towns. North district is the least populated which accounts for 26,455 persons residing in 54 revenue blocks (3 uninhabited) and one town.

A close examination of the census figures reveal significant rural-urban differences in literacy rates in all the four districts of the state ranging from 20.56 percentage points in the East district to 25.63 percentage points in the West. Difference in male-female literacy rates though gone down significantly as compared to 1971 census, is still quite high in rural areas. It is observed that difference in male-female literacy rates in rural areas of all districts of the state is approximately of the order of 21 percentage points, whereas this difference in urban areas is highest in West district. The East district is distinctly ahead in literacy followed by South, North and West districts. In fact the regional variation of literacy rate is quite high in Sikkim.

Even in terms of percentage of participation in the work force there are considerable variations. The percentage of main workers to the total population is 46.6 in Sikkim. For males the percentage of main workers to the total population is 56.5 whereas for females it is only 34.7. The percentage of marginal workers in the state is 1.7. There are only 0.7 marginal workers among the males and 2.4 among the females. The remaining 51.7% of the total population in the state has been treated as non-workers in accordance with the concept of workers and non-workers adopted in 1981 census. Highest participation rate of 51.41% is observed in West district followed by 47.79% in South district, 46.34% in the North district, and the lowest participation rate of 43.39% is recorded in East district. Rural-urban difference in participation rate is the highest in West district where main workers in rural areas are 51.77% and in urban areas 35.83% showing a gap of 15.94 percent points. Rural-

urban difference in participation rate is the lowest in North district where percentage of main workers is higher by 0.73 percent points in urban areas than in rural areas. The difference in male and female workers participation rate is quite high in the state. Male-female difference of participation rates vary from 8.56 percent points in West district to 29.51 percent points in North district. Male-female difference participation rate is higher in urban areas as compared to rural areas of all the districts of the state. Role of marginal workers in the economy of the state is insignificant. Highest proportion of marginal workers (6.91%) is recorded in North district and lowest (0.48%) in West district. Proportion of non-workers is highest in East district (55.70%) followed by South district (49.67%), the lowest proportion (46.75%) is recorded in North district.

It is well known that without education no nation can progress. The progress of education in Sikkim has been extremely slow. In order to have effective educational facilities, primary education facilities should be specially available to children right in their area of residence, as small children cannot be expected to walk long distance to avail these facilities, more so in the difficult hilly terrain of this state. The table below indicates the primary education facilities in this state.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1.2 shows that out of total of 215 panchayat units as many as 183 (85%) have primary schools within 1 km, another 11

TABLE 1.2

**Primary education in Sikkim: Location of schools**

District	No. of panchayats within 1 km	Units having primary schools within 2 km	Units having primary schools beyond 2 km
1. East	55	5	8
2. West	47	4	9
3. North	21	0	0
4. South	60	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>

panchayat units have a school within 2 kms, but still there are 21 panchayats where the children would be required to walk more than 2 kms. North district is better placed with all its panchayat units having a school within 1 km.

As far as middle level education is concerned the position does not appear to be satisfactory, because only 50 panchayat units have a middle school within a distance of 1 km, another 57 panchayat units have these facilities available within 5 kms. There are 107 panchayat units whose children will have to walk a distance of more than 5 kms to avail of this facility. Among the districts, South district appears to be the worst sufferer on this account.

In respect to secondary schools the situation is still worse. Only 17 panchayat units have a high/higher secondary school within 1 km, other 7 panchayats have such a school within 2 kms. 21 panchayat units have this facility within 3.5 kms and another 40 panchayats within 6-10 kms. As many as 120 panchayats can avail of this facility at a distance of more than 10 kms.

It is clear that there are considerable variations in respect to educational facilities in different districts of Sikkim. This is partly due to difficult terrain and partly due to lack of finance. But it should be stressed that there has been some developments and improvements in respect to educational facilities in Sikkim after merger.

With more and more emphasis being placed on the provision of basic medical facilities for safeguarding population from disease, there has been an increase in the availability of these facilities in the rural areas. Table 1.3 shows the position in this context.

From the table it is clear that 7 panchayat units have a primary health centre within 1 km of their boundaries, 30 panchayat units have within 1-5 kms and another 27 panchayat units have a primary health centre only at a distance of 6-10 kms and 150 panchayat units are, however, not well placed as the nearest health centre is found to be only more than 10 kms away. It may, however, be added that the national norm of having primary health centres for a population of 20,000 has not been achieved primarily because of the distribution of population and distances from the health centres.

TABLE 1.3

Number of panchayat units having a hospital<sup>10</sup>

District	Within 1 km	Within 1-2 kms	Within 3-5 kms	Within 6-10 kms	Beyond 10 kms
1. East	4	5	5	7	47
2. West	2	2	5	10	40
3. North	1	2	2	1	15
4. South	0	2	7	9	48
Total	7	11	19	27	150

The problem of provision of safe drinking water in the rural areas has been receiving attention of the government for quite sometime. This has also been included in the Minimum Needs Programme by the Planning Commission on national basis. Tables 1.4 and 1.5 indicate the availability of this amenity both in summer and other seasons in various panchayat units.

It can be seen from these tables that for many panchayats spring is the main source of supply of water. In the summer season as many as 163 panchayats have drinking water facilities within 1 km as compared to 128 panchayats in other seasons. Availability of water is still a problem for many panchayats during all seasons. The first place among the main source of drinking water is taken by spring which is perhaps natural—Sikkim being a hilly state, the second place is being occupied by some kind of piped water. There are, however, quite a good number of panchayat units, 52 in summer and 53 in other seasons whose residents have to go out of their panchayats for water.

In respect to electrification Sikkim has to go far in terms of achievement. In Sikkim only 45 panchayat units of total 215 are electrified. The progress of electrification in Sikkim is far from satisfactory.

The most important facility that the rural population needs is a place to sell their surplus produce and buy their groceries from normal markets, periodic *hats* and fair price shops. It is pertinent to point out that regulated markets as have been set up in other parts of the country for the procurement of surplus produce of the farm-

TABLE 1.5  
 Number of panchayat units having main source of water  
 in other seasons<sup>12</sup>

	Within 1 km					Within 2 kms		
	Tap	Pond	Stream	Spring	Others	Tap	Stream	Spring
1. East	6	3	2	28	2	2	2	19
2. West	0	6	0	23	0	1	3	14
3. North	12	1	0	2	0	5	0	0
4. South	23	4	2	12	2	0	1	6
Total	41	14	4	65	4	8	6	39

ers do not exist in Sikkim at all. Only 27 panchayat units have some sort of market within 1 km, 98 panchayat units have market between 2 km to 10 km and more than 90 panchayats have markets beyond 10 km distance. Again only 17 panchayats have *hats* within 1 km and 114 panchayats have *hats* from 2 to 10 km distance and 84 panchayats have periodic *hats* at more than 10 kms distance. The facility of fair price shops is available only in 30 panchayats within 1 km and majority of panchayats have this facility at a distance of more than 10 kms. It may be noted that the above facilities are not mutually exclusive and thus the actual number where one of the other facility may be available may be less than what appears from the government data. In fact the marketing system is heavily concentrated in a few localities and therefore, the farmers have to face difficulties in selling their products.<sup>13</sup>

Banking facilities in Sikkim are mostly confined to urban and semi-urban areas. The only four banks operating in Sikkim are State Bank of India, State Bank of Sikkim, United Commercial Bank and Central Bank of India. The State Bank of India has only three branches in East district (i.e. Gangtok). Again in the same district there are three branches of Bank of Sikkim and one in the South and one in the North district. It means that in the West district there is virtually no bank. In fact the banking system has not properly developed in Sikkim.

Co-operative movement has not advanced far in Sikkim. Only 62 panchayat units have a co-operative society within 5 kms. But

158 panchayat units have no co-operative at all or are located beyond a distance of 10 kms. These co-operatives are not very often useful because of distance involved.<sup>14</sup>

Out of 215 panchayat units only 71 units have a fertiliser depot or seed store within 1 km. Another 60 have within 5 kms. The residents of 57 panchayat units can avail of this amenity only if they are prepared to walk between 6-10 kms. Another 27 panchayat units are so placed that they are at least 10 kms away from any fertiliser depot or seed store.<sup>15</sup>

The provision of veterinary services still does not appear to be satisfactory. Only 19 panchayat units out of 215 have this facility within 1 km. 43 panchayat units can avail of this opportunity within a distance of 1-5 kms. Nearly half of the panchayat units can reach veterinary hospital or dispensary only after walking more than 10 kms.<sup>16</sup>

Development of any country depends upon its quality of people. Sikkim is relatively a backward state and rate of literacy has not progressed to the extent considered to be desirable.

The educational status of households in the rural areas is shown in the following table.

TABLE 1.6

Percentage of literate and illiterate persons in various age groups<sup>17</sup>

Age group	Literate %	Illiterate %	Total %
0 - 5	6.16	21.41	15.58
5 - 14	39.81	15.94	25.06
14 - 25	26.42	18.80	21.71
25 - 40	17.66	22.52	20.67
40 - 60	8.29	16.72	13.50
60 - 100	1.66	4.61	3.48
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

The table shows that the percentage of literacy is the highest (39.81%) in 5-14 age group and lowest (1.66%) in 60-100 age group. A consistently declining tendency has been noticed in the rate of literacy. The illiteracy rate, on the other hand, was the

highest (22.52%) in 25-40 age group and lowest (4.61%) in 60-100 age group. As for total, it is the highest (25.06%) in age group of 5-14 while lowest (3.48%) in age group 60-100.

The above table can further be broken up for details as shown in the following table.

TABLE 1.7  
Level of education

Level of education	Age groups					
	0-5	5-14	14-25	25-40	40-60	60-100
1. Illiterate	84.89	39.30	53.49	67.34	75.54	81.82
2. Can write	15.11	59.58	40.15	28.78	23.24	17.23
3. Class VIII passed	—	0.73	4.21	1.77	0.34	0.38
4. Higher secondary	—	0.39	1.91	1.89	0.73	0.38
5. Graduates	—	—	0.24	0.22	0.15	0.19
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

It appears that the rate of illiteracy is the highest (84.89%) in 0-5 age group and lowest (39.30%) in 5-14 age group. The percentage of those who can write worked out to be highest (53.50%) for 5-14 age group. The percentage of population which passed the VIII standard recorded the highest (4.21%) in 14-25 age group while lowest (0.34%) in 40-60 age group. Those who passed higher secondary hardly worked out to be 1.91% in 14-25 age group while more or less the same i.e. 0.38% was noted for 5-14 and 60-100 age groups. Those who attained graduation level form 0.24% in the age group of 14-25 while 0.15% was observed for the age group of 40-60. The total impression one gets is that in education Sikkim is still a backward region.

In respect to education there is also considerable amount of regional variation. Illiteracy of all groups is highest in West district (69.06%), followed by North (64.74%), South (61.40%) and East (57.73%). More or less similar pattern follows in respect to enrolment in schools. The West district may be considered as the most backward educationally.



An attempt has been made in the agricultural census to study the healthy status of the farmers according to age groups. The data have been presented in Table 1.8.

TABLE 1.8

Health details of the members of operating households (by percentage)<sup>19</sup>

Age group	Healthy	Weak	Sick	Total
0 - 5	91.65	6.65	1.70	100.00
5 - 14	95.31	2.95	1.74	100.00
14 - 25	95.61	3.11	1.28	100.00
25 - 40	95.02	3.16	1.82	100.00
40 - 60	85.93	8.30	5.77	100.00
60 - 100	60.65	20.70	18.65	100.00
Total	92.29	4.86	2.85	100.00

It can be seen from the above table that the percentage of healthy population recorded the highest in age group of 14-25 (95.61%) which indicates the degree of health status noticed at the stage of adolescence. The percentage of healthy even in age groups of 0-5 and 5-14 displayed a somewhat encouraging state of affairs. The percentage of healthy population, however, displayed a downward trend in the subsequent age groups viz 40-60 and 60-100, a phenomenon found almost in all rural areas.

As for weak population, the state percentage more or less exhibited a rising trend from the age group 14-25 onwards and touched the highest (20.70%) in 60-100 age group. This table further reveals that the percentage of sick population displayed a rising tendency with the increase in the ages of rural population. The percentage except in age group of 14-25 fluctuates between 1.70 and 18.65 the highest percentage being noticed in age group of 60-100.<sup>20</sup>

As for the position in the districts, it is observed that the percentage of healthy population has consistently been maintained at higher trends in age groups 0-5, 5-14, 14-25 and 25-40 in all the districts which indicates the general health condition of the rural population. The percentage has been maintained at the lowest, par-

ticularly in age group of 60-100. The percentage for East, West, North and South districts respectively worked out as 62.42, 62.22, 42.4 and 75.55 as against the state average of 60.65. It will be seen that the North district has the lowest percentage of healthy population in age group of 60-100.<sup>20</sup>

Percentage figures for weak population in the districts exhibited a mixed tendency as it maintained a downward trend in age groups 0-5, 5-14, and 14-25. Thereafter, a rising trend was noticed. With the percentage touching 36.84 in North district in age group of 60-100, the same was lower at 20.81% for East, 13.35% for West and 25.66% for South districts. The state average percentage for this group has been worked out as 20.70%.<sup>21</sup>

As for the sick population, the percentage has been maintained at the lowest (0.25-1.43) in age group of 14-25 in all the districts, the lowest being recorded in North and the highest being recorded in East district. Therefore, the percentages, after recording marginal fluctuations displayed a rising trend in all the four districts. The percentage of sick population for age group 60-100 recorded respectively was 16.77% for East, 24.43% for West, 16.84% for North and 25.87% for South districts, the state average being 18.65% for this age group.<sup>22</sup>

## 1. Population and Urbanisation

Quality of population to a large extent depends upon the pace of urbanisation. According to Debi Prasad Boot,<sup>23</sup> urbanisation is a very recent phenomenon in Sikkim. Gangtok was the only urban centre according to the census of 1951. Other urban centres were only visible from the 1971 census. At present only 16 percent of the population lives in eight urban centres but in Gangtok alone 72 percent of the urban population lives. In Gangtok 36,747 persons live according to 1981 census. Gangtok is the only class III town. The other towns are Gyalshing (population 745), Jorethang (population 3921), Mangan (population 780), Namchi (population 1444), Nayabazar (population, 932), Rango (population 2452) and Singtam (population 4043). Other than Gangtok, the towns are classified as class VI towns.

The process of urban development in Sikkim has two main forces of operation—administrative and commercial. The result of administrative forces is witnessed in case of the development of towns of Gangtok and Namchi. Namchi emerged as a nodal centre because of its location at the junction of two major roads—Darjeeling-Gangtok and Gangtok-Pemanchi. The second important force for the emergence of urban centre is the commercial activity. The state saw the emergence of a number of bazars or market centres along the major routes which ultimately developed into “nodal points” by virtue of their location. Among them Gyalshing and Mangan were made district headquarters in 1963.<sup>24</sup>

Both Gyalshing and Mangan are located on the northern limit of the habitable area where poor accessibility, forbidding terrain, insulation from external influences of social and economic development and highly dispersed rural population limit the size of these towns. Migration is one of the important factors for the net increase of population in the urban areas of Sikkim. In the urban areas on the whole, there has been a net increase of 31,476 persons in the decade (1971-81) of which 20,247 or 64% persons are migrants from other parts of India.<sup>25</sup>

Among the towns, Jorethang shows the highest rate of growth during the last decade (1971-81), namely 414.6%. The rate of growth is also high in the administrative headquarters like Namchi (213.9%), Gangtok (176%) and Mangan (135.7%). Gangtok, the state capital, has changed its status in each decade ascending from a class VI town in 1951 to a class III town in 1981. In contrast, the rate of growth is rather low in Gyalshing (67.4%), Nayabazar (46.2%) and Rangpo (37.4%) where the impact of post-merger development is less significant. The present Jorethang is only an extension of Nayabazar across the river Rangit. The nature of terrain (flat surface) facilitates expansion of the urban areas of Jorethang whereas the hilly terrain limits further extension of Nayabazar. Rangpo is located 12 kms south of Singtham, next to the border between Sikkim and West Bengal. The merger of the state and the closure of the Rangpo road in the floods of 1968 have limited the trading activities of Rangpo whereas the alignment of the roads provides greater mobility for Singtham.<sup>26</sup>

Lepchas were 5,762, Bhutias were 4,894, Limbus 3,356 and Nepalese 15,458. While in 1931, out of total population of 1,09,808 the Nepalese population had grown up to 84,693 which was much higher in comparison with 11,955 Bhutias and 13,060 Lepchas. That is to say, the Nepalese population which was about 50.75% in 1891 increased to about 77.13% in 1931.<sup>29</sup>

After 1931, figures of different ethnic groups are not available from the census. But from religions we can have tentative figures regarding this proportion between Nepalese and Bhutia-Lepcha population. This is because Bhutias-Lepchas are mostly Buddhists and Nepalese are Hindus.

TABLE 1.9  
Ethnic composition of Sikkim from 1891 to 1931<sup>30</sup>

Year	Total	Lepchas	Bhutias	Nepalese	Nepalese as % of pop.
1891	30,458	5,762	4,894	15,458	50.75%
1911	80,000	—	30,000	50,000	62.50%
1931	1,09,808	13,060	11,955	84,693	77.13%

*Religious groups of Sikkim from 1951 census*

Year	Total	Buddhists	Hindus	Hindus as % of total population
1951	1,37,725	39,395	97,863	71.05%
1961	1,62,189	49,894	1,08,165	66.69%

From the above table it can be tentatively concluded that Nepali Hindus constitute about 70% of the total population of Sikkim. But it is needless to say that this proportion was much lower in the early period. Nepalese mass immigration in Sikkim started the Bhutia settlement (particularly during the British reign in India). Nepalese are the people either whose forefathers had come from Nepal or those who had origin in Nepal. Their forefathers were the settlers from Nepal, coming in from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Indeed Nepalese come from a society which may be considered as an "organic whole" in the sense that though

its constituent parts represent religious and cultural diversity, yet Nepalese language, dress and way of life have united them into a single community. Being immigrants provides them with a sense of unity. They have retained their own cultural identity distinct from Lepchas and Bhutias.<sup>31</sup>

The present population of Sikkim is primarily composed of Nepalese, Lepchas, Bhutias and the plains people from other states of India. Marwaris play a major role in the state's trade and Bengalis and others are mainly found in service and academic spheres. Nepalese are the majority and constitute about 70% of the total population now. But wholesale trade and a large part of retail trade are in the hands of the Marwaris coming from Rajasthan of the western part of India.

It is stated very often that Lepchas or Rongs were the original inhabitants of this area. Religiously they belong to Lamaist Buddhism. They have their own language and mostly it is derived from Tibeto-Burmese family of languages. The exclusive Lepcha settlement can be found in the Dzong area of Sikkim. But even in this area they have been reduced to a minority in many villages by the Nepalese immigrants.

Describing the results of the Nepalese penetration into the population of Sikkim, Prof. Nakane<sup>32</sup> comments on the way they have penetrated the economy also, in spite of the fact that, as she points out, Nepalese are initially economically greatly handicapped as compared with the Lepcha-Bhutia peasants. She adds that a Nepali who came with empty hands, would in two decades, succeed to such a degree that his economic standard would easily compare with that of even rather wealthy Lepcha-Bhutia peasants in the community. The basic reason for this, she claims "is the difference in the pattern of life which is closely related to the religious difference between the Buddhists and the Hindus". This Buddhist-Hindu religious difference "results in a sharp contrast between the two in terms of productivity and consumption". According to Nakane it is the religious difference between Hindu and Buddhist that is responsible.

Trevor Ling,<sup>33</sup> however, does not accept this hypothesis. According to him some other basic factors ought to be taken into

account. The broad conclusion presented by Nakane from her contrast of the styles of life of the immigrant Nepalese and the settled Lepchas and Bhutias in general terms is that the Hindu-Nepalese have a higher level of economic activity and lower level of consumption than the Buddhist Bhutias and Lepchas, given the same population and the same resources. According to Trevor Ling, the immediate historical background is not dealt with in Chie Nakane's essay. What is presented there is a simple contrast between a Hindu style of life that entails high productivity and low consumption and a Buddhist style of life extailing low productivity and high consumption. According to Trevor Ling, in that contrast little allowance is made for the initial dire poverty of the Nepalese immigrants. Prithvi Narayan's conquest and political unification of the territories that now constitute the kingdom of Nepal, with the final conquest of the Kathmandu valley, had brought into existence a hierarchy of functionaries whose concerns were the discharge of functions related to land allotments, revenue collection and administration of justice at the local level. Land allotments in Nepal were generally made in favour of Brahmins, members of nobility, government officials and priests, members of religious sects and other persons belonging to non-agricultural classes who possess neither the time nor the aptitude to cultivate their lands themselves. For the Nepalese peasant, who as a tenant cultivated the land, therefore, it was of little significance whether his landlord was an individual, a religious institution or even the state itself. In such case the surplus produce of the land, that is, whatever was left after meeting the essential costs of cultivation and providing him with a minimum subsistence, was taken away from him without any consideration. Moreover, it is indeed significant that while there existed a plethora of functionaries to collect revenue, maintain accounts and promote land reclamation and settlement, there was none to directly organise the agricultural process. Consequently, the existence of multi-tiered village level hierarchy of functionaries with himself at the bottom created a number of problems for the actual cultivator. His ability to obtain a plot of land for subsistence or to continue living in the village depended on the favour of village headman. Occasional gifts and presents as well as unpaid labour services to village

With regard to revenue pattern, there were two sets of revenues—one for the Bhutia-Lepcha and another for the Nepalese. These were introduced in 1915 and the rates as shown in Table 1.10 were fixed for an area covered by a *pathy* (approximately 12 kg) of seed or equivalent area of land.

These rates were in application till the first settlement operations and proclamation of the Maharaja in August 1956. The proclamations declared that the rates should be equalised through periodical adjustments.

If before 1947, the attempt on the part of Darbar was to establish the supremacy of Lepcha-Bhutia community over the immigrant Nepalese, after 1947 the attempt was to maintain the ethnic balance and although the king was ready for fulfilling the wishes of Bhutia, and Lepchas, his second trouble was the unruly Nepalese element against whom he could not take any action as he would like to have. In order to protect the interest of the Bhutias and Lepchas a series of measures were initiated. The most important was the parity formula by which Lepcha-Bhutia and Nepalese were to be equally represented in the political and administrative spheres of the government.<sup>38</sup>

The reason for this change in the attitude of the ruler is chiefly political, i.e., emergence of political parties.

It will be wrong to assume that the political parties were developed on ethnic lines. In fact, the first three political parties which were started in 1947 had the avowed objectives of achieving socio-economic reforms jointly. At a meeting on December 7, 1947 these political parties generally emerged to form the Sikkim State Congress. The resolutions adopted were: (a) abolition of landlordism, (b) formation of a democratic and responsible government, and (c) accession of Sikkim to India.<sup>39</sup>

It is generally believed that the emergence of political parties in Sikkim was a "handiwork of disgruntled Nepali peasants", which, however, cannot be substantiated by the ethnic background of the leaders: The Praja Sudharak Samaj was formed by Tashi Tshering, Sonam Tshering and Kezang Tenzing, the Praja Sammalen was founded by Gobardhan Pradhan and Dhan Bahadur Tiwari and Praja Mondal was formed by Kazi Dhendup Dorjee.<sup>40</sup>

mind as a party representing the Nepalese.

Ethnicity came to play a major role in the 1986 election and all major parties like the Sikkim Sangram Parishad and Indian National Congress (I) beside the Sikkim Congress (R) voiced the (i) need for reservation of seats for the Nepalese, (ii) granting citizenship to stateless population of the state, and (iii) the recognition of the Nepali language in the eighth schedule of the Constitution. Despite similar programme in their election manifesto, the Sikkim Sangram Parishad won by overwhelming majority bagging thirty seats out of thirty two.<sup>43</sup>

Ethnic issues have come up frequently in the matter of recruitment of higher posts in the government departments. The general grievance of the Nepalese during the time of Chogyal was that the ruler was interested only in bolstering up the minorities and regarded the Nepalese as second class citizens. Unqualified Lepchas and Bhutias were being appointed to posts to which Nepalese had a stronger claim by virtue of their higher qualifications and the Nepali language was also not being accorded its due importance.<sup>44</sup>

A study conducted in 1970-72 which studied *inter alia* the background of 72 top Sikkimese bureaucrats suggested that recruitments to the higher civil service were made on personal consideration through certain networks of influence at the higher level. Regarding the ethnicity of these bureaucrats the study showed that 56.77% of those bureaucrats belonged to the Lepcha-Bhutia community and 31.34% were the Nepalese. But the situation drastically changed after the merger.<sup>45</sup>

Besides the appointments, another problem confronted by the government after the merger was the official language. The government has recognised four languages as the official language of the state, namely Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepali and Limbu. In schools these languages are taught as vernaculars, whereas English is the medium of instruction.

The 1973 agreement between the two governments was superseded by the terms under which Sikkim acceded to the Indian Union. The monarchy was abolished and Sikkim became one of the democratic states of the Indian Union operating under all the constitutional and administrative rules and procedures applicable else-



where in India. At present, the administrative machinery of Sikkim is not different from that of other states of the Indian Union. During the reign of Chogyal, the state was almost feudal but after its merger with India the state has become democratic and its bureaucracy and political order streamlined so as to conform to all India pattern. So it can be said that the history of modern Sikkim began in May 1975. In this way, the past traditional and feudal-cum-administrative system has given way to the modernised new bureaucracy. From 1975 it has grown in Sikkim and has taken a firm root in response to the organic needs of a backward and isolated state.<sup>46</sup>

Modern education of Sikkim after merger has helped the emergence of a broad-based educated middle class cutting across the boundaries of caste, ethnicity, language and religion. The power and control of resources have shifted from the hands of the erstwhile nobles and aristocrats and it is this new middle class enjoined to government service who now exercise this authority. Sikkim is now on the path of modernisation and development.

### 3. Summary

The infrastructure which is required for quick development is extremely poor in Sikkim. The transport system is not properly developed, rate of urbanisation is slow and growth of literacy is different in different areas. In fact, Sikkim has remained isolated for a long period due to difficult terrain and topography. Markets for surplus are heavily concentrated in a few localities and therefore the farmers have to face difficulties in selling their products. The banking system is mostly confined to urban or semi-urban areas and co-operative movement has not taken deep root in the economy. The quality of population has to improve if Sikkim wants to make steady progress in respect of development.

Development is likely to be hampered because of ethnic tension prevailing in Sikkim. The Nepalese are the most dominant and numerous ethnic group in Sikkim. The present population of Sikkim is primarily composed of Nepalese, Lepchas, Bhutias and the plains people from other parts of India. This ethnic tension in Sikkim is the result of certain historical forces. The problem has

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