

THE TAMANG COMMUNITY IN SIKKIM:

A HISTORICAL STUDY

Dissertation Submitted to Sikkim University in Partial Fulfilment of the

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Submitted by

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2016

Dedicated

To my beloved brother

Lt. Binod Tamang (Syangdhan)

Declaration

I, **Anjana Tamang**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled “**THE TAMANG COMMUNITY IN SIKKIM: A HISTORICAL STUDY**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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This to certify that the dissertation titled “**THE TAMANG COMMUNITY IN SIKKIM: A HISTORICAL STUDY**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the Department of History, embodies the result of bona fide research work carried out by **Anjana Tamang** under my guidance and supervisor. No part of thesis has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association and Fellowship. All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AITBS	:	All India Tamang Buddhist Association.
ASKLC	:	Akhil Sikkim Kitrat Limboo Chumlung.
BGP	:	Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh.
CBSE	:	Central Board of Secondary Education.
CIIL	:	Central Institute of Indian Language.
GAC	:	Gorkha Apex Committee.
JAC	:	Joint Action Committee.
LT	:	Limboo-Tamang.
MA	:	<i>Muluki Ain</i> (National Court of Nepal).
MBC	:	Most Backward Classes.
OBC	:	Other Backward Classes.
PNG	:	Paljor Namgyal Girls School.
SC	:	Schedule Castes.
SDF	:	Sikkim Democratic Front.
SKM	:	Sikkim <i>Krantikari Morcha</i> .
SLP	:	Sikkim Liberation Party.
SLTJAC	:	Sikkim Limboo-Tamang Joint Action Committee.
SLTTF	:	Sikkim Limboo-Tamang Tribal Forum.
SNPP	:	Sikkim National People Party.
SPCC	:	Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee.

SSEC : State Socio-Economic Census.
STBT : Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association.
ST : Schedule Tribes.
TNHSS : Tashi Namgyal Higher Secondary School.
TNSSS : Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School.



MAP: 1 - TIBET, NEPAL AND SIKKIM.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sikkim occupies a very important place in the north-eastern landscape of the Indian Union which became the twenty second state of the Indian Republic in 1975. Sikkim extends to 27°- 28° north latitude and 88° – 89° East longitude and it is situated in the eastern Himalayas. Sikkim is bound on the north and northeast by Tibet, on the east by Bhutan, on the west by Nepal and on the south by Darjeeling District of West Bengal. It has an area of 7096 sq.km (Chettri, 2010). Sikkim's population comprises many ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups. According to the 2011 Provisional Population Census Sikkim recorded a population of 607,688 with different communities characterised by their individual culture, customs and traditions. The communities derive their distinct identities from the *Jati purana*, ethnographic accounts and historical accounts constructed from time to time. The three main outstanding groups are Lepchas, Bhutias, and the Indian Nepalese. Among them the Sikkimese Tamangs also form an important section of the ethnic mix and is a significant part of the state population. When studying the literature produced on ethnicity in the past decades it becomes obvious that despite its popularity in academia and the public discourse, the concept is fuzzy, applied in a variety of contexts and used to describe many different things. Therefore Anne Kukuczka draws the conclusion that ethnicity is best understood as “a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievement, being and identity, descent and classification” (Kukuczka, 2011).

The Tamangs are one of the most ancient ethnic groups in the hills of Sikkim and from the year 2003 it got included into the category of Schedule Tribes of Sikkim. It is believed that they originally came from Tibet and spoke the Tibeto-Burman language.

Different scholars state their different opinions regarding the meaning of the word ‘Tamang’. Some scholars opine that the word Tamang come from their principal occupation as ‘horse traders’. Some say that Tamangs are ‘Mountain Army’ or ‘Tibetan cavalry’. One Tamang Scholar Ajitman Tamang defined that the word Tamang means “Rungpo” which means the foreigners or inhabitants of the border lands of Tibet (Tamang,

2002). Another definition says that the word Tamang is derived from the combination of two words *Ta* and *Mang*, which means “horse” and “salesman” respectively. So they are known as sales men of horse. Western scholar Alexander Macdonald believed that Tamang are the indigenous inhabitants of Nepal who were here before the state formation (Macdonald, 1975). But the common belief is that the word ‘Tamang’ has been derived from the Tibetan word “Tamag”, which *Ta* refers to “Horse” and *Mag* refers to “warrior or Cavalry” during the time of king Srong-Tsen Gampo in Tibet(627- 49 A.D). It is mentioned in the Tibetan to English dictionary page 532 prepared and published by Sarat Chandra Das and T.G.Dhongthog in his work (Das, 1902: P532 and Dhongthog, 1973: Page 60). Furba Lama, also writes that the word Tamang which is used by all the Tamang communities is neither Tibetan nor Nepali word which has no meaning. This is a word given by so called Hindu ruler in Nepal. Actually the meaning of Tamang is “Tamag”. Tamag is a Tribal community of Himalayan region who are believed to be the sub-sects of Tibetan community. Simultaneously he further states that so called intruder Hindu land lord Prithivinarayan Shah and his Rajasthani Rajput people wrongly pronounced and spoiled the original title of “Tamag” to Tamang and included *Jari* or Nation known by the name of Murmi before becoming the nationality on account of what is popularly known as the Ghurkha conquest. He again states that after the codification of Caste in 1854 and after invading the Tamang monarch in Nepal, the Tamang became the *Jaat* or Caste and recently *Janjati* or ethnic later *Adibasi Janjati* (Indigenous nationality in Nepal). Infact Tamang is a community but not a Caste or *Jaat* (Lama, 2010). Therefore the word Tamag is found in the Tibetan to English dictionary which proves that Tamags are not Murmis, Nepalis, or Gorkha but a Sub-sects of Tibetans. The late king Prithivi Narayan Shah had once said, “Nepal in a common garden of four castes & thirty-six sub Castes.” In thus same garden different kinds of flowers (ethnic groups) are blooming and they all represent different castes, cultures and religions (Kukuczha, 2011). The term Tamang was not common in general official usage in Nepal until the twentieth century, Tamangs in the leadership of Janga Bir Tamang, a group had requested King Tribhuvan and Prime Minister Bhim Shamsheer to separate them from “Bhote” caste and identify them as Tamang caste group. In 1932 a government decree declared that people formerly known as Bhote, Lama or Murmi were now officially named Tamang (Holmberg, 1989).

Before recognising the Tamang as a surname in Nepal, the Tamang were called as Murmi, Mulmi, Lama, Bhootiya, Ishang, Nishung, Saing and Siyena Bhhutia (Wangdi, 2011).

The meaning of the word Murmi is ('Mur' means border and 'Mi' means men). Hence the people who live in the borders are called Murmi. The Tamangs, who are also called Murmis, and considered as one of the oldest tribes of Nepal. The Murmis are a Mongolian or semi-Mongolian caste who claims to be among the earliest settlers of Nepal. They are probably the descendants from the Tibetan stock which has been modified by intermixture with Nepalese races. They are also known as Tamang Bhotias and bear the title of Lama (O'Malley, 1907). Through the availability of various proofs, some scholars state that these people are of Tibetan origin (Bisht, 2008).

Francis Buchanan Hamilton writes that in the more rude and mountainous part of Nepal proper, the chief occupation consisted to these Murmis, who are by many considered as a branch of the Bhotiyas, or people of Tibet and their priest called Lamas. The doctrine of the Lamas is so obnoxious to the Gorkhalese¹, that, under pretence of their being thieves, no Murmis is permitted to enter the valley where Kathmandu stands, and by way of ridicule, they are called "Siyena Bhotiyas, or Bhotiyas" who eat carrion; for these people have such an appetite for beef, that they cannot abstain from the oxen that die a natural death, as they are not now permitted to murder the sacred animal (Hamilton, 1997)

But Eden Vansittart writes that "the Murmis show in a most marked manner that they come from Mongolian stock. In fact they probably are nothing or less than a Tibetan tribe whose ancestors wandered into Nepal. Ancient history would seem to point out that they were the original inhabitants of Nepal valley, but that after a certain lapse of time they were conquered by some other races, who subjected them to many indignities, and practically made slave of them, forcing them all to hard labour, such as tiling fields, carrying loads, hewing wood etc. Inter-marriage, or connection with other races for ages, has had the natural effect of giving to what was probably a pure Tibetan tribe, a certain foreign strain, which

¹ Ghurkhalese means the people of Ghurkha territory of Nepal who practiced the Hinduism as their religion and used Brahman priest for their social and religious function.

can be traced in the appearance of almost every Murmi now a days. To this day other races in Nepal look upon Murmis as “Bhutias” (Vansittart, 1993).

Some scholars have also stated that the Tamangs are the descendants of various mixed tribes, on account of the exogamous proclivities exhibited by them. And the fact that their exogamous division bears Tibetan names seems to lend support to the opinion that they have descended from the Tibetan stock of people. However it is noted by Vansittart as well as by Risley in his Sikkim Gazetteer 1928 that no difference exists between the Tamang and Murmi as they are one and the same (Risley, 1928).

The home of this tribe is said to be the Nepal valley and its vicinity, but nowadays they are found in considerable numbers, spread all over Eastern Nepal and large colonies exist in Darjeeling and Sikkim (Morris, 1933). Whatever be the case, there is no doubt; that the Tamangs are of Tibetan origin and one of the oldest tribes in the kingdom of Nepal (Bisht, 2008). Traditionally they were the follower of Bon religion² (Nature worship) and later on in the 8th century A.D, when Buddhism reached Tibet covering the entire Himalayas including the land of the Tamangs, they started adopting the new religious ethics into their traditional Bampo faith (Moktan, 2014).

A tribe known as the Tamang can be found spread out in many districts throughout the Kingdom of Nepal. Language wise, these people can be counted as the third largest tribe in the Kingdom, but if assessed from the angle of their being of the Tibeto- Burman category, then they are the most populous tribes in Nepal (Gautam and Thapa, 1994). In Sikkim they are the eight numerous community in the State (State Socio Economic Census, Government of Sikkim, 2006).

Tamangs have own beliefs regarding *Jati-Pati* (Tribes and Clans). Basically Tamangs are divided into two main divisions, the *Baratamang* (Twelve Tribes) or *jaat* and *Attarahjat* (Eighteen) *Thars* (Sects). There is no actual difference between the sects or *Thars* within these Tribes or *jaats*, and they are of the same type in both groups (Gautam and Thapa,

² Bon Religion was the primitive religion of Tibet which receives harsh treatment when Buddhism entered Tibet in the seventh century A.D. Discussed in later chapters.

1994). Both clans were used to describe the people of higher and lower status respectively (Bista, 1967). It seemed that, the *Bara* clan was socially superior to the *Athara* clan in matter concerning ritual or ceremonial aspects of society and these clans are exogamous and patrilineal (People of Nepal, Pilgrims pocket classic, 2007).

The Tamangs are also supposed to be Mongolian. Their language is mid-Himalayan language of Tibeto-Burman family. They are quite similar with the Gurungs. In the process of business their forefathers had come to Nepal from Tibet and they settled here. Because Nepal's main business centre was Tibet. When they saw the productive soil of Nepal, they settled and started cultivation crops and animal farming (Report on Socio Economic Status of Tamang Nationalities of Kavre District by Nepal Tamang Ghedung, Kavre District Committee, Nepal, 2006).

They have, therefore, since the conquest, retired as much as possible into places very difficult of access, and before the overthrow of Sikkim a great many retired to that country, but there they have not escaped from the power of the Gurkhalese, and have been obliged to disperse even from that distant retreat, as they were supposed too much inclined to favour its infidel chief. They never seem to have any share in the government, nor to have been addicted to arms, but always followed the profession of agriculture, or carry loads for the Newars (Hamilton, 1997).

Bista opines that Tamangs are rich in social and ritual culture, who settles in higher altitude with compact settlement. They practice Transtrism and Shananism form one of the major Tibeto Burman speaking communities of Nepal and maintain a belief that they originally come from Tibet. Originally, they were called *Bhot* meaning Tibetan, later thus were called Tamang for their profession of horse trading. Tamangs settle in a compact settlement and bear a strong sense of unity. Except in very few cases, they are poor and depend on farming. They are skilled in a number of crafts, which they have preserved from ages. There are certain groups and sub- groups within the Tamang community and they endow certain restrictions and freedom for social events. Various kinds of marriages are in use. Tamangs are professionally Buddhists. There are *Ghyangs* (Buddhist Monasteries) in each of the main village of Tamangs. The Gods and religious paintings of the temple are in the Sherpa-

Bhutia style. Different social and religious organization work inside the community to confirm and regularize the various social ceremonies (Bista, 1967).

Looking at the origin and background of this community, Tamangs seem to have originated from the Tibetan stock of people who migrated from Tibet to present day Nepal and settled down in parts of the Kathmandu valley and later on also migrating from Nepal to Sikkim, India and Bhutan.

There are some scholars, who supported this view like Bimla Shrestha. According to whom; Tamang belonged to the central and eastern hill regions of Nepal, but steadily they extended to places all over Nepal. They maintained that they had originally come from Tibet (Shrestha, 1937).

Furba Lama writes that “Tamang were the first sub-sects of Tibetans communities, who migrated from Lhasa (Tibet) to the Himalayan region of Temal hills in Nepal in the 8th century after conversion from Bon religion to the Mahayana Nyingmapa Buddhist Religion (Lama, 2010).

A scholar like Samten Narboo traces the migration of Tamang from Tibet in the 7th century. Actually there is no exact date of migration of Tamang from Tibet to Nepal. It was most probably before the conquest of Ghurkha in Nepal or during the time of Songten Gampo in Tibet (Narboo, 1981).

People today that fall under the ethnic category Tamang are settled around the Kathmandu valley and as far as the Tibetan plateau to the north. Towards the west Buri Gandaki River constitutes a natural boundary to Gurung territory and in the east Sherpa and Rais groups border Tamang areas. In addition Tamang have also migrated in significant numbers to the Sikkim and Darjeeling in India (Kukuczka, 2011).

They might have migrated to Sikkim during the time of the Ghurkha incursion from 1770 to 1815 and during the British induced settlement efforts since 1861 onwards. The next phase of migration happened after 1861 when the king of Sikkim invited Lachmidas Pradhan a Newar family to Renock for minting coins for the Kingdom of Sikkim for the

first time (Sinha, 2008). It is believed that along with Newars other Nepalese people also came to Sikkim from Nepal and settled there. Historically, in Nepal Tamangs were placed within the more menial positions in the Nepali army and were exploited as labours by wealthy traders. Most Tamangs settled in Nepal were agriculturalists or carried loads for Newars by working as coolies (Fricke, 1994). So when Lachimida's family settled down in Sikkim in 1867, they needed labourers, coolies and others to work in the copper mines. When J.C. White the first British political officer was appointed in Sikkim in 1889, he found his own reasons for further inducing the immigration of the Nepalese people into Sikkim (Sinha, 2008). Thus the movement of people from Nepal to Sikkim happened over many phases which are explained in details in latter chapters.

Now it is found that Tamangs are settled in most parts of the south, west and east districts of Sikkim. The highest settlements of the Tamangs are found in a place called Passi-Rateypani in Melli in south Sikkim and in Singling in west Sikkim. The Tamang tribe have their own culture, customs, language, traditions etc, and their social and religious rites exhibit characteristics of a typical tribal community in Sikkim.

In comparison with other tribal groups in Sikkim not much work has been done on the Tamang community in Sikkim. This research will focus on the historical background of the Tamangs, the socio-cultural impact of migration on the communities and how they evolved in Sikkim. It will study the roots of the tribal status of the Tamangs. Previous works only focus on the origin of Tamangs and scholars who have worked on this field mostly belong to Nepal and their perspective are from the view point of Tamang community in Nepal. Many foreign scholars have worked on the Tamang community but within the anthropological frame work and not a historical one. So this research will try to bridge the gaps that are present in the existing work on the Tamangs in Sikkim and it will assess the historical background of the Tamangs in Sikkim

1.1. Literature Review

Literature review being the back bone of any research work; will be an important component of this study. Many scholars have accomplished their work regarding the

History of Tamang in Nepal but very less amount of work has been done on the History of Tamang community in Sikkim. However most of their works are from cultural and anthropological prospective. Therefore, Nilima Moktan, in her article, *Tracing the Root, A Review of Tamang Tribe* (2014), attempts to present the Tamang world view in terms of religion, culture and language. She traces the history of the Tamang community as defined by different scholars; regarding Tamangs, being one among the first inhabitants of the entire Himalayan slopes and valley including Darjeeling, Sikkim etc. She mentions that traditionally Tamangs were *Bonpo* worshipers and later on in the 8th century A.D. When Buddhism reached Tibet and the entire Himalayas including the land of the Tamangs, they started adopting the new religious ethics into their traditional Bonpo Faith. However, she does not mention the type of Bon which was practice by the Tamangs.

Rudra Sing Tamang, in his book *Tamang Rite and Culture* (2004), talk about Bon and Buddhist religion of the Tamangs, the history of Bon Religion and Bon pilgrimage site in Nepal. He says that in Tamang society mostly *Bonpos* belongs to Goley clan of Tamang. According to their clans they used *Bonpos* in their rituals practice. He states that Bon religion still exists in the Tamang society in Nepal as well as in others places where Tamangs are densely settled. He also describes the *Tamba's* (Tamang Historian) history and their roles in the Tamang society. Here he distinguishes between *Tamba*, Bon and Buddhist culture. Lastly he talks about Tamang rituals and culture from birth to death. But he did not talk about the migration of Tamangs and he fails to distinguish the Bon practice by Tamang and other sub himalayan tribes such as Sherpas, Limboos, and Bhutia etc. Though this book is published in *Devanagari* script but it is very helpful for this research work.

The work of Larry Peters, *Tamang Shamans* (1998), is fully based on shamanism and Peters himself experienced Tamang shamanism while conducting his survey in Tinchuli and Boudha village in Nepal. He interprets the Shaman's role in the Tamang segment of the Nepalese society as compared to the psychotherapist role in the contemporary western world. He also talked about the religious practice of the Tamangs and the rituals specialist such as Lama and Bonpo in the Tamang society. He distinguishes the role of the Lama and Bonpo during the performance of the different social functions in the community. He also

describes the actual Bon religion which was practiced by the Tamangs in Nepal. However this book is fully based on the anthropological point rather than a historical one.

Dor Badhaur Bista in his book, *People of Nepal* (1967), talks about the different communities and ethnic groups of Nepal. He states that Tamangs lived in the high hills side of the east, north and west of the Kathmandu valley. He further states that the Tamangs are a part of the Tibeto-Burman speaking communities in Nepal and maintain a belief that they originally came from Tibet. He writes about the population and geographical distribution of Tamang community in Nepal. According to him the majority of Tamang settlements are found in *Bagmati Zone* and in the hilly region of both *Janakpur* and *Narayani* zones of Nepal and some scattered settlements are found as far east as Darjeeling areas of West Bengal (India) and Sikkim. However the author did not mention the socio cultural impact of migration on the Tamang community.

C.J. Moris's work, *The Gurkhas: An ethonoly* (1933), narrates the story about the origin of the Tamang tribe. He connects the mythical story of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar and states that Maheswar introduced him to the other gods on behalf of the Murmis and therefore Maheswar become the chief deity of the Murmis or Tamangs. He also writes that Tamangs are grouped into two great divisions known as *Bara Tamangs* (twelve clans) and *Athara Jat* (eighteen clans). The *Bara Tamangs* are pure lamas and claim descent from Maheswar and consider themselves somewhat superior than the *Attara Jat* (eighteen clans).

D.B. Shrestha and C.B. Singh, in their work, *Ethnic groups of Nepal and their way of living* (1987), traces the descent of the Tamangs from the Mahadeva and their migration from Tibet. According to the authors the Tamangs are mostly found in the northern part of Nepal, *Nuwakot* being their home land.

Thus scholars like C.J. Morris, D.B. Shrestha and C.B. Singh have similar view regarding the origin of the Tamang tribe.

S.S.Negi in his work, *Discovering the Himalaya* (Negi, 1998), writes that Tamangs are also known as '*Thakalis*' people of Nepal residing in '*Thak khola*' region. The *Thak Khola* is in the mountainous region and from the ancient times the *Thakalies* were engaged in salt

trade with Tibet. Thus the author tries to explain that from the ancient time itself the Tamangs were Traders. But he fails to mention the history of Tamangs in Nepal as well as the religion they practice.

Francis Buchanan Hamilton's work, *Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (1997), has illustrated the origin of various tribes of Nepal. According to him the tribes who occupied the country previous to the Hindus were the Magers, Gurungs, Jariyas, Newars, Murmis, Kiratas, Limbus, Lepchas and Bhotiyas. Here he mentions that Murmis were placed at a very low status in Nepal during the time of Shah Ruler. He also talks about the Gorkhales who invaded Sikkim during the month of September in 1788 and many people from Nepal retired to Sikkim. The boundary of Sikkim at that time was up to Illam. Even though this book helps to understand the historical perspective of Nepal and its original inhabitants, it fails to talk about the debate on the Migration of Tamangs from Tibet to Nepal.

David H. Holmberg in his book, *Order in Paradox Myth, Ritual, and Exchange among Nepal's Tamang* (1989), studied the Myth, Ritual and exchange among Nepalese Tamang. The book examines the ritual life of a community of western Tamang in sociological and historical perspective and compares Tamang culture with other cultures in the Hindu-Buddhist world. This book deals more directly and systematically with the interpretation of ritual, myth and social structure and with comparative issues. This book presents an image of the culture and society of Tamdangsa a Tamang dominated village. He writes that Tamang village to the northwest of the Kathmandu valley engage some eight ritual specialists, who were prominent and were recognised as focal persons in the ritual system. The Buddhist associated with Lamas, the sacrificial associated with Lambu and the Shamanic associates with Bompos.

According to him, the term Tamang was not in common or general official usage in Nepal until the twentieth century. In 1932 a government degree declared the people formerly known as Bhote, Lama and Murmi to be officially named as Tamangs. However Lama is still widely used for self designation in the region. Even though this research does not have detailed mention about Tamang culture, in the case of marriages, it helps to understand the

rituals practice in the Tamang society as well as role of the *Bompo* and Lama in the Tamang community.

The work of Tom Frick, *Himalayan Households, Tamang Demography and Domestic Processes* (1994), an Anthropologist, who conducted his survey in one of the oldest villages of Nepal, called 'Timling', where only the Tamang community resided, is yet another work related with the Tamangs. Though his survey and book are based on Anthropological framework, it does give a lot of information about Tamangs in Nepal. In this book Frick writes about the history of Tamangs, the dwellings of the Tamangs in Timling, the clans, their religious life, the administration system in Timling, age-sex distribution etc. He also claims that the Tamangs are of Tibetan origin and somehow or the other they managed to find their way into Nepal and settled down there and never returned to Tibet. During the time of the Hindu ruler in Nepal, the Tamangs were placed very low within the social hierarchy. While researching on the Tamangs in Timling, he came to know that Tamangs were the oldest inhabitants of Nepal who come to Nepal from Tibet in 640 A.D. However his work did not deal with the Bon religion which was practiced by the Tamangs

Anne Kucucza in her article *Negotiating Ethnic Identity in the Himalaya- The Tamang in Nepal* (2011), has analyzed the study of the Tamangs from the past to the present. She has introduced Tamangs as a laborious people and that the introduction of legal code *Muluki Ain* (MA) in 1854 by Jang Bahadur Rana, led to the Tamang being assigned low position and ranked within the category of *namasinya matwali* "enslavable alcohol drinker" and not being included in the group of *namasinya matwali* "non- enslavable alcohol drinker" like other hill ethnic groups such as Gurung and Manger. She described that, the Tamangs are mostly settled around the Kathmandu valley and as far as the Tibetan plateau to the north, the Buri Gandaki River towards the west and till to the southern region of Sikkim and Darjeeling in India. She stated that Tamangs were exploited during the time of Rana regime. Although this work does not touch upon the migration and origin of Tamangs but it helps to understand the background of Tamangs as well as status of Tamangs during the time of Rana regime in Nepal.

J.R.Subba in his work, *History Culture and Custom of Sikkim* (2008), traces the history and origin of the Tamang community defined by different scholars. Subba mentions that on the basis of the information obtained from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama: “the Tamangs were originally a group of Tibetan cavalry. They led an expedition to Magadha in order to obtain the Buddhist relics for the famous Samye Cathedral during the reign of Tibetan King Khri-Stron Deutsen in the 8th century A.D. Without having waged a war, the disciplined cavalymen returned back successfully through Nepal. Yet a group of them settled on the border region of Tibet and Nepal, whose descendants popularly came to be known as the Tamang tribe. This fact is supported by the similarities of customs, language, religion and others between the Tamangs and the Tibetans. He also discusses the reason for migration of the Tamang community. He states that the Tamangs are the original inhabitants of the northern Nepal valley, but after a certain lapse of time they were conquered by some other races who subjected them to many indignities and made practically slaves of them, forcing them to do all the hard labour, such as tiling fields, carrying loads, hewing woods etc. To escape this, a number of them wandered away into eastern Nepal and Greater Sikkim. He also writes about the geographical distribution of Tamangs in Sikkim, their food habits, kingship, language, music, religion festivals etc. He has brought forth a comparison of Tamangs in Nepal and Sikkim.

Sonam Wangdi, (2011), traces the origin of the Tamang community by consulting the views of other scholars. He writes about how Tamangs lost their real identity while coming from Tibet to Nepal and how the Nepalese culture was imposed upon them. He further assessed the status of Tamangs in Nepal and Sikkim. He also writes about Tamang language being recognised as one of the official languages in Nepal and Sikkim. He gives the explanation that Tamang language was taught in the schools of Nepal only after 1992 A.D. but instead of Tamang script, which is known as “*Tamyik*”, the Nepal government forced Tamangs to use the “*Devnagri*” script. And only after 1932 this community was permitted by the Nepal government to call themselves “Tamangs”. Till then they were prohibited to use the term “Tamang” to identify themselves. He further discusses the different clans within the Tamang Tribe. He also compares the Tamang and Sikkimese Bhutia marriage rituals. He describes the Tamang *Gompas* (Monasteries) which were built

at different places in Sikkim. His study is based on the recent status of the Tamang community in Sikkim.

A.C. Sinha in his book, *Sikkim Feudal and Democracy* (2008), traces the historical process of Nepalese immigration in Sikkim. He writes that there was a Nepalese settlement in Sikkim even when the Namgyal Dynasty was consecrated there. He further discusses that there were two waves of Nepalese immigration into Sikkim. One was the Ghurkha incursion from 1770 to 1815 and the British induced settlement efforts since 1861 onwards. He also mentions that Nepalese migrated to Sikkim from Nepal during 1835, when the king of Sikkim 'Tsugphud Namgyal' handed over the areas consisting of present day Darjeeling district to the British. Though the author mentions the Nepalese immigration to Sikkim from Nepal in a coercive way, but he fails to distinguish the other caste and tribal groups which migrated into Sikkim from Nepal. He felt that all those people coming from Nepal to Darjeeling and some parts of Sikkim were called Nepalese because Nepal was the land where the Bhutias, Lepchas, Tamangs, Yolmos initially inhabited. He also fails to focus on the problems that these groups were facing in Nepal because of which they had to migrate from Nepal to Sikkim.

The work of Suresh Kumar Gurung, *Ethnic and Political Dynamics: A Triadic Perspective* (2011), describes the major ethnic groups of Sikkim, their history and identity. Gurung states that except for Bhutias and Lepchas all the other tribes and castes settled in Sikkim come within the folds of the Nepalese community. According to him 'Nepalese' is just an umbrella term under which various tribes and communities find a homogeneous representation. The following groups are generally included as Nepalese such as Bahuns, Chettris, Newars, Tamangs, Rais, Limbos and Thakuris etc. His view that the Tamangs are a part of the Nepalese community is questionable because Tamangs come under the folds of the Nepalese community only when Nepalese culture was imposed upon them as they came from Tibet to settle down in Nepal. Looking at their origin, language, customs and religious beliefs it is found that the Tamangs may also come under the categories of Bhutia, Lepcha, Durkpa and Yolmos.

A.C. Sinha and Suresh Kumar Gurung both agree that the Tamangs are a part of the Nepalese community.

K.S. Sing's work, *People of India-Sikkim* (1993), talks about the origin of Tamang Community in Sikkim and their culture, custom, religion and language as well as the identity maintained by them in the Sikkimese society. In a same book another scholar 'Colonel Santabir Lama' traces the origin of Tamangs in a different way. He says that the name Tamang actually originated from the place name of Nepal called 'Tagmaluijin'. However K.S. Sing and some western scholars like J.D.Hooker and Risley did not agree with Santbir Lama's view. A majority of scholars who have worked on the Tamangs agree that Tamangs are actually the original inhabitants of Tibet: physically, linguistically and culturally. In this book the author – does not talk about the migration of Tamang community to Sikkim.

Sukhdev Sing Chip in his book, *This Beautiful India, Sikkim* (1977), traces the historical process of Nepalese immigration in Sikkim and states that within the Nepalese community came the Sherpas and Tamangs, although they are extremely different from the Nepalese and the followers of Buddhism by religion. However, this work is not a detailed study on the aspect of Tamang community in Sikkim.

Jas Yonjan in his article *Tamang Tribal Culture: Song Dances* (2014), traces the Tamang culture, religion, language, literature, songs and dances. But his main intention is to focus in the Tamang songs and dances. Yonjan states that the original Tamang songs used to be sung during special festivals while gathering with their relatives but these days those songs have been modernized and are sung with mixed Nepali words, which in turn dominates the original meaning and tune of the Tamangs songs.

K.M. Tamang's article, *Tamang community of Sikkim* (2002), describes the various rituals of Tamang in Sikkim. The birth ritual, marriage procedures, death rituals, religious beliefs, economic status etc. have been comprehensively stated in his article. From cultural point of view, it is very useful to be introduced about cultural practices of the Tamang in Sikkim as common.

Most of the existing works throw light on the Tamang community in Nepal. But very limited sources are available on the Tamang community in Sikkim. Thus the present research throws light on the Tamangs community in Sikkim within a Historical context. There are few scholars who have written on Tamangs in Sikkim but their work has not dealt in details on the study of the Tamang community in Sikkim and most of their work is in *Devanagari* script. So the main focus of this research is on the Tamang community in Sikkim in a historical context.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

1. This work will assess the actual theory behind the origin of the Tamang community in Sikkim and to assess the debate regarding the reasons for the migration of Tamangs from Tibet to other Himalayan regions including Sikkim.
2. To analyse the socio-cultural impact of migration on the Tamang community: Hinduization of the Tamangs and the reverting of Tamangs to tribal status.
3. To ascertain whether Tamangs are a part of the Nepali community in Sikkim by analysing their traditional social and religious customs.
4. It attempts to study the contemporary status of the Tamangs in Sikkim.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary and secondary sources which are available in the form of books, reports, articles, documents etc. in the Tamang language and in the Nepali language will be used for this research. Some of the primary sources which are available at the office of the Tamang Buddhist Association Darjeeling and Gangtok. Field survey and interview with prominent personalities of the Tamang Community in Sikkim has been carried out. Published articles in Newspapers and materials from the Sikkim state archives and in the Tamang Monasteries have been assessed and studied. These works have been accessed and used as sources in order to understand the historical, cultural and social background of the Tamangs in Sikkim.

Books, articles, journals and Government reports available in the libraries of the University, the State central library, the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Department of

Information and Public relation, Government of Sikkim and Social Welfare Department of Sikkim, Human Resources Development Department of Sikkim and the Home Department of Sikkim have been consulted and studied. Both the primary and secondary information has been assessed and analysed to understand this topic.

1.4. CHAPTERISATION

Chapter One

- This chapter introduces the statement of the problem, review of literature on various works done on the Tamangs and also discuss the objective and the methodology. The last part of the chapter entails the chapterisation of the work in brief.

Chapter Two: History of Tamang Community

- The second chapter deals with the actual theory behind the origins and history of the Tamangs and their background.
- The second part of the chapter focuses on the debate regarding the migration of the Tamangs from Tibet to other parts of the Himalayan region including Sikkim by consulting the theories of different scholars.

Chapter Three: Society Culture and Religion of the Tamangs in Sikkim

- The third chapter focuses on the village life, nature of dwelling, traditional and social customs, the Tamangs sub- sects (clan system), ancient Religion Bon and Buddhism, cuisines, costumes or ornaments, dance, music, festivals and language of the Tamangs.

Chapter Four: The Tamang Community in Sikkim: A Contemporary Analysis

- This chapter focuses on the present scenario of the Tamang community in Sikkim by conducting a survey in the Tamang dominated villages in Sikkim where they are densely settled.

- It deals with the roots of the Tribe status, reservation policies of the Sikkim Government in regard to the Tamang community, recognition of Tamang language in Sikkim and other aspects related with the community in Sikkim such as prominent people in the Tamang society, and the Tamang Association in Sikkim STBA (Sikkim Tamang Bhuddhist Association).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

- This chapter will summarise the argument mentioned in the above chapters.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF TAMANG COMMUNITY

2.1. Origins and History of the Tamangs

There are different speculations regarding the origin of the Tamangs and accordingly some scholars have stated their varying opinions. According to Dor Badhur Bista, the Tamangs can be regarded as one of the most ancient tribes within the Himalayan families. The Tamangs are one of the major Tibeto- Burman speaking communities who were originally called “Bhote” meaning Tibetan. Later on the term ‘Tamang’ was attached to them because they were said to be horse traders. The term “Bhote” or Bhutia refers to nomadic tribes living in the hills bordering the Himalayas. Tamangs in particular and allied tribes like Bhutia, Lepcha, Sherpa, Durkpas, Tibetans and Kagateys are called “Bhote” a general term assigned to them (Bista, 1967). Similarly; K.S. Sing opines that the word Tamang comes from their principal occupation as ‘horse traders’. A similar view is that Tamangs are ‘horse worrier’ people of the flat land. In the Tibetan language “Ta” means horse and “Mang” means traders (Sing, 1993). In Hooker’s writing, the Murmis are the only native tribe remaining in any number in Sikkim, beside the Tibetan of the loftier mountains. The Murmis are a scattered people of Tibetan origin, and are called “Nishung”, being composed of two branches, respectively from the district of “Nimo” and “Shung”, both on the road between Sikkim and Lhasa. Both their religion and language are purely Tibetans (Hooker, 1969).

According to oral tradition prevalent among Tibetan folklore “the Tamangs were originally a group of Tibetan Cavalry. They made an expedition to the famous city of Magadha in order to obtain the Buddhist relics and sacred objects for the newly constructed monastery of Samye (near Tibet) during the reign of the Tibetan King Khri-strong Deutsen in the 8th century A.D. without having to wage a war the disciplined cavalymen, after having complete their assignment, returned to Tibet through Nepal. Yet a group of them settled on the border region of Tibet and Nepal, and from whom are popularly believed to have descended the Tamang tribes (Yonjon, 1984). This fact is

supported by the striking similarities in attire, customs, language, religion, script, etc. between the Tamangs and the Tibetans/ Bhutias (Wangdi, 2011).

Another view is that the word Tamang is said to have originated from the Tibetan word “Tamag¹” Meaning “Mounted Army” of the king (Lama, 2010). In course of time the word “Mag” believed to have been corrupted as “Mang”. According to Jas Yanjan “During the time of Songten Gampo in Tibet (8th century) Tibet was divided into five provinces such as East, West, North, South and Central provinces which is also known as “U” province where King Songten Gampo resided. The army or guard who protected the king in and around the palace was the Tamag force. When war broke out between Tibet and Nepal the Tamag force came forward to protect the king and Tibet, some Tamag force was captured by the Nepalese army and remained in Nepal. Later the word Tamag began to be mispronounced as Tamang by the Nepalese people”. He again states that Srong-tsen Gampo himself married Amhsuvarman’s daughter Brikuti from Nepal to maintain a peaceful relationship between these two countries. It was during the time of Amhsuvarma that Buddhism and Nepalese architecture were introduced in Tibet. When Brikuti married to Tibetan king, then the relationship between Nepal and Tibet was established. His view was also supported by K.P. Jayaswal (1937), Charles Bells (1928) and L. Austine Waddell (1997) and writes that from the Tibetan sources, we know that the Tibetan emperor Strong-Stan- Gampo whose rule is dated to 629 A.D. and married Amsuvarman’s Daughter between 628 and 641 A.D.² This information taken from the account of Chinese traveller Wang Hsuan- tse, who began his travel in India in 629 A.D. and reached China in 641 A.D. Thus Amsuvarman’s time is fixed as little before 644 or 645 A.D. from the Tibetan and Chinese sources. Therefore Professor Samten Narbo refers the dGe’-dun Chos’-pel, a Tibetan Scholar who writes in his Deb-ther dkar-po (the white Annals), that the Tamangs followed Buddhism mixed with Bon, and the Tamang spoke the old dialect of Tibetan and claim their origin from Tibet. He further contended

¹ Tamag: the word *Ta* meaning Horse and *Mag* meaning Army, Soldiers, Troops, making the word *Tamag* means “Mounted Army” or “Cavalry” in Nepali *Khas/ Parbatay Bhasa* (language) Ghorchari Sena, Risalla, Aswari Sena. It is mentioned in the Tibetan- to- English dictionaries (page 980) prepared and published by Sarat Chandra Das of Lhasa Villa, Darjeeling, in 1834. (Furba Lama, in the Statesman, Siliguri, 9th April, 2010).

² According to the Chinese history Strong-Stan Gampo died in 650 A.D. and according to the Tibetan History he died in 698 A.D. (Jayaswal, 1937 p 6)

that the word Tamang is a corrupted form of “Ta-Mag” or cavalry regiment (Narbo, 1981).

But this theory has been rejected by Colonel Santabir Lama in his book *Tamba Kaiten* and asserts that the Tamangs, Yolmowas and Sherpas were natives of Nepal and not immigrants from outside. And he further contends that these tribes had simply adopted the Tibetan script for the purpose of the written language from the time when Nepal came under the rule of the Tibetan king in the 7th century. Col. Lama refers to “Mundung³” for an authentic ancestral history of Tamangs which is said to have made no mention of any evidence about the migration of Tamang from Tibet (Lama, 2064). Another theory points out that the Tamangs draw their origin from ‘Shiva’ meaning that they are the descendents of the Lord Shiva. Another legend states that they were cavaliers of Srong Tsen Gampo, a Tibetan king (Subba, 1989). A young scholar Ajitman Tamang redefines the Tibetan perspective of the word ‘Tamang’. He is of the view that in Tibetan ‘Ta’ means ‘entrance/gateway’ and ‘Mang’ means ‘Large public or common people’. So, ‘Tamang’, in Tibetan means presence of large number of people at the entrance or boundary, which signifies the settlement of Tamang people in the border of Tibet i.e. in Nepal. It is also supported by the Tibetan usage of the word ‘Rungpo’ to Tamang, which means the inhabitants of the border lands of Tibet. This view makes obvious that the Tamangs are the indigenous inhabitants of Nepal, not the descendants of the horse-riding soldiers of king Srong-Tsen Gampo as Tamangs themselves do not possess the characteristics of a horse rider too (Tamang, 2002).

S.S.Negi, writes that Tamangs are also known as ‘*Thakalis*’ people of Nepal residing in ‘*Thak khola*’ region. The *Thak Khola* is in the mountainous region and from the ancient times the *Thakalies* were engaged in salt trade with Tibet. Thus the author tries to explain that from the ancient time itself the Tamangs were the Traders (Negi, 1998).

There is yet another view that the name has its origin in a place name in Nepal – Tapmaluijin (Sing, 1993). Some western scholars such as Hamilton (1997), Risley (1928)

³ *Mundung*: the song which describes their ancient past.

and Hooker (1969) have used the term ‘Murmi’ for Tamang People. However this community is widely known as Tamangs in Sikkim.

2.2. Background

Among the different ethnic communities hailing from the middle of the great Himalayan range and sharing the common Mongolian origin are the Bhutias, Sherpas, Durkpas, Tibetans, Yalmowas, Kagateys and Tamangs. The Tamangs, according to one view are the people who descended from Tibet and the indigenous people of the central Himalaya. The use of the term “Tamang” has a complicated history and these people emerged with formation of the states of Nepal (Holmberg, 1989). The word Tamang apparently did not come into general usage in Nepal until well into the twentieth century. Older men in the village of Tamdungsa in Nepal recount that about fifty years ago a touring government official required all the adult men of the village to affix their thumbprints to a document affirming that they would no longer refer to themselves or be referred to as “Lama” or “Bhote” but as “Tamang”. This event corresponds roughly to a proclamation of the central government issued in 1932 that made “Tamang” an official legal category superseding “Bhote” and “Lama”. The extent of the application of the term “Tamang” prior to this time is unknown. Holmberg notes that “Tamang” appears in texts in Tibetan language as early as the thirteenth century and variants (*Tapang and Tamu*) are still used by the Thakali and Gurung to refer to themselves, suggesting a proto group from which the contemporary Tamang/Gurung/Thakali historically diverged(Holmberg,1989).

Nepal, a land-locked kingdom, is located on the southern slopes of the Himalayas. To its north lies Tibet (now part of the People’s Republic of China). India lies to its south and west: Sikkim to the East. Nepal has taken the political stance of a buffer state, dating back to the time of Prithivi Narayan Shah (1730-1775). Within Nepal live many ethnic groups, and three separate language families spoken among Nepal’s inhabitants that are Tibeto- Burmese, Munda (a division of Austro-Asiatic), and the Indo-Europeans. The Tibeto-Burmese speaking people advanced into Nepal from Tibet and overlaid the indigenous inhabitants. The Tamang speak a Tibeto- Burmese language and constitute the largest ethnic minority in Nepal. Most Tamang live in the Bagmati Zone. Different Dialects of Tamangs are spoken by the people in the western and eastern hills and in the

valley, and there are probably variations in between (Peters, 1998). They (Tamangs) are now most numerous in central and eastern Nepal, and are a pastoral and agricultural people, inhabiting elevations of 4000 to 6000 feet and living in stone houses, thatched with grass (Hooker, 1969). The Tamangs are people who live in the surrounding areas of Kathmandu valley and its neighbouring districts such as Likhukhola from the east and Budigandaki from the west mainly Kavre, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, Dhading, Lalitpur, Rasuwa, Gorkha, Taplejung etc. are the main areas of Tamang community (Bisht, 2008). The early History of Nepal points out that in Nepal, Tamang areas are known as “Tamsaling”. Before the unification of Nepal the Hindu Land Lord Prithivi Narayan Shah of Rajasthani *Muluk* along with his Rajput Rajasthani intruded with the Chhettris and Bhanos who ruled Yambu⁴ or Kathmandu valley such as Bhakatapur, Patan, Lalitpur and Tribal Buffer States and unified all these Buffer states that Yambu and named as “Nepal” and this Hindu Monarch forcefully passed an order not to celebrate and enjoy their (Tribals) festivals, culture, religions, customs and also banned the costumes and language(Lama ,2010; Frick,1994).

According to W .Brook Northey and C.J. Morris: “It would seem most probably that the (Murmis) or Tamangs were originally a Tibetan Tribe and somehow or other hand had managed to find its way into Nepal thence to settle and never to return”. The alien Hindu ruler of Nepal placed the Tamang very low in the social hierarchy. The author adds “while the exact social status of the Murmis is not very easy to define, it is certainly below that of Mager, Gurung, Limbu, Rai and Sunwar, and the men of these tribes would always consider themselves superior to them” (Morris, 1933). After the installation of Shah Dynasty in 1768 and the commencement of the *de facto* ruler of Ranas from 1846 onwards, the community suffered in its own land at the hands of the succession of brutal and merciless foreigners from Rajputana who became the ruler of Nepal. The high-caste Hindus from the hill region constitute the dominant group in Nepal (Hangen, 2010). They gained an upper hand in the political arenas during the last half of the eighteenth century. Prithivi Narayan Shah, the king of a principality called Gorkha, conquered and annexed the numerous small kingdoms that existed throughout Nepal. Since this

⁴ Yambu : name of the Kathmandu valley in Tibetan language.

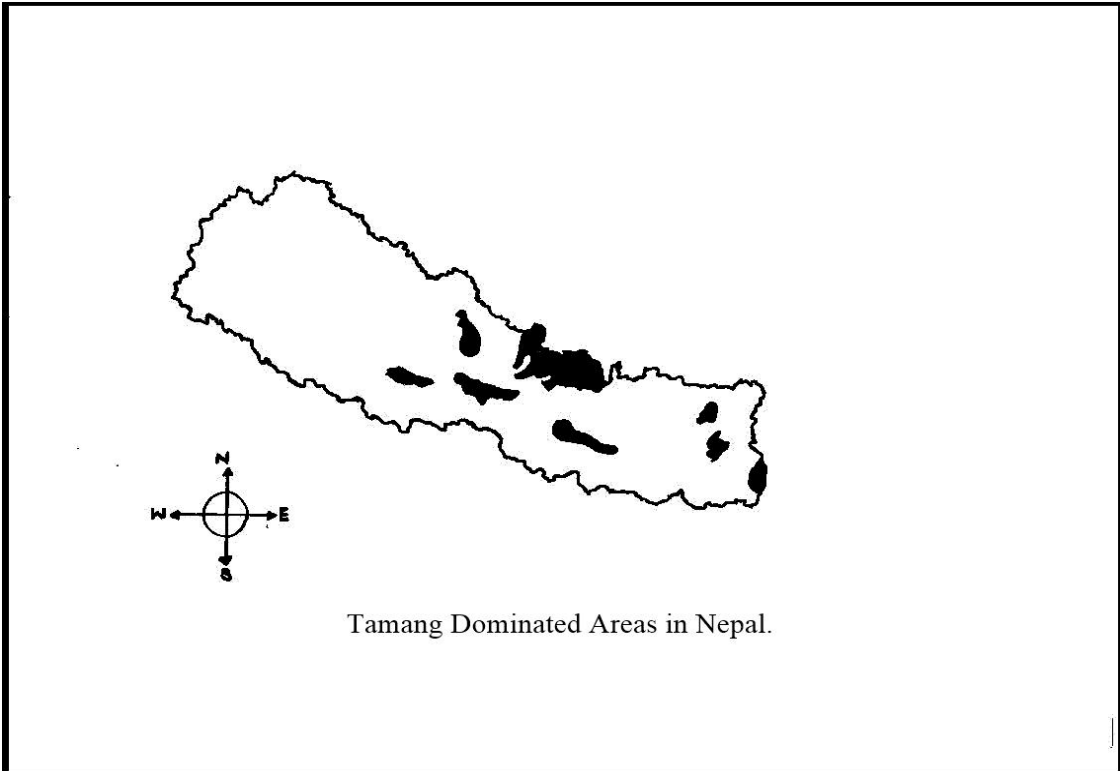
“Unification” of the state, the Shah, high-caste Hindus, who claim to be descendents of royal clans from India, have reigned as Nepal’s Monarchy. Along with these high-caste Hindus, some members of the Newar (the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley) became closely allied and served as bureaucrats in the palace. Historically, Newars were the traders (Hangen, 2010). But Tamangs never seem to have any share in the government, nor to have been addicted to arms, but always followed the profession of agriculture and carried loads for the Newars (Frick, 1994). Among the people who came under the control of the Hindu rulers, were mostly ethnic groups from the mountains and hill regions. Some ethnic groups are enlisted to meet the bulk of the expanding state’s need for labours. The internally diverse Tamangs who became the singular ethnic group, were used by the state as a source of forced labour due to their location near the Kathmandu Valley (Hangen, 2010). Anne Kukuczka states that in 1854, the 34 years old *de facto* ruler of Nepal, Maharaja Janga Badhur Rana proclaimed the *Muluki Ain* (National code of Nepal) which “prevented Tamang ethnic group from joining British-India Army and any Government Jobs in Nepal, except as *Pipas*⁵ (Kukuczka, 2011). Eden Vansittart has given a list of menial classes. Among them are the Damai, Kamara, Kami, Kasai (Newar), Pipa and Sarki. The *Pipa* was the Kalasi⁶. No man belonging to any of these menial classes were to be enlisted as soldiers. If it was found necessary to enlist any of them an account of their professional acquirement, they were to be given separate quarters and, as far as possible, be kept entirely away from all military duties. Only the Gurung Manger, Rais and Limbus were recruited into the Army (Vansittart, 1993).

Tamangs who resided in the surrounding of the Kathmandu valley, the seat of state power, endured heavy taxation and compulsory labour requirement. Vansittart therefore again writes that: “A lama has a much nearer likeness to Sarki, Damai or other menial workers than to a Manger, Gurung, Sunar, Limbu or Rais (Vansittard, 1993). It was misfortune of Tamang Youth that they were recruited as *Pipas*; worked, lived and died as a *Pipas*. It was only on 24th Sep, 2010, on learning the countries old atrocities against the community, a middle- aged Tamang lady angrily flared up against the perpetrators of

⁵ *Pipas* “The Tamangs who are employed as menial workers in the Nepal Army are called “*pipas*”.

⁶ Kalasi: assistant of the driver or those who worked as a menial job.

injustice. On 25th sep, 2010, the “Nepal Peace Minister, Raham Chemjong” told the Tamsaling Joint struggle committee that “ the Government is ready to upgrade *Pipa Goswara*, where Tamang youths are recruited for menial work at the household duties of army officers, to an army brigade if Committee quits their demand (Wangdi, 2011). Before 1932, the community never called themselves as “Tamang” in the kingdom of Nepal, the state had called these people as “Bhote” or “Murmi”, later reclassified them as Tamang to reflect their increasing economic importance (Holmberg, 1989). The Shah rulers deliberately kept all other Mongoliod people ignorant about their origin and history. The Shah rulers also destroyed their language, religion, costumes, customs, culture and distinct identities imposed upon them (Holmberg, 1989; Wangdi, 2011). Sonam Wangdi added that, it was only after 1932 that the members of the community were permitted by the Nepal Government to call themselves as “Tamang” for the first time. Till then they were prohibited to use the term “Tamang”. The Nepal Government recognised the community as Tamang on the request of Sardar Bahadur Jangba Bir Tamang, OBE, DMM, ME (Officer of the British empire, Distinguished Military Medal, Military Cross) who led a delegation to Shri 3 Sarkar , Bhim Shamsheer Janga Bahadur Rana and commander- in- chief , Yuddha Samsheer Janga Bahadur Rana(Wangdi, 2011). Therefore after the unification of Nepal, Tamangs lost everything and Nepalese culture was imposed upon them.



MAP: 2 - TAMANG DOMINATED AREAS IN NEPAL.

2.3. Debate on Migration

Regarding the migration of Tamang community, different scholars placed their opinion in different ways, some of them said that Tamangs had migrated from Tibet to other Himalayan regions whereas, some said that they had originated from Tibet and migrated to Nepal and then to India. Other side of scholars, such as Colonel Santabir Lama states that the Tamangs originated from Nepal and not migrated from Tibet. So there are controversies regarding the migration of Tamangs community and different scholars have different opinions. According to one Tamang legend, a group of King Srong Tsen Gampo's cavalry came across the Himalayas and settled in the high hills and called themselves as Tamangs, but on scrutiny of the Tamang genealogical chart; neither Tibet nor a cavalry migration is found to have been mentioned, thus this line of thinking may not be a reliable source of information. At some places, the meaning of Tamang is found to be horse owner and not a horse rider (cavalry), but lack of evidence makes this argument frail (Bisht, 2008). While another legend points out that in ancient times Tibet was ruled by a very pious king named Ralpachan. His brother named Langdarma killed Ralpachan and ascended the throne, he was a notorious man and also anti- Buddhist. He ruled Tibet for six years killing all his adversaries. He punished all those people who believed in Buddhism and took care to fill all the high executive posts with his own men and followers. The *Lamas* (Monks) of the Buddhist *Gumpas* (Monastery) were tortured and killed. The followers of Buddhism ran away to many lands including Nepal. The people at last took courage to unite to revolt against his tyrannical rule and he was ultimately killed by his people. It is said that at that time the people fled from Tibet and came to reside in the valley of Nepal. This legend too has no historical evidence. Nevertheless some people must have come to the Nepal valley and mixed with Tamang society. Such mixing of different races and tribes is a historical fact (Lama, 2004). Some scholars are of the view that Tsrong Chang Gampo, the Tibetan Ruler had come to attack Nepal with soldiers riding horses. After wards some of them stayed back in and around the valley of Kathmandu. They were the ancestors of the present day Tamangs who have spread all over Nepal and outside Nepal i.e. in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Bhutan, and others places of India. However there is not much Historical record to support this theory of migration and as there is no such event mentioned in the chronicles of the Tamang race

(Lama, 2004). While some also say that these Cavalrymen were drawn from the warrior tribe in the Minyak region of Kham provinces of Tibet (Yonzon, 1984).

Tom Frick writes that “in 640 A.D. the armies of Songtsen Gampo, the first Tibetan king to embrace Buddhism, moved south and occupied parts of present day Nepal, including the Kathmandu Valley and mountainous country to the north. These armies remained for a number of years and some began to call themselves Tamangs, Murmis and Lamas”. They have their own tradition while coming from the Tibet via Kyerong and more Hinduized people in the hills still called Tamangs as *Bhote*, the word used to describe the Tibetan peoples of the Plateau (Frick, 1994).

The Tamangs of Nuwakot, northern part of the Kathmandu valley believe that almost thousand years ago, there was an anti- Buddhist king who lived in Tibet named Galang Marma or Gyalbo Lunder. He was victorious over the Buddhist and set fire to many *Gompas* (monasteries) and destroyed many icons and statues of the Buddha. He then forced the lamas (monks) to marry and become civilians. But not all lamas were subdued; some managed to escape. Among the lamas who escaped, there was one Dapalgani Dorjee who was brave and along with his conspirators fled southwards on a horse. They were followed by Galang Marma’s Soldiers till what is today known as the northern part of the Nuwakot in the Kathmandu valley. In this way these monks (lamas) settled down in the Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts located north of Kathmandu Valley and their descendants gradually spread over the other regions around the Kathmandu valley, such as Sindupalchok in the east and Dhading in the west. An archaeologist has stated that through a study of the findings of the excavated sites within the Kathmandu valley, this region seems to have in fact been inhabited by people of mongoloid stock almost 30,000 years ago, and they indicated a north to south migration pattern. Thus it seems very clear that the Kathmandu valley was inhabited by mongoloid people initially, however, later on they migrated outwards due to the pressure from other tribes who began to migrate inwards. Thus, the tribes at the centre (Kathmandu valley) can be said to be new ones, while those on the surrounding hills to be the older ones. Through the passage of time, these mongoloid people began to be called as Tamangs, Murmi, etc. and they can be

found even today in those same hills to where they migrated in the dim past (Bisht, 2008).

There are some scholars who supported this view like; Prof.Samten Narboo, (1981) who stated in his article entitled- “Migration of Tamang from Tibet” that amongst the Tribal group originating from Tibet are the Tamangs, Yalmos and Sherpas as well as Ladakhis, Bhutiyas and the Drukpas along with some other tribes in the Indo-Tibet frontiers. Regarding the Migration of the Tamangs Prof. Narboo further refers to Pt. Gewali who had noticed the practice of Bon among the Tamangs and therefore places their migration prior to the 7th century (The period when Buddhism was establishment in Tibet). There are few traces of Bonpo role in their social and spiritual life. Therefore any attempt to connect them with the Bonpo and to infer their migration before 7th century does not seems to be correct. Professor Narboo further added that the Tamangs must have migrated earlier than the Sherpas and the Yolmowas. And they migrated in 749 A.D. and the process must have come to an end by the 10th century. The migration of the Tamangs, Yalmowas and the Sherpas before the 11th century is supported by the facts recorded in Tibetan historical works (Narboo, 1981).

However it is also said that the Tamangs were the early followers of Bon religion when they are in Tibet because Bon is the primitive religion of Tibet and when Buddhism reached Tibet in the 7th century A.D. and was adopted by the King Tsong-tsen Gampo and made into the state religion. The followers of Bon faith were persecuted and faced severe problems of survival under such situations. To save themselves and their faith, many Bon teachers and followers fled towards the boarding area of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Northern parts of India. However, many of the Bon followers from central Tibet continued to stay there with no choice but adopt Buddhism as their religion. Therefore, many Bon followers migrated to the provinces of Amdo and Kham on the outer regions of Tibet as well as to the border regions in the north of present day Nepal where they could practice their religion in relative ease and they subsequently came to be known as Tamangs, Sherpas and Gurungs etc. this is might be one reason of migration because today also in those country these people still practice Bon as their religion (Samuel, 2013; Peter, 1998). But later on Tamangs adopted Buddhism as their religion

and now also their ancestor worship proves that they are the early followers of Bon. They have Bonpos in their society. Now a days, in Sikkim no Tamang was found to be a Bon follower but in Nepal there are lots of Tamangs who still follow Bon as their religion.

Another scholar S.T. Lama points out that the migration of Tamangs, through some situations including the occasional and natural calamities during the process of migratory journey across the Tibetan Himalaya in search of greener pastures for livelihood. This community then firmly settled in what they believed as their own autonomous homeland called the “Tamsaling” in Nepal. Before the advent of Tamangs, Tamsaling had been an uninhabited terrain of dense forests (Lama, 1981).

According to modern historians, Tamangs were the first group of mongoloid tribes to settle down in their present homeland about 30,000 years ago and convert the dense jungle into productive farmlands. S.T. Lama further states that the geographical distribution of Tamangs stretches from the Highlands of Tibetan Himalaya to others parts of the country such as Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar), and Northern Thailand, Srilanka etc. this is duly referred to in the folk songs and *Mundums* of the Tamangs. He again says that their largest concentration is in Nepal and India. Within India, Tamangs are densely concentrated in the districts of Darjeeling, Doars, Jalpaiguri, Sikkim and Assam (Lama, 1981). S.T. Lama further refers to Tamang Historian , the late Santabir Lama, who argued that before the establishment of Tibetan Kingdom in Tibet, Tamangs used to live in Tamsaling in Nepal, because many claim that Tamangs used to trade in Horses in view of the denotation ‘Ta’- Horse and ‘Mang’- traders which is again repudiated by another argument in which ‘Ta’- Tamsaling (i.e., those living in Tamsaling) and ‘Mang’- numerically high number, that is fairly high number of Tamang living in the Tamsaling (Lama, 1981).

Mahendra P. Lama established a link between the Tamang and the Gurung community of the Eastern Himalayas and he says that like the Gurungs who belonged to the Mongol Kirati tribes, the Tamangs are also divided into twelve clans, sub- clans and eighteen branches. The Gurungs call themselves as *Tamu* meaning horse. The Gurungs were a branch of great *Hun* tribe who came from Central Asia via many countries and ultimately

spread in Nepal and others parts of the world. The physical features, social customs and nature of the Gurungs and the Tamangs are similar. There is no historical record but it may be assumed that the Tamangs like Gurungs might have come from Central Asia in groups being a branch of the same *Hun* tribe fighting with other tribes riding horse like the *Tamu* (Gurung). They settled down along the valley of Kathmandu and gradually spread to other parts especially in the district of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Bhutan. Lama further refers to Santabir Lama who agrees that from the ancient times Tamangs and Gurungs belong to the same tribe in his book *Tamba Kaitan* (Lama, 2004).

Today the main territory of the Tamangs extends in a broad arc to the west, north and east of the Kathmandu Valley, although their settlements are also found to the south and far eastern part of Sikkim (Frick, 1994). They might have migrated to Sikkim during the time of the Ghurkha incursion from 1770 to 1815 or even before that. During this time; Nepal had adopted a confrontational approach in the eastern Himalayan region and in the process consolidated itself as a distinct polity. This was a period, when Prithivi Narayan Shah, the Gorkha king, and his immediate successors, emerged victorious over Kathmandu valley and his armed forces reached the boundaries of Sikkim in 1788-89. The Gorkha general, Jahar Singh Thapa, crossed the Chiabhanjang pass, taking the Bhutias and Lepchas of Sikkim by complete surprise, and captured the Rabdantse palace (the state capital). They conquered the whole of Sikkim, west of river Tista and celebrated their victory on the banks of the river Tista, on the day of the *Magha Sankranti* in 1789 and remained there for 8 long years. This ended with the “Treaty of Segoulee”, in 1815, by which Nepal was forced to part with its Sikkimese possessions (Sinha, 2008).

Hence from that period onwards a significant number of the Nepalese from Nepal might have settled in Sikkim. Chettris and Brahmins were inseparable from the movement of the Gurkha garrison along with others service castes such as Damais, Kamis, Sarkis, and Majjhis (boatmen) of Majhitar and even perhaps Tamangs, Rais, Sherpas etc. may have migrated to Sikkim. Though it is not exactly mentioned whether Tamangs and others tribes also inhabited Sikkim during that particular period but somehow it may be or it can be because whoever came from Nepal to Sikkim were counted as Nepalese because

Nepal was the land of the Bhutias, Sherpas, Rais, Tamangs, Chettris, Mangers etc. Thus, one may safely conclude that a large number of Nepalese inhabited in Sikkim even before the British induced and organized immigration.

British induced settlement efforts began from 1861 onwards. After the “Treaty of Tumlong” (1861) signed by Sikkim and East India Company, Sikkim became a *de-facto* Protectorate of the British Indian Empire and British got an opportunity to construct a road in Sikkim for the purpose of trade between Tibet and Indian Plains (Basnet, 1974). The British had also learnt that the shortest route to Tibet lay through Sikkim. For this purpose they recruited coolies, stationed their army in Sikkim, appointed court councillors and controlled the external relations of Sikkim as well. But just before that, another significant development had occurred on its southern territory, which had far more significance for Nepalese immigration to Sikkim (Basnet, 1974; Sinha, 2008).

In 1835 Sikkim handed over Darjeeling district to East India Company because British wanted to construct Health sanatorium in Darjeeling. The British appointed Capt. Lloyd as superintendent to develop Darjeeling into a hill station, and he needed inexpensive labour for clearing the jungles, cutting the roads, procuring timber, and constructing buildings and amenities, for which payments were made in cash and coolie colonies, were constructed with basic provisions. He appointed enough labourers especially from eastern Nepal. Not only unattached labourers and cultivators, but even the slaves, criminals and all types of sundry run-away hands began to collect and find work at Darjeeling. This was the occasions, when labourers from Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan took shelter in Darjeeling (Sinha, 2008). Very soon it was found that the land around Darjeeling was ideally suited for tea cultivation and the hills of Darjeeling were seen as a place of new opportunity. The great bulk of the immigrants came from Nepal, chiefly as labourers in the tea gardens and in the hills mainly Nepalese. The majority of the people in the hills are of Mongolian origin, belonging chiefly to various Nepalese castes, but also including a large number of Lepchas, Bhutias and Tibetans. The various Nepalese castes are well represented in the district, but the most numerous are the Khambus (Rais) and Murmis (Tamangs), who number 33,000 and the Murmis, who number 25,400. The bulks of them are cultivators and regard agriculture as their original and fitting occupation. Many of them, however,

serve in the police and some in the army and very large proportion in this district are employed as labourers on the tea garden. A certain number leave the district to serve in the Military police battalions in Burma and elsewhere, but the great majority of emigrants consist of cultivators who throw up their holdings and cross the border to Sikkim or Bhutan, where the forests are abundant and land is to be had for the asking. And naturally, Nepalese immigration began to spill over to Sikkim across the river Rangeet (O Malley, 1907).

The next phase of migration happened after 1861 when the king of Sikkim invited Lachmidas Pradhan a Newar family to Renock for minting coins for the Kingdom of Sikkim for the first time. It is believed that along with Newars other Nepalese people also came to Sikkim from Nepal and settled there (Basnet, 1974). Historically, in Nepal Tamangs were placed within the more menial positions in the Nepali army and were exploited as labourers. Most Tamangs settled in Nepal were agriculturalists or carried loads for Newars by working as coolies (Frick, 1994). So when Lachmidas family settled down in Sikkim in 1867, they needed labourers, coolies and others to work in the copper mines. Lachmidas Pradhan and his family played a very important part in the affairs of Sikkim and the British Government in India. Pradhan and his family supported the immigration of the Nepalese under their leadership. There was an influx of the Nepalese in Darjeeling soon after the establishment of tea gardens there. Lachmidas Pradhan with his Uncle Keshav Narayan came to Darjeeling in 1853 from Nepal and probably no Newar had come to Darjeeling before them. There after they settled in Sikkim in 1867 to work in copper mines. They worked in Tuk Khani in southern Sikkim and later on in a number of other copper mines. They were invited to Sikkim for the purpose of economic development (Sinha, 2008).

When J.C. White the first British political officer was appointed in Sikkim in 1889, he found his own reasons for further inducing the immigration of the Nepalese people into Sikkim. White had his own assessment of the '*Paharias*' (Nepalese) : "they have migrated from the neighbouring densely populated state of Nepal, they are almost all Hindus by religion, with innumerable castes, and the few exceptions being the tribes coming from the northeast of Nepal, who still profess Buddhism" (Gurung, 2011).

Thus the movement of people from Nepal to India and Sikkim happened over many phases. The migration of Nepalese into Sikkim has proved a boon to her prosperity and economic well being, in as much as they cleared forests, introduced new methods of agriculture, particularly, terrace farming. They also introduced the cultivation of cardamom in Sikkim which is a good cash crop. Most Nepalese are Hindus, while some of them practise Buddhism and Christianity too. Hindus follow many customs akin to majority of Indian Hindus, while Buddhists are nearer to Tibetan Buddhists. The Christian converts have, no doubt, introduced certain changes in their customs. But old Hindu imprint is very much pronounced even now in their day-to-day life (Shukla, 1976).

There are no records or written documents regarding the migration of Tamangs from Nepal to Sikkim. The debate on migration depends upon the view of Scholars. But Scholars like O Malley, Sinha, Basnet and Shukla have not mentioned the particular date and time of the Tamangs migration. They all said that People migrated from Nepal to Darjeeling and in Sikkim are all Nepalese. Only the religion was distinguished and it is already mentioned above that the Tamangs were the followers of Buddhism. Therefore T.B. Subba, writes on the chronological pattern of group-wise migration and says that the earliest immigrants from Nepal to Darjeeling and than in Sikkim were the Buddhist, animist and 'Hinduised' Nepalese, followed by those who occupied the lower strata of the caste hierarchy, the Kami, Damai, and Sarki. The 'high- Caste' *Tagadharis*⁷ came later, seemingly pushed by their own economic impoverishment, although stray examples of their very early settlement in some parts of India are known. He further says that the majority of the first immigrants from Nepal belonged to communities such as the Rais, Limbus, Gurungs Mangars and Tamangs (Subba, 2002). Along with Newars, Tamangs may also come to Sikkim because in ancient times in Nepal, Tamangs worked as coolies and carried loads for the Newars and they were placed in a very menial position in Nepal (Frick, 1994). When new opportunities opened in nearby areas for their survival they may have also come to Darjeeling and Sikkim for new job prospects and settled there. Nepalese migrated to Sikkim for the purpose of economic development and from the ancient times Tamangs were good agriculturists. So they might have migrated from

⁷ Tagadharis: people who wear the scared thread on the shoulders especially Chettris and Bhanus.

Nepal to Sikkim, Darjeeling and Bhutan etc. during that time. No doubt Tamangs were people of Tibetan origin. Most of the scholars who write on Tamangs agree that they had migrated from some part of Tibet, though the exact time period not as yet ascertained. The process of immigration from Nepal to India, Darjeeling and Sikkim etc. which started about two centuries ago, continues till date (Subba, 2002).

2.4. Cultural changes due to the Nepalese influences

According to Furba Lama “The “Tamag” migrated from Lhasa (Tibet) to Himalayan region Temal Hill in the 8th century after conversion from Bon Dharma to the Mahayana Nyingmapa Buddhist Dharma. There were many Tibetan sub-sects of whom Tamags were the main security and protection force of the Palace and king. That is why Tamag is a Tibetan word that was wilfully mispronounced and intentionally changed to “Tamang” by the so- called first Hindu Monarch just after the creation of Nepal. Lama continues: “The Tamag were compelled by the so-called first Hindu king of “Unified” Nepal in 1767 to give up their culture, customs, costumes, language and main festival (Sonam Lochar). Defiance invited severe punishment from the Hindu king’s forces, which had intruded from Kanauj (Rajasthan) and included the Rajput communities of Nepal like the Chettris and Bahoons. This explains why the Tamang lost everything after the unification of Nepal and Nepalese culture was imposed upon them (Lama, 2010). The atrocities of the alien ruling class in Nepal led to the migration of a large number of Mongoloid people to “Munglan” (India, Bhutan, Sikkim etc.) after the installation of Shah Dynasty and later continued during the Ranas’ *de facto* rule. “Munglan” literally meant “the territory of the Mughals” who established by the Mughal Empire in India during the 16th century. According to the Nepali Subject of the Shah Dynasty, any country, other than the kingdom of Nepal, was “Munglan” (O’Malley, 1907). A large number of people from Nepal came to Darjeeling and in Sikkim during the revolt against the Rana rule in “Dui hazaar saat saal”. Some of them were Rais, Limbus and Tamangs settled in the village as well as in the urban areas (Wangdi, 2012). After the state formation of Nepal in 1768 by the King Prithivi Narayan Shah, ruler of the small principality Ghurkha declared that “Nepal will be a true Hindustan of the four *Varna* and thirty six *jat*”. By this formation he included all people living in the conquered territory irrespective of their religion, caste or

ethnic affiliation within the framework of Hinduism (Kukuczka, 2011). Although the Hindu framework introduced by Prithivi Narayan Shah aimed to subsume the various groups, it was the introduction of the legal code *Muluki Ain* (MA) in 1854 by Jang Bahadur Rana which codified and fixed the status of all castes and ethnic communities within a legal binding national Hindu social Hierarchy(Hangen, 2010).

The 700 page legal code dealt with topics such as land tenure and law of inheritance, but most of the chapters were dedicated to intra and inter-caste relations. In the MA (*Muluki Ain*) all groups were equally called *Jat* (Caste). The main distinction was between *Tagadhari* “wearers of the holy cord” who formed the elite of society and included Chettris , Bahun, Thakuri as well as several Newar castes, and *Matwali*, the various alcohol consuming *Jat*. The *Matwali* were further divided into non-enslavable and enslavable alcohol drinkers, impure but touchable and untouchable *Jat*. When looking for the direct reference revealing the position of Tamang within the legal code, the Tamang are subsumed under the category “Bhote”, which generally refers to Tibetan-speaking groups. In consequence Tamang are ranked within the category of *Masinya Matwali* “enslavable alcohol drinkers” and are not included in the groups of *namasinya Matwali* “non-enslavable alcohol- drinkers” like other hill ethnic groups such as Gurung and Magar (Kukuczka, 2011).

The low position assigned to the Tamang in the nascent state in Nepal can be attributed to a combination of socio-economic and ideological factors. Many Tamangs lost their lands to high-caste Bahuns and Chettris immigrants through money lending, and land formerly used as pasture and forest was transformed into the immigrant’s private properties in most cases with support of the Rana government. Almost all labour required by the government was performed by Tamangs due to their proximity to Kathmandu, even though compulsory labour was not limited to this area. The practice of *rakam*, regular compulsory labour obligations for the military’s and administrations requirements in return for usufruct land had a deep impact on villagers’ daily life and beyond. The threat of physical violence in the form of beating and the confiscation of their land by government officials if villagers failed to perform their duties or openly opposed the system was omnipresent (Holmberg, March and Tamang, 1999). Kukuczka argues that the

monopolization of Tamang labour for state services was also the main reason for prohibiting recruitment from the districts adjacent to Kathmandu into the Gurkha army. Tamangs who wanted to sidestep this rule had to change their names in order to get enlisted (Kukuczka, 2011). Besides the proximity to Kathmandu, According to Holmberg three factors contributed to the Hindu perception of the Tamang: they were perceived as consumers of beef, practitioners of Buddhism and as a subjugated population, all attributes being in opposition to the Hindu nascent state order. In fact, 'Bhote' are the only group described as beef-eaters in the MA. Respect for the cow is an integral part of the Hindu social custom. Until recently the importance of the cow was also reflected in its usage as an official symbol for the Hindu monarchy (Holmberg, 1989). Therefore associations of Bhote-Tamang with violence against cows, which is in contrast to actual social Tamang practices, exaggerated their otherness and enforced their separation from Hindu society. Furthermore in practicing Buddhism and following Lamas, Tamang recognized a competitive socio-religious order and might have enforced Rana fears of solidarity with Tibet rather than the new emerging state. This perception was further strengthened by the proximity of Tamang territory in Nepal to Tibet and historically links of some Tamang polities to its neighbour. The combination of Tamang's traditional settlement area around the Kathmandu valley and along the trading routes towards Tibet and their cultural practice which were perceived in the feudal like state and consequently led to their relatively low position in the MA (*Muluki Ain*) (Kukuczka, 2011).

According to Jas Yanjon, Sonam Lhochhar which is the main festival of the Tamangs, was celebrated by the Tamangs from the ancient time when they were in Tibet. Before the unification of Nepal, the Tamangs celebrated Lhochhar as their main festival. He also says that in Nepal, Tamangs had their own king and kingdom, In the Tamang language king is known as *Glax* and kingdom is known as *Glaxsa*. In Nepal, Tamang area is known as Tamsaling which already mention above. Tamangs who resided in Tamsaling celebrated *Thapsand*, the name giving ceremony of a new born baby. During Tamsaling, a *Tamba* (Tamang Historian) orally narrated their ancient culture. When *Glax* (Tamang King) ruled Tamsaling at that time Prithivi Narayan Shah defeated the Tamang king and

captured all the territory. Prithivi Narayan Shah captured Kritipur in 1765, Kathmandu in 1768, Lalitpur in 1768 and Bhaktapur in 1769 (Yanjon, 2004).

After Prithivi Narayan Shah captured all of Tamsaling, he imposed very high taxes on Tamang people; Not only this, he also banned the use of 'Tamang' as their Surname and all the Tamang's land was distributed among the Brahmans, Rajputs, and his ministers. He even destroyed the scripts where the History of Tamangs was written. Even he changed the name of the Tamangs from Passang, Doma, and Pema to Nepali names such as Ran Maya, Man Maya, Bir Badhur etc, and forcefully Hindu/ Nepali culture was imposed upon the Tamangs and if any Tamang family celebrated their own culture they were given severe punishment by the king. From then onwards Tamangs started celebrating *Dasai*, *Thihar* instead of Sonam Lhochhar. Such kinds of humiliation were faced by the Tamang ancestors after the unification of Nepal. So the Tamangs left Nepal and moved to other parts of the country such as India, Bhutan, Srilanka, and Thailand etc. Along with them their culture also moved to others areas. In India they densely resided in Sikkim, Darjeeling, Duars, and Bengal etc. Thus Tamang Grand Parents and elders put *Tika* on the foreheads of their younger one during *Dasai* (Hindu festival) they say in Tamang Language "*Chu Tika Hyangla Akin Panch Sarkar Gyala Thim Heena*" meaning this *tika* did not belong to us, this *tika* belonged to shri Panch sarkar's festivals (Yanjon, 2004).

T.B. Subba also mentions that the Tamangs are the Buddhist by religion and the school of Buddhism they follow is called Mahayana Buddhism (Subba, 1989).

So, during this whole process of migration and resettlement in different areas from Tibet to Nepal and then to Sikkim, the Tamang community underwent several phases of transformations in terms of its status as well as its language, rituals, beliefs and practices. In Nepal they were forced to give up their tribal ways and adopt Hindu beliefs and practices during the rule of Prithivi Narayan Shah (1769 to 1775 A.D.). They continued their Hindu practices by worshipping Hindu deities, gods, adopting Nepali language and celebrating the Hindu festivals of *Dasai* and *Tihar* even after their migration to Sikkim. But from the last decade of the twentieth century there has been an effort within the

Tamang Community of Sikkim to claim their tribal status and revert back to their original beliefs and practices. In this backdrop it becomes important to study the Tamang Community of Sikkim within a historical perspective

CHAPTER III

SOCIETY CULTURE AND RELIGION OF THE TAMANGS

IN SIKKIM

The Tamangs are one of the principal Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes in the Sub-Himalayan region of India. Though densely populated in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal and in Sikkim, the Tamangs are also scattered almost all over the states of India. The Tamangs have a rich and splendid culture which distinguishes them from other ethno-linguistic groups. They have their distinct culture as evident from their traditional and social customs, food habits, costumes or dresses, songs and dances, musical instruments, festivals, language and their way of life which has substantial similarity with the other tribes following Buddhism.

3.1. Village Life

The village life of Tamangs is very simple. In ancient times they are the farmers and agriculturists and but now a day's most of them are government employees. The Tamangs in Sikkim live collectively and not in a scattered way. They are very social and they live like one big family sharing the joy and sorrows of day to day life. They keep their village neat and clean. They build roads of stones within their village with collective effort. They build *Gumpas* (Monasteries) nearby their village where prayers flags flutter day and night.

The villagers wear simple Nepali and Tamang dresses. The women love to wear ornaments made up a gold and silver. Their food habit is also simple which consists of rice, maize, wheat, millet or barley flour. The Tamangs are very fond of meat especially beef. Some Tamangs eat pork but other such as Syangden and Goley clans do not eat pork (Lama, 2004). Even now in the villages they cultivated maize, millet, wheat, barley and potatoes in the high altitude and some rice in the warmer and wetter areas of the lower altitude. Vegetables like peas, cabbages, cauliflowers, beans etc. are also produced by the Tamangs. The Tamangs who live in compact traditional settlements are self-

sufficient in food, but those who live outside are poor. In ancient time when they were in Nepal they were forced to earn their wages as porters and domestic servant in Kathmandu and other towns. Besides this the Tamangs were carpenters, masons, builders, and wooden plough makers, the Lamas (Buddhist priests) are also well trained and skilled in painting Tibetan types of *thangkas* and their women folk were skilled in making bamboo baskets, containers and vessels for storing grains (Armington, 1979). These skills are appreciated by many other hill-tribes who do not perform such tasks.

Both men and women drink *rakshi* and *janr* (prepared out of millet or wheat). The Tamangs observe both Buddhist and Nepali festivals. They also celebrated *Magay Sankranti* by going down to the nearby streams early in the morning to take bath and to make sacrificial offering to god. But their main religious festival is Buddha *Purnima* which is celebrated in a grand manner in Buddhist monastery or *Gumpa* (Lama, 2004).

3.2. Nature of Dwelling (*Dhim Soba*)

Most of the Tamangs inhabited the cold climate of rugged hill. In the earlier times and the chief occupation of Tamangs was agriculture. The typical Tamang traditional houses were of square or rectangular shape, one or two-storied, thatched-roofed where the walls were made up of stone or roughly joint planks or spilt bamboos plastered with black, red and white coloured mud. There was also a ladder inside the house made up of bamboos to climb upstairs where two or three narrow-storied halls made of little narrow spaces for storing food –grains. The entire house could have had only one or two doors and one or two slits serving the purpose of windows. The Tamangs preferred to live as a joint family rather than nuclear one (Tamang, 2002).



Fig.3.1. Typical Tamang Houses in the Ancient Time
 (Photo from Controversy by: <http://pinterest.com>)

TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS

3.3. Traditional Social Organisation

Traditionally the Tamangs lived in amity and peace. They had a highly organised social body within the village which looked after the social affairs. It was a kind of *panch* or village community. Their original social organisation consists of eight council members. These councils are formed in every large Tamang settlement with the main purpose to control their social structure and its resultant activities. Every member is given a certain task to do or supervision of tasks. This social structure is laid out on a hierarchical ladder and is based on the following levels of seniority.

<i>Choho</i>	-	president or Chief Councillor
<i>Mulmi</i>	-	the leader of the village or <i>kipat</i>
<i>Nagptha</i>	-	Tantrick
<i>Douptha</i>	-	A learned person
<i>Ganba</i> or <i>Alla</i>	-	An elderly person
<i>Tamba</i>	-	A person knowing the ancient history of the race
<i>Mulmi Gorga i</i>	-	secretary to the president
<i>Bonpo</i>	-	The priest in the community

Bonpo had an important role to play in the Tamang society. At some places the post of *Mulmi* was hereditary but generally a *Mulmi* (the leader of the village or *Kipat*) was elected by the villagers themselves. The Tamangs had their *Kipat* like the other *Kirati* tribe. Traditionally the *Mulmi* is elected on the auspicious occasion of *Sanisare Puja*, also known as *Bhumi Puja*. Before 1951, Tamang village land taxes or similar revenues were collected by the *Mulmi* for their social functions and various religious festivals. The *Mulmi* elected by the villagers was recognized by the government. The duties of the *Mulmi* were not only arranging the various festivities or collecting taxes but they had to protect the forest and the common people from any external danger. In the past, the *Mulmi* had the power and authority to settle ordinary disputes and give judgement on common issues. The status of the *Mulmi* was an extremely importance one. Other tribes began to call Tamang as *Mulmi*. Later the pronunciation was corrupted into ‘Murmi’. In some places, the whole village community is guided by the *Mulmi* when performing social and religious functions as well as other community works (Gautam and Manger, 1994; Lama, 2004).

Besides these, there was *Manpa* or the Herbalist who played a vital role in maintaining a healthy and disease free life in the Tamang society. Herbalism grew strong among Tamangs as there was obviously a constant need to fight off diseases that afflicted both human and animal life. This naturally led to increasing appreciation of herbal medicine which soon developed into the *Manpa (Vaidyaraj or Kawiraj)* tradition which has come to stay ever since. Another hallmark of Tamangs culture is the *Ganpa* and his role is refining and maintaining the Tamangs cultural attributes. A *Ganpa* is a very senior and knowledgeable person as well as experienced individual who are well adept in the practice of Tamang culture. This being so, Tamangs regard the *Ganpa* in high esteem as it was under his guidance that the Tamang community became “developed and civilised”. A *Ganpa* is also known as the *Tamba*. *Tamba or Ganpa* is generally regarded as the chief custodian of preservation of the Tamang culture and tradition including their history. He is, therefore, next to the Dharma Guru to command respect from the community. As the *Tambas* rule of law governs all kinds of social mores everywhere, it also contributes in considerable measures in maintaining solidarity within the organisation and in promoting

uniformity of social conduct and behaviour among all Tamangs. *Tamba*, in view of the above, continues to hold a pre-eminent position in the Tamang society even today. On all occasions whether there be sorrow or happiness *Tamba's* presence is indispensable to conduct the occasion. An assembly of *Manpas* and *Ganpas or Tambas*, brought out is *Mithim*¹ which is a policy document which elaborate details on how to live in peace and harmony. *Mithim* literally stands for human policy. It was followed by the promulgation of *Hylthim*² which is a document on social policy or rules for the Tamangs society. There were provisions made for the development of different Tamang sub castes (*thars*) living in different villages on the basis of peaceful co-existence and harmony. A council of the following composition to give effect to the policy was also constituted (Lama, 1981).

In the ancient times, the above council was highly powered that handled all the existing socio-economic issues and problems confronting the Tamangs and which also served useful guidelines for day to day activities and performances. The decision of the council being obligatory on all, it thus proved to be a powerful tool to enhance the cause of development of Tamangs and lift them into higher and enlightened level of social hierarchy (Lama, 1981).

3.4. Tamangs Clans and Sub-Sects

The Tamangs, Lama or Murmis are grouped into two great divisions known respectively as *Bara* Tamangs (Twelve Tribes) and the *Athara Jat* (Eighteen Clans or steps). The *Bara* Tamangs are pure lamas and claim descent from Lord Maheswar and consider themselves somewhat superior than the *Attara Jat* (eighteen clans or steps) (Morris, 1933). Being merely Tibetans there was no such thing as caste amongst the Tamangs in older days, although, prior to the Gurkha conquest, the Murmis were divided into *Baratamang* (Twelve Tribes) and *Atharajat* (Eighteen clans) or nevertheless there was no social difference between them. Prior to the Ghurkha conquest the *Baratamang* and *Atharajat* ate and drank together and intermarried (Vansittart, 1993). The term *Atharajat*

¹ Mithim- Mi-Man, Thim- Policy or rule

² Hylthim- Hyl-Village or society, Thim- Policy or rules.

was given in those days to the progeny of a Tamangs with any foreigner, merely as a distinctive name for a mixed breed, but it in no way caused any social superiority or inferiority. This breed, although of mixed blood, was accepted into the Tamang nationality without question, and enjoyed all the privilege of any other Tamang. But with the Gurkha conquest and the consequent influences brought to bear, many changes have taken place, and are doing so more and more, and the line drawn between the *Baratamang* and the *Atharjat* is much more strongly defined now, and no doubt fifty years hence the rulers which exist at present regarding social custom, marriages etc., will have undergone still greater modifications (*Ibid*)

The former are considered more superior and as pure Tamangs. But the origin of this development is not known yet. They may have adopted this development and division from the Gurungs, but this division is hardly seen in actual relationship (Subba, 1989). The entire Tamang community is vertically divided into several subgroups known as *thars*. Each *thars* has its own name (Pradhan, 1991). Bista has recorded some twenty five; Kalden has recorded some two hundred twenty seven, Gautam & Thapa has recorded some forty four and during a field work at Singling, it was noted that there are some forty nine and more different *thars/clans* of Tamangs. The hierarchical divisions made later were the consequences of Hindu influence. Some of the Tamang clans are as under:

1. Kalden ,
2. Bal,
3. Goley,
4. Tidung
5. Bajyu
6. Grangden
7. Dong
8. Syangdan
9. Singdan
10. Moktan
11. Waiba

12. Pakrin
13. Ghishing
14. Loo
15. Zimba
16. Rumba
17. Gyaba
18. Mikchan
19. Syanbo
20. Blone
21. Lamakhor
22. Thing
23. Nasur
24. Yonzon
25. Bomzon
26. Dumzon
27. Lopchen
28. Taisang
29. Kamten
30. Dakay
31. Done
32. Marpa
33. Tuba
34. Thokar
35. Malachoki
36. Lamaganju
37. Mulung
38. Galden
39. Choten
40. Sumba
41. Tartang
42. Hen

43. Rimten
44. Suktal
45. Nazong
46. Palpali
47. Dabo
48. Toiba
49. Balam
50. Gompa
51. Hopten
52. Gromba
53. Rimten
54. Mensing
55. Mitak
56. Tumba,
57. Damrang
58. Suktal
59. Tungba,
60. Lalungba
61. Zaba,
62. Rarang etc. (Kalden, 2012, Tamang, 2002, Morris, 1933 and Bista, 1967).

According to Eden Vansittart, originally the *Baratamang* (Twelve Tribes) were divided into 12 tribes only. And the *Atharajat* are only three, i.e. *Gothar*, *Narba* and *Sangri*. The following are said to be the original oncs:

1. Baju
2. Bal
3. Dumjan
4. Ghishing
5. Giaba
6. Goley
7. Mikchan

8. Kokthan
9. Pakrin
10. Syangdhen
11. Theeng and
12. Yonjan (Vanisttard, 1993).

It can be said that these are some of the *thars* of the Tamangs, However there could be more. These *thars* have emanated from two main sources, namely, places and incident or events. The Tamangs living in the flat or even lands (low lands) are called *dimdus*, those inhabiting hilly places are called *maelaendens*, and those dwelling at cliff edges are the *chanden*, *Pakhrin* indicated people living in *Pakho Pakhera* (Nepali word). Similarly, other *thars* could also be identified (Bisht, 2008; Shrestha, 1937).

The above *thars/clans* are considered as *Bara* Tamangs (Twelve Tribes). According to T.B. Subba, until 1769 (during the reign of Prithivi Narayan Shah) the children of a Tamang women and a Khasa man used to be called *Gothar or Godar* Tamang. Later on the offspring of Newar Men and Tamang Women were called *Ngarba* Tamang and the children of Tamang women and Gurung, Manger, Limboo, Rai or Sunuwar Men were called *Sangri* Tamang (Subba, 1989). C.J. Morris writes that these were also considered as *Athara Jat*(Eighteen Clans) (Morris, 1933). But today only the children of Tamang men are called Tamangs.

The *Barah* Tamang (*Tribes*) and *Atharah Jats* are the clans that exist to demarcate the different social status of the various clans. Between them, the twelve clans have a higher social status than the eighteen clans. It is a horizontal demarcation and marriages between these two divisions do not usually take place.

Besides the *Thar* (clan), in some places, a person can belong to a particular *Gotr*. A *gotr* is a subdivision of a clan and there may be more than one *gotr* in a clan. It is only found in some places. The Goley and Dong clan of Tamangs are different clans. Marriage between these is prohibited, as they are considered brother clans. They may have common ancestors and their *gotrs* are the same. The marriages between the same *gotr* are

considered taboo and socially unacceptable. The Tamangs practice exogamy between the different *gotr* (Gautam & Thapa, 1994).

It is believed that the *Bara Jaat* of Tamangs are of pure blood, while those of the *Athara Thars* are of mixed blood, but it is extremely difficult to distinguish between these two categories, since they both have the same *thars*. However, this categorisation is meaningless in Tamang society, since on the basis of food, marriages etc. no barriers have been seen to exist. Religious ceremonies and rituals are also seen to be free of any sort of *Jaat* bias and they work in extremely good mutual cooperation among themselves.

Traditionally the Tamangs followed the *Kipat* or land system. The Tamang clans held an exclusive and inalienable right over the land. Pradhan while referring to Baburam Acharaya's view writes that Prithivi Narayan Shah granted *Kipat* or land to the Murmi or Tamangs, Sunwar and Thami in exchange for their service as carriers and potters during his expeditions to Eastern Nepal (Pradhan, 1991). However the word *Kipat* is used by the Tamangs also to mean a clan or original homes. The first and original home of the Ghishing is said to be Talijun, but as they increases in numbers, the Ghishing spread out and formed others homes; thus we find the Modi, Tilbung etc. these again formed fresh homes for themselves as they increases in numbers, but they are not to be considered as subdivisions or clans of the Ghishing, but merely 'Kipats' or places of residence. Thus, a Talijun Ghishing is merely a Ghishing residing in Talijun, or descended from a Ghishing resident of Talijun, and he is in every respect neither more or less than any other Ghishing, whether a resident of Modi, Mirgie, Tilbung or any other 'Kipats' and he, therefore, cannot marry any other Ghishing (Vansittart, 1993). Thus under the Bomjan clan *Kipat* kindreds like Hebung, Kamkol and Namlang are included. Similarly there are sub-divisions under each Bal *Kipat* was Themal. The Moktan *Kipats* are Baarkhani, Bhoja, Kaman, Marga, Markkani, Phasku Popti, Thapkan etc. The Yonjan *Kipat* are Dahding, Dawu, Pulbung and Risangu and Palchoka *Kipat* was Siangbo (Morris, 1933; Vansittart, 1993). Besides the whole community owns land in a pre-literate tribal society we cannot expect to find deeds and documents providing proprietary rights. The grant of *Kipat* or land by the state authority similarly goes against the very concept of communal ownership of land (Pradhan, 1991).

3.5. Same Clans (*Swangey Bhai*)

The Tamang custom does not permit to marry within the same clan (*Swangay bhai*). It is believed that in the ancient past, the “Swangey Bhai” were considered as offspring of the same parents. Later in time, their clans got divided according to the place of inhabitation. If any person violates this social rule, he or she is outcaste by the Tamang society. According to Kazi Man Tamang and H.K Kalden the following are the same clans (*swangay-bhais*) of the Tamangs:-

Dong: Tidung, Grangdan, Goley, Bal-Dimdong, Gongba, Dartang.

Hyonzon: Bomzon, Dumzon, Lopchan, Mickchan

Ghishing: Loo, Glan Ngesur, Loba

Moktan: Syangden, Thokar, Pakhrin, Syangbo

Rumba: Zimba, Gyabak, Waiba, Tuba, Gongba

Lopchan: Choten, Bloonden, Ngarten, Golden.

Theeng: Marpa, Toisang

Singer: Blone, Syangbo

Bal: Bayju, Tidung, Grangdan, Goley, Dong, Gomden, Kalden.

Nasur: Thing, Singer: this Nasue *thar* has been found in Doars Kalchini in (West Bengal) and West Pandam in Sikkim.

Choten: Galden, Blanden, Gomja (this *thar* has been found in Doars (Othalabari, Toribari Village) (Tamang, 2002; Kalden, 2012).

3.6. Ancient Religious Practice

The earliest form of religion which the Tamangs practiced was the “Bon Religion” which is also known as Shamanism and was very popular among the Mongols of Siberia, China, Tibet and Japan and naturally it found a place of pride among the Tamangs too (Lama, 1981). The Bon religion of Tibet and its followers, the *Bonpo*, first became known to Western scholars through the perspective of Tibetan Buddhism. In Buddhist historical writings, Bon is presented as the religion of Tibet in pre-Buddhist times, and specifically as the religion supported by the anti-Buddhist party at the Tibetan imperial court from the seventh to ninth centuries (Samuel, 2013). Bonpoism which is the oldest religion of Tibet was divided into three stages; the first one was primitive Bon, otherwise known as the “Black Sect”. The second phase ended during the reign of the mythical king Gri-gum Tsan-po. The third phase began during the reign of Srong Tsen Gampo (620-649 A.D.), the first Buddhist king of Tibet (Peters, 1998). It was during this third phase that the textual white Bon achieved full development. Black and white Bon are completely different religions. The Black Bon is a form of Shamanism and animism with an oral tradition. White Bon is close to Buddhism, assimilating almost all its literature. Larry Peters while referring to Li An-Chi (1948) writes that, “The names of deities and scriptures in White Bonism are different from those in Lamaism but their functions and ideologies correspond”(Peters,1998).

Tamang Bonposim is probably very close to ancient Black Bon. Both are shamanic-type religion with oral traditions. And none of the Tamang *Bonpo* knew white Bon or its deities³. The White Bon had its deities and literature and was not an animistic religion whereas Black Bon doesn't have deities and literature. Therefore it is considered that Tamangs are the oldest follower of Bon.

The Tamang people who were historically the adherents of Bon or Shamanism, a Tibetan school of Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism) practiced venerations of ancestors. They had

³ Because of the absence of these deities and of Srong Tsen Gampo from the Tamang oral tradition, it seem likely that the Tamangs either left Tibet before his reign; or have always lived where they do now, between Kathmandu and Tibet where the Himalayan Mountains provided a natural barrier against early incursion of Buddhism or white Bon Philosophy (Peter, 1998: 58-59).

their religious altars (place of worship) with no idols of any god and goddesses kept on such religious altars. There were only lamps, bells and *trisula* on such altars. Such altars were generally located under big trees. One could also find some stones kept as the symbols of god and goddesses. Walls were erected around the place of worship. According to Bon faith the Tamangs offered *pujas* to the god and goddesses of earth, under world and the sky. Yellow, white, green and red flags flutter around the boundary of the place of worship. The Tamangs also performed a special type of *puja* called *Fawla Halsu*. It was a kind of collective *puja* in the names of their tribe and was performed during the months of *Mangsir* to *Fagun* (November to March). Goats and fowls were sacrificed on such occasions. The *puja* was performed by a *Bonpo* and not by a Lama (Moktan, 2014; Lama, 2004).

For many years all social functions, rituals and festivals during bad and good times were conducted by the *Bonpo*. The Bon religion and the *Bonpo* traditions remained a deeply entrenched tradition and occupied an important place in the administration of *Mithim* and *Hyulthim* mores and the values they contained. No occasions of birth and death could be solemnised without the *Bonpo* cult coming into play. According to M.P Lama, not only Tamangs but other tribes also practice Bon religion such as Bhutia, Lepcha, Sherpas etc. but different from Tamangs and the believers of Bon religion believe in the existence of evil spirit and devils. The followers of the Bon religion such as Bhutias have their *Gumpas* (Monasteries). The picture or idol of Bon god looks similar to Buddha with a minor difference. *Bonpo Sherab* is the god of those following the Bon religion and their main mantra of the Bonpos is *Om Matri-Muyey-Salaydu* (Lama, 2004). But Tamangs do not have images or idols of gods neither they have Bon Monastery (*Gumpa*). *Bonpo Sherab* the god of those following Bon religion, in Tamang community venerated of the final death ceremony. The religion of Tamangs, however, is based on common ground and later on like that of others who follows Buddhism, Tamangs also started adopting Buddhism. Now around 80% of Tamangs in Sikkim follow Buddhism. The main mantra of Buddhism is *Om Mane- Padmay-Hum*.

3.7. Bon Pilgrimage Sites

We cannot find Bon pilgrimage sites or *Gumpas* (Monasteries) in Sikkim but in Nepal there are lots of Bon pilgrimage sites and *Bonpos* (the priest of the Tamangs) offers *pujas* at those sites. In Rasuwa district of Nepal (Gosaikund) are important Bon pilgrimage sites including Bhairavkund lake where *Bonpos* meditated every year in the day of *Sawant Purnima* (Full moon day). Every year there is a fair in Bhairavkund where all the Tamang *Bonpos* perform their Tantrick Sadhana. Only the Tamang clan of Goley *Bonpo* do not attend the fair because of some mythical reason. The myth relates that; the Goley clan of Bhairavkund believed that in ancient times one Goley *Bonpo* was killed by a *Naag* (Lord of snakes) and that is why the lake of Bhairavkund became black and blue in colour. In ancient times there were lots of Bon pilgrimage sites like temples, caves, lakes in Nepal but now they have been replaced by the Buddhist and Hindu religious sites, because Hindus believed that in the place of Gosaikund, Lord Shiva drank the *Kalakat Biss* (Poison) to save the world. Both the Bon and Buddhist worship Mansarowar Lake. The Buddhist goes round the lake from the right side but the *Bonpo* goes from left. In Nepal, other Bon sites are Halesi, Banapa Gosaithan, Mahadev Pokhari, Dolakha (Sailungswary), Kalingchowk, Doot Pokhari, Sundhari Jal, Kageshwari they offer *pujas* or fare. In Sindhupalchok (*Paanch Pokhari*), People first take bath in Gosaikund Lake and attain the fare in *Paanch Pokhari*. In northern Kathmandu valley such as in Nuwakot district's *Dhobi Ghat and Dupscheswarma* *Bonpo* do the (*Thirtha Yatra*) and offer *pujas* (Tamang, 2004).

3.8. Religious- Buddhism (*Choye*)

A major historical event marked the life of the Tamang society sometime in the middle of the 7th century when a new religion from across the northern Himalaya made its way to Tamsaling and held sway over the Tamangs, and that religion was the "Mahayana Buddhism". It was made possible by the noble act of the Guru Padmasambhawa, one of the greatest Indian religious teacher and philosophers who travelled across to Tibet where he preached Buddhism to the Tibetan king, the royal family and to the general people. The response was instantaneous, the Tibetan king and all his country people embraced

Buddhism as their newly found religion. Soon, Mahayana Buddhism and its Ningmapa brand spread like wild fire throughout the Himalaya and among the Tamangs. The Tamangs were the early adopters of Buddhism. When they embraced Buddhism a mixed form of Bonism and Buddhism emerged which is known as Lamaism or most commonly known as Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore there is no doubt that the religion which began to be practiced by the Tamangs was Buddhism and the innate faith or original belief of Bon. The adaptation of new religion as Buddhism has made the Tamangs similar to those other ethnic tribal groups who follow Buddhism. That is why their distinct identities as Tamang Buddhists have emerged (Lama, 1981).

Now the Tamangs are the follower of Mahayana Buddhism. But some are the followers of the Gelungpa sects too. Though the followers of the Gelungpa sects are not supposed to propitiate the various spirits, The Tamang does it almost invariable (Subba, 1989). Now most of the Tamangs are Buddhist by faith and birth, their religion is Lamaistic Buddhism and they use the religious texts and scriptures written in Tibetan and Tamang language. Tamangs share several basic similarities with the Tibetans, Sherpas, Bhutias, Lepchas, Yolmos and Kagateys (Tamang, 2002). As Mahayana Buddhist, Tamangs have erected numerous *Ghyangs* or *Gumpas* (Monasteries) which in turn have been in the vanguard of progress in Mahayana Buddhism. The Ningmapa sect to which the Tamangs belong within Mahayana Buddhism is characterised by the creation and presence of a class of religious priests or teachers called the Lamas (Monks). It is a great and unfailling tradition for every Buddhist Tamang. The social conventions and norms that have been evolved by the *Gonpas* or *Tambas* and *Bonpos* and which were being faithfully observed since ancient times dissolved into a new religion. The Mahayana Buddhism is now uniformly followed by almost all Tamangs. Based on this new religion, the “Tamang Chyurila Thimten” serves as a guide book and an inseparable part of Tamang Buddhism. It is noteworthy to observe significant differences between the Hinayana and the Tamang version of Mahayana Buddhism (Lama, 1981).

The Tamangs are Buddhists since long time in the past and they are adherents of Lama Buddhism or Lamaism. Their deities and rituals are very similar to other Buddhist tribes living along the Himalayas, such as the Sherpas who are of the Bhuddhist Nyingmapa

sect. Guru Padma Sambhava is worshipped as Rinpoche or great teacher by these people. The *Ghyangs* or *Gumpas* are looked after by the *Ghyang Guthi* (association) which sees to it that these *Ghyangs* are swept and cleaned daily and worship is performed (Bisht, 2008).

The Tamang Buddhist *Gumpas* (monasteries) is painted with images of Lord Buddha, Guru Padmashambhava, *Awaloketeswara*, *Doma* or *Tara* and other Buddhist deities on the walls of the monastery. Various Buddhist festivals and ritual ceremonies are conducted in the *Gumpas*. The Tamang Lamas are all trained in the Lamaistic Buddhist ritual procedures in different monasteries. In the absence of the Tamang Lama, Lamas from any other Mahayana-Vajrayana sects can perform the social and religious ceremonies of the Tamangs. Like other Mahayana sects, Tamang Buddhists also build stone tables and *Chortens* in commemoration of their dead ancestors. Prayers and images of Lord Buddha, Guru Padmashambhava, *Awaloketeswara* and others are inscribed on them. Resting places at the roadside for travelers are also built by them (Tamang, 200; Moktan, 2014).



Fig.3.2. Tamang monastery in Malli Dara in South Sikkim established in 1860.



Fig.3.3. Chorten



**Fig.3.4. Photo of Swarga Lama Kipat Sing Lama and his wife Suku Dolma Lama
Founder of the Tamang monastery in Sikkim.
Sources from the Villagers of Malli Dara, South Sikkim.**



Avaloketeswawa



Buddha



Doma/Tara



Gurupadmashambhava



Sanjay Mituk Pa

Fig.3.5. Photos of Buddhist deities
Collection from Lama Gyurme Tamang, Sichey Dechhencholing *Gumpa*

3.9. Tamang Rituals and Religious Specialists

Tamang religion essentially comprised of two distinct yet coexisting systems, Buddhism and Shamanism or Bonpoism. These are the traditionally recognized aspects. Hinduism also has a great influence. However, the Tamangs do not consider themselves Hindu and none of their religious specialists espouse Hinduism (Peters, 1998).

The two major types of Tamang religious specialists are Lamas (Priests) and *Bonpo* or *Bombo* whom David Holmberg, Larry Peters and others specialists on Tamang society describe as Shamans. A *Lama* and *Bonpo* fulfil different social functions in the community. As mentioned, the lama's primary responsibility is officiating at funeral ceremonies. The *Bonpo*'s main duty is to perform healing rituals. Bonpoism is an ecstatic religion in which *Bonpo* or Shamans enter into trance; i.e. he becomes possessed by spirits and embarks on soulful journeys where as the ritualistic duties of the Lama are textual and non-inspirational (Peters, 1998). In the Tamang society the Lama proceeds step by step where as the *Bonpo* by his voice. Lamas believed that the sacrifice is eternal torment in hell but shamans consider sacrifice to be an integral part in the performance of their duties. The *Lama*'s main god is Buddha and they believe that everything drives from the Adi- Buddha. Similarly, the *Bonpo*'s main god is Ghesar Gyalpo. Shamans/*Bonpo* also consider as Sorcerers or magicians. There is a myth that explains why the *Bonpo* traditions are maintained orally. There is a story which states that there was a contest between Guru Rimpoche and Nara Bon (the first human shaman) when all the Nara bon texts were thrown in a fire and burnt. Nara was as powerful as Guru Rimpoche and he memorised all the text thus the *Bonpos* commit everything to memory (Holmberg, 1989). The *Bonpo* or Shamans heal illness through visionary journeys in which they seek to discover the spirits causing the illness and recover the lost spirit-substance, shadow-soul or life-essence of the sick person. The Tamangs also have Lamas, and, according to Lerry Peters, in the older material there is a kind of ritualised conflict between *Bonpos* and *Lamas*, with a number of variants of a myth told by both *Bonpos* and *Lamas* of rivalry between the two, ending in an agreement that the *Bonpo* will look after the living, and the *lama* will take care of the funerary rites. This is a story known in Tibetan literature through its appearance in relation to Milarepa's contest with a *Bonpo* practitioner (Peter, 1998).

However what is worth noting is that there is a third significant class of ritual specialists in Tamang communities, the *Lambu* – a term which can be plausibly related, again, to *lha bon*. The *Lambu* is a sacrificial priest and is responsible for offerings to the deities. Unlike the *Bonpo*, whose visionary journeys have an exploratory nature, the *Lambu*, like the Khumbo⁴ and Te⁵ *lha bon*, has a fixed repertoire of chants referring to the various local deities (Samuel, 2013).

The Tamang again figure themselves as ‘on the wild side’ in relation to Tibetan Buddhism - the Tamang goddess was never bound by Buddhist lamas and the rituals of the Tamang lamas seem pretty rough and ready by comparison with their Tibetan equivalents

⁴ Khumbo: Is the community in eastern Nepal. In Hildegard Diemberger’s words the Khumbos are “the self – designation of an originally rather heterogeneous people made up of different clans who came from Tibet. *lha bon* is the priests of local clans and mountain deities. *lha bon* – locally pronounced *lhaven*; first introduced by Diemberger a western scholar in 1992 (Journals of the International Association for Bon Research, Vol- I, 2013).

⁵ Te: one of the groups of five villages in southern Mustan in Nepal who speak a distinctive Tibeto-Burman language known as *Seke*. The people of Te have hereditary Buddhist *Lama* and they also have special hereditary priests known as the *lhawen* (again spelled *lha bon*). The people of Te are unusual, though by no means unique, among Tibetan communities in Nepal in that they still carry out animal sacrifices to the local deities or *Yul lha*. The Te, *lhawen*’s role is linked to these animal sacrifices (*Ibid*).



Fig.3.6. Tamang Bonpo

(Photo from Controversy by: <http://pinterest.com>)



Fig.3.7. Monks Performing the Funeral Rituals

3.10. Rites and Rituals

In the earlier times Tamangs like all other tribal groups followed an animistic tradition and most of the religious ceremony centered round the worship of ancestors and appeasement of the elements. With the acceptance of Lamaistic Buddhism the religion of the Tamangs underwent some change keeping in tune with the Buddhist principal of Ahimsa. The original ritualistic practice, however, still remains in the far-flung hamlets inhabited by Tamangs of Sikkim and other parts of the country.

Tamangs practice several rituals and they have their own rituals priests known as *Bonpo* or Shamans. Moreover *Tamba*, the expert in Tamang rituals (*Rim- Thim*) and *Kairan* (History), is held in high esteem.

3.10.1 The Tamangs practice *Khepa –Soom* (Three Forefathers)

This is the ancestor worship where the head of the family performs the *Khepa-Soom* during the month of the September/October every year. This performance is a primitive practice in which homage is paid to the forefathers for their wisdom and blessing. The homage is paid by way of worship in which a full grown cock is killed literally at the threshold of a door called “Mrapsang” and its blood is offered to the idols, which may be specially made of different shapes of *Torma*- flour dough or cooked rice. The *Bonpo* or male head of the Tamang family usually perform this to evoke the spirits of dead forefathers for their blessings. Incense is burnt for purifying the air with good will and noble thoughts. The recitation of mantra is done in the Tamang language during this whole operation.

3.10.2. The Tamangs also perform rituals like *Phola- Daala* or *Kul Devta* or *Clan God* (Titular Deity)

The Tamang tribe offers their *puja* (worship) annually to their *Phola* (Titular Deity). Different Tamang clans (sub-castes) have different *Pholas* and the way of offering such *puja* is different from one clan (sub-castes) to another. The eldest member of the family either head of the family member or one who belongs to the same clan who is well versed

in such *puja* conducts the ceremony. Such offering is made in two ways either by a *Lama* or *Bonpo*. There are more than thirty such *Pholas* or titular deities. During the performance of *Phola* some tribes do it with great festive activities for 3-4 days. All members of the tribes, relatives are invited and food and drinks are offered. After completion of the *Phola Puja*, no money, article belonging to the house is lent or given to outsiders for 2-3 days. In some cases even the family members do not go out of the houses. This *Phola* is necessary for all the Tamangs due to the reason that besides the titular deity, this *puja* is offered to all the ancestors chanting each name belonging to the family- history, tracing back to the first ancestor (Gautam and Manger, 1994; Tamang, 2002; La Tshring, 2014).

3.10.3. Meen Thanba or Thapsang (Name giving ceremony)

It is believed that this ceremony was prevalent even before Tamangs converted into Buddhism. That is why at times they go ahead with this function even without the presence of a *Lama* (Monk). The purification and naming ceremony is usually performed five days after the birth of a child. However in some cases it is performed after five days too. Due to the influence of the Hindu religion this is sometimes done within seven to eleven days after the birth of the child (Moktan, 2014). According to the traditional customs of the Tamangs, the father of child performs the ceremony. This is now a day's done by the Tamang *Lama* or even the Brahmin priest. Before the observance of *Thapsang*, the *Chyosam* (prayer hall) and entire house and surroundings are cleaned and a long white colored *khada* (scarf) is placed on the top of the *Chyosam* (prayer hall). The newly born baby and the mother also bathe and wear new clothes specially made for the *Thapsang* observance. In this ceremony the *Lama* (Buddhist Priests) purifies the new born baby, mother and the family with *Thui* (Holy water). The Holy Scripture used by the *Lamas* for such ceremony is called "Choi". On the day of *Thapsang* all the family members, relatives and neighbors are invited for the blessing of newly born baby. The main feasts for the occasion are prepared *Thukpa* made from powder of dry fried rice and small pieces of meat and bones of beef or chicken. *Ko-roro-gang* (*Sal-roti*), *Khabjey*, *Nhe-Kan* (sweet rice), *Kekeba* (sweets) etc. are served (Lama, 2004; Shrestha, 1997; Tamang, 2002).



Fig.3.8: Newly Born Baby during the Time of *Thapsang*

3.10.4. *Kan Chwaba* or *Kan Waba* (Rice feeding ceremony)

The rice feeding ceremony which is also called *Pasni*, is a ceremony where the child is fed rice for the first time. It is normally performed after five months if the child is a daughter and it is done after six month if it is a son. The Tamangs have a peculiar custom of feeding rice to the child with the beak of a *Maina*-bird. There is a belief that in doing so the child would start speaking sooner. During this ceremony babies are either fed rice with the silver spoon or a coin used as spoon by the eldest member of the family. Then all the relatives and other persons are served with food and drinks on this occasion. They in return present money or other gifts to the child. At this ceremony the *Lama* performs the *Puja* for the well being of the baby, mother and the family members (Lama, 2004; Tamang, 2002).

3.10.5. *Tap-Chey* or *Chewar* (First hair shaving ceremony)

The ritual of *Tap-chey* or first hair cutting ceremony of a male child is performed by the Tamangs. The child must be three, five or seven years. The *Ashyang* (maternal uncle) plays the key role in this haircutting ceremony. In the case where the mother doesn't have any brothers, then any other relative can be used to function as a *Ashyang*. Before the

observation of *Tap-chey* ceremony the members of the family invite the *Ashyang* and *Angi* (maternal uncle and Aunty) to attend the ceremony. The following items are offered to the *Ashyang* for invitation on the occasion of *Tap-chey* ceremony:-

- | | |
|---|------------|
| a) <i>Mlha</i> (Rice) | 12 kgs |
| b) <i>Geng/Babari</i> (Bread) | 12 dozens |
| c) Rum/Whiskey/ Beer | 12 bottles |
| d) <i>Naga Hwaba</i> (Fully grown cock) | 1 cock |

The date of *Tap-chey* ceremony is fixed as per the Buddhist calendar or astrology. On the occasion, the *Asyang* and *Angi* also present the following items as blessing to their loving nephew:-

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) <i>Chemchey</i> (scissor) | 1 (one) |
| b) <i>Tagi/Usha</i> (Tamang cap) | 1 (one) |
| c) <i>Khenjar</i> (white shirt) | 1 (one) |
| d) <i>Taar Kwan</i> (white cloth) | 1(one) meter long for putting cut hair. |
| e) <i>Kharba/ Derma</i> (Plate-bronze) | 1 (one) |
| f) <i>Khenja</i> (Waist coat) | 1 (one) |
| g) <i>Darpung</i> (Small pitcher-bronze) | 1(one) |
| h) <i>Tanga</i> (Coin) | Rs. 120/-(Rupees one hundred twenty) |
| i) <i>Khada</i> (scarf) | 1 (one) white color. |

On the occasion, the *Ashyang* and *Angi* may reach the child's home one day before the celebration, When they reach the house of the child they are welcomed with full honor of cultural party by the family members of the child. The head of the *Lama* and the others recites the "Chyondo Tsesang" (meaning) three times and 108 *Chemis* (butter lamps) are lightened by the family members of the child and the invited guests. If the child is female only few strains of hair from the centre of the head is cut by the *Ashyang* and the Head *Lama*. After cutting the hair of the male and female child, the hair is offered at the *Chyosam* (prayer hall), *Gonpas* or *Chorten* (monasteries) or in the River. The girl child is

also given one new set of clothes as a gift on the day of *Tap-chey*. This auspicious occasion is celebrated in a grand manner (Tamang, 2014).

3.10.6. *Brelsang* (Marriage ceremony)

There is no prescribed age for marriage of boys and girls within the Tamang community. When the boys or girls attains the marriageable age, a girl within the Tamang tribe is looked for. There are many sub-castes within the Tamang tribe. There is the tradition of cross-cousin marriage among the Tamangs, which is to say that matrilineal and patrilineal cross-cousin marriages are generally practiced and accepted. The matrilineal cross-cousin marriage is called *Mama Cheli Phupa Chela* and patrilineal cross-cousin marriage is called *Phupu Cheli Mama Chela* (Gautam & Thapa, 1994).

There are various types of marriages among the Tamangs, such as *Magi Biwaha* (Arranged marriage), *Prem Biwaha* (Love marriage), *Chori Biwaha*, *zari Biwaha*, *Bidua Biwaha* (Widow Marriage). But it cannot be pointed out which particular type of marriage is the most prevalent among the Tamangs (Bisht, 2008).

In *Magi Biwaha* (arranged marriage), there is the custom of the *Lami* (middleman) or matchmaker, representing the boy's family who goes to the house of girl with a proposal of the marriage. Generally *Tamba* is the person who functions as the *Lami*, because the *Tamba* has the knowledge of the ancient customs and traditions of the Tamangs. Once the talks are over and the finalization is made by the *lami*, *sagun pong* (a vessel of fermented millet) two bottles contained with *Airak* (liquor) called *karjel pong* containing one fully grown cock, curry (chicken) bottles of Rum or whiskey and 10-15 *khada* (scarf's) etc. are taken to the girl's home. All these items are arranged in a clean *Kharba/Derma* (a bronze plate) and taken to the girl's home. Then both sides agree for the marriage, the items brought by the boy's side will be distributed to all the members present there. After agreeing to give their daughter to the boy and from the boy side another *sagun pong* and one bottle of whiskey or Rum is offered to the girl's parents and they are asked what kind of *Rim* (custom) they want from the boy's side. Tamangs have different kinds of *Rim* (customs) ranging from the highest to lowest according to the socio-economic

standard. The highest being the *Dhangri Rim* or oldest *Rim* of Tamangs. In this *Rim* all items like *Airak* (liquor) 12 bottles, *Maama geng* (like chapattis) - *Khal Changni* (240 chapattis), *Sya* (around 30kg of meat of mutton) and other gift items consisting of 12 representative of twelve clans of Tamangs are sent to the girl's house by the boy's family. It is at this time that the actual date of the marriage is fixed (Lama, 2004; Tamang, 2014).

The *Janti* or procession consisting of men and women proceed to the house of the girl on the scheduled date, as per their custom. While the *janti* makes its way towards the girl's house, exotic rhythms are beaten on their *damphu*⁶ or large one sided open hand beating drums. *Damai bjas* or instruments played by the *Damais*⁷ are not used by the Tamangs. Along with the *Tamba* the *Damphuray* (singer who plays the *Damphu*) and dancers precede with the groom, while relatives, friends and neighbors follow him. The girl's sides welcome them by placing drinks, flower and home cooked bread etc. on the threshold of the main door of the house. They are offered *Janr* (alcoholic drink) or milk called *sagun* (good omen for the occasion). The bridegroom is made to sit on a woolen *Rari* (carpet). The brother of the bride brings her to the place carrying her on his back and makes her sit beside the bridegroom. They are offered milk or *Janr* (drink) which they drink to bring luck.

The marriage starts with the *Tambas* of both sides singing the *Mundum* which narrates the origin story of the universe, the ancient history of the Tamang tribe their traditions and customs. This is followed by a duet where the *damphu* beaters of one side ask their counter- parts certain questions in a typical tune or *bhaka* and these questions are answered by the other side in the same *Bhaka* or tune. At this time these people are in a rhythmic motion or dancing as is customary. The *bhaka* sung on this particular occasion is *Tamaba geet* or song of the *Tamba*, because whatever is said in these songs is related to the respective families and their genealogies (Gautam and Manger, 1994).

⁶ *Damphu*-the main musical instrument played on the occasion.

⁷ *Damais*- the *Damais* are tailors by occupation. *Damaha* is one of the musical instruments of the *Nawmati baja*. It is said that the term *Damai* comes from *Damaha* played by the *Damai*. The *Damai* still play the *Damaha*. The *Damai* too are treated as schedule caste with special privileges under the act of the government (Lama, 2004; p285).



Fig.3.9: Tamba and Damphurey playing the Damphu during the time of Marriage ceremony

The next part of the marriage is the *ratri bhoj* or night feast, where the bride, groom and all present eat and drink together. After the feasting is over, the solemn ceremony or rituals of *Kanyadan* (ceremony of giving away the bride) is arranged. A traditional custom called *Chardam* is observed. This consists of a kilo of rice, four coins, drinks and flowers. The *Chardam* is also known as *Damen Bli* and before giving the daughter to their son-in-law they perform *Chardam*. It is a moving ceremonial function presided over by a *Tamba* who declares that everything (body with flesh, blood and breath) is given to the husband and in-laws except the *ruiba*. *Ruiba* means a flat bone (of forehead) which should be brought back by the husband or in-laws after the death of the daughter-in-law. It is believed that the *ruiba* is the proofs that one belongs to one particular clan (*ru*) that she belong to before marriage. That is why even after marriage a Tamang woman does not change her title and the clan name (*ru*) that she belonged to before marriage. After the *Chardam* is presented from the bride's parents, the ceremony *Chardam* ritual, in Tamang society, is considered to have concluded (Bal, 2005; Moktan, 2014)

The marriage ceremony is either performed by the *Bonpo* or the *Lamas*. However, it has been observed that a majority of Tamangs prefer to use the services of a *Bonpo* instead of *Lama*. Only when *Bonpo* is not available then they use a *Lama*. There is no custom of putting on the vermilion or *sindur* on the bride head (Bisht, 2008)

The next day before sending away the bride and the bridegroom, a feast called *Samdhi Bhoj* is arranged in honor of the parents of the bride and the bridegroom. On this occasion the relatives of both the sides are introduced. After exchanging respect to each other the bride and the bridegroom are bid farewell (Lama, 2004).

At this point of the wedding, the *Tamba* in the presence of the gathering makes the parents or guardians of the groom promise never to let the bride suffer in future and the groom is made to vow in a similar way too, by the *Tamba*. A swearing in ceremony is also held by the *Tamba* in favor of the bride. The bride and the bridegroom are made to touch each other's forehead three times and are also made to exchange each other's seat three times. They are also made to exchange each other's food to eat. The final ritual is the placing of *tilak* on the forehead of the bride and bridegroom by the elderly persons and wishing them a happy and prosperous life.

When the bride and bridegroom and party reach the house of the bridegroom, a grand feast is arranged for the *Janti* or procession i.e. called *jitwari bhoj* (Victory feast). This ceremony is believed to have started in ancient times, when a popular form of arranging a marriage was to kidnap the bride. After the *bhoj*, the couples are then welcomed with *sagun* i.e. drinks, fruits and other kinds of food are served to the gatherings in plenty. After three days of the ceremony the bride is sent away to her parent's home. This custom of sending away the bride is called *dobri niwori (duran phiraune)* by the Tamangs. This concludes the marriage (Gautam and Manger, 1994; Bisht, 2008).



Fig.3.10: Tamang Couple during the Marriage Ceremony

Now a days *Prem Biwaha*, *Chori Biwaha* and *Zari Biwah* seem to be more popular than the *Magi Biwaha*, among the Tamangs.

Prem Biwaha (Love Marriage): In the love marriage, a girl elopes with a boy having fallen in mutual love. In such marriages all rituals of marriage are not observed but certain traditional customs have to be followed before taking the girl as the bride of the boy.

Marriage by Zari: In the uncommon case where a man's wife is abducted, the offender has to pay certain monies to compensate the former husband. When adultery is committed with another's wife, the offender is punished and a fine is paid to the aggrieved husband. After acceptance of compensation, the aggrieved husband than allow his ex- wife to remain with the other man (Bisht, 2008).

Bidua Biwaha (Widow Marriage)

There is no bar in remarriage by a widow in the Tamang society. A younger brother can marry the widow of the elder brother. This is however very rare. Divorce is always easily

agreed in Tamang community. The *Panch* (the village community) binds a long string to the waists of the man and the woman and cuts the same into two parts. It is called to *Sinkapongra*. The Pancha is compensated with a nominal fee. After the conclusion of the divorce, the wife or husband is free to re-marry and not looked down upon. Previously the practice of polyandry was also prevalent, where two or more brothers married one woman. This has however, become extinct nowadays. The practice of polygyny is also prevalent among the Tamangs and so a person is permitted to have a couple of wives simultaneously. The practice of polygyny is still prevalent in the society. Moreover, in Tamang community women have equal status to that of man. They hold equal right over the family property. But if any woman moves outside the Tamang community by way of marriage to someone from other communities she loses everything (Gautam and Manger, 1994)

Death Ceremony

3.10.7. *Rho* (Dead Body)

Death in the Tamang family is a religious and social event which is observed by going through many traditional customs. According to the traditional belief of the Tamangs the dead is completely dead only after the expiry of eight hours. The life remains inside the body for eight hours, as they believe. After eight hours the dead body is washed and purified with water from a *Bumha* (small vessel). The dead body is called *Chaynday*. The body is then covered with *Namsa* (white sheet). The body is kept in a big *Kharkundo* (vessel of copper or brass) in a sitting position of Padma-Asan or lotus position like the Buddha. A *mandap* (alter) called *Lasem* is erected. *Lasem* is the symbol of three supreme gods i.e. *Chaiko*, *Loong Ko* and *Tulko* i.e. the creator, protector and the destroyer like the Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh of the Hindus. The *Chaynday* or the dead body is kept near the *Lasem* where butter lamps are lit. In case of rich people 108 butter lamps are lit. The sweet scent of the burning *Saldhup* fills the atmosphere. The Tamangs believe that the sweet smelling smoke would kill all the invisible germs coming out of the dead body.

The Lama then starts reading the prayers from the Holy Scripture. There are four different kinds of prayers for the occasion which are called *Fawa*. These are *Chentop Fawa*, *Chaiko Fawa*, *Loong Ko Fawa* and *Tulko Fawa*. *Chentop Fawa* is chanted with the purpose of keeping away the evil spirits from entering into the body of the deceased. The other three prayers are chanted in honor of the three gods.

The dead body is taken out of the house according to the direction of the head Lama who fixes an auspicious moment for the purpose. The dead body is taken out either in a coffin box or in a vessel with the help of bamboos. The coffin box is decorated with red, green and white flags and flowers. Among the people of the Buddhist faith the flower called *Koko Mehendo (Totala)* a longish hard shell which contain hundreds of thin flowers, is considered most sacred and is required on certain occasions, death being one of them. The Tamangs pay their obeisance to the sacred flower before taking out the corpse to the cremation ground. The dead body is taken to the cremation ground to the tune of various musical instruments and to the blowing of the conch shell *Gyaling* (a clarinet-like instruments used in the Buddhist religious ceremonies), *Jyamta* (cymbal), *Dhyangro* (drum), *Sankha* (conch shell) etc. are the important musical instruments for the occasions. Just in front of the corpse walks the head lama who rings the bell and simultaneously recites the Mantras, while walking in rhythmic steps. While his one hand ring the bell, his other hand is used to hold a *Dhvja* which is attached to the box or bamboos structure, carrying the corpse.



Fig.3.11: Funeral Procession

The Tamangs generally cremated the death either near a stream or on hillock. The fire woods are stocked in six stories for the purpose. Under the stock of fire wood a line is sketched for lighting the fire which they called *Broom*. The cremation ground is fenced with banana stumps, branches of the cherry tree and sugarcane stumps. This is done for the purpose of keeping away the evil spirits. A piece of camphor with a small quantity of *ghee* is put on a leaf which is placed on the lips of the dead body. The camphor is lit and the fire is lit from the four corners by the relatives of the dead person. Fourteen kinds of food grain are mixed and put into the burning pyre. Five butter lamps are also lit near the funeral pyre to represent five Gods. A pinch of soil or a piece of firewood is also thrown on the burning pyre by the people to bid farewell to the dead person. The body which consists of the five elements of nature i.e. air, sky, earth, fire and water of which the human body is made up dissolve into nature. This high philosophy is in accordance with the Vedic principle followed by the Hindus. The Tamangs however, believed that the soul of the dead loiters on earth for forty nine days. Hence food, food stuffs are kept near the cremation ground for the dead, which is called *Dhoyon* (Lama, 2004; Tamang, 2002; Bisht, 2008).

3.10.8. Ghewa or Kuth Segu (49 Days Death Rite) *Ghewa* is the most important and costliest ceremonial function of the Tamangs. The former is held after three days and also *Dunchi*⁸ on every seven days of death and final rite on the 49th day of the death. Till the performance of the final rites or *Ghewa* two principal meals are offered morning and evening to the departed soul every day and the dry powder of oat grains or rice powder called *Sur* is burned in burning coal and a full jug of clean water is offered. The prayer flags in the name of deceased are placed on the long bamboo pole or clipped in long ropes. The *Ghewa* or *Kuth Segu* (final death rite) is observed inside the *Chyosom* (prayer hall) if sufficient space is available for the observance, if not the *Dazang*⁹ can be constructed outside the house. Before the starting of *Kuth Segu* the working groups for three days are constituted as under:

Dorjey Loben (head lama)

Unzey (head musician)

Ganba (An elderly person)

Tamba (historian of Tamangs)

Kongyer (person who arranges things for the *Gheywa* or *pooja* arranger)

Kathwkey (convener or in charge of all work)

Lhaiba (Incharge of dishes)

Tshangba (Incharge of tea and bars)

Chyuwa (Incharge of firewood and water)

Byon Hraba Dorjey

⁸ *Dunchi*: is the ceremony which is done every seven days before forty nine days where Lama came to the home and offers prayers to the deceased soul and all the family members relatives lit 108 butter lamps in the name of the deceased soul and also Buddhist mantra *Om Mane Padmay- Hum* recited.

⁹ *Dazang*: before 49 days it is constructed outside the house, where *Chyosam* (Prayer hall) is made. In the *Dazang* all the funerary rituals are done by the Lamas. It is also believed that only the Tamang community done the funerary rituals in the *Dazang*.

The working groups of the above members are selected and finally the *Dorjay Lobon* (head lama) offers *khadas* (scarf) to the above members. The use of alcohols and any kind of meat is prohibited inside the *Dazang* and its premises till the completion of final rite. *Ghewa* is performed in three different ways. First kind of *Ghewa* is begun in the morning and is completed in the evening of the same day. The second kind is begun in the morning and is completed in the afternoon of the next day. The third kind of *Ghewa* is called *So*. This is performed in the same manner like the other two (Lama, 1981; Tamang, 2002).

3.10.9. Bonbo Sherab:

Before conclusion of final rites or last death rites the *Tamba* (historian of Tamangs) perform the *Thunda-sosi* (arrangement of ration for deceased) programme. In the *Thunda-sosi*, all the relatives are offered a handful of rice with a coin of one rupee in the name of the deceased. On behalf of the ceremony performer *Tamba* explains in the Tamang dialect that the rice and the one rupee coin are offered by the relatives for the expenses of travelling to heaven (Tamang, 2002).

3.11. Cultures

3.11.1. Chaba Thungba (Food Habits)

Regarding food, Tamangs have their own belief and ideas. In the earlier days the Tamangs were determined by the kind of food crops that they grew and the climatic condition prevailing in the area where they lived. Living at high elevators in the Himalayan Mountain, the original food habit of the Tamangs did not differ much from that of Tibetans or Bhutias, who are also tribal communities of the mountains (Armington, 1994). They preferred to eat foodstuff like millet, maize, wheat and barley flour. They did not use paddy as much as those living in rice growing areas. They mostly used rice to make *Janr* (alcoholic beverage otherwise prepared out of millet or wheat) and *raksi* (homemade liquor) using flour and other cereals. Wherever Tamangs live, they are liquor drinkers and none of their rituals are complete without the use of liquors. Similarly meat is also considered essential to complete their dietary structure, and

according to their own beliefs, they do not abhor beef, yet it cannot be said that this is consumed by all of them (Bisht, 2008).

A typical Tamang meal consists of powdered dried and fried oat grain mixed with butter, which is then served with butter tea. They are mostly non-vegetarian and they take all kind of meat, fruits and vegetables. In the past few centuries, however, as they immigrated to new areas in search of better vocation and opportunities, the original food habit, language, religion, costume and customs etc. in respect to these emigrants often became gradually influenced by the food habit of the non-Tamangs who were in majority in the areas that they moved to. This is a feature which can be observed in every tribal society. In some cases when employed as labors, servants and herdsman by comparatively richer non-Tamangs landlords, their food habit, costume and way of life became that of their non-Tamang employees (Shrestha, 1997).

While eating food Tamangs generally would sit cross-legged on the floor, the meal dishes being served on a plate placed on the floor itself. When respectable relatives or Lamas, Rinpoches visited a Tamang's house the meal were marks honor, so they were served on the *Chok-chi* (small traditional table) rectangular table of various sizes. The head of the family member also enjoys this privilege. The guests are offered *Rari* (Den) a thick carpet made of sheep wool to sit on comfortably. What is remarkable is that before taking the meal, the head of the family member initiates the conventional of *Fyafula*¹⁰. It is first conveyed to the guests and to which all present members will join saying '*Laso*' '*Laso*'. *Fyafula* a custom carried out in the form of folded hands is a respectful sign of request to the guests and other signifying that the meal may now be taken '*Laso*', means a reply in the affirmative. The guests are provided with a full vessel of water for washing their hands and mouth right at the points where they were sitting before and after meals (Tamang, 2002, 2014).

¹⁰ *Fyafula* means (equivalent of nameste) or to greet each other.



THEKI (Milk Jar)



MARTHONG (Butter bowl)



WINE GLASS



MANA (Rice Cup)



FURU (Soup Bowl)

Fig.3.12: Utensils used by the Tamangs.

3.11.2. *Kwanba then Gyancha* (Costumes or dresses and ornaments)

The original dresses or costumes of the Tamangs differ little from that of a Tibetan or a Sherpa. However, the Tamangs in the plains or warm places wear different type of dresses or costume. The Tamangs, living in high altitude areas wear a long gown called *bakkhu* or *Surkaye* that extend right up to their feet (Josephson and Tiwari, 1988). The men and women's head dress may be of wool or fur known as *Tagi* or *Usha* and on the foot they wear an extremely warm leg warmers called *docha* or *Lakham* and their female folk wear blouses called *Hangrey*, *bakkhu*, *Khenjo* little different from waist coat. On the lower part of the body they wear frocks called *farey*, *dormu* and *Kitti (Pangden)* etc. married and unmarried women wear a *Pangden* or *Kittie* (apron-like cloth) similar to those worn by a married Sherpas and Tibetan women folks. This *Pangden* is worn either in front or at the back. Due to this use of the *Pangden* among the Tamang women, it is difficult to distinguish an unmarried woman from a married one, as is extremely easy among the other users of this *Pangden* which is the identification of a married woman among Tibetans, Bhutias, and Sherpas. The traditional ornaments of the Tamang female consists of a star shaped bracelets called "Gao" and the bangles called *Mathi*, *Bala*, and *Yachyap*. *Chyaldang*, *Chyaldo*, *Nachya* as earrings. *Phuli Mundri* and *Na-Mhar* on the nose. *Chakka* and *Chap* on fingers, *Jantar*, *Red munga*, *Shi* as garment and *Kalli* on legs. Married women sometimes also wear *Potey*, *Tilhari*. While male wears earrings called *Nhabi Mhar*. Male babies are given silver bangles on the first *Bhat Khwai* or *Kaan Chaba* (Rice feeding ceremony)(Subba, 2008; Tamang, 2014). However, the Tamangs costumes and custom were gradually influenced by the non-Tamangs, who were the majority in localities where they resided in Sikkim.



Fig.3.13: Tamang Man and Women in the Hills of Rasuwa district of Nepal

The Tamangs costumes are us under

Male

Cap ... *Tagi/Syodey/Usya*

Shirt ... *Khenjar*

Khenjo/Todung (waist coat)

Surlung/Surtam/Kansu (Trousers)

Docha /Panaie/Lakham (shoes)

Female

Tagi/Usya (cap)

Hangrey (blouse)

Khenjo/Todung(waist coat)

Farey/Dormu (fork)

Docha/Panaie/Lakham(shoes)

Pangden (Kitti)



Cap (*Tagi/syodey/Usya*)



Shirt (*Khenjar*)



Trouser (*Surlung/Surtam/Kansu*)



Waist Coat (*Khenjo/Todung*)

**Fig.3.14: Tamang Male Costume
Collection from K.M. Tamang**



Cap (*Tagi/Usha*)



Pangden (*Kitti*)



Fork (*Farey/Dormu*)



Blouse (*Hangrey*)



Waist Coat (*Khenjo/Todung*)

Fig.3.15: Tamang Female costumes
Collection from K.M. Tamang

ORNAMENTS

Chyoldo (earrings), *Na-Mhar* (nose rings), *Chyaldang* (sikree), *Mattie* (Bangle), *Chap* (finger ring), *Zeeh* (beats), *Bulun Mala* (Big Neckles)



Earrings (*Chyoldo*)



Finger Ring (*chap*)



Bangles (*Mattie*)



Amulet Necklace (*Sikri/ Jantar*)



Big Necklace (*Bulun Mala*)



Beads (*Zeeh*)

Fig.3.16: Tamang Female Ornaments.
Photo collection from Ajitman Tamang, Kthmandu, 2006.
Photo collection from Controversy by: <http://explorehimalaya.com>

3.11.3. *Shyaba then Goba* (Songs and Dances)

The Tamang tribes have their own traditional songs (*Whaee*) and Dances (*Shyaba*). The Tamang songs and dances are also distinct in their own way. Tamang folk songs are generally composed in Tamang language and have appeals of their own. Tamang songs are sung on all festive occasions and along with *Damphu* dance; performed by two or three men or women dressed in the traditional costume which has its own unique beauty and effect. Every tribal community living in the Himalayan belts have their own traditional songs and dances. And so do the Tamangs. Tamang songs and dances have a distinctive character of their own. They speak as much as about the naivety of their antiquity, varied in content and meaning. Tamang songs (*Whaee*) composed in Tamang dialect and Tamang “selo” reflects the philosophy and ethos of a civilization which can only be considered as ancient and unlike other civilizations it is uniquely singular. Tamang “selo” has a distinctive feature, which has greatly enhanced the folk song. Tamang songs are sung on all occasions and along with *Damphu shyaba* (dance) form a part and parcel of Tamang marriage. On such occasions often men and women sit in two groups and then the most typical Tamang songs in the purest Tamang dialect begins. Soon they may find themselves tied up in an exciting duel. This may continue for the whole night and even the next day. Often it happens that the vanquished has to surrender to the victor (winner) who will elope with the former to become his or her life partner. The *Damphu* rendered on the accompanying *Damphu Whaee* (song) is typical Tamang folk *shyaba* (dance) performed by two or three men and women dressed in the full costume. The *Damphu* is the most loving musical instrument of the Tamangs, it is a round flat shaped drum topped with deer skin and tightened at its edge with the help of 32 (thirty two) pointed small bamboo pencil like pieces which give the whole instrument a characteristic appearance. Musical instruments of Tamang are *Damphu*, *Tungna* and *Gonggap* (made out of a small piece of iron) etc. (Tamang, 2014;Yonjan, 2014).

3.11.4. Origin of Tamang Songs and Dances

Songs and dances of the Tamangs have their origins in mythology. According to the *Tambas*(Poet-Historians of this tribe), Tamangs songs (*Whaee*) and dances (*Shyaba*) have

originated from the time of Lord Shiva. The *Tambas*, while narrating about the creation of *Dhamphu* (an one sided finger beating tambourine which is the main musical instrument of the Tamangs), take the name of Peng Dorjee (symbolically Peng Dorjee refers to Lord Shiva) (Yonjan, 2014). According to the Tamang beliefs, a man called Peng Dorjee (Shiva) and his beloved Ruisang (Parvati) wondering in the beautiful and dense Himalayan forest, while travelling through the Himalayan forests, felt tired and sat down to rest. Suddenly Peng Dorjee saw a Ghoral (species of Himalayan deer) in the near distance. Immediately he had a desire to kill the deer. He aimed his arrow and killed it. On seeing the Ghoral's suffering his beloved Ruisang was filled with grief. She even scolded Peng Dorjee for his cruelty. Peng Dorjee became stunned seeing his annoyed beloved. He begged for pardon. But Ruisang said that until and unless he did something memorial for the poor creature, which had died for no fault of its own. He would never be delivered from this sin. Then Peng Dorjee, confessing his sinful act, assured his near and dear Ruisang to create a memorial. Next day he skinned the Ghoral, removed its bristle, and dried the hide in the sun. He then cut a branch of the *koiralo* tree (*Bahunia Variegata*) and carved the wood to make a circular frame. Chanting the names of different Gods and goddesses, and asking to be absolved of his sin, he stretched the hide across the frame and fixed it all around with thirty two nails of bamboo. He overlaid the wooden ring by the kin and nail around the ring. He also fixed a split cane of bamboo (nearly ½ inch in breadth and 2 to 2 ½ inches long) in the lower part of the ring from outside where the middle finger of the holding hand would give onetime beat. On completion of that musical instrument, he played on it with the three fingers in three beats. The first beat and the third beats he played with his open hand which sounded as 'Tap *dhung dhung*'. Peng Dorjee felt himself in making an instrument as a memorial. He also thought that he has been able to create the instrument by the blessing of Saraswati (Goddess of Music). So, at first, he prayed to the Goddess of Music, playing and dedicating his instrument. Peng Dorjee had an instrument but it had no name. One day, in the jungle Peng Dorjee was playing his instrument, composing song on his own mood of ecstasy. He suddenly saw a *Damphe* (Pheasant) dancing to please his dear *Munal* (Impeyan Pheasant) few steps far in the pasturage. It was dancing, sometime shaking its crest, sometime making his head up straight and sometime bending down. Sometime the

Damphe used to hop here and there and again stretching its wings and going a few steps ahead and turning back. Time to time, it used to dance rotating in one place. Peng Dorjee was amazed seeing the dance of *Damphe* and made up his mind to dance like *Damphe* playing his instrument. He practiced for some time. Finally he went before his Ruisang and danced singing and playing the instrument. Ruisang was really happy for her loving lad's song and dance. She was much happier with the creation of an instrument from skin of wild goat. When she knew about the dance which was learnt from *Damphe*, she proposed the name of the instrument as "*Dhamphu*". Peng Dorjee also agreed and then onwards the instrument is called '*Dhamphu*'. Thus one can easily and etymologically find out the derivation of word '*Dhamphu*' from '*Damphe*' (Yonjan, 2014; Dasgupta and Tamang, 2015).

From that day onwards this small drum *Damphu* still exists in the same form without any change. The oral traditions which exist in the form of songs or dances of a tribe throw much light on ancient past of a race or tribe. The Tamangs have their *Mundum* i.e. the song which describes their ancient past. They sing this song on religious and social occasions to the rhythmic beats of their dear musical instrument *Damphu*. Before singing of Tamang Selo (song) the name of Siva the God of all Mongol Kirati tribes is invoked (Lama, 2004).



Damphu



Tamang Dances

Fig.3.17.

3.11.5. There are three types of songs in Tamang community. **1) *Whaee*. 2) *Rhama*. 3) *Selo*.**

Whaee

Whaee, which is strictly in Tamang language, always begins from “Prayer to Mother” (*Matri Vandana*) such as: “*Ammaile hoi Ammaile*” (mother oh mother, the adulation of mother) (Dasgupta and Tamang, 2015). This is an invocation to the mother. It has four different kinds of significance:

Firstly it is a song of praise for Saraswati, the Goddess of music and art. Secondly, it is a prayer to Ruisang (Parvati) by whose reprimand ‘*Damphu*’ could be made and Tamang songs (*Whaee*) and dance (*Syaba*) came to existence. Thirdly, it is a prayer to one’s own mother who gave birth to Tamang sons and daughters and makes them able to sing and dance. Fourthly and finally, it is a mark of devotion to the birth-giving mother, the procreator of the Tamang people. After the hymn to the mother, the Tamang *Dampharus* sing in praise of Pengdorje and pay obeisance to their forefathers (Das Gupta & Tamang, 2015).

In Tamang *Wahee* (songs) we can also find the narration of the creation of this world and this type of song is called *Tambala Wahee*. Description of Tamang rituals and social activities are also described in such *Wahee* (song).

Rhama

Rhama is another type of song of the Tamangs. *Rhama* is specially sung during the occasion of wedding ceremony, that too, particularly at that time of wearing wedding garments by the bride-groom before the beginning of the procession to bring the bride. The tune and rhythm of *Rhama* are quite different from *Whaee*. The tune is slow and deliberate. In *Rhama* they pray to Gods and Goddesses of sky, god of family (*kul-deuta*), Goddess presiding over mountains tops (*Devi-Deurali*) and Gods and Goddesses of water and dry land (*Sime-Bhume*) to bless the bride-groom and to safe guard him till his return

from the bride's house, pushing aside the obstacles that may come in. But this *Rhama* and '*Mhinjyan Prachila Rhama*' are not the same. First one is in tune where as the later is recited like prose. The later is performed by *Tamba* at the time of the last dead rituals of a person just before burning his or her body (Yonjan, 2014).

Selo

Some scholars believe that the word '*Selo*' is derived from the Sanskrit Word '*Shaili*', which means 'performance', while many others claim that the root word comes from Tibetan where '*Se*' means something that can be sung and '*lu*' is song. Some other theories also argue that '*Selo*' is a derivative of the word '*Syalu*' which is an invitation to join in dance (Das Gupta & Tamang, 2015). The Tamang song in Nepali language is called '*Tamang Selo*'. The content mostly draws from everyday songs of love and life and occasionally also draws from ritualistic songs. Rhythm, beat and style are similar to that of the '*Whaee*' but the language used is Nepali. In some places of Nepal it is also called '*Bhote Selo*'. As the song is sung by playing *Damphu* it is also known as *Damphu Geet* (Yonjan, 2014; Dasgupta and Tamang, 2015).

3.11.6. Dances

Tamang word for 'dance' is *Syaba* or *Syaw*. But now a days, generally the word '*Nac*' is used for dance. The Tamang dances are dividing into two broad categories-

- 1) Religious and ritual dances.**
- 2) Social and other festive dances.**

In the first categories dances such as – *Bakpa Nac*, *Choie Cham*, *Ziunba Nac*, *Ghyn Nac*, *Torma Mharso Nac*, *Bambo Nac* etc. Social and festival dances are generally known as *Whaee Syaba* and *Damphu Nac*. In the present context, *Damphu* dance is a *Selo* song. It may be the reason why *Damphu* dance is also called *Selo* dance. *Damphu* dance is a dance which is to be danced playing the *Damphu* in the hands. A *Damphu* dancer is called *Damphe* or *Damphare*. Both men and women participate in

Whaee Syaba or *Damphu* dance. The number of dancers may vary from one to many considering the place and situation. Presentation of *Whaee* dance differs as little from *Damphu* dance or *Selo* dance. In *Whaee* dance, *Whaee* singers start the song slowly and then the dancers pick up the rhythm accordingly by crossing their legs and twisting their bodies. Their queuing word to start the dance is- '*Tadhin lau jhilke nadhin lau*'. When singers change the rhythm and go fast, the dancers also pick up the same rhythm and dance like *Damphe* as described before. On the contrary, *Selo* dance begins suddenly and ends suddenly. Even the duration of dance is maximum five minutes. *Selo* dance is more dramatic because the dancer tries to express the meaning of *Selo* lyrics through their movement of eyes, limbs and facial expressions. Anyway, Tamang dance whether it is *Whaee*, *Syaba* or *Selo*, is very popular even beyond its tribal sphere and Tamangs do perform these song and dances in varied occasions. Now a day Tamang songs and dances are getting their places even in the cinema (Yonjan, 2014; Moktan, 2014).



Fig.3.18: Choie Cham performs by the Lama during the time of funeral ceremony



Fig.3.19: Tamang Dances performed during the social function

3.12. Festivals

Tamangs have well preserved their culture, custom, costume, language and the literature. Among many Buddhist festivals *Sonam Lhochhar* is one of the important festivals of this community. Tamangs observe *Sonam Lhochhar* as their New Year. When the Tamangs practiced Bon religion in Tibet in the Pre-Buddhist period, *Sonam Lhochhar* was observed every winter with offerings of large quantity of incense and sacrificing a number of animals to local spirits and deities to gain victory of good over evils. Later, during the period of the IXth King of Tibet, Pude Gungyal, *Lhochhar* started being observed as a Buddhist festival. There was a wise woman in Tibet named Belma who introduced the measurement of time on the basis of moon and the science of astrology was also introduced according to the five elements and then the *Lhochhar* began to be observed according to the lunar calendar. *Sonam Lhochhar* falls on the first day of twelve month of Tibetan calendar as per Hindu calendar on the first day of *Magha Suklapakxa*. *Sonam Lhochhar* means a farmer's New Year of the harvest festival. This festival is observed during the period of autumn season. In the beginning the *Sonam Lhochhar* was observed for a period of one month and later it was reduced to 15 days and subsequently reduces to 5 days only (Tamang, 2002).

The word *Loho* means 'year' and *Char* means 'new'. According to the religious scriptures after every twelve years a new "Era" begins. Each Era is represented by an

animal or a bird (Yonjan, 2004). A legend has it that when Buddha the enlightened was about to leave the world he called the twelve animals and birds to bid them adieu. The animals and birds which represent each era are Rat, Tiger, Hare, Eagle, Snake, Horse, Monkey, Bird, Dog, Cat, Bull and the Pig. All these animal and birds are used in determining the age of a person in which each person belonging to the same animal or bird name will have either the same age or be younger or elder by twelve, twenty four, thirty six, forty eight and so on (Tamang,2002). This festival of *Loho-Char* is also observed in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Honkong, Mongolia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Tibet, India and Bhutan. *Loho Char* festival is celebrated during (December-January). There are three types of *Loho Char* viz. *Tola Lohochar* is observed by the Tibetans; *Gyalbo Loho Char* is observed by the Tibetan nobles and the monks and the *Sonam Loho Char* or the New Year of the farmers is observed by the Tamangs and Gurungs. The Tamangs celebrate the festival of *Loho Char* for a day or two during month of January until the day of full moon. The festival of *Loho Char* or *Losar* is now being celebrated by the Tamangs and Gurungs in a grand scale especially at the state of Sikkim. From the year 1999 the government of Sikkim has declared a state holiday on the day to celebrate this ancient festival of *Lho Char* (Lama, 2004; Lama, 1981; Glan, 2013).



Fig. 3.20: *Loho* (Tamang calendar based on a Chinese Lunar Calendar)

Table No.3.1. Tamang calendar based on a Chinese Lunar Calendar

<i>Chibalo</i> Rat	<i>Langlo</i> Ox	<i>Taklo</i> Tiger	<i>Haylo</i> Cat	<i>Duklo</i> Dragon	<i>Dullo</i> Snake	<i>Talo</i> Horse	<i>Looklo</i> Sheep	<i>Telo</i> Monkey	<i>Chiyalo</i> Bird	<i>Khilo</i> Dog	<i>Faklo</i> Pig
1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016			

3.13. Tamang Language

Tamangs have their own language and script. Tamangs shares lots with Tibetan language. However, Tamangs speak a slightly different language and the vocabulary differs in most of the cases and their language occupies a place among the languages of Tibeto-Burman family (Moktan, 2014). In the subsequent period, the *Tambas* (Tamang Historians) took the initiative to write book in the Tamang language using the *Tamyik* script. The present name of this language is derived from the Tamang ethnicity which was first mentioned in 1205 A.D (Thokar, 2011) Tamang language is known under several appellations such as “Tamang Tam”, Tamang Lengmo”, “Tamang Kat”, “Tamang Kayi”, “ Tamang Gyot”, and “Tamang Gyoyi” (*Ibid*). These words stands for ‘Tamang sound’ or ‘Tamang speech’ or ‘Tamang voice’, that is to say Tamang language.

Tamang people have their own distinct language. Their mother tongue is Tamang, which falls in Tibeto-Burman language group. According to the census of 2001 92% of the Tamang people speak in their own mother tongue i.e. Tamang in Nepal. Their script is known as *Sambhota*, but one of the leading Tamang organizations, Nepal Tamang Ghedung, has been using a script known as *Tamyik*¹¹ well known as a modified version of the *Sambhota* script (official report prepared by Nepal Tamang Ghedung, 2005).

¹¹ In Declaration of International Tamang Language and Script Symposium 16-17 Dec.1995, Sikkim.

In course of time *Tamyik* became the springboard for Tamang literatures to appear. Philologists like G.A. Grierson believe that Tamang is very closely related to Gurungs. Like that latter form of speech it is more intimately connected with Tibetan than are most other Himalayan dialects and distinct from the Chinese. In popular parlance, Tamang language is also known as the *Murmi* or *Bhote*. It is a living language spoken by a vast number of people throughout the Himalaya (Grierson, 1909)

There are publications of books on Tamang lineage, origins, history, culture and tradition that have been writing in *Tamyik* script. The following books are:

1. *Jigten Tamchhyoi* (social norms-rules and regulations)
2. *Tamang Chyungila Thungswapas* (all about the 12-Tamangs)
3. *Chhama* (Cultural songs in Tamang language)
4. *Kerab* (History of Tamangs)
5. *Parab* (Lineage details)
6. *Tamba Kaiten* (What *Tambas* has to say)

The above books are believed to have been written between 7th to 11th centuries. There is evident that the Tamang script came into being since 7th century and has received government recognition by the Government of Nepal and Government of Sikkim (in India) in the 20th century. It is a fast growing language as new books and magazines in Tamang language keep on being published both in Nepal and in India. Tamang is spoken invasively in Darjeeling, Duars and villages and towns of Assam, Sikkim and others parts of the Himalaya (Lama, 1981). Tamangs have their own script called *Tamyik* which has been making use of it by All India Tamang Buddhist Association, Darjeeling, Nepal Tamang Ghedun, Kathmandu and Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association since 1998 (Moktan, 2014).

It is natural that the Tamang dialect should undergo changes as a result of migration. But despite these changes, their dialect has retained a considerable number of Tibetan words and phrases. This is the fact that the Tamang could not abandon the religion of the

country of their origin and the literary language extant in the scriptures (Narboo, 1981). This will be evident from the illustrations given hereunder:

Tamang	Tibetan	Spelling	Meaning
Phya-fulla	Chag-fullo	Phyag-fullo	Salutation offered
Brel-shing	Del-shing	Brel-shing	Connecting
Kra	Ta	bsKra	Hair
Ling	Ling	gling	Place (<i>though it is 'mountain' in the Tamang dialect</i>).

Thus, we find that the Tamang communities in Sikkim have a highly developed cultural sense. The transformative phase undergone by the Tamang community has made the Tamangs much more conscious of their culture and identity. As per the tribal community in Sikkim they believe in community spirit. The amalgamation of Bon and Buddhism as their religion is what makes the Tamangs as Tamangs. With the different communities living in the Sikkim the Tamangs and their culture is an important part for the state of Sikkim.

CHAPTER IV

THE TAMANG COMMUNITY IN SIKKIM:

A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS

This chapter describes the demographic profile of Tamangs in Sikkim as well as the most concentrated villages where Tamangs are highly settled such as Rateypani in Melli in south Sikkim, Singling in west Sikkim and Shyari in east Sikkim where field work is conducted. Second part of this chapter deals with the root of the tribal status, reservation policies of the Sikkim Government in regard to the Tamang community, recognition of Tamang language in Sikkim and other aspect related with the community in Sikkim such as prominent members of the Tamang community in Sikkim and the establishment of (STBA) Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association in Sikkim and their aims and objectives to promote and protect the history, culture and Language etc. of the Tamang community Sikkim.

4.1. Demographic profile of Tamangs in Sikkim

In Sikkim, Tamangs are found in the lower Teesta Valley and Rangit Valley, i.e. in the district of east, south and west. Hill slopes, tops of the outer spurs, and narrow reverie valley on the resistant rock of the Darjeeling ridge of the Lower Teesta and Ragit valley are the places where Tamangs reside in large numbers. However, the Tamang concentrated areas are Soreng, Singling, Borbotey, Heeyangthan, Hathidunga, Budang, Dokathang, Rinchenpong and Chakung in the west district; Jorethang, Damthang, Melli, Rateypani, Assangthang, Maniram, Boomtar, Bermiok-Tokal and Temi- Tarku in south district; Rang-Rang, Gaikhana in north district; Burtuk, Rangli-Rhenock, Singtam, Central Pandam, Assam Linzey, Ranka, Shyari and Gangtok in the east district of Sikkim (Law Commission of Sikkim, Report, part I,1990). The population of Tamangs in Sikkim was 2,867 persons in the year of 1891; which accounted for 9.4% of the total population of Sikkim (census 1891; Risley, 1928). On the basis of the voter's list of 2004, the population of Tamang is about 35,194 persons, constituting about 5.88% of the total population of Sikkim (Subba, 2008). As per the SSEC (State Socio Economic Census)

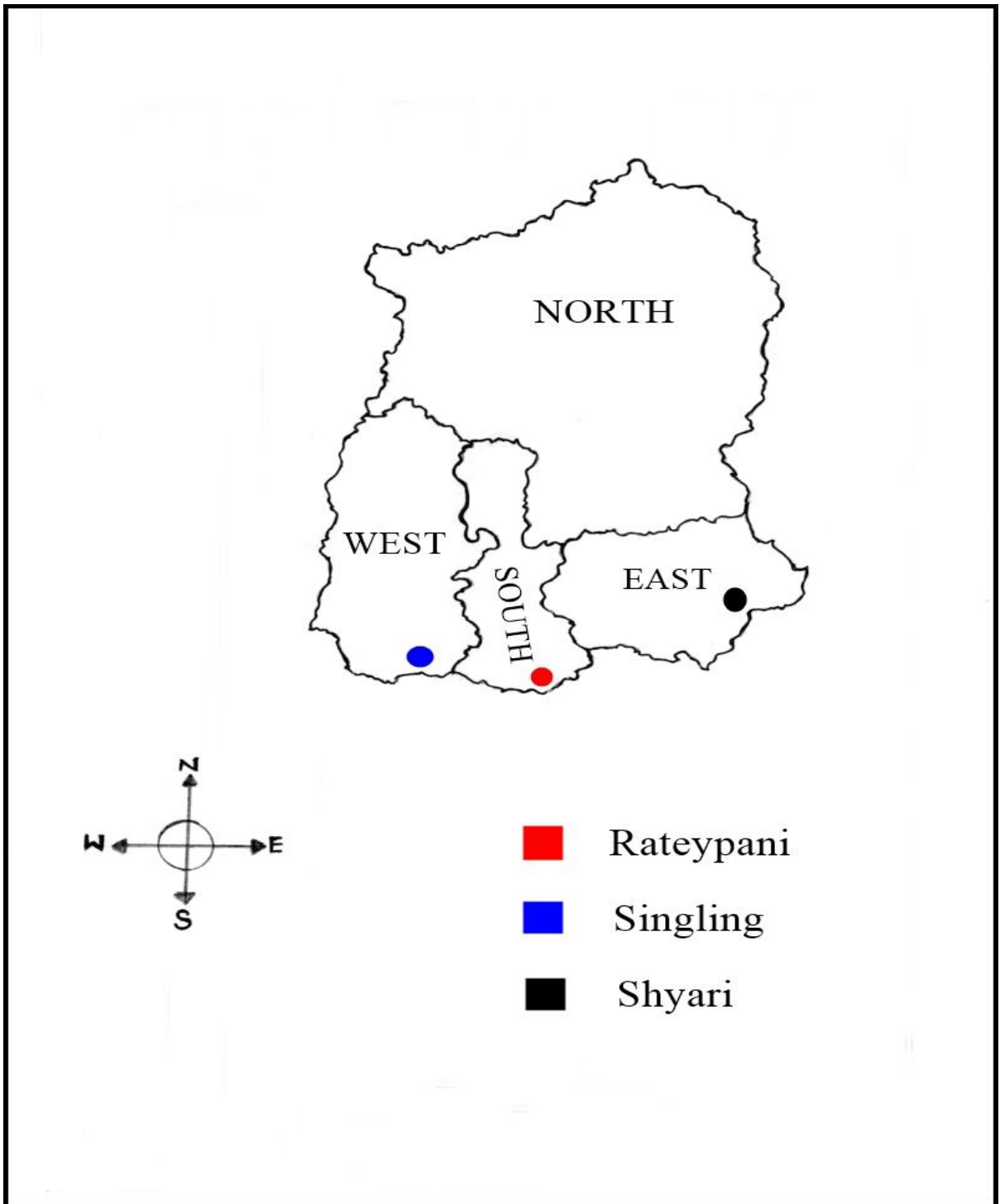
2006, the population of the Tamang community comprises 6.78% of the total population numbering 39,457 persons of which 20,437 are males and 19,018 are females (State Socio Economic Census 2006, Government of Sikkim).

Among the areas which are mentioned above, the highest numbers of settlements of the Tamangs are found in a place called Passi- Rateypani in Melli in South Sikkim where almost 80% of the Tamangs in Sikkim reside.

Table No.4.1: District wise Tamang Population in Sikkim.

	Total	Male	Female	Sex Ratio
East	20423	10583	9840	930
West	6142	3173	2969	936
North	1898	979	919	939
South	11028	5724	5304	927

Sources: State Socio Economic Census, Government of Sikkim, 2006, (Pp 59-61)



MAP: 3 - STUDYING AREAS IN SIKKIM



Fig.4.1. Passi-Rateypani Village, South Sikkim

4.2. Passi- Rateypani Village (South Sikkim)

Passi- Rateypani falls under the Namchi sub-division. Passi-Rateypani is divided into six GPU (Gram panchyat ward) such as upper Rateypani, middle Rateypani, lower Rateypani, Khairbotey, and upper Passi and lower Passi. As per the official record from Department of Economics, Statistic, Monitoring and Evaluation, Government of Sikkim (2012-2013) there are altogether 1839 above population and more than 374 Tamang houses. Due to the huge size of the GPU ward, the present field work was conducted only in the lower Passi village. During the field work in lower Passi village it was observed that there are altogether 55 plus houses of Tamangs and around 200 plus Tamangs in that village. A majority of Blone (a Tamang clan) are found there. Houses of Blones are more than 18 in numbers. It was reported that they celebrated all the Buddhist festivals but their main festival is Sonam Lhochhar. According to their traditions they practice *Keepa Soom* (*Kul puja*/ ancestor worship) and other ancestral *pujas* but they do not sacrifice animals as they believe that they are Buddhist by religion so they follow the path of Buddha and instead of sacrificing animals they perform *puja* with fruits. There is no Tamang association there, but they have a local association known as Passi-Pragati Samaj established in 1980s, where not only Tamangs but other community member are also included. The president of this *Samaj* is Mani Prashad Tamang (Blone). It was observed

that these days only during the marriage ceremony the older persons wear Tamang costumes.

According to Prastu Tamang, a resident of the village; there were old traditional Tamang houses in the village but they were destroyed long time back.

Passi Junior High School was established in 1980s and in 2002 the first Tamang teacher Mr. Prem Sing Goley was appointed there. There is no Tamang monastery there so people mostly go to Melli Dara or Namchi Alley Dara monastery to worship and pray.

4.3. Singling (West Sikkim)

Singling is located in the west district of Sikkim. It comes under the Soreng sub-division. There are altogether five wards within the Singling village such as Singling Gumpadara, Singling Ogeng, Singling, Singling Khundurkey and Singling Barakhaley Phunchabung. The population of Singling is more than 2214 people. But the study area chosen comprises only ward number III and IV, where the maximum numbers of Tamangs were found. As per the panchyat office rural village census record (2015) there are 640 above population and 170 houses of Tamangs in ward III and IV. Besides the Tamangs other communities also reside in Singling. The table below shows the different communities who resided in ward no.III and IV in Singling:

Table No. 4.2: Shows the Community wise Distribution in Ward No. III

Serial no.	Community	Total no. of houses
1.	Tamangs.	77
2.	Chettris.	19
3.	Rais.	5
4.	Sunars.	15
5.	Sherpas.	6
6.	Subbas.	8
7.	Gurungs.	1
8.	Thapas.	1
9.	Muslims.	2

10.	Lepchas.	1
11.	Sharmas.	1
Total no. of houses		136

Sources: Rural Village Directory- 2015, Singling Panchyat Office, Department of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation, Government of Sikkim.

Table No.4.3: WARD No.–IV (SINGLING KHUNDURKEY).

Serial No.	Community	Total no. of Houses
1.	Tamangs	93
2.	Sherpas	11
3.	Subbas	5
4.	Rais	2
5.	Bhutias	3
6.	Gurungs	2
7.	Pradhans	6
8.	Chettris	4
9.	Sharmas	1
10.	Sarkar	1
11.	Chaudary	1
Total no. of houses		129
Total community		136+129= 265

Only Tamangs: 77+93=170

Sources: Rural Village Directory- 2015, Singling Panchyat Office, Department of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation, Government of Sikkim.



Fig.4.2. Photo of Singling Village, West Sikkim

The Tamangs of Singling believe that they are the people of Tibetan origin and Mongolian people who were called as “Eldest Bhotey” and later on when they migrated to Nepal from Tibet they were called as Tamangs because of intermarriage with other caste groups. According to them, Tamangs also belong to the Lhasa *Gotra* like the Bhutia community. They believe that they first came from Gyana (Mongolia) to Poklabung, Nepal and then came to Sikkim in the 1770s. They came to Sikkim via Darjeeling. In 1770 they first came and settled in Chakung, west district of Sikkim. One of the first to have come was Janak Sing Tamang (Gyabak) from Poklabung via Darjeeling. At that time there was a Taksil (Court) in Chakung and Mr. B.B. Gurung (the former chief minister of Sikkim who remained in that post only for 13 days from (11.5. 1984 to 24.5.1984)) (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013) grandfather’s Bungalow was established there. Searching for a new job, Janak Sing Tamang came to Chakung in 1770 and worked as the Dewan’s (Political leader or General) Secretary. After serving as a secretary he married a Moktan girl from Kaijalay (West Bengal). Then, later Ganak Sing Gyabak with his family settled down in Singling in 1775 which is quite far from Chakung. He was the first Tamang who came to Sikkim at that time. At present, the people of the Gyabak clan who have settled down in Singling belong to his lineage. He also built houses in Singling which is still present at Singling. Along with him, another Tamang who came and settled

down in Singling at the same time was Astapati Goley and Kanak Sing Pakrin. Their younger generations are still living in Singling.



Fig.4.3. According to the people of Singling this Tamang House was build around 250 years ago in Singling, West Sikkim

4.3.1. Village life

The village life of the Tamangs in Singling is very simple. They were all agriculturists in the past and now a days most of them are government employees. In Singling a majority of Gyabak, Goley, Pakrin and Waiba clans are found and along with them, other clan such as Ghishing, Syangden, Dumzon, Mikchan, Yonjon, Bomzon, Nasur etc. are also found but in a fewer numbers. According to the people of Singling Gyabak clan in Singling is more qualified as compared to other Tamang clans. They also believe that intermarriage within the same clan is a taboo. The Yonjon and Bomzon can't inter-marry one another because of their common family tree. Similarly clans like Thokar, Pakrin, Moktan and Syangden do not have intermarriage practice between them. In this way there are other clans also who cannot practice intermarriage on that score. But beyond the pale of the same genealogy they can contract marriage with any other clan.

Table no. 4.4: Clan Distribution in Singling

Clan	No. of Household
Gyabak	119
Goley	95
Ghishing	54
Pakrin	48
Waiba	3
Dumzon	2
Syangden	1
Mikchan	1
Bomzon	2

4.3.2. Costumes

During the field work at Singling it was observed that now a days Tamang men and women wear Tamang costumes only during occasions like Lhochhar, marriage ceremony and some kind of social functions. But in their day to day lives they wear western dresses. Men wear pant-shirt and female wear sari and blouse. In the past, *Bakhu* (a Tibetan traditional dress) was worn by Tamang women in their day to day life and men used to wear Nepali dresses such as *Daura Sular*. Wealthy females used to wear ornaments made of a gold and silver. A Star shaped locket known as “Gow” is the main ornament of Tamang women.

4.3.3. Food Habits

The Tamangs in Singling used to eat all kinds of food and their main food being *Champa*; made up of rice and wheat flour. *Khabje* and *Zero* are also made during the time of occasions, especially during marriage ceremony, death ceremony, Lochhar or others social functions. They are mostly non-vegetarians and consume all kind of meats. But their special meat is beef. The farmers in Singling used to cultivate all kinds of vegetables because of the suitable climatic and soil condition there. Because of their alcohol loving

nature both Tamang men and women in Singling drink *Rakshi* and *Janr* (Alcoholic drink prepared out of millet or wheat). In case of surplus food, they would sell in the markets or stored them in a store house and when necessity arose they uses those stored grains. They also consumed different kind of yams and sweet potatoes readily available in the nearby forest. One of the interesting food influences of the Nepali community or the Tamang cuisine has been the making of *Sel roti*, - a Nepali circular shaped rice doughnut prepared during Hindu festivals, which the Tamangs have picked up and started preparing during Buddhist festivals also. It is served during the occasions along with other cuisines.

4.3.4. Festivals

The Tamangs observed both Buddhist and Nepali festivals. Before 1983 the Tamangs in Singling celebrated *Dasai* and *Tihar* but after 1983 they stopped celebrating these festivals because of the realization that by religion they are Buddhists and their main festival is Sonam Lhochhar and Buddha Purnima. On the day of Sonam Lhochhar the grandparents and elders in the family put *Ko Ko mehendo* flower (*Totala ko Phul*) instead of *Tika* on the foreheads of their younger ones and give blessings. *KoKo mehendo* is required in all the occasions of Tamangs especially during marriages, during birth and death rituals etc. They began to celebrate Sonam Lhochhar in a grand manner. Not only the Tamangs of Singling but the Tamangs living in different areas of the state celebrate these festivals in a grand manner.

4.3.5. Language

According to Durga Gyabak, a village resident- there are three languages within the Tamang community such as: Charikotey, Palchokey and Khantokoy and the people of Singling speak Charikotey language. It was observed that within the village; all village members spoke Tamang language in their daily conversation. One interesting fact which was noted was that not only Tamangs; but other caste groups such as Rai, Limboo, Bihari, Chettri, Bahun also speak the Tamang language in Singling; even the shop owners (who are mostly non-Tamangs) communicate in Tamang language. It is not that the Tamangs in Singling do not know other languages but they prefer to speak in their own language. Different languages were taught in the schools there, such as Nepali, English

and Hindi. The children are fluent and can read and write in Nepali, English and in Hindi but they know how to speak Tamang even though they cannot read and write Tamang script. In the year 1983 when the first Tamang monastery was established in Singling; Tamang language was taught there but later on it gradually vanished. As compared to other Tamang areas of Sikkim, Villagers of Singling have well preserved their social and traditional customs. There are altogether three schools within Singling which are: Barakhalay Primary School, Phuncheybong Primary School and Singling Junior High school. But only in one school, the Tamang language was taught up to primary level in the Barakhalay primary school, which was established in 1984. In 2002 the first Tamang teacher (*Lobenla*) Mr. Rajen Pakrin was appointed there. In Sikkim, from 2002 onwards Tamang teachers have been appointed up to primary level and Tamang language was being taught, but at present (2016) Tamang language is being taught up to class nine. Very recently in 2015, Tamang language was also recognised by C.B.S.E (Central Board of Secondary Education) as one of the languages being taught in Schools.

4.3.6. Religion and Rituals

It was observed that the Tamangs in Singling follow Mahayana Buddhism. Some of them even follow Hinduism and Christianity. But 90% of Tamangs in Singling followed Buddhism. They also believed that historically they are the followers of Bon religion that is why they retained some of the elements of Bon religious practices, namely, *Keepa-Soom* (a practice of paying homage to the ancestors with blood sacrifices), *Bonbo Sherab* (an act of giving affectionate farewell to the departed soul (*Thunda sosi*) with offerings). It is interesting to note that in Singling each Tamang clan has their own system of ancestral worship, for instance *Keepa-Soom* is performed by the Goley and Blone clan by sacrificing one full-grown cock where as *Gonpa Khola* is a ritual similar to *Keepa-Soom* and performed by the Gyabak clan but they do not sacrifice any animals. Tamangs of Singling used *Bonpos* for their ritual practices and used Lamas for their religious practices but both the *Bonpo* and *Lama* fulfills different social functions within the community.

4.3.7. Singling Tamang *Gumpa* (Monastery)

The Tamangs build *Gumpas* (Monasteries) near their villages where prayers flags flutter day and night. Singling Tamang monastery was established in 1983. The name of the *Gumpa* (Monastery) is Singling Mhani Lhakhang. Most of the Buddhist festivals are conducted in this *Gumpa*. Hereditary lamas (monks) are placed in the monastery. In 1983 there were two monks placed in the Monastery -Tshong Tashi (Head Lama) and his junior. After the death of Tshong Tashi his son Chey Dorjee became the head lama and after Chey Dorjee his son Narbu Lama became the head Lama. But later on Narbu Lama left the *Gumpa* and his son Wang Tshring became the head lama in the monastery. Female Monks (*Aaanilas*) are also used by the Tamangs in Singling to perform death rituals but no *Aaanila* resides at Singling monastery.

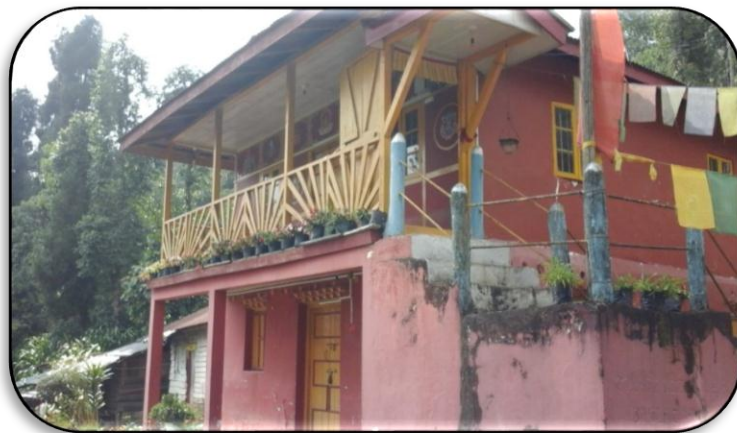


Fig.4.4. Singling Tamang Monastery, West Sikkim



Fig.4.5. Monks of the Singling Monastery, West Sikkim

4.3.8. *Gumpa* Committee Members and their functions

There is a *Gumpa* committee at Singling. Kalu Sing Goley was the founder member of the *Gumpa* Committee and also became the first president in 1983. He is the father of Prem Sing Goley the president of SKM (Sikkim Krantikari Morcha the opposition party of Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) which forms the present government in Sikkim). Second, Mr. R.B. Pakrin was the vice president and Durga Gyabak was the Secretary in the same year. But now at present the committee members have changed and Mr. Prem Tashi is president and others members are Atal Sing Tamang, Pratan Goley, Rajan Pakrin and P.T. Gyabak. This committee still exists. The main function of the members is to look after the maintenance of the *Gumpa*, its funding, infrastructure as well as the festivals to be conducted in the *Gumpa*.

4.4. Shyari (East Sikkim)

Shyari is located in the east district of Sikkim. It comes under the Gangtok sub-division. Shyari is divided into three wards: upper Shyari, middle Shyari and lower Shyari. Accordingly it is divided into ward number 1, 2 and 3. The study area chosen was ward number three also called lower Syari, where maximum numbers of Tamangs are found. In this ward around 600 above Tamangs are living and around 80% Tamang houses are found where mostly Blones, Muktans and Ghishing clans of Tamangs are found.



Fig.4.6. Village of Shyari, East Sikkim

According to Prakash Chandra Blone (Tamang), a village resident at lower Shyari; Tamangs have been living in this place from three generations and they also believe that they came from Nepal but the exact year was not known. By religion they are Buddhist and some of them are Christian too. According to the people of lower Syari, the Tamangs are mostly labourers and very few Tamangs are working in state government or in a private sector. They do not perform ancestor worship through sacrifices as they believe that they are Buddhists by religion and sacrifices are prohibited in Buddhism. Only occasionally they wear Tamang dresses. Many Tamangs in Lower Shyari celebrated Hindu festival such as *Dasai* and *Tihar* and only few houses of Tamangs celebrated Sonam Lochhar. The villagers of Shyari know that Sonam Lochhar is the main festival of Tamangs but it is not celebrated in a grand manner like in other Tamang village. This may indicate that the Nepali Hindu influence in the urban areas is stronger than the rural areas, since Lower Shyari falls under the urban area of Sikkim.

They have the Buddhist Monastery within the village which was established in 1984. The name of the monastery is Padmacholing Manilakhang *Gumpa*. Both male and female monks (*Aaanelas*) can stay in the monastery. But there were no monks there in 1984 when the *Gumpa* was first established. Every day's *puja* in the *Gumpa* used to be performed by the villagers themselves. They also have the *Gumpa* Committee which looks after the maintenance of the *Gumpa* from the time of construction itself. In 1984 the president was Kancha Lama, the vice president was Allen Yonjon and the Treasure was D.B. Mukhia. After Kancha Lama, Prakash Tamang became the president in 1988 and remained till 2011 and now at present (2016) the president is B.B Moktan. The Shyari *Gumpa* (Monastery) is not yet registered but Government of Sikkim gives Rs 3000 annually to light the *Chimi* (butter lamp) in the monastery. From 2010 onwards Lamas were placed in the *Gumpa* who perform the *puja* in the monastery every day and also looked after the *Gumpa*'s maintenance. There are two schools within Shyari and till class five Tamang language is being taught in those school. In 2002 Geeta Tamang was appointed as Tamang Teacher in Syari junior high school.

As compared to these three areas it is observed that only Singling is the compact settlement of Tamangs in Sikkim. In other areas other communities also reside along with

the Tamangs. In Singling very less number of other communities are found and almost 95% are Tamangs but in other areas it is a mixed society. The Tamangs in Singling preserve their culture well. But in other two areas it was found that they did not preserve their ancient culture well. It may be because of the mixture of society or the influence of Hindu culture. Regarding the language, it was observed that in Singling, Tamangs language is the *lingu-franca* but in other two areas only 10% of the people speak the Tamang language and that too mostly older generation. Regarding the Tamang costume also, only Tamangs in Singling wear Tamang dress in every occasion but in other areas they have stopped wearing them. Though people became modernized but the Tamangs in Singling did not forget their history, rituals, customs In others two areas most of the Tamangs even did not know the Tamang culture and why Tamangs celebrated their rituals and festival. Being Tamangs they perform their rituals such as Death Rituals, *Thapsang* (Name giving ceremony), Marriage ceremony etc. During the field work it was observed that as compared to Singling village, Ratey Pani is the highest Tamang settlement area in Sikkim but did not preserve their ancient culture well; may be due to the influence of other culture or it might be because of the mixture of society.

4.5. Root of the Tribal Status

There is a long history behind the inclusion of Tamangs in the list of Schedule Tribes in India. Actually this process began in Darjeeling before 1960, when other Tribes such as Bhutias, Lepchas, Yalmos, Kagateys and Sherpas were included in the list of Schedule Tribes of India in 1952, as per the article 342 of the constitution of India¹ (Bakshi, 2013). But the Tamangs and Limboos were left out. Tamangs from all over India, especially from the Darjeeling district of West Bengal felt that the Tamangs follow the same Lamaistic Buddhism as the Tibetans and Bhutias but they were not included with them. Their monasteries and *Gumpas* are similar in design and when a Tamang Buddhist Lamas is not available another Buddhist Lama can carry out the functions. Their religious texts are same as used by the others groups such as Tibetans, Kagatayas, Yalmos, and Sherpas, who are already recognized as Schedule Tribes of India in 1952. But the Tamangs who

¹ Article 342 says Presidential Order under Article 342 regarding Schedule Tribes is final. Court cannot add or subtract any entry.

are the same as the above groups they are left out from the List of Schedule Tribes. By realising this fact; on 12th June 1960, a person from Kurseong named Narayan Tamang wrote a letter to the Government of India requesting the inclusion of Tamangs in the list of Schedule Tribe and sent it to Delhi. But this was proved as personal demand and no action was taken by the Government of India. Between this in 1961 he was murdered and this matter vanished there. But in July 1977 again some Teachers from the Darjeeling district such as Lt. Prithiviraj Sangdhen, Yugan Goley and Karma Bamchuk Rumba made one Tamang study forum where they started collecting and searching information on the ancient religion, culture, customs and rituals of Tamangs by visiting different villages where Tamangs were densely populated and produced a written document. They also sent the memorandum to the Government of India for requesting the inclusion of Tamangs in the list of Schedule Tribes. But that forum became sealed and that matter vanished in there (Bomzon, 2006).

The Indian Parliament passed the (Thirty-Sixth Amendment) Act, 1975 making Sikkim the 22nd state of the Indian union. The President of India Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed gave his assent to the Bill on 16th May, 1975 ending the 332 year-old Namgyal Dynasty in Sikkim². A special provision for the state of Sikkim was inserted under article 371F of the Indian constitution. The Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim became a full fledged state of the Indian Union (Basu, 2004; Das, 1983). However, in pursuance of the spirit of the constitution of India, certain modification in the existing rules governing the affairs of the minority community of Sikkim were felt necessary. Accordingly, the Chief Secretary of Sikkim, T.S.Gyaltshen, requested the central counterpart to furnish details for the specification of the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes communities in Sikkim. The norms approved by the Government of India for Specification of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and communicated to the Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim, which was based on Lokur Committee Report of 1964³ (Gurung, 2011). The letter further

² Sikkim State Archives. 36th Amendment Act, 1975. Gazette No. 38. Notification No/date S.O.280 (E) - Gangtok, 16 May, 1975. Sikkimarchives.gov.in. Accessed on. 24/4/2016.

³ Lokur Committee Report means:

- A- Schedule Castes: Extreme social, education and economic backwardness arising out of the traditional practice of untouchability.
- B- Schedule Tribes: Indication of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness.

revealed that the Kazi government had earlier proposed for ST status for the Lepcha and Bhutia only. The central Government also wanted to know from the State Government as to why Limboos (also called Tsong) could not be included in the ST list. The letter also highlighted the inability of the State government to include other tribal communities i.e., Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Manger in the Schedule Tribes list. The Kazi Government, however, did not pursue the matter seriously. But the Constitution (Sikkim) Schedule Tribes Order, 1978 included the Bhutias, Lepchas, Sherpas, Kagateys and Yalmos in the lists of Schedule Tribes of Sikkim. While other groups like Tamangs, Limboos, Gurung, Manger, Rai etc. were denied Schedule tribes status. Socially, various socio-cultural groups of the Nepalis community like the Rai, Limboo, Tamang, Gurung etc. should have been included in the Schedule Tribes list of Sikkim in view of their distinct culture, language, religion and overall backwardness. Besides, the Minister of Home Affairs, Government of India, had also expressed desire for their inclusion in the Schedule Tribes list of Sikkim, and accordingly had instructed the state government to review the case of these 'Left out' communities. The policy of the Sikkim Government on tribal affairs was not only ambiguous but also discriminatory (*Ibid* Pp 289-291).

On 24th July, 1980 Kalimpong Tamang Buddhist Association decided to organise a meeting next year in Siliguri regarding the inclusion of Tamangs in the Schedule Tribes list. On 24 and 25 January 1981, the first annual conference was held in Siliguri where Tamangs from all over the country were invited and members of Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association (STBT) were also present there. On the first day of the conference a strong committee called All India Tamang Buddhist Association (AITBS) was established and in the presence of L.D. Bomjan from Kurseong and Buddiman Yonjan from Doars, 31 executive members from all over the Indian states were selected. First of all the president was selected from Gangtok, Mr. Satey Lama. The vice- President was P.R. Sangdhan from Kurseong and P.L. Lama from Mirik (Darjeeling) and General Secretary was P.L. Moktan from Kalimpong. Accordingly other members were also selected from different states of India (Yonjan, 2004). On the next day of the conference held on 25th January, 1981, the committee passed an idea to all the Tamangs from all over the country that as per the article 342 of the constitution of India the Tamangs community

from Indian States except Sikkim (because in 1952 Sikkim was not part of the Indian State) should be included in the lists of Schedule Tribe of India in 1952. The main motive behind that conference was to show the unity of the Tamangs from all over the country and also to realise the fact that they also belong to the same ethnic groups like the Bhutias, Yolmos, Kagatey and Sherpas belongs but Tamangs of India are not being included in the Schedule Tribe list. So members of AITBS decided to urge the central government for their rights and they also wanted the support from all over the country (Bomjan, 2006).

Sixth months after that conference on 12th June, 1981, on behalf of AITBA, P.L. Moktan sent a Memorandum to the President of India, mentioning the Dialect and Religion of Tamangs, Population and Occupation and how Tamangs became a distinct tribe. The letter also mentioned about the establishment of Tamang dialect, mode of religion which is Lamaistic Buddhism, practices of worship known as *Khepa-soon*, *Bonbo-Sereb* (Ancient rituals) with marked influence of Bon religion that predates Buddhism in India, ritualistic sacrifice of animals. There own custom and tradition which goes to show that the Tamangs are a distinct tribe. It may be worth mentioning here that Yolmos and Kagatays, the existing Schedule Tribes share exactly the same features as possessed by the Tamangs but the Tamangs have not yet been included in the Scheduled Tribe list. Lastly in the letter it is also mentioned that educationally, economically, socially and politically the Tamangs were still backward and this fact has alienated them from joining the mainstream of national life and contributing their mite to its growth and development. The Tamangs whose identity as a distinct tribe was historically established, so they urged the Government to kindly consider the genuine grievances of the Tamangs of India by way of declaring the Tamangs of India as Schedule Tribes, as per the article 342 of the Constitution of India⁴. Within that time, in Sikkim Mr. N.B. Bhandari had came to the power in 1979 Assembly Election and he took up the issue with the central government. In 1981, he wrote to the Prime Minister of India recommending inclusion of the Limboo

⁴ Copy of the letters written by P.L.Moktan, General Secretary, All India Tamang Buddhist Association, to the President of India, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, Govt. of India, New Delhi. Letter No.129/ 81 AITS, dated 12th June, 1981.

community in the list of Schedule Tribes of Sikkim⁵ (Gurung, 2011). After one year again on 25th May, 1982, Chief Minister of Sikkim Mr. Bhandari representative of the Limboo dominated Soreng Assembly Constituency sent a Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, mentioning that; “Tamangs and Limboos are very old communities, largely resident in the higher elevation of Darjeeling district and Sikkim. They are socially, economically and educationally very backward, so they may therefore be considered for inclusion as one of the Schedule Tribes of Sikkim by virtue of their close and unique culture and traditions and their residence in these hill regions, alongside the other Scheduled Buddhists tribes”.⁶

The response of the Central Government was always positive. Tamangs of Darjeeling and Sikkim had undergone a long Struggle for fulfilling their demand. Tamangs from Darjeeling district, Sikkim, Assam etc. went to Delhi several times. By then Mr. M.S. Bomjon became the General Secretary of All India Tamang Buddhist Association and he also sent a memorandum to the Government of India regarding the above matter (Bomjan, 2006). Meanwhile in 1987, Mr. Bhandari, the Chief Minister of Sikkim changed his earlier stance and opposed the inclusion of Tamangs and Limboos in the Schedule Tribes list even though the centre Government wanted the two communities to be recognized as Schedule Tribes.⁷ He perhaps was of the impression that the inclusion of Tamangs and Limboos in the Schedule Tribes list would lead to division within the Nepali community in Sikkim. Bhandari’s view was that the issue of Tribal status for Tamangs and Limboos could not be isolated from the issue of citizenship, seat reservation and recognition of Nepali language. His official note dated August 22, 1987, on the report presented by the Secretary, SC/ST and welfare Department, stated “We cannot separate the demand. We do not want divine and rule policy. All Sikkimese are

⁵ Copy of letter of the Chief Minister, Shri N.B. Bhandari, to the Prime Minister of India, Moraji Desai, dated 14/11/1981.

⁶ Letters of the Chief Minister of Sikkim, N. B. Bhandari to the Prime Minister of India, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Government of India, New Delhi, Letter No. D.O. No. 72/CMS/81-82, dated 25th May, 1982.

⁷ Bhandari’s noting on the Report of the Secretary, SC/ST Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, dated 22/08/1987. Also refer letter of Shri Mata Prasad, Additional Secretary, Minister of Welfare, Government of India, to Shri P.K Pradhan, Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim, D.O.N.12016/17/810 SCD (R-CELL), dated 18/12/1991.

one”⁸ (Gurung, 2011). However his decision alienated the Tamang and Limboo communities. The Tamangs and Limboos, in disgust, reactivated their organizational activist and submitted a memorandum to the President of India requesting them to include in the Schedule Tribes list of Sikkim and restoration of the Limboo- Tamang seats in the Assembly. The Limboo Organisation, called Akhil Sikkim Kirat Limboo Chumlung (ASKLC) (Estd. 1973), and Tamang Organisation, called Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association (Estd. 1961), also demanded resignation of the Chief Minister, Mr. N.B. Bhandari (*Ibid* p292-293).

The major rift within the Nepali community in Sikkim, however, began with the passing of the legislation by the central government seeking to implement Mandal Commission Recommendation. In Sikkim, the communities like Rai, Limboo, Tamang, Manger, Gurung and Bhujel were included in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) list which taken together, formed the majority of the State’s Population, and excluded other groups of Nepalis like Bhanus (Brahmins), Chettris (Kshatriyas) and the Newars. But the Chief Minister, Mr. N.B. Bhandari rejected the recommendation of the Mandal Commission report on the ground that it was “Discriminative” and its implementation would create tension and cause disturbances in this strategic border state. On 7th September, 1990, the Assembly passed a resolution rejecting the centre’s directives for implementation of Mandal Commission recommendation in Sikkim (Kazi, 2009). The resolution, passed unanimously in the House, while rejecting the Mandal report, also asked for the inclusion of all Sikkimese Nepalese in the list of backward classes in the state. Mr. Bhandari emphasized the need for unity among the three ethnic communities in Sikkim and said implementation of the Mandal report which excluded a section of the Nepalese community would bring dissatisfaction and create tension among the people and thereby disturb the peaceful atmosphere in the state (Kazi, 2009). Suresh Kumar Gurung writes that, after rejecting the Mandal recommendation, Mr. Bhandari said in the public meeting that “when people became mad, they become OBC” invariable, the shape of the nose “Thepche” (Flat nose) and “Chuchey” (Pointed nose) were used for identifying the Mongoloid fold from the Aryan Nepali (Gurung, 2011). In this context J.N.Kazi writes

⁸ Official noting of state’s chief minister, N.B. Bhandari, on the Report submitted by Passang Nmgyal, Secretary, SC/ST Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, dated 22/8/1987.

“Elsewhere in the world politics may be decided by the colour of one’s skin or by faith that one profess, but in this part of the region, the shape of things to come may ultimately be determined by the shape of one’s nose. The traditional ‘Thepche- Neptte’ divide denoting their racial differences, is gradually surfacing and will definitely set the future political agenda in the Himalayan borderland” (Kazi, 1994). The OBC people with their inkling for benefit in terms of 27 percent reservation in employment and other economic benefits were infuriated at the rejection of the implementation of the Mandal Commission’s recommendation and articulated their resentment besides engineering electoral mobilization and formation of ethnic organization. These ethnic organisations, includes Akhil Sikkim Kirati Limboo Chumlung and Sikkim Tamang Bhuddhist Association, representing from Sikkim, accused Bhandari of highhandedness and demanded for a ‘review’ of the state government’s decision on the Mandal Commission issue (Gurung, 2011; Kazi, 1994).

On 2nd November, 1993, several hundreds of Tamang Buddhists from different states of India started staging a *Dharna* (Strike) at Rajghat (New Delhi) on the above subject. The above demand was like hanging fire for more than four decades. It was discriminative that while other ethnic groups such as Bhutias, Sherpas, Yolmos and Kagatays were included in the list of Schedule Tribes way back in 1952 in India and in Sikkim in 1978 the cases of the Tamang Buddhist remained left out despite the fact that Tamangs of India also belong to the same ethnic groups. It was noted that the Government of West Bengal and Sikkim, had already recommended the case of Tamangs for inclusion as a Schedule Tribes to the Government of India as early as in 1981 and 1983 (Bomjan, 2006). The *Dharna* included a *Shanti Puja* by eminent Tamang Buddhist Monks numbering about 50, reading Mantras from the Holy Scriptures. A memorandum was submitted to the Honourable Prime Minister of India strongly urging for introduction of an official “Bill” for inclusion of the Tamang Buddhists of India in the list of Schedule Tribes in the current session of the parliament. Addressing the gathering at the *Dharna* sites, Mrs. Dilkumari Bhandari, MP Lok Shaba, representing the Government of Sikkim, said that the case of the Tamangs is indeed an old one and should have been already duly recognised by the Govt. of India. She further added that she would fully support this

legitimate demand which was already highly recommended by the Govt. of Sikkim way back in 1982⁹ (Bomjan, 2006).

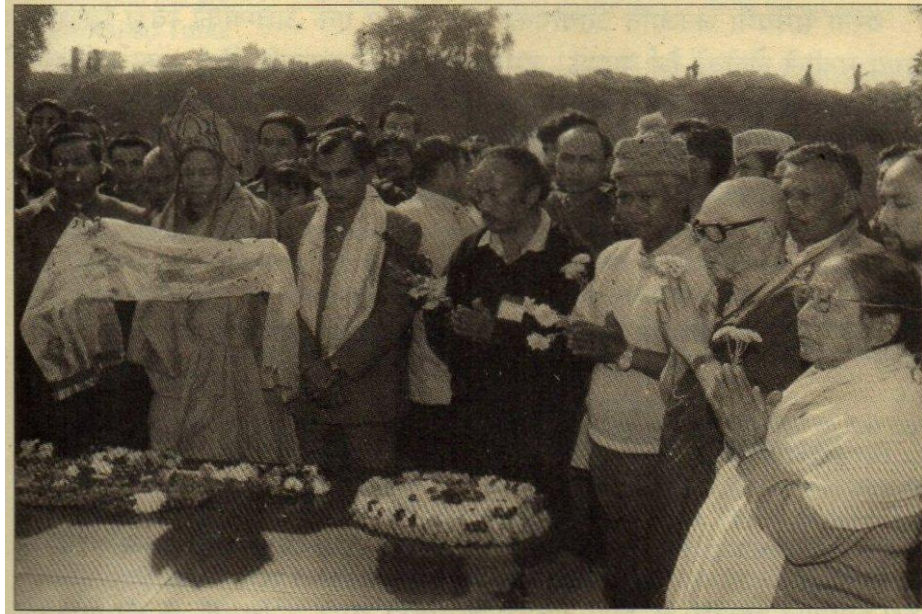


Fig.: 4.7 Maha Guru Norbu Lama and the Members of AITBS at *Dharna* Sides in Delhi on 2nd November, 1993



Fig.: 4.8 Former MP Mrs. Dil Kumari Bhandari at *Dharna* Sides in Delhi on 1993

⁹ Press Release, Rajghat, New Delhi, dated 15th December, 1993

Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, MP and Deputy Leader of Janta Dal in the Lok Shaba, emphatically told the audience that he had already publicly declared as a policy decision of the –then Janta Dal Govt. would include the Tamangs of India in the list of Schedule Tribes. This was his public declaration in Darjeeling when he visited Darjeeling in August 1990. On 16th December at 10.30am the AITBS organised religious procession and paid floral tributes at Rajghat to the Father of Nation, where several Ministers and M.Ps also attended that AITBS prayers for national integration and world peace. President Sri Setay Lama from Gangtok, Patron in Chief H.H. Mahaguru Norbu Lama from Viswa Mahayana Budha Sangha Lekhapani, Assam and General Secretary Sri M.S. Bomjan from Darjeeling along with monks from different Indian states of different *Gumpas* and Tamangs from all over the Indian states participated. That was held between 15 and 19 December, 1993 (*Ibid*).

Just after one year in 1994 the Chief Minister of Sikkim P.K. Chamling implemented the Mandal Commission Recommendation and Tamangs and Limboos besides others were recognized as Other Backward Classes in the state of Sikkim. As per the Resolution No. 12011/7/95-BCC, New Delhi, 24th May, 1995 published in the Gazette of India (Extraordinary) Part-1, Sec-1 No.88, New Delhi, Thursday, 25th May, 1995, Ministry of Welfare, Seven communities were recognised and notified as Central Other Backward Classes, namely Limboo, Tamang, Bhujal, Gurung, Rai, Sunar, Mangar. Apart from this, a list containing names of the above communities was also forwarded to the central government for the grant of Schedule Tribes status. As well as Mr. Chamling also enlarged the list of OBC in 2003 to include Bahun, Chettri, Newar and Sanyasi in the list. And the communities who were declared OBCs were now classified as the Most Backward Classess (MBC) in the states (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013). But in West Bengal, Tamangs refused to accept the Central Other Backward Classes (OBC) status as they wanted Indian Tamangs to be included in the list of Schedule Tribes other than the OBC, (Official report, All India Tamang Buddhist Association, 1981-2000).

In the same year on 22nd April 1994, Sikkimese Tamangs were included in the state list of OBCs. The Tamangs from West Bengal (mostly from Darjeeling district of west Bengal, Meghalaya and Assam sat for the hunger strike at Jantar Mantar (Delhi) for almost a

week demanding their community's demand. In that Strike, Tamangs from Sikkim also participated. By observing that, Shrimati Dil Kumari Bhandari from Sikkim again wrote a letter to the Central Government mentioning that despite a number of assurances given to this community by the central Government, nothing had been done till now, so she would like to urge upon the Government to recognize this community and include this community in the list of ST as soon as possible¹⁰ (Official Record, All India Tamang Buddhist Association, 1981-2000).

A year later in 1995 Tamangs from Darjeeling, Kuresong and Kalimpong carried out a procession (rally) voicing their demands in their areas. In the same year in the month of June, Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri P.K.Chamling wrote to the Union Home Minister, Shri S.B.Chavan, for the inclusion of Tamangs, Limboos and Gurung communities within the Schedule Tribe list of Sikkim (Official report, All India Tamang Buddhist Association, 1981-2000). On 7th March 1996, the three hills subdivision of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong called for a 24 hour *Bandh* (Strike) by the AITBS, where all the Schools, Shops and Banks were closed.



Fig. 4.9: 24 Hours *Bandh* (Strike) by the AITBS on 7th March 1996 at Darjeeling

¹⁰ Copy of Letter written by the Dil Kumari Bhandari, MP Lok Sabha, Government of Sikkim, to the Central Government, dated 25th April, 1994.



Fig. 4.10: 24 Hours *Bandh* (Strike) by the AITBS on 7th March 1996 at Kalimpong



Fig. 4.11: 24 Hours *Bandh* (Strike) by the AITBS on 7th March 1996 at Kurseong

The association called the Strike to press for its demand for recognition and inclusion of the Tamang community living in India, as in the Schedule tribe list. It also urged the

centre to introduce a bill in the current session of the parliament on that issue. That news spread in various News papers but no positive result came about.¹¹

During the period 22-24 January, 1999, the AITBS held the fourteenth annual meeting at Namchi in South Sikkim for three days. The most crucial issue was the inclusion of the Tamangs in the List of Scheduled Tribes of Sikkim and West Bengal. After a thorough discussion the meeting unanimously passed the following resolution:

First, there shall be no alcohol while performing any religious ceremony.

Second, in accordance with the fundamental precept of Buddhism *Ahimsa Parmo Dharma*- shall there be no sacrifice of animals in any religious functions. Moreover, no Tamangs shall use meat in any religious work.

Third, the meeting also noted the traditional *Ghewa* (funeral ceremony) practice by Tamangs constructing a separate house called *Dazang*, outside the main residence for the purpose of keeping a dead body and performing death rites. It was pointed out that in the ancient times, dwelling houses of Tamangs in the villages were normally small and they could not accommodate the mourners and worshippers inside the house, hence the system of erecting a temporary structure outside the house for their convenience developed. The meeting, therefore, agreed that death rites could be performed inside a main dwelling house if it is big enough to accommodate all without causing any inconvenience.

Fourth, keeping in mind the economic status of the Tamangs, it was decided that the death rites could be performed after twenty- one days and thus obviating the necessity of doing it after forty-nine days. Further the corpse could be disposed off within an hour after necessary religious rites by a *Lama* (Monk) one need not wait for ominous time. There was no need for keeping the dead body for days together.

¹¹ The Sentinel, Newspaper, Darjeeling, 9th March 1996. The Telegraph, Newspaper, Calcutta, 8th March 1996, page 6. The Pioneer, Newspaper, Darjeeling. 8th March, 1996. The Tribune, Newspaper, Darjeeling, 8th March, 1996 (Official Records, All India Tamang Buddhist Association, Darjeeling, 1981-2000)

Fifth the AITBS had also formally called for the boycott of the *pujas* in 2001. Saying that the *Durga Puja* celebration was not part of the Tamang culture, AITBS declared a fine of Rs. 3,000 on all its members who were found to be observing the rituals, which incidentally the Tamang community imbibed over the years.¹²

Lastly, Mr. M.S. Bomjan, the then General Secretary, AITBS, said that the Tamangs were “the largest ethnic population in Darjeeling hills and Sikkim, but has lost its identity”. He clarified that “the decision to abstain from *Durga Puja* was not with an aim to hurt the Nepalese people but to revive their own dying culture”. Bomjan claimed that in 2001, about “eighty percent of Tamangs had formally abstained from the festivals. In 2002, he expected the figure to go up to 95 percent” (Wangdi, 2011).

These were the resolutions passed by the AITBS from 1999 to 2001, which is still followed by the Tamangs from all over the Indian states, but regarding *Durga Puja* festival at some places Tamangs still celebrate this *puja* without knowing the facts.

Besides this, under the leadership efforts of Chief Minister of Sikkim, in December, the Bill seeking to amend the Constitution (Sikkim) Schedule Tribes Order, 1978 (Bill No. 62) was placed in the Union Parliament and the discussion on the Bill was held on December 19, 2002 in the Lok Sabha (December 18 in the Rajya Sabha). Mr Chamling’s presence in New Delhi since December 2, 2002 was immensely helpful in the smooth passage of the Bill (No.62) on the Schedule dates. The Bill received Presidential assent on January 7, 2003. The Limboos and Tamangs were notified as Schedule Tribes while the other deserving communities like Gurung, Rai, Manger, etc. were denied the status once again (Gurung, 2011).

4.6. Tamang Tribal Notification

From the year 1981, the AITBS, represented their demand to the President, Prime Ministers and other concerned authorities with the prayers for inclusion of Tamangs in the List of Schedule Tribes. Not only this Association but the Government of West

¹² The statesman, Newspaper, Siliguri, 15th October, 2002. Page 3.

Bengal and Sikkim helped them side by side. Finally the hard work and long struggle bore results when the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes orders (Amendment) Act, 2002 (No.10 of 2033) came into force on 7 January, 2003 after the Lok Sabha unanimously passed a Bill on 18th December, 2002 granting Tribal status to one hundred and forty, out of the one thousand fifty communities including the Limboos and Tamangs, spread over twenty states in the country. The Government of India in the Ministry of Law and Justice published the Act on 8th January, 2003 (The Gazette of India, Extraordinary, part II- Section I No. 10 of 2003, dated 8th January 2003). However Sikkim government did not republish the Act. “The Sikkim Limboo Tamang joint Action Committee expressed its resentment over the state Government’s delay and failure to release a Gazette notification to the effect of being included in the Schedule Tribes list by the centre even after a lapse of three months”.¹³ The Committee asked the state government to issue the notification at the earliest. Accordingly the Home Department of the Sikkim Government issued the notification on Saturday 5th April, 2003.¹⁴

After obtaining the Schedule Tribes status in India, the 18th annual conference of AITBS was held at Kaffer in Kalimpong. On the first day of the conference, Mr. Bomjan expressed happiness at the inclusion of the Tamangs in the Schedule Tribes list. He also emphasized on the education of the Tamangs. Tamangs from Darjeeling Hills, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, Bihar Meghalaya and Assam gathered at the Kalimpong for the meeting where they all celebrated the victory from 23 to 25 January, 2003 (Wangdi, 2011).

4.7. Reservation policies of the Sikkim Government in regard to the Tamang community

Both the Tamang - Limboo communities of Sikkim were included in the union list of Schedule Tribes under the Schedule castes and Schedule Tribes order (Amendment) Act 2002, (No.10 of 2003) published on 8 January, 2003.¹⁵ Under Article 332 of the constitution of India, Schedule Tribes are entitled to a political right to contest state

¹³ The Statement, Newspaper, Siliguri, 2nd April, 2003.

¹⁴ Sikkim Government, Gazette, No.113, Notification No.17/Home/2003, Home Department, Gangtok: 5th April, 2003

¹⁵ Sikkim Government, Gazette No. 113, Notification No.17/Home/2003, Home Department, Gangtok: 5th April, 2003

assembly election from their allotted reserved seats (Bakshi, 2013). However, despite their inclusion, the Limboo-Tamang communities have been denied this right by the Sikkim government till date. This particular issue goes back a long way.

Both Tamangs and Limboos were included in the list of Schedule Tribes of Sikkim in 2003 but without fixing the number of seats to be reserved for them in the legislative Assembly. According to the article 332 of the constitution of India, Schedule Tribes are entitled to a political right to contest state assembly election from their allotted reserved seats (Bakshi, 2013). Since then the Sikkim Limboo Tamang Joint Action Committee (SLTJAC) have been demanding for reservation of seats within the special provision of article 371F and 332 (1) of the constitution of India (Gurung, 2011). The recognition of the Limboos and Tamangs as Schedule Tribes has created an anomalous situation in Sikkim (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013).

These communities are now recognized constitutionally as Schedule Tribes but they cannot contest election from the 12 Bhutia-Lepcha seats in the state Assembly of Sikkim because these seats are reserved only for Bhutias and Lepchas not as Schedule Tribes but as ethnic or original inhabitants (Gurung, 2011). In December 2005 the Government of Sikkim constituted a commission under the chairmanship of Prof. B.K. Burman. The commission in its report submitted on 31st March, 2008, suggested increase in the number of assembly seats from 32 to 40 and continuation of 12 seats reserved for Bhutias and Lepchas. Apart from this the commission also recommended the inclusion of all Nepalese into the Schedule Tribes list, allocation of 20 seats for the Tribals including Limboos and Tamangs and others who would be considered for inclusion as Tribes in future and Assembly seats to increase to 40.¹⁶ The Government of Sikkim accepted the recommendation in its meeting held on 24th April, 2008 and forwarded it to the Government of India for necessary action but as of now no further development has taken place in this regard (*Ibid*). The Tamangs and Limboos are Schedule Tribes of Sikkim but seats in the Assembly are yet to be reserved.

¹⁶ Burman Commission report 2008. www.indiatogether.org. Accessed on 15 April, 2016.

As per the Article 371F, the Assembly for Sikkim formed as a result of the election held in Sikkim in April, 1974 with thirty-two members elected in the said election (hereinafter referred to as the sitting members) shall be deemed to be the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim duly constituted under this Constitution (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013). According to the Representation of the People Act, 1950/51, as amended in 1980, the total numbers of Seats in the State Assembly are 32 from which 12 seats are reserved for the original inhabitants of Sikkim such as Bhutia and Lepcha, 1 seat for Sangha (the monk body), 2 seats reserved for the Schedule Castes and the rest 17 seats were declared General. Thus, as of now, no seat is reserved exclusively for the Schedule Tribes community in the state Assembly and so for section 7 (1A)¹⁷ of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 1950 is not amended, the Limboo and Tamang tribal community cannot have seats in the Assembly.¹⁸ The communities became disillusioned further when all cases of delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies were postponed till 2026 and subsequently statement of the central government denying any possibility for creation of Tribal seats in the state Assembly before 2004 Lok Sabha and Assembly election.

The Sikkim Limboo-Tamang Joint Action Committee (SLTJAC) or Sikkim Limboo-Tamang Tribal Forum (SLTTF) was formed in 2003 with an objective to work for the reservation of seats for the Limboo-Tamang tribal communities. It is to be noted that unlike the normal practice, these two communities were recognised as Schedule Tribes in January 2003 though without specifying the number of seats to be reserved for them in the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim.¹⁹ The committee under the leadership of P.R. Subba demanded reservation of seats for the two communities in the Assembly without restructuring the Assembly constituencies. The committee also submitted the memorandum to the central government and the state Delimitation Commission

¹⁷ Section 7 (1A) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, was included with retrospective effect from 9 September, 1975. Section 7A, clause (1) and (3) provided for a 32 member Legislative Assembly chosen by direct election from Assembly constituencies and continuation of reservation of seats as provided immediately before the commencement of the constitution (Thirty-sixth Amendment) Act, 1975. By which Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union.

¹⁸ Sikkim State Archives. Gazette No.75.Representation of the People (Amendment), Ordinance, 1979. Sikkimarchives.gov.in. Accessed on 24/4/16.

¹⁹ Now, Newspaper, Gangtok. 9-15 April, 2003. P 4.

demanding special census of the two communities and allocation of the seats for the Limboo and Tamang tribal communities in the same way or method as was followed while reserving seats for the Schedule Tribes earlier. The committee also demanded amendment of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and to expedite the process for seat reservation for the two tribal communities before the commencement of the Assembly election in 2004. The Sikkim Limboo Tamang Joint Action Committee for Tribal status also demanded for reservation of seats before the completion of the work by the Delimitation Commission 2002. The SLTJAC also submitted a memorandum to the then visiting President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, at Raj Bhawan, Gangtok, stating “if the delimitation proposal in its present form is allowed to pass, the Limboo and Tamang communities will be deprived of their political rights for another 25 years and the next delimitation will take place only after 25 years”.²⁰ The state government also requested the Prime Minister of India, A. B. Bajpai, for conducting special census of the Limboo and Tamangs in order to fulfil the constitutional obligation mentioned under article 332 (1) and (3) of the constitution of India.²¹ (Bakshi, 2013).

The Sikkim Limboo-Tamang Tribal Forum (SLTTF) president Mr. Birbal Limboo, also observed that if the parliament makes rules enhancing the Assembly seats to 40, the state government will have no other option than to allocate seats to them politically. Considering the existing population of the communities in Sikkim, he justified reservation of at least five seats in the Assembly. He also met the President of India and requested for grant of political rights to the Limboo and Tamang tribal communities before the implementation of the delimitation proposal in 2002.²² On 3rd May, 2005, SLTJAC submitted the Memorandum to the Governor of state, V. Rama Rao, demanding his intervention in several issues pertaining to political rights of the Limboo and Tamang community, which includes holding of census before the delimitation process starts,

²⁰ Sikkim Express, Newspaper, Gangtok. 27 September, 2005.

²¹ Article 332 (1) Says seats shall be reserved for the Schedule Castes and Tribes, in the Legislative Assembly of every States, except the autonomous district of Assam, and Clause (3) says the number of seats reserved for the Schedule Castes of the Tribes in the Assembly of any state under clause (1) shall bear, as nearly as may be, some proportionate to the total number of seats in the Assembly as the population of Schedule Castes or Tribes in the State or part of the State, in respect of which seats are so reserved.

²² Memorandum of Sikkim Limboo Tamang Joint Action Committee for Tribal Forum, dated 22/09/2005.

reservation of seats for the community in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly as well as in the ensuing Panchayat and Municipality elections. They said despite their inclusion in the Schedule Tribe category, Limboo-Tamang were the only community in the country who have been deprived of their political rights and instead limiting seats reservation issue only within the parameter of political propaganda stating it as unconstitutional and illegal. The Committee added that depriving the political rights to the Limboo-Tamang was a violation of Article 332 of the constitution, which deals with the seat reservation for the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes. They urged the Governor to apprise the Central Government of this issue and further used his special power to give proper instruction to the concerned authorities in the state in this regard.²³ Up to now Sikkim has seen three elections since the above date that is in 2004, 2009 and 2014. The issue was raised in the Assembly on several occasions but no positive result has come as yet.

According to the State Socio Economic Census 2006, the Tamangs in Sikkim are around 39,457 and Limboos around 56,650 in the state as per the respective community organization (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013).

On 15th March, 2016, The Sikkim Limboo-Tamang Joint Action Committee (SLTJAC) organised the peace rally in Gangtok demanding LT (Limboo- Tamang) seats reservation. Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee (SPCC) had welcomed the rally which was organised by the SLTJAC. Speaking to the media, Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee (SPCC) General Secretary Tara Shrestha said that on 4th January, 2016, the Supreme Court had directed the Home Affairs minister to decide on the Limboo- Tamang seat reservation matter within four months.²⁴ Joint Action Committee (JAC) President Mr. S.P.Subba also contended that the state government was never serious in providing seats reservation for the Limboo-Tamang communities in the state Assembly. He also showed the population of Limboo and Tamang and said that, we are not concerned from where the seats would be provided as it is the prerogative of the government to do so. We are only concerned that the reservation must be provided from the existing 32 seats. He

²³ Now, Newspaper, Gangtok. 4 May, 2005. P 4.

²⁴ Sikkim Express Newspaper, Gangtok, Vol. XXXX No.74 dated 16th March, 2016. P 1-7.

further said that the committee flatly rejected the proposal of the state government to expand the Assembly to 40 seats. This was not feasible. The number of Assembly cannot be increased till the next delimitation which is taking place only after 2026.²⁵ Addressing the gathering on the third day of the ongoing Budget session in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling said that the two tribal communities would be getting their political rights before the 2019 Assembly elections. Seats will increase to 40 in the Assembly as per the report of the Burman Commission report. If reservation is done from the general seats, it would be an injustice to the majority population who despite being in majority enjoys only 17 seats. And he said that let injustice not be done to the majority, therefore Burman Commission report is the only way and solution for the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation. He further said that, regarding the claims made that increase of Assembly seats to 40 is not possible as delimitation of new constituencies will not take place till 2026; he said people are being misguided on this ground. This delimitation provision is not applicable to Sikkim as Sikkim has special protection under Article 371F and the binding of 2026 for delimitation commission will not be implemented for Sikkim.²⁶ He also said that this has been mentioned in the letter of the union Home Minister, government of India and the chairman of the National Delimitation Commission earlier in 2005. However Chief Minister Chamling has been very optimistic on this issue and also asked the State Census Department to enumerate the Tamang and Limboo tribal communities separately in the 2011 census for which the process has begun since April 1, 2010 (Gurung, 2011).

In Sikkim, here have been eight Assemblies from 1979 to till now. Pradeep Yonzan was the first Tamang Member of the Assembly from 1979 to 1984. He was also the first Tamang Minister. Though for a short period 11 to 25 May, 1984.²⁷ P.S. Goley was a member of the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh Assemblies from 1994 to 2009, a Minister of Tamang origin who completed full four terms as a cabinet minister from 1994 to 2009. P.S.Goley was again elected in May 2009 and became the only Tamang member of the eight Assembly. In addition to P.S. Goley, there was Sang Dorji Tamang, since deceased,

²⁵ Sikkim Express Newspaper, Gangtok, Vol. XXXX NO.73, dated 15 March, 2016. Front Page.

²⁶ Sikkim Express Newspaper, Gangtok, Vol. XXXX NO.78, dated 20 March, 2016. Front Page.

²⁷ Sikkimtamangyouthsociety. Blogspot.com. Accessed on 23rd April, 2016.

in the sixth Assembly 1999 to 2004. Compared to the population of the community, the Tamangs are not adequately represented in the Assembly (Wangdi, 2011). Though the reservation for Tamangs and Limboos in Sikkim Assembly only after the result of the 2011 Census.²⁸ Chamling pointed out that while the state government has provided all the reservation for the Tamangs and Limboo (by virtue of their being ST now) which were under the state's jurisdiction, like reservation in jobs, at the Panchayat level, the 33 percent reservation in government departments and public sector undertaking and for allotment of seats in educational institutions for professional courses meant for the Schedule Tribes of Sikkim which until substituted, also included the share of the Tamangs and Limboos.²⁹ The provision for the Legislative Assembly was a Parliamentary subject for the centre to resolve. Very recently on 13th April 2016, during a daylong meeting of the Forum for Constitutional Rights of Tamangs and Limboos of Sikkim (Forcotalis) held at Harkamaya College of Education, 6th Mile, the committee discussed on the Tamangs Limboos seats reservation issue and tribal status for Sikkimese communities. Politicians like former Chief Minister Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, Former MPs Nakul Das Rai and Pahal Man Subba, Former legislator N.B. Khatiwada and Pradeep Yonzon, leaders of political parties like SNPP (Sikkim National People Party) and SLP (Sikkim Liberation Party) and Organisations like GAC (Gorkha Apex Committee) and BGP (Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh), legal experts R.P. Sharma and former bureaucrat P.K.Pradhan attended the daylong meeting. After the discussions the meeting passed two resolution- demanding 6 seats for Limboo and Tamang in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and inclusion of 11 segments of Sikkimese people as tribes. This association is also supporting the Sikiim Limboo Tamang Joint Action Committee (SLTJAC).³⁰

4.8. Recognition of Tamang language in Sikkim

Sikkim is a home of many languages and dialects. These belong to several branches of the Indo-Aryan family and Tibeto-Burman branches of the Sino-Tibetan speech family.

²⁸ Sikkimtamangyouthsociety. Blogspot.com. Accessed on 23rd April, 2016.

²⁹ Sikkimtamangyouthsociety. Blogspot.com. Accessed on 23rd April, 2016

³⁰ Sikkim Express Newspaper, Gangtok. Vol. XXXX No.103, dated 15th April, 2016. P 8.

The Tamang language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family. Tamang language has been recognised by the Government of Sikkim by an official Gazette Notification dated 31 March, 1995 as a state language (Lama, 2004). Prior to this, the Kingdom of Nepal's constitution recognised Tamang Language as *Rashtriya Bhasha* (National Language) in 1990. Under the Constitution of Nepal, provision for education in Tamang language has been made (Yonzon, 1999). After the inclusion of Tamang language in the list of state language of Sikkim, the Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association (STBA) very judiciously convened a seminar of International Tamangs at Gangtok on 16 and 17 December, 1995. And after sometime, decided to send a team to the Central Institute of Indian Language (CIIL), Mysore in order to find out the possibility of creating a new script for Tamang language (Bomjan, 2006; Lama, 2004). Now Tamangs have their own script called "Tamyik" which has been recognised by the All India Tamang Buddhist Association (AITBA), Darjeeling, Nepal Tamang Gedung, Kathmandu and Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association (STBA) from June 1998 (Lama, 2004). As per the 2001 census of India the total number of Tamang speaker was 10,089 which are 1.87% of the total population (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013). Tamang language occupies the fifth place among the languages of Tibeto-Burman family in Nepal.

4.9. Tamang Publications

Jikten Tamchhyoe or Tamang *Vanshavali* is considered to be the first book printed in the history of Tamang publications. This book written by Budhiman Moktan was published in Darjeeling in 1957. Another book titled *Tamba Kaeeten Rimthim* written by Santabir Lama was also published from Darjeeling, nearly 99 titles pertaining to language, culture and tradition of the Tamangs have been published between 1957 to 1977. Among these titles, 85 have been published from Nepal and 14 from other places outside Nepal. It was in 1994 that Radio Nepal started broadcasting Tamang news bulletin. The Magazines and Journals published are *Thweendal* in 1975 from Nepal. It was edited by Tashi Pintso Lama. In 1982, a journal called *Phyapulla* was published from Darjeeling under the editorship of Buddha Kumar Moktan. This journal has the distinction of many years of publication. *Tsargyam* from Sikkim has also been published (Official record from All India Tamang Buddhist Association, Darjeeling. Vol. II, 1981-2000).

In 1995, Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association published G.D. Lama's *Sherab-Gno-Syepo* (Introduction of Alphabets). In this book, an attempt has been made to teach Tamang language through both *Devanagari* and Tibetan Script. At appropriate places, meaning of Tamang words in Nepali and English and Tibetan has been given (Lama, 2004). *Hyang Tamang Gyot Lokpe* (Let us learn Tamang language) written by K.M.Tamang was published in 1997. This book is comprehensive as the writer has tried not only to present the grammar of Tamang language in *Devanagari* script but he has also given the meaning in Nepali (Tamang, 1997). Sikkim Herald is being published in Tamang language from 2001 onwards. For this purpose Nima Tamang has been appointed as Tamang news translator. On 15 February, 1996, Mrs. Sumitra Dong (Tamang) was appointed in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly as a Translator. Some of the prominent Tamang writers from Sikkim are K.M.Tamang, Kumar Yonzan, Lama Lakpa Bomzon, G.D.Lama and Pempa Tamang.

Inclusion of Tamang language in the list of State official language in Sikkim is very encouraging. From 2002 onwards Tamang language teacher began to be appointed in the Schools of Sikkim and till now 21 Tamang teachers are appointed in different Schools of Sikkim. Among them, 8 regular primary teachers and from 2012 onwards 19 teachers are appointed in the school of Sikkim on contractual basis. Very recently in 2015 Tamang language was included in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and up to class nine, Tamang language is taught in the schools of Sikkim (Official Record, Language section, Department of HRD, Government of Sikkim, 2015).

4.10. Prominent Members of the Tamang Community in Sikkim

4.10.1. K.M. Tamang (Prominent writer from Sikkim)

K.M. Tamang of Passi Rateypani in south Sikkim is a prominent Tamang writer from Sikkim. He studied up to graduate level and presently he is the



Fig.4.12. K. M. Tamang

presently he is the president of All India Tamang Buddhist Association. A well known linguist, K.M. Tamang also served as a president of the Jinlab Tamang Gedung, Namthang, South Sikkim. He was also the General Secretary of the Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association (1999-2010). He has done research on the *Tamaik*

Script from the Central Institute of Indian Language; Mysore in 1996 and is the editor of a Tamang language and magazine called *Jyo-Jyo*. Apart from being the author of *Hyang Tamang Gyot Lopkey* (Let us learn Tamang language), he is the writer of Tamang language textbooks. He has written a lot of articles and books on the Tamangs and Buddhism in the Tamang language, English and Nepali.

4.10.2. Late Man Bahadur Tamang (First Commissioned Officer of the Imperial British Army from Sikkim)



Fig.4.8. Lt. Man Bdr Tamang

Lt. Man Bahadur Tamang was born in 1925, at Ranka, East Sikkim. After completed his Xth standard from Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School (the first English medium school of Sikkim which was started in 1906 and was known as Gangtok School in its earlier days). In 1944, he was recruited to the Imperial British Army at the age

of the 19 years old. After completing his training in various parts of India, he served in the Army office in India. He could not take part in the Second World War, as it was in its last phase when he was recruited. With the withdrawal of the British from India, Lt. Tamang went to Singapore where he got Commissioned and worked there as a sergeant in the British Army from 1948 to 1951. He was posted to

Hong Kong in 1951, and remained there for one year. In 1952, he was again posted to Malaysia from where he got his retirement in 1957 and came back to Sikkim. A person with great calibre and enthusiasm to acquire higher education, Lt. Tamang could not remain idle even after his retirement. He joined a new job as an accountant at B.T. College and studied in the Night School at St. Josephs's college, Darjeeling. From there, he completed his Graduation in 1968 after which he again Joined British Army as an Account Officer in Ilam (Nepal). After serving there for 14 years, Lt. Tamang got his retirement in 1982 and made his way back to Sikkim. A close relative of Poet Agam Sing Tamang (founder of *Apatan Sahihitya Parisad* which is the pioneer literary association of Sikkim in Gangtok on 15th April, 1947) and Lt. Tulsi Bahadur Chettri eminent Sikkimese Nepali poet, sergeant Tamang was probably the first Commissioned Officer of the British Army from Sikkim. Due to his dedication and sincerity to serve the British Army, the Royal British Government honoured 21146964 Sergeant Man Bahadur Tamang of 7/7 Gorkha Regiment with king George VI Medal (*Malaya*) and King George VI Medal (Great Britain). Lt. Tamang died on 27th June 1990 at Namchi District Hospital due to throat cancer.

4.10.3. Late Jeewan Theeng (Tamang)

Jeewan Theeng (Tamang) born in Namchi district Hospital in south Sikkim on 19th December, 1955. His native place was Sichey, Gangtok where he was brought up later. His father was a Vaccination Inspector in the then Royal Government of Sikkim. Young



Fig.4.9. Lt. Jeewan Theeng (Tamang)

Jeewan started his education in Namchi Primary School. Later he came to PNG (Paljor Namgyal Girls) Sr. Sec. School. At that time PNG was a co-education school and completed his high school from Tashi Namgyal Higher Secondary School in 1972. After that he went to join Darjeeling St. Joseph's College for his degree education in Political Science. He received his Bachelor Degree and Master Degree from North Bengal University in 1975.

All through his student life, he was interested to write poems and stories. During his short life of 23 years he wrote, 79 poems, 11 stories, 7 songs lyrics. He is mostly known for his Sikkim related poems. One of his famous books was “Sangli Bitra Badiyako Ghora ko Thabharu”. The script used was *Devanagri*. Theeng received the second prize in an essay competition in 1974 during the Golden Jubilee celebration of Darjeeling Nepali Sahitya Sammelan. He was 20 years at that time. He was also awarded with Ratna Shree Swama Padak in 1977 in Nepal for his Story “Bimba Pratibimba Gangtok Bhariko Kalilo Bihani”. It was a very rare honour which was conferred on him for his contribution to Nepali literature.

The road stretching from the National Highway to Development area till Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School has been named after Jeewan Theeng and now it is known as “Jeewan Theeng Marg”. At the age of 23 Jeewan Theeng took his last breath. On 5th July, 1978, during an operation at P.G. Hospital Kolkata to operate lung complication he died.

He was a great poet at that time and he was the first young man who receive Ratna Shree award at that time, his award and pictures are kept in the Sikkim Sahitya Parishad Bhawan in Development area, Gangtok. He was known by the name of “Mato Kabi” meaning love of Soil, feeling to Nationalism and Love toward Sikkim. His name remains unforgotten in Nepali literature. He had made great contribution for the development of Nepali literature in Sikkim. His statue which the Jeewan Theeng Salig Sthapana Committee prepared five years age still lies unrecognized in BL (Bhutia-Lepcha) House. However, the statue which is still waiting for its place should be given its due respect.

4.11. STBA (Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association)

Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association was established in the year of 1961 and registered at Gangtok on 26th November, 1981 (Registration vide No 60, volume no. I). STBS is a purely apolitical organisation. Present executive members are-

1. Mr. Mani- Kamal Yonzone.
2. Vice President- Mr. Subash Pakrin.

3. Vice President- Mr.Sarad Lama.
4. General Secretary- Mr. Phurba Tamang.
5. Joint Secretary- Mr. Bijay Kumar Tamang.
6. Treasure- Mr. Lalit Moktan .

The main objectives of this organisation are to promote and encourage Buddhism within the Tamang community. To propagate and preserve the ancient culture, tradition, customs and social heritage of the community, to promote and protect their language, literature, socio-cultural interest and also to work in the field of economic and political development of the community. It establishes *Gumpas* (Monasteries) in order to observe Buddhists religious ceremonies. Presently the Tamang *Yangla Din* (Bhawan) is under construction at Syari, Gangtok, and East Sikkim. The construction began in 2011 but because of some financial problem it is not completed yet. But by 2018 they have aimed to complete this Bhawan, so that in future they can use this Bhawan for official purpose.

On 10th April, 2016 STBA president Mr. M.K. Yonzon said that they have aimed to complete this house or Bhawan by 2018. He also added that STBA is an old Association and till now office for Tamangs in Sikkim is yet not constructed. From this year onwards all the members of STBA and Tamangs from all over Sikkim are working hard to complete this building, so that in future, this building can be utilised for official purposes where they can teach Tamang language to the coming generations as well as they can preserve their ancient text and monuments by opening up a library and also to promote the value of education, economic development and control of social menace i.e., alcoholism.

Thus it is evident that the Tamang are densely settled in the East, West, South and North districts of Sikkim. The highest settlements are found in the place called Passi Ratey Pani in Melli in South Sikkim. The Tamangs from Darjeeling district and Sikkim carried out a long struggle for their Tribal Status. However seats in the Sikkim State Assembly for the Tamangs are yet to be reserved. The Tamang language was recognised in the state of Sikkim in 1995 along with other 11 languages in Sikkim. But the number of publications, books and articles in the Tamang language are still very meagre. Different Tamang prominent writers have written a number of books on Sikkim but least in the Tamang

community and the establishment of STBA and their struggle for preserving the cultures, languages etc. Under such conditions and background, it becomes imperative to protect and promote the ancient culture and traditions of the Tamangs in Sikkim.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Different scholars trace their opinions regarding the origin of word 'Tamang' and the common belief is that the word Tamang actually comes from the word 'Tamag' meaning 'Horse Warrior'. The Tamangs are one of the Tibeto- Burman speaking tribes who were originally called "Bhotay or Tibetan", on the premise that they descended from Tibet. It is assumed that the term Tamang was applied to them later on in view of their principal occupation as "horse traders". The term Tamang has survived ever since. Beside Tamangs, other allied tribes such as Sherpas, Durkpas, Yolmos and Kagateys are also called "Bhotay" throughout Nepal from where all these Tribes migrated to India. Although they were all clubbed under the umbrella term 'Bhote', there were differences between the Tamangs and the Bhote, Sherpas, Durkpas, Yolmos and Kagateys in matter of both customs and ceremonies.

If we looked at the History of Tamangs, they are said to be the Tibetan origin people who migrated from Tibet to other Himalayan region. In Nepal they are densely settled in the eastern and western region and in an around the Kathmandu valley. Different dialects are spoken by the Tamangs of eastern and western region. All Tamangs practice some variant of Nyingmapa Buddhism together with an indigenous Shaman tradition. In Nepal, the Tamangs were placed in a very low social hierarchy during the time of the Shah Ruler. They were even not allowed to enter the Kathmandu valley and were not recruited into the Army or any other government jobs. Even the surname of a 'Tamang' in Nepal was used only after 1932 when the Nepal Government permitted, its use because before 1932, only titles such as Murmi, Mulmi, Lama, Bhootiya, Ishang, Nishung, Saing and Siyena Bhhutia were allowed to be used for Tamangs.

The Tamangs are not Hindu and practice of an animistic, Lamaistic Buddhism. A Tamang village can be easily recognised by the display of prayer flags and by 'Mane' walls and 'Chortens' at the roadside. Though Tamangs were not permitted to kill cows in Nepal because Nepal being a Hindu country. The Tamangs willingly eat the flesh of a Cow killed by accident. It was for this reason that the more orthodox Gurkha Officer used to be prejudiced against the enlistment of Tamangs. There is no

doubt, however, that the Tamang makes an excellent soldiers. The Tamang people were the inhabitants of the lands conquered by the founding Nepali Monarch, Prithivi Narayan Shah, as he, initially blocked and overtook the Tamang Kingdom.

The question regarding their identity has made the Tamang people more conscious about their culture and tradition in Nepal. It becomes then the double struggle one of shifting the traditional Tamang culture understanding of what is acceptable as well as shifting the society rule and assumption about what a Tamang can do. The Tamang scholars soon found that their *rim-thim* (traditional culture) and *Kairan* (History) was proof to their distinct identity which helped to break the cycles of Tamangs exploitation in terms of various names such as “Bhote, Tibetan, and Siyena Bhhutia etc. Although they follow the Nyingmapa forms of Lamaism but they also practice their own culture and possess their own identity.

Tamangs are densely populated in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal and Sikkim. In Sikkim, Tamangs are densely settled in the east, west, south and north district; Tamangs are counted as the 8th numerous communities in Sikkim and the highest number of settlement are found in the south district of Sikkim. They practice a form of Tibetan Buddhism along with the Bon tradition and there are Buddhist temples in many Tamang villages. The Tamangs have a rich and splendid culture which distinguishes them from other ethno linguistic groups. Moreover, most of the Tamangs in Sikkim are Buddhist by faith and worshipped at Buddhist monasteries whenever they faced difficulties. They have a *Tambas* (Tamang Historians) and *Bonpo* (Tamang priest) in their villages that fulfil their social and religious functions but now a days they mostly use Buddhist Lamas in their funeral rites and religious functions.

Sikkim is the only state in India which exhibits such, ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity in a small area. Historical events have played their parts in creating such a mosaic (Bhasin, 1989). The ethnic groups of Sikkim have been sharing the same basic institutions but have been presenting different distinctive life-styles due to their racial, social and cultural differences and population migration. These elements which individuals recognise to be unique to their groups may not, in fact, be that unique as the symbols and traits used to signify uniqueness are frequently borrowed from other groups (Jha and Mishra, 1984).

There are different group inhabiting Sikkim such as Lepchas, Bhutias, Sherpas, Tamangs etc. who are Buddhist. The Nepalese came as labourer, but with their hard working nature their number increased and now they constitute 75% of the total population of Sikkim (Bhasin, 1989). The Tamangs in Sikkim live in a multi-ethnic set up. Urbanisation and development activities have affected them, but in the midst of all such influence and pressure, the Tamangs still maintain their identity in their faith of Buddhism, in speaking their own language Tamang and practising their own rituals and festivals (though some influence of Hinduism and other forces are in evident). The attempt to maintain a Tamang identity is evident also in the establishment of Tamang Buddhist Association in Sikkim and Darjeeling.

The Tamangs practice “Sonam Lhochar, *Keepa Soom* and *Falha Halsu* as their main rituals and festivals and also the *Dasai* and *Deepawali* are practiced by the Tamangs. They organised socio-religious activities through the Tamang Buddhist Association. The monasteries (*Gumpas*) are the sacred centre for them. They perform folk Songs and Dances to the music of the *Damphu*.

Typically and traditionally, Tamang are described as a Tibeto- Burman speaking people of Tibetan origin, organized into clans (not caste), who marry their cross-cousins. A Tamang man could marry any girl from any clan except his own clan. Preferred marriage was held between cross-cousin that is to one’s mother’s brother’s daughter and father’s sister’s daughter.

The Tamang tribe have their own culture, customs, language, traditions etc. their social and religious rites exhibit characteristics of a typical tribal community in Sikkim. Today Tamang community has undergone drastic transformations. The most obvious transformation in Tamang community can be witnessed from their craze in search for identity. This transformative phase is leading the Tamangs to search for their roots, their culture, traditions, language etc. as in a modernizing society the socio economic, cultural and political status of Tamangs is complex and multi sided. For Tamang tribe, transformation means an opportunity to create a unique history and a new story to be told, a new Tamang tribal identity in the modern world. Though the Tamang tribal group occupies a unique position in the social structure of Sikkim including other region such as Darjeeling district of West Bengal as a Schedule Tribe of India but they still feel there is threat to their identity. Therefore this thesis

attempts to present the Tamang world view in terms of their History, their ancient religious transformation from Bon to Buddhism, social and traditional culture, language, their tribal and political status. Different socio-cultural bodies have been formed to preserve the vanishing language and culture in Darjeeling and Sikkim. For this purpose the Akil Bharatiya Tamang Baudha Sangh (All India Tamang Buddhist Association) which was established on 23rd January 1981 and Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association established in 1961 deserves special mention. The bitter taste of social politics or identity in general, has been the driving force for their struggle to unify the Tamang all over the world. After all, as a tribal community, they believe in community spirit.

Thus this work has attempted to chalk out the historical narrative about the origin of the Tamang community in Sikkim. It has traced their social, cultural and economical background through the help of case studies of Passi- Rateypani, Singling and Shyari villages, an analysis of the present scenario of the Tamangs in Sikkim has been brought about.

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Appendix – 1

All India Tamang Buddhist Association
Head Office : Kalimpong, P.O. Kalimpong
Dist. Darjeeling : West Bengal (India) - 734301
Regd. No.S/31850

Ref. No. 129/81 AITS

Dated 12th June, 1981

To

The President of India

New Delhi

Sub : Inclusion of Tamangs of India in the Scheduled Tribe

Sir,

It was rightly with a view to uplifting certain very backward masses, in keeping with the democratic principles of justice, that the Government of India declared such masses as Scheduled Tribes and Castes. This declaration meant a special provision of opportunities and facilities for such Scheduled Tribes and Castes with the help of which not only they could develop themselves but they will also be protected from the clutches of exploitation by dominant classes who are already advanced in every sphere of national life. If your good self would be kind enough to review the period of the last 46 year after India's Independence, it would be revealed that the Tamang citizens of India and themselves in the quagmire of educational, economical, social and political backwardness, in some respects even more backward than some of the existing Scheduled Tribes and Castes, in the mainstream of national life.

Dialect and Religion :

Being tribal, Tamangs have their own dialect although no script has been discovered as yet. Our religion is Lamaistic Buddhism and the Tamang Lamas or Priests use the same religious book or scripture written in Tibetan language as the Tibetan Lamas, the Tamangs have some of the most famous traditional song all composed in the Tamang dialect, as also the famous Tamang Damphu Dance. Tribal rites like Khepa Soong, Bonbo-Sereb and Tamba oration, peculiar to the Tamangs alone are reflective or zealour practice or preservation of Boncult, and all are performed in the Tamang dialect. In 1911-26, 963 persons in the district of Darjeeling ware recorded as seeking Murmi or the Tamang dialect.

Population and occupation :

In the district of Darjeeling only, according to the Darjeeling District Gazetteer, 1947, the total population of the Tamangs was 43,114 Tamangs are equally spread over in the State of West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam and other areas of India. Their occupation ranges from tea garden workers to labourers in collieries and oil fields of Assam, loggers and woodcutters, peasants and petty tradesman. Being a martial race, a number of them are employed in the India Army and Provincial Armed and other defence forces. Due to backwardness, no Tamang have as yet been able to occupy any position of distinction in any field even in the areas of their concentration let alone the various State Government and Central Government Services.

Distinct Tribe :

Official authorities such as Darjeeling District Gazetteer, 1947, declare the Tamang as a distinct tribe. Our established dialect, mode of our religion which is Lamaistic Buddhism, practices of worship known as Khepa-soon, Bonbo-Sereb with marked influence of Bon religion that predates Buddhism in India ritualistic sacrifice of animals. Our own customs and traditions, go to show that the Tamangs are a distinct tribe. It may be worth mentioning here that Yolmos and Kagatays, the existing Scheduled Tribes share exactly the same features as possessed by the Tamangs but the Tamangs have not yet been included in the Scheduled Tribe list.

Lastly, we would like to submit that educationally, economically, socially and politically the Tamangs are still very backward and this fact has alienated us from joining the mainstream of national life and contributing our mite to its growth and development. When other tribes like Yolmos, Kagateys, Sherpas, Lepchas and Indian Bhutias have been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes of India, the Tamangs, whose identity as a distinct tribe is historically established, urge upon your honour kindly to consider the genuine grievances of the Tamangs of India by way of declaring the Tamangs of India as Scheduled Tribe, as per article 342 of the Constitution of India. Praying for many year of fruitful service to the Nation.

Yours faithfully

Sd/-

P.L. Moktan

General Secretary,

All India Tamang Buddhist Association

Copies sent to

- (i) The Hon'ble Union Home Minister, Govt. of India, New Delhi.
- (ii) The Commissioner, Scheduled Castes & Tribes Commission, New Delhi.

Sd/-

P.L. Moktan

Appendix – 2

D.O.No. 72/CMS/81-82

GANGTOK

SIKKIM

CHIEF MINISTER OF SIKKIM

May 25, 1982.

I understand that the "All India Tamang Buddhist Association" has submitted a memorandum to the President of India Asking for inclusion of the Tamangs of India in the list of Scheduled Tribes of India.

The Tamangs are a very old community, largely resident in the higher elevations of Darjeeling district and Sikkim, and they have much in common with the other Buddhist tribes of the area. They remain a backward community, being basically farmers, but many of the hold lowly jobs as tea pickers, porters or similar labouring occupations. Very few have any higher education and, as a result, none holds a position of any eminence or significance.

The Tamangs are a Mongolian or semi-Mongolian people, probably descended from a group of Tibetan cavalry who settled on the border between Tibet and Nepal and they are called 'Tamang' from the Tibetan words for 'horse-traders'.

They follow the same Lamaistic Buddhism as the Tibetans and Bhutias. Their Monasteries or Gumpas are similar in design and when a Tamang Buddhist Lama is not available another Buddhist Lama can carry out his functions. Their religious texts are the same and they build similar chortens to their dead and observe similar festivals and ceremonies. Like the other tribes, the Tamangs were previously of the Bon cult, an animistic religion centred round the worship of ancestors and appeasement of elemental forces. Some of the primitive rites and customs remain, such as the sacrifice of a cock to invoke the blessings of the fore-fathers and a death rite called Bonbo Shereb.

Since they live at high altitudes and due to their close ties with the Tibetans and related tribes their dress and food habits are very similar. Their diet consists of powdered cereal, eaten with butter tea, and there are no taboos regarding meat or vegetables. Their dress, in the colder regions, is the same Bokhu as worn by the Tibetans although in lower regions many have adopted Nepali or Western dress. The women's jewellery is elaborate and distinctive.

A strong family tradition remains and there are strict rules as to marriage and inter-marriage. In common with other hill tribes the bride is considered an asset, not a liability, and there is no dowry system; rather the bridegroom's family presents twelve traditional items to the parents of

the bride and the marriage ceremony includes mutual oaths by the bridal couple that they will live together and a public declaration of the marriage by a relation of the bride.

The Tamangs have their own traditional forms of dance and song. The Damphu is an unusual kind of goat-skin drum, peculiar to the community, which has greatly contributed to the beauty and form of their dances and songs. They also have symbolic religious dances in common with other Buddhist tribes. Their spoken dialect is distinctive but they have no written script.

The Tamangs are an attractive people, but they still need a great deal of assistance to bring them up to the same level of education and standard of living as their more fortunate compatriots. They may therefore be considered for inclusion as one of the scheduled tribes of India by virtue of their close and unique culture and traditions and their residence in these hill regions, along side the other scheduled buddhists tribes.

Sd/-

(NAR BHADUR BHANDARI)

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,
NEW DELHI.

Appendix – 3

Government of Sikkim

The Secretariat

GANGTOK - 727103

Tel. Off : 2310 Resi 2369

Tlx. 264-206 HOME IN, 264-207 CAB IN

D.O. No.54(92)Hence/92/143

August 21, 1993

Dear Sir Vohra,

This pertains to inclusion of the Tamang and the Limboo Communities of Sikkim in the list of Scheduled Tribes of the State as also the amendment of Schedule Tribes order, 1978 pertaining to the State of Sikkim.

2. The Tamang Community has a distinct culture of their own, as also their own customs, social traditions, songs and dances, language and dialect. Their religion is Lamaistic Buddhism and they use the same text written in Tibetan as are used by other Tibetan Lamas. Educationally, economically and politically, the Tamangs are still backward and separate from the mainstream of national life. Finally, the Sherpas, Yolmes and Kagateys belonging to the same ethnic group have already been given recognition as Scheduled Tribes.

3. The Limboos constitute a big chunk of the population of The State at present. Unfortunately, they appear to play only a limited role in the government of the State. A seat had been reserved for this community in the State legislative Assembly in 1967 on the ground that they were a distinct identity in themselves. However, after the merger of Sikkim into India, while reservation of seats was provided for in the State Assembly in 1979, for the Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes, this was not done in the case of Limboos. Economically, the Limboos remain poor and indigent. This stems from their social backwardness and simple and superstitious nature which hinders the development of a spirit of

enterprises. Socially, the Limboos have traditions much like other tribals. They have their own officially recognised language. They follow an animistic religion which has its own mythology, its own pantheon of God, and Goddesses... its own group of priests. Their religious rituals involve slaughtering of animals. Their marriage system involves distinct customs and rules. The rituals that they perform during child birth, after child birth etc. are also quite distinct.

4. The above reasons have been cited by the representatives of Tamang and Limboo communities for their inclusion in the list of Scheduled Tribes of the State and the State Government endorses each of these reasons as also the demand raised by these communities. Hence, it is requested that under Article 342 of the Constitution of India, the Parliament may be moved for the amendment of the Schedule Tribes Order, 1978 so as to include these communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes of the State.

With regards

Shri N. N. Vohra
Secretary
Ministry of Home Affairs
Government of India
New Delhi.

Sincerely yours,
Sd/-
(G. P. Pradhan)
Chief Secretary

SINCE 1976

SIKKIM EXPRESS

OF THIS LAND, FOR ITS PEOPLE

■ Good Morning Sikkim, today is WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH, 2016 ■ REGD NO. WB/SKM/02/2015-2017 VOL. XXXX NO. 74 ■ RNI No. RN 40962/1990 ■ www.sikkimexpress.com ■ ₹ 5.00

MARCH FOR RIGHTS

JAC rally in Gangtok demanding LT seat reservation

Staff Reporter

GANGTOK, March 15: Members of the Limboo and Tamang communities from various parts of Sikkim arrived at Gangtok on Tuesday in huge numbers to participate in the peace rally organized on the Assembly seat reservation issue.

The rally organized by the Sikkim Limboo Tamang Tribal Joint Action Committee (JAC) was to press for reservation of seats for the two tribal communities in the State Assembly. It was also to record dissatisfaction on the stand taken by the State government on seat reservation matter.

The rally started late at around 11.30 am from the private truck stand at Deorali as several Limboo and Tamang groups were coming from far flung areas. There was no sloganeering in the rally which was led by a group of drum beating Limboo youths in their traditional dress. The participants held placards and banners regarding their seat reservation demand.

The rally progressed along the national highway from Deorali to Zero Point from where it took a bend towards Tibet Road and dropped down to Titanic Park before concluding in front of Limboo Bhawan in DPH area.

Contd. on page 7




The Limboo-Tamang seat reservation demand rally in Gangtok. Pics: Wang Chen

Submit LT seat proposal to Centre: Goley
SE Report

Give LT seats using Art 371F: SPCC
SE Report

GANGTOK, March 15: SKM president P.S. Goley has supported the rally organized by the Sikkim Limboo Tamang Tribal Joint Action Committee on Tuesday at Gangtok.

I extend my congratulations to those who participated in the rally as they are conscious about their rights, said Goley in a media statement. I demand the State government to expeditiously submit a proposal to the Home

Contd. on page 7

SIKKIM EXPRESS

OF THIS LAND, FOR ITS PEOPLE

TUESDAY, 15 MARCH, 2016 ■ REGD NO. WB/SKM/02/2015-2017 VOL. XXXX NO. 73 ■ RNI No. RN 40962/1990 ■ www.sikkimexpress.com ■ ₹ 5.00

‘Gangtok rally will damage LT seat demand, JAC should do rally in Delhi’

Staff Reporter

GANGTOK, March 14: HRD minister Ram Bahadur Subba and Urban Development minister Narendra Kumar Subba – the two senior elected representatives of the Limboo community – has questioned the rationale behind holding a peace rally by the Sikkim Limboo Tamang Tribal Joint Action Committee (JAC) at Gangtok.

“The Sikkim government cannot give Assembly seats for the Limboo-Tamang communities on its own. This is purely a Central matter which must be decided in the Parliament. The State government has done all things possible from its side on the matter. The doors of the Union government must be knocked on the Limboo-Tamang seat demand,” said Ram Bahadur Subba on Monday.

The JAC – consisting of various Limboo and Tamang organizations – is holding a peace rally in Gangtok on Tuesday seeking reservation of the seats for the two tribal communities in the State Assembly.

Speaking at a programme organized here at a local hotel to deliberate on the seat reservation issue, the HRD minister suggested the JAC to hold rallies and dharnas in New Delhi so the attention of the Union government is received. Do not misguide the members of Limboo and Tamang communities of Sikkim, he said.

“The Assembly seats can be given only by the Centre. The State government can only give proper data and facts to the Centre. Hence, the matter must be raised before the Centre and not in the State. They must go and meet the concerned authorities in Delhi instead of holding rallies in Gangtok,” said Subba. He urged all to come forward in a single forum on the seat reservation demand.

Subba observed that the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation demand is a political issue. The JAC should not be used as a tool for political purposes. He said the JAC should focus on the welfare of the community and not on the political agenda.

Contd. on page 7

JAC rally in Gangtok today demanding LT seats

‘State’s 40 seats proposal not feasible, reservation must be given from 32 seats’



JAC members speaking to media on Monday. SE Pic

Staff Reporter

GANGTOK, March 14: The Sikkim Limboo Tamang Tribal Joint Action Committee (JAC) is expecting a large turnout of the members from the two communities during the peace rally at Gangtok scheduled on Tuesday.

“We are expecting more than 5,000 persons to participate in the rally. The appeal to participate in the rally has been sent to all corners of Sikkim. It would be a peaceful rally to demand our long pending political rights,” said the JAC members in a press conference today here at Press Club of Sikkim.

JAC advisor Oma Hang Subba urged the people of Sikkim to show solidarity to the Limboo-Tamang communities by participating in the peace rally.

The rally would be starting from the truck stand, Deorali at 10 am.

The JAC is holding the rally to press for Limboo-Tamang seat reservation in the State Assembly. The rally is also to express the committee’s dissatisfaction on the stand taken by the State government regarding the seat reservation issue.

The State government wants the Assembly to be enhanced from 32 seats to 40 seats for providing seat reservation to the Limboo and Tamang tribal communities.

Speaking to media today, JAC president S.P. Subba contended that the State government was never serious in providing reservation for the Limboo-Tamang communities in the State Assembly.

The two communities had been recognized as STs in 2013. The population of Limboos in Sikkim is around 55,000 and Tamangs number to around 39,000 in the State as per the respective community organizations.

Lackadaisical attitude of the State government deprived the two communities of their legitimate Constitutional rights, said Subba.

“We are not concerned from where the seats would be provided as it is the prerogative of the government to do so. We are only concerned that the reservation must be provided from the existing 32 seats” said the JAC members.

The committee flatly rejected the proposal of the State government to expand the Assembly to 40 seats. “This is not feasible. The number of Assembly seats cannot be increased till the next delimitation which is taking place only after 2026,” it said.

Normal water supply restored in Gangtok

KUNALRAI

GANGTOK, March 14: Normal water supply has been resumed in several neighbourhoods of Gangtok after it was disrupted for 2-3 days due to the construction of a supply line at 8th Mile area. The construction had hindered water supply from the main source at Selep Tanki which has been restored. PHE department secretary S.K. Chettri informed SIKKIM EXPRESS.

Stressing on need of judicious use of water, Chettri said the department has been working on management of uninterrupted water supply in the capital. He added that the PHE department is also working on reframing acts and rules pertaining to water supply and its judicious use so that the consumers do not have to face water shortage in the future.

The department is also likely to take action against households pumping water directly from the mainline following complaints from consumers. They blamed usage of pumps for illicit diversion of water hindering the equal distribution to individual pipelines connected to the main supply line. Consumers have been cautioned against using such pumps and rather advised to source water to rooftop storage tanks through base tanks.

To top up the growing demand, the second pipeline is also being upgraded from the Selep tank source which has been delayed due to a difficult terrain. The PHE secretary informed that the work is being initiated and officials have been continuously monitoring and visiting the up-gradation site so that the work can be completed at the earliest.

The PHE secretary also appealed to the consumers to use water judiciously and check and monitor their water pipelines.

The department supplies around 17 million litres of water daily to households in Gangtok and its surrounding areas.



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H.O. 347, Main Road, Gangtok, Sikkim
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Kazi did 'historic injustice' to Nepali community: CM

SE Report / JPR/HS

GANGTOK, March 19: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today said L.D. Kazi, the first Chief Minister of Sikkim, did a 'historic injustice' to the Nepali community of the State.

A big historic injustice has been done to the Nepali community in Sikkim in 1976 due to the wrong leadership of then Chief Minister L.D. Kazi, said Chamling in the Assembly.

Chamling mentioned that the Union government had written to the Sikkim government in 1976 asking details of tribal communities in Sikkim. However, the Kazi government wrote back saying that only Bhutia-Lepcha communities are entitled for tribal status, he said.

If the then government had wanted, the Nepali community of Sikkim would also have been given tribal status but no such recommendation was made, said Chamling.

He also accused former Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari of doing injustice to the Limboo-Tamang communities in 1987 by not recommending the tribal status. (With inputs from JPR)

Delimitation 2026 not binding for Sikkim: CM

'LT seats will come before 2019'

SE Report / JPR/HS

GANGTOK, March 19: The Limboo-Tamang seat reservation issue dominated the third day of the ongoing Budget Session in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly with Chief Minister Pawan Chamling maintaining that the two tribal communities would be getting their political rights before the 2019 Assembly elections.

Taking part in the discussion on the private member's resolution on the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation matter, the Chief Minister on Saturday asserted the Limboo-Tamang communities will contest the 2019 Assembly elections from ST seats. The SDF will also field its candidates from the ST seats then, he said. He further emphasized that political rights of all communities would be protected while resolving the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation issue.

SKM MLA Kunga Nima Lepcha had introduced the private member's bill which was recorded in the House after detailed discussions. The Assembly seat reservation of Limboo-Tamang communities is their legitimate right, said Chamling. He also countered the allegations made against his government of not being serious on the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation demand.

Reading out letters written by the SDF government to the Centre on the issue, the Chief Minister reminded that it during the tenure of the SDF government in 2003 that the two communities got recognized as ST. He asked the detractors to come out with concrete evidences of his government not being serious on the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation matter.

Regarding the claims made that increase of Assembly seats to 40 is not possible as delimitation of new constituencies will not take place till 2026, Chamling said people are being misguided on this ground. This delimitation provision is not applicable to Sikkim as Sikkim has special protection under Article 371F.

and the binding of 2026 for delimitation commission will not be implemented for Sikkim, said Chamling. "This has been mentioned in the letter of the solicitor general written to the Home Affairs ministry when the ministry sought an opinion in the matter. So it clearly means that the seat reservation of the Limboo-Tamang communities can be done before 2016," he said. He also read out a portion of the letter in the Assembly.

Seats will be increased to 40 in the Assembly as per the report of the Burman Commission report, Chamling said. He also mentioned about the issues if seats for Limboo-Tamang communities are reserved from the existing 17 general seats of the Assembly.

If reservation is done from the general seats, it would be an injustice to the majority population who despite being in majority enjoys only 17 seats, said the Chief Minister. Let injustice not be done to the majority while giving rights to the minority, therefore Burman Commission report is the only way and solution for the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation, he said. It will not take away the rights of any community and every one will have their political rights in the Assembly, he said.

I will ensure the seat reservation of the Limboo and Tamang communities by increasing the number of seats from 32 to 40 in Sikkim Assembly, said Chamling.

The Chief Minister opined that the private member's resolution was detrimental to the interests of the majority Nepali community and was not in the interests of Sikkim people.

Speaking on the State government constituted high powered committee on tribal seat matter, the Chief Minister said the committee has been formed to maintain transparency. "The committee will submit its report on March 31 to the State government. The main aim of the committee is to ensure the rights of every community." (Contd. on page 7)



Chief Minister Pawan Chamling making his points during the Assembly session. Pic: JPR

What others said during Saturday debate...

SKM MLA P.S. Goley: The Limboo and Tamang communities were deprived of their political rights for last 13 years. It is high time that they get justice. Discard Burman Commission report on increasing seats from 32 to 40 as the next delimitation would be only done after 2026.

SKM MLA Kunga Nima Lepcha: The reservation must be done from the existing 32 Assembly seats without disturbing the BL seats.

SKM MLA Sonam Lama: There should be proportionate increase of BL seats if the number of Assembly seats is increased from 32 to 40.

Independent MLA R.N. Chamling: It is time to give the Limboo and Tamang communities their constitutional rights. State should pursue the matter with the Central government vigorously.

SDF MLA B.B. Rai: Why don't opposition give an appropriate formula rather than misguiding the masses?

SDF MLA Hemendra Adhikari: Burman Commission is the solution of seat reservation issue.



Minister R.B. Subba: It should be looked upon responsibly. It is a Union list subject. The communication is on progress between State and Centre. So far, no communication from Home ministry on Supreme Court's direction. The registered political parties would be called for a meeting for the discussion very soon by high powered committee.



Minister DD Bhutia: Collective effort will bring a solution to seat reservation. The high powered committee is working in collecting suggestions and opinions from the people.



Minister Tshering Wangdi Lepcha: We are not afraid, consensus needed on issue.



Minister SB Subedi: Protection for Bhutia-Lepchas needed. Rights of Limboo and Tamang communities and others should be given.



Minister GM Gurung: Resolution not sensible; will be injustice to majority of the communities.

Minister DT Lepcha: Seat reservation would be done keeping the rights of every community on mind.

NEWS

Open forum bats for 6 LT seats, tribal status for 11 communities

PANKAJDHUNGEL

GANGTOK, April 14: Politicians, legal experts and community organization members deliberated on the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation issue and tribal status for Sikkimese communities during a day long meeting of Forum for Constitutional Rights of Tamangs and Limbus of Sikkim (FORCOTALIS) at Harkamaya College of Education, 6th Mile here today.

The open-debate initiated by forum president A.K. Subba on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti was attended and addressed by former three-term Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari, former MPs Nakul Das Rai and Pahal Man Subba, former legislators Nar Bahadur Khatiwada and Pradeep Yonzon, leaders of political parties like SNPP and SLP and organizations like GAC and BGP. Legal expert R.P. Sharma and former bureaucrat P.K. Pradhan were also in attendance.

With the twin issues topping the agenda, the



The speakers and organizers at the forum meeting.

meeting passed two resolutions - demanding reservation of six seats for Limboo and Tamang communities in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and inclusion of 11 segments of Sikkimese people as tribals.

According to the resolutions, the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation should be done by further amending the People's Representation Act of 1950 bearing in mind the provisions of Article 371F (f) of the Indian constitution in proportion to their population, it was resolved.

Former CM and Sikkim Sangram Parishad president N.B. Bhandari stated that the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation should have been done before the 2004 assembly elections which was however overlooked by the ruling SDF. He further alleged Chief Minister Pawan Chamling of deceiving not only the two communities but all of Sikkim over the years.

Former MP Pahal Man Subba maintained that the State government turned a blind eye to the seat reservation issue since 2003. Another former MP, Nakul

Das Rai charged the SDF of using the LT issue in 2002 to score political mileage. He also criticized the Burman Commission report for decimating the spirit of Article 371F, that provides special status to Sikkim in the Indian constitution.

Echoing similar views, SNPP president Biraj Adhikari termed the Burman Commission report as a mere paid document produced by the State government. He said the special constitutional provisions would be futile if Sikkim Subject Certificate is not protected.

Law expert R.P. Sharma explained Sikkim's exemption from the provisions of Article 170 saying seats in the State Legislative Assembly can be increased through the parliament. He also stressed on the need to convince Central leaders on the issue.

P.K. Pradhan, BGP Sikkim member Kamal Gurung, SLP president Duk Nath Nepal and Neema Theang also addressed the meeting.

Mangan residents asked to submit details of workers, tenants in 15 days

DEEPAKSHARMA

MANGAN, April 14: House owners and business establishments under Mangan Nagar Panchayat (MNP) jurisdiction have been asked to submit details of their tenants and workers to Mangan police station within 15 days.

In a bid to check unscrupulous elements and criminal activities in the North district headquarters, a coordination meeting held today decided to make submission of identity proof of tenants and workers mandatory.

The meeting organised by MNP was attended by its

president Zangmo Bhutia, councillors, Mangan police station in-charge Karma Uden, officials and general public.

During the meeting, the members deliberated on various issues and stressed on the need to check anti-social activities trying to disturb peace of the town.

The MNP president in her address stated that details of all business establishments, workers, housekeepers, tenants and foreign nationals working in the area should be submitted to Mangan police station within 15 days. She also spoke on the need to eliminate child labour.

The Mangan police station in-charge in her address informed that the workers, hawkers and tenants should submit their identity proof and details of house owners and employers. She also called upon the public not to encourage entry of unknown persons for any work.

Suggestions to stop issuance of hawker licenses to new owners, verification of scrap item dealers, ban on begging and maintaining law and order were also placed during the open discussion in the meeting.

MNP councillor K.J. Bhutia appealed to the public to cooperate with the authorities to maintain public safety.

Governor inaugurates supercomputing facility at NIT Sikkim

SE Report

GANGTOK, April 14: In a major step towards excellence and innovation in technical education, the PARAM Kanchenjunga Supercomputing Centre at National Institute of Technology (NIT), Sikkim at Rabongla was inaugurated by Governor Shrinivas Patil, informs a PIB release.

The facility is set up in joint collaboration between the Centre for Development

C-DAC indigenously developed Integrated Cluster Solution (InClus) Suite is first deployed in PARAM Kanchenjunga at NIT Sikkim, it was informed.

NIT Sikkim director Prof. Arun B. Samaddar, C-DAC Pune executive director Dr. Hemant Darbari, and officials from C-DAC, NIT Sikkim and the State government were present during the inauguration.

Dr. Darbari stated that C-DAC is proud to partner with

Arun Samaddar said the supercomputing facility will bring in new innovation avenues in the field of computational science and engineering through collaborative research and development in various engineering fields. He informed that in the trial period of the supercomputer itself two faculty members of the institute have developed some application in long distance crude oil flow from Middle East to India and study

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OF THIS LAND, FOR ITS PEOPLE

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File has started moving in Delhi on LT seat demand: CM

State demands Centre to expand Assembly to 40 seats for reserving 5 LT seats

RUPESH SHARMA

GANGTOK, June 17: Administrative process has begun in the Centre on the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation demand, said Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Friday at Rangpo.

Chamling was returning to Sikkim after a 5-day Delhi trip where he and his delegation of MLAs met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 15 and submitted memorandum on the Limboo-Tamang seat issue and other pending demands of Sikkim.

"There is no provision for ST reservation in Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Due to this, the Limboo and Tamang communities cannot contest from their seats. Hence, we have told the Prime Minister that seats should be quickly given to them anyhow," said

the Chief Minister asking the people to take it that 'file has started moving in Delhi'. "However, it will take minimum of six months to one year to complete the whole administrative exercise. People should understand that the Prime Minister will send the memorandum to the concerned ministry. The ministry will work on the documentation and send it to the cabinet. After the cabinet approves, it will be discussed in both the Houses of the Parliament and then go to President for consent. People have to trust our government and have to understand that the demand was placed strongly before the Prime Minister," added the Chief Minister while addressing the gathering of SDF workers who had assembled at Rangpo to welcome him and his team.

In his address, the Chief Minister detailed the demand placed before the Prime Minister on the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation issue.

"No community should get injustice when seat reservation is done in the Assembly. We must take care of several aspects while reserving seats for the Limboo and Tamang communities. The 12 BL seats, one Sangha seat and two SC seats are reserved in the Assembly. There will be 20 reserved seats in the Assembly if five seats are given to the Limboo and Tamang communities from the 32 seats. In terms of population ratio, only 12 unreserved seats will be left for the 60 percent population," said the Chief Minister.

"Hence, we have demanded that the Assembly seats are increased from 32 to 40 so minimum of five seats are reserved for the Limboo and Tamang communities. It is our principle to secure the interest of all and have equality. This matter lies with the Union government, it can



Chief Minister Pawan Chamling welcomed at Rangpo. Pic: SDF social media.

be given in any form but we have urged the Prime Minister to resolve the seat issue as soon as possible," said Chamling. "The Prime Minister has assured to forward our demand to the ministry concerned and to take quick action. He has also assured to give a positive decision," said the Chief Minister. In his address, Chamling

said the delegation also raised the demand of tribal status for the 11 left-out communities of Sikkim during the meeting with the Prime Minister. As an alternative, Sikkim can also be given a sectoral tribal status like Lakshadweep and Jansari district of Himachal Pradesh, he said.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the other demands placed before the

Prime Minister including allowing the 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorjee to visit Sikkim.

"The Karmapa is permitted to visit other places in the country and foreign nations. Only Sikkim is left out. The Prime Minister told us that the Sikkim permission would also be given after removing a minor hurdle," said Chamling.

We have received positive response from the Prime Minister in all our demands including the inclusion of Lepcha tribe in the category of the Most Primitive Tribe, he said. Continuing on the Limboo-Tamang seat issue, the Chief Minister maintained that his government did not heeded to threats in past during the

tribal status process for the two communities.

"The force that had blocked ST status for the Limboo and Tamang communities also tried to stop me. I was warned that my chair will go but I did not listened to such threats," he said.

Chamling also spoke about his government being targeted on the pending seat reservation of the two communities. "We have done whatever is in our power. We have given reservation in jobs, education and panchayats. We have made ministers and MLAs from the Limboo and Tamang communities," he said appealing the two communities not to be misguided on the seat reservation issue.

In his speech, the Chief Minister announced that he would be embarking upon a tour of villages in Sikkim after June 25.

Earlier, the Chief Minister was given a rousing welcome at Bagdogra airport by the SDF workers who then escorted him to Rangpo.