Identity Politics in Sikkim: A Study on the Demand of Thamis for Scheduled Tribe Status

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University
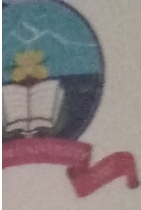

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

Manisha Thami

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

February, 2018

सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय

(भारतीय संसद के अधिनियमद्वारा स्थापित केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)

गुणवत्तापूर्ण प्रबंधन प्रणाली ISO 9001:2008 हेतु प्रमाणित संस्थान

SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

[A Central University established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007]

An ISO Quality Management System 9001:2008 Certified Institution

Declaration

I, Manisha Thami, do hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the content of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university.

The dissertation has been checked using URKUND and found within limits as per plagiarism policy and instructions issued from time to time.

This is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University.

Manish Thami

Registration No. 16/M.Phil/PSC/06

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

Professor M Yasin   Dr. Durga Prasad Chhetri

Head of the Department   Supervisor

6 माईल, सामदुर, तादोंग, गंगटोक - 737102 सिक्किम, भारत
दूरभाष : 00-91-3592 - 251067, 251403, फैक्स :- 251067/251757

6th Mile, Samdur, PO Tadong 737102, Gangtok, Sikkim, India
Phones : 00-91-3592-251067, 251403, Fax - 251067/251757
website : www.sikkimuniversity.in/www.sikkimuniversity.ac.in
Email : sikkimuniversity@gmail.com

सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय
(भारतीय संसद के अधिनियमद्वारा स्थापित केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)
गुणवत्तापूर्ण प्रबंधन प्रणाली ISO 9001:2008 हेतु प्रमाणित संस्थान

SIKKIM UNIVERSITY
[A Central University established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007]
An ISO Quality Management System 9001:2008 Certified Institution

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **"Identity Politics in Sikkim: A Study on the Demand of Thamis for Scheduled Tribe Status"** submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Political Science is the result of bonafide research work carried out by Miss Manisha Thami under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associateship and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

Date: 02.02.2018

Dr. Durga Prasad Chhetri

Place: Gangtok

6 माईल, सामदुर, तादोंग, गगंटोक – 737102 सिक्किम, भारत
दूराभाष : 00-91-3592 - 251067, 251403, फैक्स :- 251067/251757

6th Mile, Samdur, PO Tadong 737102, Gangtok, Sikkim, India
Phones : 00-91-3592-251067, 251403, Fax - 251067/251757
website : www.sikkimuniversity.in/www.sikkimuniversity.ac.in
Email : sikkim

PLAGIARISM CHECK CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that plagiarism check has been carried out for the following M.Phil dissertation with the help of URKUND software and the result is within the permissible limit decided by University.

"Identity Politics in Sikkim: A Study on the Demand of Thamis for Scheduled Tribe Status"

Submitted by Miss Manisha Thami under the supervision of Dr. Durga Prasad Chhetri of the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Gangtok, India.

Signature of the Candidate

Countersigned by the Supervisor

Dedicated to my Aappa, Aama and Bhai

for their unconditional love and tremendous support.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The dimension of identity and identity politics is vast, which engages ambiguity and complexity. The contents of this dissertation are framed specifically to represent, the simple meaning and explanation of the term identity and identity politics. It has been explained in the light of various theories and approaches advocated by Parker (2005), Taylor (1994), Brubaker and Cooper (2000), Jenkins (2008) andBernstein (2005). Furthermore, with the support of the conceptual framework of identity and identity politics, ethnic identity politics in Sikkim has been discussed.

The present study essentially focuses on the Thami ethnic group, who are demanding Scheduled Tribe status since thelate 1990s.It discusses how the Thami ethnic group, have been facing identity crisis due to misrecognition and absence of recognition. The absence of historical and scholarly discourses on their origin, as well as disorientation of the term Thami was found to be the main reason for the identity crisis. Moreover, the oratory history is not strong enough to locate their origin and on this basis, many scholars have expressed that Thami ethnic group has an obscure history of origin. The existence of their language and ethnicity was also frequentlyquestioned. Consequently, it further distorted their original identity.

The study was based on both qualitative and quantitative methodology. The ethnographic field survey was conducted in the East Sikkim, to collect data from the primary sources. From the survey, It was found that the Thami ethnic group in Sikkim are very much aware of their ethnic identity, who wants to be recognized as Scheduled Tribes. It was also found, that the process of acculturation has infiltrated the Thami ethnic group in such a way, that they have adopted two popular religions viz, Buddhism and Hinduism of their locality. They are demanding Scheduled Tribe status precisely with the perception of the socio-economic and political development and also for the preservation of their ethnic identity. Hence, the present study provides an insight into the identity politics in Sikkim and the demand of Thami ethnic group for Scheduled Tribe status.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

LIST OF TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS

1. APL   Above Poverty Line
2. BPL   Below Poverty Line
3. BTWA   Bharatiya Thami Welfare Association
4. EIECOS   Eleven Ethnic Indigenous Community of Sikkim
5. MBC   Most Backward Class
6. MNO   Mongol National Organisation
7. MPI   Multidimensional Poverty Index
8. MR   Muster Roller
9. NEFIN   Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
10. NFDIN   National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities
11. NSM   New Social Movement
12. NSSO   National Sample Survey Organisation
13. NTS   Nepal Thami Samaj
14. OBC   Other Backward Class
15. PSU   Public Sector Undertaking
16. SES   Socio-Economic Status
17. SC   Scheduled Caste
18. ST   Scheduled Tribe

Identity Politics in Sikkim: A Study on the Demand of Thamis for Scheduled Tribe Status

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The concept of identity and identity politics has been defined and discussed by many scholars. But it still continued to remain ambiguous and complex. It is ambiguous because sometimes it becomes easy to identify who we are? But most often, it becomes difficult to identify who we really are? Therefore, identity is termed as one of the complex, ambiguous and multifaceted (Verkuyten, 2014). Identity is also multifaceted term, because it is dynamic in nature and it changes according to the various circumstances. For instance, a person is usually born with one identity, i.e. a person is a homo sapiens. But with the due course of time a person is identified with the various factors, such as sex, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, citizenship, various professions and so on. Sen (2006) in his book 'Identity and Violence' addresses the concept of multiple identities. He said he is, "an Asian, an Indian Citizen, a Bengali with Bangladeshi ancestry, an American or British resident, an economist, a dabbler in philosophy, an author, a strong believer in secularism and democracy, a feminist, a heterosexual and a believer in the rights of gay and lesbian". His views on multiple identities are essentially relevant especially when a person needs to identify him or her on the multiple factors.

Identity is not a problem for some group of people, who can identify them without any intricacy. They even own and enjoy the hegemony over their particular identity. But the identity really becomes a great issue for some group of people. Especially for those people, whose identity are misrecognised or never recognised throughout the history of human civilization (Taylor, 1994). Such people are frequently asked questions about their identity, which even raises the questions on their very existence. Frequently asked questions on their identity somewhere leaves a mark of sorrow, leading them to feel identity crisis. Sometimes it is even rooted in the society as a form of stigmatisation. When a group of people with a grief over identity crisis, demands the right to be recognised for what they really are, is often termed as identity politics. The movement led by people with certain disabilities can be marked as the

beginning of the movements based on identity politics. These movements represent the fight against the society's stigmatisation on disabilities (Bernstein, 2005).

The concept of identity can be politicised in many ways. For instance, ethnicity is one factor on the basis of which people politicise their identity (Ross, 1982). History has witnessed that the identity politics based on ethnicity and race often employ devastating violence. It offers the ground for the massive massacre of human civilization, through the process of the holocaust (Marrus, 1987) and genocide (Newbury, 1998). The process of genocides and holocaust is not only the curse to one particular ethnic group who were butchered, but it is also the curse for the entire human civilization. Not a single country or a region is left untouched by the norms of identity politics. Among all the factors, identity politics based on ethnicity is widely spread phenomena in the multi-ethnic and multilingual society.

Sikkim is one of the North-Eastern State in India, is also influenced by identity politics based on ethnicity. It is also one of the multi-lingual and multi-cultural States, where various ethnic groups reside within its territory (Subba, 2009). The population of Sikkim is basically divided into three categories, i.e. Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali. Nepali population is further divided into two categories, i.e. the Aryans and the Mongoloids. In Sikkim, the political outcome has been always determined by the role of the ethnicity. Some of the ethnic groups like Bhutias and Lepchas, enjoy privileges on their distinct ethnic identity (Gurung, 2011). In 1979, Government of India passed an Ordinance No.7, which abolished the parity system in Sikkim. According to the ordinance, out of 32 seats in State Assembly 12 seats were reserved for the Lepcha and Bhutia, one seat was reserved for the [1]'*Sangha*', 2 seats were reserved for Scheduled Castes and remaining 17 seats were reserved for the Nepali population. Moreover, the reservation of 17 seats is still debated in the State's Legislative Assembly (Sinha, 2008).

Many scholars like Chhetri (2013), Gurung (2011), Sinha (2007) etc. have observed, how ethnic identity plays a key role to mould the political outcome in Sikkim. This was possibly begun from thelate1980s when the Government of India recommended implementation of Mandal Commission Report for the State of Sikkim. The Mandal Commission Report came up with the provision to include, some of the ethnic group from the Nepali population in the Backward Classes. That particular period (the late

1980s) can be remarked, as the beginning of new era in the political history of Sikkim. This is because the government who supported the implementation of Mandal Commission won the majority vote in State's general election. Subsequently, the ethnic identity became the prior concern for some of the ethnic groups within Nepali population.

In 1994, the ethnic-groups like Limbu, Tamang, etc. were listed in Other Backward Class, but they were not seemed to be satisfied with it. Within no time, they demanded Scheduled Tribe status and in 2003, they were listed in Scheduled Tribe category (Gurung, 2011). Further, the ethnic-group like Rai, Bhujel, Thami, Gurung, Sunuwar etc. also followed the same step as Limbu and Tamang. At first they wanted to be listed in Other Backward Classes, but later they wanted to be listed in the Scheduled Tribe category. The ethnic groups like Rai, Thami etc. were also enlisted in the Central List of OBC for the State of Sikkim and West Bengal in 2002. Furthermore, these two ethnic groups also placed their demand for Scheduled Tribe status before both the Government. The demand for ST status is definitely for the socio-economic upliftment, but the reservation of seats in the State Assembly is also a considerable fact for their demand. The ethnic groups, who are demanding ST status is devotedly involved in the process of ethnic identification. They identify them on the basis of their ethnic identity, away from Nepali identity as a whole. Besides, they even took the initiative to depart their holy practices and cultures, from that of the Hindus in order to be recognised as tribes. Hence, Identity politics in Sikkim can be understood as the demand of ethnic groups for the ST status and their desire for the reservation of the seats in the Legislative Assembly.

Thami is one of the ethnic groups within Nepali population in Sikkim, who are also demanding ST status on the basis of their ethnic identity. As mentioned already, the ethnicity is one of the essential factors for identity and identity politics. The group of people, who emphasised on ethnicity to identify them, is popularly denoted as ethnic groups. The term ethnic group is used to identify groups who have essential characteristics, collective proper names, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific homeland and a sense of solidarity (Hutchinson and Smith, 1991). Thus, the ethnic group is the group of people, who shares certain biological

characteristics with common ancestry, language etc. In the light of these views, Thami can also be recognised as the ethnic group because they identify them on their ethnic identity.

Thami ethnic group were enlisted in Central list of OBC, for the State of Sikkim and West Bengal in 2002. But they started complaining about the OBC; as they found out the provisions of the OBCs do not provide privileges as similar to STs. Thami ethnic group were more stimulated when the Limbu and Tamang were recognised as ST in both Sikkim and West Bengal. From that period onwards, to be enlisted in ST category became their priority. They started collecting their mythological and legendary stories on their deities, ancestors, language etc. (Shneiderman, 2009:130). It can be said that the whole process of demanding ST status employed, quest for Thami's ethnic identification. But Thami ethnic group are not yet recognised as STs.

In Sikkim, Thami ethnic group is sparsely populated who are comparatively less in number. They are also autochthons clans along with Lepcha, Limbu, Magar etc. They were also considered to be the signatory to *Lho-Men-Tsong* treaty (Report, 2017). Although Thami ethnic group were also the subjects of the king during the monarchical regime, there is also the possibility that they have migrated to Sikkim like that of Gurung and Sunuwar (Subba, 2008:375). According to 2006 census, the total population of Thami ethnic group in Sikkim was 453 with 92 households.

Hence, the present study discusses the basic and simple concept of identity, identity formation, identity politics, identity crisis and demand of recognition. It further analyses, that how the ethnic identity politics can possibly mould the entire politics of the State. It also evaluates, that how the ethnic identity politics can also be the curse for the entire human civilization. Then, it illustrates how the ethnic identity politics also played a vital role in the political history of Sikkim. Finally, it discusses how and why Thami ethnic group are demanding ST status and why it is not yet fulfilled.

Statement of the Research Problem

Thami ethnic group are found in the Eastern Himalayas, especially in the countries like Bhutan, India and Nepal. In Nepal, they reside in the places like Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Ramechap, Illam and Jhapa (Shneiderman, 2015:10). In India, they

are settled in Northern districts of West Bengal and in four districts of Sikkim. Throughout the history, Thami ethnic group in both India and Nepal were suffered, from the misrecognition and absence of recognition for their original identity. Vansittart (Cited in Subba, 2008:374) has included Thami ethnic group of Nepal, as one of the sub-clan of Adhikari and Magar. Bista (1972) addresses them, as economically and religiously very close to Tamang. Sharma (cited in Subba, 2008:374-375) viewed, that the Thami ethnic group shares a close affinity with Rai and considered them as one of the sub-clan of Rai. They also share close physical appearance with Rai, Tamang and Gurung. (Thapa and Subba, 2004:1606). They are also misrecognised as Kami because the words 'Thami' and 'Kami' seem as the rhyming words (Shneiderman, 2015). But due to their closer affinity with Kirat, they are also categories as analogous to Kiratis (Subba, 2008).

In the whole process of recognising Thami ethnic group, as the sub-clans of the various communities, their original identity was disoriented. Therefore, their disoriented identity made its way towards murkiness and intricacy. Their identity is misrecognised from upper caste to lower caste and from Aryans to Mongoloids. Thami ethnic group claim their existence and distinct ethnic identity from the very ancient period. But, with the due process of misrecognition and disorientation, they have a complex and enigmatic history of origin. However, it is in the absence of historical and scholarly discourses, the original identity of Thami ethnic group was buried under obscureness. The misrecognition or the absence of recognition further led them to feel identity crisis within the majority population (Shneiderman, 2009).

They are animists by their ancestor's belief system, who used to worship Mother Nature. They worship Mother Nature as their deities and refer them with different names. But at present, they have adopted Hinduism and Buddhism, which has become a threat to their animist belief system, myths, folktales, folklores etc. They still perform some of the rites and rituals of their ancestors, but the young generation hardly knows their myths and rituals (Subba, 2009:27-28). The Thami ethnic group in Sikkim has scanty literature and obscure history. The origin history of the Thami ethnic group is neither written in their own script nor in any other script. But their origin history is narrated by the headman of the family and recited by the shaman in holy the festivals (Thapa and Subba, 2004:1606).

Thami ethnic group use [2]'*Thangmi-Wakhekham*', a Tibeto-Burman dialect for conversation (Turin, 1998). In Sikkim, it was observed that they speak in Nepali language and it is not known whether or not they have any dialect of their own (Thapa and Subba, 2004:1605). Thami ethnic group from Darjeeling have published a dictionary called Thangmi-Wakhekham, which consists of a translation of sentences written in Thami language into English and Nepali language (Thami, 2013). Thami ethnic group from both Sikkim and West Bengal, are collectively working for the process of keeping their demand before the State Government and the Central Government. In the process of collective works for their demand, they are always in contact with each other. But the question here is how it could be possible, that Thami in Sikkim does not have their distinct dialect or are not aware of it. There is a possibility that they speak in the Nepali language, but by not recognising their ethnic dialect further distorted their ethnic identity.

Review of Literature

Many scholars have contributed their knowledge on identity and identity politics, which provides an insight on the concept of identity, identity formation, politics of recognition, identity crisis etc. They also have comprehensibly discussed the ethnic identity politics in Sikkim. So, the following reviewed books became a source of knowledge for the research work:

Roger Brubaker and Fredrick Cooper (2000) in 'Beyond Identity' explained how the identity can be understood in various circumstances. The authors discuss the variations of identity in both soft and analytical version. Identity according tothem means everything if it is understood in a strong sense and it means nothing if it is understood in a weak sense. They also provide insights into the constructivist's stance on identity. Constructivist's stance on identity is defined in soft version, i.e. it views identity in constructed, fluid and multiple in terms. A soft version of identity lacks rationality and makes it complex. Instead of soft version the identity should be understood in an analytical way. According to the authors, identity is the fundamental and consequential sameness among the group or category of people. Identity is something which is very deep, basic, and abiding or foundational. Hence, this sameness can be understood in both subjectivity and objectivity. They said this sameness manifest itself in solidarity with shared dispositions or consciousness or in

collective actions. It analysed identity as the product of political or social action, which involves the interactive development of the kind of collective self-understanding. It is the collective self-understanding which leads the way to fulfill the collective action of the group.

Richard Parker (2005) in the article 'Five Thesis on Identity Politics' evaluates how identity politics can be exercised as one of the instruments of democratic political freedom. He has explained how the constructions and presentation of identities becomes a weapon of manipulation. He provided five perceptions to explain how and why identity politics is used as an instrument of democratic political freedom. This article overview all politics as identity politics because all politics involve a process of identification. It begins with identifying oneself on the basis of name, caste, citizenship etc. Identity politics gives motion to the static politics by enforcing debates, discussions and even conflicts. This is because the choices and interest of the groups of people begin with the process of identification. Identity politics sometimes freezes the political freedom. It portrays the feeling of differences and grievances rather than similarities and bonds among people. It further extends the reason for conflicts and chaos. Identity politics can also become pathology, when it's meaning and concepts are deviated. He analysed that identity politics based on race, ethnicity or sexual orientation is not so devastating like the identity based on the minority. According to his analysis, identity politics based on minority activates all three pathologies exacerbates.

Charles Taylor (1994) in 'The Politics of Recognition' illustrates the concept of identity through politics of recognition, misrecognition and absence of recognition. According to him recognition, misrecognition and non-recognition can harm an individual or group of people. It can really distort or damage one's identity. The whole concept of misrecognition and non-recognition encourage suppression, marginalisation, imprisoned etc. The core concept of this article provides an insight on the misrecognisation of some people do not only show lack of due respect, but also distort their sentiments. To recognise someone for who they are is not only the courtesy, but also the vital human need.

Jocelyn Maclure (2003) in 'The Politics of Recognition at an Impasse? Identity politics and Democratic Citizenship', examines the identity politics in a broader field

of democratic theory. According to her, identity politics must be studied not only as the struggle for recognition, but also as a game of disclosure and acknowledgement. The value of recognition must be reappraised. Further, identity politics is an aspect of the broader game of democratic politics which involves meaning and implication of justice in a plural public sphere.

Juliette Storr (2010) in the article 'Identity Politics' analysed the concept of identity politics in terms of providing justice to marginalised people. Identity politics is the political activities which are rooted in social justice for marginalised, oppressed or disadvantaged social groups. It represents the discourse and activism of the oppressed and marginalised people who are struggling for justice, recognition, autonomy, power and equal opportunity, rights etc. Identity politics is also anchored in the consciousness rising in transforming one's sense of self and community from a position of inferiority to equality, by embracing self-esteem and self-worth. The discourse of identity politics has created a vast body of knowledge, which oscillates between the proponents or adherents of identity politics and the opponents of dissidents. In this article, the author discusses the general meaning of identity politics, its emergence and the criticisms.

Mary Bernstein (2005) in 'Identity Politics' explained the concept and approaches of identity politics. It illustrates the various approaches and challenges to define Identity Politics. The author tried to examine each approach in the reflection of competing theories in the relationship between experience, culture, identity politics and power. It also includes the theoretical issues regarding the relationship between personal experience and political stance. Further, this article also tried to discuss socially constructed identities.

Ian Law (2008) in 'Ethnicity' offers the meaning and dimension of ethnicity. The word ethnicity comes from the Greek word 'ethos' and '*ethnikos*', which refers to collective shares of similar culture or biological characteristics. The sociological accounts of ethnicity are based on homeland, where a group of people can be identified on the basis of their place of origin. The members of the particular ethnic group can also be identified, by the shared common dialect for the medium of communication. However, it also provides insight on how sociological accounts on

ethnicity try to break the classical linkages, between the ethnicity and identity contextualized by the history, language, descent and culture.

Colin Wayne Leach, Lisa M. Brown and Ross E. Worden (1999) in 'Ethnicity and Identity Politics' addresses ethnic identity politics as a tool to oppose certain issues. It throws light on how politically less powerful people make identity politics as an instrument. They pressurize the government for the fulfillment of their demands. The authors consider the minority subordinated groups who create the causes of divisive conflict. However, this perspective leaves unexamined the role of ethnicity and identity politics in the construction and maintenance of political power by majority dominant group. Rather being solely the weapon of the week ethnic conflict identity politics also may be central to modern forms of State formation. For instance, the formation of modern nation-state relied on the use of majority or dominant ethnic identity and associated politics. From this article, it can be understood that the ethnic identity is an important part of contemporary political efforts, to maintain established authorities in pluralistic states.

Donald L. Horowitz (1984) in 'Ethnic Groups in conflict' provides insight on how ethnic groups politicise their ethnicity. In no case, the politics easily reduced to the simple common denominator of ethnic ties, even in deeply divided societies. The degree to which ethnicity is pervasive is variable. In deeply divided societies, ethnic affiliations impact not only family and social life, but also more formal organisational life. This applies to both the realms of political and economic life (ex. organisation of capital and labour, party systems). He argues that for the comparative analysis, distinguishing between ranked and unranked systems, centralisation of groups, the severity of division and group differences is important. He also argues that the ethnic groups, which are tied heavily to kinship, are bounded in such a way to maximize the effective use of the political structure. So that it could provide many services in the replacements for what the modern western state provides.

Susan Hangen (2000) in 'The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Nepal: Democracy in the Margins' addresses the rise of ethnic movements in Nepal. Ethnic groups belonging to Mongoloids have formed Mongol National Organisation (MNO) on the racial grounds. MNO consists of ethnic groups like Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Sunuwar etc. who have common biological features. These ethnic groups belong to Mongol race and

wished to be recognised on this basis. After 1990, movements based on ethnicity, language, caste, religion, regional identity etc. played an essential role in the politics of Nepal. It also reshaped the debates on the definition of Nepali nation, nationalism and the structure of the Nepali State. In Nepal, the demands of newly mobilized ethnic groups became a major concern of the State even during the drafting of the interim constitution in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The chapters in the book also discuss the ethnic identity crisis and politics of recognition.

A.C. Sinha (2007) in 'Communities in Search of Identities in Sikkim' provides insight on the ethnic identity politics in Sikkim. It addresses the issue of how the ethnic identity politics molded the State's politics. This is because the demand for ethnic groups to be listed in ST category voted out the ruling party of that particular period. However, reservation of seat in State Assembly is also one of the reasons for demanding ST status. The author throws the lights on how Nepali caste system was codified in Nepal. In Nepal, [3]*Muluki Ain*' confirmed the location of every community of Nepal in a hierarchy of social order. The hierarchy of social orders in Muluki Ain does have not included Magar, Tamang, Rai, Gurung, Limbu, Sherpa, Chepang, Sunuwar, Bhutiya, Thakali and Thami. These ethnic groups were considered to be the clean caste, but do not wear sacred thread like that of Tagadaris. The author taking the case of Nepal, studies the ethnic movement in Sikkim.

B. K. Roy Burman (2008) in 'Executive Report of the Commission for Review of Social and Environmental Sector Policies, Plans and Programmes' deals with politics recognition, reservation and representation. It explains the reservation system for ethnic groups belonging to the different category. The report analyses theconstitutional status of castes and communities of Sikkim in historical, cultural, ecological and political contexts. It recommended Bhaun, Chettri and Newar to enlist in Central lists of OBCs. It also recommended Rai, Gurung, Mangar, Sunuwar, Thami, Dewan and Bhujel are to be properly examined for their inclusion in the lists of STs. It also recommended recognition of Lepcha as most primitive tribe and reservation of seats for Limbu and Tamang in State Legislative Assembly. Moreover, the report also addresses the protection of 12 seats reserved for Bhutias and Lepcha communities and setting up Central University in Sikkim.

T. B. Subba (2014) in 'Making Sikkim More Inclusive: An Insider's View of the Role of Committees and Commissions' critically evaluates the formation of committees and commission created by Government of Sikkim. It is one of the chapters in the edited book 'Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices'. The author of this chapter discusses how and why various commissions and committees were formed in Sikkim since the early 1990s. Analysis of the demand for OBC by the advanced group, like Bahun, Chhetri and Newar has been also discussed. The formation of committees and commissions were important for two reasons. Firstly, the reports prepared by such committees and committees as recommended by State Government were to be submitted to the Central Government. This was considered by the author as the first step towards the social inclusion. Secondly, the State Government would also facilitate the functions of appointed committees and commission. Such committees and commission were often headed by anthropologists and sociologists. The State Government can partially or totally accept or reject the report prepared by them. The origin of ethnic groups demanding ST status can be trace from the Janjati Movement in Nepal in 1990. Janjati movement is considered to be an attempt of Hinduised ethnic groups to return to their own belief system. The author overview the reason and the process of acculturation, Sanskritisation followed by re-adopting their own belief system.

J. R. Subba (2008) in 'History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim' discusses the history, culture and livelihood of Sikkim. He has mentioned about cultures and customs of the various ethnic group in Sikkim including Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalis. He denoted Thami community as analogous to Kiratis. He had also mentioned about their kinship, inheritance and customs. The author also discusses the Thami's ethnic identity in Sikkim.

Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin (2006) in 'Ethno-Politics in Darjeeling and Sikkim' address the ethno political issues. The article provides an overview of ethno politics in Sikkim and Darjeeling, West Bengal. The authors have explained the struggle of ethnic groups in both the States, for the recognition of distinct tribal entity. Those ethnic groups are struggling for recognition on the basis of distinct identity because this will provide educational and economic benefits for them.

J. R. Subba (2009) in 'Mythology of the people of Sikkim' deals with the impact of acculturation in particular mythology. The author describes how ethnic groups like Khasaa, Newar, Sunuwar, Bhujel, Thami, Manger and some Gurung has been influenced by two major oriental mythologies of Buddhism and Hinduism and one occidental mythology of Christianity. The ethnic groups who adopted Buddhism long time ago were Bhutia, Tamang, Sherpa and some section of Gurung and Newar. In Sikkim, the lesser known belief system such as animism has been followed by fourteen ethnic groups. Bhutia, Lepcha, Limbu, Rai, Yakha, Mangar, Gurung, Sunuwar, Tamang, Sherpa, Thami, Majhi, and Khasas (Higher Khasas-Bahun and Chettri, Lower Khasas- Kami, Damai and Sarki) used to follow animism but now they have adopted many well-developed religion of the world. The core theme of the book is to discuss the belief system and mythology of different ethnic group residing in Sikkim. The book also contains one chapter on Mythology of Thami in Sikkim. The author expressed that Thamis in Sikkim is animist who worship [4]*Bhumya, Dolakha Bhimsen, Bisa, Gosai, Chirkun dewa, Bahara Dewa* etc. But now Thamis in Sikkim have adopted Hinduism and Buddhism which affected their animist belief system.

Casper J. Miller (1979) in 'Faith Healers in the Himalayas' explained the rituals performed by Thami faith healers and their shaman. After his research, he came up with the meaning of the word Thami or Thangmi. He mentioned how the mythological legendary story of Thami begins and how they started their livelihood. He has also described the mythological stories of Himalayan Faith Healers. In that case, he has also mentioned about the Thami shamans and the Faith Healers.

Sara Shneiderman (2015) in 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' examined and evaluated ethnicity of Thamis. Thamis are frequently asked questions about their identity which leads them to feel identity crisis. The book provides insights on how and why Thamis have issues of identity and identity crisis. Moreover, the author also illustrates the belief system, rites, rituals, language of Thamis. The consciousness of political recognition is guiding them raise their voice for identity and political rights. The author also explained the formation of Thami ethnic organisation in India as well as in Nepal. It also includes how Thamis are demanding ST status in India.

Sara Shneiderman (2009) in 'Ethnic Preservations Comparing Thangmi Ethnic Activism in Nepal and India' examines the identity politics of Thamis. The article analyses the role of the ethnic organisation in mobilizing the ethnic group. The leadership of Bharatiya Thami Welfare Association (BTWA) in India and Nepal Thami [5]*Samaj* (NTS) in Nepal has been critically illustrated. It further discusses the purposes of gaining ST status in India.

The above-reviewed books address the basic concept of the identity formation, identity politics, politics of recognition etc. It provides the insight on how ethnic identity can be the driving force of political systems. The reviewed books also examine the identity politics in Sikkim and the demand of ethnic groups. But among the reviewed books only a few authors have dealt with Thami ethnic group in Sikkim. Those authors have tried to describe Thamis from Darjeeling, but hardly to address the issues and the problems of Thamis in Sikkim. Therefore, it can be said that there are scanty literature and limited resources on Thamis residing in the State of Sikkim.

Scope of the Study

The present study tries to provide succinct perception of identity politics and its relationship with the demand for ST status. The study focuses on the demand of Thami ethnic group for ST status. It discusses the ethnicity of Thami, their socio-economic-political status and the issues related to their identity. For the purpose of the present study, ethnicity means language, unique culture, tradition, common ancestors etc. On the other hand, an ethnic group means those groups who have their own language, rituals, customs, traditions, common ancestry etc. The area of the study is confined to the territory of East Sikkim. This is because the major concentration of Thami population is inhabited in East Sikkim.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

i. To understand identity politics based on ethnicity from theoretical perspectives.
ii. To examine the socio-economic and political status of Thamis in Sikkim.

iii.   To analyse the reason behind the demand of Thami's for Scheduled Tribe Status.

Research Questions

The research questions for the study are as follows:

i.   How does the theoretical perspective of identity politics help to understand identity politics in Sikkim?
ii.   What is the socio-economic and political status of Thami ethnic group in Sikkim?
iii.   Why the Thami ethnic group is demanding Scheduled Tribe Status?

Methodology

The present study is based on both qualitative and quantitative methodology. Qualitative methodology was applied to collect data, especially for the purpose to understand the people's behavior and response towards their ethnic identity politics and the demand for Scheduled Tribe status. On the other hand, the quantitative methodology was applied to conduct qualitative research in a quantitative way. For the fulfillment of the objective, both the primary and the secondary sources have been used for the collection of the data, which is again, followed by descriptive analysis. Primary sources have been collected from the ethnographic fieldwork and secondary sources of data were collected from books, journals, articles, reports, newspapers etc.

Methods of Data collection

One of the essential methods of data collection in qualitative research is ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnographic fieldwork employs a collection of data from the field, by building rapport with the respondents. It also includes gaining respondent's perspective on a particular issue through individual and group interviews, by asking them questions, taking photographs, recording audio tape and film etc. The main tool for data collection in an ethnographic field survey is participant observation (Reilly, 2009). Henceforth, participative observation has been used to observe respondents perceptions and knowledge on the identity politics and the demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

Furthermore, a quantitative method was used to collect data with the help of survey schedule. The survey schedule was based on both structured and unstructured questions. During the ethnographic field survey, the survey schedule systematically guided the interviews and participatory observation. Therefore, for the purpose of the study, the data were systematically collected from the field with participatory observation.

Sample Selection

Purposive sampling has been employed in order to collect data purposively. In order to observe the perception and behaviour of the respondents, the survey scheduled was divided into two categories. Firstly, it observed the response of the common people belonging to Thami ethnic group. Secondly, it observed the response and role played by office bearers in Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh. The selection of the field was purely done on the basis of historical and scholarly reason. During the process of data collection, the effort of choosing the respondents without any biases was also taken into consideration.

Study Area

The area of study for this dissertation was East Sikkim. The universe of the study was the entire Thami population residing in Sikkim. 50 respondents from East Sikkim was the sample size from the entire universe. Only 50 respondents were taken as the sample size, because of the less population and also to conduct an ethnographic field survey. For the purpose of the study, both Sikkimese and Non- Sikkimese Thamis were included, as both were the citizens of India and have their names enlisted in Voter's list of Sikkim. The survey was conducted in the places like Khewathang, Bhusuk, Chonge, Aritar, Lingtam, East Martam, Ledong, Deorali, Thami Gaon in Burtuk, Bagthan, Syari, Arithang, Natok, Rorathang, Lingding, Singtam, Chota Singtam, 8th Mile etc.

Organisation of the Study

This dissertation is organised into five chapters. They are as follows:

Chapter I: **Introduction**

The first chapter of the study includes the brief introduction of the identity, identity crisis, politics of recognition and identity politics. It also discusses Thami ethnic group and identity politics in Sikkim in brief. This is followed by a statement of the problem, scope, objectives and methodology used for the study.

Chapter II: **Dynamics of Identity Politics: A Conceptual Framework**

This chapter draws the conceptual framework of Identity and Identity Politics. It provides insights on the meaning and perspective of identity politics along with various approaches to define identity politics. It also illustrates the concept of ethnic conflicts and violence. It also discusses the identity politics in Sikkim and the demand of Thami's for ST status.

Chapter III: **Socio-Economic and Political Status of Thami Ethnic Group in Sikkim**

This chapter explains the Thami Ethnicity and their identities in general. With the support of few indicators, socio-economic status of Thami ethnic group has been discussed. It is then, followed by a discussion on political participation of Thamis in Sikkim.

Chapter IV: **Identity Politics of Thami Ethnic Group and their Demand for Scheduled Tribe Status**

The fourth chapter of the present study is based on the data collected from the primary sources, which are descriptively analysed. It is followed by observations on identity politics of Thami ethnic group and their demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

Chapter V: **Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the summary of the study, major findings, suggestions and conclusions.

Chapter II

DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY POLITICS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The word dynamics itself denote changes and variation in a particular concept. This chapter addresses the changes and variation in the meaning and concept of the term identity and identity politics. The word identity has been used in many senses, as the meaning and the concept of identity can be analysed in terms of various disciplines. For instance, a psychologist like Freud (2010) discusses the concept of identity in a psychoanalytical and psychodynamic way. He analysed the whole process of identity and identification on the three perceptions i.e. unconsciousness, precociousness and consciousness. He termed these three concepts as 'id, ego and superego' respectively. On the other hand, scholar like Erikson (1995) discussed the concept of an identity crisis. The concept of identity and identity politics takes another dimension when it is defined by the school of social sciences. In the disciplines like political science, the term identity is defined in apolitical way. The political scientist analyses identity in terms of political recognition, political participation, reservations, representation, ethnic rights etc. They also evaluate how misrecognition of certain identities can generate crisis among some ethnic groups. They evaluate how such crisis leads to the historic massacre like holocaust, genocide, acculturation etc. Moreover, the political scientist also analyses identity and identity politics in terms of certain groups, who are involved in the political activities for the recognition of their specific identity.

The dynamics of identity and identity politics is really a multifaceted term, as said by some of the scholars. But it can also be understood in simple terms. So in this chapter, the concept of identity and identity politics is simplified to understand its dynamics and in the light of it, identity politics in Sikkim and Thami's demand for Scheduled Tribe status has been discussed.

Identity as a Concept

Identity is something that each individual has or ought to have. It is something that an individual has without of being aware of it. It is something that is to be discovered

and something about which it can be mistaken (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Oxford Dictionary of English (Simpson and Weiner, 1989) and Sociology (Marshall, 1998) indicate that the term identity is rooted in the Latin word '*identias*' from '*idem*', which means 'sameness and continuity'. Sameness and continuity are consistently manifested in solidarity in a shared disposition of the collective action.

Identity can be defined in many ways as it is dynamic in nature. It can be said that a person is born with only one identity i.e. a person is a 'homo sapiens'. But immediately after birth, the person is identified in terms of sex. That person will either become he or she. Later, he or she is even identified on the basis of homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality. Thereafter, the person is identified on the basis of surnames or caste or ethnicity and this will be followed by citizenship, race, religion, profession and relationships with other people (Parker, 2005). Identity is also a human capacity, which is rooted in language. This involves discussion regarding, "who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are and so on" (Jenkins, 2008:5). We often think that we know, 'who we are'? But the ideas of 'who we are?' are constantly changing day by day. That change is guided and shaped by our past experiences, relationship and interactions with the social world. 'Who we are' at present may not be same, with the 'who we were' on yesterday and 'who we will be' on tomorrow. We often identify ourselves on our individual perceptions. By doing this, we are also drawing wider cultural representations, discourse, norms and values, to which we earn from interaction with the society. Hence, in the simple terms identity is a set of integral ideas about self, the role played by an individual and the qualities which make an individual unique from the others (Scott, 2015). A human being can identify them on the basis of the ideas framed inside the mind i.e. 'self'. On the other hand, they can identify themselves on the basis of the relationship of self with the social world (Jenkins, 2008). For this reason, identity is said to be the contextual and dynamic term, which is built in the process of interaction of self with others (Mach, 2007).

"Identity tends to mean too much (when understand in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense) or nothing at all (because of sheer ambiguity)". It is something, that people can have it without being aware of it. Identity is something to be discovered and something which one can be mistaken. Identity is also self-

constructive, which is fluid and multiple in nature. Self-constructed identity is considered as the soft version of identity, which lacks rationality leading to putative identities to proliferate. If identity is viewed in fluid and multiple ways it becomes difficult to understand power and pathos of identity politics. Identity is something which is very deep, basic, and abiding or foundational and it should be understood in an analytical ways (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). If the identity is understood without any rationality, it tends to involve ambiguity. That is the reason why identity is also termed as complex multifaceted and ambiguous term (Verkuyten: 2014).

Identity Politics: Meaning and Perspectives

Identity politics is considered to be slippery in nature, as its meaning and concept changes in various circumstances (Licterman, 1999). Identity politics represents the discourse and political activities of some group of people, for the recognition of distinct identity and also for social upliftment. It expressed the struggle of subordinated marginalised groups for justice, rights, recognition, opportunities etc. It is those subordinated marginalised groups, who politicise race, gender, ethnicity, caste, religion etc. (Storr, 2010). In social sciences identity politics can also be understood in terms of various movements. The movements like civil rights movement, feminist movement etc. are considered to be the movements based on identity politics (Bernstein, 2005). Civil rights movement is also remarked as the beginning of the movements based on identity politics (Storr, 2010). But it is observed that, the identity politics was employed for the first time in the movement led by the disabled people. The aim of that movement was to uproot the stigma on the disability (Anspach, 1979).The movement became the way of expressing their emotions and anger against such stigmatization (Britt and Heise, 2000).It can be said that the identity politics is an act of mobilization, for solidarity against the disability stigmatization.

Ethnicity is one of the significant tools to mobilize various ethnic groups for solidarity. Thus, identity politics can also be defined in terms of ethnicity (Ross, 1982). It can also be understood, as a claim articulated by some groups, who are concerned for their specific culture (Bickford, 1997). Furthermore, the politics of recognition, misrecognition and absence of recognition give shapes to the identity politics. The identity of the certain group of people is distorted, when they are

misrecognised or never recognised throughout the historical discourses. "They suffer a real damage, real distortion, if the people or the society around them, mirrors back to them confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor, 1994:25). The question of identities rarely matter to those, who do not need to trace their origin history again and again. But there are some people, who are often asked questions regarding their origin history. Those people always need to shout from the rooftops, "we belong, we have unique identity and we know it by our ancestry and history" (Hutt, 2009:29). Frequently asked questions about the person's identity, gives birth to identity crisis.

A psychoanalyst Erikson (1995) denoted the term, identity crisis during the Second World War. Although he coined the term identity in psychological aspects, it is also applicable in social sciences. This is because human being involves psychological aspects to identify them, as self in the society. He discusses identity crisis in terms of person's loss of 'sameness and continuity'. The people experience identity crisis, when they fail to represent strong identity in the society. The feeling of identity crisis somehow leads to politics of recognition for the sustenance. The process of misrecognition or absence of recognition ultimately leads to marginalisation, exploitation, humiliation, insult, degradation, disfranchisement etc. (Honneth, 1995). But identity politics in broader sense can be understood as a game of disclosure and acknowledgement. It is strongly believed that the politics of recognition should maintain equidistance from elusive and heterogeneous nature of identity (Maclure, 2003).

The whole concept of politics and political activity can also be defined in terms identity politics. The political activity employs the process of self-identification, self-construction and self-presentation. Identity politics is also considered as the driving force of democratic political freedom. Although identity politics is considered to be the movement led by subordinate marginalised groups for justice and rights, in reality it also brings differences and grievances which even involve conflicts. When the concept of identity politics is perverted and distorted, it evokes three pathologies. Firstly, it evokes essentialism which emphasises on common essential traits inherent in the particular ethnic group. If such essential traits are identified in rational manner, it activates interest of the political parties. Secondly, identity politics give fuel to

healthy grievances against the other. Similarly, it widens the differences in the society by consuming blame and prejudices. It further widens the differences by engaging political activities for their self-interest. The second pathological tendency of identity politics also generates righteous narcissism and evoke fundamentalist group to operate the political activities. Thirdly, if the differences created by the second pathology of identity politics are extended, then the consequent effect is bloodshed. The process of blame and prejudices even lead its way to genocides and holocaust. The pathological tendency of identity politics is the dangerous weapon used in democratic conflicts. Moreover, identity politics based on race, caste, and ethnicity is not so dangerous, than the identity politics based on minority. This is because identity politics based on minority activates all the three pathologies (Parker, 2005).

Approaches to Define Identity Politics

The discourses on identity politics vacillate between thesis and antithesis. But it was only in twentieth century, scholars and academician employed this term to understand various movements. It was during this period, the philosophical ground has been framed for identity politics (Storr, 2010). Identity politics has been defined in many ways based on various movements and school of thoughts. But there is lack of concrete definition of Identity politics. Bernstein (2005) has tried to discuss possible approaches to define identity politics. On the basis of her analysis, approaches of identity politics are framed for this chapter. Following are the approaches to identity politics:

i) **Neo-Marxist Approach to Identity Politics**: This particular approach views identity politics as a distinct political practice in contradiction to class politics. Power and forces of oppression is the central idea of Neo-Marxist to define identity politics. According to this approach, identity politics is understood in 'symbolic, cultural, or psychological terms'. Identity politics indicates the class inequality as the main source of marginalization and suppression. The dominated class challenges the social structure based on economic criteria. But Marxist or Neo-Marxist does not precisely discuss identity politics and its theory; rather it is somewhere reflected in the notion of explaining two classes, i.e. the hegemonic class and the subordinated class. For instance, Hegel (Cited in

Bernstein, 2005), in the 'The Phenomenology of Mind' mentioned that identities are developed in the process of struggle between dominant and subordinate groups.

ii) **Cultural Approach to Identity Politics**: According to this approach, cultural politics directly or indirectly represent identity politics, as it focuses mainly on the cultural aspects of identity politics. The social movements which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s such as, civil rights movement and feminist movement were based on cultural aspect of identity. Respect for the unique culture and cultural disparity, was the main objective behind the movement based on identity politics (Bernstein, 2005). Identity politics can also be viewed, as the way of politicising issues based on gender, ethnicity, race etc. (Storr, 2010). It is also the process of demanding certain rights for affirmative action (Kauffman, 1990). Thus, all the claims related to social identities are considered to be cultural politics which can be termed as identity politics (Gitlin, 1995). In many cases marginalization is the base of cultural politics which ultimately leads its way towards identity politics (Brown, 1995).

iii) **The New Social Movement Approach to Identity Politics**: New Social Movement (NSM) starkly emerged since 1960s and 70s (Bernstein, 2005). It presumably replaces old social movement based on proletariat revolution. In contrast to the movements based on ideology, class, power etc. NSM theory analysed new movements based on identities. Identity politics based on ethnicity, gender and sexuality emerged during NSM period (Buechler, 1995). The proponents of NSM theory prefer identity politics as the identity oriented paradigm (Touraine, 1981). NSM approach to identity politics involves identity as the key factor to understand social movements. It studies how identity plays a vital role in mobilizing the groups, to organise social movements (Bernstein, 2005).

iv) **Social Constructionism, Postmodernist and Poststructuralist Approaches to Identity Politics**: This particular approach to identity politics emerged as a response to queer theory. Queer theory is said to be the antithesis of identity politics as it transcend all marginalised groups under one fold (Gamson, 1995). Postmodernist views on power are starkly different to that of Neo-Marxists and NSM. It constitute that any category

of people have some form of regulation. The activism based on the name of such categories, will reify them instead of alleviation. Those categories will be encouraged to regulate their demand as against dominance and suppression. Postmodernist view on the power narrow down the whole concept of identity politics, as it fails to address the cultural sources of oppression. Hence, this approach tries to evaluate identity politics on the basis of how power functions. It tends to make normative political evaluations on identity politics. This is because they implicitly identify the causal mechanisms, which link identity politics to these purported outcomes. They ignore the possibility that claims to essentialism may be strategic, and they overlook the difficulties in eliminating social categories as a political strategy (Bernstein, 2005).

Identity Politics based on Race

Race is another factor of identification. Many people identify them in terms of racial groups, like Aryans, Mongoloids, Negroids etc. Race is something which is characterised by hereditary physical appearances in a human being (Hardimon, 2003). It has been widely assumed that race is the primordial source of identity (Hirchman, 2004). Identity politics based on race or racism offers, the foundation for hostility and conflicts. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) rightly asserted that, identity means nothing if understood in soft version, but its means everything if it is understood in strong sense. Repercussion of it would give space for exploitation, dominance and devastating massacre.

History have witnessed so many wars and violence based on race or racism. For instance, Nazis suffered endless atrocities by the Germans, on the racial background. Millions of Nazis were butchered and made homeless only because of the racial discrimination. The holocaust of Nazi was the curse for entire human civilization, which picturise human as a demon (Marrus, 1987). Identity politics based on race is also engraved in civil rights movement. During the civil rights movements, the American-African was denoted as the second class citizen. It emerged from 1954, Brown vs. Board of Education and continued till Civil Rights Act, which was passed on 1964. The movement was raised against the aged old slavery and inhuman treatment to blacks, who have suffered tremendous discrimination, exploitation,

injustice etc. On 1965, Voting Rights Act was passed which finally declined the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr. emerged as the prominent leader, to lead the movement. His soul goal was to bring justice to the blacks. He said, "I had a dream". In that dream, he wished his children to be raised in a country, where there will be no discrimination. He wanted his children to be judged not by the colour of their skin, but by their personalities (Hall, 2005: 1234).

Identity politics based on racism is also gaining its popularity in the Eastern Himalayas. In Nepal, the ethnic groups like Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, Thami etc. identify them as Mongoloids. The process of identification on racial background began from 1990s. Those ethnic groups have also formed Mongol National Organisation (MNO) on the racial base. They also want to be recognised on Mongoloids racial background (Hangen, 2000). Similarly, in Darjeeling and in Sikkim some ethnic groups like Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, and Thami also recognise them as Mongoloids. Moreover, in Sikkim the Nepali population is categorised into two racial fold, i.e. Aryans and Mongoloids (Gurung, 2011). But in Sikkim, identification of ethnic groups on racial background can be understood in Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) soft version of identity. This is because the racial identification in Sikkim has never turned into destructive situation.

Identity Politics based on Ethnicity

Ethnicity is considered to be one of the most important phenomena in politics and essential factors of identity (Hale, 2004). It implies common ancestry and kinship is the most obvious objective indicator of membership in an ethnic group. Language, culture and territory often become more common signs of membership of a larger group, especially for those groups, who cannot trace their genealogy from more than three generations (Kasfir, 1979). International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences denotes ethnicity in classical Greek term i.e. 'Ethnos' and '*ethnikos*'. This is referred to a group, collectively sharing similar cultural or biological traits. For instance, a group of people who were not Greek and belong to other groups were referred as foreigners or as barbarian or less civilized people (Law, 2008). According to Horowitz (2000:52) "ethnicity is based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries innate traits". It is used for shared values and beliefs, the self-definition of a 'socially defined but on the basis of cultural criteria' (Spencer, 2014).

Sociological accounts on ethnicity can be fictive and hyphenated. This is due to the fact it is formed on new conjunction of social context. For example, British Asian, Hispanic-American etc. are considered to be hyphenated as it produces more than one ethnicity (Storr, 2010).

According to Oxford Dictionary of Politics, ethnicity is defined on the basis of common consciousness of shared origin. It is the quality of belonging to one ethnic group (McLean and McMillan, 2003). The term ethnic group can be referred to denote people with common biological ancestors, unique cultural values, distinct language etc. (Narroll, 1964). Some scholars have defined ethnic groups in terms of biological attributes with blood relationship. But for some scholars, blood relationship does not matter to define ethnic groups (Horowitz, 2000:52). On the other hand, ethnic group can also be defined in terms of common shared experience during the process of colonialism and migration. Weber (1978:35) defined ethnic group, as the group subjectively perceiving common descent from the similar traits and customs, or because of the shared experience of colonization, migration etc. It can be said, the ethnicity is an umbrella term which brings races, languages, religion, tribes, nationalities etc. under its fold. (Horowitz, 2000:53). Moreover race, religion, nationality etc. are considered as the subset of ethnicity and it can also be used as a proxy to all these terms (Wayne, Brown, and Worden, 1999).

Identity based on ethnicity is succinctly termed as ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is determined by decent based attributes (Chandra, 2006). It bestows self-esteem to the subordinated group. It facilitates psychological well-being in the face of low status. For example, Black American faced racial discrimination, subjugation and domination, but they always kept high self-esteem. Further ethnic identity can provide a certain degree of social status, existential security etc. Ethnic identity in the form existential security affirms their values, beliefs, practices etc. Consequently, it leads them to participate in social activities, which make their sense of belonging more secure. The contemporary world is characterized by economic, political and moral uncertainty. Scholars view ethnic identity politics as an attempt of a marginalised group to secure political, economic and moral status. Recently, there is an apparent increase in the ethnicity based on solidarity political and economic movement throughout the globe. Ethnic identity appeared as the 'currency deferred aspiration' by

the politically less powerful, socially subordinated and economically marginalised groups. It is employed as an instrument and the tool to political and economic opportunities (Wayne, Brown, and Worden, 1999).

Ethnic identity as a currency deferred aspiration was visible during twentieth century. It is also employed to mobilize and artifice certain groups, to challenge the existing societal arrangements. This was visible in the rapid process of African, Asian and Caribbean colonisation. It can also be found in certain groups like Basque in Spain, the Hutu in Rwanda, the Tamilian in Sri-Lanka and Plemish in Belgium. A new wave of ethnic mobilization emerged in the places like Uzbekistan, Latvia Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia especially after dissolution of Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Wayne, Brown, and Worden, 1999).

Identity Politics as the Base of Worldwide Conflicts

After analysing ethnicity and identity politics it can be said, the politicisation of ethnic identity can also be the base of conflicts. By the mid-1990s identity politics was referred to denote ethnic conflicts (Mezanic, 1993:89). Ethnic identity specifically serves the base for ethnic conflict (Wayne, Brown, and Worden, 1999). It is the leading source of lethal violence throughout the globe (Esman, 2004:26). Ethnic conflict basically emerged, due to ethnic hostility, marginalisation, subordination discrimination, exclusion etc. Hostility, discrimination and exclusion are three foundational reasons for ethnic conflict (Law, 2008). Ethnic conflict rooted in the norms of identity politics lead its way to violent confrontation, among the various ethnic groups. It generally emerged due to lack of tolerance, inequality in the distribution of resources, political exclusion etc. (Thatal, 2015).

Extreme hostility culminates inhuman activities like holocaust, genocides etc. The term holocaust refers to systematic mass murder of Jewish by the Nazis. It was during Second World War (1939-1945), more than six million Jewish were holocaust only because of extreme hatred and the feelings of superiority (Marrus, 1987:114). Genocide is another word for human horror, which began on April 1994 and lasted for three months (Newbury, 1998). Historic victimisation of Hutu ethnic group at the hands of Tutsi (Marrus, 1987:114) is another example of extreme hatred and hostility. It was driven by certain legacies from the colonial history and planned by political

elites. As a consequence, many innocent people were slaughtered in the name of politicised ethnicity. Ethnic cleansing in Kosovar Albanians by the Serbs in the 1990s, annihilation of Native people in North America, South Africa and Australia from the seventeenth centuries, is an example of how politicised ethnic identity politics leads to conflict (Newbury, 1998).

Discrimination and exclusion of one particular ethnic group by other germinate seeds of injustice. It denies the subordinated marginalised group to access socio-economic and political opportunities. Xenophobia and racism are affecting most of the countries. In Europe, Roma, Sinti and Gypsy etc. are the most affected ethnic groups. Hence, the exclusion and discrimination lead its way to degradation of mental and physical health, by denying them access to primary education, restricted access to resources, lack of adequate housing facilities etc. These kinds of social restriction constrain political participation. Discrimination also involves abusive languages, to demean the subordinated marginalised groups. An anti-Muslim Danish cartoon which was circulated in 2005 and 2006, is an example of abusive languages on the other people. This kind of derogatory action, unwitting stereotyping and pejoratives phrases may constitute lesser forms of ethnic hostility. But still it serves as the base of ethnic conflict (Law, 2008).

Identity Politics in India

India is the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural country, wherein, the diversity is rooted in a decentralised way. Such multiple identities are based on social, political, cultural and economic factors (Chandra, 2002:1389). Indian citizen first identify them as an Indian, followed by the region they belong from, ethnicity, caste, creed, religion, and also on gender. Taylor (1994) was right in saying that the identity politics of any group includes the demand, for recognition and dignity. Every individual has right to life and dignity, which are also one of the basic human rights. The rightful recognition is represented as a respect to the subordinated and marginalised groups. Thus, identity politics involves the politics of equal recognition and politics of differences (Pingle and Varshey, 2006:358).

Identity politics in India is rooted both in pre-colonial and post-colonial era. Indian sub-continent is the area of identity clashes. The conflicts in India are multifaceted

and the repercussions are grave. It is multifaceted because identity politics in India took different dimension in different place and time (Chandra, 2002:137). It involves identity politics based on religion, caste, language, ethnicity etc. Since India's independence, the country has dealt with or still dealing with four kinds of identity politics based on religion, caste, language and the tribes (Pingle and Varshey, 2006:358). Cultural diversity and regional inequalities continued after independence in different forms (Gupta, 1997). In India identity politics can be understood under following dimension:

i) **Identity politics based on Religion**: Identity politics based on religion confronted violent massacre by killing lakhs of people. During Hindu-Muslim riot and 1947 Partition, around five to ten lakh people were massacred (Chandra et al, 2000). After the independence, Hindu nationalism played prominent role in the field of identity politics. It has its roots in the pre-independence era, when there was the emergence of Hindu nationalism. During 1989 onwards, it turned more strong and rigid in its ideologies. According to Hindu nationalists, Hinduism provides a distinct identity to India. India is the land of Hindus, the theme of their claim. There was 65 percent and 75 percent Hindus throughout the country, which at present rose to 82 percent, who views India as a Hindu Nation (Pingle and Varshey, 2006:362-63). Savarkar one of the members of Abhinav Bharat (a revolutionary organisation) said, "A Hindu means a person who regards this land from the Indus to the seas as his fatherland (*pitribhumi*), as well as his holy land (*punyabhumi*)". This means, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists are originally Indians as they were born in India. But the other religions like Muslims, Parsis, Jews and Christians are not originally Indians. It was considered that their love was divided between the land, where their religion was originated and where they were born (Sarvarkar, 2007). Consequently, for this reason Hindu nationalist or Hindu fundamentalists considered Muslims and Christians as the enemy for the nation. Among the minority religion, the Muslims are always targeted because of the historical difference and the religious philosophies. Moreover, the grievances of partition and formation of the new country, on the basis of religion is the grave of grievances. In the pre-independence

era, 25 percent of the Muslim resided within Indian Territory and in the post-independence era, 12.8 percent of Muslims are residing in India. They even consider India as their Mother Nation. But their citizenship is often challenged and their patriotism is always doubted. Besides, the extreme version of Hindu nationalist compelled all other religion to accept, Hindu mythological stories as a historical fact. Golwakar said, all the other religion in India must accept Ram as the national hero, who in ancient period fought for righteousness (Pingle and Varshey, 2006:358). The demolition of Babri Masjid and the violent communal riot are the examples of xenophobia and genocide in India (Thakur, 1993). Hence, the demolition of Babri masjid also signified the submerged voice of the minorities (Ansari, 2001).

ii) **Identity Politics based on Caste**: Caste system is deeply rooted in the Indian societies, which starkly involve exploitation and marginalisation. The traditional Indian society was organised around caste structures and caste identities (Kothari, 2010). Identity politics based on castes activates the pathologies (Parker, 2005) and the repercussion is exploitations. Many people woes to be born in the catastrophic society, rooted in caste discrimination. Some Dalits accepts the notion of Karma out of emotion, but some do not subscribe to it (Shah, 2001:213). *"Brahmano sya mukhasmasit. Bahu rajanyah krtah. Uru tadasya yadvaissyah. Padhagm sudro ajayata"* (Roopak, 2011:141). This is the famous verse of *"Purusha Suktam"*, which is considered to be the testimony of prevalent caste system in India. The caste is divided into four categories i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras. The Brahmins represent the head, which consists of the power of discrimination and thought. They are considered to be the supreme person among the Hindus. The Kshatriyas represents arms, which symbolises the duty of protection and preservation. The Vaisyas represent the thigh, which symbolises an acquisition and distribution. The Shudras represents the feet (Srinivas, 1991:29). The relevant philosophy behind the division of caste system may not be rational, but it was politicised and made rigid with the due course of time. The feeling of superiority and inferiority was encouraged by caste system. Over the years, caste system has become one of the instruments to

suppress the subordinated groups. The Shudras or the lower caste people are also referred as the Dalits. The word Dalit is commonly used in Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati and other Indian languages (Shah, 2001:195). Dalits are referred to denote people belonging to lower caste, who are poor and downtrodden. The Mahars of Maharashtra have consistently employed political means, for the upliftment of their socio-economic and political status. Ambedkar fought against the caste system throughout his life. Although he was highly educated, he was humiliated, excluded, and discriminated only because he belonged to Mahar caste. According to him, the caste system in India is legitimised by the Shastras. It compelled the people to believe in the fruit of Karma, which decides the stratum in caste hierarchy. It is Shastras which create margins between pure and impure castes (Rodrigues, 2002). The people belonging to lower castes are said to be socio-economically and politically subjugated. With the due course of time, they gradually inculcate the feelings of equality and dignity. They articulated their identity by asserting the right to equality and dignified recognition against the inhuman discrimination, exploitation etc. It would bestow them governmental benefits and representation. Subsequently, the seats are reserved for the Scheduled Caste category under Article 330, Article332 and Article 540. The protective discrimination led towards upward mobilization of Dalit which help them in socio-economic and political developments (Shah, 2001).

iii) **Identity Politics based on Language**: India is a multi-lingual country. Thousands of languages are spoken throughout the country. Some languages are even recognised under Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Singh, 2010). Hindi and English language are recognised as the official languages. During the period of recognising Hindi as the official language, there were many controversies and debate. This is due to the fact that the Hindi language varies from the State to State. For instance, Hindi used in Uttar Pradesh is different from Bhojpuri, Haryanvi, etc. In the mid of 1950s, some regions also started demanding separate state, on the basis of distinct languages. State Reorganisation Commission was also formed for this specific purpose (Gupta, 1997:233).

iv) **Identity Politics based on Tribes**: The tribes, despite of their uniqueness, were always targeted by the majority groups. Religion and caste played the dominant role to influence and subsume tribes into Hinduism and repercussion of it threatened the tribal way of life (Xaxa, 2005:1364). Tribes were kept outside the structure of larger Indian civilization. Yet they were never isolated as an island, because they were always in constant interaction with the mainstream civilization. This led to the acculturation of tribal culture. The process of acculturation is viewed as modification of tribal culture with the larger Indian civilization (Xaxa, 2005:1363). The process of acculturations is popularly known as Hinduisation and Sanskritisation. It includes Brahmanical way of acculturation of tribes in the Hindu society (Munshi, 1979). For instance, the advocates of Hindutva were more concerned to conceive tribe solely in terms of religion. Consequently, it ignored the fact that the tribes are animists, which is much more different from other religions. They consistently overlooked this fact and categorise them as Hindu. All this articulation were latent and dormant unless and until it was highlighted. It shows that how few tribes ceased to be tribes when they adopted another religion. Especially when they identify them as Hindus or Christians rather than identifying them as the tribes (Xaxa, 2005:1365)

Identity Politics in Sikkim

Sikkim is one of the richest States in India, in terms of flora and fauna, water resources, topography, culture, language etc. It is located in the southern mountain ranges of Eastern Himalayas, in between the Northern latitude 27° 04′ 45″ to 28° 07′ 45″ N latitudes and 88° 35 ′ 15″ E longitudes. Sikkim is separated from Singalila range from Nepal in the West, Cho la range from Tibet in the northeast and the Kingdom of Bhutan in the Southeast, Rangit and Rangpo rivers from the borders with the Indian State of West Bengal in the South (Uprety, 2013). The Lepcha termed Sikkim, as '*nye-mal-el*' which means 'Garden of Eden or Heaven'. The Bhutia termed Sikkim, as '*Denzong*' which means 'Hidden Valley of Rice and Fruits'. On the other hand, Limbu termed Sikkim as '*Sukhim*' meaning 'New House'. Hence, 'Sukhim' is most popularly accepted connotation of the word Sikkim (Arora, 2006; Bhutia,

2014:322). Sikkim is the Frontier State, which shares its border with Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of People's Republic of China (PRC), the erstwhile Hindu Kingdom of Nepal and the Royal Government of Bhutan. Chogyal dynasty reined the Kingdom of Sikkim for 333 years on Lamaist theocratic pattern (Sinha, 2017:703). The word '*Chogyal*' is a Tibetan word which means 'Religious King' or '*Dharmaraja*' (Bhutia, 2014:322). Sikkim also shares its border tenaciously with West Bengal, India.

The liberal democratic movement in Sikkim dethroned the monarchical rule (Sinha, 2008:15). The intensity of the movement consequently resulted in Constitutional Amendment Act, 1974. It was passed by the parliament of India, to make Sikkim as the Associate State of Indian Union. Following this, people of Sikkim held referendum on 14 April, 1975 which primarily seeks to overthrow monarchy. On May 1975, Sikkim was merged with an Indian Union as 22nd full-fledged State. It was basically merged after 28 years of India's independence (Sinha, 2017:703; Gurung 2011:43). On 8th May 1998, Sikkim was also made a member of the North-Eastern Council, "A mining Planning Commission" for the region. It was recognised as the 8th sister of North East States along with Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura (Bhutia, 2014:322).

The total population of Sikkim is divided into three folds i.e. Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali (Gurung, 2011). Bhutia and Lepcha are considered to be minority, whereas, Nepalese social commonwealth with the caste and the tribal social complexity are considered as the majority group (Sinha, 2017:703). In order to analyse the caste and the tribal complexity in Nepali society, it is necessary to have some knowledge on Muluki Ain Code of Nepal. With reference to Sinha's (2007:222) work on 'Communities in Search of Identities in Sikkim', Muluki Ain Code is the National Civil Code promulgated by Jung Bahadur Rana in 1854. It consists of confirmed location of every community of Nepali's hierarchy of social order. It also discusses caste system in Nepali's society in hierarchical order. The following are the caste hierarchy categorised in Muluki Ain Code:

- Firstly, it refers Tagadaris as the upper caste which consists of Upadhay, Chhetri and various Newar.

- Secondly, Namasinya Matwalis are referred as non-enslavable alcohol a drinker which includes Magar, Gurung and some Newar.
- Thirdly, Masinya Matwalis are referred as enslavable alcohol drinkers, which include Bhote, Chepang, Kumai, Hayu etc.
- Fourthly, impure but touchable caste includes Newar butchers, Kusule (Newar musician), Kulu (Newar Tanners) etc.
- Lastly, the untouchable castes consists of Kami (blacksmith), Sarki (Shoemaker), Kadara (Stemming from Union of Kami and Sarki), Damai (tailors and musician) etc. (Sinha, 2007).

In the Muluki Ain Code, the communities like Rai, Limbu, Thami, Tamang etc. are not mentioned. Unlike caste in the West, these communities were not associated with Nepal State. There is a possibility, that they negotiated internal autonomy and communal land ownership as the price of submission to the Gorkha rule. 20 percent of population in Nepal were identified as 'pure caste', but does not wear sacred threads like Tagadaris. Those communities were Bhutia, Chepang, Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Rai, Sherpa, Sunuwar, Tamang, Thakali and Thami (Sinha, 2007). After 1990s, these groups have formed Mongol National Organisation, which serves as the wheels for 'Janjati' movement in Nepal. They also want to be recognised on the mongoloids racial background. Nepali social structure in India was also influenced by Muluki Ain Code. This is due to the fact that most of the autochthons inhabitants of Sikkim and West Bengal belongs to Nepal's ethnic groups who are also known as Janjati (Shneiderman and Turin, 2006:54). In fact, Limbu, Magar etc. along with Lepcha, are also considered to be the aboriginal people of Sikkim (Sinha, 2008:271-272). Hence, it is also to be noted here, that the Nepali population in Sikkim is an amalgamation of both Aryan and Mongoloids races (Gurung, 2011).

The genesis of identity politics based on ethnic identification within Nepali population can be trace back to Bhandari's Government. It was during his third tenure (1989-1994) as a Chief Minister, the Central Government of India planned to implement Backward Commission Report. According to the report, 27 percent of seats were to be reserve for backward classes in educational, welfare, political and administrative field. But the report incidentally listed all the communities in the backward classes. Bhandari, who belonged to the upper caste, did not respond

positively towards the demand raised by some ethnic groups for OBC. It was so, because his full attention was captured for recognising Nepali Language as one of the major Indian language (Sinha, 2008:283). His ignorance towards the demand of the ethnic groups germinated seeds of golden opportunity for the new born leaders.

Chamling appeared as the new face in the politics of Sikkim in early 1990s. In 1992, he raised the demand for implementation of Mandal Commission Report in Sikkim. Consequently, he was expelled from the Sikkim Sangram Party and this can be marked as the turning point in the political history of Sikkim. In 1994, the State Legislative Assembly passed a resolution against the implementation of Mandal Commission Report in Sikkim. Instantaneously, 19 out of 31 members deserted Bhandari to form new alliance under the leadership of Sanchaman Limboo. On May 1994, Bhandari was voted out of office of the Chief Minister. The newly formed Government right away recommended to the Central Government, for the inclusion of seven communities in socially backward classes. On June 1994, Bhujel, Gurung, Limbu, Manger, Rai, Sunuwar and Tamang were declared OBC for the State of Sikkim (Sinha, 2017:715).

But some of the ethnic groups were dissatisfied with their inclusion in the list of OBC and started demanding Scheduled Tribe status. Limbu and Tamang started demanding Scheduled Tribe status and January 2003, they were enlisted in the Scheduled Tribe category for the State of West Bengal and Sikkim. Furthermore, in partial modification of earlier orders of the State through the Notification No. 2/ WD of June 2, 1994 and Notification No. 236/ SW/ 25193) WD dated June 15, 2000, the Government of Sikkim declared Bhujel, Dewan, Gurung, Jogi, Kirat Rai, Sunuwar and Thami as the Most Backward Classes (MBC). Similarly, Bahun, Chhetri, Newar and Sanyasi were declared as the Other Backward Classes (OBC) (Sinha, 2008; Gurung, 2011).

The demand of ethnic groups for ST and OBC status encouraged the formation of many committees and commissions to look after the matters of ethnic group. It was due to the fact that those who were included in the list of Most Backward Classes (MBC) raise their demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Besides the groups who were included in Other Backward Classes (OBC) via, Bahun, Chhetri and Newar were also

making the same demand i.e. to be categorised as Scheduled Tribes. The formation of committees and commissions were important for two reasons:

- Firstly, the reports prepared by such committees and committees as recommended by State Government were to be submitted to the Central Government. This is considered as the first step towards the social inclusion.
- Secondly, the State Government would also facilitate the functions of appointed committees and commission. Such committees and commission were often headed by anthropologists and sociologists. The State Government can partially or totally accept or reject the report prepared by them (Subba, 2014:136).

The process of demanding Schedule Tribe status, by the ethnic groups can be compared with the Janjati movement in Nepal after 1990s (Hangen, 2000; Shneiderman and Turin, 2006). Janjati movement is considered to be an attempt of Hinduised ethnic groups to return to their own belief system. It also addresses the process of acculturation and sanskritisation followed by re-adopting their ethnic belief system. The process of dehinduisation is critically viewed as the tool to be listed in Scheduled Tribe category. In Sikkim, the basic perception for demanding Scheduled Tribe status is the political assertion and empowerment; because being tribal in Sikkim, does not necessarily indicate oppression or subaltern status. Sen's (Cited in Subba, 2014) concept of favourable and unfavourable exclusions is valid in Sikkim. This is because the ethnic groups do not want to be included in Scheduled Caste category nor does they are satisfied being in Other Backward Classes. The ethnic group in Sikkim favourably excluded themselves from being demarcated as Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes while they are unfavourably excluded by not being demarcated as Scheduled Tribes.

Identity politics in Sikkim can be overviewed as the demand raised by ethnic groups. The demand put forward by them specially employ politics of recognising their ethnic identity. Reservation of seats in State's Assembly is the ultimate goal of those ethnic groups. The ethnic identity politics also moulds the direction of political activities of the State. Thus it can be said, the political outcome in Sikkim is determined by ethnic identity politics (Gurung, 2011).

Identity Politics of the Thami Ethnic Group

One of the possible etymologies of Thami in Tibetan is, [6]'*mtha*' meaning frontier and [7]'*mi*' meaning man. Combination of both the term mtha and mi, means people of the 'steppe or the pasture lands'. Another possibly etymology of Thami in Tibetan, is 'Barbarians' (Miller, 1979:89). Thamis are one of autochthonous ethnic group inhabiting in the Eastern Himalayas. They are found mostly in Bhutan, Nepal and India. Thami are also popularly known as Thangmi. In both the countries, the word 'Thami' is officially used as a surname especially in the citizenship card and the ration card. Whereas, Thami ethnic group prefer to use Thangmi, as it denotes their ethnonym (Shneiderman, 2015:10). Although there is a slight difference in pronouncing 'Thami' and 'Thangmi', these two words represent a particular group of people who speak 'Thangmi-Wakhekham'. 'Thangmi-Wakhekham' is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by Thami ethnic group in both the countries (Turin, 1998:1).

The total population of Thami in Nepal is approximately 35,000. They are majorly inhabited in the districts of Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Ramechap, Illam, and Jhapa (Shneiderman, 2009: 119). It seems that they are struggling for recognition of their unique identity even in Nepal. Shneiderman (2015:10) writes, in Nepal the Thami ethnic groups always hear the questions like "*Thami ko ho*? (Who are Thami?)". If they were mentioned in historical and scholarly discourses, such questions would have not asked frequently. In the absence of historical and scholarly discourses they have always faced an identity crisis in Nepal. Thami are not mentioned in Muluki Ain i.e. National Civil Code of Nepal. But 0.1 percent of Thami were counted among 20 percent population of Nepal who were recognised as clean caste, but not wearing sacred thread as the Tagadaris (Sinha, 2007:223).

Thami are most often misrecognised as the sub-clan of Adhikari, Burathoki, Rai, Tamang, Gurung etc. (Subba, 2008). This is the genuine reason for the struggle for recognition. The ethnic identity of Thami was recognised by few scholars, but in the absence of written history they were misrecognised again and again. Consequently, this paved the way for distortion of their ethnic identity by making them highly marginalised.

Table 2.1

Classification of 59 Janjatis Listed in the NFDIN Act Based on Socio-Economic Status

Region	Endangered	Highly Marginalised	Marginalised	Disadvantaged	Advantaged
Mountain (18)	-	Shiyar Shingsawa (Lhomi) Thudam	Bhote Dolpo Larke Lhopa Mugal Tapkegola Walung	Bara Gaule Byansi (Sauka) Chhairotan Markhali Thakali Sherpa Tange Tingaule	Thakali
Hill (24)	Bankariya Hayu Kusbadiya Kusunda Lapcha Surel	Baramu Chepang Thami	Bhujel Dura Pahari Phree Sunuwar Tamang	Chhantyal Gurung Jirel Limbu Magar Rai Yakkha Yolmo	Newar
Inner Tarai (7)	Raji Raute	Bore Danuwar Majhi	Darai Kumal	-	-
Tarai (10)	Kisan Meche (Bodo)	Bote Danuwar Majhi Dhanuk (Rajbansi) Jhagad	Darai Kumal Dhimal Gangai Rajbanshi (Koch)	-	-

		Santhal (Satar)	Tajpuriya Taru		
Total (59)	10	12	20	15	2

Source: Onta, 2014:258

Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) is one of the federal organisations formed by Janjatis in Nepal after 1990s. Table 2.1 shows the classification of 59 Janjatis based on socio-economic status. The primary source of the present data is extracted from 'Classified Schedule of Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal prepared by the Janjati Classification Task Force and approved by the Federal Council of NEFIN', Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), 1 March 2004'. It provides the names of 59 Janjatis inhabiting in Mountainous, Hilly and Terai regions of Nepal. It also presents the socio- economic status of Thamis in Nepal. From the table 2.1 it can also be noticed that, in Nepal, Thamis are highly marginalised (Onta, 2014:258).

In India, the existence of Thami ethnic group can be trace back to 1800s. In Darjeeling, the Thami ethnic group actively participated in regional political agitation and movement. In 1936, the new shrine of Mahakal Temple located on the top of Observatory Hills was inaugurated. Thami ethnic group also donated one of the temple bells. But in the era of twentieth-century, it is very difficult to locate the bell donated by the Thami in Mahakal Temple, as there are thousands of bells hanged over it. It was also observed, that the first Thami ethnic organisation was registered in India in 1943, while in Nepal it was founded after forty years (Shneiderman, 2015:109-113).

The concept of backward class is not properly defined in the Indian Constitution. But the Government of India defined Other Backward Classes, on the basis of socio-cultural and economic attributes. A class is referred as the group of people having homogenous traits, which can be identified on the basis of socio-economic status in the society, race, religion etc. (Shneiderman, 20015:150). According to Article 15 (4) and Article 16 (4), they must be treated separately from the issue of reservation for the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste (Prakash, 1997). On 1990s, the Government of

India came up with the plan to implement Mandal Commission Report in the State of West Bengal and Sikkim. With no time, Thami in India became very much conscious of their ethnic identity. Both Thamis from Sikkim and West Bengal wanted to be listed in OBC. They even started compiling files, consisting of their origin history, mythology, language, rituals etc. In West Bengal, they were listed in OBC in 1995 and in 2002 they from were listed in OBC at Central Lists for the State of Sikkim and West Bengal. Over the time, they realised the benefits provided by the OBCs are comparatively less than benefits provided for Scheduled Tribes. The echoed grief them was "*OBC vaneko jat na bhat*" i.e. being in OBC does not recognise their ethnicity and does not even provide economic privileges (Shneiderman, 2009). Instantaneously, they placed their demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Hence, it can be said, Thami's quest for the identity and identity politics began from that particular era.

Demand of the Thami Ethnic Group for Scheduled Tribe Status

The tribes have various nomenclatures throughout the world. In Guatemala and in most of the Asian countries the native groups are categorised as the tribal people (Storr, 2010). In India, they are also known as autochthonous people of the particular land. They are also known by different names viz, Adivasi, Vanyajati, Pahari, Adimjati and Anusuchit Janjati (Chhetri, 2013:8). Since the sixteenth-century, the tribe is referred to denote the groups lived in primitive and barbarous nature. The term tribe is used to describe people, who are distinct from mainstream civilization. They are heterogeneous in nature in terms of physical, cultural and social background. They have starkly different languages, demographic size, ecological and regional adaptation, etc. The term tribe in India is considered to be the colonial construction. During the pre-independence period, there was a need to categorise those groups for two reasons. Firstly, they were denoted as a tribe to orderly subsume the heterogeneity of India into a succinct demography. Secondly, such succinct demography would benefit the British administrative system. The categorisation of tribes is seemed to be colonial construction term, but in reality it is beyond that. This is because, it differentiate with that of sociological and anthropological terms (Xaxa, 2005).

The anthropological discourse, denote tribal people in the ordinary usages and considers 'tribes', as the people with primitive traits living in the backward areas and

who are not so civilized (Beteille, 1997:7). They view tribes in terms of language, culture, territory and government. But the colonial construction of the term tribe was generally presented, in contrast with anthropological connotation. They viewed tribe on the basis of caste, religion and opposite to mainstream civilization. But in reality language and culture which are collectively termed as ethnicity, is considered as the main factor to denote one particular group as a tribe (Xaxa, 2005). Moreover, Ghurye (1963) defined tribes as the backward Hindus and Haimendorf (cited in Chitinis, 1997) defined them as animists. Up to the early 20th century, they were denoted as one of the depressed classes. It was with the proposal of the communal award they were identified as the aboriginals practicing animistic religions. The tribals often mixed their animism with that of Hinduism. But their spatial and isolated nature was the prior concern, which was needed to be protected from the mainstream culture. Hence, the British government protected tribals, by placing them outside the ordinary administration and by treating their habitation as separate reserves. Again the Government of India Act of 1935 provided separate representation for the backward tribes, similar to that of untouchable castes. Accordingly, a list of backward tribes was promulgated for the purpose (Chitinis, 1997).

The tribes are generally referred as Scheduled Tribe by the Indian Constitution. The Constitution of India came into effect on 1950, which guarantees its citizens fundamental rights and basic human rights. The drafting committee incorporated welfare programmes for the tribes which would help to provide socio-economic and political upliftment (Chhetri, 2013). The President of India, under Art 342, may by public notification specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes and tribal communities which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution (Singh, 2010). On exercise of the said powers, the President issued the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 which has been amended from time to time. By virtue of clause (2) Parliament passed in 1976 the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 (Act 108 0f 1976) (Singh, 2010). Before listing some of the groups in the category of Scheduled Tribe, the Government of India would look for certain criteria. For instance, the group of people must have primitive lifestyles, living in secluded or rural areas, certain habits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, backwardness etc. They must belong to either Negritos or Austroids or Mongoloids traits (Chhetri, 2013:9-10). The

basic criteria for Scheduled Tribe status are the distinct and unique culture, language, demographic size, regional adaptation etc. (Xaxa, 2005:1364). These criteria are not mentioned in the Constitution of India. But all these criteria, has been considered in the first Report of Backward Classes Commission 1955, Lokur Committee 1965, the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 and Chanda Committee 1969 (Chhetri, 2013:9-10).

The Scheduled Tribes are defined partly by habitant and geographic isolation, but mainly on the basis of their social, religious, linguistic and cultural distinctiveness and their tribal characteristics. The caste and communities, who were listed by the President in the Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and the other, are considered to be backward in the social ladder, irrespective of the per capita income, literacy rate etc. Henceforth, STs and SCs are totally disadvantaged group as the SC suffered the disability of low caste status including traditional practice of untouchability and STs suffered from the physical and cultural isolation (Chitinis, 1997). Article 330 even provides them reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and Article 332 provides them reservation in the Legislative Assembly. On the basis of Article 332, Government of Sikkim has also reserved seats for STs and SCs. From the total 32 seats, 12 seats are reserved for STs in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. According to new reservation policy, under Notification No.5/GOS/9/(15)/SWD/WD dated 19.8.2003, 33 percent of seats are reserved for STs in all government jobs and in professional courses. Furthermore, STs are also provided five years of relaxation in the age (Chhetri, 2013:16).

The whole concept of reservation emerged from Tamil Nadu, where the Non-Brahmins consisting of Christians, Muslims and lower caste Hindus had organised the protests against the predominance Brahmins in governmental services. Therefore, in the initial phase, the concept of reservation emerged as the protest to restrict the proportion of jobs to which Brahmins used to hold in the governmental sectors. Within no time, the concept of reservation infiltrated in the educational system as on ancient time the Brahmins were highly educated. It was due to their class hierarchy, they could afford the higher education. Consequently, the Brahmins also got good governmental jobs in the princely states as well as in British administrative system. At present, the reservation policies are applicable only in the governmental or semi-

governmental sectors. The reason for acquiring the government jobs is because of the provided facilities and to gain respects in the eyes of the other people. The issues concerning the reservation policy would have never been debated and would have not involved lots of controversies as it would have not reserved seats in the legislatures. The various ethnic groups definitely think of having reservation policy for the betterment of their standard of living, as well as for the political interests. The rationale for the reservation system in India is the fruit of the rigid caste system. The lower subjugated classes were being exploited, tortured and humiliated by the upper caste in the name of the religion. It is because of such distortions, it was not possible for them to lead a respectful life in the society through the competition. Therefore, they were to be assisted with preferential facilities for certain period of time. The preferential facilities were possible, only through the positive discrimination to make the space, for their socio-economic development and to bring them in an equal footing (Chopra, 1997).

Along with the changing circumstances, they were able to make space in the society as per the reservation policies. However, after the decade of reservations the parameters of the situation also changed, as the STs and SCs are enjoying preferential facilities. It even made them elites in terms of socio-economic conditions (Chitinis, 1997). The reservation on the basis of economic status was also highlighted, because the disabilities of the poor people belonging to highest caste can also be able to enjoy basic facilities. Henceforth, the reservation based on economy, would have benefitted the poor people regardless of their caste hierarchy and religion (Chopra, 1997).

Thami ethnic group are demanding Scheduled Tribe Status since the day when they found out, being in OBC does not provide them tribal identity and economic upliftment. In order to fulfill their demand for ST status, Thami ethnic group are collecting basic information and facts on their ethnicity. In West Bengal, Thami ethnic group even conveyed the fact of eating the meat of mouse. By saying this, they want to represent their unique tribal identity. But such statements were falsified, because not a single Thami family was being found eating the meat of mouse (Shneiderman, 2007). Such type of statements made by Thamis, picturise their adamant desire to be counted as tribes. But it can also distort their original identity, if they are begun to be identified   on   such   false   conceptions.   Thus,   Thami's   demand   for

Scheduled Tribe status precisely viewed, as the politics of recognising their ethnic identity and also for reservation policy.

Conclusion

The term identity in simple sense denotes the process of identifying self in relation to the social world. The process of identification sometimes make them part of larger group, while sometime it makes them a part of smaller groups. The people with small group have to identify their originality again and again which also involve subjugation, exploitation of them by majority group. Consequently, these subjugated and exploited groups when raise their voice against injustice, it is denoted as identity politics. Identity politics definitely is an instrument of subordinated marginalised group to bring justice, but it often involves devastating violence like genocide and holocaust.

In Sikkim, ethnic identity politics is also a common phenomenon, where the various ethnic groups are demanding the rights on the basis of their ethnic identity. Among such ethnic groups, Thami ethnic group are also demanding Scheduled Tribe status based on their ethnic identity. Hence, this chapter can be concluded by saying that identity politics is a common phenomenon in the multilingual and multi-ethnic States like Sikkim, wherein many ethnic groups like Thami, are demanding Scheduled Tribe status in order to preserve their ethnic identity and also for the policy of reservation.

Chapter III

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STATUS OF THE THAMI ETHNIC GROUP IN SIKKIM

Introduction

It is very unfortunate, that the works on the Thami ethnic group are very rare in both the countries; nevertheless, there are studies, works, and research that have been done by few of the scholars and have identified Thami with their distinct identity and unique cultures. Among the scholars, Shneiderman (2009 and 2015) did ethnographic research on the Thami ethnicity. She was the first ethnographer to write ethnography of Thami ethnic group, her work was of a great significance, which eventually became the mine of information in giving a wholesome understanding about Thami ethnicity. Turin (1998) again was the first scholar to understand the essence of Thangmi-Wakhekham. It was due to his efforts and initiative that at present, Thami ethnic group does have the Dictionary of Thami Language. But before them, Miller (1979) also tried to discuss Thami ethnicity, by discussing their unique tradition.

Thapa and Subba (2004:1605-1609) presented the work on recognizing different aspects of the Thami people in Sikkim, by observing the lifestyle and the livelihood of these communities. Though their studies and works are not very robust and is based on the confined Thami ethnic group of Sikkim. On the other hand, Subba (2008) is of the opinion that Thami's are analogous to Kirat. However, to some extent, it comprehends the origin myth, mythology and legends, language, customs and traditions, kinship, dresses and music etc. of Thami ethnic group in Sikkim.

So, in order to get the better understanding of the socio-economic and political condition of Thami ethnic group in Sikkim, it becomes indispensable to get the much needed information on Thami ethnicity. Therefore, the first section of this chapter deals with the history and origin of Thami. The second section of this chapter deals, with the scope, significance and the definitions of ethnicity, wherein the Thami ethnicity is believed to be connected to the group of individuals who consider them as a decent of particular ancestors, who have their own language, customs, tradition, rituals, beliefs and who worship Mother Nature in their own way. They also have

distinct myth on the origin of the world and supernatural powers. The third section of this chapter, analyses the socio-economic and political status of Thami in Sikkim with reference to Socio-Economic Census of 2006.

Historical Background of the Thami Ethnic Group

There is no unanimous opinion among different scholars, regarding the origin myth of the Thami ethnic group and is said to be obscure and confusing. But beyond this murkiness, they acknowledged Thami people in having history, culture which is completely different, distinctive and exclusively unique in nature. The only reason behind not to have a unanimous opinion among different scholars, is because the Thami ethnic group do not have their history of origin in a written format. Since there is no written format available, henceforth the best possible avenue to help us to explore and trace back the history of Thami origin is through the oratory history. The orated history of Thami is recited by Thami [8]*'Guruappa'* (A Thangmi Shaman) in every festivals and rituals. This oratory is particularly known as [9]*'Palhoke'* (Shneiderman, 2015:76), and renowned scholars like Miller (1979:87) and Shneiderman (2015:76) considered Palokhe as the sacred narratives of Thami's which includes mythic stories, spiritual wisdom and basic elementary idea about their ancestors. While analysing the Palhoke collected by Shneiderman (2015) during her research, she discovered that it consisted [10]*'Kiranti'*, Hindu and Buddhist myth of origin. She concluded that, such mixtures about their origin, is because of the influence of their immediate neighbours like Rai, Newar and Tamang.

The origin myth of Thami confers the knowledge of their deities, where it follows, as how they summed and conducted a meeting to resolve the creation of the human world. This is in accordance to the Palhoke as recorded by Shneiderman (2015:79-81), where it is believed that the deities were responsible for the creation of this world and to do away with the emptiness of this vast creation. The deities then created the humans from ashes of 108 woods and bird's excretory wastes and simultaneously, other living organisms/ beings were created.

Miller's (1979:89) throws some light and adds to the information with regards to the origin and history of Thami ethnic group. He is of the opinion that, Thami ethnic group were the nomadic people or the hunters who have been settled to the place

called Thimi. Thimi lies in the Eastern part of Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. From Thimi they started to move towards the places called Sushpa, Dolakha, Rangrangthali etc.

In the recitation of the Palokhe (Mantras) they say, "*ni-ko Thanmi paila simanghar- ni wan-te kumaugaon- na ho?– yon- so; kumangaon- ni- ni wan- yon- tale Nepal thimi ya- si- yon-duthai- na ho?- yon- so*". The English translation of that would be, "our Thami in the beginning hailed from [11]'*Simanghar*' and settled in Kaumangaon, having come from Kumaugaon to Nepal, they arrived in Thimi and settled there" (Miller, 1979:89). The place called Kumaugaon and Simanghar is not properly recognised by the scholars. But it has been identified through recent research, that they had once settled in the place called Thimi and then migrated towards the places like Rang Rang Thali, Suspa, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok etc. Even to this day, the major concentration of Thami population can be found in the mentioned places (Shneiderman, 2009).

Subba (2008:376) holds the opinion that, Thami ethnic group have migrated from Asia Minor and settled down in Simanghar (present day: the present border area of India and Nepal). He said, the Thami would have travelled through the Himalayan region from Tibet and entered North-East India via Burma. Although they claim that, they are also one of the early settlers in Sikkim, but their oratory history fails to present strong evidence. As mentioned in the second chapter of the present study, the settlement of Thami ethnic group in Darjeeling can be witnessed since the time of British Raj. The participation of Thami ethnic group is also evident in the regional socio-economic and political activities in Darjeeling. According to Report prepared by Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, Thami was also one of the early settlers of Sikkim. In the absence of any written documents their claim does not have strong support, but one cannot even avoid the fact that there are some Thami families in Sikkim, who were the subjects of Chogyal. Moreover, there is the place called Thami Dara in East Sikkim, which is considered to be first settled place of Thami in Sikkim (Report, 2016).

Mythological Stories of the Thami Ethnic Group

The term myth is referred an idea and mythology is the vehicle of that idea. The dictionary definition of the term myth to some degree is related to stories of God,

traditional stories, folktale, legendary remarks, narratives etc. (Subba, 2009:30). The mythological stories of Thami ethnic group includes the stories of their deities and also provide insights on their belief system. The origin myth of Thami are recited by the shaman and also narrated by the grandparents or parents. There are two major origin myth associated with that of Thami ethnic group which are as follows:

- Firstly, Thami are considered as the successor of the Kiratis who ruled in Kathmandu for several years until encroachment of the [12]'*Lichhavi*' rulers. After the downfall of Kirat rulers, one group of Kirats headed towards eastern part of the Kathmandu valley, through the route of Koteswar-Thimi, Sanga and Benighat. Then they settled in Kiratchhap area (nearby Charikot Bazar) of Dolakha. However, this hearsay is not supported by other oral traditions (Magar, 2008:7).
- Secondly, Thami ethnic group consider themselves as the decent of Yaapatichuku and Sonariaaji (Thami, 2003). Their ancestors travelled from Simanghar to the place called Thimi and then moved towards the places like Rangrangthali, Sushpa, Dolakha etc. (Magar, 2008).

Among the two perceptions of the origin of myth of Thami ethnic group, the second perception is seemed to be more convincing. This is because the remaining oration of their origin myth has a nexus with second perception. Yaapatichuku and Sonariaaji after a long way travelling reached the suitable land on the banks of two rivers viz, Suspa and Tamakoshi. Then they moved towards upland through the bank of the river Suspa. After reaching Rangrangthali, they decided to settle in a cave. Unfortunately, their settlement area fell under the supervision of Newar Malla Kingdom and very soon their settlement was declared illicit by the king. Instantly, the king dispatched his group of soldiers to bring Yaapatichuku and Sonariaaji in his court. The king asked them the reason for their migration and illicit settlement in his kingdom. After having analysing the reason behind their migration, the king allowed them to settle in his kingdom. The condition of the king was that, Yaapatichuku have to hunt a deer in the form of tax, until then his wife was to be kept in the prison. But he could not find any deer in the forest, so he returned to the court empty-handed. He was upset, as he could not hunt the deer for the king. But he was beset with woe, as he could never see his wife again. By seeing this, his wife magically produced a golden deer and she humbly

offered it to the king. The king was pleased by their offerings and in return, they were given land for settlement as a boon. They were asked to measure the land for their settlement. Yaapatichuku measured the land from Thami Deurali in the East, foothill of the Mountain Gaurishankarin the North, Kalinchokmai in the West and River Tamakoshi in the South. Right away after the measurement, the king granted them [13]'*Tamrapatra*', as a land certificate. The king also ordered them to worship Dolakha Bhimsen as on the seven day of Dasera festival. Many Thami still refer the Suspa Chhamawati of Dolakha District as their original place (Magar, 2008:8).

Belief System of the Thami Ethnic Group

After their settlement in Suspa, the next day Yaapatichuku went to nearby forest to collect the eatables, Sonariaaji stayed back at the cave. [14]'*Sishnu*' which is known as [15]'*Nyakadangre*' in Thangmi-Wakhekham, was the only edible plants found in their settlement area, so she collected Sishnu's flowers and put some medicated plants as [16]'*suna, taka suna, bothoro suna*' and blended it with the cooked Sishnu's flowers and put into a pot with a lid on it and decided to open only after her husband comes back from the forest. Yaapatichuku came back from the forest after a month. As soon as he arrived in the cave, his wife told him that she has prepared i.e. the [17]'*tong*' for him and asked him to open the lid of that pot. The husband tried to open the lid, but eventually failed. So he enquired with his wife about the lid. Then she asked him to burn [18]'*udreng*' and glides the smoke of udreng over the lid on the pot. After which he could see a snake sitting above the lid of that pot. The moment he took the smoke of udreng over to the snake, the snake flew away and sat near the hill of Suspa. By seeing these, both the couple was perplexed and scared. At night husband dreamt of the same snake, who said that, they must worship him. The snake in his dream also said, he emerged from the pot of tong and ordered Yaapatichuku to worship him in the harvesting months of the year (Report, 2016).

Before this auspicious day, [19]'*Uvauli Pudasa*' which is done in [20]'*Baishakey Purnima*' (Magar, 2008), a house is chosen to take out the *Bhume*, where Guruappa executes [21]'*pudusa*' the entire night. Next day, without eating anything he goes to the place where Bhume pudasa has to be performed. The village youth stroke [22]'*taakee*' in a consistent rhythm and they even perform their dances. In that process they collect wheat, egg, etc. from the houses. On the same day, the collected wheat is soaked in

the water; afterwards, it is roasted and grinded to make dough out of it. It is known as puchui which is decorated by [23]'*baldane*' flower at the top. [24]'*Puchui*', cocks, collected eggs, money, [25]'*aachheta*' and other things, which are essential for pudasa are kept aside or near the [26]'*Bhume Thaan*'. Udreng is burnt to make incense and pudasa is performed. Bhume Thaan consists of five big stones, which symbolises the presence of their deities on the earth. The day long Bhume pudusa culminates in the evening, when a matured cock is sacrificed and the blood is offered on the three puchuis without touching the fourth and fifth Bhume deities. The myth says, among the five Bhume deities, the two Bhume deities are considered as the vegetarians. During the times of offering the sacrifices of birds and animals, the vegetarian Bhume deities should be hidden under the leaf. It is believed, if a drop of blood falls on the vegetarian Bhume deities during the offerings, then the family or the village will have to suffer chaos and devastation (Report, 2016). In Bhume Thaan, many Guruappas together chant the palokhe, considering Bhume as the divine deities. Thami ethnic group prays to earth, sun, air, water, forest, mountains, rivers, etc. and the most needful products like grains, leafy vegetables, fruits etc. are received blessings by their divine Bhume deities. Before sowing the seeds, they pray to the Bhume to protect their fields and harvests from the evil forces. Moreover, before taking the harvest into their houses, they dance in merry making relish and they also pay their homage to their ancestors on this day (Subba. 2008: 378). On [27]'*Mangsir*', the pudusa is again performed by them which are popularly known as [28]'*Udhauli Bhume pudusa*' (Magar, 2008).

They also worship [29]'*Gosai dewa*', who protects all the animals, [30]'*Chirkun dewa*' who protects all the birds, [31]'*Bhimsen dewa*' who protects them from enemy, [32]'*Bisa dewa*' who protects the family from illness and any kind of diseases. Lastly, they also worship [33]'*Bara dewa*' to uphold the rituals of their ancestors (Subba. 2008:378).

Clan and Sub-clans of the Thami

Yaapatichuku and Sonariaaji had seven sons and seven daughters and in order to save their clan they had to make their children married to each other, which was possible only after the couple would bestow different clans upon their children. They gave their son arrows and held an archery contest. This contest depending on the target of the arrow, would determine the clan for each son. For example, if the arrow would hit

the tree, then based on the name and species of that particular tree which it belong; the name of clan for the son would be given. On the other hand, the clan of the daughters was named after looking at their different works. But some people in Thami ethnic group itself hold different opinions and views regarding the marriage of their children. They believed that Yaapatichuku and Sonariaaji had only seven sons who got married to seven daughters of [34]'*Ukuchhhuku and Betiaaji*' (Shneiderman, 2015:201).

Table 3.1

The Clan name of Seven Daughters and Seven Sons are as follows:

Male	Female
Akal Akyangmi	Budati
Kyangpole Akyangmi	Yante Siri
Areng Akyangmi	Khatu Siri
Dumla Akyangmi	Calta Siri
Danguri Akangmi	Alta Siri
Mosanthali Akangmi	Khasa Siri
Jaidhane Akyangmi	Bampa Siri

Source: Shneiderman, 2015:205

All the mentioned clans have different etymology in Thangmi Wakhekham (Shneiderman, 2015:205). Magar (2008) in the 'Case Study of Thami in Nepal' has also mentioned different names for female clans which are not even mentioned by Shneiderman (2015). For instance, he has mentioned clans like [35]'*shreepechare, ramandaman, khamba kapane and tankit*'.

The names of the particular clans can be trace from the names of plants in their language. [36]'*Akyangmi*', which is used like a suffix means people of needle wood tree i.e. Schima Wallichii. [37]'*Akal*' means a flowering tree or Machilus Odoratissima and [38]'*Kyangpole*' means trunk of the needle wood tree or Schima Wallichii. [39]'*Areng*' means an oak tree or Lithocarpulus Elegans. [40]'*Dumla*' means common Ficus Hookeri tree. [41]'*Danguri*' means the 'searcher'. The son who searched and collected the arrows after the archery contest was referred as Danguri. [42]'*Mosanthali*' means the place of spirits or the land of cremation. This particular son's arrow was landed in the cremation ground for this he was named as mosanthali (Shneiderman, 2015:203).

50

The name of the daughter's clans was derived from the work they were doing, during the archery contest. The two daughters, who were offering [43]'*Budati*' to their deities, were named as [44]'*Chaltasiri*' from the edible fern shoots or Dryopteris Cochleata, and [45]'*Altasiri*' from Rhododendron or Rhododendron arboretum respectively. The remaining daughters got the name of the clans from households. For instance, [46]'*Yantesiri*' which means quern, [47]'*Khatusiri*' which means backstrap handloom and [48]'*Khasasiri*' means the ladder. It can be noticed that the naming of clans were divided on the grounds of households and outside activities. The name of female clans was specially derived from the household activities while the name of male clans was derived from outside the activities (Shneiderman, 2015:204). From the above discussion, it can be said that, within the Thami ethnic group there are fourteen original clans. But with the due course of time, many sub-clans are also formed. Such as Simi Rishmi, Thoro Rishmi, Gyaba Rishmi, Ponglang Rishmi, Rodho Rishmi, Chodhiro Rishmi Thori Akangmi, Pentedali Akangmi, Khurpey Akangmi, Roimidati, Chitrey Akangmi etc. (Report, 2016).

Thangmi-Wakhekham

Thangmi-Wakhekham is the Tibetan-Burman language spoken by Thami ethnic group language spoken in central-eastern Nepal and north-eastern India (Turin, 1998:476). They do not have any written scripts, but they claim to have one and point to the inscriptions on their [49]'*maanee*'. However, the deciphering of this and comparing this with other scripts is a different matter altogether and awaiting a well-equipped and expert researcher. They articulate very slowly when speaking their own language, but when one listens closely the sounds are soft and sweet. Since the birth of Tibeto-Burman language, scholars have obscure idea of Thangmi-Wakhekham. It is also considered as one the extinct language. The Thangmi-Wakhekham was studied for the first time by Sten Konow (cited in Turin, 1998:476) for the Linguistic Survey of India (1909) and he then classified it as an 'Eastern Pronominalised' language alongside [50]'*Baram*'. Furthermore, the scholars like Brian Houghton and Robert Shafer (cited in Turin, 1998:1) included Thangmi-Wakhekham in Tibeto-Burman. It was viewed that the Thami shared a special generic relationship with Baram. Moreover, it also has nexus with Kiranti languages of Eastern Nepal and Newar language. Thami share close cultural relationship with Kiratis and Newar because of their origin myth. There

are two mutually incomprehensible dialects, hereafter referred to as the Dolakha dialect and the Sindhupalchok dialect. The dialects differ from one another in terms of phonology, nominal and verbal morphology and even in the lexicon. Some of the lexical differences can be explained by regular phonological alternations, but these rules by no means account for even half of the differences (Turin: 1998; Turin and Thami, 2004).

Murra

The murra represents the symbol of pride and identity of the Thami ethnic group. It is used by Guruappa in the *taakee*. The murra is made up of wood, where the pictures of animals and birds are carved. Each picture on the *Murra* describes the mythological stories of Thami ethnic group. Moreover, they also have the distinct dresses and ornaments, dance forms etc. They also have their own way of producing music from the various instruments and also have distinct cuisine and beverages (Report, 2016).

Socio-Economic Status of the Thami Ethnic Group in Sikkim

Socio economic status of any individual or the group of individual represents the multidimensional process. It gauges the economic, social, political and cultural rights, equitable distribution of development benefits and opportunities, dignified living environment, gender equality and empowerment of the poor and marginalised people. The socio-economic development is also popularly known as upward movement of the society. On the other hand, it also gauges the rise of productivity, equitable distribution of the goods to the least marginalised people, which can ultimately remove the norms of underdevelopment and poverty (Ohlan, 2013:842). The socio-economic upliftment is the most important objective of any State or a county. It requires a higher level of per capita gross domestic product of the country, but a higher level of per capita gross domestic product does not mean a higher level of development in terms of socio-economic aspects of life. It does not include the sum total of human life, but it is taken as a means to create circumstances where people could live standard healthy and happy life (Majumder, Mazumdar and Chakraborty 1995).

Over the years, Indian Government in collaboration with the State Governments has taken steps to maximise the highest standard of living for the citizens of the country. The Government also introduced major plans and beneficiaries for APL and BPL households, various health schemes etc. have also formulated and implemented by the Government to improve the standard of living of the people (Ohlan, 2013:842). In simple words, socio-economic status of any group of people means the social standing or a class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Socio-economic status (SES) in a simple term can be defined as a measure of one's combined economic and social status which tends to be positively associated with better health. This entry focuses on the three common measures of socioeconomic status; education, income, and occupation (Baker, 2014).

In Sikkim, the land is the essential economic resource of Thami which is controlled by the head of the family. But some of them are landless and cultivate land on a sharecropping basis. They should pay a certain amount of grain as mentioned by the landlord in the form of the tax. They are engaged in both agricultural and horticultural crop as well as animal husbandry. Only few amount of total population are engaged in white colour jobs (Subba, 2008). To gauge the socio-economic status of Thami in Sikkim from the secondary sources, few selected indicators are being employed with reference to Socio-Economic Census, 2006. The indicators like households, head of the households (HHs), identification status, nature of the activity, income and expenditure, literacy rate, APL and BPL households etc. are being employed, to provide insights on the socio-economic status of Thami in Sikkim. The following are the concepts and definition of employed indicators:

- **Households:** Households means a place where a group of person lives together and take a meal from the same kitchen.
- **Head of the Households (HHs):** Head of the household is the person who is recognised by the family members as the head of the family. Head of the households also bears the chief responsibility for managing household affairs.
- **Identification Status:** By the virtue of Article 371F of the Constitution, Sikkim Subjects Certificate means the identification of citizen, who shall have documents issued by the king before the merger. Certificate of Identification

means the documents issued by the State Government of Sikkim, on the basis of Sikkim Subjects.

- **Sikkimese and Non-Sikkimese:** The Sikkimese and Non-Sikkimese population of the State has been identified by the Certificate of Identification, Sikkim Subjects Certificate and [51]'*Parcha*'. As per the 2006 census, the person who failed to show any three mentioned documents, during the time of the survey were categorised as Non-Sikkimese. Some of the Non-Sikkimese is living in Sikkim since after the merger, but do not hold the mentioned three certificates. In that case, they have been referred as Non- Sikkimese. The people who do not belong to the specified community are included in other category. This was implemented on the cardinal provisions of the 371F, which states that, the Parliament may for the purpose of protecting the rights and the interests of the different sections of population of Sikkim, make provision for the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim which may be filled by the candidates belonging to such sections and for the delimitation of the Assembly constituencies from which the candidates belonging to such section alone may stand for the election to the Legislative Assembly (Burman, 2008:4). Hence, it can be viewed that the group of people in Sikkim may belong to the same ethnic group, but are not identified as Sikkimese, because they do not hold the mentioned three certificates

- **Literacy rate:** Literacy rate is one of the significant tools to measure the socio-economic status of people. It represents the person's capability to read and write in any languages. Literacy is considered as the key tool, to make the workforce efficient. The word literacy means, a state of being able to read and write. In a broader sense, literacy is a phenomenon by which one can enhance his or her communication, professional and social skills. The impact of literacy on economic development is positive and can be easily determined by comparing the standard of living, per capita income, GDP, industrialization and development of infrastructure within a country. Literacy enhances the working capabilities of people, by providing them with skill development. High rates of literacy are often found in urbanised and industrialized countries. More industrialized countries are wealthier and can provide best of education, health care, and technology to its citizens at a minimum cost; therefore,

countries with a high literacy rate usually have a high Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Nations with low GDP frequently have lower literacy rates since the people in that country have less access to education, where the children often have to work to support the family (Akhtar, 2006).

- **Nature of Activity:** Socio-economic Census, 2006 has taken fifteen types of activities to gauge the activity of the people and to find out the working status of the population. They are a student, farmer or cultivator, agricultural wage labourer, non-agricultural wage labourer, regular salaried State Government, salaried Central Government, salaried public sector undertakings, salaried private, self-employed, traders or the business, muster roll, work change, contractor, unemployed and the others.

- **Income and Expenditure:** Income and expenditure of any country and states are very important to understand, the economic development of the country. It helps to measure the levels and the changes in living conditions of the people. Income of the population provides insights on the proportion of the low and high income of a person. Expenditure of the population means, the total proportion of the income used for consumption of livelihood through purchase.

- **APL and BPL Households:** The abbreviation APL stands for Above Poverty Line and BPL stands for Below Poverty Line. These programmes were implemented in order to monitor, review and appraise the poverty of the entire country. This programme was initiated in India by Ministry of Rural Development (Sundaram, 2003). In India, Planning Commission estimates the number and proportion of people living below the poverty line at National and State levels. It estimates the numbers separately for the rural and the urban areas. It makes poverty estimates based on a large sample survey of household consumption and expenditure carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), after an interval of approximately five years. The Commission has been estimating the poverty line and poverty ratio since 1997, on the basis of the methodology spelt out in the report of the Expert Group, on the 'Estimation of Number and Proportion of Poor' (popularly known as Lakdawala Committee Report). Poverty is a social as well as a multidimensional phenomenon. According to the World Bank, poverty is

pronounced deprivation in wellbeing. Amartya Sen (cited in Walker and Unterhatter, 2007) in his capability approach perhaps gave the broadest meaning to well-being. According to him, well-being comes from a capability to function in society. Poverty arises when people lack key capabilities, due to inadequate income or education, or poor health, or insecurity, or low self-confidence, or a sense of powerlessness, or the absence of rights such as freedom of speech etc. The Human Development Report pioneered the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) which is grounded in the capability approach and an innovative effort to complement the income, based on the poverty indices. It includes an array of dimensions from participatory exercises among poor communities and an emerging international consensus. The MPI shows the share of the population in multidimensional ways, wherein the poor are adjusted by the intensity of deprivation in terms of living standards, health and education (ibid). The BPL-APL distinction is already being used in the matter of pricing grains under the public distribution system and is likely to be used by other ministries for the better targeting of their programmes (Sundaram, 2003).

Table 3.2

Distribution of Thami Population, Household Size and Sex Ratio

Community	Households	Population			HH Size	Sex
		Total	Male	Female		Ratio
Thami	92	453	238	214	4.92	903
State	111830	581546	302852	278694	5.2	920

Source: Socio-Economic Census, 2006: 32.

Table 3.2 shows the distribution of Thami population, households, head of the households and the sex ratio. According to 2006 census, out of 111830 total households in Sikkim, Thami has only 92 households and out of 581546 total population of the State, the total population of Thami was 453. The total male population was 238 and female were 238. Furthermore, HH size was 4.92 out of 5.2 and the sex ratio was 903 out of 920. Although the population of Thami is less in terms of total population, the sex ratio seemed to be high.

Table 3.3

Population Distribution of Thami in the Four Districts of Sikkim

District	Households	Population			Size	Sex Ratio
		Total	Male	Female		
North	1	3	2	1	3.00	500
East	77	382	199	183	4.96	920
South	3	15	8	8	5.00	875
West	13	66	35	35	5.08	886

Source: Socio-Economic Census, 2006:63, 66, 70 and 72

Among the four districts, the major concentration of Thami population is settled in East Sikkim, with 77 households and 382 total populations. After East Sikkim, total 66 Thami populations inhabit in West Sikkim with 13 households. In North and South, the total population of Thami is 3 and 15, with 1 and 13 households respectively. The sex ratio of Thami ethnic group is high in the East Sikkim, followed by West Sikkim, whereas in North and South Sikkim it is comparatively less.

Table 3.4

Community Wise Distribution of Population by Identification Status

Community	Non-Sikkimese			Sikkimese		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Bahun	1951	1775	3726	18262	18122	36384
Chhetri	7999	6944	14943	29104	27789	56893
Newar	2030	1794	3824	8951	8861	17812
Rai	8665	7662	16327	31457	30867	62324
Manger	2132	1777	3909	6039	5754	11793
Gurung	2268	1928	4196	15302	14864	30148
Sunuwar/Mukhia	662	552	1214	947	881	1828
Thami	145	115	260	93	100	193
Jogi	33	33	66	226	198	424
Dewan	33	30	63	58	55	113

Bhujel	527	457	984	1280	1299	2579
Giri/ Sanyasi	132	114	246	584	507	1091

Table 3.4 shows the distribution of population by identification status of eleven communities viz, Bhujel, Dewan, Gurung, Jogi, Khas (Bahun and Chhetri), Mangar, Mukhia, Newar, Rai and Thami. In comparison to all the other communities, Sikkimese Thamis are seemed to be the minority ethnic group. The total population of Sikkimese Thami is 193, with 93 male and 100 female populations. Whereas, Non-Sikkimese Thami who have been residing in Sikkim, after the merger is 260 with 145 male and 115 female population. However, it can also be noticed that the lowest Sikkimese ethnic groups are Dewan followed by Thami.

Table 3.5

Community wise Literacy Rate

Community	Male	Female	Total
Bahun	91.45	78.96	85.26
Chettri	85.76	73.79	79.97
Newar	90.36	81.01	85.76
Rai	84.76	73.70	79.39
Mangar	83.32	73.62	78.72
Gurung	86.73	75.57	81.31
Sunuwar	83.08	72.86	78.20
Thami	76.69	70.00	73.62
Jogi	79.22	71.96	75.73
Dewan	95.40	95.24	95.32
Bhujel	81.21	70.73	76.10
Sanyasi/Giri	88.03	76.22	82.75

Table 3.5 represents the percentage distribution of literacy rate of eleven communities in Sikkim. It also helps to locate the literacy rate of Thamis in Sikkim in comparison with other eleven communities. Compared to other communities 73.62 Thangmi population are literate with 76.69 percent of male and 70 percent of the female. The literacy rate of Thami ethnic group is also lowest among all the eleven communities.

It can also be said that, within less population the literacy rate of Thami in Sikkim is not so satisfying.

Table 3.6

Percentage Distribution of Thami in Sikkim by Nature of Activity-State

Nature of Activities	Total
Population	453
Student	158
Farmer	47
Agri wage labourer	9
Non-Agri wage labourer	37
Salaried State Govt.	5
Salaried Central Govt.	9
PSU	0
PVT	9
Business	3
MR Employed	8
Self	30
Contractor	1
Work Charge	1
Unemployed	20
Others	116

Source: Socio-Economic Census, 2006:195.

Nature of activity of Thami in Sikkim refers to the type of job in which they are engaged to earn their livelihood. Table 3.6 shows the percentage distribution of Thami community by nature of activity in the State. Out of total percentage 0.08 percent were students, 0.05 percent were farmers, 0.11 percent were agricultural wage labourer, 0.02 percent were non-agriculture wage labourer, 0.02 percent work under state government, 0.17 percent work under Central Government, 0.08 percent were engaged in private sectors, 0.02 percent were involved in business, 0.08 percent are M.R employed which include works like small. Business, Truck Operators, Taxi Drivers, Consultants etc. 0.05 percent were contractors. 0.0 percent is unemployed and 0.0 percent is engaged in other activities.

Table 3.7

**Percentage distributions of HHs by Monthly Income and Monthly Percentage
Consumer Expenditure of Thami Ethnic Group**

0-2,500	2,501-5,000	5,001-10,000	1,001-25,000	25,001-above	Monthly per capita consumer expenditure(Rs)	Per Capita medical expenditure (Rs)
18.48	54.35	17.39	8.70	1.09	556	37

Source: Socio-Economic Census, 2006:36.

Income and expenditure of any country and states are very important to understand
the economic development of the country. It helps to measure the levels and changes
in living conditions of the people. Thus, the table 3.7 shows the monthly income and
expenditure of Thami living in Sikkim. Out of total percentage, 18.28 percent of
households earns income between Rs. 0-2500, 54.35 percent earns income between
Rs. 2501-5000, 17.39 percent earns income between Rs. 50001-10000, 8 percent
earned income between Rs. 10001-25000 and only 1 percent earns income between
Rs.25001-Above. After analysing the available data, it can be said that majority of
Thami population in Sikkim earns the low level of income. Only a few individuals
earn a higher level of income. Moreover, monthly per capita consumption expenditure
of total household of Thami is Rs. 556 and per capita medical expenditure is Rs. 37.

Table 3.8

Community Wise Distribution of APL and BPL Households

Community	BPL Households	APL Households	Total Households
Bahun	1191	6489	7680
Chhetri	2577	10932	13509
Newar	590	3851	4441
Rai	3940	11490	15430
Manger	736	2279	3015
Gurung	1271	5218	6489
Sunuwar	125	470	595

Thami	21	71	92
Jogi	42	52	94
Dewan	3	41	44
Bhujel	207	494	701
Sanyasi	64	199	263

Source: Socio-Economic Census, 2006:23.

From the table 3.6, out of 111830 State's total households, 21618 households are categorised as BPL households. It is also found that out of 92 households Thamis have 21 who are living below poverty line and 71 APL households.

Political participation of the Thami Ethnic Group in Sikkim

The word 'politics' is derived from Greek word 'polis' meaning 'city-states'. Aristotle, the father of political science, referred 'man as a political animal'. It means, all the men living in the city-states are political in nature. Furthermore, the adjective 'political' is often referred as 'statesman', who are actively engaged in politics or political leadership (Mulgan, 1990). Participation of people in politics is the cardinal feature of the democratic state. The more the people participate in democratic practices, the more efficient the result will be. Participation of the people acts as the driving force for the survival of democracy (Ulbig and Funk, 1999).

Verba and Pie (cited in Conge, 1988) defined political participation as a behaviour and attitude of the citizen, to change the political scenario, governmental policies, etc. The political participation is the voluntary activities of the people to influence, directly or indirectly the political system of a country. Sometimes it also takes negative turn involving violent political conflicts etc. Nelson (cited in Conge, 1988) said that the political participation is the action by the private citizen, who is intended to influence the governmental actions. The participative behaviour of the poor marginalised people is often manipulated and guided by the elites. Participation of the people through patron, within the ethnic group or interest group etc., helps them to influence the government directly or indirectly. It also creates the platform for the government to communicate and bargain with the people. Through the special-interest associations and parties, the government controls and co-opts the poor people. Sometimes the government can even threaten or challenge the poor people to exercise

loose or tight control, which can be channeled through patrons and brokers (Conge, 1988).

Sen and Dreze (1999) said that the political participation leads to development. Political Participation can be seen to have intrinsic value to the quality of life. In simple terms, it includes people to participate in voting at polls, supporting possible pressure groups by being member of them, personally communicating directly with the legislators, participation in political activities and thus, acquiring the claim in legislatures, engaging in habitual dissemination of political opinions through the communications to the other citizen etc. (Mukhopadhyay, 1977).

Being a citizen of Indian, the Thami ethnic group enjoys universal adult franchise as guaranteed by the Constitution. They participate in the democracy to choose their leader or a representative. The available secondary data shows, they have been participation in an election since the establishment of democracy in Sikkim. It was also found that they have been participating in the Panchayat, municipality, and legislative assembly election. But so far no records have been found on Thami ethnic group, contesting an election as a candidate. Probably because they are comparatively less in number and on top of that, in 2006 the total number of Sikkimese Thami was only 93. Majority of Thami are Non-Sikkimese who is living in Sikkim since the merger. Usually, people have right to vote and to contest in the election, in any part of the said country. Sikkimese Thami having been the right to contest election never participated in the election as a candidate. All this somehow indicates that till now Thami ethnic group do not have any political leader from their own ethnic group.

Conclusion

There are very few literatures which discusses ethnicity of Thami ethnic group. From the available literatures it was found that they are the people with distinct traits, who have their own language and belief system. They believe that they are decent of particular ancestors, who used to worship Mother Nature in their own ways. The mythological story of them consists of stories related to their deities and their supernatural powers. Scholars like Subba (2008) considered them as analogous to Kirat. Moreover, from the historical background, it becomes clear that they are the successors of Kirat rulers, who have migrated to the places called Sushpa, Dolakha

etc. after their territory was captured by another dynasty. It was also found that they have some connection with Malla dynasty because after the fall of their kingdom they Malla king offered them Kipat as a boon to the Thami. Furthermore, their existence in India could be recorded from thee arly 1880s. In Sikkim, the origin of the Thami ethnic group cannot be located properly, but the Sikkimese Thami claims that they are also one of the autochthonous. On the other hand, the Non-Sikkimese Thami who is said to be the citizens of India and have their names enlisted in the voter's lists of Sikkim claims, that their ancestors came from Darjeeling after the merger and settled in Sikkim.

After having basic knowledge of the ethnicity and the language of Thami ethnic group, it became possible to gauge their socio-economic and political status. The term socio-economic status refers to a person's standard of living in any country or the region, which gauges the equitable distributions of facilities and opportunities, gender equality, etc. It represents the person's level of literacy, occupation, income etc. In Sikkim, the literacy rate, income level etc. of Thami ethnic group was found dissatisfying. This is because, they were found to be lacking behind in terms of higher education, good job and so on.

The political participation is said to be the salient feature of democracy. The participation of the people in the democracy helps to choose their leader or the representatives; time to time they can also check the actions of their leaders. The political participation of the Thami in Sikkim is limited as the voters. The secondary sources did not show anything on their participation as the candidate for any election. Thus, it can be said that the socio-economic and political status of Sikkim is found to be in deplorable condition.

Chapter IV

IDENTITY POLITICS OF THE THAMI ETHNIC GROUP AND THEIR DEMAND FOR TRIBAL STATUS

Introduction

The concept of tribe is said to be the colonially constructed term, as the British referred tribes as the people having common ancestry, primitive lifestyles or the barbarians in nature etc. (Xaxa, 2003:374). In the post-independence era, such distinct groups were placed under Schedule Tribe category. On the basis of region and language, they were categories as Scheduled Tribes in India (Xaxa, 2005:1364). More than 400 groups were enlisted in Scheduled Tribe category (Xaxa, 1999:1519). The Constitution of India proclaims that Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes are socially and economically backwards and hence, they must be protected. But the Constitution of India does not define anywhere the term Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Classes. Nor does it provide detail criteria by which these groups may be identified. The tribes are basically recognised for their distinct culture, language, common ancestry etc. They are included in the lists of Scheduled Tribes category only if they are recognised as a tribe by the Presidential order in consultation with the governor of each state with subsequent modification by an act of Parliament (Chitnis, 1997:89).

For the fulfillment of the objective of the present study, the survey was conducted in the East Sikkim. The survey was conducted in 44 households, taking 50 individual respondents from the places like Khewathang, Bhusuk. Chonge, Aritar, Lingtam, East Martam Ledong, Deorali, Thami Gaon in Burtuk, Bagthan, Syari, Arithang, Natok, Rorathang, Lingding, Singtam, Chota Singtam, 8th Mile etc. For the purpose of the study, both Sikkimese and Non-Sikkimese Thami are taken as the respondents. Therefore, this chapter analyses and evaluates the data collected from the ethnographic field survey.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 4.1

Total household and Sex of Thami respondents in East Sikkim

Total Households	Sex		Transgender	Total
	Male	Female		
44	35	15	-	50

For the present study, 50 individual respondents were taken from 44 surveyed households, including both male and female. Among the total respondents, 6 were the office bearers of Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh and the remaining 44 were the common people belonging to Thami ethnic group. Office bearers were also taken as the respondents from among the surveyed 44 households. Among the 44 surveyed households, all the respondents were citizens of India as it was found that they all were enlisted in the voter's list as a voter. But among them, 26 households were the Certificate of Identification holders or were counted as subjects of Sikkim. The remaining 24 households are living in Sikkim since a long period of time, but do not hold Certificate of Identification.

From the table 4.1, it is found that 66 percent of the respondents were male and 34 percent were female. Most of the female respondents were housewives and the earning member in their family is generally male. Only a few female respondents were employed and advocate the notions of women empowerment. This represents that, Thami ethnic group in Sikkim try to uphold the patriarchal nature of the family, wherein, most often the head of the family is the male member. The female head of the family is the exceptional case, only if they are either divorced or a widow. Throughout the survey, not a single transgender was found. It can be noticed that Thami ethnic group in Sikkim, are not very much familiar with the terms like heterosexuality or homosexuality. It is quite possible that the young respondents would be familiar with those terms, but nobody mentioned anything about it. This somehow indicates that the Thamis in Sikkim strictly try to maintain their heterosexuality, by preserving their conservativeness.

Table 4.2

Variation of age among the respondents

Age	Male	Female	Total	Total Percentage
18-30	11	2	13	26
31-45	10	4	14	28
46-55	6	5	11	22
56-65	4	2	6	12
Above 65	4	2	6	12
Total	35	15	50	100

Table 4.2 shows the variation of age among the respondents. 26 percent out of total respondents were in between 18-30 years, 28 percent were in between 31-45 years, 22 percent were in between 46-55 years, 12 percent were in between 56-65 years and another 12 percent were above 65 years old. Variation of the age among the respondents presented variations, in some of their thinking processes also. For instance, only a few senior citizens were aware of the terms like Scheduled Tribes, OBC etc. The few female respondents who were above 65 years did not have basic ideas about those terms. On the other hand, 26 and 28 percent of the respondents, viewed these terms as the key to uplift their socio-economic status. 22 percent of the respondents stand between the senior citizen's lack of awareness and needs of the younger respondents. It can be said that with the variation of ages the views and perceptions of the respondents also varied.

Table 4.3

Level of Education of the respondents

Education	Male	Female	Total	Total Percentage
Never been to school	4	6	10	20
Primary	12	3	15	30
Secondary	17	4	21	42
Graduate	2	2	4	8
Post Graduate	-	-	-	-

Professional	-	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-
Total	35	15	50	100

Table 4.3 represents the level of education of the respondents. It was found that 20 percent of the total respondents including both male and female have never been to schools, 30 percent of them got primary education, 42 percent of the respondents were secondary pass outs as well dropouts and remaining 8 percent were graduated from different colleges. From the survey, it was found that the very few respondents were graduated. During the survey, it was found that not the single Thamis in Sikkim have opted for higher education. The educational level of Thamis in Sikkim is very low.

Table 4.4

Occupation of the respondents

Occupation	Male	Female	Total	Total Percentage
Student	4	-	4	8
Farmer	-	-	-	-
Labour	15	-	15	30
Govt. Sector	7	-	7	14
Private Sector	2	3	5	10
Business	-	-	-	-
Unemployed	2	1	3	6
Housewife	-	10	10	20
Others	5	1	6	12
Total	35	15	50	100

Table 4.4 illustrates the occupation of the total number of the respondents. From the secondary sources, it was found that land is the main source of income and farming is their major occupation. But during the field survey, farming was not found as the sole source of income and occupation as the majority of the respondents were found to be engaged in the different occupation. 30 percent of the total respondents were labourers, who are mostly masons and carpenters. 20 percent of the total respondents

were housewives. During the survey, 30 percent of the male members or the head of the family were not present in the houses. In that case, the female members of the house were interviewed. Those female respondents claimed themselves as housewives. Although housewives do not earn any income, but to do work day and night for the house and family also require equal labour. Thus, the occupation of housewives can be considered as one of the occupations, wherein, the female does work without any income. Only 20 percent of female respondents were employed and that too under the private sectors. 14 percent of the total respondents are working as the government employ. But it was noticed that not a single female was engaged in government jobs. Moreover, 10 percent of the respondents including both male and female were engaged in private sectors. 12 percent of the respondents were engaged in the activities driving, cooking etc. 8 percent of them were students and 6 percent were unemployed.

Table 4.5

Annual Income of the respondents

Income	Male	Female	Total	Total Percentage
Less than 5000	-	-	-	-
5000-20,000	7	2	9	18
20,001-35,000	8	6	14	28
35,001-50,000	16	7	23	46
50,001-65,000	2	-	2	4
Above 65,001	2	-	2	4
Total	35	15	50	100

Table 4.5 shows the annual income of the respondents. Out of total respondents, 46 percent of respondents including both male and female said that their annual household income falls in between 35,001-50,000. The female respondents who claim themselves as housewives calculated their husband's income or income of the earning member in order to calculate the annual income. 28 percent of them were earning 20,001-35,000, 18 percent are earning in between 5000-20,000, 4 percent are 50,001-65,000 and another 4 percent are earning above 65,001. This shows that majority of the total respondents are earning average annual income. It was observed that the respondents earning average income are engaged in the occupation like labour,

driving, private sectors, cooking etc. The respondents earning above 65,001 were basically government employ.

Table 4.6

Religion of the Respondents

Religion	Male	Female	Total	Total Percentage
Hindu	12	6	18	36
Muslim	-	-	-	-
Buddhist	3	1	4	8
Christian	1	-	1	2
Others	19	8	27	54
Total	35	15	50	100

Table 4.6 shows the religion of the respondents. It shows 36 percent of the respondents said that they are Hindus, 8 percent of them were Buddhists and 2 percent were Christians. Remaining 50 percent of the respondents mentioned that they worship Mother Nature in 'Bhume Thaan' and their practice of worship is different from other religion. Those respondents were aware of their ancestor's culture and would want to follow it. They said in the official documents they have to mention that they are Hindus as they do not find any specific names for the other religion. Those respondents who said that they are Hindus followed Hinduism, but they also said that they practice their ancestor's rites and rituals. It was observed that respondents were seemed to be confused regarding their religion, as they cannot clearly express in one word how they worship Mother Nature. Further, the respondents who said they are Christians have converted their religion. The respondents who said that they are Buddhists follow Buddhism. They believe that the ancestors of Thamis also followed Buddhism.

Table 4.7

Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Male	Female	Total	Total Percentage
Married	29	9	38	76
Unmarried	6	4	10	20
Widow/Widower/Divorced	-	2	2	4
Total	35	15	50	100

Out of the total respondents, 76 percent were married including both male and female, 20 percent were unmarried and 4 percent were widows. Most of the unmarried respondents were students and those who said they were never interested in marriages.

Table 4.8

Thami sub-clans found during the Survey

Male Clans	Female Clans
Chitrey Akangmi	Altasiri
Harba Akangmi	Yantesiri
Khurpey Akangmi	Gyaba
Pentedale Akangmi	-
Roimidati	-
Thororeshmi	-
Sebirehmi	-

Table 4.8 shows the sub-clans of Thami which were found in East Sikkim. The female respondents did not remember their mother's sub-clan, so they mentioned the sub-clan of their husbands. Altasiri, Yantesiri and Gyaba were the only appropriate sub-clans found among the women, while male clans like Chitrey Akangmi, Harba Akangmi, Khurpey Akangmi, Pentedale Akangmi, Roimidati, Thororeshmi, Sebirehmi etc. were found.

Ethnicity and language of Thami Ethnic Group

- 62 percent of the total respondents said they know the mythological stories and their deities. They believe Thami ethnic group are the descent of Yaapatichuku and Sonariaaji. They seemed to be aware of the oratory history of Thami and recitation of Guruappa. The belief system of Thami is rooted in their innocent nature to please Mother Nature in their distinct practices. They mentioned the names of some of their deities like Bhume dewa, Bara dewa etc. It was found that their deities protect them from the evil and bring prosperity to the family. Whereas, the 38 percent of the respondent did not have any knowledge on Thami ethnicity. The Thami family wherein, the inter-caste marriage is common are found to be fall under 38 percent of the respondents. Due to inter-caste marriages, they are influenced by cross-culture of both the mother and the father. They said their parents never mentioned anything about the Thami ethnicity.

- Language is the indispensable means of communication, through which human being expresses their ideas framed inside the mind. Thami language which is known as Thangmi-Wakhekham is considered as one of the extinct language (Turin: 1998). During the survey, 82 percent of the respondents mentioned their awareness regarding Thangmi-Wakhekham. But it was also noticeable that, they could not speak more than few sentences in Thami language. Some of the common sentences used by Thami ethnic group in Sikkim are "*iisaa chagnang*? (Do you want to have rice?), *pepele maaho hara longsaa* (I do not have money, now what should I do?) and *kuta henshaa*? (Where are you going?). These were the common sentences spoken by them, in their day to day activities. They also said if Thami people do not speak Thami language, then who will speak their language? They agreed that they do not have much idea of Thami language and could speak only a few sentences. But they were seemed to be very conscious about the protection and preservation of their language. They said if any institutions would have taught them Thami language, then each of them would have been able to speak Thami Language fluently. Moreover, remaining 18 percent of the respondents did not seem to be aware of their own language. They said, their parents

communicated in Nepali language and not in any other languages. They mentioned they were never taught anything about the Thangmi-Wakhekham.

- Almost all the respondents mentioned that the intercaste marriages in Thami ethnic group have grown common, but they also pinpoint few reasons behind its growth. The elderly respondents said the reason behind the intercaste marriages is due to less population because it becomes difficult to find the perfect match for the bride or the groom. On the other hand, the young respondents are of the opinion that the reason for intercaste marriage is love. They said when two people fall in love with each other; caste and community do not matter rather the love between the two people is counted essential. It seems that the younger respondents really had broad views with regard to intercaste marriages. But unavoidable fact is also that, if the population is less, the choices to choose the bride or grooms from the same community also remains less.

Identity and identity politics of Thami Ethnic Group

- 80 percent of the respondents consisting of both Sikkimese and Non-Sikkimese identify them, as the member of the distinct ethnic group. They prefer to identify them on the basis of their distinct culture, language etc. For them, to identify as Thami especially by their ethnonym Thangmi is both the psychological and political need. Psychological need because over the years they have faced several questions on their identity. They mentioned, because of misrecognition and absence of historical discourses they often experience identity crisis. They do not want to be identified as the sub-clan of the other ethnic groups; rather they want to be identified for what they really are. It is also their political need because they want recognition and preservation of their ethnicity at both Central and the State lists. 10 percent of the respondents identified as Indian, 6 percent of them identified them as Sikkimese and 4 percent of them identified them as a human with a spiritual conscience. It seemed that the questions of identity did not even bother these 20 percent of respondents.

- 90 percent of the respondents said, because of disorientation, misrecognition and absence of recognition they experienced an identity crisis. Less number of

the population was also found as one of the reasons for an identity crisis. Thami ethnic group in Sikkim, especially the COI holders are very less in number, essentially because of less population they have to struggle for their ethnic identity. Among the Sikkimese Thami, only a few said they never felt identity crisis, but the majority of them expressed their grievances for identity crisis. Although it was observed that the feeling of identity crisis among the respondents is not severe, but it disseminated the seeds of inferiority in the society of majority.

- The respondents mentioned that in June 2000, the Government of Sikkim after analysing their standard of living recognised them as the Most Backward Classes. Later in 2002, they were also recognised as Other Backward Classes at both Central and the State lists. But they fervently want to be recognised as the Scheduled Tribes in the State as well as in the Central lists. 100 percent of the total respondents expressed their wish to be recognised as Scheduled Tribes, as it could help them to preserve and promote their ethnic identity.

- During the survey, it was found that they are the members of Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh i.e. Thami ethnic association in Sikkim. But only 67 percent of them are found active in association's activities, while 33 percent of them hold some grievances towards the association. The 33 percent of the respondents did not utter any words against the association, but their denial for not participating in association's activities seemed to be suspicious. Moreover, 67 percent of them mentioned that few office bearers consistently remains absent from the association's meetings.

- 67 percent of them mentioned that they participate in every meeting organised. They said that with the help association they can be able to participate in the cultural programmes organised by the Government of Sikkim. They said, in the meetings, they participate in discussions and debate and in cultural programmes of the State they perform their cultural dance forms in their own music. 33 percent of the respondent said, that they do not participate in the meeting organised by the association. They mentioned that they are not properly informed about such meetings and programmes.

- All the respondents had their names enlisted in the voter's list of Sikkim have the right to vote. 100 percent of the respondent, participate in the election as

the voters. But it was found that none of them has ever contested the election as a candidate. It was observed from the given answers that, due to less population they cannot form majority vote banks in the elections. They mentioned that the political parties while giving tickets to a candidate also give preference to the vote banks. No doubt, the large number of population forms a large number of vote bank.

- 100 percent of the respondents attain the meetings organised by the political parties in their localities. 40 percent of them participate in the meeting and listen what others are saying. Whereas, 60 of respondents expresses their views and also give suggestions in the meetings. The respondents said, they even raise the questions in the meetings with regard to the development of drainage, water tanks etc. in their locality.

Demand of the Thami Ethnic Group for Scheduled Tribe Status

- 80 percent of the total respondents were aware regarding the demand for ST status. They were aware because of their involvement in some of the activities. As per the notification from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs India, many officers demanded the documentary on the ethnic groups in Sikkim. They were documenting the culture, tradition, dress, songs in their own languages, cuisine etc. In this type of the activities, some of the respondents have already participated. This is the genuine reason for their awareness regarding the demand. But 20 percent of the respondents were not seemed to be aware regarding their demand. Most of them were the old respondents, especially the old women respondents were not seemed to have any idea on their demand for Scheduled Tribe Status.

- Those 80 percent of the respondents have some knowledge of Scheduled Tribe status. But they could not properly explain its meaning and concepts. For the respondents, Scheduled Tribe status precisely means socio-economic upliftment through the reservations. It was observed that one of the important reasons for demanding Scheduled Tribe status is to improve their present socio-economic status. The young respondents were even saying that Scheduled Tribe status would also provide facilities in the educational field.

Office Bearers of Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh

Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh came into existence in 1994. It was founded with the ardent initiative of D.B. Thami, Purna Thami, Sanjay Thami, Bijay Thami and Sheela Thami Dahal. The total number of the office bearers is six which consisted of President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Advisor and Coordinator. General Secretary and Coordinator were female and remaining four was male. The office bearer plays a significant role in any association. It can be said that they are the guiding light to the people in the darkness. Interview with office bearers was an important part of the survey. Especially, in order to understand and observe their role in community development. Following views were observed in the field while interviewing them:

- Thami ethnic association since its establishment, are working for the fulfillment of the demand for Scheduled Tribe status. The office bearers mentioned that the association is in collaboration with Darjeeling Thami Welfare Association is consistently working for political recognition and representation. They said the association often calls the meetings with all the members. Especially, when the Thami ethnic group needs to represent their culture in the cultural activities organised by the Government of Sikkim. They mentioned that the members most often do not attain the meeting and they miss some important information and later they complain about not making them aware. But they also mentioned, some of the office bearers themselves remain absent from important programmes and meetings.

- The office bearers are demanding Scheduled Tribe since they found the provision in Other Backward Classes is not sufficient to improve their socio-economic upliftment. They mentioned that most of the members are engaged in labour work and their children are studying in various government institutions. They expressed ST status will bring good fortune for them. Besides, they also mentioned that they can be able to improve their distorted confidence by learning their own language. This could also help them to preserve and promote their ethnic identity.

- They mentioned that the marginalisation, socio-economic backwardness etc. are the most important reason for demanding Scheduled Tribe status.

Although they are approaching both the governments for the fulfillment of their demand, it was found that the government often sends back their reports for the revision. They mentioned that the discourses which misrecognised Thami ethnic group are the main reason for the revision of their submitted report. They showed their grief on such discourses which said, the Thami ethnic group in Sikkim do not have ethnicity and do not have any languages. They claim that such statement made by the scholars is a hindrance towards their demand. But such statement even raises questions about the very existence of Thami ethnic group, consequently leading to lack of confidence to identify them on their original traits.

- Association is placing the demand in front of the government and provides general information to the common people. It was found that eleven communities who are demanding Scheduled Tribe status in Sikkim including Thamis have formed a group viz. Eleven Indigenous and Ethnic Communities of Sikkim (EIECOS). This group has been working for making eleven communities. Thami associations also submitted a report and met the Tribal Affairs Minister in December 2017. But among all, few reports were returned for revisions. The report submitted by Thamis was also returned for the revision. The advisor who went to Delhi for submission of the report mentioned that misrecognition of them in scholar's writings is the hindrance. They have also submitted some of their reports to the State Social Welfare Departments.

- The office bearers mentioned that sometimes the members behave positively but sometimes they just do not cooperate. They try their best to mobilise and motivate the members to be active and participate in the meetings organised by the association. They said the role of youth is necessary for any association. Although they consider youth wing as important, but they mentioned that the association do not have any youth wings. They mentioned response of the present Government towards the demand of Thamis is very positive.

Observations on identity politics of Thami ethnic group and their demand for Scheduled Tribe status

- During the survey, it was observed that Thami ethnic group in Sikkim, have the basic knowledge of their ethnicity and language. The respondents were adamantly curious to understand their ethnicity. Although the respondents named some of their deities like Bhume Dewa, Bara Dewa, etc., but in their houses the pictures of the Hindu and few Buddhists God and Goddesses were visible. The process of acculturation has influenced Thami ethnic group in such a way, that they are practicing rites and rituals of popular religions. However, during the survey respondents also mentioned, that the Bhume Thaan is under construction in Aritar. Accordingly, the survey was conducted in Aritar, wherein, the construction of Bhume Thaan was found incomplete. The observable fact behind this was the lack of cooperation and coordination, between the members as well as between the office bearers. They celebrate the festivals like Dasera, Diwali etc. but they also celebrate their few festivals.

- The essence of language and its preservation was not unknown to the Thami ethnic group in Sikkim. It was observed, that they could speak few sentences in Thami language and they express their wish to speak in Thami language fluently. The greatest grief of them was they want to preserve and protect their language, but they do not know where they should start.

- Identity is really a complex and multifaceted term because it changes according to different circumstances. The variation in the meaning and concept of identity changed from one respondent to the other. Thami ethnic group in Sikkim who holds the Certificate of Identification claims, that they are the subjects of Sikkim. But the Thami who do not hold Certificate of Identification has to prove their identity again and again.

- For the 80 percent of the respondents which included both Sikkimese and Non-Sikkimese Thami, the identity is something which bestow them appropriate recognition without being misrecognised. The questions on identity became the sensitive issues, because the respondents were emotional and nervous while answering the questions. For them to be recognised as Thami was the prior concern. It was observed that the concept of identity and identity crisis usually emerged when the respondents have to give answers to

77

the questions like "who are Thamis?" Others may ask this question knowing or unknowingly or out of curiosity. There is nothing wrong in answering such questions, but the frequently ask questions to the same individual leaves a scar of an identity crisis. The frequently asked questions out of curiosity can even displease them or damage the confidence of an individual forever. Therefore, eagerness to protect and preserve their distinct identity became tenacious emotions for them. On the other hand, the questions on identity befuddled 20 percent of the respondents, because the questions on identity did bother them.

- Thamis in Sikkim are less in number and cannot form the majority group to support particular political parties to form the government. It was observed that the less population is one of the major the drawbacks of Thami, for not participating in the election as a candidate. But the vote banks cannot be always made on the basis of particular communities. Sometimes people him or herself have to form vote banks. This is because it is unpredictable to predict the mind-set of each individual within a particular community also. Besides, sometimes others people belonging to other community people can also become vote banks. All this indirectly indicates Weber's charismatic leadership, because vote banks do not always depend on the quantity of the population but also on the charismatic leadership of a person. The respondent's reason behind not contesting in the election due to less population is valid to as well as invalid to some extent.

- The ethnic association has an essential role to play for the upliftment of the people. In Sikkim, Thami ethnic associations also have an essential role to play. The association was found active in the process of recognising Thami ethnic group as Scheduled Tribes. But the common complaint of the respondents, with regard to the association was the lack of coordination and cooperation between the office bearers. They mentioned, the President of the association remains absent from most of the meetings.

- Although they are demanding ST status, the respondents were not aware of the basic criteria. Only a few respondents said that the basic criteria for Scheduled Tribe status include the distinctive culture, language, geographical isolation etc. It was observed that those few respondents are in constant contact, with the office bearers of the Akhil Thami Sangh in Sikkim. It was observed from

the respondent's answers that Thamis are demanding Scheduled Tribe Status in Sikkim since the1990s. But till now, they are not included in the list for ST status. The basic reason explained by the respondents was that there is the lack of coordination and cooperation between the members, less population with sparse settlement etc. In fact, it was clearly observed during the interview with the office bearer it. Only few office bearers were to be active and adamant towards their goal. It was observed that the office bearers are the representative of Thami ethnic group in the society and governmental affairs and they are also responsible to the common members of the association. It was found that the association is playing a vital role to motivate the people and manipulate their grievances before the government.

Conclusion

In Sikkim, there are total eleven communities who are demanding Scheduled Tribe status. Among them, Thami ethnic group are also demanding ST status. First, they were included in MBC in 2000 followed by central lists of OBC in 2002. But soon after their inclusion in the lists of OBCs, they started demanding ST status. The main reason for demanding ST status was found to be their marginalised socio-economic status and their endangered ethnicity. The secondary data on Thami's socio-economic status in Sikkim showed their deplorable standard of living. In order to find out the possible results of their deplorable standard of living, the field survey was conducted in the East Sikkim. It was found that they are experiencing identity crisis due misrecognition and for this reason, they adamantly want to protect and preserve their ethnic identity.

It was found that the literacy rate of them does not exceed above the higher education. They are found to be engaged in the private sectors more than the governmental sectors. Many of them were labourers, drivers, etc. but none of them was found to be the farmers. Moreover, the annual income of the respondents was found to be average, which would help them to earn their livelihood; but it is also found that the average level of income is not sufficient to afford, the higher education in the renowned institutions etc.

They have been placing their demand for ST status in front of both the State and the Central Government. Accordingly, various reports have been submitted to fulfill their demands. But most often their report is sent back for the revision. The discourses which misrecognised Thami ethnic group and which ignored their ethnicity and language were found to be, one of the important hindrance towards their on the demand of ST status.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The identity politics is the common phenomena in the multi-ethnic society. Sikkim, being a multicultural and multi-ethnic State, has witnessed ethnic identity politics in various dimensions. It basically represents the demand of the ethnic group to be listed in the Most Backward Classes or the Other Backward Classes or the Scheduled Tribe Status etc. Identity politics in Sikkim means politics of recognition of ethnic groups and politics of reservation. The ethnic groups, who are demanding Scheduled Tribe status, precisely have a perception, that it will help them in socio-economic and political development. The purpose of the study was to understand, the theoretical perspectives of identity politics in general and identity politics in Sikkim in particular. Furthermore, the purpose of the present study was also to analyse the socio-economic and political status of Thami ethnic group in Sikkim and the reason behind their demand for the Scheduled Tribe status. To fulfill the objectives of the study, the ethnographic field survey was conducted in the East Sikkim.

Summary of the Study

The concept of identity has been defined and discussed by various scholars. It is understood as something to which a person has without being aware of it. It considered as a slippery term because it often changes its dimension from one individual to the other or from one place to another. Identity is also considered as a self-constructed term, because it is first constructed in the mind and it develops with the interaction of the self with the social world. Identity politics is nothing but the process of identification, which involves political activities. It is also considered as the driving force of the democracy. However, the identity politics based on ethnicity is a common phenomenon in the multi-lingual and multicultural States. It was found that the ethnic identity politics can also change the political scenario of the country. The consequent effect of the ethnic identity politics definitely helps the subordinated groups to develop their socio-economic status, but it often involves conflict and violence.

The identity politics in Sikkim is rooted in the arena of the tribal facilities. The policy of reservations for the Scheduled Tribes attracts a number of ethnic groups. It is already mentioned that the Nepali population in Sikkim is identified on the two racial backgrounds, i.e. the Aryans and the Mongoloids. But the racial identification of the Nepali population in Sikkim can be understood in the Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) soft version of identity. This is because the racial identification in Sikkim has never turned into a destructive situation. In Sikkim, ethnic identity politics can be considered as the driving force of democratic movements. Its political history shows, how the demand made by ethnic groups and their political activities helped to form the new government. Besides, the interests of the ethnic group directly or indirectly influenced the governmental activities. It can be said that the ethnic identity politics bring a motion in the static politics of Sikkim. From the theoretical discussions, it was found, that there are total eleven communities viz. Bhujel, Dewan, Gurung, Jogi, Khas, Mangar, Mukhia, Newar, Rai, Sanyasi and Thami are demanding Scheduled Tribe status. The Government of Sikkim constituted the committee in the name of Eleven Ethnic Indigenous Community of Sikkim (EIECOS), to prepare the community wise report for the demand of Scheduled Tribe status.

Major Findings

The major findings of the study are based on the data collected from the ethnographic field study. Following are the major findings of the study:

- **Identity politics in Sikkim**: In the light of theoretical understanding, the identity politics in Sikkim can be understood in terms of the demands of ethnic groups. It appears as the driving force of the entire political system because it brings a motion in the State's politics. Among the eleven ethnic groups, it was found that Thami ethnic group is also demanding Scheduled Tribe status since the late 1990s.

- **The Socio-Economic and Political status of Thami Ethnic Group**: As already mentioned that the total population of Thami in Sikkim is comparatively less. It was found that the literacy rate of Thami ethnic group is quite low because 75 percent of the respondents were found to be either secondary pass outs or dropouts. Only 25 percent of the respondents were

found to be graduated from the residential colleges. It can be said that the literacy rate of Thami in Sikkim is not satisfactory. The land was considered as the main source of income of Thami in Sikkim. But during the survey, 60 percent of the respondents were found to be engaged in the occupation like labour, mason, driving, cooking, private sectors etc. It was also found that they earn average total annual income, which is not found to be sufficient for all their basic needs. It was found that due to the low level of income, they could not afford higher education in the renowned institutions and the low qualification does not even help them to earn a high income. It can be said the socio-economic status of Thami in Sikkim revolves around the vicious cycle of poverty. The vicious circle of poverty is the theory advocated by Nurkse (cited in Bauer, 1965). The basic theme of the theory is that a country is poor because it is poor. This means the poor country cannot make high investments in the production, so low investment leads to low productivity. Similarly, for Thami ethnic group vicious circle of poverty appeared as the quantity of investment in the basic necessities and its resultant effects in their standard of living. Among the total respondents, only 40 percent were found to be engaged in the governmental sectors. However, the political status of Thami in Sikkim was found satisfied, in the terms of their political participation as a voter in the election. But in the contrary, political participation of Thami was found to be dissatisfying, as they have never contest any election. Less population was found as the major drawbacks for them to contest in the election as a candidate.

- **The reason behind the demand of Thami Ethnic Group for Scheduled Tribe status**: In Sikkim, the absence of literary discourses and the murkiness of the oratory history of the Thami ethnic group appeared as the main reason, for the politics of recognition. It was also found, that the shaman who was supposed to narrate the sacred chanting somewhere fails to represent their culture properly. It is due to the fact, that nowadays a common people with knowledge of animism could become a shaman in Thami ethnic group, consequently leading to a crisis of spiritual head. Moreover, it was also found that the Thami ethnicity demands blood and sacrifices of the animals and birds, but most of them nowadays do not prefer sacrifices of the birds and the animals. They believe that taking the life of innocent animals and birds do not

make their deity happy, rather it imbalances the ecosystem. It subsequently had an impact on their rituals and rites. That is how the process of acculturation and modernity has infiltrated their thinking process. During the ethnographic field survey, it was found that the Thami ethnic group in Sikkim is very much aware of their ethnicity and language. Although they are influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, most of them still uphold their ancestor's culture. They could not speak Thangmi-Wakhekham fluently, but the unavoidable fact is that they could speak few sentences in Thangmi-Wakhekham. Turin (1998) has already remarked Thangmi-Wakhekham as one of the extinct languages and if not done anything to preserve it, then soon it will cease to exist. This may further deteriorate their identity by making it more complex.

Suggestions

Firstly, the Thami ethnic group in Sikkim should be aware of the issues related to their vanishing ethnicity. The Thami language which is considered as one of the extinct languages can be saved, only if they start to give preference to it. The Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh should take an initiative to organise capacity building programmes on the ethnicity and language. They should encourage the common members of the association to promote, their language by speaking in it. The people belonging to Thami ethnic group should also give their attention, on the rites and rituals performed by their ancestors.

Secondly, the literacy rate of Thami ethnic group is found to be dissatisfying, so they should focus on the literacy rate and must opt for the higher education. The higher education would definitely provide them with an opportunity to earn a high level of income, which would ultimately end their vicious circle of poverty i.e. low investment leads to low productivity. They should also be provided with the facilities of reservations, for the upliftment of their socio-economic status. Furthermore, they should also take the initiative to participate in the election as the candidate.

Thirdly, the Government of Sikkim should take initiative to preserve and protect the endangered ethnicity and language of Thami ethnic group. They should help them by providing reservation in educations, jobs etc. They should also be declared as an

endangered minority ethnic group in Sikkim as well as in India. The Government of Sikkim can also take initiative to teach Thangmi language in the institutions. Moreover, they should also be provided with certain facilities in terms of their political participation as a candidate.

Lastly, The Government of Sikkim should consider the distinct features of Thami ethnic group and recommend the Central Government to recognise Thami as STs. By doing so, the Government of Sikkim somehow helps them for socio-economic and political development.

Conclusions

The study addresses the ethnic identity politics in Sikkim and the demand of the Thamis for ST status. For the fulfillment of the objective, the conceptual framework of the identity and identity politics has been thoroughly discussed and in the light of that conceptual framework, ethnic identity politics in Sikkim has been discussed. In Sikkim, the ethnic identity politics was found to be the driving force of the political system, which brings a motion in it. At present, there are eleven communities who are demanding ST status in Sikkim.

Thami ethnic group are also among those eleven communities within Nepali population, who are also demanding Scheduled Tribe status. Throughout the historical and scholarly discourses, their original identity was disoriented and misrecognised. But now they want to be recognised as Scheduled Tribe. Although the Constitution of India does not define the term tribes and Scheduled Tribes, it was found that the basic criteria for the ST status are the distinct and unique culture, language, demographic size, regional adaptation etc. (Xaxa, 2005:1364). It was found that on the basis of these criteria 500 tribes were included in ST status after the independence.

The Thami ethnic group is placing their demand for ST as soon as they found out the provision of OBC does help them for socio-economic upliftment. However, misrecognition of them in the historical and scholarly discourses was found to be the reason that they are not yet included in ST category. It was also found that the main reason for demanding ST status is misrecognition and marginalisation. It can be said that the demand of Thami for ST status, precisely represent their hope for the

preservation of their ethnic identity as well as socio-economic and political development.

ENDNOTES

Chapter I: Introduction

[1]Sangha: In Sikkim The word sangha refers to the all the monks

[2]Thangmi-Wakhekham: It is a Tibeto-Burman Language, spoken by Thami ethnic group, see, Newar Thangmi Lexicon Correspondences by Mark Turin, 1998 and The Thangmi Verbal Agreement System and the Kiranti Connection by Mark Turin, 1998).

[3]Muluki Ain: It is referred to national Civil Code in Nepal. It confirmed the location of various communities residing in Nepal in hierarchical categories, see, Communities in search of Identities in Sikkim by A. C. Sinha, 2007.

[4]Bhumya, Dolakha Bhimsen, Bisa, Gosai, Chirkun dewa, Bahara Dewa: These are the names of the deities in Thangmi-Wakhekham, see, History, Culture and customs of Sikkim' by J. R. Subba 2008 and 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[5]Samaj: The Samaj is a Nepali word which refers to an organisation or association formed by the people for the welfare of the society.

Chapter II: Dynamics of Identity Politics: A Conceptual Framework

[6]Mtha: The word 'mtha' means frontier or the border in Tibetan etymology, see, 'Faith Healers' by Casper J. Miller, 1979.

[7]Mi: The word 'mi' means people in Thami-Wakhekham, see, 'Faith Healers' by Casper J. Miller, 1979.

Chapter III: Socio-Economic and Political Status of the Thami Ethnic Group in Sikkim

[8]Guruappa: The Thangmi shaman is popularly known as Guruappa, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[9]Palokhe: Palokhe is considered as the sacred narratives of Thami's which is recited by the Thangmi shaman. It includes mythic stories, spiritual wisdom and basic elementary idea about their ancestors, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[10]Kiranti: In Vedic or Indo-Aryan literature the Kiratis are denoted as dehumanise wild man. Whereas, the word Kiranti is derived from the two words, Kira meaning lion and ti meaning people or it is known as people with lion's nature, see, 'Politics of Culture: A Study of Three Kirata Communities in the Eastern Himalayas' by T. B. Subba, 1999.

[11]Simanghar: The oratory history of Thami ethnic group addresses Simanghar as the original inhabitant, see, 'Faith Healers' by Casper J. Miller, 1979.

[12]Lichabi: Lichabi rulers are those who ruled Nepal in the beginning of fourth or fifth century A.D, see, Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar, (2008).

[13]Tamrapatra: Tamrapatra means copper plate inscription, see, 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar, 2008.

[14]Sishnu: The English name of Sishnu is stinging nettle, Utrica dioica, see, 'Nepali-Thami-English' by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, 2004.

[15]Nyakadangre: Nyakadangre is the Thami name of Sishnu which is known as is stinging nettle, see, 'Nepali-Thami-English' by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, 2004.

[16]Suna, taka suna, bothoro suna: These are the names of few wild medicinal plants found in the Eastern Himalayas, see, 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[17]Tong: Tong is popularly known as Jad in Nepali language. It is nothing but the beer made of millet or rice, see, 'Nepali-Thami-English' by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, (2004).

[18]Udreng: Udreng means titepati in Nepali and bitter aim yam (Dioscorea bulbifera) in english, see, 'Nepali-Thami-English' by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, 2004.

[19]Uvauli Pudusa: Uvauli has been generally referred to the festivals of Thamis ethnic group which falls between April and May, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015 and 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar, 2008.

[20]Baishake Poornima: The full moon night of in the spring, it falls especially in the month of April and May, see, 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar, 2008.

[21]Pudasa: Pudasa is the holy ceremony to make offerings to the deities of the Thami ethnic group.

[22]Taakee: The taakee means one-sided drum played by the Thangmi Shaman. It is known as Dhangro in Nepali language, see, 'Nepali-Thami-English' by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, 2004.

[23]Baldane flower: Baldane flower is popularly known as totala's flower in Nepali language which is the species of tree, Oroxylum Indicum'Nepali-Thami-English' by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, 2004 and 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[24]Puchui: Puchuis are made of grinded wheat and it looks like triangle shaped pyramid. It resembles their deities during the holy performances, see, 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[25]Aachheta: Aachheta is nothing but collected raw rice for holy rituals, see, 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[26]Bhume Thaan: Bhume Thaan is the sacred place of Thami ethnic group where they worship Bhume. Bhume Thaan consists of five big stones which resemblance their deities, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015 and by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, 2004 and 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[27]Mangsir: The mangsir is the Nepali months which falls in between the mid-November to mid-December, see, 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar, 2008.

[28]Udhauli Bhume pudusa: It is the festivals of Thami ethnic group when they perform rites and rituals to their deities, see, 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar, 2008 and 'History, Culture and customs of Sikkim' by J. R. Subba 2008.

[29]Gosai dewa: Gosai dewa is one of the deity of the animals, see, History, Culture and customs of Sikkim' by J. R. Subba 2008 and 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[30]Chirkun Dewa: Chirkun dewa is considered as the deity of the birds, see, History, Culture and customs of Sikkim' by J. R. Subba 2008 and 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016.

[31]Bhimsen Dewa: Deity Bhimsen is related to the Malla king who ordered Thami couple to worship Bhimsen, see, 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016 and 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar.

[32]Bisa Dewa: Bisa dewa is regarded as the deity, who protects the family from illness, 'Thami: An Extinct Tribe' in the Report prepared by the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh, 2016 and 'History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim' by J. R. Subba 2008.

[33]Bara Dewa: Bara dewa is consists of twelve deities who are worshipped to protect them from evils and for the prosperity of the house.

[34]Ukuchhhuku and Betiaaji: The names of the couple, other than the Yaapatichuku and Sonariaaji, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[35]shreepechare, ramandaman, khamba kapane and tankit: The names of the Thangmi sub-clans, see, 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar.

[36]Akangmi: The word Akangmi means needle wood tree, which is popularly known as Chilaune in Nepali language, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[37]Akal: Akal means a flowering tree Machilus Odoratissima, which is popularly known as Chiplo Kaulo in Nepali langauge, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[38]Kangpole: Kyangpole means the trunk of the needle wood tree or Schima Wallichii, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[39]Areng: Areng means an oak tree Lithocarpulus Elegans, which is popularly known as Arkhaulo in Nepali language, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[40]Dumla: Dumla means common Ficus Hookeri, which is popularly known as Nebaro in Nepali language, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[41]Danguri: Danguri means to search, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[42]Mosanthali: Mosanthali means the place of spirit or the land of cremation, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[43]Budati: Budati means leaf plate in Thagmi-Wakhekham, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[44]Chaltasiri: Chaltasiri or Dryopteris Cochleata is popularly known Unyu in Nepali language which means, edible fern shoots, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[45]Altasiri: Altasiri means Rhododendron, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[46]Yantesiri: Yantesiri is the sub-clan for women, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[47]Khatusiri: Khatusiri the female sub-clan, which means backstrap handloom, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[48]Khasasiri: It means ladder, see, 'Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India' by Sara Shneiderman, 2015.

[49]Maanee: It is the monuments built over the deceased's ashes, etc. see, 'Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report' by Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki Magar, 2008.

[50]Baram: It is also known as Brahmu, see, 'Nepali-Thami-English' by Mark Turin and Bir Bahadur Thami, 2004.

[51]Parcha: Parcha means the land registration in his or her name in Sikkim, Socio-Economic Census, 2006.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akhtar, Qurratulain (2006). *Literacy and Economic Development*. Retrieved from
https://qurratulain.wordpress.com/2006/08/26/literacy-and-economic-
development.

Anspach, R. R. (1979). From Stigma to Identity Politics: Political Activism Among
The Physically Disabled and Former Mental Patients. *Social Science and
Medicine*, 13A: 765-73.

Arora, Vibha (2006). Roots and the Route of Secularism in Sikkim. *Economic and
Political Weekly*, 41(38).

Baker, E. H. 2014. Socioeconomic Status, Definition. *The Wiley Blackwell
Encyclopaedia of Health, Illness, Behaviour and Society*, 2210–2214.
Retrieved fromhttp://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/book/10.1002/9781118410868.

Barth, Fredrik (1969). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Boston: Little Brown and
Company.

Bauer,P. T.(1965). The Vicious Circle of Poverty. Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv,
95:4-20

Bernstein Mary, (2005). Identity Politics. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 3:47-74.

Bhutia, Zigmee Wongchuk (2014). Bhutia Tribe in Sikkim: A Sociological Study.
International Journal of Innovative Research and Development, 3(11):322-
326.

Beteille, Andre (1997). The Definition of Tribe. In Thapar Romesh*, Tribe, Caste and
Religion in India*. Meerut: Macmillan.

Bhandari, B. and Nepal, Dukhnath (2013). *Sikkimese Nepalese*. Gangtok: Himalayan
Gaurdian.

Bhattacharya, P. (1984). *Aspect of Cultural History of Sikkim*. New Delhi: Bagchi and
Company.

Bramha, Abilas (2013). *The Ethnic Identity Movement in North East India*.
Guhati: Vicky Publication.

Bista, D. B. (1972). *The People of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.

Bista, D. B. (2011). *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's Struggle for Modernization*.
Kolkata: Orient Blackswan.

Britt L. and Heise D. (2000). From Shame to Pride in Identity Politics. In S. Stryker, T. J. Owens and R.W. White, *Self-Identity and Social Movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press 252-68.

Brown, W. (1995). *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Brubaker, Rogers and Cooper, Frederick (2000). Beyond Identity. *Theory and Society*, 29:1-47. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publisher.

Buechler, Steven M. (1995). New Social Movement Theories. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36(3):441-464.

Burman, B.K. Roy (2008). *Executive Report of the Commission for Review of Social And Environmental Sector Policies, Plans and Programmes*. Report submitted to Government of Sikkim.

Chandra, Bipin and et. al (2000). India after Independence. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Chandra, Pratyush, (2002). Linguistic-Communal Politics and Class Conflict in India. In Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, *Fighting Identities Race, Religion and Ethnic-Nationalism*. India: Bagchi and Company.

Chandra, Kanchan (2006). What is Ethnic Identity and does it Matter? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9:397-424.

Chhetri, Durga Prasad (2013). Tribal Population and Development Policies in the Himalayan State of Sikkim: A Critical Analysis. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2: 08-18.

Chitnis, Suma (1997). Definition of the term Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes: A Crisis of Ambivalence. In Pai Pananadiker (ed), *The Politics of Backwardness: Reservation Policy in India*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

Chopra, Pran (1997). An Overview. In Pai Pananadiker (ed), *The Politics of Backwardness: Reservation Policy in India*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

Conge, Patrick J. (1988). The Concept of Political Participation: Toward a Definition *Comparative Politics*, 20(2):241-249.

Deth, Jan W. Van (2016). What is Political Participation? *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Politics*, Retrieved from http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-68.

Erikson, Erik H. (1995). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Erikson, Erik H. (1970). Autobiographic Notes on the Identity Crisis. *Daedalus*, 99(4):730-759.

Esman, Milton J. (2004). *An Introduction to Ethnic Conflict*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Freud, Sigmund (2010).*The Ego and the Id*. USA: Pacific Publishing Studio.

Friedrich, Paul (1962). *Language and Politics in India*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Gamson, J. (1995). Must identity movements self-destruct? A queer dilemma. *Social Problems*, 42(3):390-407.

Ghurye, G. S. (1963). *The Scheduled Tribes*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

Gitlin, T. (1995). *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by CultureWars*. New York: Metropolitan.

Gobo, Giampietro (2008). *Doing Ethnography*. London: Sage publication.

Gupta, Dipankar (1997). Ethnicity and Politics. In Sudipta Kaviraj (eds), *Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Gurung, Kumar Suresh (2011). *Sikkim: Ethnicity and Political Dynamics*. New Delhi: KunalBooks Publishers.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd (2005). The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past. *The Journal of American History*, 91(4).

Hale, Henry E. (2004). Explaining Ethnicity. *Comparative Political Studies*, 37 (4): 458–485.

Hangen, Susan (2000). *The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Nepal: Democracy in the Margins*. London: Routledge.

Hangen, Susan and Lawoti, Mahendra (2013). Introduction: National and Ethnic Conflict in Nepal. In Susan Hangen and Mahendra Lawoti, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nepal: Identities and Mobilisation after 1990*. New York: Routledge.

Hirchman, Charles (2004). The Origins and Demise of the Concept Race. *Population And Developmemt. Review*, 30(3):385-415.

Honneth, Axel [Translated by Anderson Joel], (1995). *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press Cambridge.

Horowitz, Donald L. (1984). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. California: University of California Press.

Hutchinson, John and Anthony D. Smith (1996), *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hutt, Michael (2009). Where is Home for Indian Nepali Writer? In T.B Subba, A.C Sinha, G.S Nepal and D.R Nepal (ed), *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Jenkins, Richard (2008). *Social Identities*. Oxon: Routledge (simultaneously published in Canada and U.S.A).

Kasfir, Nelson (1979). Explaining Ethnic Political Participation. World Politics, 31:365-388.

Kauffman, L. A. (1990). The Anti-Politics of Identity. *Socialist Review*, 90(1):67-80.

Kothari, Rajni (2010). *Caste in Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswam.

Knelman, Fred H. (2000). Commentary: Kosovo: A Retrospective. *Peace Research*, 32(2):48-52.

Lama, M. P. (2001). *Sikkim Human Development Report, Government of Sikkim*. New Delhi: Esha Beilla.

Law, Ian (2008). Ethnicity. In William A Darity, *International Encyclopaedia of the SocialSciences*. Detroit: Gale language learning.

Leach, Colin Wayne, Brown Lisa M. and Worden, Ross E. (1999). Ethnicity and Identity Politics. In Lester Kurtz, *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*. California: Academic Press.

Lemarchand, Rene (2002). A History of Genocide in Rawanda (Reviewed Works: WhenVictims Becomes Killer: Colonialism, Nationalism and Genocide in Rwanda byMamdani Manmood). *African History*, 43(2):307-311.

Lichterman, P. (1999). Talking Identity in the Public Sphere: Broad Visions and Small Spaces in Identity Politics. *Theory and Society*, 28(1):101-41.

Macha, Zdzigslaw (2007). Constructing Identities in a Post-Communist Society: Ethnic, National and European. In Deborah Fahy Bryceson, Judith Okely and Jonathan Webber, *Identity and Networks; Fashioning Gender and Ethnicity Across Cultures*. New York: Oxford.

Maclure, Joseph 2003. The Politics of Recognition at an Impasse? Identity Politics And Democratic Citizenship. *Canadian Political Science Association*, 36(1):3-21.

Magar, Chitra Bahadur Budhathoki (2008). *Case Study of Ethnic Identity and Socioeconomic Condition of Thami in Dolakha District: Final Report*. Submitted to Janjati Social and Economic Empowerment Project (JANSEEP) Funded by European Union through CARE/Nepal.

Majumder, Amita, Mjumdar Krishne, and Chakrabarty Snigdah, (1995). Patterns of Inter-And Intra-Regional Inequality: A Socio-Economic Approach. *Social Indicators Research*, 34(3).

Marshall, Gordon (1998). *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marrus, Michael R. (1987). The History of the Holocaust: A survey of Recent Literature. The *Journal of Modern History*, 59(1):114-160.

Mclean, Lain and Mcmillan, Alistair (2003). *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*. NewYork: Oxford University Press.

Meznaric, S. (1993). The rapists' progress: ethnicity, gender and violence. *Rev. Social*, 24(3-4):119-29

Miller, Casper J. (1979). *Faith Healers in the Himalayas*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Centre For Nepal and Asian Studies.

Morris, Aldon S. (1999). A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement: Political andIntellectual Landmark. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25:517-539.

Mukhopadhyay, Amal Kumar (1977). *Political Sociology*. Kolkata: K. K. Bagchi and Company.

Munshi, S. (1979). Tribal absorption and Sanskritisation in Hindu society. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 13(2):293–317. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/006996677901300206.

Mulgan, Richard (1990). Aristotle and the Value of Political Participation. *Political Theory*, 18, (2):195-215.

Narroll, R. (1964). Ethnic Unit Classification. *Current Anthropology*, 5 (4):283-312.

Newbury, David (1998). Understanding Genocide. *African Studies Review*, 41(1): 73-97.

Ohlan, Ramphul (2013). Pattern of Regional Disparities in Socio-economic Development in India: District Level Analysis. *Social Indicators Research*, 114 (3).

Onta, Pratoush (2014). Expansion of the Public Sphere amidst Market Challenges: Janjati Magazines in Nepal in 1990s. In Marrine Carrine, Paralay Kanungo and Gerard Toffin, *The Politics of Ethnicity: In India, Nepal and China*. Delhi: Primus Books.

Parker, Richard (2005). Five Theses on Identity Politics. *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 29(1):53-59.

Prakash, Shri (1997). Reservations Policy of Other Backward Classes: Problems and Perspectives. In Pai Pananadiker (ed), *The Politics of Backwardness: Reservation Policy in India*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

Pingle Visha and Vasrshey Ashutosh (2006). India's Identity Politics: Then and Now, Managing Globalisation. David A. Kelly, Ramkrishna S. Rajan and Gillian H. L. Goh, *Managing Globalisation: Lesson from China and India*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd. Retrieved from https://doi.or/10.1142/9789812774729.

Rai, Sona (2013). People, Society and Culture. In Kharel Sunita and Bhutia Wangchuk Jigmi, *Gazetteer of Sikkim: Government of Sikkim*. Gangtok: Home Department Government of Sikkim.

Reilly, Karen O. (2009). *Key Concepts in Ethnography*. London: Sage Publication.

Report (2016). *Thami: An Extinct Tribe*. Gangtok: A Report Submitted by Akhil Sikkim Thami to Social Welfare Department of Sikkim.

Report (2017). *Human Ecology and Statutory Status of Ethnic Entities in Sikkim*. Department of Information and Public Relations. Gangtok: Government of Sikkim.

Rodrigues, Valerian (2002). *The Essential Writing of B.R. Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Roopak, M.Sai (2011). *Veda Pushpanjali*. Bangalore: Sri Satya Sai Research Centre.

Ross, J. A. (1982). Urban Development and the Politics of Ethnicity: A Conceptual Approach. Ethnic Racial Study. 5(4):440-56.

Savarkar, V. D. (2007). Who is Hindu? In Jaffrelot (ed), *Hindu Nationalism*. Jersey: Princeton University.

Scott, James (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance*. NewYork: Yale University Press.

Scott, Susie (2015). *Navigating Identity: Symbolic Interactionist Approaches to Social Identity*. Cambridge; Polity Press.

Sen, Amartya (2006). *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Sen, Amartya (1999). *Development as Freedom*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Shah, Ghanshyam (2001). Dalit Poltics. In Ghanshyam Shah*, Dalit Identity Politics: Cultural Subordination and Dalit Challenge*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Shah, Ghanshyam (2001). Dalit Movements and the Search for Identity. In Ghanshyam Shah, *Dalit Politics: Cultural Subordination and Dalit Challenge*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Sharma, Khemraj (2000). *The Himalayan Tea Plantation Workers*. Assam: N.L. Publishers.

Shri, Prakash (1997). Reservations Policy for Other Backward Classes: Problem and Perspectives. In Pai Pananadiker (ed), *The Politics of Backwardness: Reservation Policy in Indi*a. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

Singh, Mahendra P. (2010). *V.N. Shukla's Constitution of India*. Delhi: Eastern Book Company.

Simpson, J. A. and Weiner, E. S. (1989). *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sinha, A. C. (1975). *Politics of Sikkim: A Sociological Study*. New Delhi: Thompson Press.

Sinha, A. C. (2004). The Politics of Identity Formation in Sikkim. *Dialogue* , 10(4):124-136.

Sinha, A. C. (2007). Communities in search of Identities in Sikkim. In B.B. Kumar (ed), *Problems of Ethnicity in the North East India*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing House.

Sinha, A. C. (2008). *Sikkim: Feudal and Democratic*. New Delhi: Indus Publishing House.

Sinha, A. C. (2017). State Politics and Political Participation in Sikkim. In Himanshu Roy, M. P. Singh and A. P. S. Chouhan (ed), *State Politics in India* (703-726). Delhi: Primus Books.

Shneiderman, Sara (2009). Ethnic (P)reservations: Comparing Thangmi Ethnic Activism in Nepal and India. In Gellner David N., *Ethnic Activism and Civil Societies in South Asia*, 115-141. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Shneiderman, Sara (2015). *Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal And India*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Shneiderman, Sara and Turin, Mark (2006). Revisiting Ethnography, Recognition A Forgotten People: The Thangmi of Nepal and India. *Mandala Book Point Journal*, 11 (1):54-58.

Smith, Anthony D. (1991). *National Identity*. London: Penguin.

Smith, Charlotte Seymour (1986). *Palgrave Dictionary of Anthropology*. New York: Macmillan Press.

Spencer, Stephen (2014). *Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity and Representation*. New York: Routledge.

Srinivas, M. N. (1991). Varna and Caste. In Dipanker Gupta, *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

State Socio Economic Census (2006). Department of Economics, Statics, Monitoring AndEvaluation, Government of Sikkim.

Stone, John (2003). Max Weber on Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism. In John Stone AndRoutledge Dennis, *Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches*. UK: Blackwell Publishing House.

Storr, Juliette (2010). Identity Politics. In Ronald L. Jackson and Michael A. Hogg, *Encyclopaedia of Identity*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Subba, J. R. (2008). *History, culture and customs of Sikkim*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Subba, J. R. (2009). *Mythology of the people of Sikkim*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

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

Subba, T. B. (2013). Making Sikkim More Inclusive: An Insider's View of the Role of Committees and Commissions. In K. Nielsen, M. Fibiger, and U. Skoda (Eds.), *Navigating Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary India and Beyond: Structures, Agents, Practices (135-148)*. London: Anthem Press.

Sundaram, K (2003). On Identification of Households below Poverty Line in BPL Census 2002: Some Comments on the Proposed Methodology. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38 (9):896-901.

Taylor, Charles (1994). The Politics of Recognition. In Amy Gutmann, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition (25-73)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Thami, Basant (2003). *Niko Bachinte*. Siliguri: Sivakoti Printing Press.

Thami, Sova (2013). *Thangmi Conversation*. Darjeeling: Systematic Computerised Offset.

Thatal, Naina (2015). *Dynamics of Identity Politics in Sikkim: A Case Study of Old Settlers In Sikkim*. Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, Sikkim.

Touraine, Alain (1981). *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turin, Mark (1998). Newar Thangmi Lexicon Correspondences. In George Van Driem, *Himalayan Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.

Turin, Mark (1998). The Thangmi Verbal Agreement System and the Kiranti Connection.*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, 61 (3):476-491.

Turin, Mark and Thami, Bir Bahadur (2004). *Nepali- Thami- English Dictionary*. Martin Chowthari and Samajik Wikas Kendra. Kathmandu: Nepal.

Ulbig, Stacy G. and Funk Carolyn L. (1999). Conflict Avoidance and Political Participation.*Political Behaviour*, 21(3):265-282.

Uprety, M. (2013). Physical Aspect. In Kharel Sunita and Bhutia Wangchuk Jigmi, *Gazetteer of Sikkim: Government of Sikkim*. Gangtok: Home Department Government of Sikkim.

Vaid, U. (1995). *Virtual Equality: The Main streaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*. NewYork: Anchor.

Verkuyten, Maykel (2014). *Identity and Cultural diversity: What Social Psychology CanTeaches*. U.S.A: Routledge.

Walker, Melanie and Unterhatter, Elaine (2007). Capability Approach: It's Potential Work in Education. In Melanie Walker and Elaine Unterhatter, *Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Social Justice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Xaxa, Virginius (2003). Tribes in India. In Das Heena's, *The Oxford India Companion To Sociology and Social Anthropology*. New Delhi: Oxford University.

Xaxa, Virginius (1999). Tribes as Indigenous People of India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(51):3589-3595.

Xaxa, Virginius (2005). Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribes in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 40(13):1363-1370.

*****

APPENDIX

Survey Schedule

On

Identity Politics in Sikkim: A Study on the Demand of Thamis for Scheduled Tribe Status

For all the respondents

1) Name:
2) Sub Clan:
3) Address:
4) Sex: Male/ Female/ Transgender:
5) Age:

Age	Male	Female
18-30		
31-45		
46-55		
56-65		
Above 65		

6) Education:

Education	Male	Female
Never been to school		
Primary		
Secondary		
Graduate		
Post Graduate		
Professional		
Others		

7) Occupation:

Occupation	Male	Female
Student		
Farmer		
Labour		
Govt. Sector		
Private Sector		
Business		
Unemployed		
Housewife		
Others		

8) Income:

Income	Male	Female
Less than 5000		
5000-20,000		
20,001-35,000		
35,001-50,000		
50,001-65,000		
Above 65,001		

9) Religion:

Religion	Male	Female
Hindu		
Muslim		
Buddhist		
Christian		
Others		

10) Marital Status:

Marital Status	Male	Female
Married		
Unmarried		
Widow/Widower/Divorced		

Thami ethnicity and language in Sikkim (Only for the common people belonging to Thami ethnic group)

1) Do you know the mythological stories of Thami? Yes/ No.
2) If yes, can you please share mythological stories of Thami/ if no, can you explain the reason why you do not know mythological stories of Thami?
3) Do you believe in Thami deities? Please specify the reason behind your answer.
4) Do you follow rites and rituals practiced by Thami's ancestors? Please illustrate the reason.
5) What are the festivals celebrated by Thamis in Sikkim? Can you please mention some of the festivals?
6) Do speak Thangmi-Wakhekham in your house? Yes/ No.
7) If yes, how and with whom you speak Thangmi-Wakhekham/ if no, what is the reason that you do not speak Thangmi-Wakhekham?
8) Is it compulsory to speak in Thangmi-Wakhekham? Please illustrate your views.
9) Does Thami practice inter-caste marriages?
10) If yes, then how and why do you practice inter-caste marriages/ if no, then why you do not practice inter-caste marriages?

Thami identity and identity politics in Sikkim

1) How do Thami in Sikkim identify them? Please explain.
2) Do ever feel or experience identity crisis for identifying yourself as Thami in Sikkim? Yes/ No.
3) If yes, then how and when did you feel identity crisis?
4) How does the Government of Sikkim have recognised Thami ethnic group? Please explain the reason.

5) How do you want to be recognised? Please specify.

6) Are you a member of Thami ethnic organisation in Sikkim? If yes, since when?

7) Is that ethnic organisation active? Please illustrate your views.

8) How do you participate in its activities?

9) Do you participate in election? Yes/ No.

10) If yes, how do you participate?

11) Have you ever contest in election as a candidate? Yes/ No.

12) If yes, what was the result of the election?

13) Do you attain political meetings in your localities? Yes/ No.

14) If yes, do you contribute and express your opinion in that particular meeting/ If no, then why you don't participate in such meetings?

Thami's demand for Scheduled Tribe Status

1) Do you have any idea about the Scheduled Tribes? Please share your ideas.

2) Since when Thamis are demanding Scheduled Tribe Status?

3) According to you what can be the reason behind demanding Scheduled Tribe Status?

4) Does Thami fulfil all the criteria to be enlisted in the lists of Scheduled Tribe? Please explain.

5) What could be the possible reason for not enlisting Thami in Scheduled Tribe Status till today?

6) What is the role of the Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh?

Only for the office bearers of Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh

1) What is your designation in the association?

2) What is your role within particular designation? Please explain.

3) How many times an association calls the meetings?

4) Since when does Thamis are demanding Scheduled Tribe Status?

5) What could be the possible reason for the demand of Thamis in Scheduled Tribe Status? Please specify.

6) Why the Thamis are not satisfied with their inclusion in OBC? Please explain the reason.

7) How do Akhil Sikkim Thami Sangh playing its role for the fulfilment of the demand?

8) What is the response and behaviour of the common members in the association?

9) How to mobilize and motive the members for their participation in association's activities?

10) Do you think that the role of youth remains essential in any association? Please explain the reason why the role of youth is essential?

11) How does it motivates and encourage youth for their participation?

12) What is the response and behaviours of the Government towards the demand placed by the Thami?

*****