

# **Locating Food in the Cultural History of Sikkim: A Study of Fermented Drinks**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted To**

**Sikkim University**



**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for award  
of the Degree of Master of Philosophy**

**By**

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### DECLARATION

I, **Ram Sharma**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled "**Locating Food in the Cultural History of Sikkim: A Study of Fermented Drinks**", submitted to Sikkim University for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is my original work and it has not been submitted earlier to this or any other University for any degree.

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### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "**Locating Food in the Cultural History of Sikkim: A Study of Fermented Drinks**" submitted to the Sikkim University for the partial fulfillment of the degree of **Masters of Philosophy** in Department of History, embodied the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Mr. Ram Sharma** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted earlier to this or any other university for any Degree, Diploma, Association and Fellowship.

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

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

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#### **"Locating Food in the Cultural History of Sikkim: A Study of Fermented Drinks"**

Submitted by Ram Sharma under the supervision of Dr. Veenu Pant, Associate Professor, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University.

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## **CONTENTS**

### **Acknowledgement**

### **CHAPTER I: Introduction 01-20**

1.1: Statements of Problems

1.2: Review of Literature

1.3: Objective of Study

1.4: Research Methodology

1.5: Chapterisation

### **CHAPTER 2: Historical Background of Fermented Drinks among the Different Matwalis and Non-Matwalis Communities of Sikkim 21-37**

2.1: Introduction of Sikkim

2.2: Important Communities of Sikkim that consumed fermented foods and drinks beverages.

2.3: Origin of Curd and Dahi.

2.4: Origin of Che in Lepchas based on folktales.

### **Chapter 3: Different Types of Fermented Food & Drinks and their historicity and Socio-Cultural Use since Antiquity 38-66**

3.1: About Milk and its fermented Products

3.2: Cereal – based fermented foods and drinks

3.3: Fermented items made from vegetables

3.4: Fruit Wine.

3.5: Different types of crops cultivated in Sikkim which are used for fermenting foods and beverages in Sikkim.

**Chapter 4: Use of fermented Drinks and Beverages in different religious Occasions and festivals among the Matwalis and Non-Matwalis Communities of Sikkim** **67-85**

4.1: Festivals and Importance of Drinks among Different Communities in Sikkim

4.2: Domestic Ritual and Importance of Fermented Drinks and Beverages

4.3: Marriages and Importance of Fermented Drinks and Beverages

4.4: Death Ritual of Matwalis and Non Matwalis Communities of Sikkim

**Conclusion** **86-88**

**Bibliography** **89-93**

**Glossary** **94-95**



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The term fermentation is derived from the Latin word *fermentum* that stands for boiling. Fermentation is the process of digesting certain substances that leads to the chemical conversion of organic substances into simpler compounds. The process of fermentation was probably discovered by observing the changes in the juices of several fruits and other substances that had been kept for a day or more. It appears that fermentation techniques started with settled agricultural practices during the Neolithic period. Archaeological evidence shows that this art was developed early as 6000 years ago in the valley of *Tigris*, *Nile*, *Indus*, and other civilizations. Even in the Harappan site, Mandi Hassan found distillation pot clay. Max Muller dated as 3000 BC; the pre-Aryan hill tribes fermented Mahua flowers.<sup>1</sup> The Rig Veda (1500 BC) mentions the use of *Soma* and *Sura* which was used for medicinal preparation. Above 60 Tamil names were found in Sangam literature which suggests the brewing of liquor in South India. In the post-Vedic period, *Kautilya*'s Arthashastra (321 -150 BC) discusses alcoholic beverages made from fruits e.g., *Medaka*, *Prasana*, *Avasa*, *Arista*, and *Madhu*.<sup>2</sup> Arthashastra gives recipes for several fermented drinks including those whose ingredients are rice, sugarcane juice, grapes, and various species. *Atharva Veda* and *Kanda 5th* and 8th of the *Paippalaa Samhita* contain two *Suktas* dealing entirely with the preparation and effect of *Sura*.<sup>3</sup> Butter is one of the important fermented milk products and it is also mention in Old

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<sup>1</sup> Nand Lal Singh, Ram Prasad, P.K. Mishra, S.K Sukla, "Alcohol fermentation techniques in early Indian tradition", *Indian Journal of history of science*, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid .p.,168.

<sup>3</sup> Marianne S.Oort, "Sura in the Samhita Paippalada Samhita" *American Oriental Society, Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.122, 2019, p.355.

Testament.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, cheese is the oldest food of human beings and it is one of the prominent diets of Greek and Roman about 2500 years ago and history of cheese is referred in Old Testament. It is said that cheese is made accidentally in the stomachs of animals carrying milk.<sup>5</sup> The Fermented drinks were culturally and socially accepted for consumption, entertainment, customary practices, and religious purpose.

Sikkim is one of the smallest states of India. The population of Sikkim is comprised of various ethnic groups like Bhutias, Lepchas, and Nepalis. These ethnic groups are divided into two categories i.e *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis*. *Matwalis* Communities are those Communities that are Non-Vegetarian and prefer to consume fermented alcoholic beverages in their diet and cultural functions. Secondly, the *Non-Matwalis* Communities are those Communities who are Vegetarian and prefer to consume Non-alcoholic fermented products.<sup>6</sup> But now a day we observed that many *Non-Matwalis* Communities are also consuming alcoholic fermented products. The economy of Sikkim is based on agriculture and animal husbandry.<sup>7</sup> They cultivate different crops and vegetables like wheat, barley, millet, rice, etc.<sup>8</sup> These crops are used to make fermented products like *Jaar*, *Rakshi*. Similarly from the milk, they make ferment products like *Dahi*, *Mohi*, *Chhurpi*, *Panner*, etc<sup>9</sup>. The origin of the fermented product in Sikkim is based on accidental discoveries, as depicted in oral history, the knowledge of which was then transmitted from one generation to another. The fermented product is used on every occasion by the people of Sikkim. The people of

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<sup>4</sup> Sukumar De, *Outlines of Dairy Technology*, Manzar Khan, Oxford University Press YMCA Library Building, New Delhi 110001, 2003, p.143.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.p.225.

<sup>6</sup> A.C.Sinha & T.B.Subba, *The Nepalis in Northeast India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2007, p.36.

<sup>7</sup> B.Bhattacharya, *Sikkim Land & Peoples*, Omsons Publications T-7, Rajouri Garden New Delhi-110027, 1997, p.89.

<sup>8</sup> J.R Subba, *Crops of Sikkim*, Organic Sikkim, Sikkim YakhthumMundhumSaplappa(SYMS), 2014, pp.68-115.

<sup>9</sup> Ranjita Rai, J.P.Tamang, "Naturally Fermented Milk Product Of the Eastern Himalayan", *Ethnic Food*, p .274.

Sikkim also grow fruits like orange, guava, pineapple, banana, etc. which is used to make fermented fruits wine. *Marcha* is one of the important ingredients which are used to make fermented products. A similar product like *Marcha* is known by different names in different countries of the world.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Every food has its history. Therefore, Fermented foods and alcoholic beverages have their history or antiquity. Fermented foods and beverages have been consumed during time immemorial. The art of fermentation originated in the Indian Sub-Continent (Prajapati and Nair 2003). The earliest evidence of use of fermented drinks in India is said to be used in the Rig Vedic age which is known as *Sura*. The traditional method of preparing fermented foods and beverages has been passed from mothers to daughters and fathers to sons through the traditional knowledge of elders which include grandmothers/ grandfathers/mothers/fathers/ village elders etc.

Sikkim is a unique blend of different religions, customs, and traditions of different communities. It is the center of a rich diversity of cultures. The communities which dominate Sikkim are ethnic Nepali [*Bahun, Chettri, Sanyashi, Giri, Magar, Tamang, Pradhan, /Newar, Rai, Limboo, Gurung, Bhujel, Dewan, Sunwar, Khagatey, Sherpa, Damai, Sarki, Maji*], *Lepcha, Bhutia*)(Tamang,2010). There are various types of fermented foods and beverages which are consumed by the people of Sikkim like *Gundruk, Sinki, Khalpi*, fermented bamboo shoots like *Mesu(Tama ko achar)* fermented soya bean foods like *Kinema*, fermented milk products *Dahi,Mohi,Gheu*, Soft *churpi, Chhu*, Hard *churpi, Dudhchurpi, Somar, Philu*, fermented cereals

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<sup>10</sup>Brigadier Kuldeep Singh Gulia, *Human Ecology Of Sikkim*, Kalpaz Publication Delhi, 2005, p.197.

like *Selroti*, fermented meat products like *SukakoMasu*, *Satchu*, *Sidra*, *Kargyong*, fermented fish products *Sidra*, *Sukako Macha*, fermented alcoholic beverage starter *Marcha* and fermented beverages like *Kodo Ko jaar*, *Makai ko jaar*, *Bhaatijaar*, *Gahoon ko Jaar*, *Simal Tarul ko jaar*. Fermented alcoholic beverages are consumed in Sikkim by Non-Brahmins who are known as *Matwalis* and it is not consumed by the Brahmin Nepali who is known as *Non-Matawalis* or Bahun, Chettri.

The origin of the fermented product in Sikkim is based on accidental discoveries which developed into oral tradition, to be transmitted from one generation to another in the form of stories based on folklores among both *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* communities of Sikkim. The fermented drinks are used on every occasion and function among the *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* communities of Sikkim from birth to death.

The main purpose of the study of Ethnic Fermented drinks and Beverages of Sikkim is to study the historicity of fermented beverages, that what are the various factors which lead the start of the fermentation process among the various communities of Sikkim. Socio-cultural aspects of those fermented beverages, the religious significance of fermented drinks and beverages (how religion plays an important role in the consumption of fermented drinks and beverages), and also how fermented drinks and beverages are used in religious functions like *Dussehra*, *Diwali*, *Christmas*, *Lochar*. Every food and beverage has its history, how they get the idea of preservation, and it also has an associated religious practice or belief and cultural value. The main reason for this study is to document the old food culture of our people and historicity of those foods which has started to vanish with the old people. There is much information about Sikkim's political history however; regarding the cultural history or cultural aspects of Sikkim, there is a lack of information or

documentation especially of ethnic fermented foods and beverages, their historicity, cultural and religious, medicinal aspects. There are no recorded documents that contain information on the communities of Sikkim who consume fermented foods and drinks as there is the only documentation of some tribes. Though there is documentation on culinary practices and methods used for the preparation of those fermented foods and beverages of Sikkim, there is a lack of information on those fermented foods and beverages historicity, cultural, religious, and medicinal aspects. There is no documentation on taboos of those fermented foods and beverages among the different people as each food and food taboos have its history.

Food is an integral part of every culture. It is not only a means of subsistence for life but also a product of social traditions, religious beliefs, cultural identities, and even a reflection of influences. Every community in this world has a distinct and unparalleled dietary culture with rituals and history, through which the ancient foods have been developed and modified into the present food habits (Tamang and Samule 2010). What we eat is an expression of what we are and our cultural and personal identities are closely associated with our meal table. Food Culture is often a geo-social aspect of human life as much as it is an expression of socio-cultural choices made over long years by a community of people. What we eat, what we wear, where we live are all associated with conscious decisions made by our ancestors in past and they are a part of our history as much as the political events that shaped the land. The use of locally available material may be a geographical necessity but how to use it is certainly related to the cultural practices of the people who are using it and a study of food history would reflect upon the cultural choices and influences of the society.

North East India is home to diverse tribal communities and thus diverse food cultures. Fermentation of available agro-resources including plants and animals into edible



food products and beverages is very common and widely practiced in the Himalayan regions of India (Tamang, 2010). All of these fermented food articles are region/ tribe specific and have a socio-cultural identity as well as a preparation method. Every state and tribal community has a different way of producing fermented food and the process of preparing fermented food is a part of their historical heritage. The traditional knowledge of fermentation will give us an insight into their knowledge of survival under harsh conditions thrown up by the ecosystem, their idea of traditional medicine, their knowledge of resource management.

The study proposes to look into the diversities of traditional practices in the preparation of ethnic fermented drinks and beverages of Sikkim amongst its tribes and communities and also to trace the historicity of the practices.

The main research questions in the proposed research work are “How fermented drink and beverages are produced and consumed among various communities and cultural groups in Sikkim over the ages traditionally? Has the process changed over time? And what similarities or differences exist among articles produced in different regions/ by different communities?”

## **1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The book, *Ecology of Sikkim* by **K.S Gulia** mentions the alcoholic beverages such as *Jaar* and *Rakshi* are used for worshipping gods and goddesses. Fermented beverages are commonly used by Non-Brahmins, Nepalis, Bhutias, and Lepchas during marriage ceremonies. It had mentioned that *Marcha* is used for fermenting food beverages and alcoholic beverages. They are round in shape. The weight and size of *Marcha* vary. The *Marcha* is known by different names like *khesung* in Limbu, *Bopkha* or *Khabel* in Rai, *Phabin* in Bhutia, *Buth* or *Thanbum* in Lepcha. The

book it had also discussed fermented foods like *Kinema*, *Gundruk*, *Sinki* as well as milk-based fermented food like *Dai*, *Mohi*, *Chuppri*, etc. However, this book fails to give a concrete history of any of the fermented alcoholic beverages.

Jash Raj Subba in his book **Organic Sikkim-Technology for Change** mentioned different local wheat which was cultivated before 1975 such as *Kalo gahun*, *Setogahun*, *Murulegahu*, etc. It is reported that barley has been originated from Asia and Ethiopia. Sikkim also cultivates barley for consumption as well as for making liquor. Millet is being abundantly found in the Himalayan regions like Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan, etc. The writer has pointed that all these crops have a mythological origin however; he fails to mention how the origin took place. J.R. Subba highlights that leafy mustard is used to make *gundruk* by fermenting which is used as a vegetable in off-seasons at various villages in Sikkim.

**The Splendor of Sikkim- Cultures and Tradition of the Ethenic Communities of Sikkim-** which is published by the **Cultural Affairs and Heritage department government of Sikkim**. The book mentions the culture and tradition of the ethnic communities of Sikkim like Bhutia, Lepchas, and Nepali. It also talks about the local drinks like *Swechhang* and *Arrak* (wine) prepared from rice, millet, fruits, etc., by the Bhutia communities. Reference has also been made to *Che*, a kind of beverage prepared from millet or rice and considered as a favorite drink of Lepcha. Nepali communities like Bahun consumed fermented milk products, Bhujels communities also drink homemade liquor prepared from millet, maize, rice, roots, and *tuber*. It is believed that among the Nepali communities, Chettris are not supposed to consume alcoholic beverages according to their traditions but they consume occasionally. The Limboo communities prepare beverages through millet. The Mangers calls the fermented drink *Haan* which is made from millet, maize, wheat, and rice. Rai

communities also enjoyed homemade beverages and liquor. Sherpa community also consumed fermented alcoholic beverages. *Thami* community also drinks alcohol. But the book failed to mention detailed information for the use of fermented products of all communities.

The book *Lepcha Folklore and Folk Songs* by **Lyansong Tamsang** highlight that *Che* is the traditional beverages drinks of the Lepcha community. *Che* is known with various names by Lepchas people like “Num Feng Moo”, *Chhet Chhyooko*, meaning power, energy, force, strength, potency, etc. They use *Che* right from birth to death because they consider it an important drink. It is also used during the Marriage, Burial, and death ceremony which they offered to the departed soul. The *Che* is offered to the Guardian deities of the Lepchas, Mount Kanchenjunga, and to *Itboo-Deboo Rum*, creator, god, and goddess as well as to the guardian spirit. This *Che* is also used in different ceremonies of the Lepchas communities like *Lee Rum Fat*, *Chu Rum Fat*, *Sakyoo Rum Fat*, *Lyang Rum Fat*, *TungrongHlo Rum Fat*, *Muk Zek Ding Fum Fat*, *Pok Sat*, *Sunfkyyo fat*, etc. The origin of *Che* is based on myth stories that mentioned different deities played a major role in the creation of *Che* on the earth. It suggests that *Che* can be used as medicine if we consume it in a limited manner; however excessive use of it can also lead to the negative impact such as quarrel, lose of health, wealth, and respect in the society. The book failed to mention that how the *Che* is used as a medicinal value among the Lepchas community.

The book, *Himalayan Village an Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim* by **Geoffrey Gorer** describes the Lepchas of North Sikkim. It mainly focuses on the Lepchas of *Dzongu* valley and adjoining areas. In the book, it has been mentioned that fermented food and drinks are used and consumed on all ceremonial occasions of Lepchas. The book also mentions that the millet is used for fermenting *Che*, but if

millet is not available then other grains are used for making *Che* again if the grain is not available then *bootley* liquor is made from the trees ferns which is very strong. *Che* is prepared in nine days however if it is kept for a longer period then it becomes much stronger than before. The book also informs about the processes of making *Che*. It further highlights the various tools required like- *copper vessel, wooden spoon, mat, baskets, pieces of cloths, fire, wood, and water, etc.* *Yeast* cakes are the important ingredients used in fermenting process. It is made through local indigenous knowledge. The work of making yeast is done by the elderly women. *Yeast* is the combination of *ginger, chili powder, leaves of plants, etc.* To make *Che* tasty yeast is an important ingredient, and the amount of the *yeast* determines the taste of *Che*. One can consume *Che* through the bamboo container which is called *Patyoot* in the Lepcha dialect. There is a belief in the Lepcha community that the *Che* acted as a medicine and it also protects from cold weather but excessive consumption of alcohol may lead to quarrels and fighting. *Arak* is made out of *Che* and it is the distilled liquor. One can identify the fermentation through its smell. The book only talked about a particular village of North Sikkim i.e. Dzongu and it fails to explain the fermented processes of other parts of Sikkim.

In the book the **Nepalis in Northeast India- A community in search of Indian Identity** by A.C Sinha and T.B Subba- According to the ethnological point, Nepalis can be categorized into three major ethnic groups. Firstly the *Kiratis* who claimed to be the earliest inhabitants like Rai, Lepchas, Tamang, Limbu, etc. having their language. They are Buddhists, Hindus, or *animists*. They are hilly people, nature lovers, and much similar to northeastern tribes of India. Secondly, the *Newars* were urban traders and businessmen, who have their scripts, art, architecture, and language. Newars reside in Kathmandu valley, eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling, and northeast

India. Thirdly, *Tagadharis*- are those Nepalis who follow the concept of purity and pollution. They settled in the western, central regions and Kathmandu valley. Based on the drinking habits the Nepalis can be divided into two major groups: The *Tagadhar is* (those who wear sacred thread) and *Matwalis* (those who are outside the follower of Hindu orthodoxy and are permitted to drink intoxicating beverages).

In the Journal of Ethnic food by **Ranjita Rai, H Nakibapher Jones Shangpliang, Joti P. Tamang-** *Naturally Fermented Milk Products of the Eastern Himalayas-* mention that agriculture and animal husbandry are the two major economic livelihoods of the northeast. They domesticated animals like goats, sheep, yaks, cows, oxen, and buffalo for meat, hair, and milk products. Fermented milk products are popular in eastern Himalayan, Nepal, and Bhutan. Like other regions, Sikkimese also produces different types of naturally fermented milk products like *Dahi, Mohi, Soft Churpi, Gheu, Somar, Chhu, Chhurpi, and Philu*. *Somar* is mostly consumed by Lepchas of Sikkim and Nepalis who are living at a high altitude. The naturally fermented milk products of Bhutia are *Dahi, Datshi, Chugo, Hipta, Mohi, and Gheu*. The naturally fermented milk products are divided into two categories based on time duration i.e., Short time fermented and long term fermented. Short term fermented products are *Mar, Chhurpi and Churkam*. *Churtang or Chharpupu* are long-term fermented products. *Dahi* is a non-alcoholic beverage fermented product of Nepal, Darjeeling hills, Sikkim, and Bhutan. *Mohi or Kachhu* is a cooling beverage consumed during hot days to overcome tiredness. *Chhuri* is mainly used to make *Cury*. The journal, mentions that yaks are commonly found in a colder region in mountains areas while cows are commonly available in lower altitudes. The cows hold an important place in Hinduism. They considered cows as sacred animals and



cows milk products play an important role in every religious and cultural ceremony of Hinduism.

**Food and Nutrition** by **Dr. Devendra Sengar** discussed various types of food that we consumed daily. It mentioned that heavy use of alcohol increases colorectal cancer, high levels led to an increase in the risk of colon cancer. These diseases are common to any age group- Parents to children. Consumptions of alcohol have both positive and negative outcomes. The moderate use or consumption of alcohol is a benefit to health. It reduces the risk of developing heart diseases and peripheral vascular diseases, reduces the person's risk of dying due to heart attack, lowers the risk of strokes particularly ischemic strokes, lowers the risk of gallstones. Excessive consumption led to serious problems in health like cancer of the pancreas, mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, liver as well as breast cancer. It also creates accidental death due to cardiovascular diseases, which also led to heart muscle damage which led to heart failure.

The book **Food and Nutrition** by **Vijay Kaushik**- This book mainly deals with different meals, generally consumed in day-to-day life i.e breakfast, mid-morning, and dinner. The author has mentioned foods like Milk, Butter, and Vegetables that help for body to grow, protection and supply energy material. It mentioned that the milk of *goats, Asses, Ewes, Mares, and Reindeer* are similar and contain the same food material but have slight differences in composition and proportions. Cow milk is benefitted to various stages of life- children, adolescents, and nursing mothers. Milk is the composition of all types of nutrients i.e fats, proteins, minerals, carbohydrates, and vitamins. The book also mentioned different milk products like cream, butter, and cheese. It mentioned that the flavors of cheese are developed through the action of the bacteria and moulds present in the *Cheese*. *Cheese* is consumed along with

carbohydrates foods like breads and biscuits. It mentioned that fermentation is one of the oldest methods of preserving and improving the components of milk. The principal types of fermented products that are mentioned in the book are *kephyr*, *koumiss* and *yoghurt*. *Koghurt* was the most common product consumed in our country. *Yoghurt* is thick curdled milk. It acts as a nourishing and refreshing food. Milk will be converted into *yoghurt* with the help of special bacteria. It is due to the formation of lactic acid from lactose. Different beverages can be produced by the process of fermentation with the help of yeasts. The important alcoholic beverages include wine of grapes, beer from malt, and cider from apples. The book also mentioned that alcohol is unable to cure any diseases or infections but it helps to increase bodily strength.

Book **Outline of Dairy Technology** by **Sukumar De**, discussed various types of milk and milk products both western and Indian. It mentioned that fermentation is possible due to microorganisms. There are many merits of fermented milk- it contains beneficial antibiotics, increases the longevity of human beings. It discussed different types of creams and Butter. References of the butter are also found in the *Old Testament*. In the past time, butter was used as an important commercial item as well as a sign of wealth. Butter is used as a direct consumption with bread, preparation of sauces, as well as a cooking medium. *Cheese* is one of the important dairy products. It is obtained by draining after the coagulation of milk with a harmless milk coagulating agent, under the influence of harmless bacterial cultures. *Cheese* is the oldest food of humankind. It was one of the prominent diets of *Greeks* and *Romans* about 2500 years ago. The history of cheese is referred to in the *Old Testament*. It is said that cheese is made accidentally in the stomachs of animals carrying milk. Until 1850 cheese was commonly made in the farmhouse. From 1860-the 80s onward factory system was

introduced throughout the world for the production of *Cheese*. *Cheese* is used as a direct consumption or in the form of sandwiches, preparation of special dishes, and preparation of the sauce. The importance of milk and milk products of India is recognized since the Vedic time. The production of varieties of dairy items is an indigenous art. Only in recent times, it is scientifically studied. The milk is used to manufacture different products. Indian curd is commonly known as *Dahi*. It is well known fermented milk product. It is consumed by a large section of people throughout the country as a daily diet or as a refreshing beverage. Milk is converted into *Dahi*. The *Dahi* act as an intermediary step for the manufacture of Indigenous Butter and *Ghee*. It is said that there are two types of *Dahi* for direct consumption i.e sweet with a pleasant flavor and a sour variety with a sharp, acidic flavor.

In *Peculiar customs and Rites of the Himalayan People* by **DD Sharma**- The book discussed a different form of marriage prevalent among the communities like- *Monogamy, Bigamy, Polygamy, Polyandry, etc.* The book discussed the communities like Sherpas, Dokpas, Rais Managers, Limboos, Bhutias, Kinauras, and Buddhist Lahulas. It discussed the roles and customs of the marriage system. It mentioned different types of marriage practices in the Himalayan region of India. This book discussed the important role of *Jaar and Rakshi* among the different communities. Marriage could not begin in the absence of *Jaar and Rakshi*. The book mainly gives focuses on customs, rules, and tradition, but it failed to provide concrete information on the food and drink culture of the Himalayan region. The book only talked about the role of *Jaar and Rakshi* in very short.

Book by **Dinesh Prasad Saklani**- *Ancient communities of the Himalayas*-  
Mentioned that the majority of people living in the Himalayan region spoke *Pahari* dialect. It mentioned that most of the records of the Himalayan region

are based in the form of folk literature and folklore. The Himalayas remained an object of mystery and awe from the Vedic time. Knowledge of the many facts is associated with the legends, folklore and colorful religious accounts, and ancient epics like Puranas and others. The history of the region is very rare and scanty. The earliest recorded of the Himalayan region are available in Vedic literature like Brahmanas and Samhitas Puranas, Upa Puranas, and Buddhist texts. Besides cow milk, the tribal peoples used to take the milk of sheep, ass, and camels. *Curd* was a common fermented product. Later with time agriculture was taken by few ethnic communities and introduced the cereals as their staple diet. They also prepared drink from various plants, flowers, and fruit by the fermentation process. Liquor was prepared by fermenting cereals like barley, paddy, and boiled rice. This was the favorite intoxicating drinks among tribal peoples. They prepare distilled liquor like *Sura* and, *Asava*. In the book, it mentioned that how they cross the hunting and food gathering and gradually reached a new stage of primitive agriculture popularly known as shift or *Jhum* cultivation. But this book failed to mention how they start to make fermented milk-based products, although they discussed the milk products.

**The Lepchas of Sikkim** by **Sumitabha Chakraborty** – in this book it mentioned that Lepchas were also known as *Rungkup*. The date of chronology and history of Lepcha are obscure and it is said that written documents and records were destroyed during the Tibetan invasion. The book provides different places in Sikkim where the majority of Lepchas lived. The Lepchas worshipped the spirit of mountains, rivers, forests, and natural surroundings. The important deities of Lepchas are *Itbu- Rum*, *Rum*, *Utbu-Debu Rum*, *Konglo*, and *Tamsang-thing*. *The Boongthing* and *Mun* perform all the religious ceremonies. The book highlights the different rituals performed by Lepchas of Sikkim. Further, it also mentioned *Che* is made from

different food grains like millet, rice, and buckwheat. But the book failed to mention the importance of *Che* while performing the rituals of the Lepchas community.

**Kumya Kumsyee Chhyo- a Lepcha Manuscript on Morals and Ethics with their English translation** published by **Indigenous Lepcha tribal association**- stated that Lepchas performed various rituals and festivals like *Chyoo rum fat*, *Lyang rum fat*, *Tungbongfaat*, *Sakyoo rum fat*, *Nyoo Thing Laom*, etc. Commonly all these festivals and rituals needed *Che*, though this book highlight the uses of the *Che* in the above festivals however, the origin of the *Che* and the date since when the *Che* became so important to these festivals are lacking in this book.

**Mayel Lyang and the Lepcha about Sikkim and Darjeeling** by **D.T Tamlong**- It mentioned that *Che* is the national drink of the Lepchas. It played an important role in culture and religion. On all occasions being from social, religious, marriage *Che* is needed. It mentioned that *Che* is a medicine that protects from the chill. It gives strength to the weak body. *Che* is the heavenly origin. It is said that two birds brought *Che* from the land of the god. There is a common belief that ferment was stealing from a woman called '*Mati Mun*'. *Che* is consumed in a bamboo container called *Pathut* in Lepcha and *Tongba* in Gorkha. It mentioned that excessive drinking of *Che* led to health problems. It also produced quarreling effects which result in murder or crime. It mentioned that one-fourth of the Lepcha population died due to *Che*. The book also mentioned various kinds of festivals where *Che* is needed like- *Nambun*, *Pang Lhabsol*, *TendongLho Rum Fat*, *Chu Rum Faat*, and *Lyang Rum faat*.

In the book, the **Festivals of the Limboo community** by J.R Subba- he mentioned that festivals are always associated with customs, religion, and rituals. According to Subba, the religious festivals of Limboo society were originated



from *Mundhum* (mythic structure or symbolic structure). It mentioned festival like *Sisekpa La Gaene Tongnam*, *Chasoktongnam Kok Phekwa* and *Ingman or Yumang*. In this book, he said that *Phdangba* played an important role in the rituals and festivals. He further mentioned that festivals are performed for the welfare and prosperity of the village. The book mentioned the old ways of performing the religious rituals but the comparative studies of the performance of religious ceremonies are not highlighted.

The book **Legends of the Lepchas folk tales from Sikkim** by **Yishey Doma**: The book is all about folk tales and stories based on myth. This book had a story that how the *Che* originated among the Lepchas community. The origin of the *Che* in Lepcha is based on the marriage between first man Fudogthing and a lady called NazongNyu. This story it had mentioned the role played by a cockroach to bring *Buth* from the old lady by using his trick. This *Buth* is the most important ingredient which helps in fermentation. There is also mention of the curse given by the old lady. The story successfully ended with the marriage between two couples.

The book **Limboo marriage** by **Bal Muringla** discussed the marriage ceremony of the Limboo community of Sikkim. The book mentioned different steps of a marriage of Limboo community like *Thiksegekpathapla* or *ek kalam*, *Netchigelepathapla* or *Dosro Kalam*, *Sum Thepla* and *Leesigekpa Thapla* or *Char Kalam*. It also explained the rules and regulations of the marriage ceremony. It further mentioned the different items needed during marriage ceremony and role of fermented *Jaar* and *Rakshi*. But this book is failed to mention the changes in food and drinks culture among the Limboo community of Sikkim.

In the book- **Sikkim Problems and Prospects of Development** by **Monas Das Gupta** mentioned that 86% of the population of Sikkim lived in rural areas. Animal's husbandry is the main economic for them. In the book, it mentioned that yaks are the native animals of Tibet. It is also said that yaks can sustain in the high altitude. The book mainly focused on North Sikkim. In the book, it mentioned that yak milk is used for direct consumption as well as for making *butter* and *Cheese*. The fermented products of yaks are in limited demand in the local markets. The book also talked of sheep rearing. Sheep rearing commonly practices in the west and north Sikkim.

In the Journal **Ethnic Foods- Indian Dietary Culture** **Prof. Jyoti Prakash Tamang** highlights different fermented foods and drinks consumed in India. In this article, he mentioned that origin of milk and milk products such as *Dahi* is mentioned in Vedas and Upanishad. According to him the preparation and consumption of *Dahi* are recorded since 2,000 BC. *Dahi* played an important role in the social and religious function of Hindus and Buddhist culture. It further explained the *Jaar* and *Rakshi* which are also fermented alcoholic beverages. These alcoholic beverages have a great value among the Non-Brahmin Nepalis and Buddhists of the Himalayan region. This article is failed to mention the use of *Dahi* and other fermented alcoholic beverages in detail.

The **Sikkim Human Development Report 2001** mentioned that Sikkimise was fond of drinking alcohol. It is said that no occasion or celebration can be complete without alcohol. According to the data survey of 1989 and 1997, it is found that there have been continuous declines in the number of consuming alcohol. In 1989 the total percentage of drinking alcohol in rural areas was 20.8 which came down to 18.19 percentages in 1997. Similarly in urban areas also there is a decline from 12.51 percentages in 1989 to 6.63 in 1997. Consumption of alcohol by the woman is

comparatively much lower than men in Sikkim. It has been mentioned that *Rakshi*, *Chhang*, and *Tongba* are cheaper in Sikkim. The book is failed to mention the reasons behind the continued decline in the consumption of alcohol in both rural as well as urban areas.

### 1.3 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the research is:

- To highlight the historical background of fermented drinks and beverages based on folk tales, community memories, stories, and experiences which was transferred from one generation to another among the *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* communities of Sikkim.
- To document different types of fermented products consumed by *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* communities of Sikkim like *Jaar*, *Rakshi*, *Marcha*, Wine made out of fruits, *Dahi*, *Mohi*, etc. and to record their historicity.
- To trace the importance of fermented drinks among the cultural customs of *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* Communities of Sikkim.
- To find out whether the process of fermentation has changed over time and what outer impact caused that change.

### 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The study proposes a methodology based on a review of written articles and books as well as on oral interviews conducted among various communities of Sikkim. The work will also depend on oral tradition like folk songs, stories, ballads, etc. Identification of traditional fermented drinks and beverages and their social

association with communities as well as interviews of local families will be an essential part of research work.

As socio-cultural practices are seldom documented in written form, the use of oral history will be extensive and it will also be helpful in the collection of ethnic memories related to food as well as several socio-cultural and political aspects related to food for posterity.

The work will also be based on primary sources which are available in documents and government files. Information will be collected from the books available in State Archives of Sikkim, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, etc.

## **1.5 CHAPTERISATION**

### **CHAPTER 1**

The first chapter will be Introduction, Statement of problem, Objectivity, and Research Methodology.

### **CHAPTER 2**

The second chapter will be the historical background of fermented drinks among the different *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* communities of Sikkim.

### **CHAPTER 3**

The third chapter will be based on different types of fermented drinks and their historicity and socio-cultural use since antiquity.

## **CHAPTER 4**

The fourth chapter will be based on the uses of fermented drinks on different occasions and functions among the *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* communities of Sikkim.

## **CHAPTER 5**

Chapter five will be the conclusion part. It will be the overall summary of the whole chapter of the thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### Historical Background of Fermented Drinks among the Different Matwalis and Non-Matwalis Communities of Sikkim

#### 2.1 Introduction of Sikkim

Sikkim is the combination of two words in Limbu *Su*, which means “New” and *Khyim*, which Means “Palace” or house. The Tibetan name for Sikkim is *Denzong*, which means the “Valley of Rice”.<sup>11</sup> Sikkim is a Mountainous state which is located in the eastern Himalayan region which has a total geographical area of 7096 sq km. Sikkim is situated between 88°00’58’’ and 88°55’25’’E Longitudes and 27°00’46’’ and 28°07’ 48’’ N Latitudes. The Sikkim lies between Tibet to the North and Northeast, Bhutan and Bengal to the South and Southeast, and Nepal to the West. Mount Kanchendzonga which is the third-largest Mountain in the world lies in Sikkim. The Singalila range is the Western border of Sikkim with Nepal and Chola range defined the eastern border and the Dongkia range passes from North to East Sikkim. Teesta and Rangeet are the two important rivers of Sikkim which are originated from Tso Lahmo, Zemu Glacier, and Rathong Glacier. The Climatic condition of Sikkim is divided into tropical, temperate, and Alpine Zones. Our state receives rainfall of 2000mm to 4000mm. Sikkim is divided into four districts i.e East Sikkim, West Sikkim, North Sikkim, and South Sikkim. Gangtok is the headquarter of East Sikkim, Gyalshing of West, Mangan of North, and Namchi of South Sikkim. The state is divided into Nine Sub-Division i.e Gangtok, Pakyong, Rongli, Soreng, Gyalshing, Rabongla, and Mangan. The state secretariat is located in Gangtok. The state has 453 revenue blocks, 180 Gram Panchayat units, 92 Zilla Panchayat wards,

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<sup>11</sup> R.S. Arha Latila Singh, *Glimpses of Sikkim*, ABD Publishers B-46, Natraj Nagar, Jaipur, 2008, p.1.

32 assembly seats including one seat for Sangha Community, and one seat each for the legislative council. The state has more than 500 religious Institutions including Monasteries, Temples, and Churches.<sup>12</sup> Sikkim is a Mountainous state in which a third of its total area is covered with forests. The dense forest mostly lies in Lachang and Lachung in North Sikkim. Nearly 2650 sq km is covered with forests lands. The forest is very rich in flora and fauna. Different species of plants are found in Sikkim like flowering plants, ferns, bamboo, Orchids, Rhododendron, etc. Nearly 37.3 Percent of the total land is covered with forest<sup>13</sup>. The first capital of Sikkim was Yuksom. In Sikkim, there are more than 5,000 flowering plants, 515 rare Orchards, 60 Primulas species, 36 rhododendron species, 11 Oaks varieties, 23 bamboo varieties, 362 types of ferns and ferns allies, and over 424 medicinal plants.<sup>14</sup>

### **Historical background of Sikkim**

Before the 15th Century, Sikkim had a very less population of Lepchas and Limboo community. Gradually Missionaries started to immigrate to Sikkim in search of new pastures. The Tibetans came in search of a rice field. During the later half of the 15th century, Bhutia patriarch named KhyeBumsa came from the Chumbi valley of Tibet and had a brotherhood treaty with the Lepchas Chief named Tho-Kung Tek. Since after that the follower of the Khe- Bumsa, and relatives settled down in Sikkim at various places in the form of traders and pastoralists. The sixth generation of KheBhumsa had a quality of leadership. A band of Tibetan lamas installed the first

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<sup>12</sup> *Sikkim the Hidden fruit Valley*, Prakash book India Pvt Ltd 1 Ansari Road Daryanganj, New Delhi-110002, India, 2008, p.40 -41

<sup>13</sup> Mahendra. P.Lama, *Sikkim Society Polity Economy Environment*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2000, p.272.

<sup>14</sup> R.S. ArhaLatila Singh, op.cit.,p.32.



Bhutia ruler in 1642A.D and these marked the beginning of the monarchy system in Sikkim.<sup>15</sup>

The ethnic pattern of Sikkim changed rapidly due to the advent of the British in Sikkim. The British needed more Nepalese labors to develop good communication with Tibet. They developed a tea plantation on the periphery of Bhutan and Sikkim and deployed more Nepalese labors. This led to further Migration of Nepalese into Bhutan and Sikkim.<sup>16</sup>

### **Economy of Sikkim**

The economy of Sikkim is based on agriculture. They practiced the traditional farming system. The important crops grown by the Sikkimese people are cardamom, Ginger, Orange, apple, tea, and Orchid. Agriculture is the backbone economy of the Sikkimese people. More than 64 percent of the Population of Sikkim depends upon agriculture and related activities.<sup>17</sup> 86 % of the population of Sikkim lived in rural areas and animal husbandry is the main source of income.<sup>18</sup> Yaks are considered the native animal of Tibet. These animals can sustain themselves in high altitudes. Yak's milk is used for consumption. From the milk of the yaks people used to make butter, *Chhurpi* which they sold in the local markets.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A.C. Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, M.L. Gidwani for Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, p.31.

<sup>16</sup> B.S Das, *The Sikkim Saga*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt, Ltd Ansari Road, New Delhi-110002, 2002, p.6.

<sup>17</sup> R.S. Arha, op.cit., p.79-89.

<sup>18</sup> Manas Das Gupta, *Sikkim Problems and Prospects of Development*, Indus Publishing Company FS-5, Tagore Garden, New Delhi 110027, 1992, p.73.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

## 2.2 Important Communities of Sikkim That Consumed Fermented Food and Drinks Beverages

Nepalis are divided into three major ethnic groups. First is Kiratas like Rais, Mangers, Lepchas, Tamangs, Limboos, etc. They are mostly settled in the Northeastern part of India and some areas of Nepal. They are much closer to the tribes of Northeaster India. The second ethenic group is Newars which is also called Pradhan. Newars are traders and businessmen. Newars mostly resided in Kathmandu Valley, Eastern Nepal, Sikkim, and Darjeeling. The third Category of Nepali is *Tagadharis* (who follow the concept of purity and pollution). They settled mainly in the western Central region and Kathmandu valley. Further Nepali is again divided into two major groups The *Tagadharis* (those who wear sacred thread) and *Matwalis* (those who drink intoxicating Beverages).<sup>20</sup>

### Bhutia

The word Bhutia is derived from the word *Bod* or *Bhot* which means Tibet. It refers that they were the descendent of the early settlers from Tibet and Bhutan. Bhutia is Buddhist. So Monk and Monasteries played an important role in their social life. The Bhutia are divided into two groups i.e *Tong-Du-Ruzhi* with four clans and *Behtsengyed* with eight clans. There are other Sub-castes within the Bhutia community. Bhutia is generally an agriculturalist and Shepherd and well excellent in Craftsmen. In the higher region of Sikkim Bhutia are divided into two groups i.e *Lachenpas* and *Lachungpas*. Their name is derived from the place where they settled.<sup>21</sup> The Sikkimese Bhutia is also known by the term *Lhopa*, which means ‘The Dwellers of the South’. They are also commonly known by the term *Denjongpa*,

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<sup>20</sup> A.C Sinha &T. B.Subba, Op.cit.

<sup>21</sup> *Sikkim The Hidden Fruit valley*, op.cit.,p. 46-47.

which means the people belong to *Denzong*. The descendent of the earliest Bhutia of Sikkim have come from Tibet. The Bhutia of Sikkim follows Buddhism. All the religious household rituals, Marriage, birth, and death of Bhutia are conducted by the Monks. Earlier there was a system that every family has to send one male to join the Monastery. Bhutias are located in different places of Sikkim like –Kabi-Tingda, Gangtok, Assam Lingzey, Ranka, Sang-Martam, Rumtek, RakdongTintek, Khamdong, Riqu, and Pathing in East Sikkim. Gyalshing, Tashiding, Yaksum, and Rinchendgbong in West Sikkim, Wok, Timi-Tarku, Ralang, and Damthang in South Sikkim.<sup>22</sup> The major population of Bhutia lived in North Sikkim. Bhutia prefers to live in a Mountainous and cold climate. Gompa is the important institution of Bhutia.<sup>23</sup> Mahendra P. Lama stated that Bhutia is of Tibetan origin having the same kind of physique and feature, a cultural pattern of living, language, and script. It has been commonly accepted that they came from the “Kham” province of eastern Tibet first and started to settled in Sikkim from 10-11th centuries.<sup>24</sup>

### **Lepchas of Sikkim**

The Lepchas people referred to their homeland as *Ne MayelLyang* ‘*Hidden Paradise*’, or *NeMayel Maluklyang* ‘Land of eternal Purity’.<sup>25</sup> The Lepchas were the earliest settlers of Sikkim and proclaimed themselves as ‘*Rongkup*’ (son of the snowy peak). The earliest Lepchas were animists tribal who have migrated from the Assam hills of Southeast Asia. They claimed that they originated from *Mayel*, a legendary kingdom on the slopes of Mt Kanchendzonga, and call themselves *Rongpa* or ravine folk

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<sup>22</sup>*Splendor of Sikkim*, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Government of Sikkim, 2017, pp. 15-17.

<sup>23</sup> A.C Sinha, op. cit, p.32.

<sup>24</sup>Mahendra P. Lama, op.cit, p.25

<sup>25</sup>Sumitabha Chakraborty, *The Lepchas of Sikkim*, Sanskriti north-eastern institute of Culture and Religious, Guwahati, 2011, p.5.

or “*Mutachi*”, meaning the beloved people of the mother earth.<sup>26</sup> The Lepchas believed that they were the ancestor of the first man Fudonthing and the first woman NazongNyu. They believed that they were made from the fresh snow of Mount Kanchendzonga by their Mother *Itbu-Moo*. Sikkimese Lepchas are agriculturalists and hunting-gathering. They are well expert in weaving, cane Craftsmen and archer.

The higher concentration of Lepchas in Sikkim are Dzongu, Mangan, Kabi-Tingda in North Sikkim, RagdongTintek, Rumtek, Ranka, and Assam Lingey in East Sikkim, Wok and Rateypani in South Sikkim and Daramdin, Dentam and Tashiding in West district.<sup>27</sup>

### **Nepalese Communities of Sikkim**

The Sikkimese Nepalis are Hinduism and follow the caste system, tradition, and customs of Hindu. The Nepalis society is divided into four social classes based on ‘Varna’. The four Varna class are Bahun, Chettri, Vaishyas and Shudras.

### **Brahmin**

The Brahmin communities are commonly called *Bahuns*. They are priestly classes who occupy higher positions in the hierarchal order. They are well-versed in Sanskrit and they function as Priests. Bahun also acted as Priests to other communities including Chettri, especially during the naming ceremony of children, Marriage and death rites. There were *Jaisis* Bahuns also who are prohibited from performing Puja in other houses. Bahuns inhabitant in different places of Sikkim. They are farmers who own land and cultivate Paddy, Millets, Maize, Buckwheat, Roots, and Vegetables. They also engaged in animal husbandry and the religious services sector. Bahuns is

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<sup>26</sup>*Sikkim The Hidden fruit*, op. cit, p.15.

<sup>27</sup>*Splinder of Sikkim*, op.cit., pp.31 -32.

Vegetarian. They do not drink alcohol. There are different surnames of Bahuns in Sikkim like Adhikari, Acharya, Khanal, Guragain, Dhakal, Dhungel, Timshina, Nepal, Rimal, Regmi, Sharma, Silwal, etc.<sup>28</sup>

### **Chettri**

Chettri is a warrior or fighting caste. They are the second important caste after Bahun. Chettri is divided into different Thar or sub-caste such as Thapa, Basnet, Karki, Kharka, etc. Agriculture and Animal husbandry are the important economic activities of Chettri. Chettri are non vegetarian. Generally, Chettri is abstained from drinking alcohol but we see some groups of Chettri drink beverages on some occasions and festivals.<sup>29</sup>

### **Pradhan/Newar**

The original homeland of Newar was the Kathmandu valley. It has been mentioned that the name “Newar” is also derived from the name of the country ‘Nepal’.<sup>30</sup> Newar was the community that was largely involved in the trading activities. In Sikkim, Newar is very less but they occupy and play an important role in the ethnic politics of Sikkim.<sup>31</sup> It is commonly believed that the Newar came to the Himalayan state of Sikkim and Darjeeling about 2 centuries ago. They came to Sikkim after the Gorkha conquest of Nepal in 1769 AD. Many Nepalese traveled to Sikkim and started to settle permanently. The British East India Company annexed the hills of Darjeeling from Sikkim on 1 February 1935 and encouraged and provided land at a cheap price

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> Bal Gopal Shrestha, *The Newar of Sikkim- Reinventing Language, Culture, and Identity In the Diaspora*, Vajya Books, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2015,p.1

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.,p.2.

to migrate Newar in Sikkim.<sup>32</sup> The Pradhan was also known as Newar. There are different sub-groups of Newar in Sikkim which they called as thar. The important thar of Newar are Achaju, Bhandari, Joshi, Kasaju, Maskey, Maikey, Sayanju, Shakya, Shreshtha, Vaidya, etc. In Sikkim, Newar is both Hinduism and Buddhism. The priests of Hindu Newar are called *Dyobhaju* and priests of Buddhists are called *Gobaju*.<sup>33</sup> The important food items of Newar communities are fermented bamboo shoots, Sinki, Gundruk, Kachila, Dukula, and Sukula. They also consumed varieties of fermented alcoholic drinks and also offered them to their Deities and ancestors. One of their favorite drinks is *Ayelaa*. It is a hard drink made from rice.<sup>34</sup> The Newar community is rich in its culture, religion, and tradition. Sikkim had different ethnic communities and they influenced each other. The Newar communities also successfully conserve their cultural heritage and practices.<sup>35</sup> In today's scenario, Newar in Sikkim is engaged in Politics, government services, trading, business, agriculture, etc. They are also engaged in industries, tourism, hotels, handicrafts, bakeries, transporting, and printing.<sup>36</sup>

## **Tamang**

K.S Sing stated that the word “Tamang” is associated with the occupation of ‘horse trader’. In the Tibetan language “*Ta*” means horse and “*Mang*” means trader. According to the oral Tibetan folklore “The Tamang was originally a group of Tibetan Cavalry”. There is another view that the word Tamang is originated from the Tibetan word “*Tamag*” meaning the Mounted army of the king. There are different views regarding the Migration of Tamang in India. Some opinions are that they

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.,p.18.

<sup>33</sup> *The Splendourof Sikkim, op.cit., p.153.*

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.,p. 156.

<sup>35</sup> *Folk Tales of Sikkim*, Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department Government of Sikkim, 2015, p.115.

<sup>36</sup> Bal Gopal Shrestha,op.cit., p. 30.

Originated from Tibet and gradually migrated to Nepal and India. On the view of Colonel Santabir Lama, Tamang Community is not migrated but originated from Nepal. Tamang speak Tibeto-Burman. Today Majority of Tamang communities are populated in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Tamang community had its own traditional culture, customs, dresses, songs, festivals, and language. They are agriculturalist and their stable foods are Maize, Millet, Rice, and Barley.

Tamang is Non-Vegetarians and they consumed and prepared *Jaar* and *Rakshi* from the crops like Millet or rice.<sup>37</sup> Tamang follows animistic tradition and most of their Ceremony is attached to their ancestors. With the following of Buddhism, there is a certain change in their practices and they followed the principle of Ahimsa. Most of the Tamang are resided in the higher hills of Sikkim and in rural villages. In Sikkim, they are Concentrated in Passi-Rateypani, Kateng-Bokrong, Namthang, Dodok, Maniram, Boomtar, and BermoikTokal in South Sikkim, Soreng, Singling, and Chyangbagaon in West Sikkim, Syari, Padamchey-Bhusmey in East Sikkim and Pakshek, Gaikhana, Rang-Dang in North Sikkim.<sup>38</sup>

## **Mangar**

Mangers, Limboos, and Lepchas are the earliest settlers of Sikkim. They appear like Mongoloid. The manager is well known for their, bravery, honesty, and simplicity. In ancient times Mangers ruled a small independent republic called '*Mangarjong*'. In ancient times they had their king or headman which they called *Mukhia* or chief. But gradually they lost their earliest glory and status due to the coming of the new rulers from other communities.<sup>39</sup> The Mangers community had their language belonging to

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<sup>37</sup> Anjana Tamang, *The Tamang Community in Sikkim: A Historical Study*, S.B. Nangia. A.P.H Publishing Corporation 4435-36/7, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi, 2020, pp.9-32.

<sup>38</sup> *Folk Tales of Sikkim*, op.cit., p. 81.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

the Tibeto-Burman family. The main occupation of the Manglers community in Sikkim is hunting, Weaving bamboo baskets, agriculture, animal husbandry, collection of honey and tubers. They also used to make handmade clothes from animal skin basically from sheep.<sup>40</sup>

## **Gurung**

Gurung community is one of the important communities of Sikkim. They commonly described themselves as “*Tamu*”. The term “*Tamu*” denotes Courage and fearlessness community. Gurung community is mainly concentrated in high land and terrain in Sikkim. Agriculture, animal husbandry, and sheep rearing are the main occupation of the Gurung community. Gurung community Settled in Rinchenpong, Dodok, BuriaKhop, Chakung, Dentam, Sardong, Pathing, Burtuk, Pasting, Dalapchand, Riqu, and Pakyong.<sup>41</sup> Sheeps rearing is the common occupation of Gurung in West Sikkim and tribes of North Sikkim. Sheep are reared for wool to make carpets and cloths known as ‘*Lukuni*’.<sup>42</sup>

## **Limboo**

Limboos is the important ethnic community of Sikkim. They believed that they were the descendants of ancient Kirates. Limboos has its religion called *Yuma* or *Yuma Samyo*. They believed that ***Tagara Ningwaphuma*** was their supreme god. Their shamans were known as *Phedangma*. *Phedangma* plays an important role during birth, marriage, and death rituals. The *Phedangma* were classified into nine types, *Muhikkum*, *Ongshi*, *Phejiri*, *SambokeSambha*, *Yabokoyeba*, *Yabokoyema*, *Yuma*

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<sup>40</sup>*Splendor of Sikkim*, op.cit.,p.139.

<sup>41</sup>*Splendor of Sikkim*, op. cit. ,p.,89.

<sup>42</sup> Manas Das Gupta, op.cit.,p.,79.



*sam, Sammundhums, Yepmundhum and Dida sambas*. In Limboo there is no caste system but they are divided into several sub-castes.

Agriculture and animal husbandry are the main economic activities of the Limboo community in Sikkim. Limboo communities have resided in different places in Sikkim like Soreng, Daramdin, Dentam, Yaksum, Darap, Tashiding, Rabitar, Namphok, Aho, Assam-Lingzey, and Mangshila in North Sikkim. They are non-vegetarians. They cultivated millet to prepare brew which is used to offer to deities and for self-consumption.<sup>43</sup>

### **2.3 Origin of Curd and Ghee**

Abikeshar Dahal shared a few information which he heard from his grandfather, grandmother, and experiences till date. He said that during childhood he stayed in a forest with his family. Cattle grazing were their main occupation. They used to continue to shift their cattle from one place to another in search of grasses. They stayed less than one month in one place. The cows, ox, buffaloes, and goats were their main Cattles. Regarding the origin of curd, he said that – the curd-making process is accidentally discovered. According to him- one night the milk was accidentally left in a mud pot. The next morning they saw the milk was converted into curd full of cream at the top. This gave them ideas to learn a method to prepare curd from milk.

Secondly, he said that – due to the continuous increase in the number of cattle in the *Ghot (a place where people lived with groups of animals in a forest)* there was excess milk. There came a time to shift their cattle to another place. So they dig a deep pit and put milk on that pit. After 3-4 days they noticed that milk is fermented into curd. So they find a new technique for the preservation of milk and get a new

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<sup>43</sup>*Splendor of Sikkim*, op.cit.,p.,118.

product from milk i.e curd. Gradually the people used to make tools from bamboo and woods to ferment the milk. Further, he said that - due to the discovery of *dhungro* (tools used to keep milk made of bamboo) which gave them ideas to extract ghee and *Mohi* from Dahi. He said that they used to keep curd in *dhungro*. During their journey, they used to carry *dhungro* on their back.

Due to the movement of curd in the *dhungro*, the ghee was extracted from the curd. This lead to the process of origin of ghee. These experiences gave them ideas to discover different tools. The different tools which are used by ruler people in Sikkim to ferment milk are –

*Handi* – It is Mud pot used to ferment milk in ancient times.

*Dhungro/ Dhudheri*- Tool used to milk cows. It is made of bamboo or wood.

*Herpe /salak* – It is a tool made of wood used to keep Ghee.

*Theki*- It is a tool used to extract ghee from curd. It is made of wood.

*Madhani*- It is a tool used along with theki.

*Neti* -The rope used in the *Madhani*.

*Koila* - The piece of two woods which are attached with *Neti*.

*Ghuro*- The tool which connects *Madhani* with *Theki*.

*Thoolong*- It is just like *Theki* but it has more height than *Theki*. The function of *thoolong* is the same as *Theki*. The *thoolong* is made from bamboo, wood, and rubber.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Interviewed, AbichandraDahal, 94 years, Gerethang, West Sikkim, on 5/7/2010.

## 2.4 Origin of Che In Lepcha Based on Folktales.

The Lepchas of Sikkim prepared beverages. It is prepared from millets or rice. It is their favorite drink. According to the folklore of Lepchas, it is said that *Che* (fermented beverages) was origin in *Mayel*, a legendary land which is near Mount Kanchendzonga in Dzongu.

It is said that during the marriage ceremony of Tarbong Nom with Narip Nom *Che* was demanded in the form of gifts for the bride's family.<sup>45</sup>

In the foothills of Mount Kanchendzonga there lived a hunter name Tarbong Nom. He was fond of hunting and fishing. One winter Tarbong went hunting. He went in all directions of *Pari Pagyen* with bow and arrows. His mother packed enough food for him. Tarbong roamed in search of deer. His food was near to finished. So Tarbong left the forests. He climbed up Mountain *PalyangChuu*. From the top of the Mountain, he saw a tree with fruits and hundreds of beautiful birds. As a hunter, he was greedy to capture the beautiful birds. There was no village nearby. He reached the place of the trees. He decided to spend the whole night under the tree. He takes his dinner. Now he made a bamboo trap to catch the beautiful birds. Tarbong managed to catch a few beautiful birds. Next early in the morning, he started to return home. In the evening he reached home. His mother was very happy to saw him. He told the whole story about his journey to his mother. The mother was very happy. He hands over all the birds to his mother. The next morning again Tarbong went towards its destination in the forest to catch the beautiful birds. On reaching the forest he again set traps to catch the birds. He had spent his night in the forest under the tree. He finds that on the tree branches there were only leaves were hanging on the traps instead of birds. He was very

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<sup>45</sup>*Splendor of Sikkim*, op.cit.,p.,36-38.

curious to know who had done that tricks. One night he hides behind the rock and looked. He saw one beautiful woman was coming through the woods and replacing the birds with leaves. She was none other than a fairy from rum lyang. Tarbong was so quickly fell in love with her. Both of them were surprised to see each other. The hunter Tarbong asked the girl that why did you free the bird?. She said that I am the guardian and protector of these birds. She further said that each and everyone had the equal right to live in this beautiful Mayellyang. Tarbong fell in love with her. He wanted to marry her. She said that you should ask my hand with my mother and my uncle. Tarbong returned to his home. He tells the whole story to her mother and uncle. Her Mother advice the Tarbong to meet his older brother Kumshey thing for advice and suggestion who lived in another village. His older brother said that in order to win the heart of Narip Nom's mother and uncle for approval of marriage you have to present different kinds of gifts. He said that you need to offer *Che* and butter to the god. His brother also said that you have to go to Nepal to get a pig and *tandyofyu*, (the thick hand-shaped earthen pot). Tarbong went to Nepal and brought these items. Tarbong was sent to Tibet to get a wollen rug, *Mongbree* seed from Mayel valley, and bull from Kamyong valley. Now everything was ready except fire and *Che*. Now there was a need for fire to cook the *Mongbee* to make *Che*. The fire was possessed by Deut Mung, who was the devil who was hiding in MashyokMayel, a place between heaven and earth. It was very difficult to bring fire from that place. At last *Karhyakfo*, (a black-backed Khaleej pheasant bird) was ready to help to bring fire. But due to some obstacles, he was unable to bring fire. Secondly, the grasshopper was ready to bring the fire from the devil. Finally, the people boiled the *Mongbee* seeds. But there was another problem with *Buth*. The *Buth* was the powder that ferments the boiled Mongbee into *Che*. The *Buth* was available on the hand of *Anyumatli mu*, the

god of wine. Kumsheything did a meeting with all the animals, birds, and humans of Mayellyang. In the second meeting humble *tangder* (cockroach) was offered to bring *buth* from *Anyumatli mu*. When the *tangder* reached the house of *Anylumatlimu*, he found that she was an old woman. He planned to be pretending her grandson. Whenever she started to make *Che* she closed the *tangder* in the woven basket. One day the *tangder* said to the woman please covered me with another basket because it will suffocate me. The Old woman replaced the close-weaved basket with a wide-messed basket over the cockroach. From the big gaps of the basket, the cockroach saw that the old woman take the tiny *buth* from her back and crushed it into powder, and mixed over the boiled *Mongbee* to make *Che*. She also put a handful of ashes on the boiled *Mongbee*. *Anyumatli mu* put the *Mongbee* in an earthen pot and covered it with a lid. After two days the smell came out from the pot. The whole process was looking by the cockroach. The old oldwomen never take bath in her life. She always used to scatch her head all the time. One day the cockroach makes an opportunity to lookat her head. The cockroach carefully theft a small quantity of *buth* from the neck of an old woman and flew away. When she waked up she found that her *buth* was stolen by a cockroach. She also came to know that the cockroach was not her grandson but the theft. She gave the curse that, anyone who drinks *Che* more and more will let it cause quarrels and fight and act as a poison. But if it is used in a proper way it acts as a medicine. On the way to Mayellyang the *buth* was tested by other creatures like a black cobra, the snake turned into poisonous. Next tested by honeybee it developed a sharp needle sting. Some of the larger birds tasted, it turned carnivorous. Some fig trees tested its fruits was turned into sour. When banana touched, it fruits taste turned into sweet. The poison part was removed by the Cobra, honeybee, and larger birds. The *buth* was now fit for human use. Finally, the *tangder* delivered the *buth* to the

Kumsheything. The Kumsheything was very happy. They made the *Che* with the help of *buth* and *Mongbee*. On the marriage day of Tarbong and Narip Nom, the *Che* was served to the guests. All the Lepchas drink the *Che*. They all sing, dance, and make merry.<sup>46</sup> In these ways, the fermented *Che* was brought to earth according to folk tales of Lepchas.

There is also another story related to the origin of *Che* in Lepcha-The Lepchas believed that *Itboo- Deboo Rum* was their creator. Looking at the condition of Lepchas in *MayelYang*, he created ‘*Tamsangthing*’ from the pure snow of *Punfim Chum* and blessed him with supernatural to save some Lepchas from the clutches of the Devil, *Laso Mung Pano*. Tamsangthing came to know that the morale of Lepchas was too low and sunken to fight against the devil, ‘*Laso Mung Pano*’. To remove the fear from the mind of the Lepchas again *tamsangthing* consecrated first *Mun* of Lepchas “*Nyolik –Nyosong*” to restore the lost morale of the Lepchas. In the beginning, *NyolikNyosong* found difficult to communicate and to express her thought and power to Lepchas. By imitating the sound and rhythmic tones of *tungbum* (kind of insects) in her prayer she is successfully communicated and expressed her power to the Lepchas. With her supernatural power, *Nayolik-Nyosong Nun* came to know that the lost morale of Lepchas can be restored with the help of medicine which was in the form of “*Bat*” meaning ferment. She came to know that ‘*Bat*’ was possessed by ‘*Matlimanyoo*’. Finally, ‘*Bat*’ was successfully brought by ‘*Tungdyerpalyung*’ a cockroach with his trickery from *Matlimanyoo*. On the way of journey, the *tungdyerpalyung* was resting due to tired. The little bit of ‘*Bat*’ was stolen by ‘*Pamaolbu*’ (a pure black cobra). As soon as it was tested it became mad and very

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<sup>46</sup>YishayDoma, *The Legends of the Lepchas folk Tales from Sikkim*, Transqueber Press, Venkat Towers,165, P.H Road, Opp, Maduravoyal Municipal Office Chennai, 2010, p.,27-39.

poisonous. Next, it was tested by ‘*hu*’ (a honey bee) which develop a sharp needle. Next, it was tested by large birds which became carnivorous, and those small birds that did not test remain vegetarians. ‘*Kuntek*’;( fig tree) also tested which result in it having a sour taste. Finally, *tungdyerpalyeng* arrived and hand over ‘*Bat*’ a power portion to *NyolikNyosong Mun*. *NyolikNyosong Num* cooked millet and mixed with ‘*Bat*’ to prepare *Che* (fermented beverages). It was then distributed among the Lepchas soldiers to raise their morale to fight against *Laso Mung Pano* (the devil in the battle). After drinking *Che* it raises their morale and in the battle, they killed *Laso Mung Pano*. Thus in this way, fermented beverages were originated in Lepchas.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>LayangsongTamsang, *Lepchas Folklore and Folk Songs*, SahityasAkademi Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah road, New Delhi 110001, 2008,p., 6-7.

## CHAPTER III

### **Different Types of Fermented Foods& Drinks and their historicity and Socio-Cultural Use since Antiquity**

Fermentation is defined as the metabolic process in which chemical changes are brought in proteins, carbohydrates, or fat through the action of enzymes by specific living organisms.<sup>48</sup> Fermented food is prepared through the action of micro-organisms. In Sikkim fermented food is prepared through local technology from locally available products. Production of fermented items is dependent on ethnic preferences, agro-cultural conditions, socio-cultural, and religion. The people do not have any scientific technology but they have the desired and skills to get the desired products.<sup>49</sup> The journal of 'traditional knowledge,' mentioned that there are more than 250 types of ethnic fermented food and beverages are produced in northeast India. These include curry, pickles, soup, drinks, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. In northeast India, fermented food is classified into soybean fermented, fermented vegetables, bamboo shoots, and cereal-based fermented food. It mentioned that the people of northeast India are consuming and preparing fermented food and alcoholic beverages from more than 2500 years old as per the historical record.<sup>50</sup>

#### **3.1 About Milk and Its Fermented Products.**

Animal husbandry is one of the important parts of the rural household economy in the state of Sikkim. Nearly 89 percent of the people of Sikkim are depending on animal husbandry and poultry farming. There are mainly two types of animal husbandry

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<sup>48</sup> Sukumar De, op, cit, p.102.

<sup>49</sup> Brigideer Kuldip Singh Gulia, op.cit, p.192.

<sup>50</sup> J.p Tamang, Narmata Tamang, "Microorganisms and Nutritional Value of Ethnic Fermented Foods and Alcoholic Beverages Of North-East India", *Indian journal of traditional knowledge Vol 11(1)*, January 2012, pp.7-25.



practiced in the state. First is the animal husbandry practices by those peoples who lived in higher altitudes in the north, west, and east district of Sikkim. This animal husbandry is practiced by Lachungpas, Lachenpas, Gurung and Sherpa. Livestock rearing is the main occupation of those people who are living in the higher altitudes of Sikkim. The animals they reared are sheep, yaks, and upland Cattle. The second type of animal husbandry is practiced in lower and mid-altitudes areas. It is a part of a mixed farming system. Animals are commonly reared to support horticultural crops. The manure of the animals is used in the fields.<sup>51</sup> The importance of milk and milk products in India is recognized since the Vedic period. The production of varieties of items is an indigenous art. Only in recent times, it is scientifically studied.<sup>52</sup>

**Important fermented products from milk**-Cows milk are the most commonly used in the world, but the milk of goats, asses, ewes, mares, and reindeer are also used in the form of foods in various parts of the world. It is mentioned that the milk of all animals is similar and contained the same food material but there are slight differences in composition and in proportions. Cowsmilk is benefitted to various stages of life- children, adolescents, and nursing mothers. Milk is the composition of all types of nutrition i.e fats, proteins, minerals, carbohydrates, and vitamins.<sup>53</sup>

## **Dahi**

*Dahi* is commonly known as curd. It is an important product consumed by the people of Northeast India. From the *dahi*, many items are prepared like *Gheu*, *Mohi*, and *Chhurpi*. *Dahi* is made by cooling the boiled milk in the vessel at room

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<sup>51</sup>SIKKIM DEVELOPMENT REPORT PLANNING COMMISSION GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM, NEW DELHI, ACADEMIC FOUNDATION 2008, P.123.

<sup>52</sup> Sukumar De, op. cit, p.,383.

<sup>53</sup> Vijay Kaushik, *Food Science, and Nutrition*, Knowledge plus 6/15, Punjabi Bagh Extension New Delhi – 110026, p.18.

temperature. *Dahi* is an important refreshing Non- alcoholic beverage.<sup>54</sup> Indian curd is commonly known as *dahi*. It is a well-known fermented milk product. It is consumed by a large section of people throughout the country as a daily diet or as a refreshing beverage. Milk is converted into *dahi*. The *dahi* act as intermediary steps for the manufacture of indigenous butter and ghee. It is said today 40 percent of total milk in India is converted into *dahi*. It is mentioned that there are two types of dahi for direct consumption i.e sweet/mildly sour variety pleasant flavor and a sour variety with a sharp acidic flavor.<sup>55</sup>

### **Chhurpi**

*Chhurpi* is also an important milk product. Two types of Chhurpi are popular among the ethnic communities of the Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh region. They are *soft Chhurpi* and *hard Chhurpi*.

### **Chhu**

*Chhu* is also called *Sheden*. It is the most popular and common fermented milk product of Bhutias, Lepchas, Monpas, Sherdukpens, Khambas, Membas, and Tibetans who were living in the northeastern region. It is prepared from the milk of yaks. It is slightly sour.

### **Somar**

*Somar* is the most important milk product prepared from the milk of yaks and cows. It is a traditional fermented milk product commonly consumed by the Sherpa community.

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<sup>54</sup> J.P Tamang, Narmata Tamang, op.cit, p.7-25.

<sup>55</sup> Sukumar De, op. cit, p. 404.

## **Philu**

It is also an important ethnic fermented milk product. It is commonly consumed by the Tibetans, Bhutias, and Khambas in Northeast India.<sup>56</sup>

## **Yoghurt**

It is the most common milk product consumed in our country. *Yoghurt* is thick curdled milk. It acted as a nourishing and refreshing food. Milk will be converted into yoghurt with the help of special bacterial.<sup>57</sup>

## **Cream**

Creams are known from time immemorial. They are a fatty layer that rises at the top of the milk. The cream may be defined as the portion of milk which is rich in fat. There are various types of cream like table cream, light cream, coffee cream, whipping cream, heavy cream.<sup>58</sup>

## **Butter**

Butter is an important dairy product. The butter has a long history. The butter is manufacture in the cold region of the world. References of the butter are found in Old Testament. In the past time, butter was used as an important commercial item as well as a sign of wealth.<sup>59</sup> Butter is used as a direct consumption with bread, preparation of sauces, as a cooking medium. It is also used to make ice cream.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> J.P Tamang, Narmata Tamang, op.cit, p.7-25.

<sup>57</sup> Vijay Kaushik ,op.cit, p.29.

<sup>57</sup>Sukumar De, op.cit, p.118.

<sup>58</sup> Sukumar De, op.cit, p.118.

<sup>59</sup> Sukumar De, op.cit, p.143.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.173.

## **Cheese**

Cheese is one of the important dairy products. It is obtained by draining after the coagulation of milk with a harmless milk coagulating agent, under the influence of harmless bacterial culture. Cheese is the oldest food of human beings. It is one of the prominent diets of Greeks and Romans about 2500 years ago. The history of Cheese is referred to in the Old Testament much time. It is said that Cheese is made accidentally in the stomach of animals carrying milk. Until 1850 Cheese was commonly made in “Farmhouse”. From 1860-the 80s onwards “factory system” was developed throughout the world for Cheese production. Cheese is used as a direct consumption or in the form of Sandwiches, preparation of special dishes, and preparation of the sauce.<sup>61</sup>

## **Kheer**

*Kheer* is one of the common milk products prepared by the partial dehydration of milk in a *Karahi* in a fire together with the combination of sugar and rice. It is also called *basundi* in India.<sup>62</sup>

### **3.2 Cereal-Based Fermented Foods and Drinks**

Fermented food beverages are the important food culture of Darjeeling and the people of Sikkim. Fermented beverages are rich in calorie content. In Sikkim and Darjeeling they are prepared from locally available agricultural products.

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid,pp.224-267.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.384.

## Marcha

It is the main item that is used for the preparation of indigenous fermented food and alcoholic beverages. The feature of *Marcha* is always dried, round, and flattened shaped. It is a solid ball-like shape. The size of *Marcha* is 1.9 to 11.8 cm and the weight is 2.3 to 21.29 gm. There are different names of *Marcha* in different languages. It is called *Khesung* in Limbu, *Bharama* in Tamang, *Boppha/Khabed* in Rai, *Phab* in Bhutia, and *Buth* or *Thambum* in the Lepcha language. Similar products like *Marcha* are *bakhar* in north-western India, *ragi* in Indonesia, *nuruk* in Korea, *bubod* in Philippines, *loogpang* in Thailand, and *Chuu-Yuch* in China.<sup>63</sup> *Marcha* is made through local knowledge by older women. The quality of *Che* is depends on the amount of yeast or *Marcha*.<sup>64</sup>



Figure 1: *Marcha*

Following items are required making *Marcha*

- Red Chillies.
- Ginger.
- Rice.
- *Waathang* (plant roots).
- Water.

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<sup>63</sup> J.P Tamang, S. Thapa, N. Tamang, B. Rai, "Indigenous fermented food beverages of Darjeeling hills and Sikkim: Process and Product Characterization", *Journal of hills research* 9 (2):401-411,1996.

<sup>64</sup> Geoffrey Gorer, *Himalayan village An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, Pilgrimpub, Varanasi, India, 2005, p.97.

## Process of Making Marcha

Firstly, the rice is to be soaked in water. In that wet rice, plants roots (waathang), dry Chillies, and gingers should be mixed. In the morning it should be grind in the *Okhli* to make powder. Now add a small quantity of water and make a *roti* shape (round shape).



Figure 2: Interviewed with Chungkit Lepcha about Marcha

Now the Marcha should be packed in *Pirayunung* (kind of wild fern) and kept in *Bhar* (near to the fire to dry). After 7 to 8 days it is ready to use.<sup>65</sup>

## Kodo ko Jaar

It is the most popular fermented product in the northeastern region of India. Finger millet is locally called *Kodo*. The *Kodo* is harvested in December. There are different varieties of *Kodo* that are cultivated in this region like *Mudke*, *Nangrey*, *Fyakre*, etc. *Kodo ko Jaanr* had different names in different languages like *Mandokpenaathee* in (*Limboo*), *Samplchaummaak* in (*rai*), *Kaiyanpaa* (*Gurung*), *Kaan Chi* (*Tamang*), *Ja thon*(*Newar*), and *Che* in (*Lepcha*).

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<sup>65</sup>Interviewed Chungkit Lepcha, 46 years, Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim on 17/2/2019.



Figure 3: Kodo ko Jar

### **Makai Ko Jaar**

*Makai Ko Jaar* is made in those regions where maize cultivation is high. There are various local varieties of maize that are grown in the eastern region. The *Makai ko Jaanr* is known as *Makai thee* in (Limbu), *Yobbacha Umaak* in (rai), *Makhainpaa* (gurung), *Maagnilajheenin* (tamang), *Makai haan in* (manger), *Kahni thon* in (newar), *Kinya Chhyang* in (bhutia) and *Kanchung Che in* (lepcha). The fermentation method is the same as *Kodokojaar*.<sup>66</sup>

### **Simal Tarul Ko Jaar**

It is a sweet-sour taste. It is popularly known as Cassava roots. In our region, two varieties of Cassava are cultivated i.e local red and white varieties.

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<sup>66</sup>J.P Tamang, S.Thapa, N.Tamang, B.Rai, op.cit, p.401-411.



*Figure 4: Simal Tarul ko Jhar*

### **Process of Making Symbol Tarulko Jaar Based on Interview in North Sikkim**

Firstly the Symbol Tarul should be washed and cut into small pieces. Now boil it for an hour. After that soak or keep in water for two days. After two days boil this symbol tarul with millet. Also mixed *Marcha* in it. Approximately on 20 kg of Millet add only two and a half pieces of *Marcha*. Now packed in *Thunse* for two days. After two days shift that millet in plastic or in buckets for fermentation.

Now after two weeks it is ready to use. It can be consumed in the Thungba system or the Chanwa system.<sup>67</sup>



*Figure 5: Interview with Norkit Lepcha*

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<sup>67</sup>Interviewed, Norkit Lepcha, 23 years, HeeGaythang, Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim, on 17/2/2019.



## Method of Preparation of Fermented Millet

Based on an interview with Chunkit Lepcha it came to know that Millet and Yeast which we locally called *Marcha* are two important ingredients used to make fermented millet. Fermented millet is locally called *Jaar* in Nepali. The following are the various steps for the preparation of fermented millet. First, properly wash the millet in water. Secondly cooked the washed millet in the fire. Now the boiled millet should be spread on a cloth or in *Mandro* in a cool place to dry. Add and mix the yeast/*Marcha* in the lukewarm millet. Now the cool Millet should be placed in a sack by covering it with leaves in a warm place near *Chula* for at least 3-4 days for fermentation. The fermentation of the Millet can be known through smell.

The fermented Millet should be wrapped in a plastic bag or an air-tight container like barrel. Let it kept at least two or more days. To make the *Jaar* stronger, we have to keep it for a longer period. Now it is ready for consumption.<sup>68</sup>

## Consumption Process of Jaar (Fermented Millet)

There are two methods for the consumption of fermented millet i.e *Thongba* system and the *Chanwa* system.

### Thungba System

Fermented millet is served in a bamboo container called *tongba* in the Limboo language and *Patyoot* in Lepchas. In a *tongba*, *jaar* is placed with warm water. The fermented grain is drink with the help of a narrow bamboo stick called *Pipsing* in Limboo and *Pahip* in Lepcha. The *tongba* should be soaked at least 5 minutes before it sipping. Warm Water should keep adding to the millet and sip till it loses its flavor

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<sup>68</sup>Op.cit, interviewed with Chunkit Lepcha.

and taste. The drink is quite sweet and pleasant. The *Patyoot* is regularly filled with water at least three times. Water should be added every 10-12 minutes. The fermented grain became weaker as we added more water. The content is high in protein. People commonly consumed millet *jaar* with Pickle.



*Figure 6: Thungba System*

### **Chanwa System**

This is another method to get jaar from the fermented millet.<sup>69</sup>



*Figure 7: Chanwa System*

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<sup>69</sup>Op.cit, Interviewed with Norkit Lepcha.

## Items Needed During the Process of Jaar

1. Wooden spoon- (a wooden stick used to dissolve millet with water while boiling)
2. Mat - (It is also called *Mandro* in Nepali which helps to dry boiled millet. It is made from bamboo.
3. Basket - (It is a rubber Jar, in which cooked millet is kept for fermentation.
4. Fire - (fire is used to cook the millet).

## Rakshi

*Rakshi* is a type of fermented drink that is prepared from fermented Jaar. It is also called distilled alcoholic beverages. *Rakshi* can be known by different names in different languages like *Arrack* in Lepcha.

## Processes of Making Rakshi

The process of making *rakshi* is the same for all foodgrains but only there should be fermented *jaar*. At first, we have to keep RakshiBhara in the Chula. Now add fermented jaar along with water in the RakshiBhara. Then *Odhand* should be placed inside the *RakshiBhara*. In the *Odhan* we have to keep *Nani Bhara* (wine collection pot). At the top of the *RakshiBhara*, there should be placed one round pot with cold water. That pot is called *Pathey Bhara*. Between the *Pathey Bhara* and *Rakshi Bhara*, the *Madneney* (a piece of cloths) should be placed. Now put fire on the RakshiBhara. When the water of the *Pathey Bhara* gets hot, we have to change the water accordingly. It should change seven times. The *rakshi* formed due to the evaporation and condensation process of *jaar*. Now we can collect *rakshi* from *Nani bhara*.

## **Tools Needed to Make Rakshi**

Based on the interview conducted at Rinchengbong, Hathidunga, the following items are needed to prepare rakshi in Sikkim.

*Wood/fire* – (fire is used to boil fermented jaar)

*Steel Bhara* - (Tool used to cook raw Millet.)

*Chula* - A place where Millet is cook.

*Rakshibhara* – (It is a vessel in which fermented *Jaar* are cook)

*Odhan* – ( It is a tool placed inside rakshibhara to support Nani bhara )

*Patheybhara* - ( It a round pot in which cold water is kept.

*Madhaney* –(A piece of cloth to prevent evaporate of rakshi while cooking jaar).

*Nani bhara* - (Wine collection pot)

## **Difference between Jaar and Rakshi**

*Jaar* is a non-distilled fermented alcoholic beverage while *rakshi* is distilled fermented alcoholic beverage.

The process of *jaar* making is simple while the process of *rakshi* making is complicated because it needs more tools.

*Jaar* is a short-term process while the *rakshi* is a long-term process.

The *jaar* needed *Thunse* while *rakshi* need *rakshibhara* and many more items.

*Jaar* can consume both *Thungba* and *Chanwa* systems while *rakshi* can consume only through cups.

*Rakshi* is water color while *jaar* is white color.

*Jaar* needed regular hot water for consumption while *rakshi* can be consumed directly.

The power of *rakshi* is strong than the power of *Jaar*.

The cost of *rakshi* is high than the price of *Jaar*.<sup>70</sup>

## **Kinema**

Kinema is a Limboo word for fermented soybean. It is similar to Japanese- *Korean Katto*. Kinema is good for digestive problems.<sup>71</sup> Kinema is made from fermented soybean. Kinema is common in the eastern Himalayan region of India, Nepal, and Bhutan. It is the common local diet. It is an important source of high protein. It is the important food of the eastern Himalayan region particularly Darjeeling, Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan. The Kinemais prepared by a woman with the help of indigenous knowledge and skills.<sup>72</sup> The synonym name of Kinema in the local languages are *Kinemba* in limboo, *Hokuma* in rai, *Bari* in Bhutia, *Satlyangser* in Lepcha. A similar product like Kinema which is produced in other states of India is *Nawaijar* in Manipur, *Bekang* in Mizoram, *troombai* in Meghalaya, etc.<sup>73</sup> People commonly make Curry from Kinema.

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<sup>70</sup>Interviewed, R.B Gurung, 47 years, Hathidunga, West Sikkim on 2/3/2019.

<sup>71</sup>Sonam Wangmu Ladakhi, *Popular Sikkimise Cuisine*, Sonam Wangmu Ladakhi, Ladakhi Missions, Balwakhani, Gangtok, Sikkim 737101, India, p.66.

<sup>72</sup>J. P. Tamang, "Native Microorganisms in the Fermentation of Kimema", *Indian Journal of Microbiology* vol 43, No 2, June 2003, pp.,127-130.

<sup>73</sup>Brigadier Kuldip Singh Gulia, op.cit ,p.195.

To make Kinema curry we need.

Kinema

Chopped onion

Tomato

Turmeric

Oil.

Chilies.

Salt.

### **Method of Preparation.**

Heat the oil.

Fry onion on oil.

Now add salt, turmeric powder, and chilies in oil and mix well.

Now add Kinema in the mixed items and

Cook for 4-5 minutes. Now the Kinema Curry is ready for consumption.<sup>74</sup>

### **Selroti**

It is the fermented cereal food of the Himalayan region of Nepal, Bhutan, and India.

Selroti is ringed shaped and spongy. It is commonly consumed during religious

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<sup>74</sup>*Popular Sikkimise Cuisine op. cit*, p.67.

festivals and special occasions like marriage ceremonies.<sup>75</sup> Selroti is also called sweetened rice bread. Selroti is served with *achar* i.e pickle or *Chutney*. There are different ingredients needed to make Selroti like rice, milk, wheat flour, sugar, small cardamom, and oil/ghee. The process of making Selroti is very simple. The steps of making Selroti are

Firstly wash and soaked the rice for about 12 hours.

Now pound the soaked rice into fine powder.

Now add milk, water, sugar, and crushed cardamom.

Now mixed and kept for 6-12 hours at room temperature for fermentation.

Now it is ready to fry in heat ghee or oil.<sup>76</sup>

### **3.3 Fermented Items Made From Vegetable**

In the terraces hills of Northeast India perishable vegetables are grow from sub-tropical to temperate regions.

#### **Gundruk**

The *Gundruk* is prepared in large quantities in the winter season where it is available of large quantities of mustard leaves, *Rayo sag*, and radish. The woman played an important role in producing *gundruk*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Hannah Yonzan, Jyoti Prakash Tamang, "Optimization of Traditional Processing of Selroti, A Popular Cereal Based Fermented Food", *Journal of Scientific & Industrial Research* vol.72 January 201, pp.,43-47.

<sup>76</sup>*Popular Sikkimise Cuisine*, op. cit p.,20-21.

<sup>77</sup>Buddhiman Tamang and J.P Tamang, "Traditional Knowledge of Biopreservation of Perishable Vegetables and Bamboo Shoots in Northeast India as Food Resources", *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge* Vol.8 (1), January 2009, pp.,89-95. (89)

## Sinki

The *Sinki* is made through the pit fermentation method. It is made from radish roots. The pit is being dug, should be cleaned and warmed by burning. The pit should be covered with bamboo sheaths and paddy straw. The radish is tightly put into the pit and covered with dry leaves and heavy stones. The top of the pit is plastered with mud and kept the pit untouched for 22-30 days. The fermentation process will be completed during these periods. After that *Sinki* is cut into small pieces and dry in the sun for 3-5 days. *Sinki* is acidic in flavor. Dry *Sinki* can be kept for more than 2 years at room temperature. *Sinki* is used to make pickles and soup.<sup>78</sup> The *gundruk* and *sinki* had a great economic value for the rural people.<sup>79</sup>

## Goyang

It is the important ethnic fermented vegetable item for Sherpa ethnic groups of Darjeeling and Sikkim. It is prepared from the wild plant leaves called *Magane saag*. The leaves are collected, washed, cut into small pieces, and tightly placed in the basket which is made of bamboo. The top of the basket is covered with fig plant leaves. It will be kept at room temperature for a month. After it gets fermented, the fresh *goyang* is transferred into an air-tight container and store for 2-3 months. Then it will be sundry by making ball shapes. It is largely produced by Sherpa women. *Goyang* can be consumed with yak or beef meat. It is the staple food of Sherpa.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid, p.,90.

<sup>79</sup>Brigadier Kuldip Singh Gulia, op.cit ,p.195.

<sup>80</sup>Buddhiman Tamang and J.P Tamang,op.cit, p.,89-95.



## **Khalpi**

It is one of the popular food items consumed by all the ethnic communities of Sikkim. *Khalpi* is a fermented cucumber. It is also commonly called the *Khakra ko achar* in the Nepali language. It is very simple to make *Khalpi*. To make *Khalpi*, the cucumber should be cut into small pieces and mixed with salt and Chillies. After that kept in bottles for 3- 4 days at a dry and cool place.<sup>81</sup> After the completion of 3-4 days, the *Khalpi* is ready for consumption. When the *Khalpi* is kept for 5 or more days it became sour taste. It is dominantly produced by the Brahman and Chettri communities of Sikkim.<sup>82</sup>

## **Mesu**

The term *Mesu* is derived from the Limboo dialect ‘*Me*’ the young bamboo shoot and ‘*su*’ soury taste. It is similar to *naw-mai dong* which is the fermented shoot prepared in Thailand.<sup>83</sup> It is a sour acidic taste made from fermented bamboo shoots. It is the important fermented eatable item of Darjeeling hills and Sikkim. Different varieties of local bamboo such as *Choyo bans*, *Karati bans*, *Bhalu bans* are finely chopped and tightly pressed in the hollow bamboo stem. The top of the vessel is tightly covered with bamboo or other leaves and kept for the natural fermentation process for 7-15 days. The *Mesu* is dominantly produced by Limboo women. The pickle *Mesu* is mixed with oil, Chillies, and salt. It is kept in Jar for several months. In the rainy season, the *Mesu* is available in the market of Sikkim and Darjeeling.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Interviewed Duprada, Sharma, 69 years, Gerethang, West Sikkim,23/7/2020.

<sup>82</sup>Buddhiman Tamang and J.P Tamang,op.cit, p.,89-95.

<sup>83</sup>Brigadier Kuldip Singh Gulia, op.cit,p.196.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.,89-95.

### **3.4 Fruit Wine**

On 2nd March 2019, I did a field survey in West Sikkim. The survey was conducted in the Rinchengbong area. I interviewed one of the fruit wine farm owners whose name was Azing Lepcha. With the survey, I came to know that various types of fruits wine were made due to the process of fermentation. The following is the statement I recorded during the field survey about the Azing farm.

Actually, Azing farm is one of the most renowned fruits wine farms in Sikkim. It is located in Hatidunga, Rinchengbung, in West Sikkim. In an Interviewed, Azing Lepcha said that he owned huge acres of land which are suitable for the cultivation of various types of fruits and crops. The land remained as a wasteland for a long time till 2004. Although his father had planted few orange trees for self-consumption. The production of the orange started to decline because it was attacked by diseases. So he started to grow Grapes, Pineapple, Guava, Pear, Papaya, etc which are suitable in his field. The idea of fruit wine came to his mind from the traditional system of jaar fermenting process which he learned from his family. Firstly he had done successful experimentation. So he thinks it will be profitable to start a fruit wine farm. In the initial stage, he had started with the help of his family members. Hence, slowly and gradually the more labors were recruited. In the present situation, there are 4 to 5 daily labours working on the farm with a monthly salary base of ten thousand per head. Azing farm is a purely organic fruits wine farm. He stated that the alcohol content of his farm fruit wine is much less than the wine produced by the factory. The farm produced different fruits wine like grapes wine, guava wine, gurander wine, orange wine, Pineapple wine, Sinkauli wine, Jackfruit wine, Pear wine, etc. The farm produces more pineapple wine as compared to other fruit wines. According to him, the farm produced two big trucks of Pineapple per year. The pineapple can be grown

in small areas and require less soil. He said that one group of pine produced 500 to 600 saplings per year and it is easy to transfer from place to place.

### **Process of Making Fruitwine in Azing Farm.**

The process of making fruit wine is very simple and easy. He stated that the process of making fruit wine is the same for all fruits. Suppose if we wanted to make 10 kg fruits into wine. We need 10 grams of *Marcha* and 5 liters of water.



*Figure 9: Fermenting process of fruit wine*

Firstly, the fruits should be clean properly and cut into pieces. After that cutting pieces of fruit should be packed in buckets. Inside the buckets add water along with *Marcha* and dissolve it properly. After that, it should be air-tight for six months in the bucket. The bucket should be kept in cool and dry places. It should be kept fixed in one place. After six months it gets Mature. As the waste of the wine will come at the top of the buckets and the juice remains at the bottom of the bucket. with the help of the *Chalni*, the *Chokra* or waste should be separated. After that, the wine should be transferred to another *barrel* and should have to keep for the next six months. It means that it took one year for the complete fermentation process of fruit wine. After that, it is ready to keep in a bottle. He stated that on his farm most of the

Bengali tourists came and buy local fruit wine. The local people also demanded wine especially on the occasion of marriage.<sup>85</sup>



*Figure 10: Fruit Wine Stall of Mr. Azing Lepcha*

### **3.5 Different Types of Crops Cultivated In Sikkim which are Used For Fermenting Food and Beverages in Sikkim.**

Sikkim has a long history in agriculture. It is only the Nepalese peasant immigrants who lead to start the foundation of settled or permanent agriculture in Sikkim. They initiated terrace cultivation in Sikkim. The important cereals crops that are grown in Sikkim are maize, paddy, wheat, and buckwheat.<sup>86</sup>

#### **Wheat**

Wheat is one of the important crops of Sikkim. It is believed that wheat is originated in South West Asia. Wheat was introduced and cultivated in the United States in the

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<sup>85</sup>Azing Lepcha, Hathidunga, West Sikkim, age 56, on. 2/3/2019.

<sup>86</sup>S.S. Chib, *Encyclopaedia of Sikkim*, vol.x14(inroma.), Rima Publishing House, New Delhi-1100102(INDIA), P.54.

17th century. Wheat is cultivated throughout the world. It is extensively grown in USSR, China, and the USA. India is also one of the leading wheat-producing countries in the world. Wheat is the rabi crop of Sikkim. Wheat is mostly cultivated in most of the villages in Sikkim. In the case of India wheat is a winter crop. In case of Sikkim, sowing of wheat start from the last week of September and continue till to the second week of December. Wheat is grown in different varieties of soil. Light loam soil is suitable for the cultivation of wheat in India.<sup>87</sup>

### **Barley**

Barley is the fourth important cereals crop after wheat, rice, and maize in the world. Barley is commonly used to make bread which is also known as *chapattis*. In the case of Sikkim barely is conversion into malt for brewing into liquor. It is commonly used to make many beverages, biscuits, beer, liquor, industrial alcohol, etc. Barley is an important source of vitamin B. It is believed that barley has been originated from Ethiopia and Southeast Asia. It is also mentioned in 'Ved'. It is used for various religious purposes. It is the prominent crop of Utter Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, and Jharkhand. In the case of Sikkim barley is a Minor crop.<sup>88</sup> Barley will be best in those areas where there will be cool, dry, and low rainfall. Barley can be grown in wide varieties of soil ranging from sandy to heavy loam in Indo- Gangetic plains. Sikkim farmers introduced the first improved varieties of barley in 1982. These varieties are Himani, Dolma, Vlb-1, Vlb-5. There are other varieties as well.<sup>89</sup> In the case of Sikkim, crops rotation systems are commonly practiced. The sowing time of barley is commonly determined by latitudes, altitudes, climatic conditions, cropping systems,

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<sup>87</sup>J.R. Subba, op.cit ,p.128.

<sup>88</sup>RavikantAvasthe, Yashida Pradhan, Khorlo Bhutia, *Handbook of Organic Crop Production Of Sikkim*, Sikkim Organic Mission Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, Sikkim, India, p. 25.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, p.26.

soil type, moisture and irrigation facilities, etc.<sup>90</sup> The harvesting of barley is done manually with the sickle. The harvesting period of barley in hilly regions like Sikkim varies. It is generally harvested from 6-7 months. It is very important to harvest barley before it got fully mature. Morning time is very good for harvesting.<sup>91</sup> The people of Sikkim give more importance to barley cultivation. The barley is socially and economically important to the people of Sikkim. The barley is used as food and to make liquor. In the case of Sikkim 80 percent of the total population drink liquor. Barley is used to making barley powder commonly known as *Champa*. Barley is mostly grown in a temperate region and it will be good in sub-tropical regions of the world.<sup>92</sup> It will be good under dry conditions. Barley is one of the short-growing crops.<sup>93</sup>

### **Finger Millet**

Finger millet was originated in the Indian Himalayan region. It is originated from wild finger Millet *Eleusina Indica* which are found in Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan in the barren land. Early botanist De Candolle (1886) reported that finger millet was originated in India then spread to Abyssinia and rest of the Africa.<sup>94</sup> Finger Millet is also mythologically connected to the native tribes of Sikkimise Limboo and Lepchas. According to Limboo, it was blessed by their goddess *Yuma Sang* and to Lepchas by *Itbumoo*. There will be no any rituals without fermented beverages among Lepchas and Limboo communities. The crop is also associated with the natives Kiratas of the Himalayans regions. Another center of origin of finger millet is Ethiopia. The different states of India which cultivate Millet are Sikkim, Karnataka, Tamil Naidu,

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid, p.27.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid,p.30

<sup>92</sup>J.R. Subba, op. cit, p.138.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid, p.139.

<sup>94</sup>RavikantAvasthe,Yashida Pradhan, Khorlo Bhutia, op. cit,p. 53.

Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. In Sikkim, it is cultivated for local brewing. Only 5 % of finger millet is used for food items in Sikkim.<sup>95</sup> Finger millet is also commonly known as *ragi* or *Mandua*. It is one of the most stable crops in the hilly region of our country. In Sikkim millet is commonly known as '*Kodo*'. Millet is socially and economically important to the people of Sikkim. Millet is most commonly used to make '*Chhang*' or '*Jarn*'. It can be also consumed in the form of bread known as '*Dhainro*'. The important leading finger millet-producing countries are India, Africa, Srilanka, Malaysia, China, and Japan. Finger Millet is cultivated in hills slopes and plains from the sea level of altitudes of 2500m. Finger millet is a Kharif crop season and it will be good where there will be enough rainfall.<sup>96</sup> In the case of Sikkim finger Millet is cultivated under different conditions and it is divided into the following seasonal crops viz

**Bhadauray Finger Millet:** It is cultivated in less sloppy land, mid and high hills. It is grown up to an elevation of 1400 above MSL. The seedling period of Bhadauray is May-June. The seeding is ready to transplant after 20-25 days of sowing in the nursery.

**Mangsirey:** Mangsirey finger millet is sown in the last week of June and the first week of July and transplanted during August in the mid and lower hills of Sikkim. It is generally grown in 1750m above MSL. It is ready for transplantation after 20-25 days after sowing the seed.

**Pangdur:** It is cultivated on slopy and virgin land. These varieties are cultivated in February – March and harvested in August-September by hills people.

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<sup>95</sup>Jash Raj, *Organic Sikkim Technology For Change*, SukhimYakthumMundhumSaplappa (SYMS), Gangtok, Sikkim, .p.115.

<sup>96</sup>RavikantAvasthe, Yashida Pradhan, Khorlo Bhutia, op. cit, p.53.

**Kartikey:** Kartikey variety of Millet is sown in the second fortnight of May to the first night of June in the nursery.<sup>97</sup> The finger Millet crops will be mature about 120-135 days. It will depend on the altitudes and variety of seeds. The harvesting is done with the help of ordinary sickles.<sup>98</sup> Millet is a socially and economically important crop of the people of Sikkim. Millet is useful to persons who are suffering from diabetes. In Sikkim, finger millet is grown as transplanted crops. Finger millet is suitable in a light red loamy soil. The local varieties of finger millet in Sikkim are *Nangkatua*, *Murky*, *Bhadaurey*, and *Pangdur*. The high-yielding varieties in the state which are recently been introduced are Hpb 7-6, INDAF F-5, PR202, etc.<sup>99</sup>

### **Soyabean**

It has been reported that soyabean is originated from eastern Asian countries. In India, soyabean was introduced in 1880 A.D. Soyabean contains a high amount of proteins than other cereals. Soyabean contains nearly 38 to 42 percentages of proteins, 17 to 22 Percentage of oil, ten essential amino acids, B vitamins, and many essential minerals. In Sikkim, soybean is a Kharif crop i.e Monsoon season crop.<sup>100</sup> The crop are extensively grown from June to October. Soyabean can be cultivated in most of the dry fields as a pure or a mixed crop. It can be grown with maize. There is not a proper date of record from which period soyabean was started to cultivate in Sikkim. Soyabeans can be grown in all types of soil. It yields on drained fertile clay loams and fertile sandy soil. Soyabean is cultivated as mixed cropping with Maize

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid.,p.54.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid,p.57.

<sup>99</sup>J.R. Subba, op. cit, pp.144-145.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid, p.162.



crops.<sup>101</sup> There are different high- yielding varieties of Soyabean-like Punjab-1, SI-4, Alankar, Shilajeet, etc.<sup>102</sup>

## **Tapioca**

Tapioca is grown as a food crop. In India tapioca is cultivated in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Assam. Sikkim is one of the leading tapioca-producing states in India. In all four districts i.e Gangtok, Namchi, Mangan, and Gyalshing tapioca are cultivated. Tapioca is a good source of carbohydrates. The tapioca is also good in proteins, fat, ca, and fe. Tapioca is used to make Chips, Sweets, and puddings. In the case of Sikkim tapioca is used to make liquor. There are different varieties of tapioca like white, red, and yellow.<sup>103</sup> Tapaico will be good in the tropical and humid climate. It can be cultivated in varieties of soil like sandy loamy soil, clay soil, and red laterite loam soil. The tapioca is planted from March to May. It required moisture soil in the initial stage of cultivation.<sup>104</sup> Mosaic is a deadly virus that causes serious diseases to tapaico. The Tapaico takes 11 to 12 months for harvesting. In our state tapaico is harvested in the month from January to April.<sup>105</sup>

## **Maize**

Maize is the dominant crop of Sikkim. It is mostly cultivated in foothills regions of southern Sikkim. Higher temperatures and a good amount of rainfall are needed during the growing season of Maize. Maize is sown in early summer and always harvested at the end of the summer season.<sup>106</sup> There are different views regarding the origin of maize. Some says it is originated from southern Mexico and Central

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid, p.163.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid,p.165.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid,p,195.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid,p,196.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid,p.,197.

<sup>106</sup>S.S. Chib,op.cit, p,56.

America. Others says it was originated in Asia.<sup>107</sup> The first definite date in the history of maize is 5th November 1492 when it was noticed by Columbus at the time of his first visit to North America. It was believed that the Portuguese introduced maize in Africa and India then it reached China in the 16th century. But ‘*Murali Makai*’ primitive variety of maize cultivated in Sikkim, Bhutan, and in the Northeastern state of India since time immemorial. It is believed that Sikkim, Bhutan, and Northeastern states are the secondary origin center of Maize.<sup>108</sup> The local varieties of maize cultivated in Sikkim are Murali Makai, Kali Makai, Pahlenli Makai, SetiMekai, Pangri Makai, Pharasi Makai, Satthiya, Kukhrey, and Chepti Makai. These varieties were cultivated before 1975-76.<sup>109</sup> Maize is also known as the queen of cereals because of its highest genetic potential among the cereals. Maize is a staple crop for humans and animals. It also serves as an important raw material in thousands of products like starch, proteins, oil, alcoholic beverages, food, sweeteners, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, textiles gums, packages, and paper industry. Maize is used as human food (23 percent), poultry, pig, and fish food for (51percentage), animal feed (11 percentage), industrial starch product (12 percentage), beverages, and seed (1 percentage each). In Sikkim maize will be cultivated in altitudes ranging from 300-2200m. More than 80 percent of maize in Sikkim is cultivated in mid-hills regions. The highest maize crops in Sikkim are cultivated in the south and west Sikkim. Maize is also cultivated in rice lands as a pre Kharif crop in lower hill regions. Maize will be also cultivated with pulses and beans.<sup>110</sup> There are different varieties of maize that are cultivated throughout the world like flint corn, dent corn, sweet corn, and ped

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<sup>107</sup>RavikantAvasthe, Yashida Pradhan, Khorlo Bhutia, op. cit,59.

<sup>108</sup>Jash Raj Subba ,op.cit ,p.,68.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.p.71.

<sup>110</sup>RavikantAvasthe, Yashida Pradhan, Khorlo Bhutia, op.cit.p.59.

corn.<sup>111</sup> Maize will be good in warm climates ranging from tropical to temperate region 2000m amls. Maize is successfully grown at a temperature of 15 ° C during the night and 22 °C during the day. The maize tolerates an annual rainfall from 250 - 400cm. It could be successfully grown in rainfall ranging from 60cm to 300cm. Maize can be grown in varieties of soil. It will be good on well-drained, well-aerated, deep warm loams and silt loams containing rich nutrients.<sup>112</sup> The sowing time of maize depends on the altitude. Pre- Kharif maize is commonly sown in the rice fields from mid-February to the second week of March at lower altitudes. The main season of sowing starts from mid of April.<sup>113</sup>

## **Rice**

Paddy is the second important major crop of Sikkim. It is mainly cultivated in a river valley where there is plenty of water. It requires fertile soil and an artificial irrigation system. On higher elevations, paddy is planted on terraced fields.<sup>114</sup> It has been reported that rice was first cultivated in Asia. In our country, the cultivation of rice started since time immemorial. There is a lot of archaeological evidence and references mentioning rice like Hindu Sculpture and Literature. According to De Candolle (1886) rice was first originated in South India. Vavilos(1926) suggested that the India and Burma regions are the original centers of rice.<sup>115</sup> Asian regions are the best areas for the cultivation of rice. Rice is the staple food of the Asia-Pacific region people. In India two-third of its population consumed rice.<sup>116</sup> The cultivation method of rice is divided into two-part: Upland or dry land cultivation and Low land or

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid,p.61.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid,p.62.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid,p.63.

<sup>114</sup>S.S.Chib,op.cit,p.,57

<sup>115</sup>RavikantAvasthe, Yashida Pradhan, Khorlo Bhutia, op. cit,p.173.

<sup>116</sup>Jash Raj Subba,op.cit,p.80.

puddle cultivation. Upland means rice cultivation on higher hills without irrigation and lowland means rice cultivation on low areas where water can be collected through an artificial irrigation management system.<sup>117</sup> Different varieties of rice that are cultivated in Sikkim are *Pusa, Sugandh, Geetanjali, Attey or thulo, Bachhi, Basmati, Attey or nunia, Birimphool, Champasari, Kalodhan, Kataka, Khemtey, Krishna bhog, Ghaiyadhan, Lamodhan or Barmidham, Phudungey, Sano attey or Kanchiattey or Masino attery, Taichung, etc.*<sup>118</sup>

### **Buck Wheat**

Buckwheat was originated in China. It has been believed that the North-eastern state of India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan brought Buckwheat from China. Buckwheat is the important crop of Sikkim. It is consumed in the form of bread 'dheroo'.<sup>119</sup> Buckwheat powder is highly used during the Hindu festivals like 'Navratri and Shivaratri, in Northern India.<sup>120</sup> Buckwheat is the important crop of the Himalayan region. It is cultivated in the hilly regions with an elevation ranging from 300m to 2500m. Soviet authors mentioned that it is originated either in Himalayan region of Western China or Northern India.<sup>121</sup> It is cultivated in different states of India like Manipur, West Bengal, Assam, and Himachal Pradesh. Wheat cultivation has great economic value. It is used to prepare alcoholic beverages, noodles, and porridges, etc.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid.p.89.

<sup>118</sup> RavikantAvasthe, Yashida Pradhan, Khorlo Bhutia, op. cit.

<sup>119</sup>*Sikkim Towards Fully Organic State*, Food Security & Agriculture Development Department and Horticulture & Cash Crop Development Department Government of Sikkim,2015,p.80.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid,p.82.

<sup>121</sup>Jash Raj Subba ,op.cit,p.122.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid,p.123.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid,p.123.

## CHAPTER IV

### Uses of Fermented Drinks and Beverages in Different Religious Occasions and Festivals among the Matwalis and Non Matwalis communities of Sikkim

#### 4.1.Festivals and Importance of Drinks among Different Communities in Sikkim

There are mainly two types of festivals celebrated by Sikkimese people i.e. religious festivals and social festivals. These religious festivals are also divided into different categories depending on the religion that they followed and social festivals are observed according to the ethnic group that they belonged.<sup>123</sup> *Saga Dawa, Tsuthul Dawa, Saga Dawa, Drupka Tseshi and Lhabad Duechen, Loschee Kurim, Panglhapsol, Loosong/Namsoong, Bomchu, Bum Kor, Chrim, Phola, Rum-faat, yakwo Tongnam, Tshok Tongnam, Sakaya* are the important festival celebrated by *Matwalis* Communities of Sikkim while *Dasai, Tihar, Maghe Sankranti, Sawney Sakrati, Kushey Aushey, Chaitey Dasai* are important festival celebrated by *Non-Matwalis* of Sikkim. According to J.R Subba, all festivals of the Limboo community came from the *Mundhum* narrative. *Mundhum* talks about the importance of religion of Limboo Communities. Most of the stories of the Limboo Community are came from Cultural narratives. It depicts that God creates man, food, etc. Later they forget to pray to god. So they suffer from illness. So to make god happy they started to invoke god with ritual and prayer. The *Phedangba* narrates all the stories. According to J.R Subba, there are three main ethnic groups of people who lived in Sikkim. These ethnic groups are *Bhutias, Lepchas, and Nepalīs*. According to him, the Festival occurred throughout the year in Sikkim. Religious festivals occurred in religious

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<sup>123</sup>Maitreyee Choudhury, *Sikkim Geographical Perspectives*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2006,p.34.

events while social festivals are observed individuals at home or communities together. He stated that the festival of any community is developed due to the culture that they developed. Culture is developed when people started to settle down in a particular place for a long time. There are different factors responsible for the development of culture like geographical areas, biodiversity of that areas, climatic conditions, temperature, and food habits. Most of the people of the eastern region of India are settled in the Himalayan belt, so their cultural habits are also connected to nature. So their way of worshipping, festival occasion, food habits, and clothes are connected to nature. Nature provides everything that they needed. So they worshipped nature in form of god and goddess. *Boongthing, Phedangma, Jhakri, Yeba, Lama, Pandit* played a very important role in religious events. They perform Puja and rituals during religious and social festivals. During the festival fermented items like *Jaar, rakshi*, milk, and curd are commonly used and offered to gods. The *Matwalis* Communities used *Jaar and rakshi* while *Non-Matwalis* Mommunities used milk and curd.<sup>124</sup> The different religious festivals and social festivals that are celebrated in Sikkim are:



*Figure 11: Interviewed With Jash Raj Subba.*

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<sup>124</sup>Interviewed, Jash Raj Subba, 5<sup>th</sup> Mile Tadong, Gangtok, on 16/12/2019.

## Dasai or Durga Puja

*Dasai* is one of the most important religious festivals of Hinduism. But *Dasai* is also celebrated by all three ethnic groups. It is mostly celebrated by those who followed Hinduism. During *Dasai* the houses are painted with *Rato Mato* and *Gobar*. In some houses, beautiful colors are painted on the wall of the houses. *Dasai* lasted for ten days. *Dasai* starts with the *Jamare Aushey* in which *Jamara* is sown. *Dasai* is celebrated in the month of *Karthik* i.e September –October.<sup>125</sup> *Dasai* is known by different names like *Bara Dasai*, *Vijay Dashami*, etc. It is the most important festival for *Khas Chettri* and *Bahun*. In *DasaiChandi Path* is recited for goddess *Durga*, *trisakti Mahakali*, *Mahalakshmi* and *Mahasaraswati* for 10 days. On the day of *Saptami*, they perform rituals of *Bhadrakali* and *Saraswati*. The farmer went to the field with *Chandhan*, *Akchata*, flowers and they performed Puja to Crops i.e Paddy. On this day at home, they worshipped god *Shida*, *Bhuribhaju* and *Atheney*. To conduct these rituals they need *teteypati* instead of a flower. On the same day of *Saptami* they also worshipped *Kalaratri* along with *Bhagavati* and her *Vhan* i.e tiger. After that, they sacrificed the goat, hens, buffaloes, and fish to *Devi*. On this day every family performed rituals to their *Kul* deities. The sacrifices of animals and birds are performed by *Matwalis* Communities while *Non-Matwalis* offered fruits like Coconuts, *Kubnando*, banana, *ghirwala* to their goddess. On this day they worshipped the weapons that are used in fields. The nine-day of *Dasai* is *Nawa Ratri* and the tenth days are called *Vijayadashami*. On this day *Sri Ram* victory over *Rawan*. So it is also called *Vijay-dasami*. On this day the eldest member of the family put the *tika* made of *Abir*, *Dahi*, and rice on the forehead and gave *arshirbad* i.e blessing. During the tika ceremony of boys, parents chant the following Mantra “*Ayur drone sutesriyem*

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<sup>125</sup>Interviewed, Loknath Sharma, ManebungDentam, West Sikkim, on 29/2/2020.

*Dasarathe, sutrukksheyan Raaghava, Yaishoryem Nahushe, Gatischa pawane, Manancha Duryodhane, Suaryam Shanta nava, Balam Haldare, Satyaschha Kuntissute, Bigyanam Bidure, Bhabatam, Kirtischha Narayana.*”<sup>126</sup> The above mantra is enchanted to male. This mantra is enchanted while putting Tika to the female member of the family “*Om Jayanti Mangala Kaali Bhadra Kalika Kapalani Durga Kshyama shiva dhatriswaha swadhanamo stute.*” *Dahi*, banana, and *Chura* are the favorite dishes of Chettri and Bahun during Dasai. While the *Matwalis* Communities consumed *Jaar*, *raksi*, *rum beer*, *Kinema* during Dasai. The *Jaar* and *rakshi* are also taken as a gift while visiting the house of relatives by *Matwalis* Communities during *Dasai*. While *Non-Matwalis* will take Sugar, butter, curd, milk, and Cheese as a gift.<sup>127</sup>

## **Tihar**

*Tihar* is also known as *Diwali* and it is celebrated in a different part of India. In *Tihar* Mother Goddess *Lakshmi* is worshipped. This festival is celebrated in the month of Karthik i.e. October-November.<sup>128</sup> *Non-Matwalis* Communities also called *Tihar* as *Deepawali* or *Dewali*. It is the festival of light and flowers. According to Abi Chandra Dahal, *Tihar* came exactly after the fifteen-day of *Dasai*. *Tihar* lasted for five days. The first day of *Tihar* is called *Kaktihar* or *crow tihar*. In *Kak Tihar*, a crow is worshipped as a god with flowers and served with milk, curd, and food. Hindus consider *Kak* as the Messenger of *Yama*. Still in the rural village today it is believed that *Kak* brings a message whether it is bad or good. The second day of *Tihar* is called *Kukur tihar* or *dog tihar*. On this day dog is worshipped and served

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<sup>126</sup> Folk Tales of Sikkim, *Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department Government of Sikkim*, 2015, p.40-41

<sup>127</sup> Interviewed, Loknath Sharma, ManebungDentam, West Sikkim, on 29/2/2020.

<sup>128</sup> Maitreyee Choudhury, *Op.cit*, p.35.



with good food. It is believed that the dog is also the *Messenger* of *Yama* and it is also the bodyguard of the house. Dog protects the house from theft and wild animals when no one is in the house. The third day of *Tihar* is called the *Ghai Tihar* or *Cow Tihar*. On *Ghai Tihar*, Cow is worshipped in the form of Mother Goddess because she gives milk like a mother. A cow is also called the *Gaumata*. On the night of *Gai Tihar*, the people worshipped to goddess *Lakshmi*. It is believed that goddess *Lakshmi* is the god of wealth. During this night they performed *Puja* to their expensive items like gold, silver, utensils, etc. The night of *Lakshmi Puja* is very dark, so the house is decorated with beautiful flowers and colorful lights. On the night of *Lakshmi Puja*, the girls sing *Bhailini* and the boys play *Bhailo*. The fourth day of *Tihar* is called *Gorutihar* or *ox tihar*. On this day people worshipped to Ox. It is also called *Hali Tihar*. They considered Ox as an important member of the family which supports agriculture. On the night of *Goru Tihar*, the boys play *Dausi*. The *Dausi* is play in a traditional dress like *Daura Shural*, *Nepali thopi* along with musical instruments like *Madal*. At the village level young youth also conduct the singing and dancing Program. In some places, football, Valley-ball, and cricket tournaments are also conducted. The last day of the *Tihar* is called *Bhai Tika*. It is also called *Deutya*. On this day the brother goes into the house of her sister to put *Tika* and *Phulmala*. The *Phul Mala* is made of *Saipatri* or *Gowadari*. The colorful *Tika* is put on the forehead of the brother. In *Tihar* curd is the most important item used to make *Tika* mixing with *Abir* and *Acheta*. The curd is also served in the form of refreshing items by *Non-Matwalis Communities*. *Sel roti* is cooked on the day of *Bhai Tika* and it is the most important food item of *Tihar*. While *Matwalis Communities* used *Jaar*, *rakshi*, *Tongba*, *Rum*, *Beer*, etc.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Interviewed, AbichandraDahal, 94 Years, Gerethang, West Sikkim on 29/12/2019.



Figure 12: Interviewed with Abichandra Dahal, Gerethang, West Sikkim.

### Maghe Sankranti

*Maghe Sankranti* is one of the most popular and common festivals of the *Non-Matwalis* Communities of Sikkim. This is the important festival of *Chettri*, *Bahun*, and *Newar* Communities. Some of the *Non-Matwalis communities* also celebrate the *Maghe Sakrati* like *Limboo*, *Rai*, *Tamang*, *Gurung*, etc.<sup>130</sup> *Maghe Sankrati* is also called as *Makar Sankrati*. *Mage Sankrati* falls on the first day of *Magh* month. During *Maghe Sankrati* People went to different holy rivers or tri river juncture and take baths and pray in temples. Some Communities performed animal's sacrifices during *Maghe Sankranti*.<sup>131</sup>

In the morning of *Maghe Sankranti* rituals and *Puja Path* are performed with the help of *Purohit* by *Chettri* and *Bahun* communities and in the case of *Mathawalis* communities rituals are conducted with the help of *Phedangma*, *Yeba*, or *Lamas*. During ritual Milk, curd, flower, and fruits are needed. In *Maghe Sakrati* tubers is boil in every house and it is the special dish of this day. The tubers of *Symbol tarul*, *Sarkarkanda*, *Ghartarul*, *Bantarul*, and *Bhagur* are boiled. These tubers are

<sup>130</sup> Interviewed Ran Bahadur Pradhan, 60 Years old, Dentam, West Sikkim on 2/3/2020.

<sup>131</sup> Folk Tales of Sikkim, Op.cit, p. 38-39.

consumed with *Milk, Dahi, Mohi*, or tea. In some houses, *Kheer* and *Dhakaney* is also cook. In some houses, *laddu* and *Phuralo* are also made. In Sikkim huge *Mela* are conducted near the river *Teesta* and *Rangit* during *MahgeSakrati*.<sup>132</sup>

### **Chatey Dasai**

*Chatey Dasai* occupies a special place in *Chettri and Bahun* Communities in Sikkim. It is called *Chatey Dasai* because it falls on the month of *Chait* month of the Nepali calendar. On these day *Puja Path* are perform in *Devithan*. There was a saying that main *Dasai* was celebrated in the month of *Chait* but due to some reasons it is shifted to *Ashoj and Karthik* month.<sup>133</sup> According to Abi Chandra Dahal, *Chaitey Dasai* was shifted due to the failure of crops and scarcity of food in *chaith* month. So, the people could not celebrate the festival and it is shifted to *Karthik* month where there is abundant of food crops. Still today at the village level the people gave importance to *Chatey Dasai* as importance as *Bara Dasai*. During *Chatey Dasai Puja Path* are conducted in every house with the help of *Purohit* and in some places, sacrifices are also performed. During *Chetey Dasai* red *tika* is made with *Chamaal* and *Dahi*. This *Tika* is swear by father and mother to their children. Special dishes like *Kheer, Dhakaney* are cook in the house of *Chettri and Bahun* while meat, *jaar, rakshi, rum, beer* are consumed by *Matwalis* Communities.<sup>134</sup>

### **Sawney Sangkrati**

*Sawney Sangkrati* is one of the most important festivals of *Chettri and Bahun* Communities of Sikkim and Nepal. This is an important festival of Nepalese Communities. *Sawney Sankranti* is celebrated on the first day of *Sawan* month. It is

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<sup>132</sup>Interviewed, Loknath Sharma, ManebungDentam, West Sikkim, on 29/2/2020

<sup>133</sup> Folk Tales of Sikkim, Op.cit, p.39.

<sup>133</sup>Folk Tales of Sikkim, Op.cit, p.39.

<sup>134</sup> Interviewed, AbichandraDahal, 94 Years, Gerethang, West Sikkim on 29/12/2019.

also known as *karkat Sangkrati*. From the day of *Sawney Sangkrati* the sun shifted from *Uttara* to *Dakshin* and day become shorter and night becomes longer. From the *Swaney Sangkrati* the season of *Path puja and Shraddha*, etc starts. The *Chettri and Bahun* Communities take fasting of *Shiva* every Monday in *Sawan* month.<sup>135</sup>

### **Sonam Lasoong**

*Sonam Lasoong* is the main festival of Sikkimise Bhutia. *Sonam Lasoong* is also known as the farmer's New Year. In these festivals, they offered their first fruits and crops to their god and goddess. They also expressed their gratitude to their god and goddess for the good harvest of the previous year. During this festival, they asked their gods to bless them with protection, prosperity, and a good harvest.<sup>136</sup> *Sonam Lasoong* is also the festival of *Lepchas*. They celebrated harvesting festivals. During this festival, they offered their harvest to their god and goddess. This festival falls on the first day of the eleventh month of the Tibetan calendar.<sup>137</sup>

### **Tendong Lho Rum Faat**

This is the festival observed by the *Lepchas* of Sikkim to Honour Mountain *Mount Tendong*. This festival falls in August. During this festival, the *Lepchas* pray to their goddess and *Boongthing* performs prayers to *Mount Tendong*. There is a story in *Lepchas* that how *Tendong Lho Rum Faat* festival origin. *Lepchas* believed that thousands of years ago there occurred large natural calamities i.e earthquakes that damage the lake. From the lake, two rivers originated *Teesta and Rangeet*. The two creatures *Parilbu* (king serpent) and *Tutfo* (mountain bird) guided two new rivers *Teesta* and *Rangeet* up to Pujok (Peshok in West Bengal). River *Teesta* was

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<sup>135</sup>*Folk Tales of Sikkim*, Op.cit, p.39-40.

<sup>136</sup>*Splendor of Sikkim*, op. cit, p.19.

<sup>137</sup>Brigadier Kuldip Singh Gulia, op.cit.p.79.

guided by *Parilbu* and river *Rangeet* was guided by *Tutfo*. River *Teesta* reached its destination much earlier than river *Rangeet*. The river *Rangeet* was guided by a bird, which halted several places in search of food. So it gets late. River *Rangeet* was angry for reaching late in Pujok than river *Teesta*. So it began to flow back to its source which caused flood in *MayelLyang* (earlier name of Sikkim by Lepchas). It damaged the life of the *Lepchas* and animals that were living in that *Mayel Lyang*. So Lepchas climbed in the top hills and pray to their god for help. Their god *Itbu Rum* appeared at the top of the Mountain *Mount Tendong* to help the people. So till today, the *Lepchas* thank *Mount Tendong* from where the god appeared.<sup>138</sup> So during this festival, they offered *Che* to their god.

### **Rum Faat**

*Rum Faat* is the important festival of *Lepchas*. This festival takes place every year after the harvest of crops. The *Boonthing* plays a major role and makes prayers to their divinities during *Rum Faat*. This festival is celebrated by the *Lepchas* of *Sungthung* villages. All the villagers participate and they bring rice, millet, ghee, eggs, and fruits available to them during *Rum faat*. The offering is always taking place at the tops of the hill and in forest areas. The *Bongthing* invokes the names of different mountains and offers *Che* to the different deities. This festival is celebrated for the protection, prosperity, and happiness of the whole village.<sup>139</sup>

### **Yakwo Tungnam and Tshok Tongnam**

*YakwoTongnam* and *Tshok Tongnam* are the two important festivals celebrated by *Limboo* dominated areas of Nepal and Sikkim. *Yakwo Tongnam* is the sowing

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<sup>138</sup>Sikkim the Hidden fruit valley,p.118.

<sup>139</sup>Florance Lepcha, 27 years old Rinchengbung, west Sikkim on 17/2/2019.

festival that is celebrated during the sowing season and *Tshok Tongnam* is the harvesting festival that is celebrated after the harvest of the crops. *Limboo* Community believed that *Tagera Niwaphungma* is the supreme god of the *Limboo* Community who gave seeds and teaches the method of cultivation. So they pray to him before cultivating crops and offered him *Tongba*, *rakshi*, *Jaar*, fruits, etc to express gratitude. They take permission from their god to cultivate the crops. They had believed that prayer to God will protect the crop from birds, insects, and natural calamities. Through their prayer and ritual, they try to make their god happy. They had believed that if they did not perform the ritual the seeds will not germinate. The seeds will decay or crops will be attacked by insects, pests, or wild animals. *Yakwo Tongnam* rituals can be performed by the head of the family or with the help of *Phedangba*. In some villages, these rituals can be celebrated in a community gathering. After seven to eight months the crops are ready to harvest and they again celebrated a harvesting festival which they called *Tshok Tongnam*. The whole of December is the month of the harvesting season of the *Limboo* Community. So the whole of December they celebrate the festival. They had a traditional system of making fermented *Jaar* and *rakshi* from the harvested crops and offered to god. Earlier this ritual was only practiced individually at home but now a day it is celebrated in the form of huge festivals by *Limboo* communities. They had a belief that if they consumed before offering to god they will suffer from different illnesses like being born blind, deaf, etc. This offering is performed with the help of *Phedangma*. *Tshok Tongnam* is celebrated every year by the *Limboo* community. In 2019, the *Tshok Tongnam* was celebrated at two places in Sikkim. The first one was in Ranipool and the second one was at Sarmasa garden.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>Interviewed, Amber Singh Subba, 28, years, Dentam, West Sikkim on, 14/3/2021.

## 4.2 Domestic Ritual and Importance of Fermented Drinks and Beverages

### Ghoot Dhup

*Chettri* and *Bahun* performed *Ghoot Dhup* twice a year. The first is celebrated on the month of *Baishk Purnima* which they called *Uvauli* and the second is celebrated on the month of *Mungshir Purnima* which they called *Udhauli*. On the day of *Ghot Dhup* they cooked *Kheer* and offered to God like *Bhuma*, *Bhuri*, *Baju* and *Shikari*.<sup>141</sup> So *Ghoot Dhup* occupies a special position in the society of Hindus. *Ghoot Dhup* rituals are performed both by *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* Communities of Sikkim. *Non-Matwalis* Communities especially *Chettri* and *Bahun* performed *Ghot Dhup* simply with the help of *Purohit* while the *Non-Matwalis* communities like *Limboo*, *Gurung*, and *Rai* performed with the help of *Phedangma*, *Yaba*, *Bijwa*, or *Jhakri*. The *Ghot Dhoop* is performed for well being of the cattle. In village areas, cattles are considered as one of the important family members and they are also the source of wealth.<sup>141</sup>

### Teej

*Teej* is one of the most important festivals of *Chettri* and *Bahun*. *Teej* is celebrated for four days. In *Teej*, they worshipped to god *Shiva* and also performed entertainment activities like singing and dancing. There is an old traditional system of *Sangani* singing and dancing. On the day of *Teej*, *Chettri* and *Bahun* Communities cooked special and favorite dishes like *Kheer* and *Dhanakey*.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>Lok Nath Sharma, Op.cit.

<sup>142</sup> Folk tales of Sikkim, op.cit.p.43.

## **Kushey Aushey and Nagpanchami**

*Kushey Aushey and Nag Panchami* is two important rituals performed by Chettri and Bahun communities in Sikkim, Darjeeling and Nepal where chettri and bahun communities mainly dominated these areas in term of population. Kushey aushey is celebrated in the month of august-September. During Kushey aushey the purohita carry *Kush* and place it on the houses of their peoples. The purohita chants mantras while placing the *Kush* on the railing of the house. After the ritual is over, the head family of the house served purohita with *Dan* and *Dakshina* with tika on forehead. *Kushey-aushey* is also known as the father's day in Hindu society. *Nag Panchami* is also a similar ritual like *Kushey- aushey*. In *Nagpanchami* the people offer prayer to *Nag* i.e snake. The *Purohita* paste photo of *Nag* in the doors of the people in the morning of *Nagpanchami*. These rituals are performed for well being of the people.<sup>143</sup>

## **Ghar Puja**

*Ghar Puja* is the main domestic rituals of both *Matwalis* and *Non-Matwalis* Communities of Sikkim. *Chettri* and *Bahun* performed *Ghar Puja* with the direction of *Pandit* while *Bhutias*, *Lepchas*, and *Limboos* performed with the help of *Lamas*, *Boongthing*, and *Phedangba* respectively. The *Pandits* and *Lamas* read different holy texts while *Boongthing* and *Phedangba* chant their own *mantra* during *Ghar Puja*. The guests and relatives are invited during *Ghar Puja* and they are served with *Curd*, *milk*, *Selroti*, *Kheer* in the case of *Chettri* and *Bahun* while *jaar*, *rakshi* and *tongba* are served in the case of *Matwalis* Communities. The main purpose of performing *ghar puja* is to protect the

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<sup>143</sup> Interviewed, Kamal Sharma, 31 years, Gerethang West Sikkim, on 10/3/2021.



house from natural calamities like earthquakes, landslides, floods, etc, and also for well being of the family.

### **Phola**

*Phola* is a kind of worshipping one own's ancestors. This ritual is observed by both *Lepchas* and *Bhutias* of Sikkim. The *Lepchas* of Sikkim also called this ritual by the name of "*Lee Rum Faat*". Basically, the head of the lineage is worshipped. In this celebration, the "*tormas*" i.e effigies are made to all the ancestors. The *Puja* is performed by the senior-most member of the particular clan. Normally the *Puja* '*Phola*' is observed every 15th day of the first month of the third month of the Tibetan calendar when the crops like wheat and buckwheat are harvested. The first harvests of the crops were worshipped in the names of the ancestors. Similarly when the rice is first harvested then the first rice will be offered to their ancestors. But such an offer will be only symbolic.<sup>144</sup>

### **Nauran**

*Nauran* is the naming ceremony of the newborn child. The naming ceremony of *Chettri* and *Bahun* is conducted by *Purohit*. In *Nauran* there will be two names of the child. One is the hidden name and the other is the calling name. The hidden name is sacred and it is only called during *Puja* Ceremony. *Nauran* is held on the fifth, seventh, or ninth day when the boy is born in the family and it is held on the third or fifth if a female child is born in the family. The *priest* performs the *puja* and prepares *Cheena* during *Nauran*.<sup>145</sup> The naming or birth ceremony of *Kulung rai* is conducted by *Shamans* who are commonly known as *Mongpa*. The *Mongpa* purifies

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<sup>144</sup> P.T Gyatso, *The History, Religion, Culture and Tradition of Bhutia Communities*, P.T. GyamptoShomoon House 31A, National Highway Gangtok, Sikkim, 2011 p., 54-57.

<sup>145</sup> Lok Nath Sharma, Op.cit.

the house, Mother, and newborn baby by sprinkling locally fermented beer during *Nauran* Ceremony.<sup>146</sup>

### **Bhat Khoi**

This ceremony is performed when the first teeth of the child are grown. Till then, the child is feed with the milk of the mother. This ceremony is performed by the family relatives. In the Tamang community, it is called *Kan Chwaba* or *Kan Waba* (rice feeding ceremony). It is performed when the baby is 5-6 months old. In this ceremony friends and relatives are invited and they are served food and drinks. They present gifts to the child. The lama performed the *puja* during the *Chwaba* Ceremony in the house of the *Tamang* community.<sup>147</sup>

### **Chewar and Kanchedai**

*Chewar* is the haircutting ceremony of a child. This ceremony is performed when the child is three or five years old. The maternal uncle cut the first hair of a child. Similarly, *Kanchedai* isa ceremony performed when a child is two-four years old. During this ceremony both the ears of a child are hole with the help of needles. In the hole, a thread is tied. Later girl child wears jewelley on her ears. During this ceremony family, relatives and friends are invited. They are served with fermented beverages like *Jaar*, *rakshi*, *rum*, *beer* in the case of *Matwalis* Communities while *Non-Matwalis* Communities are served with tea, milk, *Dahi*, etc.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup>Sangeeta Rai, *KulungRais Of Sikkim: A Socio-Cultural Study*, MPhil Thesis,2016.,p.46.

<sup>147</sup>Anjana Tamang, *The Tamang community of Sikkim* , S.B Nangia,A.P.H Publishing Corporation 4435-35/7, Ansari Road,Darya Ganj New Delhi, 2020,p.56.

<sup>148</sup>Interviewed, LakmanSubba, 27 years, Sombaria, West Sikkim on 25/3/2021.

## Janau

This ceremony is only performed on boys. This ceremony is practiced in those ethnic groups who follow the *Hindu* or *Hindu* life cycle. *Janau* Ceremony is also popularly known as *Brathmandra*. This ritual is performed on those boys who are belonging the age of five to nine years. In these ceremonies, a thread is placed in their body. After *Brathmandra* the boy has to follow the specific duties and moral codes. The priest tied the *Janau* and whispers mantra on their ears. The powerful mantra has to be chanted each morning after bathing. During *Brathmandra* one or two day *Puja* path are performed with the help of *Purohit* in the house.<sup>149</sup>

### 4.3: Marriages and Importance of Fermented Drinks and Beverages

Marriage is one of the most important socially accepted cultures of the universe. “Broadly, Marriage may be defined as a culturally approved relationship of one man and one woman (Monogamy), or two or more women (polygyny), or one woman and two or more men (polyandry) in which there is a cultural endowment of sexual intercourse between the marital partners of the opposite sex and generally, expectation that children to be born of the relationship will have a right socially recognized father”<sup>150</sup> In the post-Vedic period we see four types of marriage i.e *Brahma*, *Gandharva*, *Assur*, and *Rakshas*. Among these four types, only *Brahmana* marriage was performed through the chanting of mantras and practices of *Yajnas*. There are texts like *Yagyabalka* and *Manu* which cited that there are eight types of marriage in early society i.e *Brahma*, *daiba*, *Arya*, *Praiyapatya*, *Assur*, *Gandharva*, *Rakshya*, and *Paishch*. The *Gandharva* is the love marriage. This

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<sup>149</sup> Interviewed Kamal Sharma, 31 years, Gerethang West Sikkim, on 10/3/2021.

<sup>150</sup> Tamo Mihang M.C Behera, *Marriage in Tribal Societies (Cultural Dynamics and Social Realities)*, Office Bookwell Sales Office 24/4800. Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi, India, 2007, p.1

marriage was commonly practiced by *Kshatriya* and sometimes they also practice *Brahmana* marriage. People who belong to higher *Varna* order follow *Brahmana* or *Gandharva* marriage.<sup>151</sup> According to SukbirSubba, the marriage of *Matwalis* Communities is celebrated in a large and small manner. Small marriages are conducted inside the house and large marriages are performed outside the house. Marriage also depends on the economic status of the family. Small marriages are conducted with the presence of old people and relatives only while big marriages are conducted by inviting whole villagers. According to him, there are three types of marriage practice among the *Matwalis Communities* of Sikkim i.e *Magi beha*, *Chori beha* and *Jaribeha*.

***Magi beha*** is popularly known as arrange marriage in the Nepali language and *Nuga Making* in the Limboo language. In the case of *Maghebeha* two people from the boy's side will go with two bottles of *rakshi* for the marriage proposal in the house of the girl. This two-person is called *Kaley* or middle man. If the parents of the girl accept the proposal they will keep the *rakshi* and fix the date of a marriage ceremony. After the date is fixed both the families start to prepare for a marriage ceremony. Firstly they start to cook millet to make fermented *Jaar*, *rakshi* and *tongba* for the marriage day. During the *Janti* procession, the boy family takes gifts like clothes, liquors, eatables items, fruits, money, etc in the house of the girl family.

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<sup>151</sup>TamoMihang M.C Behera, Op.cit,p.25.



Figure 13: Maghi Beha of Limboo Community

**Chori beha** is also called love marriage in the Nepali language. It is the most common form of marriage in today's society. In this type of marriage, the boy takes the girl to his house without informing the girl's parents. Later the information will be taken to the girl's parents with the help of a middle man called *Kaley*. The middlemen went to the house of a girl with two bottles of *rakshi* to fix the date of marriage. The other system is the same as *Magi beha*.



Figure 14: Chori Beha

**Jari beha** - means the marriage made through the fine payment. In this system, the boy takes the wife of the other. The disputes are settled with the help of the old people of the village. The boy has to pay cash along with two bottles of *rakshi* and *tongba* to a formal husband.<sup>152</sup> According to AbichandraDahal, there are only two types of marriage practice by *Non-Matwalis* Communities of Sikkim i.e *Chori*

<sup>152</sup>Interviewed, Bir Hang Subba, 27 years, Pokhari Dara West Sikkim on 20/1/2021.

*beha* and *Maghibeha*. Earlier *Maghebeha* was commonly practiced but now a day *Chori beha* is commonly practiced. The same *gotra* of boy and girl are not allowed to conduct a marriage ceremony. During the time of marriage, the curd is the main item that has to take in the house of a girl during *Janti* procession. Two small *theka* of *dahi* have to take as a gift during the day of marriage in the case of Chettri and Bahun.

#### **4.4 Death Ritual of Matwalis and Non-Matwalis Communities of Sikkim**

Death is the ultimate reality of life. The dead person is worshipped in the form of an ancestral God every year. Many rituals are performed during the death of a person. *Non-Matwalis* Communities especially *Chettri* and *Bahun* considered the river a sacred place and the funeral always takes on the bank of the river. The mourning death of *Chettri* and *Bahun* is practice for 13 days. During this period, they were abstaining from taking salt, mustard oil, tomatoes, onion, in their diet. They only take simple food. Mostly they take fruits during funeral rituals. During the funeral, the deceased son shaves their head with blades. The *Shradha* ceremony is observed every year by the son of a deceased person. *Shardha* rituals are performed with the help of *Pandit*.<sup>153</sup>

There are two types of funeral practiced by *Matwalis communities* like *rais*, *Limboos*, *Bhutias*, and *Lepchas* in Sikkim. First is disposal through burning in fire and second is cremation by digging land. The funeral rituals are performed with the help of *Bijwa*, *Phedangma*, *Boongthing*, or *lamas*. In the case of the *Limboo* community on the disposal place, they placed *Jaar* or wine, drinking cup, *Khukari*, metal plate, etc. These items are placed for the departed soul of a deceased person.

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<sup>153</sup> Interviewed, Santa Kumar Sharma, Manabung, West Sikkim on 27/2/2020.

The *Chautaro* and *Dharmachala* are also constructed on the name of the deceased person during the time of the funeral.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Interviewed, Bir Hang Subba, 27 years, Pokhari Dara, West Sikkim on 20/1/2021.

## CONCLUSION

Fermentation is the process of digesting certain substances that lead to the chemical conversion of organic substances into simple compounds. The process of fermentation techniques started in the Neolithic period. The archaeological evidence shows that this art was developed 6000 years ago. The Rig Veda also mentioned fermented items like *Soma* and *Sura*. Similarly, Kautilya's Arthashastra also discussed fermented items like *Medaka*, *Prasana*, *Avasa*, *Arista*, and *Madhu*. These fermented items are prepared from fruits. Old Testaments also discussed fermented items like- *Cheese* which was used by Greeks and Romans about 2500 years ago.

Sikkim is a small state in terms of geography but it is home to diverse communities and thus diverse food cultures. Fermentation of available agro-resources including plants and animals into edible food products and beverages is very common and widely practiced in the Himalayan regions of India (Tamang 2010). All of these fermented food articles are region/ tribe specific and have a socio-cultural identity as well as a preparation method. Every community has a different way of producing fermented food and the process of preparing fermented food is a part of their historical heritage. The traditional knowledge of fermentation gives us an insight into their knowledge of survival under harsh conditions thrown up by the ecosystem, their idea of traditional medicine, their knowledge of resource management.

The study dwelled into the diversities of traditional practices in the preparation of ethnic fermented drinks and beverages of Sikkim amongst its tribes and communities and also attempted to trace the historicity of the practices.

The population of Sikkim comprised of various ethnic groups. These ethnic groups are divided into two categories like Matwalis and Non Matwalis communities.



Matwalis being those who consume alcoholic drinks and Non Matwalis are those who traditionally abstain from it.

Agriculture and Animal husbandry are the two important economic activities of the Sikkimese people. The different communities that dominated Sikkim are Bhutia, Lepchas, Chettri, Bahun, Rai, Tamang, Manger, Gurung, Limboo, Pradhan, etc. Each community follows its own culture and customs. The origin of fermented products in Sikkim is based on accidental discoveries which developed into oral tradition, to be transmitted from one generation to another in the form of stories based on folklores among both Matwalis and Non-Matwalis communities of Sikkim. Northeast alone produced more than 250 types of ethnic fermented food in India. These fermented foods are divided into milk-based fermented products, cereals-based fermented foods, and beverages vegetables-based fermented foods. The important milk-based fermented products are *dahi*, *chuppri*, *chhu*, *somar*, *philu*, *cream*, *butter*, *cheese*, *kheer*, etc. similarly cereals-based fermented foods and beverages are *Marcha*, *Kodakojaar*, *Ghaukojaar*, *Makaikojaar*, *Simboltarulkojaar* and *rakshi* and the vegetables based fermented items are *gundruk*, *sinki* etc. With interviewed conducted at various places of Sikkim, I came to know that there are different tools that are used during the fermentation processes. The tools have their own local names. There are two processes of consumption of *jaar* in Sikkim. The first process is called the *tongba* system and the second system is called the *chanwa* system. The people of Sikkim also produced fruit wine. Through the field survey conducted at west Sikkim, I came to know that fruits like orange, guava, and pineapple are commonly used for the preparation of fruit wine. The fermentation process of fruit wine is similar to *jaar* fermenting process but it takes a longer period. The people of Sikkim also cultivate

different crops like paddy, maize, wheat, soybean, buckwheat, etc. These crops are consumed in the form of foods or to make local beverages items.

In Sikkim, two types of festivals are celebrated by the different communities of Sikkim i.e religious festivals and social festivals. The different festivals that are celebrated in Sikkim are *Saga Dawa*, *Panglhapsol*, *Bomchu*, *Losoong*, *Tshok Tongnam*, *Yakoo Tongnam*, *Sakawa* etc. These festivals are celebrated by Matwalis communities of Sikkim like Bhutia, Lepchas, Rai, and Limboos. Similarly, *Durga puja*, *Tihar*, *Sawney Sakrati*, *Maghey Sakrati*, *Chatey Dasai* are celebrated by Non-Matwalis communities of Sikkim. In both these festivals, fermented items are used. In different religious and social festivals *Phedangba*, *Yeba*, *lamas*, and *Pandits* played an important role. The people of Sikkim also used fermented items in different domestic rituals like *Ghoot dhoop*, *Teej*, *Ghar puja*, *Kushey aushey*, *Nag panchami*, *Phola*, *Nauran*, *Bhatkhai*, *Chewar*, *Brathmandra*, Marriage and death funerals.

In Sikkim due to the lack of proper written historical records field survey is the best method to get the correct and accurate information from the people. The researcher has to depend on oral narratives, folk stories, memories, etc. In Sikkim, there are many areas of studies left untouched where a researcher can explore the knowledge and information.

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## **INTERVIEWS**

Abichandra Dahal (m), 94 years, farmer, Gerethang, west Sikkim, on 5/7/2020.

Chungkit Lepcha (f), 46 years, Housewife, Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim, on 17/2/2019.

Norkit Lepcha (f), 23 years, Housewife, Hee-Gaythang Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim, on 17/2/2019.

R.B Gurung (m), 47 years, farmer, Hathidunga West Sikkim, on 2/3/2019.

Duprada Sharma (f), 69 years, Housewife, Gerethang, West Sikkim, on 23/7/2020.

Azing Lepcha (m), 56 years, fruit wine farm owner, Rinchengbong, West Sikkim, on 2/3/2019.

Loknath Sharma (m), 70 years, farmer, ManeybungDentam, West Sikkim, on 29/2/2020.

Ran Bahadur Pradhan (m), farmer, 60 Years, Dentam, West Sikkim, on 2/3/2020.

Florance Lepcha (m), 27 years, farmer, Hathidunga, West Sikkim, on 17/2/2019.

Sukbir Subba (m), 43 years, Phedangba, Gerethang, west Sikkim, on 14/3/2021.

Jash Raj Subba (m), 5th Mile, Tadong, writer, Gangtok, on 16/2/2019.

Lakman Subba (m), 27 years, students, Sombaria, West Sikkim, 25/3/2021.

Amber Singh Subba(m), teacher, Dentam West Sikkim, on 25/3/2021.

Kamal Sharma (m), 31 years, teacher, Gerethang, West Sikkim, on 10/3/2021.

Birhang Subba (m), 28 years, student, Pokhari Dara, West Sikkim, on 20/1/2020.

Santa Kumar Sharma (m), 43 years, social worker, Dentam, West Sikkim, on 27/2/2020.

## GLOSSARY

*Mundhum*- Oral Narratives of Limboo community.

*Phedangba/yeba*-They are the Limboo priests who performed rituals.

*Boongthing*-They are Lepcha priests.

*Matwalis*- Important communities of Sikkim like Rai, Limboo, Tamang, etc.

*Non-Matwalis*- Important communities of Sikkim like Chhetri, Bahunetc

*Jarn/ rakshi*- It is a kind of alcoholic beverage made through the process of fermentation.

*Kheer*- It is sweet food item made from milk.

*Dhakaney*- It is food items made from milk.

*Devithan* – Holy place where people performed puja.

*Itbu-Rum*- God of Lepcha community.

*Che*- fermented alcoholic beverage made from millet. The term *Che* is commonly used by the Lepchas communities of Sikkim.

*Tagara Niwaphungma*- God of the Limboo community.

*Shikari*- God of a forest.

*Udhauli*- winter solstice, when the gods are in the lower regions.

*Ubhauri*- Summer solstice, when the gods are in the upper regions.

*Sangani*- A dance performed by Nepali communities during a religious festival.



*Dan /Dakshina-* These are a kind of charity given to the priest.

*Selroti-* It is a food item that is round and ringed shaped.

*Nauran-* It is the naming ceremony of a newborn baby.

*Chewar-* Hair cutting ceremony of the child.

*Bhat khoi-* Food feeding ceremony of the child.

*Janau-* It is a sacred thread worn by Chettri and Bahun communities in their body.

*Biha-* Marriage

*Janti-* A group of people involved in a marriage ceremony.

*Kaley-* Man who arrange marriage ceremony.

*Chowtaro-* A structure made from cement and stone in the name of a deceased person.

*Gundruk/ sinki-* A kind of solid fermented food item made from a vegetable. It is sour.

*Dahi-* Curd.

*Ghot-* Cowshed.

*Mesu-* It is fermented food items made from bamboo shoots.

*Chhurpi-* It is a solid fermented food item made from milk.