

SIKKIM

The Story of
its Integration
with India

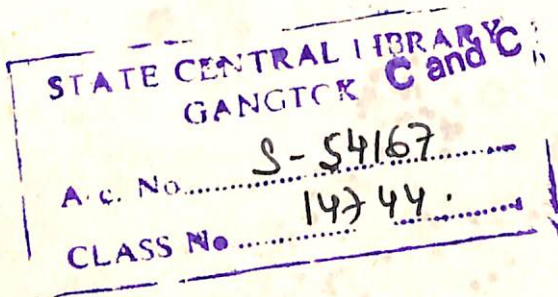
P Raghunadha Rao

S I K K I M

THE STORY OF ITS INTEGRATION
WITH INDIA



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PREFACE

Ever since India became independent the people of Sikkim wanted that their State should accede to the Indian Union so that they can join the main stream of the Indian life. But their aspirations remained unfulfilled till April 1975.

In 1950, the India-Sikkim Treaty was signed whereby the Sikkim continued to be the protectorate of India. But in Internal affairs Sikkim enjoyed autonomy. Taking advantage of this, the Chogyal not only continued his autocratic rule but also aspired to become an independent monarch. The Sikkimese had to wage a long and incessant struggle to frustrate the designs of the Chogyal.

I have tried to highlight not only the struggle of the people of Sikkim for democratization of their administration and closer political association with india, but also the international intrigue to embarass India by siding with the feudal regime.

In the preparation of this book, I have been encouraged consistently by Dr. V.M. Reddi, Professor and Head, Department of History, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati to whom my thanks are due. I am also thankful to my wife, Mrs. Sarada, without whose active interest and encouragement I could not have done this work. My thanks are due to my colleague Sri A.R. Ramachandra Reddy for preparing the Index. Finally my thanks are due to Mrs. Rani Kapoor and Shri Surendra Kapoor, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, for getting the book neatly printed and expeditiously published.

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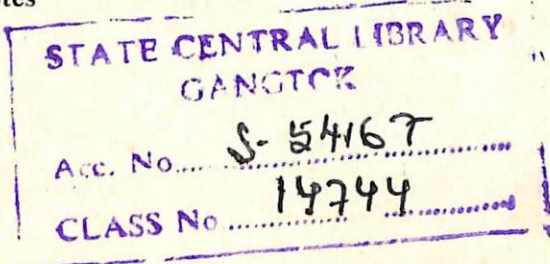
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INTRODUCTION

Sikkim situated in the Eastern Himalaya, is the 22nd State of India. It has an area of 2,818 sq miles. The name Sikkim is derived from two Limbu words meaning "New Palace". The Tibetans called it Drend Zong, or the land of rice, while it was known to the Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the country as "Nye-ma-el" or heaven.

It is located within 28° 07 ft 48 inches and 27° 04 ft 46 inches north latitude and 88° 00 ft 58 inches and 88° 55 ft 25 inches east longitude, and is bounded on the north by Tibet, on the east by Tibet and Bhutan and on the south by the Darjeeling district of West Bengal and on the west by Nepal. It lies south of the main Himalayan range. Except on the south it is separated from its neighbours by a wall of great mountains ranging from 10,000 ft to 28,000 ft in height. However, these mountains contain certain important passes. The Chola ranges which form the eastern boundary of Sikkim with Tibet, contains the two important passes of Natu La (15,512 ft) and Jelep La (13,354 ft). Similarly, the Singalila range, which forms the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal, contains the important pass of Chiabhanjan (10,320 ft). The highest peaks are Kanchen Junga (28,140 ft), Kinchinjhan (22,700 ft), Siniolchu (22,620 ft) and Chomiomo (22,386 ft).¹

The country can be divided into two geographical parts: northern and southern. Tangu can be taken as making the dividing line between the two parts. The southern part consists of dense forests and precipitous hills. It is sparsely populated and the villages are few and far between. The northern part is comparatively a more open and undulating country. In this region good pastures and pine forests are found.

The climate has great variations and every variety, ranging from sub-tropical to temperate and arctic is encountered. The rainfall is heavy and averages 137 inches a year at Gangtok, the capital. The important river of Sikkim is the Tista, which is formed by the confluence of the Lachen and Lachung in the north of Sikkim.²

Sikkim is noted for its floral wealth and an estimated 4,000 varieties of flowering plants and shrubs are found. In the sub-tropical lower valleys, several varieties of bamboo, ferns and tree ferns, pandanus and orchids are found. In addition to these, valuable trees like sal are also found. In the temperate zone and in the northern valley, forests of oak, chestnut, maple and pine are found.³

Abundant varieties of wild animals are found in different parts of the country. The Himalayan bear is generally found in the altitudes ranging from 4,000 ft to 11,000 ft. Above this altitude the brown bear is habitat. Snow leopard is also found though it is fast vanishing. In addition to the wild animals, there are about 500 species of birds and nearly 600 species of butterflies.

The geological survey of the country is not yet completed, but it is generally believed that copper, coal, graphite, gypsum are to be found in large quantities.

Mining and fruit preservation are the principal industries of Sikkim. Copper is mined at Rangpo by the Sikkim Mining Corporation, a joint venture of the Government of India and the Government of Sikkim. The fruit preservation factory at Singtam is run by the Sikkim Industrial Corporation.

The total population of Sikkim is about 2 lakhs which is composed mainly of the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese. The Lepchas were the original inhabitants of the country, and number about 17,000. Their origin is doubtful but they are supposed to have come from the east, along the foot of the hills, from the direction of Assam and Upper Burma. There are two accounts regarding the origin of the name Lepcha. According to the first version, the name "Lepcha" had been derived from a Nepali word 'Lapcha' meaning 'vile speakers'.

According to the second version, there is a type of fish in Nepal, known as Lapcha, which is very submissive in nature like the Lepcha people who are also noted for their submissiveness and as such the Nepalese termed them as Lepcha not in contempt but to give them credit for their submissive temperament. The word "Lapcha" was modified in English pronunciation as 'Lepcha.'⁴ The Lepchas were originally animists, but most of them now profess Buddhism. They are noted for their mild, quiet and indolent disposition.

The next group of people to enter Sikkim were the Khambas, popularly known as the Bhutias. They were immigrants from Tibet. They number about 16,000. They profess Buddhism and are generally very strong, hardy and good tempered.

The Nepalese immigrants now far out number the Lepchas and the Bhutias. They are almost all Hindus by religion. At present they number about 1,50,000. They are on the whole "a steady, industrious and thrifty people."

Very little is known about the early history of Sikkim. The Lepchas, as mentioned earlier, were the original inhabitants of Sikkim and they claim to be autochthones of Sikkim proper.⁵ In the beginning of the Seventeenth century A.D., three Lamas came from Tibet into Sikkim to convert the people to their doctrines. They found at Gangtok, one Penchu Namgyal, the great-grandson of Guru Tashe, a Tibetan noble. The Lamas selected and invested the young man as the Gyalpo or the king of Sikkim. This event took place, in 1641, at a place called Yoksam. The Kingdom of Sikkim in those times was very extensive and included the Chumbi Valley of Tibet and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

For the next 150 years, after the accession of Penchu Namgyal to the Sikkim throne in 1641, succession passed from father to son. During the reign of the third Gyalpo, Chador Namgyal, Sikkim was overrun by the Bhutanese in 1706. Tibet then came to the rescue of Sikkim and drove out the Bhutanese from the country. The ruler of Sikkim, in gratitude, founded the great monastery at Pemiongchi.

During the reign of Gyurma Namgyal (1717-1734), Sikkim lost the province of Limbuana to Nepal. In the time of the

sixth Gyalpo, Tenzing Namgyal (1780-1790), the Nepalese invaded Sikkim and overran the country as far eastward as the Tista river including the Morung or the lowlands at the foot of the hills.⁶ Tenzing Namgyal died in 1790 and was succeeded by his son, Chugphui Namgyal (1790-1861). Shortly after his accession to the throne, war broke out between Nepal and Tibet, in the course of which the Nepalese established themselves firmly in Sikkim, south and west of the Tista.⁷

According to a tradition, the Chinese after expelling the Nepalese from Tibet called on the Sikkimese to show their boundaries. Chugphui Namgyal, being a minor and a fugitive, could not come forward to protect the interest of his kingdom. The Chinese thereupon gave the region west of the Tista to Nepal. The Chola-Jelap range was made the northern and eastern boundary of Sikkim. The Chumbi Valley was given to Tibet.⁸

British relations with Sikkim commenced in 1814-15 when the East India Company, which had brought great parts of India under its control, was involved in a war with Nepal. The opening of relations with Sikkim became a political and military necessity. The alliance with Sikkim seemed to promise to the Company three advantages : *viz.*, (1) to facilitate communications with China via Tibet, (2) to prevent Nepalese-Bhutanese intrigues against the Company, and (3) to level an attack on the Gurkha flank. In view of these advantages, the Company, induced the Sikkim Raja to bring a large number of troops against Nepal and promised him help to recover his territories lost to Nepal in 1780.

The Nepal War came to an end in 1815 when the Company and Nepal signed the Treaty of Segauli. Lord Moira (afterwards Marquess of Hastings), the Governor-General of India, decided to restore to Sikkim a part of the territory wrested from Nepal. By this gesture he wanted to establish the Company's relations with Sikkim on a firmer footing with a view to check the Gurkha expansion towards the east. The Company agreed to hand over the territory between the rivers Mechi and Tista to Sikkim on certain conditions. The Raja

accepted the conditions and signed a treaty with the Company at Titalia, on 10 February, 1817.

The Treaty of Titalia marked the beginning of the end of Sikkim's independence. Under Article Three of the Treaty, Sikkim lost its right of independent action in its disputes with Nepal and other neighbouring States. Further, it began to lose territory bit by bit. In 1835 it was forced to give to the company Darjeeling as a 'gift'. By this cession, though the Company gained a bit of territory, it lost the goodwill of Sikkim. Consequently, the relations between the Company and Sikkim worsened. In December 1849, the Raja arrested a Company's servant by name Campbell when he wanted to cross into Tibet. Taking advantage of that incident, the Company launched a military expedition against Sikkim in 1849. As a result of it, the Company gained additional territory of Sikkim to the extent of 640 sq miles. The Company did not annex the whole of Sikkim because of the political expediency of maintaining the kingdom as a separate entity. Sikkim was not wiped out of the map because of its strategic situation between Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and British dominion in India. But, interestingly enough, the non-annexation of the whole of Sikkim did not result in the increase of British influence there. This was due to the strength of Tibetan faction in Sikkim. Though Tibet did not actually intervene on behalf of Sikkim during the crisis, it granted the Raja an allowance when the Company stopped his Darjeeling grant. It may be mentioned here that the Company granted the Raja an yearly grant of Rs, 6,000 after the cession of Darjeeling. The gesture increased the Tibetan influence so much that in the next decade the Government of India was forced to undertake another military expedition into Sikkim to re-establish its position.

The Government of India, in order to assert its position, sent a military expedition to Sikkim towards the end of 1860. The expedition was an unqualified success. The power of the Maharaja⁹ was completely reduced and he submitted himself to the mercy of the Government of India. The latter decided

not to annex Sikkim on various political, military and economic considerations.

The Government of India was aware that the annexation of Sikkim would result in a "long, tedious and most expensive war" with the Himalayan States like Bhutan and Nepal, since they were likely to make a common cause with Sikkim due to their dread of the "proverbial acquisitiveness" of the British. Secondly, the Government of India was afraid that by annexing Sikkim out right, it might find itself in a quarrel with Tibet or China, since all the Himalayan States have close connections with them. Thirdly, trade considerations weighed heavily with the Government of India in its policy towards Sikkim. From the early fifties of the Nineteenth century the importance of Sikkim, as an easy trade route to Tibet and lands beyond, was recognized. The rapid development of the Tea industry in the neighbourhood of Darjeeling convinced the Indian Government of the need to tap the great tea markets of Tibet. Therefore, it took care not to spoil its trade prospects with Tibet by antagonizing China by annexing Sikkim. Lastly, the non-annexation of Sikkim was dictated by the internal considerations. The memory of the Indian Revolt of 1857 was still fresh in the mind of the Government of India. It was afraid that the annexation of Sikkim might have adverse political repercussions elsewhere in India.

The Treaty of 1861 was very significant. It brought Sikkim under the control of British India; Sikkim lost all freedom of action and became a *de facto* protectorate of the Government of India; and the British had gained substantial advantages without having the need to annex Sikkim. In spite of all this the Treaty suffered from two weaknesses. The first was the non-definition of the *de jure* status of Sikkim, and the second was the privilege granted to Maharaja under article Twenty two, to stay in Chumbi for three months in a year. These two weaknesses manifested themselves within three decades and were mainly responsible for the subsequent difficulties of the Government of India with Tibet and China.

In 1886, the Tibetans advanced 13 miles across the Jelap pass and occupied a place called Lingtu on the Darjeeling road.

The Maharaja of Sikkim, Thothab Namgyal (1874-1914), who was then staying in the Chumbi valley of Tibet supported the Tibetan action and declared that the land in occupation really belonged to Tibet. So, in March 1888, the British sent an expedition and expelled the Tibetans from Lingtu. The news of the Tibetan defeat alarmed the Chinese and convinced them that if they failed to come to terms with the British, they might lose their influence in Tibet. The Maharaja of Sikkim and his family members who had since returned to the capital were taken to Kalimpong where they were kept under house arrest. The Government of India appointed a political officer and entrusted to him the administration of Sikkim.

In March 1890, the Anglo-Chinese Convention was signed. Article Two of the Convention categorically admitted Sikkim as a protectorate of the Government of India. H.M. Durand, Secretary to the Government of India, emphasized this point in an Official Note (21 May, 1889) :

Sikkim is part of the Indian Empire..... It can have no dealings with foreign powers to whose eyes India should be all red from Himalayas to Cape Comerin.¹⁰

The Convention of 1890, by settling once for all the status of Sikkim as the protectorate of the Government of India, had removed the main weakness of the Treaty of 1861. The second weakness of the Treaty of 1861, relating to the privilege of the Maharaja, to stay at Chumbi for three months in a year, was also removed.

Within a decade, after the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 the Government of India had consolidated its authority in Sikkim to such an extent that it was able to meddle with impunity in important affairs concerning the royal family. The temporary deposition of Thothab Namgyal, in 1892, was intended to warn the Maharaja that he dared not disobey the orders of the Government of India. Similarly, the recognition of the Maharaja's second son, Sidkeong Namgyal, as successor-designate to the Sikkim and later of Tashi Namgyal, ignoring the claims of the eldest son, Tchoda Namgyal, twice was intended to demonstrate that no man suspected of

anti-British proclivities could rule Sikkim and the succession was in gift of the paramount power. The silent acquiescence of the royal family and the people in the decisions of the Government of India indicated the nature and extent of British authority in Sikkim.

In 1903, the Government of India exploited the disputes concerning Sikkim-Tibet boundaries to open Tibet. The success of the Young Husband Expedition in opening Tibet and forcing it to sign the Lhasa Convention on 7 September 1904, had solved all the British difficulties regarding the status of Sikkim and its boundary with Tibet. Tibet had not only recognised the protectorate of the Government of India over Sikkim but also confirmed the Sikkim-Tibet boundary as laid down in the Convention of 1890. China confirmed the Lhasa Convention by signing the Peking Convention with Britain in 1906. The influence of these two Conventions on Sikkim was far reaching. In the first place, the *de jure* status of Sikkim as the protectorate of the Government of India had received international sanction. In the second place, the Government of India by demonstrating its power in Tibet was able to consolidate its position in Sikkim. It no longer had any troubles either from the Maharaja or from the outside powers like Tibet and China, for the remaining period of its rule in India. Its power and influence over Sikkim was reflected in the smooth succession to the throne when the Maharaja Thothab Namgyal died on 11 February 1914. His son, Sidkeong Namgyal, whom, as we have already noted, the Government of India had recognised as successor, ignoring the claims of his elder brother Tchoda Namgyal, became the Maharaja. He was, however, not destined to rule for a long time. He died unmarried on 5 December 1914 and was succeeded by his younger brother, Tashi Namgyal, who ruled the kingdom till his death on 2 December 1963.

With the accession of Tashi Namgyal to the throne of Sikkim, the British relations with that kingdom entered into a happy period. The Maharaja remained a loyal friend of the British till the end of their rule in India. The Government of India was so much satisfied with his loyalty that it confirmed on him many honours and distinctions like K.C.S.I. and C.I.E.

Till 1946, the kingdom was free from communal disturbances and political agitations. However, after 1947, the kingdom was rocked with many political agitations, to which we shall revert in the following chapter.



CHAPTER ONE

THE AWAKENING OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The Indian independence gave fillip to the democratic movement in Sikkim. A number of organisations like Praja Sammelan, Praja Mandal, Praja Sudhar and Swatantra Dal were formed in different parts of the kingdom during the latter half of 1946. These organisations were more or less welfare bodies without any policy, programme or ideology. The need for a political party was strongly felt as the people became restive under the autocratic regime of the Maharaja. Therefore, on 7 December 1947, the representatives of the people from all over the country and the representatives of the Praja Sudhar of Gangtok, the Praja Mandal of Chakhung and the Praja Sammelan of Temitarku, met for the first time at Gangtok. Their united deliberations gave birth to the Sikkim State Congress—the first political party of Sikkim. Tashi Tsering and C.D. Rai were elected President and Secretary respectively. The other important leaders who took active part in the formation of the party were Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Khangsarpa of Chakhung, the present Chief Minister of Sikkim, Capt. Dimik Singh Lepcha, D.D. Gurung, Chandra Das and Senam Tsering.

The leaders of the party led a deputation to the late Maharaja of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal and presented him a memorandum containing three demands—

1. The abolition of land-lordism,

2. The formation of the interim Government as an essential precursor of the responsible government to come, and
3. The accession of Sikkim to India.¹

It is significant that the leaders of the new party have pointedly asked for accession to India. Tashi Tsering and C.D. Rai went to New Delhi towards the end of 1948 and met *Jawaharlal Nehru*, the Prime Minister of India, and *B.V. Keskar*, Deputy Minister of External Affairs, Government of India, and apprised them of the political situation then obtaining in Sikkim. They further requested representation for Sikkim in the Indian Parliament on the ground that "It would be undemocratic not to send the Sikkim people's representative in the Indian Parliament which controlled and guided the external affairs." When Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, replied that there were constitutional difficulties for Sikkim's representation in the Indian Parliament, the Sikkim leaders requested him to see that the difficulties are removed. However, in March 1950, the Indian Government advised Sikkim Congress leaders to keep "the demand for accession with India in abeyance."²

The State Congress within a short time of its formation became a power to be reckoned with. Its influence penetrated into all sections of the population including government officials. The agitation for popular government gathered momentum. In the first week of February 1949, the Congress started statewide movement called "No-rent campaign" or Satyagraha demanding implementation of land reforms. Twelve leaders of the Congress were arrested. However, the "No-rent campaign" was suspended on the advice of Hareshwar Dayal, the Political Officer of India in Sikkim.³

The Sikkim Congress leaders suspended the "No-rent campaign" hoping that the Maharaja would lose no time to instal a responsible government to implement the popular demands of the people. But their expectations were belied. So, on 1 May 1949, they launched the momentous Second 'Satyagraha' Movement for the establishment of responsible government in the State. The agitators numbering about 5,000 besieged the Royai Placed demanding the formation of the popular ministry.

An ugly situation was averted when the Indian Army units rescued the Maharaja and gave him protection in the Indian Residency. It is important to remember that two companies of the Indian Army were sent earlier to Gangtok at the explicit request of the Sikkim Government which had apprehended trouble from the local population who were then under the sway of the State Congress.

After realising the gravity of the situation, the Maharaja of Sikkim, on the advice of the Political Officer of India, asked Tashi Tsering to form his own Ministry. The first popular Ministry was formed on 9 May 1949, with Tashi Tsering as the Chief Minister. There were four other ministers. From its very inception the Ministry began to face trouble with the Maharaja, since it wanted to implement land reforms. Further, it wanted that the state should accede to India. These two things were not to the liking of the Maharaja. Further, as there was no constitution defining the respective powers of the ruler and the Ministry, each side blamed the other of encroachment. This threatened the breakdown of the administration. The Maharaja invited the Government of India to intervene. The Government of India was in a delicate position. Even though its sympathies were with the State Congress, which represented the majority of the population, it was unable to advise the Maharaja to accept the popular demands lest it might be accused of having sinister designs on a small state located on a sensitive international border. The Maharaja exploited the Indian government's dilemma and dismissed the popular Ministry on 7 June 1949. The Ministry remained in office for less than a month.

After the dismissal of the Ministry, the Government of India took over the administration and, in 1950, the India-Sikkim Treaty was signed without any reference to the leaders of the political parties in Sikkim.

THE NATIONAL PARTY

To counteract the growing influence of the State Congress, the Maharaja encouraged the formation of a loyalist party called the Sikkim National Party which was composed mainly of the minority communities of the Lepchas and Bhutias. The

party in order to oppose popular demands began to emphasize the communal and racial differences of the State's population. It opposed the demand of the State Congress for the popular government on the ground that the formation of "Democratic Government in a Small State" would be a 'farce.' Similarly, it opposed the other demands of the State Congress, namely, the kingdom's accession to India. On 30 April 1948, it passed a Resolution stating that "Sikkim shall not under any circumstance accede to the dominion of India." Further, it demanded a revision of "Sikkim's political relations with the Indian Union on the basis of equality" and declared that Sikkim was closer to Tibet than to India on the following grounds:

- (a) Historically, socially, culturally and linguistically, Sikkim has closer affinities with Bhutan and Tibet.
- (b) From the geographical and ethnic point of view Sikkim is not a part of India. She has only political relations with the latter which were imposed on her.
- (c) From the religious point of view, being a lamaist, She is quite distinct from India.⁴

The Resolution declared that the policy of the party was "by all means to maintain intact the indigenous character of Sikkim and to preserve its integrity." The Resolution further declared that the Party would make all out efforts to see that Sikkim remained outside the Indian Union. The Resolution pleaded that any attempt to force Sikkim to accede to the Indian Union, either by direct or indirect means, would be unfair because it would be a denial to Sikkim of its right to stick to its national affinities. The resolution concluded with the following warning to India:

From India's point of view, a happy Sikkim as a buffer State would be of great advantage than an unhappy Sikkim in India on one of her future international boundaries of great importance, which would be disadvantage, indeed a danger to India.⁵

INDIA-SIKKIM PEACE TREATY, 1950

After the lapse of British paramountcy, a standstill Agreement was signed between the Governments of India and Sikkim

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

India's relations with Sikkim since the former's independence in 1947 is marked by three successive stages. The first stage was during the years 1947-56. During this period Sikkim was completely under the control of India and the former ungrudgingly accepted the status of the protectorate of the latter. As a matter of fact, the Government of Sikkim used to underline that status so as to distinguish the kingdom from other native states of India. This it did so as to circumvent the persistent and powerful demand of the State Congress for the accession of the kingdom to India.

Even though Sikkim was under its complete control, the Government of India hesitated to advise the Maharaja to respect the popular demand of accession of his kingdom to India. The hesitation of the Indian Government was due to two reasons. First, its hands were full with the Kashmir problem. Secondly, it was worried as to the policy the newly established Communist Government of China would follow towards Tibet. New Delhi wanted to avoid, at all costs, the criticism that India was having sinister designs towards Sikkim. That is why when the population of Gangtok surrounded the Royal Palace, on 1 May, 1949, demanding the Maharaja, among other things, accession of his state to India, the Indian troops rescued the Maharaja and gave him protection in the Indian Residency.

The Government of India was so sensitive of international criticism, that even after Communist China's takeover of Tibet,

hesitated to adopt a stern policy towards Sikkim. It soft-pedalled the demand of the State Congress for Sikkim's representation in the Indian Parliament. On the other hand, it signed a treaty of friendship with the Maharaja (1950) confirming his kingdom's status of the protectorate of India. This Treaty came into force without ratification since both governments apprehended popular opposition to the Treaty. The mood of the majority of the population of Sikkim at that time was for the full accession of their State to India.

The second stage of India's relations with Sikkim began in 1956 when the late Maharaja Sir Tashi Namgyal visited New Delhi. At that time the Naga trouble was at its zenith, and the Mizos and others made extreme demands on New Delhi. The Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, in his enthusiasm for small states described the routine visit of the Maharaja to New Delhi as a State visit to India. A separate Sikkim flag was flown and 'a National Anthem' for Sikkim was improvised. The 'State visit' of the Maharaja marks the turning point in Sikkim's relations with India.

In 1962, the Chinese aggression on India shattered New Delhi's image to such an extent that Palden Thondup Namgyal, when he became the ruler of Sikkim in December, 1963, following the death of his father, Maharaja Sir Tashi Namgyal, found no difficulty in changing his Indian status of Maharaja to that of the Tibetan sounding status of Chogyal. The seeds of change of Sikkim from a small protectorate to that of an independent kingdom were then sown. China was quick to realise this. And as if to demonstrate that it had accepted the independence of Sikkim, Chairman Liu Shao-Chi, sent a telegram of congratulations directly to the Chogyal at the time of his coronation on 4 April, 1965.

The growing cordiality between Pakistan and China, following the formers' attack on India in 1965, emboldened Sikkim to such an extent that it was no longer willing to accept its status as the protectorate of India. Three Executive Councillors of Sikkim were bold enough to state in a 'historic Joint Statement' of 15 June, 1967, that 'Sikkim gained her

independent status on the 15 August, 1947, when India achieved her independence from the British Rule.' Of course, the Chogyal had not made any public declaration of his desire for the independence of his country but there is no doubt as to his real feelings since *Sikkim Herald*—the official bulletin of the Publicity Department of the Government of Sikkim—declared that Sikkim 'aspires to breathe independently.'

The third stage of India's relations with Sikkim began when Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister. She showed a keen awareness of the country's strategic and security interests than her predecessors.

Eversince the Chogyal's marriage with the American socialite, Hope Cooke in 1963, the U.S. began to show undue interest in Sikkim. The Gyalmo was always surrounded by a large number of American 'visitors'. It became evident that the U.S. was interested in establishing some form of strategic outpost in the country. When Hope Cooke began laying claims to the Indian towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong and commenced campaign for Sikkim's admission into the U.N.O., New Delhi's worst suspicions were confirmed.

The policy makers at Delhi also noticed that there was a convergence of interests between the Americans and the Chinese. China which regarded Sikkim as one of the five fingers of the Chinese palm has never been comfortable about Sikkim's position as a protectorate of India. It never lost an opportunity to intrude into Sikkim. As late as 1967, Chinese troops, on the other side of Nathu la, tried to extend their lines of communication into the Indian side of the watershed which marks the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet. Indian troops are keeping eternal vigil on the Sikkim-Tibet border since the inverted triangle of Tibet's Chumbi Valley, thrust between Sikkim and Bhutan is regarded as "dagger aimed at the heart of India."

New Delhi realised that it cannot allow the attention of the troops guarding the Sikkim-Tibet frontier, diverted from the enemy because of the internal turmoil in Sikkim born of

