CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION
1. Preliminaries

On the May 8th 1973, an agreement was signed at Gangtok between the Chogyal, the leaders of the political parties representing the people of Sikkim and the Government of India. The Agreement provided for a Legislative Assembly for Sikkim elected on the basis of adult franchise, an Executive Council responsible to the Assembly and safeguards for minorities. Under the Agreement, India was to provide the head of the administration (Chief Executive) to ensure democratization, communal harmony and social development. The Assembly was to be elected every four years on the basis of adult franchise under the supervision of Election Commission of India.

Following the Tripartite Agreement, elections were held from April 15 to 19, 1974, under the supervision of the Chief Election Commission of India. According to the parity formula, fifteen seats were allotted to the Bhutia- Lepchas and the remaining fifteen to the Nepalese including one for the scheduled caste. Soon, both sides demanded separate seats for the monks. As a result thirty-two member Assembly was provided with two reserved seats one for the scheduled caste and other for the monastries (Sangha). The sangha constituency is a unique feature of not only Sikkim but also for the whole of India. It is reserved seat for the representation of the monasteries of Sikkim as a whole and their Lamas. This maintained parity, the scheduled caste being of Nepali origin and the monk coming from the Bhutia-Lepcha group. Kazi Lhendup Dorjee's party Sikkim Congress swept the polls by winning thirty-one seats out of the thirty two seats. He was sworn in on the 23rd of July as the Chief
Minister of the State. And thus, the Country passed on from autocracy to democracy.

The Government of Sikkim wanted to have closer ties with India and on 5th September 1974, the Constitution (Thirty-fifth amendment) was passed in the Parliament of India to up-grade the status of Sikkim from a protectorate to an associate state of the Indian Union. The ‘Associate State’ idea was a unique constitutional arrangement.

The Chogyal did not like the new set up. He was also dissatisfied with his status as a constitutional head of the state of which he was an absolute ruler till the other day. He initiated an attitude of confrontation with the popular ministry headed by Kazi. The difference between the Chogyal and the Assembly got aggravated to such an extent, that the Sikkim Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on 10th April, 1975, abolishing the institution of the Chogyal and declaring Sikkim as a constituent unit of India. The Assembly also resolved to submit its resolution to the people of Sikkim by way of a general referendum. Majority of votes were cast in favor of the resolution. Consequently, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha passed the Thirty-Sixth Constitution Amendment Bill, which received the assent of the President on 16th May 1975 and made Sikkim the 22nd state of the Indian Union.

A new chapter was added in Sikkim’s history bringing to an end more than three hundred year old monarchy headed by Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal the last ruler of the Namgyal dynasty. In the last 38 years many unexpected changes altered the basic character of Sikkim’s unique personality as one knew it in 1973. The very nature of Sikkim policy began to be viewed de-linked to its past and a new content was added to it. The post merger era brought about a painful process of conversion to the political and economic
culture of an Indian state. The merger brought in a system of governance and institutions which were foreign to the Sikkimese tradition. Immediately after the merger, Sikkim adopted unicameral legislative system in the name of Sikkim Legislative Assembly. It also got one seat each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The members of Sikkim Legislative Assembly are directly elected by the people on the basis of 'one man- one vote' and universal adult franchise. It was much in contrast with the traditional communal voting system.

Following the resignation of Kazi's ministry on 17.8.1979 due to defection in the ruling party and subsequent failure of constitutional machinery, President's rule was imposed for the first time in Sikkim in 1979. Immediately after the imposition of President's rule, since the Houses of the Parliament were not in session, the election was to be held on the 12th October, 1979.

More than seven political parties and independent candidates were in fray. National parties such as Indian National Congress (U)(INC), Janta Party (JP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI (M), regional parties viz; Sikkim Janta Parishad (SJP), Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary)(SCR), Sikkim Prajatantra Congress (SPC), Sikkim Schedule Caste League (SSCL) and other independents contested the 1979 election. SJP founded and led by Nar Bahadur Bhandari was able to secure majority and formed a new government for the first time based on a regional party. In 1981 the SJP joined the Congress (I) and became the Sikkim Pradesh Congress (I). In the midst of healthy political signs in Sikkim under the leadership of N.B. Bhandari, there occurred the most unfortunate and undemocratic dismissal of Bhandari as Chief Minister of Sikkim in May 1984 by the then Governor of Sikkim H.J. Taleyar Khan on the ground that he had lost the support of the M.L.A's. B.B. Gurung from Congress (I) was installed as the third Chief Minister but his ministry lasted for only 13 days. As a result of the failure of the
constitutional machinery, Sikkim was once again brought under President's rule for the second time in the year 1984.

No sooner Bhandari was dismissed; he left Congress (I) in disgust along with his majority of legislators. He hoisted his own red and white flag and founded a new regional party namely Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) with elephant as its election symbol which won 31 of the 32 seats in the general elections in 1984. In the election to the State Legislative Assembly held in the year 1989, Congress (I), two regional parties namely SSP and the SCR and many independent candidates contested. In all the constituencies Bhandari's SSP was declared elected securing all 32 seats in the State Assembly. This was a record in the government and politics of not only Sikkim but also in the country.

On 17th May 1994, dissidents toppled the Bhandari Government on the controversial issue of income tax concessions to the tribals. Mr. Sanchaman Limboo was installed as the Chief Minister as head of the party called the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (Sanchaman). In the Assembly election held on 17th November 1994, a regional party, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) came to power and its leader Mr. Pawan Chamling was installed as the Chief Minister of Sikkim. In 1999 the SDF was returned to power and again in 2004 and 2009.

During Bhandadri’s regime, the opposition confronted with the government on matters of policies and functions even at least in the first term. In the second and third terms although there were no strong opposition parties, there were oppositions within the Party which later wrecked the very foundation of SSP and Chamling's SDF gave a tough competition for power to SSP in the 1994 elections. But in Chamling's regime, which is from 1994 till date, not a single strong party has formed which can compete with SDF and give voters
an alternative nor there does opposition force within the Party. SDF has in fact out ruled the SSP. If we look at the performance graph of SDF in four consecutive elections, it has improved from better to best. In April 2004 his party won with unprecedented verdict both in terms of percentage of votes polled and the number of seats won. In 2009 election too, the party won all the 32 Assembly seats. The party is ruling in Sikkim with absolute majority. The entire nation is debating on anti-incumbency factors, whereas in Sikkim there is nothing but pro-incumbency trend.

One reason for this pro-incumbency factor and one-party rule in Sikkim can be attributed to the lack of strong opposition. Opposition in Sikkim is weak because they tend to grow and decay like mushrooms particularly at the time of elections. They always play politics outside the Legislature. This is one reason why they mostly fail to gain people's confidence. Even national political parties play a seasonal role. Both national and regional parties except the ruling party utterly lack in organizational structure. Above all, opposition financial condition is also too poor to run the party office. The phenomenal feature of politics of Sikkim is that opposition has been virtually non-existent both from the regional as well as national political parties although opposition has to be there to play a constructive politics of checks and balances. But it has to be kept in mind that Sikkim is too young to be equated with party politics and oppositions of other states.

2. Research Objectives

The primary objective of the proposed study is to make an intense study for deeper understanding of political democracy in Sikkim. It is to understand whether political democracy has taken its root in Sikkimese society and to analyze how it has evolved in Sikkim over the years. It is also to analyze political development in Sikkim
under the leadership of different political leaders in post merger era and in this connection, it is to analyze a peculiar system of one-party-system and one-man-rule in Sikkim for almost 38 years. The objective is also to analyze the reason behind the political domination of the SSP and the SDF for a long period in the politics of Sikkim and the impact of their rules on the state policies and politics. The other related objective of the proposed research work will be to compare and contrast the ruling of these two prominent political parties.

These areas have not been covered and received adequate attention from research scholars and the academia working on Sikkim earlier. The study on these particular areas would help us to understand the state of the State after the merger till present day. More particularly the study will try to understand the performances, governance and achievements of the SSP and the SDF as a regional party and their role to bring about political democracy in Sikkim.

3. Statement of the Problem

SJP led by Bhandari swept the 1979 elections with 17 Assembly seats including 1 Sangha seat and formed the government. Since then, from 1979-1994, Sikkim’s politics was almost dominated by Bhandari and his party, SJP (1979-1984) and SSP (1984-1994). Thus for 15 years Bhandari was the uncrowned monarch of Sikkim (Chakravartti, 1994). After the end of Bhandari’s regime, SDF led by Pawan Chamling swept the polls by winning 19 out of 32 seats and formed the government in 1994. In the same manner like SSP, SDF also dominated the Sikkim’s politics from 1994 till date. The victory of SJP and later the SSP and SDF without much resistance means that there was and still is a one-party-system and one-man-rule in Sikkim for almost 38 years.
Though both the parties ruled for not less than fifteen years, there is reported difference between the rules of these two parties. Sikkim became democratic and democratic structures were established since 1975, but it was only in name-sake. The percentage of illiteracy was very high, and the Sikkimese did not know what political consciousness was. With this background, Kazi was sworn in as the first Chief Minister of Sikkim. Kazi’s term was basically characterized by trials and errors. Neither the leaders nor the public were conscious about democracy and were incompetent about democratic norms and principles.

After Kazi’s rule, Bhandari came to power. His rule was dictatorial and he is termed as despot. Bhandari demanded complete submission to his authority. State terrorism was rampantly active everywhere against which nobody dared to raise a voice of dissent as it was repressed for good. He did not tolerate any criticism from both within and outside the party. (Kazi, 1993) Not a single organization had been granted recognition by the Parishad government even if there were some social organization and political parties; they had to either join him or were silenced. The press was also asked to behave properly or face consequences (Kazi, 1993). It was alleged that the administration, the bureaucracy and the police force tortured public to no end. Bhandari wanted to control all the people by coercion and physical torture. He tried to establish hegemony of one reign, one leader, one party and one language in Sikkim (Bhutia, 1999). This is how one-party system, one-man-rule and reign of terror began in Sikkim (Kazi, 1993).

Other political parties could not survive as opposition parties. There were assaults, threats, intimidations and constant pressure over the press media and use of force and commandos over the opposition parties. As a result there was an absence of a strong and effective opposition and this led to an absence of democratic
atmosphere in Sikkim. The undemocratic rule in Sikkim by Bhandari resulted in his and SSP’s downfall and led ultimately to the emergence of Pawan Chamling and SDF in 1994 who talked about political right, freedom and restoration of democracy in Sikkim. SDF Government claim to have ended the reign of terror and political oppression and the return of the rule of Law. Chamling’s government can be remembered for bringing pluralism and dissent into the political system of Sikkim. Today in Sikkim, opposition parties are operating in a far liberalized political environment. (Telegraph, 17 Dec 1996)

Keeping the above facts, some questions arise in the mind. These are i) what were the reasons behind the domination of SSP from 1984-1994 and SDF from 1994 – till date in the politics of Sikkim? We shall have to analyze the problem in depth manner to answer this question. ii) How are these parties different in their policies, programs and strategy? Though SSP and SDF were dominant parties in Sikkim, there is a need of proper explanation of reasons of dominance of these parties and difference of dominance or rule of these parties. This may justify our interest in proposed research work since these areas have not been touched by previous researchers.

4. Review of Literature

Literatures on Sikkim are not very well documented. One can lay hands on a very few published literature. The literature available on Sikkim can be divided into different categories. Risley’s “The Gazetteer of Sikkim” (Risley, 1928/1993) is one of the earliest publications which gives an account of early history, physical features, vegetation, population, religion and custom and tradition etc of Sikkim. It gives a sketch of different rulers of Namgyal dynasty of Sikkim and the nature of their governance, their relation with

Although there were ‘social’ organisations in Sikkim prior to Indian Independence but the actual political awakening started only in late 1940’s after the birth of first political party, Sikkim State Congress on 7th December, 1947. This event is regarded as the first cockcrow of political movement in Sikkim. There are very few literatures which deal with political developments in Sikkim since 1940’s and the emergence and growth of different regional political parties and development of party- politics in Sikkim.

The pioneering work in this field is the work of Basnet “A Short Political History of Sikkim”. (Basnet, 1974) The work is divided into two parts. Part I discusses the geography and demography of Sikkim. Part II deals with the emergence of political parties, agitation launched by the different political parties and sections of the society and intervention of the Indian Government in the political affairs of Sikkim. However, this book has certain limitations. It deals with the interplay of political parties, the Chogyal and the Government of India from 1947 to May 1973. It does not cover the political aspects of Sikkim from 1973 onwards.
Sinha, in his book "Politics of Sikkim - A Sociological Study" (Sinha, 1975) provides an analysis of the political development in Sikkim and evolution of the significant social forces. He identifies sets of the elite, the patricians, Kazis, the neo-rich plebeians, pro-palace bureaucrats, the political leaders and the youth leaders leading various social forces. He regarded the lamas, categorized as religious elites are responsible for proliferation of communal feelings in the society. He evaluates the political process and development in Sikkim in the post 1947 period in terms of institutional accomplishment and development, transformation of theocracy and finally the merger of Sikkim to the Indian Union. The book although very useful with valuable information of politics of Sikkim covers only the period till 1975 and it investigates the politics of Sikkim from sociological perspective.

Rao (Rao P. R., 1978) discusses about the struggle of the people of Sikkim for democratization of their administration, awakening of the political consciousness of the people of Sikkim culminating in the making of modern Sikkim as the 22nd state of India. To some extent, it also deals with the political development in Sikkim in the pre-merger period. It also deals with the influence of Indian Independence in Sikkim, democratic aspirations and urges of the people of Sikkim. The problem with this account is that it covers the political aspects of Sikkim till the pre-merger period. It does not throw light about the political process, organization and administration and other aspects after 1973.

Das, who was appointed as Chief Executive in Sikkim from 1973-1974 during the agitation had been one of the prime actors in the merger. He in his book (Das, 1983) provides the first-hand report of the period of turmoil in Sikkim from 1973 till its merger with India in 1975. He tried to show in his book how merger of Sikkim with India became inevitable. Although tiny, this Himalayan
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kingdom was very sensitively placed that it could not be ignored by India in terms of her security. Das in his book tried to show how India took the first opportunity to bring Sikkim under its fold when such situation arose and shows how this could have been avoided if the Chogyal had played his cards well but he committed some mistakes which India had been waiting for years and in this context he accounts the key role played by the three dominant and powerful women-Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India; Hope Cook, the American wife of the Chogyal; and Elisa Maria, the Belgian wife of the Kazi. He attempts to answer a number of questions. The questions are like (i) was the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union necessary? (ii) Was there really a popular uprising against the Chogyal in 1973? (iii) What was the role of Delhi in it? (iv) Was the May 1973 Agreement not adequate to meet the requirement of a democratic set up? (v) Did the Sikkimese give up their identity happily? And (v) what has India ultimately gained? He also talked about uncertainties of Sikkim’s future as an Indian state. This book although very informative with valuable appendices is just an interpretation of facts and events and is limited to these questions only.

The work of Kotturan George, “The Himalayan Gateway: History and Culture of Sikkim” (George, 1983) underlines the political, administrative and economic set up of the people of Sikkim while S.K. Jha and Mishra in their work “Sikkim-Government and Politics” (Jha, 1984) highlights on development of different organs of the government in Sikkim in the new democratic set up under the aegis of Indian Union.

Datta Ray in his narrative “Smash and Grab Annexation of Sikkim” (Datta-Ray, 1984) recounts how Sikkim was taken over by India in a smash and grab raid. He argues that Sikkim was not merged but annexed in 1975. He sought to present a detailed
account and analysis of the events leading to the annexation of Sikkim to the Indian Union, converting the Protectorate into an Indian state. He gives the detailed account of controversial “special poll” held in 14 April, 1975 which was held to seek opinion of the Sikkimese people on the merger of Sikkim with India. The documentary evidences, interviews and eye-witness accounts provided in the book are very useful and provoke any researcher’s thoughts to revisit Sikkim’s pre-merger period. The limitation of this book is that it is somewhat like a biography of the last Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal. Since the author was a close friend of the Chogyal, his stand was against the merger. Besides, the book largely deals with the events and political development in Sikkim just before the merger and accounts how it was smashed, grabbed and finally annexed by the Indian Union.

Sengupta’s “State Government and Politics of Sikkim” (Sengupta, 1985) is a comprehensive work on Sikkim’s politics and government. He traces the political development in Sikkim especially after 1947, conflict between the old monarchical system and the new political forces that came up after the Indian independence which aspired for Rule of the People, their revolution for democracy in 1973 that led to the merger of Sikkim with India. The author gives an account of the political process and electoral system prevalent till 1973 and the changes that took place since 1974 till 1984. He also gives in depth accounts of the working of political parties, pressure groups and governmental organizations like Legislature, Executive and Judiciary through different stages of development in Sikkim. Moreover, the book provides the comparative study of electoral process and the role of political parties in the old and the new system of governance and the changing trends of political dynamics reflected through the electoral process, political parties and pressure groups before and after the merger. However, even though it is a systematic
and comprehensive work, it is limited to the political aspects of Sikkim up to 1984.

Like Datta Ray, Rustamji was also a close friend of Chogyal P T Namgyal. Hence, his work “Sikkim – A Himalayan Tragedy” (Rustamji, 1987) was also somewhat like a bibliographical account of Chogyal. Chube in his article “Ethnicity and Politics in Sikkim” in M. K. Raha edited “The Himalayan Heritage” (S.K, 1987) gives a valuable account of political development in Sikkim after 1947. He discusses about the factional politics in Sikkim in the post merger era as an effect of various ethnic and social forces.

Bhadra’s “Sikkim: Democracy and Social Changes”, (Bhandra, 1992) discusses the factors and forces that led to the transformation of Sikkim from a theocratic monarchy to democracy. In this context the author analyzes the factors that break up traditional societies and moves them towards modernization, the models of transition and the hurdles of modernization. The author also focuses on the different aspects of political development in the new state, determinants of political development and the functions of different agents of political development like education, mass media and the role of different social classes in the political development of Sikkim. She analyzes the transition of socio-economic condition of Sikkim from monarchy to democracy and also analyzes the evolution of political parties, their changing roles and transition in electoral process in the new set up. The author emphasizes more on social forces than political organizations.

Kazi’s “Inside Sikkim Against The Tide” (Kazi, 1993) discusses the issues at stake in the tiny Himalayan state and exposes the hollowness of the democratic system and values which was thrust on the Sikkimese people at the time of the merger in 1975. The book largely focuses on how Nar Bahadur Bhandari became the Chief
Minister in 1979 promising to restore Sikkim to the Sikkimese and remained in power for 14 years. It argues that after the merger of Sikkim, instead of democracy there was dictatorship in a democratic set up under Bhandari's rule. It brings into focus the supremacy of 'one-man rule and one-party system 'during Bhandari's rule where all the democratic principles were trampled especially how press media was suppressed and attacked. It gives an account of how Bhandari managed to remain in power for 14 long years and also gives a brief account of formation of a new political outfit- Sikkim Democratic Front as a counter to Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad. Although the book is well articulated and resourceful in terms of politics in Sikkim after the merger but it is more a journalistic report and an interpretation of personal events and experience which lacks the systematic approach and gives only a general idea of party politics of Sikkim from 1979 to 1992.

Chakraborty in an article "Government and Politics of Sikkim" in Lama's edited book "Sikkim: Society, Polity, Economy and Environment" (Chakaravarthi, 1994) focuses on the development of party-politics in Sikkim since 1940's. It also analyses the constitutional position of Sikkim, political structure, Sons of the Soil Policy, Electoral Politics of Sikkim from 1979 to 1989 and administration in the state. It also discusses the domination of regional political parties in the state. In this article the author shows the non-existence of strong opposition political parties unlike other states of the Indian Union as phenomenal characteristics of the politics of Sikkim.

Like Kazi, Subba's "Sikkim, Who Ruined It?" (Subba P., 1998) also gives an account of Bhandari's 14 years rule. He highlights how democratic values and principles were tempered under the misrule of Bhandari. Chakravarti's "Political Development of Sikkim", (Chakravarthi, 2003) deals with the emergence, growth and
governance of SSP to some extent. By and large, the book focuses among other things on development of Sikkim in the socio-economic field.

Thapa's "Ethnicity, Class and Politics in Sikkim" (Thapa, 2002) examines how class and ethnic factors influence the political process in the tiny Indian state and how these identities of the Sikkimese are maintained and reproduced in the political and social life of the people. The work attempts to assess the relative significance of these two factors in understanding the political process in the State. This thesis is however limited in its focus and looks only at the role of classes and ethnic groups in the politics of Sikkim.

Sinha's work "Sikkim, Feudal and Democratic" (Sinha A. C., 2008) analyses how Sikkim has increasingly been exposed to the wind of change as a result of the new sense of political identity under the Indian Union. The book is divided into three parts. Part one deals with the background and social history of emergence of ethnic plurality in the Sikkimese society. Part two deals with the feudal and democratic elites, their roles in two different phases of Sikkimese history. Part three describes the forces and forms of political development, the transition of Sikkim from feudal to democratic set up. The book focuses on Sikkim's past and present and reports as to how the Tibetans, Nepalese, and the British dealt with Sikkim leading to eclipse of its autonomous entity. However, this book is limited to an extent that it focuses only on social classes especially the elites of Sikkim.

Kazi's book (Kazi J. N., 2009) is a collection of his articles published in different publications. His articles largely focuses on the unique and distinct identity of Sikkimese people within Indian Union promised under Article 371(f) of the Indian Constitution during the time of merger in 1975. He talks about the gradual distortion and
dilution of the article by the petty politicians and urges India to honour its commitments and assurances made to the Sikkimese people during the merger period. The articles covers the important political events and issues in Sikkim from 1982-2008 and provides a record of Sikkimese people demanding the preservation of their distinct identity within the framework of the Constitution of India. The collection of articles in the book provides a good source of reference, but it lacks systematic approach as it is just a compilation of journalistic write up.

Gurung's "Sikkim: Ethnicity and Political Dynamics-A Triadic Perspective" (Gurung, 2010) provides a very comprehensive and systematic work which focuses on ethnicity oriented political mobilization in Sikkim and tries to analyze why and how ethnic identity consciousness becomes the mechanism of political action and how it influences politics. It tries to examine the relation between political organizations /institutions and ethnic politics and how they use each other for mutual benefits. In this context the book analyzes the history and identity of major ethnic groups in Sikkim, their condition and the state policies on ethnic groups before the merger. It reveals that contrary to the general expectation that democratic set up after the merger of Sikkim with India would put an end to the prevailing ethnic politics, it has become more prominent where even the smaller communities started to assert separate political identities. It shows the growth of ethnic politics under different leaders and organizations after the merger. Although this book is developed very systematically and there is not much research gap but the book's primary focus is only on ethnic politics in Sikkim. There is no denying that the book covers the interplay of politics since its inception till the recent politics but its focus is purely on ethnic politics.
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Apart from these books there are other books which deal with other aspects of Sikkim. The work of T.B. Subba "Dynamics Of A Hill Society" (Subba T., 1989) is a sociological analysis on the Nepalis of Sikkim and Darjeeling. In his another work "Politics of Culture" (Subba, Politics Of Culture, 1999) he seeks to analyze the emerging identity consciousness among the three kirata tribes-Limboos (Tsongs), Khambus (Rais) and Yakhas (Dewans) in Nepal and Sikkim. Another study on castes and communities of Sikkim is carried out by K.S. Singh edited "People of India – Sikkim" (Singh, 1993) It is an Anthropological survey which provides the detail profile of three major ethnic communities of Sikkim and other sub-cultural groups.

The work of Wangyal "Sikkim and Darjeeling- Division and Deception" (Wangyal, 2002) provides a historical account of transfer of portion of Sikkim (Darjeeling) to the British East India Company. He argues that the grant of Darjeeling by the Chogyal of Sikkim to the British was not done officially. He focuses that Sikkim and Darjeeling are historically inseparable with contiguity of borders and common language, culture and religion. He believes that because of this peculiar relationship and strong bonding shared by the people of these two places arouses apprehension and fear among the majority of the people that these two areas will one day amalgamate to form a bigger and more a viable state. Relevant documents and quoted verbatim regarding Darjeeling and Sikkim are provided for further research in this book. Such relevant documents on Sikkim and Darjeeling can also be found in Moktan’s "Sikkim- Darjeeling: Compendium of Documents" (Moktan, 2004).

The work of Geoffrey Gorer "The Lepchas of Sikkim" (Gorer, 1938/1996) "Himalayan Village: An Account of The Lepchas of Sikkim" (Gorer, 1938) throws light on the way of life of Lepcha
Community of Sikkim, their religion, law and order, rules of kinship and marriage, education and economic backwardness etc. Such an account can be found in the writings of C.J.Morris (Morris, 1938) Fonning's "Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe" (Fonning, 1987) traces the cultural history of the Lepchas and the influence of outsiders like Buddhists and Christians on Lepcha Culture. K.P. Tamsang in his book, "The Unknown and Untold Reality about the Lepchas" (Tamsang, 1983) talks about the distortion of history of evolution of Lepchas made by the different writers. R.K.Sprigg's recent work "Shedding Some Light on the History, Language and Literatures of the Lepchas" (Sprigg, 2005) provides valuable knowledge with documentary evidence about history and life of Lepchas in the early 19th century. Jha's "Ethno-Omithology of Lepchas of Sikkim" (Jha V. J., 2012) analyzes the relationship between people and birds. It makes an in-depth study of ethno-ornithological traditions of the Lepchas an aboriginal group of people of North-East India and describes the importance of birds in Lepcha myths of origins and their importance in the day-to-day lives of the Lepcha people. The works of Chie Nakane (Nakane, 1966), Bhasin (Bhasin V., 1989), Subba (Subba J., 1999) deals with tribes and other ethnic groups of Sikkim.

“Socio-Economic Condition of Sikkim under Colonial Domination (1889-1947): An Authenticity Discourse.” (Kharel, 2002) But his work is based on socio-economic condition of Sikkim before 1947. Likewise, Dutta’s “Sikkim since Independence: A Study of Impact of Education and Emerging Class Structure”, (Dutta, 1991) attempts to understand the process of modernization in Sikkim since 1975 by taking education as an index. He traces the history and growth of education and analyzes the availability of education facilities. He also analyzes the role of education in bringing change in traditional social system whereas Mahajan, Majumdar & Agnihotri’s work “Educational Administration in Sikkim Structures Processes and Future Prospects”, (Mahajan, 1995) covers different aspects of education in Sikkim in a comprehensive manner. It gives description of legal basis of education, educational policies of the state and roles of different governmental and non-governmental bodies towards education in Sikkim. It also highlights the problems and prospects of education for future development.

Since Sikkim is a tourist hot spot for its natural beauty many books and travelogues are written which explores this aspect of Sikkim. Among them, the work of Sattar “Tourism in Sikkim (India): Impact on Economy, Society And Environment”, (Sattar, 2010) and “Growth of Ecotourism in North Bengal and Sikkim”, (Karmakar, 2011) by Karmakar is noteworthy for academic pursuits. There are many other handbooks, guidebooks and travelogues which give general information about Sikkim.


Apart from the edited books there are some published articles which speak volumes about Sikkim. Rose, *(Rose, 1969)* gives an account of relation of India with China, Tibet and Sikkim and especially focuses on the relation of India with Sikkim since 1950’s. He analyzes Sikkim as an important border state for India considering the proximity of China. R. Rahul in his article "The System of Administration in the Himalaya" *(R.Rahul, 1969)* highlights on the administrative system of North Eastern Frontier Area: Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Uttarakhland, Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Likewise, N. Ram in his article "Sikkim Story: Protection to Absorption", *(N.Ram, 1974)* highlights the British interest over the Kingdom for trade and border security. It also focuses on Nehru’s policy on Sikkim, unequal treaty of 1950 between Sikkim and India and the popular movement in 1973. Ranjan Gupta’s article "Sikkim:The Merger with India" *(Gupta, 1975)* stresses on the merger of Sikkim with India and traces the history of political development in the kingdom and the changing relations between Sikkim and India since 1950’s which ultimately paved the way for the merger of Sikkim with India.

Urmila Phadnis in her article "Ethnic Dimension of Sikkimese Politics- The 1979 Election", *(Phadnis, 1980)* gives valuable information about Sikkimese politics since its inception till 1979.
She especially highlights the role of ethnic forces in the 1979 election and in this context traces the evolution and growth of different ethnic groups in Sikkim. In the same vein Jyotirmoy Chakraborty in his article "Elections and Castist Politics" (Chakraborty, 2000) also highlights the role of castes and ethnicity in determining election results. He analyzes the trend since 1979 till 1999 Assembly elections. He makes an important observation that the credibility of the candidate and the ethnic balance play a key role in candidate selection. Therefore, while selecting the candidate, a leader has to consider the ethnic composition of the electoral area and candidate's acceptability. Banasmita Bora in her article "Pro-incumbency Factor" (Bora, 2004) provides an interesting analysis of pro-incumbency factor and dominance of a single party in Sikkim. She highlights the trend of replacement of dominance of one party by the dominance of another party and the absence of competitive party politics in Sikkim since 1979. Mukund Giri in his article "Sikkim: Politics of Inclusiveness and One-Party Dominance" (Giri, 2009) also discusses about the system of one-party dominance in Sikkim. He argues that because of history and social composition of Sikkim, competitive politics and multiparty system is yet to make its way into Sikkim's politics unlike other states in the country. The peculiar history and geography of Sikkim has led to a politics of inclusiveness instead. In this context, the author examines the Assembly elections of Sikkim from 1994 to 2009. Other articles like "Roots and the Routes of Secularism in Sikkim" by Vibha Arora, (Arora, 2006) presents a discussion over whether Sikkim has transformed successfully from feudal theocracy into a democratic polity or represents the ambiguities of a secular democratic polity. She also focuses on political history and ethnic profile of Sikkim to understand ethnic competition in modern Sikkim. Articles like "Unheard Voices of Protest in Sikkim" by Vibha Arora, (Arora, 2007) her another article "Gandhigiri in Sikkim" (Arora, 2008) "Including Vulnerabilities in a
"Fragile Landscape" by Kanchi Kohli (Kohli, 2011) discuss about the protest against the Hydel power projects on the Teesta river.

5. Research Gap

From the literature reviewed and analyzed above, it is clear that there are both descriptive and analytical works present regarding Sikkim. Most of the work focused on the evolution and history of Sikkim. There are some books on geography, economy and culture of Sikkim but there are only few books on politics of Sikkim. These books basically focused on the development of politics in Sikkim, the factors that led to the formation of political parties in Sikkim and the role of social and democratic forces in its formation. Some books entirely focused on the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union. The limitation with the literature is that it provides only a general idea and information about the establishment and growth of democratic politics in Sikkim. They are not adequate to throw light on certain political, social and economic developments in Sikkim after the merger; especially political development in Sikkim after Nar Bahadur Bhandari led SSP came to power. Although there are some articles which provide an account of politics in Sikkim after the merger but systematic works narrowly specialized on the political development in Sikkim after the merger is rare.

It is necessary to make an intense study for deeper understanding of political democracy in Sikkim. It is also necessary to analyze the reason behind the political domination of the SSP and then after the SDF in the state policy of Sikkim since 1979 till date and the impact of such trend on Sikkim's politics. It should be analyzed whether these political parties could ensure democracy and social justice and should examine their roles to uphold democracy in Sikkim. It is important to understand the state of the state since merger till present day. More particularly, it is necessary to evaluate
the performance, governance and achievement of different political parties that came to power after the merger and their roles to bring about political democracy in Sikkim. Our literature review shows that these areas have not been covered and received adequate attention from research scholars and the academia working on Sikkim earlier.

6. Research Questions

Keeping the gap in mind the following research questions have been selected to undertake the present study. The questions that we are interested in are:

1) What are the reasons of two phases of dominant one party rule that is Bhandari’s SJP (1979-1984) and SSP (1984-1994) and Chamling’s SDF (1994 till date) in Sikkim?

2) Why is there an absence of effective opposition from both national and regional level in Sikkim?

3) What are the strategies adopted by these two parties to maintain their domination over the politics of Sikkim? How these two parties are different in their policies, strategies and rule?

4) What are the factors behind the decline of SSP? Why did the SSP could not come back to power after 1994? and

5) What are the factors that led to the emergence of SDF in 1994?

7. Theoretical Framework

Sikkim, it seems, requires a different perspective to understand succession of dominant one party rule since its tryst with democracy from those associated with different, primarily Western, trajectories of democratic becoming and functioning of
political parties. Below we present the case for such a fresh approach.

Political parties dominate the real world of politics in all political systems. They are as says Neumann, "the life-line of modern politics". They are an indispensable part of the democratic system, in particular. "As long as representative government endures, parties will continue to perform certain roles that may be described as primordial" to quote Prof. S.E. Finer. In almost every modern democracy, whether bourgeois or socialist, developed or developing, government by the people becomes in fact government by party. Though the written Constitution of India, like many other written constitutions of the world do not acknowledge the existence of political parties, yet they are central to our political process. They are both inevitable and necessary. They are inevitable because they are the only means whereby power can be obtained and exercised in an organized way. They are necessary because they have been, to adopt Bagehot, the hyphen joining the electorate to government, the main transmission belt - through which the demands of the people are communicated to the rulers of the state.

Party has been looked at from different perspectives. Edmund Burke, Benjamin Constant and others conceived party as an ideological group. According to Burke 'a party is a body of men for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed". Duverger in his "Political parties – Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State" (Duverger, 1954) argues that often geographical proximity or the desire to defend one’s profession or personal interest leads to the formation of parties; doctrine comes afterwards. Schumpeter in "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy" (Schumpeter, 1950) contradicts Burke by saying ‘a party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political
power'. He observed, "The first and the foremost aim of each political party is to prevail over the others in order to get into power or to stay in it." It is in fact this very goal of attaining political power that distinguishes political parties from other groups in the political system.

Max Weber's definition in "The Theory of Social and Economic organization" (Weber, 1950) also supports this contention. According to him, a political party is 'an associative type of social relationship devoted to secure power within a co-operative group for its leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages for its active members "which" may consist in the realization of certain objective policies or the attainment of personal advantage or both. Sartori, in his "Parties and Party System" (Sartori, 1976) perceive political party as a political group that contest at election, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public office. We may therefore quote Bernard Hennessy who in his "Approaches to the study of party Organization" (Hennessy, 1968) combines the elements of both power and ideology in his definition of political parties. He writes: Political parties are social organizations that attempt to influence 1) the selection and tenure of the personnel of government by putting forward candidates for elective office, 2) the policies of government according to some general principles of proclivities upon which most of their members agree.

According to the Marxists, a political party is the most organized and active section of any class or part of that class or coalition of classes in a society. Every party speaks in terms of nation and social interest. But in a society based upon class divisions, the struggle between parties for political power is nothing but a struggle between classes for determining the character of the government, for determining government policies in their own class interest. Engels described parties as "the more or less adequate
expression of classes and fractions of classes". Marx and Engles in the "Manifesto of the Communist party" (Karl Marx, 1848) wrote, "In its struggle against united power of the owning classes the proletariat cannot act as a class unless it constitute itself into a political party distinct and opposed to all the old political parties created by the owning classes", and that "This constitution of the political parties is indispensable to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate goal; the abolition of the classes". They opined that the working class must form a party to seize political power and establish its dictatorship without which the emancipation would never be possible. In his "Civil War in France" (Marx, 1871 / 2012) Marx clearly stated that the chief cause of the failure of the commune was workers' inability to form a party. It is through the party, they opined, which would take humanity to a classless society that is a communist society.

Lenin felt the necessity of a united party, because only such an organization could succeed in capturing political power and bring about socio-economic transformation in society and change the world. To him without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. Only a well organized party can preach and propagate it among the workers. He observed that the history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness. To him the party was 'the incarnation of the ties that unite the vanguard detachment of the working class with the masses'. The role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party with an advanced theory. It will make workers conscious of the fundamental opposition between their class as a whole and the existing social system. Lenin states that the party must be small so that it can function swiftly and quite effectively. The party must be an "iron party" that it must enforce discipline and principles among the members. He envisaged party as a combat organization, a kind of ideological- military army.
In "The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement" (Lenin, 1900/1964) he emphasized that the party must consist of people 'who will devote to the revolution not only their spare evening, but the whole of their lives'. Lenin states that the party will consist of professional revolutionaries we will take revolutionary activity as the profession. He emphasized that the allegiance of these persons to both ideology and party shall be beyond all sorts of doubt and suspicion and stressed that the basis of party should be "democratic centralism".

Mao Zedong understood party in terms of the Marxist–Leninist revolutionary theory and style. He states that a party is indispensable for revolution. Without a revolutionary party, he believed, it was impossible to lead the working class and broad masses of the people to defeat imperialism. Like Lenin he also stressed upon party. But he says a mere party organization is not enough for the success of revolution, it must adopt a correct line. He said- "to lead the revolution to victory, a political party must depend on the correctness of its own political line". Mao advised democratic centralism to be practiced in the organization of party to stimulate the initiative of the party members, to eliminate corruption and factionalism and to solidify the party. He emphasized the importance of education in democracy, especially within the party to help members understand the meaning of a democratic life, the meaning of the relationship between democracy and centralism, and the way in which democratic centralism should be practiced.

To Gramsci, the revolutionary party alone had a total conception of the world and the commitment needed to instill in the masses what he described as critical self-consciousness which would lead them to overthrow the existing order and develop a new hegemonic socialist culture. Gramsci did not believe in the pure spontaneity of the working class- it needed the direction of the Communist Party. At the same time, he demanded far greater mass
involvement in the formation of party policy. To Gramsci, four points are important to construct party, first, the party’s ideology. The communist party, according to Gramsci, needs complete ideological unity in order to be able to fulfill its function as leader of the working class in all the situation. And the basis of ideological unity is the doctrine of Marxism and Leninism. Secondly, the party must be a centralized organization and an iron proletarian discipline must reign in its ranks. The centralization and cohesion of the party require that there should not exist organized groups within it which take on the character of factions. Thirdly, the party must be organized in such a way that it can function in contact with the masses, whatever the conditions may be. Fourthly, Gramsci is concerned with the strategic and tactical capacity of the party, i.e. the capacity to organize and unify around the proletarian vanguard and the working class all the forces necessary for revolutionary victory; and to lead these towards the revolution.

Behavioral theorists like Samuel J. Eldersveld in his “Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis” (Eldersveld, 1964) suggests a framework of the structure of political parties that is quite contrary to the Robert Michel’s thesis of ‘oligarchical’ control over the party. Eldersveld advances the concept of stratarchy (having borrowed the phrase from Lasswell and Kaplan’s power and society), discusses the structural styles of parties, and suggests four theoretical constructs or dimensions about political parties. Firstly, the party is a clientele-oriented structure and is always ‘potential clientele’-conscious. It is open at its base to new recruits for party work as well as to non-activist supporters. It is often open at the higher level also, and indeed, at the elite apex, if such a strategy will profit the party’s power aspirations. Thus it is permeable and adaptive and reflects structurally an inherent tendency towards joint advantage. It is joined by those who would use it and it mobilizes for the sake of power those who would join it. Secondly, the party is an alliance of
substructures or sub coalitions. It is adaptive and its character is coalitional. The party is a structural system seeking to translate or convert (or be converted by) social and economic interests into political power directly. In this image, party exists as a conflict system. Eldersveld point out that as a power-aspiring group the party does not settle conflict. It defers the resolution of conflict, but it seeks to stabilize sub coalitional relationships so that the multi interests will remain committed to the organization. Thirdly, a special type of hierarchy obtains in parties namely, 'stratarchy'. Rather than centralized unity of command 'strata commands' exist. Eldersveld reasons that the heterogeneity of membership and the sub coalitional system make centralized control difficult and even unwise. The party is to be visualized as a 'reciprocal deference structure'. Contrary to the bureaucratic and authoritarian models of social organization, the party does not have ordered system of authority and influence from top to down. Rather, the basis of the authority of party leaders is rapport with the cadres. The party is thus characterized as a 'rapport system', rapport between the top elite, middle-level cadres and local activists. Finally, Eldersveld sees a 'career system' within the party. He sees the party elite as consisting of the pluralized sets of separable 'career classes' or 'career categories', with considerable differentiation in communicative interchange and self consciousness. The tenure of the party cadre is unstable, and personal relationships are uncertain. But there are career groups of individuals for whom the party means 'status', not 'power' and the continuity of their commitment contributes to stability. The party structure thus gives rise to a peculiar career system, which because of the continuous renewal of career categories, contributes to the stability and fulfillment of party goals.

Lijphart classifies party according to three principal dimensions. The first dimension relates to the form of organization
which distinguishes between 'mass and cadre party. The Mass parties, Lijphart points out, have relatively many formal members and are centralized, disciplined and highly oligarchical. It is designed to involve the rank- and- file members in the decision making process of the party. The organization structure of the party is both articulated and detailed. The cadre party on the other hand has a much smaller formal membership and lower degree of centralization, discipline and oligarchy. Voters in the cadre party have no formal ties with the organization nor are they heavily involved in the decision making process of the party. Control of the machinery of the party rests largely in the hands of elite. The second dimension is concerned with the parties' programs which may be ideological or pragmatic, and which may reflect a leftist, centrist or rightist outlook. The third dimension is about the parties' supporters who may be defined in socio-economic and other terms.

There is a difference between one-party, two party and multi-party systems. In the one-party system the people have no choice of parties, since only one party exists, the government party. Other parties may exist but they are unable, due to their organizational weakness, to exert any significant influence upon the functioning of the major party. One party system is usually regarded as being typically communist phenomenon. The party is placed at the heart of the political system, while the organs of the state are reduced to a dependent position. The policy process and political leadership function almost exclusively through the framework of a single party. Examples of single party systems are like in China, erstwhile Soviet Union until 1991 and North Korea.

In two-party system there may exist within the country several parties but the third parties become unable to prevent two major parties from governing alone. In practice two parties obtain close to fifty percent of the votes in elections, and either of the two forms the
government. There is no party monopoly but “party duopoly”, there is party competition but it is between two main parties. Sartori points out that under the two-party system one party govern alone but not indefinitely. Thus alteration in power is the distinguishing features of two partism. The two party systems are found in western liberal-democratic political systems, such as The United States, Great Britain, New Zealand etc.

In multi party system more than two major parties exist and coalition governments are formed. In multi-party system, Huntington points out, ‘no party by itself is able either to form a government or to stand head and shoulders above its rivals’. Creation of government in multi-party system is possible only with a coalition of several parties. And the stability of government depends on the strength of ideological differences among the parties. If the difference of ideology is strong the government is extremely unstable. Parties may move back and forth from government to opposition in multi-party system.

India, in the words of Morris Jones is not a ‘one party state’ but it is a ‘one dominant party system’. In it numerous parties exists and compete for power, and all have equal chance to capture political power through elections. But it was a single party, the Congress that had managed to remain almost continuously and consistently in power both in terms of the number of seats it held in the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies, and in terms of its immense organizational strength. Kothari coined the term the ‘congress system’ to categorize such a party system. To him the Congress party was based on a broad consensus and was able to accommodate diverse interest and factions. (Kothari, December, 1964.) Jones also felt that it was a ‘Congress dominated system’. The Congress to him was a dominant party in the Parliament, which helped in the development of the Indian Parliament. Morris Jones in “The Government and politics of India” (Asian Survey, Dec 1964 (W.H,
1964) defines dominance in terms of dominance of the government. According to him it is a system in which other parties exist but find themselves unable to challenge effectively the dominant party’s hold on political power.

The concept of dominance was popularized in the sixties by Morris Jones and Rajni Kothari (1964). But it was Maurice Durverger who used the expression as early as 1951. Stanley Kochanek in his “The Congress Party of India: The Dynamics of One Party Democracy” (Kochanek, 1968) agreed with Kothari and Jones regarding the nature of the party system in India but argued that with the general election of 1967 the party system in India underwent significant changes. The general elections of 1967 seemed to bring to an end the system of one-party dominance. With the decline of the Congress and the loss of monopolistic power, we have developed in India a competitive multi-party system. The Congress was replaced as the governing party in about half of the Indian states. At the Centre, the Congress retained power only with the smallest majority (54% of the seats). This proportion was further reduced in 1969. In the light of these developments even Rajni Kothari referred to the change from one party dominant system to a system of competitive dominance. The works of Gassah (1992), Jana & Sarmah (2002), Mehra,Khanna and Kueck (2003) Hasan (2004) Yadagiri (2007) and Ziegfeld (2012) describe the transition from one party dominant system to a multiparty system while focusing on the rise and role of regional political parties.

Apart from these books, there are number of articles which trace this transition. An article “Transformation of the Indian Party System The 1996 Lok Sabha Elections” by Sudha Pai (Pai, Dec, 1996) is note worthy. In her article she argues that it was not the late 1960's but the 1980's that witnessed the breakdown of the Congress party both at the centre and in the states. She highlights two
important developments in the Indian party system following the breakdown of the Congress System. Firstly, it led to the shift from a hegemonic to a competitive multiparty system and an era of unstable coalition governments at the national level. Secondly, the emergence of distinct state party system, separate from but closely linked to the national party system, one in which a regional party is dominant and another in which all India and state parties compete for power. Ramesh Thakur’s “A Changing of the Guard in India” (Thakur, 1998) also deals with the same issue.

Political analysts have given various reasons for the emergence of regional parties in the states. To many it has been the decline of the party system that has led to formation of state parties in the various regions. Not a few have attributed this political phenomenon to the excessive centralism and monopolistic politics of the Congress and also because of ambitious regional leaders with political skills. The regional parties have now become a part of the Indian political system. They have come to play an important role in the national, state and local politics. There is growing evidence that they can ensure stable government in the states. In the North-East India several studies have been undertaken on the regional parties, particularly Assam Gana Parishad. (Kunda, 2007) However no major work has been undertaken on parties like Sikkim Sangram Parishad and Sikkim Democratic Front in Sikkim although both of these parties have ruled Sikkim for a long period. SSP has ruled Sikkim for 15 years and SDF has been in Sikkim’s politics for more than 19 years and has been winning elections for four consecutive terms with absolute majority. Under the rule of these two parties, Sikkim has undergone a sea change but no research work has been undertaken which underscores these two political parties and their rules in Sikkim.
Democracy is a complex phenomenon. The concept of democracy is impossible of definition in a way acceptable to everyone. It has a multitude of meanings and no one is generally accepted. What one person would regard as democracy another would deny was a democracy at all. However, there is broad agreement that democracy involves the sharing of power among different groups of a national society, including a common right to express views and to compete for the opportunity to make or influence decisions. This is not precisely "consent of the governed", as groups may be bound by decisions they oppose. Rather, contemporary democracy represents what Robert Dahl has called "polyarchy" and other writers "pluralism" -a system that gives legal recognition to more than one organization of interests. Democracies can differ profoundly, then, with respect to the number and kinds of groups that are recognized and the design of the competitive process. The essential element is the existence of some kind of feedback and adjustment mechanism that forces governments to respond and adapt to other viewpoints. (Brash, 1992). In his classic work "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy", Schumpeter defined democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter J., 1950, p. 250)

Democratic system of government is regarded as the best form of government in the modern world. Many non democratic countries had adopted this system in the past and some countries are still in the process of democratization. Like democracy, democratization also has multiple meanings. In the broadest sense, democratization refers to any change in the direction of more democracy, no matter how small. Democratization can thus refer to a minimal improvement in an authoritarian regime, but also to the further democratization of an existing democracy, what scholars like Schedler labels
"completing democracy" or "democratic deepening." In the narrow sense, democratization is synonymous with a democratic transition; the notion of a democratic transition implies a change of category of a country from authoritarian or totalitarian to democratic system. Munek defines a democratic transition as "the critical step, when a country passes a threshold marked by the introduction of competitive elections with mass suffrage for the main political offices in the land." (Bogaards, 2010) The global "democratic revolution" was termed the wave of democratization by Huntington in the modern era. According to him, wave of democratization is a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occurs within a specified period and that significantly outnumbers transitions in the opposite direction in the same period. Huntington identifies three distinct waves of democratization. The first wave began in America in the early nineteenth century and culminated at the end of World War I with about thirty countries having democratic regimes. (Huntington, 1991-1992) The end of the First World War was a temporary victory for democracy in Europe, as it was preserved in France and temporarily extended to Germany. Likewise, the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 inaugurated a few months of liberal democracy under Alexander Kerensky until Lenin took over in October Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922 began a reverse wave. The 1930s became a decade of dictators in Europe and Latin America. And in 1942 there were only twelve democracies left in the world.

World War II was ultimately a victory for democracy in Western Europe, where representative governments were established that reflected the general will of their citizens. The Allied victory in World War II and decolonization started a second movement toward democracy which, however petered out by the early 1960s when about thirty-six countries had democratic regimes. This was then followed by a second reverse movement towards authoritarianism,
marked most dramatically by military take-overs in Latin America and the seizure of power by personal despots such as Ferdinand Marcos. *(Huntington, 1991-1992)* Many countries of Central and Eastern Europe became undemocratic Soviet satellite states. In Southern Europe, a number of right-wing authoritarian dictatorships (most notably in Spain and Portugal) continued to exist. Japan had moved towards democracy during the Taishō period during the 1920s, but it was under effective military rule in the years before and during World War II. The country adopted a new constitution during the postwar Allied occupation, with initial elections in 1946. *(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy)*

World War II also planted seeds of freedom outside Europe and Japan, strengthening anti colonial sentiment worldwide while many restive colonies/possessions were promised subsequent independence in exchange for their support for embattled colonial powers during the war. Most of the former British and French colonies were independent by 1965 and at least initially democratic. In 1948, the state of Israel declared independence and thus was born the first full democracy in the Middle East. India became a Democratic Republic in 1950 after achieving independence from Great Britain in 1947. After holding its first national elections in 1952, India achieved the status of the world's largest liberal democracy with universal suffrage which it continues to hold today. The process of decolonization created much political upheaval in Africa and parts of Asia, with some countries experiencing often rapid changes to and from democratic and other forms of government. *(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy)*

The third wave according to Huntington began in the mid 1970s in Southern Europe, as a number of right-wing nationalist dictatorships fell from power. Then, in the early and mid-1980s it spread to Latin America and to Asian countries like Korea, Thailand [36]
and the Philippines and then in the late 1980s and early 1990s to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. (Huntington, 1991-1992) The communist states in the USSR sphere of influence were also replaced with liberal democracies. Much of Eastern Europe, Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, and several Arab, central Asian and African states, and the not-yet-state that is the Palestinian Authority moved towards greater liberal democracy in the 1990s and 2000s.

In the 21st century, democracy movements have been seen across the world. In the Arab world, an unprecedented series of major protests occurred with citizens of Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Syria and other countries across the MENA region demanding democratic rights. This revolutionary wave was given the term Tunisia Effect. The Palestinian Authority also took action to address democratic rights. In Iran, following a highly-disputed presidential vote, Iranian citizens held a major series of protests calling for change and democratic rights. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq led to a toppling of Saddam Hussein and a new constitution with free and open elections and democratic rights.

In Asia, in Bhutan, in December 2005, the 4th King Jigme Singye Wangchuck announced that the first general elections would be held in 2008, and that he would abdicate the throne in favor of his eldest son. Bhutan is currently undergoing further changes to allow for a constitutional monarchy. In Nepal, 2006 saw the final collapse of 240-year-old monarchy after decades of protest against monarchy to embrace democracy. In the Maldives protests and political pressure led to the government reform which allowed democratic rights and presidential elections in 2008. The country of Burma (Myanmar) had long been ruled by a military junta, however in 2011; the government changed to allow certain voting rights and released democracy-leader Aung San Suu Kyi from house
arrest. However, Burma still has major human rights problems and not full democratic rights. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy).

Democratization may be influenced by many factors such as history, culture, economic conditions etc. In “Political Man; The Social Bases of Politics” (1958), Seymour Martin Lipset hypothesized that democracy was a product of social factors and economic preconditions, and in particular, the emergence of strong middle class. While some scholars argue that democracy results from universal strivings for freedom. In the nineteenth century, many political theorists noted the relationship between a market economy and democracy. Glassman has documented, “Marxists, classical capitalist economists, even monarchists accepted the link between industrial capitalism and parliamentary democracy.” Schumpeter held that “modern democracy is a product of the capitalist process.” Moore concluded "No bourgeois, no democracy." Market economy including a substantial independent peasantry produces a middle class that can stand up against the state and provide the resources for independent groups, as many twentieth century scholars such as Weber, Schumpeter, Moore, Skocpol and Berger have also concluded.

Scholars like Therborn, Rueschemeyer and Stephens are of the view that while the movement toward a market economy and the growth of an independent middle-class have weakened state power and enlarged human rights and the rule of law, it has been the working class particularly in the West that has demanded the expansion of suffrage and the rights of parties. As John Stephens noted, "Capitalist development is associated with the rise of democracy in part because it is associated with the transformation of the class structure strengthening the middle class.” Berger from the conservative side noted that while there has been no case of political democracy that has not been a market economy….. There have been numerous cases of nondemocratic market economics." Diamond held
that capitalism has been a necessary but not sufficient condition. 
(Lipset, 1994)

Przeworski et al argues that modernization—specially, an increase in per capita GDP—is not a causal factor in the process of democratization. Rather, they argue, the positive association between income and democracy results from the reduced likelihood of more modern countries sliding back, as it were, into undemocratic forms of government once having (randomly) become democratic. (Epstein et al, Democratic Transition) Epstein and his colleagues refuting Przeworski opine that higher per capita incomes increase the likelihood of a movement away from autocracy as well as decrease the likelihood of a movement away from democracy. (David L. Epstein, 2006). The Asian cases provide a good deal of support for the importance of sustained economic growth as the basis for social and ultimately political transformation. In South Korea and Taiwan, authoritarian, developmentalist regimes obtained some degree of legitimacy from sustained economic growth for many decades. Eventually this growth produced a broad middle class that grew increasingly uncomfortable with paternalistic elites. When these middle classes joined with other regime opponents that democratic reforms occurred.

Democracy requires a supportive political culture, the acceptance by the citizenry and political elites of principles underlying freedom of speech, media, assembly, religion, of the right of the opposition parties, of the rule of law, of human rights and the like. (Almond, Lipset, Dahl, Diamond) such norms do not evolve overnight. The process has been the gradual one. Democracy has never developed anywhere by plan, except when it was imposed by a democratic conqueror, as in post World War II Germany and Japan. From the United States to Northern Europe, freedom, suffrage, and the rule of law grew in a piecemeal, not in a planned fashion. (Lipset,
1994). Lipset, Huntington, Dahl and others are right to analyze that cultural factors appear even more important than economic ones. More particularly having once been a British colony is the variable most highly correlated with democracy. As Weiner has pointed out, beyond the experiences in the America and Australia in the nineteenth century, "every country with a population of at least 1 million (and almost all the smaller countries as well) that has emerged from colonial rule and has had a continuous democratic experience is a former British colony." For instance, North America before the revolution or India and Nigeria in more recent times. (Lipset, 1994)

Historical factors, particularly the history of colonial legacy has influenced transformation to democracy in many countries. India’s independence was an epic struggle for democracy, freedom and liberty not only for her own people, but also for people all over the world who were suffering from the yoke of colonialism, imperialism and fascist rule. Africa’s transition to democracy is in fact the continent’s long history of struggle against slavery, colonialism and post-colonial misrule.

Huntington says that the religious tradition also has been a major differentiating factor in transformations to democracy. He views that historically there have been negative relationships between democracy and Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Confucianism; conversely Protestantism and democracy have been positively interlinked. These differences have been explained by (1) the much greater emphasis on individualism in Protestantism and (2) the traditionally close links between religion and the state in the other four religions. Tocqueville and Bryce emphasized that democracy is furthered by a separation of religious and political beliefs, so that political stands are not required to meet absolute standards set down by the church. Scholars from Tocqueville’s time to the
mid-1970s have observed that among European countries and their overseas offspring Protestant countries have been more likely to give rise to democratic regimes than Catholic ones. *(Lipset, 1994)*

Apart from the internal factors like levels of economic development and education, size of the middle classes, history of colonial legacy, political culture like the nature and vibrancy of civil society, religious factors and the role of specific leaders, observers also stress on the role of external forces in determining transformation to democracy. Although there seems to be a consensus among scholars that the so-called Third Wave of democratization has been determined primarily by internal factors, scholars are of the view that external factors played a significant role in democratizing a nation. Of course, many factors, both internal and external may contribute to transition to democracy but in the contexts of economic bankruptcy, external support in the form of financial aid played a key role. It is particularly relevant to countries where transitions were launched in response to mass mobilizations calling not only for political reforms, but also for economic improvements. In these cases foreign aid is crucial, particularly in the early stages of democratization when the states’ internal capacities have collapsed. Foreign aid encourages and helps solidify the domestic sense of confidence and support for the democratic process. It can also help new regimes gain social peace, stability and prevent military coups or popular uprisings. *(Gazibo, 2005)*

In Africa, democratization was not supposed to happen. It had too little of what seemed necessary for constitutional democratic politics. African countries were too poor, too culturally fragmented and insufficiently capitalist: they were not fully penetrated by western Christianity and lacked the requisite civic culture. Middle classes were usually weak and more bureaucratic than entrepreneurial, and they were often co-opted into authoritarian
political structures. Working classes, except in a few cases such as Zambia and South Africa were embryonic. According to the main theories about the prerequisites or favorable conditions for democracy, most African countries constituted infertile terrain. Scholars like Huntington, Dahl and Di Palma considered prospects of democracy in Africa as a whole to be bleak but by the end of 1991 there was the return of competitive party politics to many of the African countries which scholars found 'stunning'.

By 1995, almost all sub-Saharan African countries introduced some measure of political liberalization, and a majority permitted competitive elections. This transformation can be traced to three significant factors: the weakening of most African states by a prolonged fiscal crisis, the increasing control of international financial institutions and the allied bilateral agencies of the industrialized nations in determining economic policy, and the shift of western powers (especially the United States) after the end of the cold war from tolerance of an alliance with authoritarian regimes to liberalization of their systems.

"By the late 1980, according to van de Walk more than half the nations in sub-Saharan Africa were effectively bankrupt. This eventually obliged them to accept highly conditioned loans from the IMF and World Bank. Larry Diamond rightly concludes, the power of external donors to press for both economic and political reforms was nowhere greater than in Africa. Moreover, the power of these donors "to induce democratic change through aid conditionality is directly proportional to the dependence of the aid recipients or debtors upon them and to the unity of the donor community. (Joseph, 1997)

Scholars who stress the primacy of internal factors behind the democratic transitions in African countries tend to underscore the strength of domestic political protests and pro-democracy
movements. The failures of development, the economic crisis of the 1980's and 1990's pauperized middle and working classes and the disintegration of the postcolonial state's legitimacy and capacity started democratic movements in Africa. They also highlight the demonstration effects of regional transitions, such as Benin in Francophone West Africa, Zambia in southern Africa. The impact of the end of the Cold War, the demonstration effects of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, and the imposition of structural adjustment programmes and political conditional ties by Western bilateral and multilateral financial institutions acted as the external forces in Africa.

The routes of transition to democracy were diverse, as were the democratic structures adopted by the countries. Some are presidential, some are parliamentary, some embody the Gaullist mixture of the two; so also some are two-party, some are multiparty, and major differences exist in the nature and strength of the parties but the common denominator appears to be a moving away from an authoritarian to a participatory system. Of greater importance is that in all democratic regimes the principal officers of government are chosen through competitive elections in which the bulk of the population can participate.

India's transition to democracy in 1940's is mainly due to a legacy of British coloniasm. But democracy has not fared as well in so many other former British colonies including Pakistan. Therefore, as a contrast to this emphasis on colonial legacy, other scholars emphasize the role of the Indian nationalist elite and nationalist movements in the birth of Indian democracy. (Sarkar, 2001) Scholars like Sumit Sarkar while acknowledging some British role emphasizes the role Indians played in shaping their own version of democracy. India inherited a number of political traits from British rule which were significant for India's democratic evolutions but it was the
nationalist leaders who adopted the federal structure for India. The structure that India adopted after its independence in 1947 was quite distinct from what the British had in mind. When the British left India, they maintained that after the lapse of British paramountcy in 1947, all the states were free to join either Indian Union or Pakistan or remain independent. As a result, these states became the part of Indian Union. They gave up their identities of princely states and kingdoms and became the unit of Indian federal structure. In this way the process of democratization started in these states too. However, this was not the case with Sikkim as it did not become the part of India along with other states and kingdoms. It joined the Indian Union only in 1975.

The path of democratization in one country is different from that in another. However, democratization in Sikkim took not just a different but an unusual path. It was not effected through national conferences or through military regime nor it was similar to the process of its neighbouring country Nepal, where after several popular movements for decades to establish democracy people finally succeeded in putting an end to the powers of the King in 2006 nor like Bhutan, where instead of people demanding for democracy, it was gifted by the king out of benevolence. While different factors played a determining role in bringing about transition to democracy in different countries in the world at different phases; most of those factors like coloniasm, economic development, rise of the middle classes, political culture and external factors like role of international financial institutes were not relevant in this tiny kingdom.

In Sikkim, one of the factor to foster democratization was structural condition. The State was devoid of properly planned communication network. It lacked comprehensive infrastructures of heavy and light industries, the very geography of this tiny state being at a disadvantage. It was a thoroughly backward state with
insurmountable mountains and inaccessible terrains as its natural heritage. The bulk of the state’s population was riddled with illiteracy and superstition. Only a handful of people were aware of the concept of democracy and there was no civil society. Yet there were some ambitious leaders who had the confidence of ruling Sikkim as a state in a better way. The role of Kazi Lhendup Dorjee, the first Chief Minister of Sikkim is worth mentioning in bringing about democracy in Sikkim.

More than any other factor external threat and role of outsiders played an important role in Sikkim’s transition. Sikkim was spurred by very real external threat. She faced hostile neighbors from all directions. This threat put pressure on elites who saw both state capacity and economic growth as key strategies to maintain independence from external, existential threats. In the early years Sikkim’s foreign contact was entirely with her northern neighbor Tibet. Both the countries shared matrimonial relations too but the attitude of Tibet was uncertain. With her Himalayan neighbor, namely, Bhutan to the east and Nepal in the west, her experience had been none too healthy. Bhutanese forces in history invaded Sikkim and occupied the capital Rabdantse and Kalimpong was snatched from Sikkim. Nepal was no less on the western border. They made frequent attacks into Sikkim’s territory in their expansionist pursuit. They almost succeeded in annihilating it and would have perhaps permanently done so had it not been for the British who came to the scene well in time.

British had its own intention regarding Sikkim. Its policy was to extend its influence into Sikkim. In that way they hoped not only to check the Gorkha expansion but also to establish contact with the Tibetans for the expansion of trade. Political scene in Sikkim was none too healthy. The authority in Sikkim was also threatened by the forces from within. Because of these circumstances, Sikkim could ill-
afford to shirk off the protection of the British. But when the British
left India in 1947 they explicitly refused to transfer paramountcy to
the new government in New Delhi. An independent Sikkim placed
herself under India’s protection in 1950, entrusting only certain
aspects of her governance to New Delhi while retaining the essence of
sovereign authority in Gangtok. The Indian security umbrella
provided important benefits to Sikkim. It also made possible the
Sikkimese Constitution.

Sikkim’s transformation was clearly the result of local
conditions for instance after the independence of India and the
establishment of popular government in some states encouraged
some of the organizations to come together for similar movements in
Sikkim. They started demanding for democratic form of government.
As a result, political parties and elections were authorized during
1950s but the parties were based on communal lines and there was
no uniformity of the procedure of elections in Sikkim. It kept
changing according to the discretion of Chogyal.

By the beginning of 1970s there already existed multiple
political parties in Sikkim and these parties started demanding
democratic system of government. At first, these protests were not
taken seriously, which was responded with both repression and
reform. But the general upsurge of 1973 affected both the
countryside and the capital of the state. The situation became
serious which later on in 1975 paved the way for advent of
democracy in Sikkim. The Chogyal with his dynastic history of 333
years was bundled off to become a part of history. In Sikkim, the
transitions occurred quite rapidly following the onset of internal
protest and external threat on the incumbent autocratic regime.
Although it was ultimately up to local actors to initiate democratic
movement; but outsiders played a role by providing resources, ideas
and strategies. In this sense, India has played an important role by
providing technical assistance to newly emerging democratic structures even if it had nothing to do with the democratic movement itself.

The popular dissent and demonstration of 1973 in Sikkim was to abolish monarchy and to establish democratic form of government but Sikkimese had to pay handsomely for democracy. Transition to democracy occurred in Sikkim with heavy condition: it had to lose its sovereignty and become a part of India for democracy. Although Sikkim became a part of India in 1975 through a ‘Special poll’ which was held on 14 April, 1975 to seek public opinion on the issue: the abolition of the institution of Chogyal and Sikkim’s merger with India and the result went overwhelmingly in favor of the merger; some Sikkimese admitted that they did not want the Chogyal but they wanted even less to be a part of India. They were allowed no choice.” (Datta-Ray S. K., 1984, pp. 308-309) Hence, Sikkim became a part of India by default. A liberated country often adopts democracy as the best form of governance the outgoing century has known but what happened in Sikkim was just the opposite. Sikkimese had to exchange the country for democracy. A merger with India was the price the Sikkimese was to pay in exchange for democracy. Probably Sikkim’s is the dearest democracy in the world.

On the basis of the above discussion we may hypothesize that neither political party in Sikkim nor the political democracy in Sikkim have been institutionalized in the real sense of the term. The hangovers of monastic-feudalistic past are still strong and political leaders cash on the subject culture of the region. The geo-strategic factors, particularly China’s proximity has eased cash flows from the Center that do also help in maintaining status quo in every sense of the term. Political dominance of regional political party is an inseparable aspect of this process.
8. Methodological Consideration

Methods, techniques and research designs appropriate for any given enquiry are controversial not just as to their relative merits and demerits but in view of their epistemological as well as ontological aspects, the study of which is the purpose of methodology. In the present work we propose to adopt a constructivist methodological position. There is an aspect of our Constructivist methodological position that needs some elaboration. Commonly the methodological textbooks set up a debate between relative importance of words vis a vis numbers, or the relative merits respectively of quantitative research and qualitative researches while leaning closer to words or qualitative tools such as participant observation, interview, PRA techniques etc. The present study has a thrust towards qualitative research in its methodological orientation in the proper sense of qualitative research (Babbie, 2004). It does not foreclose use of statistical tools wherever necessary. It may be stated in this context that recalcitrance of qualitative methods in regard to standards of validity is taken into account. But for this study validity and for that to rely on quantitative research may not be a realizable goal in view of the present level of information that we have been able to assimilate so far. We intend to use the direct sources or personal sources of information as well as documentary sources of information would be collected to address the research problem of the proposed research work. In the personal sources or direct sources of information, interviews will be taken with the party leaders of SDF, party workers, bureaucrats/retired civil servants, senior citizens and the people belonging to different social classes.

The documentary sources of information include primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include both official and non-official documents. The official documents are Sikkim Government Gazette notifications, circulars, official letters, Assembly
and budget proceedings, memorandum of understanding signed during the tenure of the government. These official sources can be obtained from various departments, State library, Community libraries, District libraries and library of Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Non-official documents include party documents, such as party literature, election manifestoes, leaflets/pamphlets, biographies, etc. which can be obtained from the party office as well as from SDF leaders and party workers. The secondary sources are books, journals, articles, newspapers etc. related to the study.

9. Gathering and Analyzing Data

I here provide an account of data collection and my approach to analysis of the data. I start with an account of my several trips to meet the leaders of different political parties and non-political organizations and proceed to provide an account of data collection through interviews and observations as well as documentary research and secondary research.

Interviews with the Leaders

After I got registered for Ph.D program in mid-2009, I spent a year for collecting documents, literatures and some more books on Sikkim. The books which dealt with my subject were rare and there was not a single book related to my research work. My mentor had already told me about the pros and cons of treading the unbeaten track and after going through the few books available, I knew that I had to start from the scratch. Since there are not many full fledged libraries in the state for academic purpose, I basically relied on Sikkim Legislative Assembly Library. In fact, I spent most of the time of my initial year in the library. I went through all the proceedings of Sikkim Legislative Assembly (SLA) from the first Assembly session to the most recent ones to get some clues about politics in Sikkim in democratic set up. There were not less than 150 books all full of dust
and healthy silver fishes. Perhaps I was the first person to lay hands on those books. Those books benefitted me a lot in finding the names of legislators, their party affiliations and most importantly, their roles in the House. I visited other libraries like Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok and small community libraries too but those libraries did not provide me much needed literatures on my topic. The recent history of Sikkim, post 1970 is not well documented. Although there are few books but these books deal with only the agitation of 1973 up till merger. I had no choice other than relying on interpretation of people. For this purpose, I zeroed in on taking interviews of people belong to three generations: kingship under Chogyals, new born democracy under Kazi and nurturing democracy under Bhandari and Chamling.

I decided to take interviews of two types. One was intensive one-on-one interview of conscious, educated citizens and the other was random interviews of laymen across the State. For intensive interviews I selected the leaders of all existing political parties, ruling and opposition both; leaders of different associations based on caste, religion, profession and some issue based associations like Concerned Citizen of Sikkim,(CCS) Affected Citizen of Tista, (ACT)Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee(SIBLAC), leaders of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) working for child care, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS.I had chosen the Ex-MLAs, Ex-MPs, retired bureaucrats, journalists and the members of left out business community of Sikkim for my interview. For the random interviews, I had chosen respondents from all the four districts of the state which will be discussed in greater detail as we progress.

I contacted minimum 60 leading personalities of different fields. Firstly, I noted down the names of some of the political and apolitical leaders that I had heard and known. Secondly, I tried to get hold of their contact numbers and address. Once the ice was broken
and I met the first respondent, meeting others became lot easier for me. I asked each respondent to suggest some other names and asked for their contact numbers and addresses. Out of 60 people that I had approached, most of the people especially women turned down my request diplomatically. With a handful, I could not coordinate because of their circumstances, some moved out of the State and two persons died while in the process of coordination. Finally, I ended up taking interviews of 33 people. It took me 18 months to take the interviews of all these leaders and common citizens. Accessibility, availability and coordination with the leaders were very difficult as they all were leading personalities with tight schedule due to their share of responsibilities.

For me there was nothing called targeted field for interviews, I went around the length and breadth of Sikkim and sometimes outside Sikkim in West Bengal for interviews as they were settled in different places. The interviews with these people were not taken at once nor there different phases. I had to meet each of them at least three times to take their interviews. Sometimes, I have been lucky that some leaders suggested my name to another leader and gave me the contact numbers but sometimes I literally had to find out their residence and stand outside their bunglows for hours for appointment. Once I had to stand so long outside one person’s bungalow that I had to take off my sandal and stand barefoot.

The first two meetings with the respondents were just to get familiar with them. In fact, it was to make them comfortable and win their confidence which was a very tough task. Most of them kept analyzing me and viewed me with suspicion. In one way, they were right to think so. I approached them with a questionnaire which had 24 questions; most of the questions addressed sensitive issues of Sikkim which made them quite curious. They later confessed that they thought that I was some paid agent or a questionable person.
since nobody before me came asking such daring and sensitive questions. In Sikkim, politics is very congested and even if the political parties, ruling or opposition does not harm a citizen, there is a kind of voluntary terror in the minds of people. And in such a political atmosphere when I approached them with my questionnaire, I scored kudos from some of them and some just shrugged me off. The manner and feeling of being shrugged off was a confidence killer. It would take some time for me to digest and regain my confidence to approach the next bigwig.

Whereas most of the probable respondents lived in and around Gangtok, some lived far off from the busy life and settled in some remote corner of Sikkim. Gangtok town and its surrounding is relatively at high altitude, the roads and foot paths are escalating. I cannot forget the day I visited Mr. Sherab Palden, former Finance Minister's house. The way to his house was very sliding. I thought of using a taxi but I didn’t know the exact location therefore, I had to walk down searching for the place. While walking down the sliding road, I had a great fall on the way with my face down. Luckily, I fell on the small heap of sand. With my laptop and a sling bag occupying both the shoulders, I had to struggle to stand on my feet.

Taking interviews were really a learning experience, both academically and personally. Each interview taught me a new lesson of life. I used to start at 6.30 in the morning from Namchi by a shared taxi and would reach Gangtok by 10 a.m. travelling almost 79 km. I used to have breakfast on the way to Gangtok and meet 3-4 persons back to back and would return at 3.30 p.m. by the last taxi to Namchi. In one of such trips, while having breakfast on the way side restaurant, I left the bag which contained my laptop along with camera, mobile phone and pen drive on the table of that restaurant. I realized it only when I reached Gangtok. It would have cost me around sixty thousand to buy those things again but the contents in
the laptop and pen drive were priceless. I then made a ‘U’ turn from the taxi stand and travelled 2 hours towards Namchi. Luckily, an honest man in the restaurant found it and kept it safely. After recovering my bag, I again travelled all the way back to Gangtok and reached around 3 P.M and took interview of Ex-Chief Minister and SPCC President, Nar Bahadur Bhandari. The trouble was worth it.

In eighteen months, I had to go through thick and thin of life. Being the first child, like any other parents; my parent’s endless pampering made me feel like a small girl even at the age of 26. But when I had to get down in the real business all alone, I was met with different new and difficult situations. I have always been exclusive and reserved in nature and I realize that I was insensitive to other’s problems too but this research work has transformed me completely. This I felt very strongly when I met a person with HIV positive, a recovering addict, and a great lady, recipient of Padma Shree, Ms. Keepu Lepcha who ran an orphanage. I literally broke down when I went to take an interview of a person with HIV positive who ran an NGO for such persons. Since it is regarded as social taboo, we found no suitable place for interview. Finally, we ended up taking the interview in the car itself. Similar case happened with the recovering addict.

During monsoon, heavy rain pours down in its madness in Sikkim. I was accompanied by my friend MJ in the entire monsoon as travelling alone would be risky in the rainy season due to uncertain landslides and roadblocks. In one of such monsoon in 2011, I had fixed up the first appointment with a person. We had to look for his residence. It was raining cats and dogs outside and the umbrella was of no use. Since it was the first meeting I could not cancel it and cut a sorry figure, I had to reach there somehow. To make the matter worse, we went to the wrong direction and by the time we found out the place we were totally drenched and were in no
position to sit down and talk. Sympathizing our condition, the person himself fixed an appointment the following week. We returned home in wet cloths. Again, in one of the monsoon days, we were walking hurriedly along the road going to take an interview of a person in the morning. A vehicle speed passed us splashing a pool of rain water of the sizeable pothole all over our bodies. Our cloths were all soiled. We went to a showroom, bought new dresses for ourselves and went for an interview.

This phase was a mixed bag full of funny and pathetic situations but each situation was a stepping stone for me. Once I went to meet Mrs. Kalawati Subba, the former Assembly Speaker regarding my work. I didn’t know her residence and somebody showed me her residence from distance. I went to a wrong place. The actual place was just above that building. It was such an embarrassing moment to have come to the wrong place and enjoy the hospitality not meant for us. In the rainy season, we had to face many such problems. Fearing falling boulders and leeches we met the respondents. Sometimes because of land slide we had to cross over the heap of boulders to go to other side of the road so as to catch a cab and sometimes we had to take uncarpeted and slippery kutcha long road to reach home. If monsoon is rude, winter is no better in Sikkim. It is really challenging for anybody to wake up at 5 in the morning and catch a first service taxi at 6.30 in the winter morning. The tap water runs to hurt and the wind bites in winter in Sikkim.

Being a lady researcher, sometimes I had to face awkward situations too. Initially, it was quite embarrassing at times when the personal secretaries and security guards of the political leaders used to look at me quizzically when I used to meet their bosses frequently. As time passed their remorseful and respectful attitude said it all. Sometimes, the politicians used to try manipulating my opinion and
sometimes tried to pressurize me to write things according to their views but I did not let them affect my work. The most torturous part was to listen to them whole day to know their views and get answers to my questions, which would have taken hardly an hour had they been précised to answer and not kept talking about their glorious past.

**Observation**

In my field work, the answers to most of my questions were found in observation. As already mentioned, my questionnaire included some burning issues which people wanted to avoid as much as possible and even if they answered, they either answered in paralanguages or their answers had lots of what we call ‘reading between the lines’. Amongst these respondents, I found most of the politicians mysterious in nature. Their responses were varied. Sometimes they were satirical, critical and sometimes free wheeling and genuine. I had to observe their reactions, body languages and stress in the words and pitch in the voice etc. while answering the questions. Luckily, I have video recorded the interviews of each of the respondent in my camcorder. Although it was very taxing but I could refer to it when and where I had confusions.

I found the leaders in Sikkim take politics personally, there’s no segregation between political and personal relations. A party is projected as a domain of a single leader. Any party is known by an identity of a single individual. More than constitution and ideology of any party, the face value of the leader of a particular party matters. This is one of the reasons for failure of political parties to come to power once voted out as these political parties do not groom alternatives or future leaders. A party is not viewed as an organization for social welfare but as an organization whose sole aim being capturing the seat of power as soon as it is formed. Most
parties are formed by the dissident members of existing political parties. Once the party is formed, it either forms the government or if it loses in the election, its members joins the ruling bandwagon or the party disappears from the political scene till the next election but it does not function as an opposition party.

The opposition leaders reasons, it is very expensive in Sikkim to run a party. People in Sikkim do not bother about policies and ideology of the political parties but expect financial gains from the political parties. If these parties do not form the government it becomes very difficult for them to maintain their organization and fulfill people’s expectation. That’s why they join the ruling party or disappear. On the other hand people have different views on opposition. They do not vote opposition parties because the opposition parties do not stick to their principles and stands and get sold off. Along with the party they sell off people’s trust, expectations and aspirations too and simple people are left in cold to face the consequences for supporting the opposition parties. Thus, in the elections people make sure not to vote the opposition parties unless the ruling party is dictatorial and there is huge wave of revolution against the Government.

I found most of the political leaders loaded with egos. They are some what pompous and liked to discuss about their achievements only. Although nobody likes to hear about one’s failure, that’s a human nature but these issues were extra touchy for them. I had to be very careful not to bruise their egos while asking certain questions as they can be at times cheeky and cocky. These leaders are relentless to criticize their rivals. But one strange thing that I have noticed is that no body talked about and criticized the rival party, its organization, polices programs and ideology etc. Their attacks were directed to a particular leader of the party. It was very
difficult to remain somber when the leaders called their rivals 'a tiger without teeth', 'a paper tiger', 'a wet cat' etc.

It was equally difficult to get value-neutral opinions from retired bureaucrats and MPs. These people were the ones who served the Government in both Bhandari's and Chamling's regime. They had personal choices of political parties. But since Bhandari's SSP no longer existed as a regional party, in absence of strong rival political party, their choices were limited to either pro-SDF or anti-SDF. Now the third force Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) led by dissident MLA of SDF, Prem Singh Golay has just started to mark its presence in Sikkim's politics, these anti-SDF forces are now getting expressions in and coming under the new banner-SKM

I have come to know that the bureaucrats and MPs have to perform under pressure and are made to act as per the dictum of the Government no matter whichever party comes in power. The legislature exerts tremendous pressure on executive. Legislature or executive, the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union is still a burning issue amongst them. Although the actors of the merger hold that it was necessary firstly, to fulfill high aspirations of the people of Sikkim for development. Secondly, Chogyal was already a hurdle to the people. He never wanted people of Sikkim to be educated because he thought if they get educated then they might challenge monarchy. So the only alternative was to join India for Sikkim's development. Had there been any other option, Sikkim would not have merged with India. But a large section of people feel it was an outright usurpation. They are against the way it was merged and as per the International Laws, it was regarded illegal.

I found the word 'merger' is used officially and in public, but in private it is generally called 'Annexation'. They say that Sikkimese people were unaware about the development and argue that no
enlightened citizen would have loved to undergo a transformation of a nation to a statehood of another nation. For them, the merger was anyway unnecessary as the people of Sikkim had started the process of assimilation with India by signing the 8th May Agreement. According to the agreement, Sikkim was already a part of India, its external affairs, communications, defence and even the internal administration was guided by India. Although it is now the accepted fact that Sikkim lost its distinct identity for development by adopting democratic form of government and now it's a fait accompli but section of people still feel that Sikkim could not reap much benefits of the merger. The mindset of people could not change. There is still a gap between Bhutia-Lepchas and Nepalis and the communal politics still plays a vital role. We could not integrate emotionally with India either. The Sikkimese - Indian difference is very much in force. The latter regarded as outsiders are looked down upon as second class citizens and are contemptuously referred to as Madesi (plainsman) and 'Dhoti Ghathey (Dhoti clad or Dhoti Knotted) different from paharey (hillmen).

A sizeable percentage of people think there's no democracy in Sikkim although we have merged for democratic form of government. But at the same time they hold that there's no democracy not because of lack of principles, provisions and set up; it is because of lack of consciousness and inability of people to utilize it. Democracy ushered in Sikkim too early, people were not ready for it and still are not educated regarding democratic practices and still have a feudal mindset. For effective functioning of democracy it is necessary to have a strong opposition. In absence of opposition in Sikkim, its democratic status was highly debated. Few respondents think that even in absence of opposition Sikkim is democratic because even if there's no opposition political party, opposition comes from other sectors like civil society, NGOs, intellectuals etc. So there's opposition outside the Assembly which makes a balance.

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While most of the respondents think that there is space for opposition in Sikkim but people have not utilized it. There’s no opposition inside or outside the Assembly mainly because whether the opposition comes from the political parties or social organization or from the media in a democracy people have to participate. People of Sikkim are fokotes (useless people who always look for free rides). They expect the opposition to speak up in everything. Where opposition gets in trouble people do not come to their aid. When the social organizations speak on behalf of people, they keep mum. When media writes in favour of people and gets in trouble, people don’t do anything. Therefore, in Sikkim’s democracy people are not participating. They keep quiet and expect A, B, C to do the dirty work. That’s why opposition does not flourish in Sikkim nor does democracy.

I am told that the best democracy we have experienced was before merger, after merging its all fake democracy. Before merger there was one Chogyal but after the merger there are 32 Chogyals ruling Sikkim. They admit that to large extend there was some sort of democracy in Bhandari’s as well as in Chamling’s time but what democracy should be, what people aspire for is absent. I asked a person his view on democracy in Sikkim without opposition, he replied, “As long as you talk to people good thing about the government or neutral issues, people will be there to listen to you, but the moment you do the opposite, people start looking over your shoulders and even disappear from sight. What does that mean?” As mentioned above, some respondents had an opinion that even in absence of strong opposition parties in Sikkim, opposition comes from outside the Assembly namely, NGOs and other social associations. Many respondents refuted this and argued that there are many non-political associations: professional, issue based, caste based or religion based which can exert pressure on the Government but barring few, they are run by government patronage. They cannot
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keep themselves outside the purview of politics and remain non-political. There is a covered pressure of the government on them which handicaps the active functioning of these associations. They cannot oppose the government policies even if there is necessity and desirability to do so. Talking in this connection, one of the respondent stated, "There is no meaning of civil resistance, it can be purchased." I have realized that there can be paid politics and paid protests too.

One of such associations is the association of HIV positive people. When I met them, I could realize that these people still get stigmatized and are treated as a social taboo. They fear that the rate of positive people are increasing day by day of which 50% remains unreported because of the unsupportive attitude of the people. There is an inter relation between the rise of percentage of drug addicts and HIV positive people as because most of the time the virus is transmitted through sharing of needles among the addicts. More than anything else they are worried about their children being segregated and stigmatized by the society. They want them to be treated at par with the rest of the citizen and want government to take stringent steps for this. They argued that if they have the right to vote, they have every right to lead a respectable life for, being positive is not a crime. They argued that when they form the part of the populace and their votes matter in forming the government, why should not their grievances matter the Government? They further added, in fact these are the matters of grave concern which is weakening our society and the State as a whole from within.

Drug addicts and recovering addicts also had the similar grievances. I realized that most of them had dark phases of life which led them into this trap. They do not enjoy using drugs and be the victim of substance abuse. They are helpless and struggle each day to come out of it and seek moral support from the family and friends.
They want the Government and the society to support them rather than segregate them. Rather than sending them to the rehabilitation centers they want the Government to pass strict laws against the drug peddlers to stop easy availability of drugs. I have come to know that most of the suicide deaths in Sikkim are because of substance abuse and not because of HIV/AIDS.

When I approached the Women’s Associations and some leading women in Sikkim, I found women avoided politics as they feel it’s a male domain. They are not much bothered about political affairs in the state unless it affects them directly. By interviewing all these respondents, I have observed one more thing in common that most of the people barring few in power are of the view that like in any other Indian states, money plays important role in Sikkim’s politics and determines election results but the difference is in Sikkim because of its size and population it is easy to manipulate votes. There is a strong belief among the people that the first election of any party is fought and won genuinely, once the party comes to power it manipulates the rest of the election to stay in power. Moreover, people are still doubtful about secrecy of ballot boxes and Electronic Voting Machines. They feel it is somehow revealed. This is the main reason why people deter to vote against the Government fearing its consequences even if they are unsatisfied with it. As a result, people cannot express their choices in the elections freely which leads to continuity of the same party in power.

10. Tour Narration

For field survey and sample collection, I have taken 8 out of 32 constituencies from all four districts. Of those 8 constituencies, two are taken from each district – one, where SDF remained most stable for the last three consecutive terms and the other, most unstable. Since taking samples from entire constituency would have been very
difficult; therefore, I have made further division of the constituencies into Gram Panchayat Units (GPU) and wards. As a result, I have 8 wards; 4 most stable and 4 most unstable for field survey. To pinpoint these 8 wards, I have first analyzed one stable and one sensitive constituency of SDF party from each district. For this, I have compared performances of the political parties in the three General Assembly Elections that is 1994, 1999 and 2004. I took 1994 Assembly Elections as a benchmark as SDF party formed the government in 1994 for the first time and continuously won in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 elections. Although it continued to be in power even after 2004, I restricted it to 2004 general election as because there was delimitation of boundaries of constituencies in 2009. Since then, there had been only 1 election.

On the basis of three general elections' results, I have classified such constituencies as the most stable where SDF has won in all the general elections with thick margin and such constituencies as the weakest where it has lost with high percentage of votes. However, in the 2004 general election, SDF had a landslide victory winning almost all the seats but one. Therefore, in such a case, I have classified such constituencies as the strongest where SDF has won with a very high margin and classified such constituencies as the weakest where SDF has managed to win but with slender margins. Each constituency consists minimum of 5 and maximum of 10 GPUs. I have further determined the strongest GPUs from each of the strongest constituencies and the weakest GPUs from each of the weakest constituencies by considering the poll percentage of SDF party in the Gram Panchayat Elections. Each GPU has minimum of 5 and maximum of 6 wards. GPUs where SDF could manage to win in all or in most of the wards were considered strongest and those where SDF lost in all or most of the wards, as weakest. In some constituencies, SDF has won in all the GPUs and wards. To classify the weakest ward, again the least vote percentage
of the SDF is taken into consideration as was in classifying the constituencies.

I had a tough time to classify the constituencies. All that I knew was that there were 32 constituencies in Sikkim. I had no idea about the location and boundaries of these constituencies. I had no such document in my possession which would have been handy to find it out. I browsed for the Report of Election Commission of India in the internet but it addressed my problem partially only as the report included only the names of the constituencies. I then visited the State Election Commission Office, Gangtok but there too, I was met with disappointment. The gain was a booklet of Gram Panchayat Election, 2007 handed over to me after much pleading and persuasion. An official curtly said that the office did not have such leisure time to help me and called my endeavor a leisurely pursuit. I felt very low and dejected. The booklet that I had collected contained names of Gram Panchayat Units and Wards. The district wise name of the constituencies was nowhere to be found. The names of GPUs and wards written there were alien to me.

I then decided to approach the Block Administrative Centers (BAC) and I first started from my own BAC at Namchi. The Block Development Officer (BDO) there was also not in possession of such documents. He suggested me to have a talk with every BDO as he confirmed that every BDO knew his area well. He handed me the list of BACs in Sikkim with the mobile number of respective BDOs. But all the BDOs would not have entertained my call, even if they did; they would not have answered my quarries over the phone. Again I came to the dead end.

In my pursuit of document providing me the details of constituencies and GPUs, I tried to locate each BAC and tried to get hold of people working in those BACs. I called up all my relatives and
friends scattered all over Sikkim and requested them to visit their respective BDOs to get information about the document but there was no mention of such document. My network fed me with reliable verbal information about the location of constituencies, GPUs and wards but I wanted a document. I got hold of one Panchayat Directory which had the contact numbers of Panchayats, Zilla Panchayats, BDOs and other important offices. I then started calling all the Presidents of GPUs and asked them questions about their constituencies and wards and enquired about such document. I called up almost 150 numbers from that directory.

I usually rang them in the evening because in the day time, some were found to be travelling, some attending meetings etc. In the evening also a smooth conversation could not be established as some were found to be too tired or intoxicated with alcohol. It was very difficult to connect people in the extreme north part of Sikkim. Most of the time there was no network. When I rang up some Panchayats in the evening around 7.30, they were already asleep. Since it is cold there and the place is remote and people have nothing much to do in the cold; they usually go to sleep by 7.p.m. I felt very awkward to disturb them with my questions. Therefore, I introduced myself and asked for their permission to ring them in the morning.

After talking to so many people over the phone for a week, I collected different information from different constituencies. Some were correct, some were not. Some people were ignorant like me. Some were knowledgeable but as they say, an ignorant person makes a knowledgeable confused, same thing was true here. My ignorant cross questions made them confused and later they were unsure about their previous confident answers too.

Finding the document which contained information about the constituencies was like a wild-goose-chase. I was hopping from one
office to another, I checked the Party Offices, called up politicians but in vain. In one of such conversation, somebody suggested that such document might be available in the office of Rural Management and Development Department (RMDD). I went to the district office of RMDD and I was told that such document does exist but they did not have a copy. This led me to the RMDD office in the Head Quarter, Gangtok and met the Joint Secretary and repeated the same story all over again. In response, she informed me that they had a single copy of that document and that too they were about to send it to someone who had filed an RTI. She suggested me to file an RTI too through which I could get the document after a month or so. I requested her with all the skills I possessed to help me. She in return, told me that she would have it photo copied for me provided if the Secretary who was supposed to go for a long holiday the next day, gives the green signal.

The book lying elsewhere on the table suddenly became very rare and important. I would not be allowed to even have a look at the book and copy unless I had an authorization. Finally the Secretary allowed me to photocopy the book and I got my copy. It was a eureka moment for me as though I had finished my research work. The document proved to be really handy. Besides, I had a booklet of Gram Panchayats and wards provided by the Election Commission Office. This made my work easier. Soon, I had 8 wards selected for my field survey.

**Field Trips**

I first started my field survey from Damthang constituency in the south district which happened to be Chamling’s constituency for 24 years and it goes without saying that this constituency was the most stable constituency of the SDF party. Damthang is well connected and is at a distance of 13 km from Namchi. I thought of
starting with the nearest targeted area and since the constituency was purely SDF’s stronghold I assumed it to be the easiest. But my assumption about the place was wrong. I ruled out many possible problems in my assumption. In fact, I had the toughest time to convince the people at Damthang in my entire field survey experience. My questionnaire included some sensitive and burning issues of Sikkim; besides Panchayat election was also approaching. These people being pro-SDF did not quite like my questionnaire. This posed a problem for me. People there were very apprehensive. They asked too many questions regarding my motive and intension behind visiting them door to door. I was accompanied alternatively by my brother, uncle, cousin and a friend in my entire tour.

The households in this ward were far below the road. We walked down a sloppy, muddy path which ran through a cardamom field for almost half an hour and came across a small hut. We approached them, explained our motive of visit and took an interview of the head of that family. I was very excited about this survey as it was for the first time I was approaching and interacting with the common people regarding Sikkim’s politics. The houses were all scattered. We had to foot slog the cardamom field for another half an hour to find the next respondent. I had made it a point not to take two respondents from the same family, extended family or from relatives as in such cases, the response of one respondent may get influenced by the other or we may not get variety of opinion as a particular family and relatives may hold the same opinion. Since I wanted to take random samples from the selected area we moved in all ways vertically, horizontally and diagonally to get hold of different respondents.

Most of the adults went out for their daily work in the day time. Luckily, majority of them were either farmer or laborer which ensured that they were around. We went to the fields to meet the
farmers and also visited NAREGA sites to meet the laborers. It was at times fun and a new experience till our stomachs were full, after that was another experience—to walk and slog empty stomach and to approach and convince the respondents with smiling face. Most of the respondents claimed to have a very good relation with Chamling but regretted on their inability to meet him. They accepted the fact that there were many shortcomings in the Government. Some respondents were such that they did not receive any developmental scheme and benefit from the government even in twenty years. But they did not deny their love for Chamling and wanted him to be in power even in the next election. The weaknesses in the Government, they believed was not because of Chamling but because of bureaucrats who were responsible for distribution of schemes and implementation of policies of the Government. Bureaucrats were termed as ‘Daru Puneu’ meaning ladles and spatulas. These *daru puneus*, according to them had been partial and biased in ladling out and distributing these schemes.

The senior citizens were either too old, unaware or least bothered about Sikkim’s political situation, let alone Nation’s to answer my questions. The few who agreed to answer also did not speak up their minds. They relied on their children’s nod to answer the questions. Youth were reluctant to answer out of fear psychosis of losing something valuable if they answer such questions. Everybody -young and old in that ward had the same thing to say, “It has already been informed to our Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats about your visit by now. They will interrogate us about this.” After the interviews were over, we had to walk uphill to reach the main road. Walking down the cardamom field was still all right in spite of my heavy tumble in the cardamom field while coming down considering the fear of snake bite and other poisonous insects in the dusk and the nettle shrubs being very rude to us when we grasped them mistakably for support while climbing up.
The next trip was at Chuba, the most unstable GPU of the most unstable constituency, Temi-Tarku in south district. It is approximately 25 km from Namchi. We were quite worried about visiting the place as there was a clash between the ruling and opposition camp few days before our visit. Lower Phong, the ward which I had zeroed in was also inaccessible by road; we had to go by foot leaving the main road. After a fifteen minutes walk we reached our spot. On reaching the location we found the place was remote and hence we did not expect a very good response. But it was very surprising and pleasing to find that the people there were very outspoken. At first they were suspicious about us as the situation there wasn't peaceful but once they were convinced about my intention, they were more than willing to answer my questions. In fact, they appreciated my endeavor and found my questions to be factual and much needed one. First, I met one 'Daju' (Nepali term for brother) Luckily, he was quite interested in politics and contested many a times in the local and state level elections as an independent candidate although he lost every time. I took his interview first. By the time the interview was over, I took him into my confidence and made him agree to guide me through the village. He helped me leaving Durga puja ceremony at his home.

The village was quite big in size with scattered hamlets. Daju insisted me to visit an octogenarian who had not only seen transition of Sikkim from kingdom to democratic state but had served in the democratic set up as a panchayat in all three regimes viz., Kazi, Bhandari and Chamling. He was very informative and people relied on him for latest local and national news. Hence, he was given a name 'Aaj Tak Kaka' shortened as 'Kaka Tak' (Aaj Tak is a leading news channel, Kaka-a Nepali term for uncle. Since it was Dushera, I had little difficulty in finding people who were not drunk. One or the other of the family member was drunk. Even when I got hold of sober respondents, the interviews were disturbed by those drunken
members. Their acts were so funny that at times it was really challenging for me to maintain serious attitude. Except this difficulty, people’s responses were higher than my expectation. People spilt out their grievances and pointed out the weaknesses of the government especially its failure to distribute developmental schemes and benefits impartially. They complained that they did not receive any benefit from the government in nearly 20 years. As opposed to my expectation, these people were well informed about Sikkim’s actual population, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita income and foreign and central aids, loans etc.

Most of the female respondents were illiterate or had just attended primary schools. But they were very outspoken and wanted to contest in the election if given a chance no matter which party that may be. These women had made some interesting observation. As against the views of most of the urban and educated women who showed strong tendency to vote for female candidate, women from this GPU did not want to vote for female candidates. They reasoned, firstly, women are very egoistic and are not negotiable and therefore, they cannot easily come to consensus of any matter. Secondly, in most of the cases, female candidates get married and go to their husband’s house. Even if a woman is married she may sometimes have extra marital affair and get married. In both the cases chances are that the female representatives of a particular constituency might change her residence after marriage and cannot attend to people’s day to day problems by staying in another constituency. But if it is a male candidate, even if he marries many women, chances are that he may not change his residence.

In comparison to Damthang constituency, people in this constituency were very outspoken and most of them knew all the facts and figures of Sikkim. I was quite surprised and got little suspicious too. Different thoughts ran through my mind, jostling

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with one another. I was evaluating whether they really were conscious citizens or I approached some informers of some political parties; pretending to be dissatisfied with the government to know my intention. Politics in Sikkim is very congested, not just at present but since the very beginning of party politics. Barring few towns in Sikkim, people here go gaga over even at a sight of ‘a snake swallowing a frog’. This may be attributed to its size, population and laid back attitude of the people as they are dependent and spoon-fed by the government. Because of fear of losing freely earned luxury, one cannot afford to be outspoken no matter how educated or how strong one’s social position is. An unintentional and mundane comment can also become of great importance. But here, people did speak up freely and frankly.

My third targeted area was in the east district. I had picked up two GPUs from two constituencies of the east district: Khamdong and Rakdong Tintek—one most stable and the other most unstable respectively. Khamdong GPU of Khamdong constituency is situated above Singtam which is approximately 75 km from Namchi. Sumick Lingzey is adjacent to Khamdong constituency towards the east. I was accompanied by my cousin and a friend and we started at 6.30 in the morning. We got down at Singtam (one of the small town en route to Gangtok) and tried to find vehicles plying to our destination. But we were told that the place was not well connected and the cabs, not easily available because of the condition of road. We decided to hire a local taxi for whole day so that we can get plenty of time to spend with people. The taxi driver was very demanding, he charged us very high because of the road condition and made it clear in the beginning itself that his lunch, snacks and refreshment should be taken care of. Since it was during Dushera, it was very difficult to get a taxi driven by a sincere and sober driver. He was not sincere but was at least sober. Therefore, we complied. The driver was local to that place which was his plus point. Khamdong, as told earlier was
a not well connected remote village. It was very difficult for a small car to ply on the uncarpeted road. In some places, we had to get down and push the car to let it move. In some places like Dhanbari, it was impossible to take the vehicle. We had to leave the car and walk uphill through the paddy fields on foot to reach our destination.

Khamdong was a Scheduled Caste concentrated area. They were basically Hindus. They usually visited their relatives during Dusshera. Why I find this worth mentioning is because in some places we were misunderstood as their long-ago-seen far off relatives. We were almost welcomed by them. But once they came to know our true selves, like in other places, here too people were skeptic about our visit. They suspected our affiliation to some political parties. Naturally, they were not ready to answer my questions. It took some time for us to convince them too.

Although the area was SDF's stronghold, some educated people had pent up grievances against the government and wanted change in the government for better governance. But majority of them were not much educated and therefore, not very conscious and interested in political affairs. All that they knew was that they had to support the ruling government. I had a tough time with the senior citizens as most of them were illiterate and belonged to the generation of monarchy. It was very difficult to make them understand my mission and placing my questionnaire to them was like throwing a pearl to the pigs. They belonged to the generation where kings were worshipped, questioning the king's supremacy and criticizing his rule was a sin.

In one of such cases, I asked an old man to score Chogyal's rule out of 100, he did not understand my question. I simplified the question and asked, "Suppose you had 100 rupees, how much will you have given to the king considering his work?" The old man
laughed out loud and made mockery of me saying, "Have you gone mad? Was king a servant? Could anybody tip the king?" I again used another tactic and said, "Ok, if you had 100 oranges, how many would you have given to the king willingly considering his rule?" He again came up with his crazy reply, this time weirdly, "Why would the king take oranges from me? Not just 100, he could have thousands and thousands of oranges himself." The old man got irritated with my weird questions and in return, he was making me drive up the walls with his crazy answers. The only difference was that he could manifest his anger while I could not. I used many other examples like cow, milk, cock, eggs, gold, land etc with endurance to make him understand my questions. To complete his interview was an achievement in itself.

One peculiar thing about the respondents at Khamdong was most of them preferred to vote for the candidate of their own caste whereas in other constituencies people preferred to vote for candidate of the favorite party or from local area. Since it was during Dusshera festival, there was no dearth of food. We got to eat whichever house or hut we entered in. Some were very sympathetic towards us and were wondering how stern our professor was that he did not spare the children even during festivals. We made a long face and enjoyed their sympathies. We left the place around 2.30 p.m. and moved towards the next constituency, Rakdong Tintek which was adjacent to Khamdong constituency.

Our next stop was Sumick Lingzey GPU which fell under Rakdong Tintek constituency, 8 km from Khamdong Constituency. One interesting thing about this area was that this GPU was just next to Khamdong GPU. The boundary was such that, of the one hamlet, half belonged to Khamdong-the most stable constituency and the other half to Rakdong Tintek-the most unstable one. The boundary had not just divided the constituencies but also people's
views and attitudes. Their views towards the government and politics were different from each other. Whereas Khamdong's people were pro-government, pro-SDF or I would rather say pro-Chamling (politics in Sikkim is mostly a one man's show), they blindly supported the government; people in Sumick-Lingzey were critical and judgmental about the government and its policies.

The area was Tribal concentrated area majority of which were Bhutias. I found their way of life different from other small towns although the place was not very far from towns. People there were not influenced by western fashion and were mostly seen in traditional Bhutia attire, 'Bhaku'. They generally spoke Bhutia language though they could understand Nepali but were not very fluent in speaking. Here I faced a communication problem as they could neither speak in English nor in Nepali. I sought the help of a gentleman who understood both Nepali and their local language, Bhutia but English. I translated my questionnaire to him from English to Nepali. He then translated it to Bhutia language. The responses were again translated to me from Bhutia to Nepali.

Most of the respondents were interested in contesting in the elections from any political party; ruling or opposition. They would also like to vote for any candidate who is promising regardless of caste, location or party affiliation. But the government employees especially ladies denied responding to my questionnaire. At first they agreed but later when I asked questions on sensitive issues, they called it a quit. Most of the women were guided by their male associates to answer the questions; hence their answers were influenced by their partners. Luckily, as compared to other GPUs, we did not have to put extra effort to convince them. People were politically very forward, conscious and were willing to place their views. They were not constrained by pre assumed political
repercussion. We completed our work by 5.30 p.m. and took a halt in Gangtok.

The most exciting and adventurous trip in the entire tour was going to Yuksam constituency in the west which happened to be one of the most unstable constituencies in Sikkim. We hit the Khichudpalri ward which fell under Tingle Khichudpalri GPU of Yuksam constituency. We started at 5.30 a.m. in the morning from Namchi. Khichudpalri is approximately 95 km from Namchi. We woke up at 3 a.m. in the morning, got the food ready to take along as we knew that we were heading to one of the off track location and every thing that we needed had to be carried along. Besides, it was very early in the morning and the few road side restaurants would have remained closed. It was a different experience to travel in the dawn. It is very refreshing to see the snow capped mountains in October shining brilliantly when touched by the morning sun rays with the chirpings of birds at the background.

We reached Pelling at 8.30 a.m. The second capital of Sikkim, Rapdense was on the way and I promptly decided to visit that historic place although it was difficult to convince my companions as we had to walk through a forest for almost half an hour to reach there. We were scared of bears and other wild beasts on the way as we were the first ones in the morning to tread that path. Besides, the bear attacks on human beings even around the towns had occupied the front pages of newspapers in Sikkim during that time. In some places, trees were so dense that even the sun rays could not penetrate. When we reached there, the risky walk was worth taking. The ruins of the palace of the second capital of Sikkim, Rapdense were reminiscence and a witness of many important events of the past when Sikkim was a kingdom. It was great to be in the place where history was made. The events of the past related to the place seemed more vivid and expressive than the limited words in the
books. We could not stay there for long as we had to go further and we were just the half way through.

After a short break for refreshment at Pelling, we continued our journey to Khichudpalri. It was about 26 km from Pelling. The condition of the road to the west was already horrible, and the road to Khichudpalri was even more horrible. The road was literally vertical and so slender that it could hardly manage a truck. Yet we kept moving uphill until we reached Khichudpalri GPU. I was familiar with the names of the GPUs and wards there, thanks to the books from Election Commission Office.

Khichudpalri is a famous pilgrim place for Buddhist. On reaching there, we found the place crowded and cheerful with tourists, especially foreigners. We approached the nearby police outpost to know the exact location of my survey area, Tingle Khichudpalri. I was told that the area I was talking about would take 30-40 minutes uphill for regular commuters to reach there and for amateurs, 45 minutes to 1 hour on foot. We had an option to hire a mule and ride on it. I found the option quite funny considering our weights—one no less than the other. We ultimately decided to walk up the muddy foot path to reach our destination at the hill top.

It was already noon when we started our journey from Khichudpalri Lake. The pathway was so uphill that after a bare ten minutes walk, the police outpost and the road seemed far below. Leaving the hustle bustle of that place behind, we penetrated a dense jungle where we could see and hear nothing but the forest and the unusual sounds of insects. In some places the jungle was so dense that the sunrays could not penetrate even in the noon and the dew drops trickled down upon us from the tree leaves. The more we climbed, the more we found the pathway ascending. We soon became thirsty and were gasping; our shirts all wet due to perspiration and
dewdrops. We perspired even more because of fear of bears. Looking at the jungle, I am sure that there must have been some cute looking hairy creatures to give each of us a bear hug. We were lucky to have not encountered them.

After climbing uphill for almost 20 minutes, we found some pieces of Sail Rotis (traditional Nepali snacks) lying on the ground which gave us a hope that the settlement was nearby. We kept climbing up with no sight of hamlets. After another 10-15 minutes, we had an encounter with a Dog. Now we were sure that we had almost reached. After a walk of bare 5 minutes, we had a glimpse of hamlets and could hear the cock's crowing assuring us the presence of people around. After a rigorous 45 minutes walk uphill, there was a beautiful tableland with a Gumpa (monastery) at the hill top.

There were approximately 30 scattered households, all of them were Buddhists. Their main source of income was providing home stay facilities and meditation centers for tourists. I did not expect the hamlet in the midst of jungle would be used so brilliantly. At the hill top, far from the hustle-bustle of towns, rested a hamlet which had its own world, different from the rest of the world. We could see a huge snowy mountain range at the backdrop and the holy Khichudpalri Lake down below from there. No wonder most of the cottages and huts were mainly occupied by the tourists from different parts of world like Germany, Italy. The households used mules as a mode of transportation and for carrying burdens.

There I met an interesting octogenarian addressed as ‘Pala’ by everyone (meaning father in Bhutia language.) who was well known among the tourists for his home stay. He had witnessed many events and development in the erstwhile kingdom of Sikkim and was one of the participants in 1973 agitation who saw the transition of Sikkim from a kingdom to a state of Indian Union. He enlightened me with...
the tradition, custom, people and politics of Sikkim during Chogyal's rule. He shared his experience of being a subject of the king and a citizen of the democratic nation and shared how difficult it was for them to shift their allegiance from their king to some unknown power and get accustomed with unaccustomed set-up overnight. His experience was noteworthy as such experiences are not written in the books. Not just in the past, he was active in politics even after the merger. He contested in the general elections as an independent candidate from the Sangha seat until the last elections but lost every time with a slender margin. He was therefore, very well informed about the present day politics of Sikkim. The important thing was he could compare and contrast between kingship and democracy and also the ruling of each government viz., Kazi, Bhandari and Chamling.

People in this constituency were very docile. They did not want to give any interview as such. But once they were convinced, they were willing to speak up and place their grievances. They did not hesitate to say that they got nothing from the SDF government even in almost 20 years. When they were asked about the regimes of other rulers-Kazi and Bhandari, they opined that Kazi did nothing remarkable as the democratic form of government was new to Sikkim and it took sometime for the Sikkimese leaders and people to adjust with the system. His regime was basically of 'trial and error'. Most of them thought that SSP government was the best and credited it for infrastructure development. They said that most of the roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and office buildings were built during Bhandari's rule. It was during his time according to them, their villages were connected by roads, provided water, electricity, schools and dispensaries. Chamling's developmental policies and programs for them was just a carry forward of what Bhandari had initiated.
Since it was a Tribal area, they spoke either Bhutia or Lepcha. They could not communicate properly either in Nepali, Hindi or in English language. I, on my part could only understand Bhutia but could not speak. Luckily, Pala was a blessing in disguise. He had a strong command over Bhutia and Lepcha language, but could not understand English. I, therefore, translated my questions to Nepali language; Pala translated them to their local language, either in Bhutia or in Lepcha and again translated the responses of the respondents to Nepali language. The process was taxing but I thoroughly enjoyed the chain of translation. It took me nearly three hours to get their responses.

The place was lovely and we did not want to return back for two reasons. For one, it was not called 'the meditation point' by the tourist for nothing. With the Himalayas in front of one’s face, green pasture and bright October sun was really mesmerizing. Their way of life was different from the town dwellers. They were self-sufficient for every thing they needed – cereals, meat, dairy, vegetables, fruits etc. They got their daily food from their kitchen gardens and orchards and sometimes exchanged it with their neighbors. The neighborhood was indeed like their extended family. The spirit of competition, ego and class maintenance which have now become a prominent feature in Sikkimese modern society, especially with the middle class families was missing in this village. The society was very well – knitted and each household knew the inside-out of their neighbor and sincerely stood by one another.

Second reason, why I did not want to come down was because of the sloppy and slippery way back. Climbing up was still manageable, coming down was more challenging holding the entire weight of the body with two legs and the fear of bears in the evening will apparently make one’s knees go weak. Yet we managed to come down. It was already dark around 6 p.m. when we reached the main
road. Not wasting a single minute, we left for Pelling where we stayed for the night and returned home the following day.

My last field trip was at Rinchenpong constituency which was the most stable constituency in the west district. Rinchenpong is 59 km form Namchi. My area of field survey was lower Takothang ward. The condition of road was horrible and miserable; horrible for the first timers and miserable for regular commuters. After reaching the spot somehow, we climbed up the road to penetrate the hamlets. As I had always tried to cover the entire ward by choosing respondents from different hamlets, we had to walk up and down the road to find the respondents of different categories.

People there were very welcoming but they showed their reservations after reading or hearing my questionnaire. The Panchayat election in few days to come was to be blamed to some extent for this. They had two thoughts in their minds when we approached them with such questions. Firstly, they thought that we were sent by opposition political parties for canvassing. Secondly, they assumed that we were sent by the ruling party itself to smell a rat in the eve of Panchayat elections. Therefore, out of mistrust, they could not be sincere with their answers. Hence, I again took a local gentleman in my confidence. Although it took lots of hard work to make him agree to help us, he guided us to the hamlets around which would have taken longer without him and people gave us familiar looks because of his company.

Although the area was SDF’s stronghold, the respondents strongly wanted change in the government in every five year or at least in ten years. They said that they got fed up with the same party in power with the same policies for a long time. They suggested that the government should be alternated in every election so as to get benefits by the people for they believed that a new party comes to
power with new policies and programs. They viewed that chance should be given to all who wants to serve the state. Most of the respondents preferred local candidate to the candidate of their favorite party or of their caste in elections provided that the local candidate is promising enough.

The villagers led a Spartan life. Most of them were engaged in agricultural farming, some reared cattle. In one of the houses that I visited, I was surprised to see the piglets left loose in the house which followed the family members front and back. Those piglets were so adapt to stay with human beings that when we were offered piras (a handmade mat made of corn’s dried cover which is used only in remote villages) to sit they almost jumped on our laps as though they were pets. One thing that I have noticed is that people in villages are very welcoming. They leave everything to attend their guests. At Rinchenpong too, they plucked fresh fruits from their orchard and offered them to us. Some offered us curd, corn etc.

11. Documentary Research

Apart from the field work, I have collected a lot of primary documents from different sources. The documents of correspondence between India and Sikkim since the Indian independence till the merger of Sikkim with India, a letter dated 7.4.1973 signed by the different political leaders requesting for the Indian intervention during 1973 agitation, a press release of the Chogyal’s visit to Delhi dated 26.6.1974 which enclosed a detail discussion between the Chogyal and the officials of the ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India on the draft “Government of Sikkim Bill 1974”, a text of address of the Chogyal dated 2.7.1974 to the Sikkim Assembly regarding the implications of the draft “Government of Sikkim Bill 1974”, the text of telegram dated 9.9.1974 from the Chogyal of Sikkim to the Chief Minister, Kazi regarding illegality of
the draft bill, 1974 and the text of telegram dated 10.9.1974 of the
Chief Minister replying the Chogyal, a copy of a letter dated
11.9.1974, to the Chief Executive by the Sikkimese students
questioning Sikkim's status as per the draft bill, 1974, have been
collected from different sources. Another rare and important
document is the opinion of M. Hidayatullah, retired Chief Justice of
India on the merger of Sikkim with India.

Many documents during Bhandari's rule have been collected
such as Petition to the Parliament of India for citizenship to all the
people of Sikkim, 1988, petition for seat reservation in the Assembly
for Nepalese of Sikkimese origin. Most important among them are the
documents of series of correspondence between the Finance Minister
of India, the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Sikkim,
Nar Bahadur Bhandari regarding the imposition of Direct Income Tax
Laws in Sikkim, text of statement of the Member of Parliament, Lok
Sabha on exemption of Income Tax, document of correspondence
between the Chief Minister, B.B. Gurung and the Centre after
forming his government in 1984, and the document of
correspondence between the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling and
the Centre after forming his government in 1994.

Relevant Assembly proceedings since the first Assembly
session till the recent ones have been collected, other government
documents like white paper on the direct tax laws in Sikkim, Reports
of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Government of
Sikkim, State Government Notification on Gram Panchayat
Election to Gram Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats, 2007 and State
Government Notification on Reorganisation of Gram Panchayat Units
have been collected from official and unofficial sources. Apart from
this, party literatures, documents and manifestos of different
political parties particularly of SSP and SDF and relevant older
newspaper clippings from different sources have been collected. All the documents mentioned above have been collected and analysed to authenticate and enrich the present work.