CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

The history of Sikkim began with the installation of Phunsog Namgyal in 1642 as a ruler by the three Tibetan monks namely Lhatsu Chenpo, Kathog Kunto Zangpo and Ngadak Sempa of Nyingmapa sect. The prime object to install him as a ruler was the result of the ambitious projects of these three lamas who needed a spiritual and a temporal head to run a new kingdom on Tibetan lines in opposition to Gelugpa form of Buddhism of Tibet. Phuntsog Namgyal was the great grandson of Guru Tashi, one son of the chief of Kham province of Tibet who had established himself as the chief of the Bhutias and the Lepchas at Gangtok and levied tribute from the people living there.

The new ruler, Phuntsog Namgyal was to fulfill the project of the lamas and worked towards the spread of Buddhism. He as Chogyal was the protector of religion and as a temporal head he was supposed to lay the foundation of the centralized administration of the state. He divided the state into twelve dzongs or districts under Lepcha dzongpons or governors and appointed the Bhutias as his kalons as they were Buddhists. Phuntsog Namgyal left no stones unturned to establish the triumph of the Buddhist faith. After him, Tensung Namgyal, Chagdor Namgyal, Gyurmed Namgyal, Namgyal Phuntsog, Tenzing Namgyal, Tsugphud Namgyal, Sidkeong Namgyal and Thutob Namgyal, respectively ruled Sikkim till the coming of the British Political Officer, J. C. White. The third Namgyal ruler, Chagdor Namgyal, worked extensively towards strengthening the roots of Buddhism in Sikkim. The invention of alphabets for Lepcha language was intended towards the translation of Buddhist literatures from Tibetan which helped him in religious conversion of a large number of the Lepchas. To strengthen the hold of Buddhism in Sikkim he promulgated a law to send second of every three sons to Pemayangtse monastery by which he wanted to make Bhutias a superior people in the society.
The appointment of Mr. J. C. White was the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Sikkim. Revenue of the state increased due to the concern showed by him to bring large lands under cultivation and systematic assessment and collection of revenue. The coming of the British administrator was the beginning of roadways in Sikkim. Gangtok developed into the new administrative capital and a modern town. A change was also brought out in the administrative structure of Sikkim by including the representatives of all sections of people of Sikkim viz. the Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Nepalese.

The society of Sikkim during the early Namgyal rule consisted of the the Bhutias, Lepchas, Limboos and the Magars and with the passage of time other Nepalese and the plainsmen settled down in Sikkim by way of conquest, warfare and due to the necessity of the British administrators. The Lepchas, the Limboos, and the Magars, the original inhabitants of Sikkim, lived in north-east and west Sikkim respectively. The Bhutias came to Sikkim from Kham and Ha province of Tibet. Their movement continued after the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. The Nepalese settle down in different periods of the Namgyal rule were the Newars, Gurung. The Nepalese started settling in Sikkim in large numbers in 1780s when there were cross border settlement between Sikkim and Nepal. The frequent raids of the Gurkhas on the western borders compelled the earliersettlers to move towards further east. The Gurkha troops settled down in west Sikkim after occupying the tracts of west and south Sikkim. The Nepalese settlement further increased after 1835 due to British encouragement. The British Political Officer Mr. J. C. White too encouraged the Nepalese to settle down in Sikkim to bring more areas under cultivation thereby raising the revenue of the state. The other reason was to provide cheap porters for British trade with Tibet. The officials of Sikkim too were responsible for the settlement of Nepalese. The role of Lachmidas Pradhan, is also instrumental regarding Nepalese settlement who were brought to Sikkim to clear the forests and bring large tracts of lands under cultivation and to carry
out mining in Sikkim. He also brought few Nepali service castes such as Brahmins, barbers and artisans such as Kamis(smiths), Damais(tailors) and Sarkis(cobblers).

The society of Sikkim during the Namgyal period was stratified into Chogyal, kutchap, lamas, kalons and dzongpons (later kazis), tumyangs (later mondals), singpos (later raitis or bustiwallas), drokas (later gothalas) and zimchungpas. At the top was the ruler known as Chogyal, Raja, Maharaja and finally as Sikkimputtee Maharaja, was the master of all lands in the kingdom. The Namgyal rulers were the most respectable figure in Sikkim. The next in order was the kutchap who was the agent and a close associate of the ruler. Next were the lamas who had much influence in the secular and administrative business of the state. The lamas were the religious teachers, preachers and administrators, and were generally the Buddhist monks who were learned in Buddhist scriptures. In the 18th and the 19th centuries some of them became monopolists of trade and business in Sikkim. Next in the hierarchy were the dzongpons and the kalons who were the governors and ministers of Sikkim respectively and came under nobility; after the contact of Sikkim with Nepal they came to know as kazis. They formed the bureaucracy and the link between the common people and the rulers of Sikkim. They were the landlords and dispensers of justice. Later these landlords were the revenue contractors and were also known as thikadars by the Nepalese. The village headman was the chief of the village and was known as tumyang and mondal in the later period and enjoyed a respectable position in the society.

The majority of the people in Sikkimese society consisted of the cultivators and herdsmen known commonly as singpos (later raitis and bustiwallas) and drokas (gothalas) respectively. They had a limited freedom and worked in the fields and tended cattle. They were to pay salutation to the landlords commonly known as theki-bethi. Later a system developed in Sikkim commonly known as jharlangi which was a system of providing free labour to the landlords and the contractors on the self arrangement of the cultivators themselves.
The Sikkimese women took part in agriculture and trade. Women of royal family and nobility enjoyed good social status and inherited property. The properties of women consisted of personal belongings such as ornaments and women of royal family and nobility inherited landed properties. The princesses were granted lands as gifts and the widows of the royal and the noble families enjoyed proprietorship over lands till their death. The common women received respect and obedience in the house as well as in the society. In Sikkim the widow enjoyed respect in the family and society.

The polyandry form of marriage practiced by the Bhutias was later adopted by the Lepchas. The Bhutias too adopted the system of serving the parents of bride from the Lepchas. Polygamy was common among the three sections of Sikkimese society. Dissolution of marriage was adopted by the Lepchas and the Bhutias from the Nepalese. Though adultery was common, however, taking king’s and lama’s wife was considered a grave crime.

The people of Sikkim had a very simple food habit and were both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Among Buddhists non-vegetarian diet was restricted during some religious occasions. The food consisted of rice, chapattis made of wheat, millet and buckwheat and milk and its products. The non-vegetarian diet consisted of the meat of sheep, yaks and wild animals. Sikkimese people consumed tea and intoxicating drinks made of millet commonly known as chang, murwa, chi and janr. It was a common item of exchange with salt in Tibet during the Namgyal period. Later with British contact the rich people of Sikkim consumed opium and ganja which was available in government stores at Darjeeling.

Common diseases of the population of Sikkim were goitre and skin diseases and few cases of smallpox were also reported. Sikkim depended on local faith healers or shamans, natural remedies and Tibetan medicines for treating diseases in humans as well as their cattle. Before the 1890s many women of Sikkim including women of royal families died during childbirth. Crimes were very rare in Sikkim except few cases.
Crimes were considered as sins and grave sins such as murder were given harsh punishments and petty crimes were settled by paying fines. Dice was a common game and playing dice was allowed during festivals. *Khopi* was a common game among the Nepalese. The Bhutias celebrated *Loosong* as New Year, Lepchas called their New Year *Namsoong* and the Nepalese festivals included *Maghe Sakranti, Dassain, Tiwar* and *Chaite Dassain*.

Regarding the religion of the people, efforts were made by the Namgyals, throughout their rule, to convert the nature worshippers Lepchas and the Limboos to Buddhism. Monasteries were opened for them for their worship and learning. Bhutias worshipped Buddhist deities in their houses as well as in monasteries with the assistance of the *lamas*. The Lepchas worshipped nature along with worship in monasteries. The Nepalese were mostly Hindus and brought some of the Limboo and Magar people of Sikkim under the influence of Hinduism. Christianity too entered Sikkim in the last quarter of the 19th century. Altogether Sikkim enjoyed full religious freedom and toleration.

Death rites were very elaborate among the Buddhists. The Buddhists cremated their dead with the help of the *lamas*. During the death of the king or the queen the Buddhist subjects of Sikkim had to observe two months state mourning. The rulers observed mourning for one full year and no important was performed during the period of mourning.

*Lamaistic* or monastic form of education existed in Sikkim before the coming of the British administrators. The aim of the education was to provide religious education, the study of Buddhist religious scriptures, prepare the learners for religious order and to propagate Buddhism and convert the Lepchas and the Limboos to it. The syllabus of monastic education in Sikkim was based on the model of Tibetan monasteries. The students were taught traditional ritualistic prayers, religion, uses of musical instruments during rites, practices and dances. Lessons depended on rote memory and the loss of
many of the lines from the original texts was probable. Emphasis was laid on paintings and engravings. The system was elaborate and very expensive however many of them did not want to go for higher studies to become a learned lama and preferred the life of ordinary monks. The strict monastic orders did not appeal much to the Sikkimese. The result was that many of the monks left these orders and took to cultivation and lived merely as followers and devotees. The lamas enjoyed a higher position in administration, the grant of free land and were exempted from other taxation. However, the monastic education encouraged landlordism among priests and monks and it encouraged the monks to lead a lazy and listless life.

It and it was only with the appointment of J. C. White as the first British Political Officer in Sikkim that education in modern sense developed. As there was no school in modern sense in 1890 Mr. J. C. White sent the young prince, Sidkeong Tulku along with the wards of the kazis and the influential lamas to Darjeeling.

The economy of Sikkim depended on agriculture and cattle rearing and this activity continued till the coming of the British administrators. They used forest products for fuel and timber, cultivated lands by clearing forests and moved to other virgin areas in search of greener pastures. With the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty the ruler became the formal owner of land and forests of Sikkim. However, there was no formality to occupy cultivable land during the early Namgyal period. The lands were not measured and the amount to be paid to the ruler was not fixed. The cultivators themselves assessed the amount and paid to the king in kind. The Namgyal rulers were satisfied with whatever contribution they got from people in kind. In 1748 Rapden Sharpa, a Tibetan Regent introduced new system of taxation known as bah pa, zo lung and tsong-khyed. The Namgyals also derived their revenue from the lands they had at Chumbi in Tibet cultivated by the Tibetans in the name of the king. From 1835 onwards Namgyals derived permanent source of income from Darjeeling rent.
The settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim towards the later part of the eighteenth century had brought some changes in the nature of land revenue system of Sikkim. The system of land revenue collection and other systems that existed in Nepal entered Sikkim. Lands came to be classified into three different categories on the basis of fertility and produce per seed sown. The terms vogue in Nepal namely, *mana*, *pathi* and *murhi* began to replace earlier Tibetan terms of measurements such as *kang*. The settlement of the Nepalese had its impact on the economic system of Sikkim due to cultivation in large numbers by terracing the fields and due to the use of new technology. The Nepalese system further penetrated into land grant system. The landlords started to grant lands to the *raitis* on the Nepalese system of *adhia* and *kut*. The system of paying salutation to the landlords in the form of gifts called the *theki-bethi* became common. The Nepalese settlement too increased the amount of revenue payments from the earlier family based payment to one fourth of the annual produce.

The Nepalese settlement also encouraged revenue farming among the *kazis* and the *lamas* in the monastic lands and the private estates of the Namgyals. These lands were granted to the revenue farmers or the contractors who were probably the *thikadars*. These *thikadars* encouraged the middlemen called *thui* to grow up between the *thikadars* and the cultivators. These *thuis* granted the lands to the *raiyats* on behalf of the *thikadars* encouraging absentee landlordism in Sikkim. The settlement being made on verbal agreements and the uncertainty over the possession of land was the reason for the non-productivity of land.

Trade and commercial activities existed in Sikkim on a small scale during the Namgyal period and limited to the articles of daily living. The articles like salt, tea, wool, forests and dairy products were exchanged between traders of Sikkim and Tibet. The idea of earning profit in the earlier stage was almost unknown. The routes to Tibet were almost closed during cold seasons as these were covered by snow. Later the contact of Sikkim with Darjeeling due to its development by the British in the 1830s a
new phase of commercial contacts with this district of British India began. Direct interaction with Darjeeling had both negative and positive impact on Sikkim. The opening of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and its extension brought Sikkim and Darjeeling closer. Sikkim also came closer to the plains and progressed in trade on fruits, livestock and food grains. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway played an important role in increasing the value of Sikkim and her trade. The British on the other hand were keen to develop free trade relations with Tibet. Missions after missions were sent to Tibet for opening up trade relations. These missions probably led to the volume of trade of Sikkim with Darjeeling and shifting of focus to the latter in terms of trade.

With the appointment of the Political Officer saw changes in administrative structure, reforms in every sphere of Sikkim ranging from economic, social, education and culture which was a blessing in disguise for Sikkim. Without completely abolishing the old system Mr. J.C. White created the hierarchy of revenue officers. Lands were assessed and revenue payments were made in cash and Sikkim’s income started increasing due to encouragement given them by to new settlers for cultivating lands. J. C. White’s reforms in revenue administration by bringing out a number of uncultivated lands into cultivation by encouraging Nepalese settlements had its impact on the Sikkimese society in the next century.