Sikkim, a beautiful mountainous state lies on the lap of eastern Himalayas. In remote past it was encompassed with dense forests with little inhabitants. People could easily occupy lands and settle down. Livelihood depended on hunting, gathering and old methods of cultivation. In the seventeenth century Phuntsog Namgyal was consecrated as the ruler of Sikkim with the title of Chogyal by the three lamas (Buddhist monks) of Tibet with the objectives of promoting Buddhism. Sikkim became a protectorate of British in 1861 and in 1889 J. C. White was appointed as the first Political Officer. With the coming of Namgyal to power, Sikkim became a theocratic kingdom guided by the principles of Nyingmapa form of Buddhism. With the patronage of three lamas the Chogyal built a number of monasteries called the gonpas and set towards the conversion of his subjects towards Buddhism which directly and indirectly led to the socio-cultural upliftment of the state. Efforts were made by them to bring their subjects under this new faith. Lamas were appointed in these monasteries to look after its maintenance and administration. The third Namgyal ruler promulgate to send second of every Bhutia family to be ordained as a lama of Pemayangtse gonpa. He also invented alphabets for his Lepcha subjects in order to translate Tibetan religious texts.

The earliest society of Sikkim consisted of three communities viz. the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Tsongs, who were later known as the Limboos. Lepchas are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim. The Bhutias and the Tsongs migrated to Sikkim from Tibet. The Tsongs started to have close interaction with the Nepalese and they were called Limboos by the latter. Later Nepalese migrated to Sikkim from Nepal by way of conquest, cross-border movements and due to the commercial and administrative necessity of the British.

The society of Sikkim consisted of the Chogyal, kuchap, lamas, kalons and dzongpons (later kazis), village headmen, cultivators and herdsmen, and zimchungpas. The Chogyal was the ruler, kuchap his agent and a close associate, lamas were the religious teachers, preachers and clergies. The kalons and the dzongpons were ministers and governors respectively. In the nineteenth century they came to be known as kazis. The village headmen were the head of the villages, collectors of revenues and taxes and
solved petty cases of crimes with the guidance of village lama. The next strata consisted of common cultivators and herdsmen and finally the *zimchungpas* were the slaves working in palace and the officials.

The Bhutias and the Lepchas developed almost similar culture. Earlier the Lepchas worshipped nature however, with the advent of Bhutias and the establishment of Namgyal dynasty brought a change in their customs and faith. The Tsongs were also converted to Buddhism by opening *gonpas* for them. Later with the contacts with the Nepalese they started embracing Hinduism. The Nepalese were mostly Hindus and brought almost all of their communities to this fold. The coming of the Nepalese brought many changes in society, economy and culture of Sikkim. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Christianity entered Sikkim through the activities of the missionaries.

The economy of Sikkim depended on agriculture, forest and cattle rearing. The people practiced shifting cultivation and agriculture was practiced for self consumption and barter. With the establishment of the kingdom the economy showed a change. The ruler became the lord of the land. The cultivators paid revenue to the state on their own assessment. Trade relations were established with Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Indian plains in the form of barter. Among all trade on salt and tea was profitable. Later with the British occupation of Darjeeling these commodities were available there and the focus of trade was shifted to this place. With the British direct administration Gangtok became the administrative headquarter and developed into a modern town.

Sikkim possessed many natural and mineral resources which remained unexplored before the advent of the Nepalese. With their settlement few changes were noticed. New methods of cultivation were introduced such as terracing of the fields and the use of plough. The Newars belonging to Nepalese community got the permission from the Namgyal rulers to extract copper in Sikkim and mint coins. Copper was exported to Nepal and for a time being it became a source of revenue to the state. However it did not last long due to the objection of the ruler of Nepal. The Newars established themselves as merchants, revenue collectors of the areas where they had settled a large number of Nepalese. With the British administration Sikkim started experiencing various changes in administration, society and economy.
The society and economy of Sikkim under the Namgyal rulers is important from different aspects. Various scholars have taken up the study of various aspects of modern history of Sikkim, however, they have slightly overlooked the society and economy of Sikkim under the Namgyal rulers. This work is a modest attempt to find out the socio-economic condition of Sikkim during the Namgyal period. The study aims to reveal the society and economy of Sikkim during the Namgyal period which was not studied before.

The period includes the study of the changes in society that took place in Sikkim up to 1890. The work is to examine the change in economy of Sikkim from pastoralism to agriculture, trade and commerce through change in technology.

The consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal as the first ruler of Sikkim belonging to Namgyal dynasty made Sikkim a Buddhist state. The Bhutias, being the ruling class became superior and influential to the inhabitants of Sikkim. They introduced Buddhism as a state religion and brought changes in society and economy of Sikkim. The work “Society and Economy of Sikkim Under Namgyal Rulers (1640-1890)”, has revealed those facts which were unknown before and has brought to light the polity, society, economy and cultural conditions of Sikkim. This work is further focused on possession of land holdings, taxation, income, wages, trade and commerce, agricultural system, educational system, religious structure, society, social stratification and social changes.

The work is exploratory cum descriptive and analytical in nature. It is exploratory in the sense that unexplored events of history have been put to scrutiny to develop a comprehensive study. In the absence of sufficient primary source materials historical method of investigation, predominantly on the basis of hitherto unexplored primary source materials (oral source) is followed, in the form of interviews in addition to the new scientific methodology to complete the work. Due to the dearth of primary sources, the study also depends on secondary sources both published and unpublished.
through field studies. Thus, it is an endeavour to review the available materials, literatures of Sikkim and fill the gap of inadequacy by exploring new areas. The field work carried out has been supplemented by consulting library and archival works, census and case study. Interviews are being taken from the old house members of Sikkim. Apart from this other supportive documents like deeds and family papers are collected from such families. These documents are reviewed and used in the conventional and time tested historical methodology. Secondary sources include both official and non-official documents, published and unpublished materials. After collecting the source materials, cross examination of these sources were initiated to get a complete picture of the various historical aspects.

The whole thesis has been divided into five chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. The first chapter begins with the introduction of the area, discussion on land and people, and its geographical settings, settlement patterns in the state with a brief insight into its political background.

In the second chapter, circumstances leading to the formation of state are discussed. The role of religion, the Buddhist lamas (monks) and their influence on rulers have been discussed. Administration of the Namgyal rulers and their efforts to make Buddhism a state religion are highlighted. Their effort to make the lamas and the Bhutias as the superior section in Sikkimese society has been discussed. It also deals with the coming of the Nepalese and their settlement and changes that started coming into society and economy of Sikkim. It also discusses the British trade missions to Tibet through Sikkim and reasons leading to direct British administration in Sikkim.

The third chapter looks into the composition of people in Sikkim. The society and social stratification has been discussed. The impact of Buddhist religion on the people has been highlighted. The entry of Hinduism and Christianity in the later period has also been discussed. The system of marriage has been highlighted and also reveals the system adapted by the people of Sikkim regarding marriage. Birth and death rituals, treatment of various diseases through shamans also forms an important portion of discussion in the chapter. The religious festivals and dances of the people are also looked into in details. It also provides a detail account of the traditional religious
education, the recruitment of *lamas* in the monasteries and the introduction of English education.

The **fourth chapter** discusses the economy of Sikkim under the Namgyals. The economic practices, rights related to land and their uses, the agricultural practices of the people, the different techniques involved in the cultivation of the various crops, the economic practices of the people related to animal husbandry are discussed in great detail. An account of the yak herders, cow herders and shepherds are also dealt with which includes their seasonal movement to higher altitudes and back to areas having warmer climate, preparation of *ghew, churpi* and other dairy products for consumption, payment of revenue and barter are also dwelt upon. The use of forest resources for making various items and crafts are also looked into. Other economic practices of the people like trade in the in salt, tea and other local products are discussed. The chapter also focuses on the trade and economic impact on Sikkim after the entry of the Nepalese and British administration has been examined.

The **fifth chapter** is the concluding chapter which provides an overview of the entire discussion and summaries the preceding chapters. It provides an insight into the various social and economic changes in the society till the coming of the British administration. It also shows the influence of religion on the social structure of the society. Besides, it also shows the impact of British administration on society and economy of Sikkim.

The work is also embodied of glossary, bibliography, appendices and photos.

The study on this topic has revealed much new information on the society and economy of Sikkim. It is sincerely hoped that this study will be of great help for further research.