CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

Increasing mobility of people during the past several centuries has brought numerous social and ethnic groups in contact with each other. Large scale migration of people in search of socio-economic opportunities, refuge from political suppression and natural calamities have led to the concentration of diverse ethnic groups in many regions over the decades.

Migration contributes to the formation of plural societies which consist of two or more ethnic groups living in a common geographical environment. However, people in such diverse societies pass through a process of contact, competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation in the process of social interaction. Interaction between ethnic groups yield a variety of results which get reflected in their social, economic, cultural and political set up.

It is generally in urban centres that such diverse population and economic activities are more pronounced. However, such multi-ethnic societies are also found in rural and peripheral areas, lowlands and mountain regions. Their concentration is guided by the location of the region, migrational as well as historical factors of different groups.

Colonial rule in many regions was another factor that added to the accelerated movement of people. These processes brought about major changes in the demographic, economic and political setup of such areas.

People of diverse origin with varied racial, religious, linguistic and other cultural traits are found to be sharing a common geographical environment due to the above mentioned factors. At any given moment, the relationship between different groups living side by side reflects attitudes and shared experiences developed over time. It is important to understand the simultaneity of socio-economic and political processes in time and space to comprehend spatial organization in such regions.

Human behavior gets expressed through various economic, social and political processes which characterize every society and ethnic group to some extent. Moreover, interaction between ethnic groups yields a variety of results. Such contacts have at times been beneficial but often these get filled with conflict. It is equally important to consider the geographical surroundings to understand human society. Man interacts with nature by making use of numerous resources that nature provides. He makes his survival possible by adjusting to the various conditions to meet his economic needs especially in the early stages of development. It is in this process that interaction with other members of the society makes his social survival possible and contributes towards evolving social relations.

Socio-economic structure of different ethnic groups varies depending on spatially


varied conditions and other historical reasons. Whenever two or more ethnic groups come in contact they may occupy clearly distinct settlement areas and may be engaged in different economic activities. Either of this will result in minimal competition for resources and there may be less interdependence despite inhabiting the same area.\(^6\) This heterogeneity in terms of culture, values, religion, ethnicity, economy, politics of the people who share same geographic area, needs to be studied in order to understand relationships among communities.

In a diverse society, ethnicity plays major role in determining various socio-economic and political attributes. Ethnicity, here, generally means that condition where members of a society in a given social context choose to emphasize their identity associated with a common history, culture, their inheritance and the nature of distinguishing features, differentiating the group from the larger social formation in which this group is encased.\(^7\)

An ethnic group is characterized by a high level of "consciousness" among its members. Consciousness of ethnicity and ethno-social identification are related to the basis of social life. They perceive themselves and their group as different from others on the basis of socio-cultural factors.\(^8\) Ethnic identity receives impetus from a variety of sources and assumes many dimensions. It has impact on the society on one hand and reflects


\(^8\) P.N. Rastogi (1986), *Ethnic Tensions in Indian Society*, Mittal Publications: Delhi, p. 11.
change which is occurring in the social environment on the other.\(^9\)

The socio-economic conditions vary from state to state and area to area. Most Himalayan states including the areas of those states where only some of the districts fall within the mountains, are generally economically and socially underdeveloped. These normally seem to have stayed away from the national mainstream. The configuration of the socio-economic scenario in the Himalayas has been significantly influenced by the physical environment, historical processes, cultural multiplicity, ethnic diversity and the persistent exposure to outside influences. The variations in climate, terrain, accessibility and availability of resources have necessitated different modes of adaptation from Jammu and Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh. Living in high altitudes as well as in lowlands, the inhabitants in such areas have adapted themselves to the conditions prevalent there and have accordingly moulded their economic and socio-cultural set up. The Himalayan regions which also constitute border areas, have suffered considerable social and political trauma, external aggressions and internal disturbances over the years. Divisiveness, alienation and even insurgency have appeared in various forms and intensity. As mentioned earlier, these regions are mostly economically poor, socially fragmented and politically neglected. The comparatively simple societies living there have been exposed to the "onslaught of modern exploitative and consumption oriented ways of life in the recent past.\(^10\)

The major socio-economic problems faced by the hill people are, limited land

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resources available to them, rising population, unemployment, out-migration and environmental degradation. Both physical and social infrastructure is inadequate and lacks spatial spread.

It seems that the emerging social and political paradigms have failed to alleviate their problems. The diverse societies by and large remained dependent on subsistence economy. These were subsequently exposed to commercial and competitive situations. The process seems to have given rise to economic inequalities among the population. It resulted in the fragmentation of the society on ethnic lines and created threats to identity. People took up violence as an instrument of political struggle leading to the loss of human decency.11

There are various reasons that give rise to such differences. But the low level of development, push out-migration as well as in-migration of some people are some of the main factors that have caused problems in the Himalayas. Because of lack of employment opportunities in many areas, the young and educated started moving out. Correspondingly, there has been inmigration of the more enterprising people from other areas who have filled the gaps particularly at higher economic levels. This has naturally caused resentment in local population and has added to social tensions. Ethnic groups in such situations are gaining an increasing consciousness of themselves as well as of others and also about the environment.12 In the wake of political, economic and social change taking place "a dual process of reforming of new ethnic identities on the basis of the old and reenforcing the

existing ethnic boundaries is taking place".  

There are many micro-zones within the Himalayan realm inhabited by multi-ethnic societies. These areas were also influenced by diverse external factors that accelerated the process of spatial interactions leading to the emergence of new relations. Many changes have come about in these areas over the years. These are seen in the growing inter-ethnic differences in terms of socio-economic and political aspects due to low level of development and negligence. This highlights the need for a proper understanding of impact of development processes on the communities and regions. Furthermore, emphasis needs to be placed on taking into account the human situation particularly in the areas with diverse societies. Darjeeling Himalaya is one such region where such processes are quite pronounced. This small region is home of diverse ethnic groups. The British occupation of this area during the early nineteenth century resulted in large scale immigration of people belonging to various ethnic groups. They migrated from the neighboring states of Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Sikkim and the Indian plains.

The present study looks into the inter-ethnic differentials in socio-economic structure of the inhabitants of the Darjeeling Himalayas. It primarily takes into account the significant ethnic groups living therein namely the Nepalis, the Lepchas and the Bhotiyas. The socio-economic structure has been seen as reflected in the demographic characteristics, various economic activities and socio-cultural attributes. An attempt has

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14. Many people use their surname as Bhotiya, Bhotia or Bhutia but in the present study Bhotiya has been used for all.
also been made to look into the political issues and conflicts, emerging from such
differences and inter-ethnic relationships.

The problems of social unrest, under-development and ethnic conflicts have
become common in many of the Himalayan regions. Darjeeling too, is facing such a
problem. The movement for separate state status of Gorkhaland ventilated dissatisfaction
with the prevailing level of low development and it also shows growing consciousness as
regards ethnic identity. This movement had effects on other communities. In the wake of
cultural, linguistic and political dominance by the Nepalis, the demand for Gorkhaland
raised questions as regards the position of other ethnic communities in the region.

There has also been marginalization of the Lepchas who are considered to be the
original inhabitants of the region.\textsuperscript{15} The situation continued to be difficult over the years
as there seems to be growing resentment among ethnic groups. Despite demand for
separate state, there is also demand by many Nepali sub-groups for their inclusion in the
list of Scheduled Tribes or to be recognized as "Other Backward Communities". This they
feel would help in improving their socio-economic status.

It is in the background of such a situation and the variations among ethnic groups
that the study is an attempt to understand and evaluate socio-economic and political
structure of Darjeeling Himalayas in relation to the Nepalis, the Lepchas, and the
Bhotiyas.

\textbf{1.1 Introduction to the Region}

\textsuperscript{15} R.N. Thakur (1988), \textit{Himalayan Lepchas}, Archive Publishers and Distributors,
New Delhi, p. 4.
LOCATION OF DARJEELING IN THE HIMALAYAS

Map I(1)
Darjeeling Himalaya coincides with the northern most and smallest district namely Darjeeling of the state of West Bengal. It is bound by Sikkim in the north, Nepal in the east and the Kingdom of Bhutan towards the west. The total area of the district is 3106 km². It comprises four subdivisions those of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri. However, the study takes into account the subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong with an area of 2157 km² and population of 677796 persons in 1991. The subdivision of Siliguri has been excluded as it is mainly situated in the plains and the ethnic groups under study are negligible in this subdivision.

Though small in area in the context of the Himalayas, the Darjeeling hills are inhabited by people of diverse origins. Far removed from the mainstream, part of the region forms a peripheral area which received occasional off-shoots of the early civilization. Subsequently, the British, the Nepali, and Tibetan influences played an important role in moulding the present socio-economic, demographic, and political set up.

Historically, what is known as Darjeeling today was part of the Kingdom of Sikkim and Bhutan. Part of it was acquired by the Britishers as grant from the Chogyal of Sikkim in 1835. Kalimpong was annexed to this part in 1865 which earlier formed part of Bhutan.16

The Lepchas are considered to be the earliest settlers in the region. However, no authentic records exist to show as to how they came to inhabit the region. Among the other groups the Bhotiyas were the first migrants to Sikkim and came in contact with the

Lepchas. They came from Tibet initially as religious Lamas inspired by the zeal of spreading the religion of Lamaistic Buddhism. The Nepalis migrated to Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas mostly after the British intervention in Sikkim's affairs and after the cession of Darjeeling in 1835. The diverse ethnic composition in the area was primarily due to large scale immigration from neighbouring states. Thus, the region underwent major changes in terms of economic, social and administrative set up. The British officials realized the significance and potentials of Darjeeling in terms of its strategic location, centre for trade with Tibet, favourable tea growing conditions and as a resort from serving officials.

Today, different religious, linguistic and ethnic groups co-exist here. They are engaged in various types of economic activities ranging from farming, household industry on the one hand to workers in commercial plantations and tertiary activities on the other. Agriculture is predominantly practiced in the sub-division of Kalimpong while the sub-divisions of Darjeeling and Kurseong mostly form tea plantation areas. The region has witnessed numerous changes over the decades. The three communities of Lepchas, Bhotiyas and Nepalis have lived side by side for a long time. The interaction and interdependence between them are reflected through their socio-culture, religious and economic activities. However, differences have also risen over years and competition for resources and socio-economic opportunities is increasing. Inter-ethnic differences, conflicts resulting in political disturbances have become quite common.

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After having seen the significance of the problem under study and before stating its objectives, it is important to look at the literature available on the region.

I.2 Survey of Literature

Darjeeling Himalaya caught the eye of the British very early. Most studies available on the region are mainly accounts written by them. Various writings published on the region are in the form of travelogues, gazetteers and statistical accounts. The available literature on the region can be classified into two broad but distinct categories i.e. those written during colonial times and the post independence writing.

I.2 (i) Writings of the Colonial Period

Sir Joseph Hooker, noted naturalist and botanist was one of the first explorers who visited the region and studied the vegetation of this part of the Himalaya. 18 His work includes a detailed account of the region’s ecology, culture and settlements. He describes changes in vegetation types, landscape and the inhabitants along his route from Calcutta towards the Sikkim Himalayas.

Dozey wrote from his personal knowledge and experience of travel in the area and from collections of records. According to Dozey, British interaction and relationship started with the expansion of trade. He has given explicit details regarding the history of the land before the advent of the British and prior to their activities following

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18 Joseph Hooker (1854), Himalayan Journals, Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal, the Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas, Wordlock and Co. Ltd., London.
Hunter's statistical account provides detailed information about the region. Starting with the description of the physical environment, he describes the inhabitants, their occupation, economy and settlements. He has also provided population growth figures since 1835 when the region was acquired by the British. His study shows large scale immigration from neighboring Nepal. Supported by information on tea gardens he also provide information on agriculture land holdings, wages, land-tenure and natural calamities. Hunter's account also takes note of commerce, means of communication, industrial aspect etc. Statistics have been provided about the socio-economic set up. The work gives details about the region since the British advent till 1900 and is of immense help in assessing the extent of the British influence in the region.

A commendable job performed by the British officials was the preparation of district and provincial gazetteers which provide a wealth of information on the physical, social, demographic and economic aspects of the region. O’Malley’s district gazetteer first published in 1907 includes detailed information on land, people and their socio-economic and cultural aspects. Starting with the physical units of the district forming an irregular triangle, he describes the drainage system, natural division of the mountains, the foot hills

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and the plains. He has discussed the history of Darjeeling and Sikkim since the Nepalese war and the Treaty of Titaliya in 1817 between the ruler of Sikkim and the East India company. This account helps in understanding the formation of the region and the trends of development and changes those emerged after as well as during the British presence in the region. The region being an area of immense natural beauty, attracted many travellers and explorers to undertake expeditions. They have also contributed to the limited available literature. Their accounts are mostly in the form of travelogues and memoirs about their experiences and adventures in this Himalayan region. The writing of Bruce provides an interesting account of travel and mountain exploration in Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas. His account highlights the fact that Nepal despite being extremely mountainous is very densely populated. So much was the population pressure that at least 40,000 Gorkhas outmigrated from the eastern province into the district of Darjeeling and into semi-independent Sikkim. The account gives an idea about the population pressure and the movement of people.

Ronaldshay describes the physical environment and its impact on the socio-cultural as well as economic set-up. Laying emphasis on the environment, he brings into focus the nature and altitude towards life of the inhabitants. His work is simply a narrative of travel in somewhat out of the way countries of great natural charm and of people whose strange characteristics provide an unusual interest.


Dr. Archibald Campbell talks about the Lepchas calling them "practical jokers". He mentions about their habitat, methods of cultivation, food, their social norms and their faith of Buddhism. He says that they eat all types of wild roots, mountain spinach, fern tops and fungi and are extremely fond of pork and liquor. 24

The inhabitants of Sikkim and the role of some village elders as priests, medicine men, exorcists and organizers of feasts, all in one is the chief focus of the work of Gordon Latham. 25 He is of the opinion that all things withstanding the Lepchas are as staunch and good Buddhists as Bhotiyas.

Risley states that though most Lepchas prefer to be called Buddhists but actually they are followers of animism traces of which are still to be found in their religious practices. 26

Lawrence Austin Waddell is one of the pioneers to discuss the customs, religion and history of Sikkim. He was of the firm belief that the Lepchas were the true representatives of primitive men and he believed them to be great naturalists and shy of strangers. 27

The origin, Lamaism, magical practices, religious ceremonies, sex related customs, house types, agricultural practices and children of the Lepchas in Zongu, have been dealt with at length by Morris. He also talks of the Talung village where none but the Lepchas

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27. L.A. Waddell (1899), Among the Himalayas, Constable, London.
were permitted to own land or to reside and where only pure Lepchas could live.\textsuperscript{28}

Donaldson highlights the tragic history of the conquest of the Lepchas by a succession of invaders - the Bhotiyas, Nepalis and Drukpas. She takes them to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim, now reduced to a state of the poorest people in the region.\textsuperscript{29}

The region, being inhabited by diverse ethnic population, some scholars confined themselves to the study of ethnic groups. Gorer's description of Lepcha society in general and of the village Lingthem in particular provides a detailed account of Lepcha life style and society. He talks at length about their houses, methods of procuring food, their fondness for \textit{Chi} (homemade liquor brewed from millet) and their relationship with the money lenders, their matrimonial alliances and rules governing Kinship. Their social life, religious beliefs, faith in the \textit{Mun} (traditional witch doctor) have been dealt with in detail in his second book, Gorer presents the rhythm of Lepcha Life. Stating that the fertility of the Lepchas was extremely low, infantile mortality was excessively high\textsuperscript{a}. One full chapter has been devoted to sex, marriage and maturity. He has tried to portray a complete picture of the Himalayan Lepchas. Besides, his work brings into focus the

\textsuperscript{28} J. Morris (1938), \textit{Living with Lepchas: A Book About the Sikkim Himalayas}, Heinemann, London.

\textsuperscript{29} Florence Donaldson (1900), \textit{Lepcha Land or Six Weeks in the Sikkim Himalayas}, Sompson Low Marsten, London.
demographic aspects of the Lepchas. Both colonial and post-independence writers have dealt largely with the Lepcha community. Their quaint physical appearances, ways of livelihood attracted the attention of the earliest British settlers and writers as well as of the later sociologists and anthropologists who have studied them in details. All this has led to negligence of Nepalis in terms of literature available. The Nepalis as a community are heterogenous just as are the Bhotiyas. This makes the work of social scientists even more difficult which is responsible for relatively less available literature on these two ethnic groups. The Nepalis, presently are portrayed in bad light as migrants demanding rights on alien soil as was the case in Assam, Tripura and Bhutan. This is another contributing factor for lower interest in them as an ethnic community. Among the early twentieth century writers. J. Claude White has dealt with the political history along with notes on the people and geography of Sikkim. He was political officer in that region during 1889-1908 and documents much that happened there then. The folklore, customs, myths and religious beliefs of the "Rong" or the Lepchas form basis of C.de-Beauvoir Stocks' research.

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31. C. De Beauvoir Stocks (1925), "Folklore and Customs of the Lepchas of Sikkim" Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series, XXI.

32. J.C. White (1909), Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty one years on the North-East Frontier, 1889-1908, Longman Green, New York.
1.2 (ii) Writings of the Post-Independence Period

Literature on Darjeeling appeared in the form of articles in various journals and newspapers during the post-independence period. It was during the seventies and eighties that some studies were published. However, most of these are historical, sociological, political and anthropological in nature.

Kotturam dealt with the historical and cultural aspects of the region. He states that the prime interest of the Britishers was to expand economic control of the East India Company. The Britishers in the process of their expansion and situations conducive to their requirements annexed a portion of the land then known as Dorje-ling from the Chogyal of Sikkim under the deed grant of 1835. He also describes the unique culture of Buddhism and of the Lepcha tribe inhabiting the region.

Sen discusses the history of Darjeeling and British trade relations with its origin in the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-1816. He takes note of the treaties signed prior to British establishment. These are the Treaty of Seagauli of 1816 and the Treaty of Titaliya of 1817.

The multi-ethnic population composition, with diverse socio-cultural and historical aspects, led to the studies of various societies and ethnic groups inhabiting the region. Thakur studied the Lepcha tribe by conducting a detailed field work in Darjeeling and

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Sikkim. He describes the intermingling of Lepchas with other inhabitants such as the Bhotiyas, and the Nepalis. He further states that with the changing socio-economic set up, they are modernizing but at the same time de-tribalizing as well. Another important coverage is the Gorkhaland agitation for a separate state mostly favoured by the Nepalis. He further emphasizes the fact that the Lepchas as original inhabitants of the land, have now no standing. He brings out the deepening identity crisis and the vanishing cultures in the sub-Himalayan region of Darjeeling and Sikkim. Bedi and Sharma provide detailed history of Sikkim with separate chapters on flora and fauna and people along with illustrations.

Fred Pinn has rather painstakingly compiled the Darjeeling Letters from and to various eminent Britishers residing in the region. He has put together the history of then Darjeeling from these letters. He talks about the deed of grant that presented Darjeeling to the British, the construction of the Punkhabaree road, laying of train tracts, about the medical facilities or lack of these and of the establishment of the tea community in Darjeeling.

Subba discusses the emergence of the Nepalese in the hill region of Darjeeling and


highlights the hierarchy of prevailing caste system.\textsuperscript{38} His work included the long historical association of Nepalis with Nepal and explains the dynamics of the Nepalis society in Darjeeling. He has drawn his information from extensive fieldwork and his personal experiences and association with the society. Tibetan refugees residing in the Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya, especially those who migrated to the region after Chinese occupation of Tibet and their process of rehabilitation and adaptation have also been discussed by Subba.\textsuperscript{39} His main focus of analysis is the process of adaptation and he states that Tibetan adaptation in Sikkim and Darjeeling has been more successful than in any other region of India. One reason of this was the similarity in physical environment, culture and language to a large extent to what existed in Tibet. An interesting aspect of the study confirms that these Tibetan migrants do not compete with employment avenues of the hosts or in other scarce resources as most of them are self employed and have opportunities which do not present conflict with that of the other inhabitants.

The natural environment itself opens up possibilities of various economic and social activities which directly or indirectly affect the well being of the inhabitants. Moreover the process of well being and the regional set up are inter-related. In this regard Bhasin’s study discusses various facets of the population ecology.\textsuperscript{40}


\textsuperscript{39} T.B. Subba (1990), \textit{Flight and Adaptation Tibetan Refugees in the Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya}, Published by Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharmsala.

\textsuperscript{40} V. Bhasin (1990), \textit{Habitat Habitation and Health in the Himalaya}, M.K. Bhasin, ed., Kamla-Raj Enterprises, Delhi.
Basically, keeping the concept of social well-being and health of the mountain inhabitants, the study assesses the influence of various natural and human factors, i.e., physical environment, economic pursuits, social and religious factors on the health of the people especially of the Lepchas and the Bhotiyas. She brings to light some major demographic and health characteristics of the society in the Sikkim Himalayas.

With the flourishing of tea industry and tourism, the region also gained importance as a hill resort. Many studies on socio-economic set up were published in the form of articles in various journals. Some institutes were established to study the Hill Economy. These initiated research pertaining to economy, environment, society and development of the hill regions.

The Tea industry and its problems have been the object of various studies. The impact this industry has on the economy of the state, on the lives of the workers, on the plantations, the history of trade unionism in Darjeeling have been traced in the book by Sarkar and Lama.\(^{41}\) The "sickness" of the industry, the employment pattern, minimum wages have also been highlighted.

Bandhyopadhyaya's paper is an attempt to review the strategy of development pursued in Darjeeling Hills.\(^{42}\) He deals with the problems from its location point of view and subsequently suggests models for removal of backwardness. He provides strategy for

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the development of major enterprises like tea and forestry which have become moribund and need to be rejuvenated.

Sarkar discusses ecological factors that determine the quality of Darjeeling tea.\(^4\) He explains the interrelationships between tea growing in hill areas and the ecosystem as an essentially biotic community interacting with its physical environment. Bhaumik's study is confined to the impact of economic development on occupational mobility and structural change brought about by economic development in Darjeeling in the late seventies and eighties.\(^4\) Maitra highlights the inter-relationship between the settlements and the population of Darjeeling in terms of growth and its effect on development.\(^4\) The report is related to the development of hill areas highlighting their problems, the development policies and the strategies for it. A study on the landscape and environment relevant to the society within the varied ecosystem, has been conducted by Mukhopadhyay. The study deals with Tista Himalayan Terrain of Sikkim and Darjeeling.\(^4\) This study is applied in nature with a view to relate the components of


physical and cultural aspects of the Tista Himalaya. The area is prone to a number of environmental hazards and many of these result from human interferences. He believes that enhancement of communication system would be helpful in attaining regional development and to eradicate economic imbalances and conflicts at the national level.

A.R. Foning, himself being a Lepcha, sheds light on the cultural integration and erosion of the Lepcha culture by the dominant Nepalis. This autobiographical work while accepting the benefits of merging cultures and religions, laments the decline of the ancient culture. He points a dismal picture of the Lepcha community as a "Vanishing Tribe" in the face of western development and cultural erosion. He refers chiefly to the Lepchas of Darjeeling District and Sikkim.

Indira Awasthy talks about the semi-urban settlement of Pedong situated at a distance of 14 kilometers from Kalimpong town. It is situated on the border between Sikkim and that portion of West Bengal which was earlier under Bhutan. She traces the history of the colonizers of the area since the thirteenth century while maintaining the Lepchas to be autochthones. This tiny semi-urban area gained prominence due to its strategic location on route to Lhasa from Kalimpong. Awasthy addresses questions regarding the possibility or otherwise of the Bhotiyas and the Lepchas in retaining their identity amidst Christianization and more than 80 percent Nepalis.

Kottuppallil traces the advent, subsequent spread and conversion by the Jesuits in

the Darjeeling hills. All the renowned schools, colleges and many of the hospitals were built by the missionaries who catered to the needs of the Europeans, Anglo-Indians and locals as well. "Education, health care and social assistance" were provided by these missionaries. He believes the Nepali converts to be extremely courageous as conversion meant social ostracization then.49

Bhattacharya studied the Bhotiya-Lepcha women of Sikkim in the light of their position in society, their place in the patriarchal family set up and the faith they place in Amjis i.e. the medical system developed by the lamas. Their relatively lower fertility in comparison to Nepali women, marriage and divorce laws have also been touched upon. The effects of modernization, primary health centres and modern english education, and their active participation in household industries have been studied carefully.50 The work shows that working women have hostel facilities and urban educated women take on white-collar jobs while their rural counterparts participate in agricultural activities. It has been pointed out that women do not inherit property.

Rustomji deals with the various changes that have swept the Himalayan region.51 He states that "Sikkim provides the foremost example of the divesting effect of a policy


that takes insufficient account of the factors of change". The seeds of this were sown in the early year of the century by the Britishers. Rai emphasized the role of tourism in uplifting the economic conditions of Darjeeling.\(^{52}\) He wrote that "Tea is fully developed and exploited to their saturation levels, the tourism industry is still in its infancy and there is ample scope for its development as a tourist spot." Chaudhuri states that ecology has shaped the economy of the area. He says that it influences as well as limits the development programmes.\(^{53}\) Economy of Darjeeling is said to be the result of external forces, he contends that over time, the spill over has given a new dimension.

Nakane studied the peaceful coexistence of the Bhotiyas and the lepchas in Sikkim in close proximity. He provides a detailed account of the establishment of the Gompa (Monastery) and the hierarchy of the Lamas there.\(^{54}\) The fact that, there were relatively fewer marriages between these closely bound communities than between either the Lepchas and Nepalis or the Bhotiyas and the Nepalis surprised and intrigued Nakane. The problems arising out of a "community centred on a gompa", and that "from the intrusion of Nepalis into a community of Lepchas and Bhotiyas", has been noticed by Nakane.


An awareness of one’s culture, the fear of the erosion of it by a more dominant one has created widespread panic and has resulted in various language and other "sons of the soil" movements. Bagachi and Danda wrote an article on the movement for solidarity. They talk about the demand for Nepali language as a subject in the matriculation and the Bachelor of Arts courses, and the creation of ‘NE-BU-LA’ which is a committee where ‘NE’ is for Nepalis", ‘BU’ for Bhotiyas and ‘LA’ ‘Lepchas’. Language and script are physical manifestation of a culture and the demand for state level recognition of the language has led to the creation of a series of committees and associations like the ‘Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Bhasha Samiti’ and the ‘Bhotia welfare Association’ and ‘Lepcha Association’. Das took up Darjeeling Himalayas as a socio-linguistic region, taking into account the languages both spoken and written and the super imposition of a dominant language on the relatively minor ones. He mentions about the demand for the inclusion of Nepali in the Eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Schaefer writes about the recent union of the Bhotiyas and the Lepchas in Sikkim to put up a joint front against the Rathong-Chu Project that has one of Buddhist sacred places on its site. Agitated by the thought of the "desantification of Demojong" that is the


place where the first Chogyal was crowned in 1642, the "Sikkimese, Bhotia Lepcha came forward to defend what remains of their original homeland". He says that Sikkimese autochthones now form a mere 20 per cent of the population and have done so for over a century. The tussle and tension prevalent in Darjeeling between the three ethnic groups are also to be seen in neighboring Sikkim. 58

The role of ethnicism in inter-group conflicts is the focus of Rose's paper. He deals with the conflicts in the North Eastern states of India and of the neighboring Bhutan. The concept of the "sons of the soil" that has created a strong sense of awareness among most original inhabitants is a post seventies phenomena and is becoming increasingly widespread. This consciousness is also partly responsible for much of the ethnic cleansing violence and recent socio-political changes occurring world over. 59

Though not dealing directly with the area of study, this paper presents the problem that plagues Darjeeling Himalaya as well - the question of the demands of the "sons of the soil" and that of inter-ethnic conflicts is hence of interest for the present study.

As stated earlier, the early literature on the region is largely the works of the British and other European writers who were pioneers in this field. The relatively new literature on ethnic groups available today is that by Indian writers who have taken into account the earlier writings to emphasize on the present day socio-economic and political status of these groups.

The Lepchas have been studied at length while material available on the Bhotiyas and Nepalis is scanty. This could be due to the heterogeneity of these two groups. The already published literature throws light on the socio-cultural aspects of the people rather than the economic and political side which is rapidly gaining importance today. A study of the literature of the area also sheds light on the views held by various people regarding these ethnic groups. What was forecasted in the early Nineteenth century has now come to true with the Nepalis proving a majority. Many of the related economic and political problems cropping up today, can be analyzed with a correct historical perspective from the available extant literature on the region.

1.3 Objectives

It is in the light of earlier mentioned significance of the problem and lack of material on inter-ethnic relations, the following objectives have been set for the present study.

(i) To know the natural set up of the region in terms of physical environment to assess problems of resource base.

(ii) To understand historical processes in the area especially in relation to the consolidation, spatial relations and peopling of the region.

(iii) To look into the socio-economic setup of different ethnic groups, viz-Nepalis, Lepchas, and Bhotiyas, and processes of their migration to Darjeeling Himalaya.

(iv) To understand and look into the demographic characteristics of these groups and changes therein.
(v) To understand the nature of economic activities and the changes therein with sectoral shifts in response to recent development and its impact on different ethnic groups.

(vi) To assess the political disturbances in the wake of Gorkhaland movement and its impact on the economy, society, and ethnic relations.

1.4 Hypotheses

The study of mountain population has come into focus in recent times. Some attempts have been made to make generalizations about the population living in the mountains but, there remains a need for an overall framework that would integrate and explain the patterns of readjustment, interaction, social relations, differences and even conflicts in diverse societies.

As stated earlier, the socio-economic structure in mountainous regions in the initial stages, is significantly influenced by the physical environment. The socio-cultural aspects and historical factors are equally important to comprehend this set up in diverse ethnic societies like that of Darjeeling. In the light of the above and earlier discussion the following hypotheses have been formulated.

(i) The Lepchas shall have lower horizontal mobility in terms of migration, as well as vertical mobility than the Nepalis and Bhotiyas.

There is no specific account of migrational history of the Lepchas. The Nepalis migrated from Nepal and Bhotiyas from Tibet and Bhutan. Their migration was in
response to economic opportunities. The Lepchas, perhaps due to their socio-economic, cultural and religious activities which were evolved responses to the given natural environment seem to remain confined to the region. Migration in the case of Lepchas was perhaps lower and initially was restricted to within the region. Even today it is expected that their outmigration shall be lower as compared to the Nepalis and Bhotiyas. This should also influence the socio-economic opportunities available to them in terms of employment, and education attainment.

(ii) The Lepchas and Nepalis will have lower level of income than the Bhotiyas.

The Bhotiyas seem to have more diversified economic activities ranging from agricultural, tertiary to other commercial activities. Non-agricultural activities of the Bhotiyas include carpet weaving, noodles and incense making, trade in woollen garments, arts and crafts and running restaurants. All such activities of the Bhotiyas appear to be generating higher income. The Nepalis and Lepchas are mostly engaged in agricultural and plantation activities.

(iii) Settlements of diverse ethnic composition shall have more diversified economy.

It has been seen that different ethnic groups have been traditionally specializing in different professions. In fact, those villages which have different ethnic groups living together seem to have evolved more diversified economy. Whether ethnic diversity has led to diversified economy or vice-versa is a difficult question to answer. However, it is noted that those settlements which are situated in more favourable pockets are expected to have both ethnic as well as economic diversity.
(iv) Ethnic groups with higher inmigration will have more differences in socio-economic structure which results in political disturbances. The numerically strong group even if not forming the native population shall be more dominant in the region. This will get reflected in their major role in political and economic activities on the one hand and shall lead to socio-cultural marginalization of other groups on the other.

(v) Economic disparities shall be higher in those ethnic groups which have migrated at a later stage.

I. 5 Data Base

To fulfill the objectives and to test the above mentioned hypotheses, data collection was done from the following sources.

1.5 (i) Secondary Sources

These sources include published reports, documents in the form of gazetteers, travelogues and other government publications. Important among these are the census of India publications. The earlier census reports, gazetteers, and statistical abstracts were also used for understanding historical aspects, economy, population and socio-cultural set up of the concerned ethnic groups prior to and after British intervention into the region. Other secondary data was taken from unpublished records of various local institutions and associations of the ethnic communities of the Lepchas, the Bhotiyas and the Nepalis. These provided information on particular ethnic groups, their sub-groups in terms of their social, economic and demographic profiles.
I.5 (ii) Primary Sources

The study is largely based upon the data collected through field survey. A detailed questionnaire was prepared and was used for collecting information. It may be mentioned that eight village were selected for intensive detailed study. These villages were selected from plantation and agricultural areas considering their location. The location consideration taken into account was the proximity of sample villages to urban centres, important transport routes, and also their remoteness. More importantly these villages were selected on the basis of ethnic composition. For this, two villages each predominantly inhabited by the Nepalis, the Lepchas and the Bhotiyas were chosen. This accounted for six sample villages. The remaining two villages were those which had mixed ethnic population of all three communities.

The number of households surveyed in each of these villages accounted for 15 percent to 18 per cent of the total households. Three hundred and eighty seven (387) house holds were surveyed in all. Data collection got facilitated due to personal acquaintance with the area. Besides, some knowledgeable village people were interviewed in detail to get some additional information. The household level questionnaire included questions on economic, social aspects and political attitudes of the households. Besides, information on each individual of the household in terms of sex, educational qualification, occupation and migration was also collected. The methodology of the selection of villages and households has been discussed subsequently in the section on methodology.
DARJEELING HIMALAYA

LOCATION OF SAMPLE VILLAGES

Map 1(2)
1.6 Methodology

1.6 (i) Selection of Sample Villages

As mentioned earlier, eight sample villages were selected on the basis of location considering the proximity to urban centres, remoteness and the ethnic composition. Considering these above criteria four villages Tanyang, Khani, Pedong and Bhalukhop were selected from Kalimpong subdivision which is predominantly an agricultural area and the other four, namely Saregaon, Soureni, Sonada and Tukdha were selected from Darjeeling and Kurseong subdivisions which are predominantly plantation areas.

The selection of these villages is not in accordance to the census classification of villages in the region. As the basis for selection also involved ethnic composition, settlements and hamlets inhabited by particular ethnic groups like the Lepchas and the Bhotiyanas were selected which came under census village or Village Gram Panchayats. It is in these settlements that one find the predominance of particular ethnic groups. This holds true for the Lepcha villages of Saregaon and Tanyang. The former is under the Mirik Block in Kurseong subdivision and the latter under Kalimpong Block I, in the subdivision of Kalimpong. Similarly, Bhotiya predominant settlements of Sonada and Pedong were selected. The former is in Jorebunglow Block in Darjeeling and the latter under Kalimpong Block - II in Kalimpong subdivision. Since the proportion of Nepali population is higher as compared to the Lepchas and Bhotiyanas in the region, selecting the relevant village was not a difficult task. The Nepali dominant village Khani was selected from the subdivision of Kalimpong and the Soureni village was in the plantation area under Soureni Tea Estate in the subdivision of Kurseong formed the second Nepali village.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Predominant Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Sub-Division</th>
<th>Nearest Urban Center (Distance)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saregoan</td>
<td>Lepcha</td>
<td>Kurseong</td>
<td>Mirik (6 kms.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanyang</td>
<td>Lepcha</td>
<td>Kalimpong</td>
<td>Kalimpong (37 kms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soureni</td>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>Kurseong</td>
<td>Mirik (10 kms.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khani</td>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>Kalimpong</td>
<td>Kalimpong (22 kms.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedong</td>
<td>Bhotiya</td>
<td>Kalimpong</td>
<td>Kalimpong (21 kms.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonada</td>
<td>Bhotiya</td>
<td>Darjeeling</td>
<td>Darjeeling (20 kms.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukdha</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Darjeeling</td>
<td>Darjeeling (23 kms.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhalukhop</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Darjeeling</td>
<td>Kalimpong (2 kms.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two villages namely Tukdah situated in the Tukdah block in Darjeeling and Bhalukhop in Kalimpong with mixed population of the Nepalis, Lepchas and Bhotiyas were selected. The proportion of population vary with Nepalis forming majority in both the villages. Nevertheless the location of such mixed villages tends to be near urban centres or developing areas with higher level of accessibility.

Tukdah was selected for its location near Darjeeling and other market places and tea gardens in the surrounding block. Moreover plantation and agriculture provides ample economic activities.

Bhalukhop Khas Mahal shares a boundary with Kalimpong town and is facilitated by its higher level of accessibility and concentration of different ethnic groups.
On the basis of the above mentioned criteria for selecting sample villages, map 1(2) shows their distribution and table I (1) shows the location, proximity to urban centres the approximate number of households in each village and the number of households surveyed.

A separate account of these villages is given below regarding the total number of households, population composition, approximate population as seen from different sources, history and available socio-economic amenities.

**Saregaon:** is largely a Lepcha inhabited hamlet and falls under Mirik Khas Mahal village of Kurseong subdivision. It is situated at a distance of 6 km from Mirik town which lies to its east. Though situated in the midst of tea gardens, the Lepchas of this village are mostly engaged in agriculture. Squash is an important product for commercial purpose along with ginger. The main sources of income are cultivation and livestock rearing. Although situated close to Mirik town, accessibility in terms of road is low and socio-economic amenities such as school, health center, veterinary services, electricity are not available within the village. Recently the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) has started constructing road to link it with other villages. The total area of Mirik Khas Mahal village was 812.62 hectares with 593 households and a population of 3123 persons in 1991.60 There were approximately 218 Lepcha households with a population of 1180 persons in this village. A total of 37 households were surveyed.

**Tanyang:** This predominant Lepcha settlement is situated to the southeast of Kalimpong and falls under the Samalbong Khas Mahal village of the Kalimpong

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60. Source: Block Development Office, Mirik.
subdivision. Samalbong Khas Mahal with an area of 529.54 hectares had 297 households and population of around 1890 persons in 1991. This village was selected for its remoteness as it is situated 37 km away from the nearest town Kalimpong. Accessibility is relatively low.

Of the 297 households in Samalbong Khas Mahal, around 193 Lepcha households are confined in Tayang hamlet with an approximate population of 1092 persons. Of the 297 households in Samalbong Khas Mahal, around 193 Lepcha households are confined in Tayang hamlet with an approximate population of 1092 persons. Thirty households from a total of 193 were surveyed. Although located away from the town yet products like ginger and oranges are sent out from the villages. Amenities are inadequate with no electricity and roads are in poor condition. Health centre and a tribal school have been set up here. The Lepchas in this village seem to have strong socio-economic ties between them. The remaining households in the area belong largely to the Nepalis.

**Soureni:** A settlement of Soureni Tea garden lies under Kurseong subdivision. The tea garden settlements were earlier known as "Dhura" in the region. These housed the early garden labourers from Nepal who were brought by the labour contractor during the British times known as Sardars. Very often these ‘Dhuras’ were named after the respective communities or castes of the inhabitants or after the local Sardars. However, these ‘Dhuras’ over a period of time expanded into villages and become permanent settlements.

Soureni Tea garden comprised a number of different hamlets within the area. History of the village states that the workers were migrants from the surrounding areas who were initially casual workers. But, with the passage of time some tea gardens leased

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61. Source: Lepcha Association, Kalimpong.
their land to the workers. This helped them to supervise the construction of their houses and forced the employees to settle at one area on the garden land. Soureni has around 157 households entirely inhabited by Nepalis and their population was 942 persons.\textsuperscript{62}

Soureni was selected due to its proximity to Mirik town, higher accessibility in terms of roads and the availability of some agricultural land. A total of 27 households were surveyed. The socio-economic amenities are provided by the garden authorities in this settlement.

**Khani:** is largely a Nepali inhabited village under the Kalimpong Block of the same subdivision. It comprises of Soikbir and Yokpritman hamlets and is situated around 20-22 kms. from Kalimpong town towards its east. Although situated at a considerable distance from Kalimpong, road connectivity is quite high. The total area of the village is 980.97 hectares with a population of 1910 persons in 1991. A total of 38 Nepali households were surveyed out of this total 241 households. Besides the Nepalis, the only other community inhabiting the village is the Lepchas. There were approximately 1614 persons of Nepali origin in this village.

**Pedong Khas Mahal:** Pedong is a Bhotiya village situated at a distance of 21 kms towards north of Kalimpong at an altitude of 5100 ft above sea level. It formed border town with Sikkim earlier and used to be the halting place for merchants and Bhotiya traders carrying out trade between India and Tibet. The famous route through the Chumbi valley to Tibet passed through this area. Over the decades it expanded and developed as an important center bordering Sikkim. The Bhotiyas in this village are the early settlers.

\textsuperscript{62} Source: Office of the Manager, Soureni Tea Estate.
from Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan and consisted of different ethnic subgroups. Besides Bhotiyas, the Nepalis and the Lepchas are also found in many of the hamlets within Pedong. The place has high potentials for development. Pedong covered an area of 569.80 hectares and had population of 3290 persons in 1991 with 577 households. The Bhotiya settlement is in lower Pedong which also includes Sakiyong hamlet. It had around 218 Bhotiya households with approximate population of around 1296 persons. A total of 36 households were surveyed.

This village is well connected and has high accessibility despite long distance from the town. There are motorable roads and some socio-economic amenities. The higher accessibility is due to its proximity to Pedong Bazar (DIF area). Lately, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has constructed road passing through this village.

**Sonada:** It is situated at a distance of about 20 kms from Darjeeling towards south. Its location midway between Darjeeling and Kurseong, has facilitated the growth of Bhotiya settlements on the Hill Cart Road. Moreover the establishment of Tibetan settlement or colonies further made this place especially lower Sonada into a predominant Bhotiya settlement. The Darjeeling Tibetan Refugee Co-operative Collective Society is also situated at Sonada which has contributed largely to the relocation of the Tibetan community. Many of the Bhotiyas are engaged in handicrafts and cottage industry. They weave carpets, make shoulder bags, aprons and Tibetan footwear. Many of them are into dairying and other petty business.

The total Scheduled Tribe households in the area were 267 with a population of 1757 persons, comprising the Tibetans and Sherpas in 1991. The Sherpa who are another
group of the Bhotiyas are engaged in agriculture and "other services". A survey was conducted of a total of 41 Bhotiya households.

**Tukdha:** It is ethnically a mixed village and 82 households were selected for survey in this village. The total number of households in Tukdha including Tukdha forest hamlet were 667 and population of 3590 persons in 1991. The total number of Scheduled Tribe households constituted 326 out of which 167 were Lepcha households and 159 Bhotiya households while the Nepali households numbered approximately 211. The remaining households were of other communities from the plains and hence not taken into account.

Taking the total number of households of each ethnic group, 32 Nepali households were surveyed. The households surveyed of the Lepchas were 26 and of Bhotiyas 24. Tukdha is situated at a distance of about 28 km from Darjeeling to its east and lies on the slope of Singalila Ridge. It was developed as a cantonment during the British period and is accessible by road. Its multi-ethnic character is primarily due to the type of economic activities prevailing in the area which range from plantation to agriculture. It is also an important development centre with a Tibetan Refugee Center that provides handicraft opportunities and petty business to many of its inhabitants.

**Bhalukhop:** It is another ethnically mixed village and is situated closest to urban centre out of all the selected village. It lies at a distance of 2 km from Kalimpong town and is on the north-south direction of the Kalimpong ridge.

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63. Source: Block Development Office, Tukdha.

64. Source: Office of the Gram Panchayat, Tukdha.
The total number of Scheduled Tribes household in the village constitute around 262 with 143 lepcha households and 119 Bhotiya households. The total area of it was 690.90 hectares and has 761 households with a population of 3639 persons in 1991. The appreciate number of Nepali households was around 349. The total number of households surveyed were 96 out of the total 611 which comprised the Nepalis, Lepchas and Bhotiyas. A total of 53 Nepali households were surveyed out of 349. About 23 Lepcha households out of the total 143 and 20 Bhotiya households from the total of 119 households were selected for this purpose.

The Nepali households were found nearer to the urban center and in the valleys along with the Lepchas who inhabit the lower reaches for agricultural purposes. The Bhotiyas also live near the urban centre for the pursuit of their economic activities. The socio-economic amenities within the village are limited but its location near Kalimpong town facilitates it. Accessibility has been vastly improved with the construction of metalled roads as part of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council plan. However, despite all such facilities, the Lepchas have not been able to derive much benefits, as their settlements are concentrated deep down the slopes and valleys away from the urban centres. Hence these are quite inaccessible by motorable road.

I.6 (ii) Statistical and Cartographic Methods

The analysis and computation has been done through simple statistical techniques.

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65. Source: Block Development Office, Kalimpong Block-I.
Ginis co-efficient and co-efficient of variation have been computed to find out the inequality in the distribution of agricultural land. Lorenz curves have been drawn to show the concentration of land. Location Quotients have been found out to see the disparities in the income-levels and the size of land holdings.

Cartographic methods like line graphs, bar graphs and pie diagrams have been used to show the demographic and climatic data. Choropleth maps and drainage maps have been prepared to show some of the physical aspects.

I.7 Organization of Material

The present study has been organized into seven chapters including the introduction and the summary of conclusions. It is important to state the theoretical framework at the outset. Thus, the introductory chapter deals with the concept of diverse ethnic societies and processes that lead to their concentration in a region. It also includes discussion on various other aspects of multi-ethnicity, inter-dependence and issues that result in differences and conflicts in such societies. Apart from this, the objectives of the study and hypotheses have been stated and literature on the region reviewed along with the data base and the methodology.

An attempt has been made in the second chapter to understand the nature of regional diversities with regard to various physical phenomena. It deals with the environmental setting in terms of physiography, drainage and climate etc. It also mentions in a broader sense the resource potential of Darjeeling.
It is important to understand the historical background of ethnic groups especially in terms of occupance. The understanding of the socio-cultural and traditional attributes is quite important. The third chapter, therefore, deals with these aspects of the region and of the ethnic groups. Furthermore, focus on the various external and internal forces that influenced inhabitants at different periods of time has also been discussed.

Demographic attributes and economic activities vary spatially and amongst different ethnic groups. These reflect interplay of various environmental, historical, and socio-cultural factors. Therefore, the analysis of the various components of demographic and economic structure, as well as changes therein have been analyzed in the fourth and the fifth chapters respectively.

Analysis of socio political differences in the diverse ethnic society of Darjeeling and their impact on society has been presented in chapter six. The chapter focuses on Gorkhaland movement and its causes, and on the earlier ethnic movements. Attempt has been made to comprehend the socio-economic differences and politicisation of issues among these ethnic groups. Furthermore, it tries to see possible future trends of ethnic relationship. The summary of conclusions has been presented in the last chapter.