

***Mangar* for Scheduled Tribe Status in Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalayas**

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Abstract

Mangar community residing in the geographical areas of Sikkim and Darjeeling has occupied a distinct space within the multi ethnic group. The historical evidences describe the scenario of past era where these two regions (Sikkim and Darjeeling) were inter-connected; prior Darjeeling was part of an independent Himalayan Kingdom Sikkim an interlinked between these two regions explains the commonality they share on many terms.

The paper illustrates *Mangar* communities' historical existence within Sikkim and Darjeeling tracing all their ancient records and narrating some events, which proved that they were the early inhabitants before *Namgyal*. Also argues on how the historical injustice has made the contemporary discourse which leads to reclassification or re-arranging of the ethnic group presently. The article illustrates the social backwardness of *Mangar* community though community has ancestral past in these regions. Issues like distinct religious practices, identity and culture of *Mangar* community which community thoroughly deserve to be labelled as Scheduled tribe.

Keywords : *history, commonalities, historical injustice, political struggle, contemporary discourse and Schedule Tribe Status.*

Introduction

Mangar community belong to Mongoloid stock inhabitant in Sikkim and Darjeeling foothills. Thus back then they were influenced by Hinduism however some of their practices remain like ancestors worship, worshipping nature it truly resembles animist; believes in spirits, supernatural power, elements of nature (river, forest, moon, sun etc) and deities indicating more of tribal traits possess a distinctive socio-cultural features and practices. They are now digging into the root and started to connect which was vanished in a time frame their 'age-old tradition'. Contemporarily rituals of *Mangar* are done by their own community priest '*Bhusal*' or either shamans (*Jhankri* or *Dhami*). The language they speak is called *Mangrati/Mangar Dhut* (Rana, 2021).

On 27th March 1966 the Government of Sikkim recognised *Mangar Dhut* as one of the official language. Around the three districts of Sikkim that is West, South and East the *Mangar* language is introduced up to class VIII whereas in Darjeeling the facility of teaching *Mangar* language have not been introduced by the West Bengal Government. In December 1994, Sikkim Legislative Assembly session has been translated in *Mangar* language for the

first time. Through the study it has found that *Mangar* of Sikkim and Darjeeling are not divided into *Barahmagrat* or *Atharamagrat* like in Nepal they are under one sect that is '*Mangar*'. (Ethnographic Report, 2005)

The community is divided into seven major clans i.e., *Rana*, *Thapa*, *Alley*, *Burathoki* / *Buda*, *Gharti*, *Pun*, and *Roka* along with their sub-clans and *gotras* respectively though in Sikkim and Darjeeling it's hard to find all major clans instead *Rana*, *Thapa* and *Alley* clans are in majority and other is a rare seen. The marital alliances are made on the basis of these clans, sub-clans and *gotras*; as community favour the endogamy however with the assimilation of other community now endogamy becoming a rare factor. The community follow patrilocal residence it means after marriage woman start to live in her husband's house. Earlier *Mangar* community practiced matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. On the basis of this marriage system the kinship terms was established but now there is no such kind of marriage practice. As a result some kinship terms have changed. There are two types of Kinship system in *Mangar* community one is blood related and other is through marriage. There is another exceptional way of developing kinship is through social rites / *Meteri* rites anthropologically known as Fictive Kinship (Dhakal, 2017).

During festival arrived or on special occasions *Mangar* people play musical instrument like *madal*, *binayo*, *jhyali* and *khajari* accompanied by dances of various forms; for example *maruni* and *kauda dance*. They enjoy their own folk music and dance. They had a number of folktales but unfortunately due to generation gap the folktales are slowly forgotten day by day.

The history of origin of *Mangar* community is difficult to locate. Many eminent scholars put forward various probabilities. The mythical story of origin is even more complex. According to legends there were two leaders Chitu and Shing. *Mangars* under their leaderships travelled to Sikkim, Darjeeling, Nepal and other areas as well. They were named as '*Tangsang Thapa*' which means people who came from far away in north (Chemjong, 1967).

Mangar community had taken significant place within the multi-ethnic groups in the Himalayan region. Their distinctive culture and practices made them unique from other community. Presently the community is much concerned about their cultural identity; they are united for the cause of preservation of their earlier traditions. As a result language classes are being organized in the locality in order to coach the youngsters. Involvement of youth in any societal programme is much appreciated and, it encourages them to understand the significance and purpose of their customs.

Technique

The study is based on empirical data. Field survey was carried out among the *Mangar* community of Sikkim and Darjeeling periodically in the years 2019 to 2021 to comprehend their historical and political issues. Usual Anthropological methods like participant observation, interviews with structured and unstructured, schedules; were used to collect primary data. Secondary data were collected from records and documents. Finally opinions of elders and community members and youths of *Mangars* are taken into consideration in order to understand their own perception about the community.

The *Mangars*, the land and History

Topographically Darjeeling and Sikkim are much similar. Rangit and Teesta are the two most important rivers, which hold historical and mythical significance. These rivers divide the districts of Darjeeling and the state of Sikkim. Currently Darjeeling occupies the northernmost part of West Bengal.

Topographically speaking Sikkim is on mountainous terrain inhabited by different communities, who are following their own traditions and are with distinct cultural backgrounds. Sikkim is known for multi-ethnic cultural pattern and has its own sumptuous and colourful tradition.

Darjeeling hills laying on the Southern part of Sikkim, was originally a part of independent Kingdom of Sikkim. Later Darjeeling region came to be a part of British Empire (O'Malley, 1907). During British colonial times, the tea plantation industry and trans-Himalayan Trade needed cheap labour. As a result many immigrants from inside and outside travelled in this land and contributed to the flourishing of diverse culture in this region. It can be said that Darjeeling hills became a centre of 'cultural pluralism' also called as 'babel of tribes and nations' and an 'ethnological museum' (Kishan, 2018).

In 1835 Darjeeling was gifted to the East India Company. In return the company presented one double barrelled gun, one rifle, 120 yards of red-broad cloth and pairs of shawl to the Raja of Sikkim (Dozey, 1989). There were some such known events, which were recorded. However many past affairs of Darjeeling remained unrecorded. Neither Sikkim nor Nepal had put an effort in discovering those unrecorded events, which would be further useful (Moktan, 2004).

Sikkim and Darjeeling is not only known for multi-ethnic diversification, but also is recognised for beautiful architecture of Buddhist monasteries. Before British colonization, Buddhism as a religion in Sikkim and Darjeeling was established by *Chogyal*¹ (*Dharmaraja*) (Kazi, 2020). In ancient days the settlers of Sikkim and Darjeeling were following their own cultural ethos. They were isolated from other groups and surrounded by their own community in an occupied area. It is also believed that before Buddhism they were following their own animist custom as a nature worshipper and also had an independent ruling kingdom; for example; Limbu for *Limbuwan* and as for *Mangar* as *Mangarjong*. Lepchas were considered as an original inhabitant or autochthons in Sikkim (Bharat and Hemant, 2008).

The cultural identity of *Mangar* in these regions shares similar value on the ground of ethnicity where co-existence of tradition or custom explains connectivity. They specified and identified their cultural existence in the miscellaneous space with their culturally pronounced symbols and preserved their identity among diverse-cultural niches. An archaeological site was discovered which proved their glorious era.

Chemjong elucidated the origin of *Mangar*, also used the word "tribe", in mentioning *Mangar* (Chemjong, 1966). He mentioned that centuries back, *Mangars* had settled permanently in the land. Some authors had mentioned their existence on this land much before the

Namgyal. Yeshe Doma and Thutob Namgyal had mentioned of presence of *Mangar* community in Sikkim (Thutob and Yeshe, 1908). A British botanist and explorer Joseph Dalton Hooker (1854) writes that the *Mangars* are 'aborigines of Sikkim'. However the question on aborigines of a community (*Mangar*) was debated in Sikkim (Wangdi, 2010). Saul Mullard (2009) puts hold on the evidence of *Mangar* in early Sikkim. According to him the primary sources does not justify of *Mangar* living in Sikkim earlier. Sprigg (1982) writes that, not only *Lepcha* but *Mangar* were also the early inhabitants in Sikkim. Even in numerical strength there are some similarity between *Mangar* and *Lepcha* similar to *Nat*, *Nees*, *Som*, *Buli* etc. It shows that these two communities lived together. (Gurung, 2011)

Ancient history along with traditions of Sikkim and Darjeeling are not much researched. There are still some facts and quarries which are yet to be uncovered. Through many years of understanding of the geographical boundaries of Sikkim, it appeared that until 1642 the state was not politically consolidated. In the year 1642, Chogyal Phuntsho Namgyal was consecrated across the Kingdom by the three Lamas² at Yuksom Norbugang, West Sikkim. At that time the region was governed by independent Chieftains at different time periods in the "Prehistoric Greater Sikkim" by *Lepcha*, *Tsongs (Limboo)* and *Mangar* (Subba, 2008). From travel account of the first Chogyal Phuntsho Namgyal, it appears that *Mangars* were in Sikkim prior to 1642.

During Namgyal reign the population of *Mangar* were so less that it is believed that majority of them wrote their clan name as, '*Thapa*, *Rana* or *Alley*' instead of '*Mangar*'. This created confusion. Many of them were left out in the census. As a result it showed lesser population numerically.

The *Lepcha*, *Limbus* and *Mangars* were called "*Rong*", '*Chong*' and '*Mong*' (Chemjong, 1966). As for the fact up to 18th century AD existence of forts of the *Mangar* and many other events proved the inhabitation of the community in the region. There are a few places in Sikkim and Darjeeling identified as *Mangarjong* or the Fort of *Mangar*. An eminent explorer Pandit Sarat Chandra Das (1902) wrote about *Mangars* in Sikkim and Eastern Nepal and illustrated the story related to *Mangar* King and Queen.

According to Santosh Allay during the period of 1600 A.D. or so, the chief Sintupati Sen had ruled the surrounding areas like *Mangarjongs* in West Sikkim for many years. He laid the foundation of *Mangarjong*. The *Mangsari* presently has become an important place, which is indispensable for *Mangar* community to represents their historical records. The ruins of *Mangarjongs* is still founds in Sukiya Pokhari in Darjeeling, Mansong *Mangarjong* at Rangpo and, *Mangarjong* at Suldung, Kamrang *Mangarjong*, Famtham *Mangarjong*, Sudunglakha *Mangarjong*, Kitam *Mangarjong*, Mangardalam, Mangarthang, Berthang-Berfok *Mangarjong*, Rateypani, Kateng and so on are other evidences of ruins (Allay 2003, Sinha, 2005).

Mangars mostly live in the area of South-West Sikkim, Rangbhang Valley Tea Gardens, *Mangarjong*, Nagri, Chamong, Tingling, Marebong tea estate, Sukhiapokhari of Darjeeling Sadar subdivision, Pankhabari Tea Garden, Babu Kaman etc. At they live in Kurseong, Kami Busty, Kumali, Samsing Tea Garden of Kalimpong district and Dooars in Jalpaiguri District (Allay, 2003).

M. B. Thapa (2004) had mentioned that Sikkim history shows that up to 18th century A.D. the tussle continued between *Mangars* and Sikkim Rajah. Therefore it may be said that as a result of this conflict *Mangar* chief came with an idea of marital union between daughter of *Mangar* chief and the Prime Minister of Sikkim, Changjat Kurseong. This idea did not work out. *Mangar* chiefs were actively protesting against the monarchism. Later the *Mangar* king realized they could not expect anything progressive from Chogyal. As a result of this in 19th century A.D. the documentation of *Mangar* was effaced. Therefore maximum number of *Mangar* had to depart from Sikkim and moved towards Bhutan, Assam, Eastern Nepal, Darjeeling and other areas. The final resting place of last *Mangar* King was in Pubung Cinchona Plantation of Darjeeling District (Moktan, 2004).

Religious and Ritual Identity of Mangar in Sikkim and Darjeeling

Hitchcock (1966) showed that the belief of *Mangars* lies upon the natural phenomenon. They venerate or worship nature, idols and spirits. In most of the rituals they sacrifice chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, rooster etc. Before Hinduisation their religion was “animistic” (Khattari, 1995).

Under political circumstances Sikkim and Darjeeling were separated, but this separation does not affect their ethnic commonalities. They, celebrate same festivals, rituals, traditions, cultural norms, dress, and many other traits.

Barahimijong is the main festival of *Mangar* community. It falls on the full moon day of *Baisakh* or fifth day of *Mangsir purnima* according to lunar calendar. In *Mangar* language *Barahi* means God, *minat* or *mi* means worship or prayer and *jong* means fort. It is a festival of worshipping and remembering the ancestors. They believed that King and Queen were their forefathers. The *Murung/Hitan* (king) and *Murungni/Baghi/Karangni* (queen) was their guardian and protect them from every harm or evil and always blessed them with prosperous life. They offer harvested food grains, such as, various types of yam, taro, tuber crops, cereals, pulses, oilseeds, seasonal fruits, vegetables and liquor (Allay, 2003). Sikkim Democratic Front, the former Government has proclaimed the day as State holiday since 2007. In 2019 they invited the Chief Minister of Sikkim Shri Prem Singh Tamang, the renowned personality.

Kulpuja is the principal custom. This ritual defines very well why *Mangar* community are called the ancestor / nature worshipper. Remembering their forefathers on the occasion is still in continuation. Only some aspects of the custom are altered.

Indigeneity and Ethnopolitical activism for Scheduled Tribe Status

The ethnic categorisation earlier was of *Lepcha*, *Bhutia* and Nepali in Sikkim for differentiating ‘Tribe’ and ‘Caste’. Melanie (2009) argues on uncertainty of government in categorising the group between ‘Indo-Aryan’ and ‘Mongoloid’. The historical existence for the attribution of rights and benefits is an important political issue in Sikkim. For example *Lepcha* were autochthonous and *Bhutia*’s ancient history tells that they came from Tibet and Bhutan in the beginning of 13th century A.D. Since 1975, according to Article 371f, they are under legal protection. In 1978 *Bhutia* and *Lepcha* were recognised as Scheduled Tribe.

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For other ethnic groups the history says that *Limbu*'s ancient history lies in the western part of Sikkim bordering Nepal "Limbuwan" (Chemjong 1967, Sanyal 1979, Shrestha 1985, Subba 2003, Risley 1894 & Pradhan 1991); and *Tamang*'s lived in the Terai in the years 1850s (Hooker, 1854). Despite this in December 2002 *Limbu* and *Tamang* were categorised as 'Scheduled Tribe' in the region of Sikkim and Darjeeling.

First colonial census in Sikkim in 1891 mentioned thirteen "races or castes" namely *Lepcha*, *Bhutia*, *Limbu*, *Gurung*, *Tamang*, *Rai*, *Jimdar*, *Khambu* (etc), *Kami*, *Brahman*, *Mangar*, *Chetri* (the Indo-Nepali caste of Kshatriya), *Newar*, *Slaves* and *Darzi* (Risley, 1894). In the 1941 census, in which Yeatts (1931) regrets the "excessive association of the census with anthropology, "most of the 1931 'Hill Tribes' were not included in this category; expecting for *Bhutia* and *Lepcha*. The tribes of the Hills were identified according to language 'Nepali' (*Lingua Franca*). However, in the 1941 census of Sikkim, the table "Variations in population of selected tribes", which does not include Brahmans, enumerates *Bhutia*, *Damai*, *Gurung*, *Kami*, *Khas*, *Lepcha*, *Limbu*, *Mangar*, *Newar*, *Sarki* and *Sunuwar* (Melanie, 2009).

This categorisation reflects the colonial understanding and then its adaptation after independence. From 1901 Sikkim censuses were conducted under the auspices of the West Bengal Census Authorities. There was no separate report for Sikkim until 1971 (Census of India 2001, Series 12-Sikkim, Analytical note: 3).

In 1980s Backward Commission Report of B.N. Mandal was submitted and accepted for implementation in 1990s and declared various communities as the 'Other Backward Classes (OBC)' (Moktan, 2004). On 2nd June 1994 *Bhujel*, *Gurung*, *Limbu*, *Mangar*, *Rai*, *Sunuwar* and *Tamang* were declared as OBC. Furthermore, in partial modification of earlier orders by Notification No. 2/WD of June 2, 1994 with Notification No. 236/SW/251 (3)/WD dated June 15, 2000, the State Government of Sikkim declared *Bhujel*, *Dewan*, *Gurung*, *Jogi*, *Kirat Rai*, *Mangar*, *Sunuwar* and *Thami* as the 'Most Backward Classes (MBC)' and *Bahun*, *Chettri*, *Newar* and *Sanyasi* as the 'Other Backward Classes' (OBC) in Sikkim (Sikkim Gazetteer, 2003).

On 12th May 1995 in notification no. 370-TW/EC/M-6/82(1) the Government of West Bengal listed out the communities with names as -*Bhujel*, *Newar*, *Mangar*, *Nembang*, *Sampang*, *Bungchheng*, *Thami*, *Jogi* and *Dhimal* as the backward classes or OBC³.

Sikkim State socio-economic census added in 2006 the following groups to the list: *Sunuwar*/*Mukhia*, *Thami*, *Jogi*, *Dewan*, *Bhujel*, *Damai*, *Sarki*, *Maji* and *Sanyasi*/*Giri*⁴.

Earlier *Bhutia*-*Lepcha* were defined as 'hereditary subjects' and were forbidden to sell their land to 'Paharia'. This word is derived from the Nepali word *pahgr*, meaning 'hill/mountain'. They had to pay higher taxes (Melanie, 2021). These issues are because of globalisation and liberalisation (Dalibandhu, 2018). An unequal citizenship law, land, property, dominations, exploitation like system of free labour services *kalobhari*⁵, *jharlangi*⁶, *thekibeti*⁷ and *kuruwa*⁸ later lead to democratizations, revolution and dethroning the monarchism. The political struggle on eliminating the seat for Nepalese in Sikkim legislative assembly became starting point in the process of reclassification of Sikkim ethnic groups. In Sikkim after 1947 many political parties emerged, Darjeeling contributes in the formation

of these parties. Their principle was totally based on democracy. A leader of Indian National Congress Mrs. Helen Lepcha, also known as Sabitri Devi of Darjeeling was invited to enlighten the general public on the exploitation and atrocities perpetuated by the Kazis and Thikadars (Gurung, 2011).

Between the years 1961 and 1975, Sikkim was constructed as a Buddhist nation. 'Nepalese' connected with Sikkim were following Hinduism, this was not favoured by elite and were stigmatised as foreigners and migrants in their own land. *Mangars* were not spared by this speculation or stigmatisation. However their history always connects with the lands of Sikkim and Darjeeling, being independent rulers. Nevertheless, in the treaty of 1973 prolonged injustice to Nepalese saw justice and were recognized as 'insiders' and were certified as Sikkim Subjects.

Mangar community in Sikkim is categorised under Most Backward Community (MBC) and in the centre as Other Backward Classes (OBC). They fall under OBC in Darjeeling district, West Bengal. In Sikkim and Darjeeling *Mangar* community is continuing with a very long struggle, claiming for Scheduled Tribe Status. In this struggle altogether eleven⁹ communities of Sikkim are involved. Recently another small community known as *Jogi* joined for the Scheduled Tribe claim. This is named as Eleven Indigenous Ethnic Communities of Sikkim (EIECOS). However some were of not in a favour of recognising these eleven communities as Scheduled Tribe status. Opposition considers these communities as "migrants".

Scheduled Tribe status carries state benefits in a larger scale. There are many criteria for categorizing of Scheduled Tribe. Among these criteria are 'Mongloid facial feature' in addition to their distinct customs, language and script. *Mangars* have mongloid facial features and have their own way of performing rituals, beliefs in shamanism, continuing with custom which is still rooted in their culture and also has their own script, called "*Akkharika*". These are all for featuring as Scheduled Tribe. The difficulty in differentiating castes from tribes in the Himalayan regions is not only due to the views of tribes as the negative counterpart of Hinduism, but also to the difference made between Indian and Nepalese castes. The 1911 census understood Nepalese castes to be "tribal and not functional castes," because their members took up any kind of occupation (Census of India, 1911). This historical pattern is a matter of ethno political practice (Brubaker, 2004).

The Eleven communities mentioned above have gone through several inspections conducted by the Government. *Mangar* community had presented their custom, traditions and even documented them for the eligibility of Scheduled Tribe status. In 2019 at Kadamtam just few hours journey from Gangtok, a short programme was organised by *Mangar* community to showcase their distinctive culture in front of visiting officers from the department of Tribal Affairs Delhi. The association of *Mangar* community All Sikkim *Mangar* Association (ASMA) had prepared an Ethnographic Report in 2005 and submitted to the government.

Earlier, the political parties in Sikkim were essentially interested in ethnic demand for e.g., the Sikkim National Party represented '*Bhutia-Lepcha*' whereas Sikkim State Congress

represented 'Nepalese' (Gurung, 2011). Sikkim is the only state where seats are reserved in the name of the communities in the State Assembly; because of this they are considered as the "significant sections of population". It was the part of the 'tripartite agreement'. Out of total 32 seats only 12 are for two Scheduled Tribes. They are *Lepcha* and *Bhutia* in the State Assembly. This issue was taken up even to the Supreme Court which opined that the seat reservation was integral part of the 'agreement'. On this ground Sikkim joined Indian Union. However, the impression continues among the communities in Sikkim that once they are declared as the Scheduled Tribes, they will have separate seats reserved for them in the State Assembly. For this reason demands are made for being declared as the Scheduled Tribes (Melanie, 2009).

The former Chief Minister of Sikkim Shri Pawan Kumar Chamling has demanded tribal status for eleven communities, with vision for becoming a fully Tribal State. As a result the ethnic groups are distancing themselves from the Brahmanical customs. At present, they are following and emphasizing upon their own distinctive culture. The groups are trying to find out their root linking to the earlier customs, which had been forgotten. Committee is formed in order to bring back and establish their age-old traditions. Likewise people of *Mangar* community are looking into the old narratives. Many native writers started research in finding out their actual social status in respect to their forefathers; how they performed rituals from birth to death. The community members are encouraging the youths to find out the answers. They presume that all answers lies within the community itself and the main source of information is elderly people. This scenario of tribalism of Sikkim and Darjeeling somehow is connected with the idea of *Janaajati* in Nepal, which was established in 1990 to bring all the ethnic bodies under one umbrella i.e., Nepal Federation of the Nationalities.

The federation had illustrated the criteria or characteristics which somehow are being followed by the ethnic communities in the Tribalism process within Sikkim and Darjeeling. These are as follows :

1. Possess their own distinct and original lingual and cultural traditions and had religious faith based on ancient animism, meaning worshipers of ancestors, land, season, nature; do not claim to follow "the Hinduism", enforced by the State, as their traditional and original religion;
2. The existing descendants of the people whose ancestors had established themselves as the first settlers or principal inhabitants in any part of the land, inhabit within the present territory of Nepal, coming into the country with different cultures and of ethnic origin with their own history, both written and oral and had historical continuity.
3. Displaced from their own land for the last four centuries, particularly during the expansion and establishment of modern Hindu nation State and have been deprived of their traditional rights to own the natural resources, namely, *Kipat*-communal land, cultivable land, water, minerals, trading points etc.

4. Who had been subjugated in the State's political power setup in decision-making process, whose ancient culture, language and religion are non-dominant and social values are neglected and humiliated.
5. Whose society traditionally was developed erected on the principle of egalitarianism, rather than hierarchy of the Indo-Aryan caste system and gender equality such as women enjoying more advantageous positions, as opposed to social, economic and religious subordination of women and, whose social norms and values had been slighted by the State.
6. Formally or informally, admit or claim to be "the indigenous peoples of Nepal" on the basis of the aforementioned characteristics" (Indigenous, 1994).

Furthermore Sikkim has joined North-Eastern Council (NEC). 'There are a number of States in North-East India within NEC known as the 'Tribal state', as they have more than fifty percent population, who were categorised under Tribal Status. The Sikkim government has approached Central Government in respect to the listed communities who are under Most Backward Class to grant them the Scheduled Tribes status (Sinha, 2005).

'By concentrating on what is socially effective, ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organisation. A categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of integration, they form ethnic groups in this organizational sense' (Barth, 1969).

Out of the above discussion a question arises why the community needs to be recognised as Scheduled Tribe, when the community is already under MBC within the state and in OBC under the central Government of India? The community leaders opined that during the reign of Chogyal their forefathers were dominated and exploited by the Kings. After the decline of monarchism and with simultaneous start of democracy in the state the community was not facilitated or developed and the community is now in disadvantaged condition. Economic, educational, political and social development is lacking. Some migratory communities are given Scheduled Tribe Status. In spite of this *Mangar* community is not included in the category. Many eminent writers describe *Mangars* as an early inhabitant. *Mangar* holds distinctive culture, which are the criteria for claiming Scheduled Tribe status; such as, their own language, script, rituals, specialist for the rituals, dress, festival etc.

There are allegations like *Mangar* community practised Hinduism and had migrated. There are other communities, who practiced Hinduism earlier, and later were linked to their earlier tradition and got tribal status. Then why only *Mangar* community was discriminated at getting tribal status. These are the opinions of leaders of the community. They are debating and forwarding evidences in support of their demands for Tribalism.

Mangar community belong to Kirat group. Their language *Mangar Dhut* comes under Tibeto-Burman family. However Nepali is the *lingua franca* in Sikkim and Darjeeling. As

results of this the native language of various communities had been replaced by the Nepali language (Krishna, 2018).

History shows that *Mangars* were politically active and ruled over their independent small republics called '*Mangarjong*' and many other stories are still popular among the locals. They were driven away when their King or Chief was brutally assassinated. After that they had to move to most inaccessible places, where enemy could not find them. Presently at some point they are settled but lacked in community development. In time they lost their ancient glory, and became politically and socially marginalised.

In the report of 2006 census, the Below Poverty Line (BPL) ratio stood second highest i.e., 24.41%. The *Mangar* Association, known as *Mangar Sang*, was founded on 14th August 1993. Since 2004 they started claiming the Scheduled Tribe status. B. K. Roy Burman, in his report, has strongly recommended that *Mangars* are also entitled to political privileges and should have been included for Political privileges along with the *Lepcha-Bhutia* in the Agreement of 1973 on the ground of ethical reasoning. In history Smt. Rashmi Prasad Alley was the first person who insisted Royal Government for introducing the Nepali language in imparting education. Because of his contribution, Nepali literature flourished in Sikkim, Raj Kumari Thapa and Shri Dilli Ram Thapa, both MLAs, in ruling government are representing *Mangar* community politically in the state of Sikkim. In Darjeeling Anit Thapa has become a renowned figure and has launched new party, named as '*Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik*'. These renowned figures in these regions are example in political front, showing that *Mangar* community is passively working on presenting the community in democratic front. Once they were politically active and ruled these parts of Himalayas.

The widening gap in overall development of *Mangars* community, their historical struggles, and contemporary socio-economic and political deprivation directed them towards the demand of Scheduled tribe Status. The community is not only putting their efforts but somehow pressurising the government to look into the community history, which is still not discovered fully but should be recovered from the ancient history of Sikkim. Similar to other communities, they should be given special place by the State. Recently a project of building statue of *Mangar* King Sintupati Sen is approved. Construction is in progress in *Mangsari Mangarjong*. Lastly this broad discussion reveals the dichotomy between 'castes' and 'tribes' in the Indian colonial classification as well as in anthropological literature (Shneiderman, 2015).

Conclusion

Darjeeling and Sikkim are multi-ethnic and multi-lingual areas. The social diversification and immigration have drawn the ancestors of the majority of the present population from all over the Himalayas and has resulted in creation of a social mosaic with ethnic distinctiveness (Krishna, 2018).

The various oral, historical references and ruins of *Mangarjongs* furnish adequate evidence that *Mangars* existed much before the Namgyals. They were ruling Sikkim and Darjeeling

as independent rulers. While *Lepcha*, *Limbu* and *Tamang* have already been accorded with Scheduled Tribe status, *Mangar* community is been deprived from this recognition. *Mangar* community is falling behind on many terms like population size, socio-economic development, political fronts and education.

Differentiating between caste and tribe, and reclassification of the same are at present is under political strategy in developing tribal states. The communities demanding for tribalism is setting an example for re-evaluating their past.

State is very clear on the strategy for 'Tribalism'. It is a dream for the state to be recognised as 'Tribal State' similar to other North-Eastern States. The officers from Delhi Tribal Affair's department are meticulously studying the communities, which are demanding 'Tribal Status'. *Mangar* community are speculated as migrants or foreigners. This somehow puts in question about a few communities, who are categorised as Scheduled Tribe despite the fact that their ancestors followed migratory pattern of living. It is also asked why there is delay in recognising such other communities who are demanding for 'Tribal Status'. Along with *Mangar* community, there are other communities, which are also deprived from their overall development and politically- are pleading for Tribal status. According to them 'Tribalism' uplift them from their backwardness. Hence they are working on their cultural norms; such as distinct language, religion, customs and, tradition, which has left their unique marks in the regions of Himalayas.

The overview points out the fact that there was not much descriptive research on people of Darjeeling before colonisation by the British. It was done only after the year 1835. For this reason reference of Sikkim is given for any such issue of Darjeeling, while discussing issues or challenges faced by *Mangar* community in Sikkim. If there is any demand for welfare of communities, it is automatically related to Darjeeling. The Darjeeling ethnic groups naturally support and act. It is a kind of situation, which is linking ethnic politics. It can be said that not only culture but ethnic politics also is shared in these regions of Himalayas.

Table: 1. Population of Mangar in Sikkim

1891 CENSUS Mangar	Males	Female	Children		Total
	363	346	192		901
2006 Census Mangar (State Socio Economic)	Males	Female	Sex Ratio	% Distribution	Total population
	8171	7531	922	2.70	15702

Source : Gazetteer of Sikkim (1891) and (2006)

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Table : 2. List of Sikkim OBC and MBC

Central list of Sikkim OBC	Sikkim State list of MBC	Sikkim State list of OBC
Bhujel, Gurung, Rai, Mangar, Sunuwar, Thami and Jogi	Bhujel, Dewan, Gurung, Rai, Mangar, Sunuwar, Thami and Jogi	Newar, Bahun, Chettri and Sanyasi

Source : Moktan (2004)

Table: 3. List of West Bengal OBC (including only Nepali community)

Mangar Rai (including Chamling) Sampang Sunuwar Thami Jogi Majhi Gurung Khas Newar Bhujel Dhimal

Source : <https://wbcbcb.gov.in>

Table: 4. Classifications of ethnic groups in Sikkim

Sikkim “Three Ethnic groups” reflected in reservation until 1979	Current divide of ethnic groups	In the “Reservation System” (State welfare)	Percentage in Population (2006)
Lepcha	Lepcha	Schedule Tribes (1978)	37%
Bhutia	Bhutia		
	Limbu	2003	
	Tamang		

Nepalese	Bhujel, Gurung, Rai, Mangar, Sunuwar (including Mukhia), Sanyasi, Thami and Jogi	Central Level (Delhi): Other Backward Classes (1995-2004)	State Level (Sikkim) : Most Backward Classes (2003) Adding Dewan, and excepting Sanyasi	23%
	Newar	General	Other Backward Classes (2001)	23%
	'High' castes : In Sikkim			

Source : Melanie (2009)

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Notes

- ¹ In Sikkim, it is believed that the kings of Sikkim, known as Chogyals (religious kings or *dharmaraj*), came from Tibetan origin by descent through the first king of Tibet, Ngia-Thi-Tsan-Po. (Kazi, 2020)
- ² Lhatsum Chhempo, Sempah Chhempo and Kathog Rigdsin Chhempo.
- ³ Melanie 2009
- ⁴ Department of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation 2006
- ⁵ Late 18th and early 19th century, the British sold arms and ammunitions to Tibet. To protect from different weather condition the load was put inside the gunny bags and from outside it was coated with tar because of its black colour it was called kalobhari. The kazi/contractors kept all amount and did not pay to the potters they were forced to carry such heavy loads. (Gurung, 2011)
- ⁶ The trade route to Tibet was maintained by British during colonization for which they hired local contractors and also paid for this work but Kazi used their peasants without paying any wages. (Gurung, 2011)

- ⁷ The peasants on the occasions of festivity offered gifts to Mandals and Zamindars like meat, cur, banana and other items along with theki and wage less labour called Bethi. (Sashi, 2017)
- ⁸ At times of kalobhari some people stayed back and wait for the commodities arrive during such phase they had to survive with their own for several days. However later Sir Tashi Namgyal abolished the system. (Sashi, 2017)
- ⁹ Gurung, Mangar, Rai, Sunwar, Mukhia, Jogi, Thami, Yakha, Bahun, Chettri and Newar.

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