

## CHAPTER-ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Change is a universal and continuous process, which is inevitable in all societies. Change in societies occurs through different processes with different pathways. In some cases it leads to the complete disappearance of traditional socio-cultural conditions developed base the long experiences of the people within a specific environmental condition. So the major challenges are how to preserve such unique culture with improvement in livelihood condition of the local people. In this context, this study was proposed to discuss the process of change of the Lepcha tribe.

#### **1.1. Background**

Nepal, as a beautiful creation of nature, is a masterpiece in South Asia. It is a land of temples, high mountains, green terraced middle hills, tarai and precious diverse flora and fauna. There are various tribes, castes, and ethnic groups living together. These people have their own unique traditions. They have own language and dresses. Socially, these people have their own organizations. They have their own myths, customs and moral values and they settle in various parts of the country from the high mountain of the north to the middle range and flat land of the south.

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi- religious country. Nepalese are extremely simple and co-operative. Even though they have migrated to Nepal from different regions of the world, the people mainly belong to Caucasoid and Mongoloid racial stocks. The people of Mongoloid group speak Tibeto–burman languages and generally inhabit in the mountains. It is believed that they had migrated from Tibet two three couple of centuries back. The people of Caucasoid origin tend to speak Indo-Aryan languages are mountain of the north. Some Caucasoid who tend to speak Indo-Aryan languages and are believed to have

migrated from India about couple of centuries back and they inhabit in the flat belt and in the middle hilly range. But there is no generally accepted theory along those anthropologists who believe that every tribe originally came from somewhere else. It is felt that Nepalese culture and society as observed by different personalities from time to time viewed and adopted separate ways for survival. Janaklal describe Nepalese culture as example of complex ethnic groups (Sharmas 1993).

Nepal is the land of ancient culture. The footprints of Mahabharata are still seen everywhere from the North Himalayas to the Southern plains. From that time the people of this country who have settled in different parts are responsible to build the complex and unique Nepalese culture. They worship separate gods and goddess and celebrate various festivals according to their culture and traditions.

From the above conclusion it can be said that the culture of Nepal is the culture of a nation. Although the people are Brahmin, Chettri, Newar, Gurung, Dhimal, Satar, Magar, Tharu, Rajbansi, Tamang, Chepang, Sherpa, Thakali, Giral Rai, Limbu, Kami, Damai, etc. In Ilam district there are not only lepcha people but also Brahmin, Chettri, Magar, Kami, Damai, Newar, Tamang, etc. However, this present research tries to illustrate the ethnic history, facts and socio-cultural change of Lepcha people, the endangered casteof Nepal, of the Fikkal VDC of Ilam district.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Nepalese society is made up of different types of people. But some of the tribes are going backward due to the lack of proper research, study and security for that tribe. In order to protect these tribes, the existence of these tribes should first be protected; if no one pays attention to these tribes they might remain only in the history. Among different people of Nepal, only one tribe who has been living since the ancient period in the eastern part of Ilam is "Lepcha". Even though, but again, Ilam is claimed as an original place of Lepcha, many people inside and

outside Ilam is still unknown about the tribe Lepcha. Therefore, the proper research and study should be done on the Lepcha tribe only then they can remain forever.

The study is done in order to extract adequate knowledge on the causes of the backwardness of the Lepcha tribe too. The most important and significant reason for the backwardness of the Lepcha is low population which has resulted in the domination by the other majority tribes. They seem to be backward and out of reach to different services and opportunities due to their socio-economic and cultural backwardness. Lack of education is another severe problem of the Lepchas. They even are lacking of experts of their own Lepcha script. Another problem that the Lepchas are facing is the domination they are suffering from the modern culture influencing other cultures and tribes.

It has become important to study deeply on the Lepcha tribe because the population of the tribe is decreasing. The Lepchas have their own type of rites and rituals, culture, social and economic status. Because Lepcha are getting mixed up with other community socially, culturally, as well as religiously. So, they are now facing various problems to protect their culture, tradition and their purity. Thus the present study makes a survey of the economic, social and cultural status of Lepcha in Fikkal VDC.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to find out the Socio-cultural condition of Lepchas of Ilam district and other specific objectives are as follows.

1. To study the socio-cultural status of Lepcha in Fikkal.
2. To examine the present economic situation of Lepcha in Fikkal
3. To analyze the reasons for the backwardness of Lepcha in Fikkal.

#### **1.4 Importance of the Study**

It is obvious that the society is a group of different communities, tribes, people etc. Likewise Nepalese society is consisting of different tribes, communities etc. All of these have their own impact and importance in the history of Nepal. Among them, Lepcha tribe is the one which even though, had a great importance in the history of Nepal, are now going to lose their identity due to the facts like mixing up with other communities, inter caste marriage, following other's culture, religion, language etc. Although many researches have been done regarding Lepcha people of different places, these researches have not covered about Nepalese Lepcha people. That's why; I have tried my best to study on Nepalese Lepcha people in order to keep their existence alive in the society of Nepal. For this propose I have done research on this tribe of Fikkal VDC. Fikkal VDC is situated in the far eastern part of Ilam district of Nepal. Lepchas are considered as original inhabitants of this VDC. They have a significant role in the history of Nepal. In the ancient period they worked as administrators in the different states and they were given the positions like 'Subba' and 'Kaji'. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the whole eastern part from the 'Kankai River' was Lepcha state. But not any proper research and study have been done regarding these tribes. This study will help those who are trying to uplift the backward people. This study explores change and development in socio-economic conditions of the Lepchas relating to their past and the present context. It will also help giving identification of their culture, tradition, custom, education and socio-economic condition of the Lepcha community for future generation.

#### **1.5 Limitation of the Study**

This research study is limited on the Fikkal VDC of Ilam district. Specifically, it is based on the followings;

- The study is based on the sample. Sampling is done as representative of the whole study area hence the result of findings are based on respondent.
- Because of the time and budget constraints the study is not comprehensive one.
- The questionnaire survey was conducted during based on the simple random sampling.

### **1.5 Organization of the Study**

Organization of the study is the sequential and organized form of the whole research report. In it, the first chapter deals introduction of the study, chapter two deals about the review of literature, chapter three research methodology, chapter four descriptions of the study area and chapter five is the composition of Scio-economic and cultural characteristics of the respondents. Similarly, last chapter six has described about the summary, findings and recommendations. Thus, the overall organization of the study is managed.

## **CHAPTER- TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Literature review is the most fundamental process for any research which helps researcher to determine the actual topic. It specially helps to collect different information and knowledge about the study area. Literature review can be obtained by studying different type of publication and visiting different sites with the relevant information about the research area. The different literature reviews I did for my study are as follows.

#### **2.1 Literature Related to Lepchas in Nepal**

Vaidhya, Tuinstra, Schwerzel (2000) write about the Lepcha of Nepal. These three authors have proved that Lepcha are the aboriginal tribes of Ilam. They also have claimed that Lepcha were not migrated from Sikkim. These authors have collected information regarding Lepcha lifestyle from generation to generation and on the basis of religion and culture.

Bhattarai (1998) writes about the socio cultural changes among the Lepchas of Shree-Antu VDC in Ilam district of Nepal. He has studied the changing pattern of family status, marriage, festival, tradition and language. He also has described about the way of thinking, socio economic condition, agricultural systems, history and cultural pattern of the Lepcha.

Sharma (1993) has claimed that Lepcha are not aboriginal tribe of Ilam. The meaning of 'Lepcha' is '*Deurali*' where they used to stay was situated in the Lepcha *Bhanjyang* of Humla, that is why he has stated in his dissertation that Lepchas at first used to stay in the higher hilly region .

Bhattarai (2003) claimed that Lepcha tribes are the aboriginal tribe of Ilam. He has further said that after Nepal's integrity, Lepchas had got the right to work as administrators. But now Lepchas are going less in number. These Lepcha tribe

themselves have established, '*Lepcha Sangh*' in order to protect their existence. The government has not made any plan for protecting Lepcha tribe till now.

Karki (1998) has done study on the Lepcha tribe of Shree Antu VDC. According to her; Lepcha are the original people of Kanchandzonga. She has claimed that the post of 'Kaji and 'Subba' was taken as the superior than other Lepcha people so karki agreed upon that Lepchas are going less in number because of the post discrimination within their tribe.

About the Lepchas' culture, Karki has said that Lepchas were affected by the people outside the country so this has changed the Lepcha's social, culture and economic status. She has finally suggested to study and research deeply about the Lepcha tribe to protect their existence in the history.

Karki (2001) stated that Lepchas are the aboriginal tribe of Ilam. According to him, Lepchas can not be found in other places except Ilam. There was the Lepcha kingdom in the eastern part of kankai river of Ilam. This fact was written in the letter which the Lepcha kaji yuklathup had received in 1884. The different places of Ilam such as Fikkal, Ilam, Aitabare, etc were used as capital. Due to this, Prithvi Narayan shah had given the post "Kaji" after the integration. Karki has also stated that since Lepchas are Buddhist, they have their own type of language, customs, culture and they are simple and honest as well.

The Rong script which had been used by the Kirati king 'Ma warong' was also used only by the Lepchas and they then started to call themselves '*Rong Banshi*'. The old religion of Lepcha was 'Bungthinglom' and 'Manolom'. They later, also followed the religion 'Buddhism' after the Kirati king Mawrong spread out this religion. Chemjong has also described about Lepcha language in his book.

'From Mechi to Mahakali (part 1)' described Lepchas as simple, hard working, honest, enjoyable and optimistic. They specially make them happy by hunting, dancing, singing and eating with others. Lepchas think that the life of any human starts from the pregnancy. Similarly this book has also discussed about marriage ceremony and death ritual of Lepchas.

Subedi (1993), in his study of continuity and change in population movements noted the simplicity of Lepcha people. He stated that Lepchas are the children of Mt. Kanchandzonga and they call themselves 'Rong'. According to him the main area of Lepcha settlement was Sikkim. He, however, stated that there are a considerable number in Eastern Nepal, Darjeeling district in India and Bhutan.

## **2.2 Literature Related to Lepchas in India**

Tamsang (1998) has written on the reality of Lepchas which are still not Known and told. After he studied many different books of Lepchas and visited the whole Lepcha settlement of India and Nepal he found that they are common on scripts, languages, arts, culture, religion and tribe. He describes the Lepcha mythology on creation.

Chemjong (1969) has written about how Lepchas gave the name for their tribe "Lepcha". He also has written in this book that during the fourth century, the Mongolian of Ilam of South Parsiya had gone towards the hilly mountainous Jungle after being defeated in the war with Kirats. They, then destroyed the jungle and made their homeland there and gave the name 'Ilam' to that place just in order to remain in the original place from where they had come.

Kotturn (1976) has written some folktales from the old Lepcha tribe. In his folk tales, the tale of towar Daramdin is also mentioned. George has described about the history of Daramdin in this tale. Daramdin was a big pond. One day Lepchas reached the place 'Daramdin' when they were trying to escape from the fear of



the ghost. They decided to make their home land thinking that the pond was the suitable place. So, this tale has proved that Lepchas were origins of Daramdin.

Tshiring (1971) has explained regarding the word 'Lepcha', the origin of Lepcha (gotra), Religion, Birth, marriage, Custom, language, literature and folk tales. He has stated that Lepcha were first interested to say themselves 'Rong'. But the full meaning of this word was 'A-rong' which means the higher place, that's why Lepchas believed that their origin was also first started from the highest place 'Kanchandzonga'.

Rizal (2004) has stated that Lepcha people are simple and they are the original inhabitants of Sikkim. They are said to have come to Sikkim from the East Mountains of Asham and Upper Burma (now Myanmar). She has done research on the Lepcha community of Daramdin Block of west district (Sikkim). The sex ratio of Lepcha population in Daramdin is dominated by the female population.

According to her, the source of economic livelihood of the Lepcha of Daramdin in the past was agriculture, they were fully dependent on it and due to the low population they needed no other source for economic livelihood. Their life was simple and easy. The other ethnic groups migrated to Daramdin gradually and interfered with the lives of the simple Lepchas. The other tribes like Bhutias, Nepalese and Christians etc. influenced them. The other ethnic groups were quite clever as compared to these simple Lepchas so they started influencing the Lepchas to a great extent. Due to the influence of other ethnic groups, some of the Lepchas started following other religions like Christians and Hinduism. They started learning the language, culture and tradition of the other castes.

The educational status of Lepcha is quite different from that of the past Lepcha people. In the past, the Lepchas were illiterate; there was no need of education.

But at present, most of the Lepchas have become literate. The main cause behind this was the development activities and modernization which took place in the study area.

Chemjong (1969) has concluded that the Lepcha people who were under the sovereignty of Sikkim, shifted into Buddhism from their belief of natural god, like river, trees, Mt. Kanchandzonga to get favour from the palace of Namgyal Dynasty who ruled over Sikkim. Other Lepchas who lived out of Sikkim were in the impression of British rule so they adopted Christianity. Lepchas are originally Mongolian by the tribe.

Pandey (2002), in his study of socio economic condition of the Lepcha in Dzongu area of North explains Lepchas as the earliest settlers of Sikkim, which earlier comprised of the present district Darjeeling and eastern Nepal. As according to his research, Lepchas have a legend which says that they were originated from *mayel Lyang*, a mythical land at the foothills of Mount Kanchandzonga in Sikkim itself. While the Lepchas themselves have no legend of their own to show their migration from any distant place, the Limbus have a legend which says that Lepchas and Limbus are descendants of two brothers who migrated from the North. While the Limbus settled in eastern Nepal and established a Limbu kingdom, the Lepchas went farther and settled in Sikkim.

Bhasin (1989) noted that Lepchas were the original inhabitant of northern part of Sikkim and they were ruled by Bhutias. They practiced farming in the lower altitude where as Bhutias used to live in higher altitude practicing the various farming and pastroliasm in various degrees. The Lepchas gradually started scattering from the state of Sikkim to other places due to the domination of Bhutias.

Foning (1987) has described about how Lepchas shifted their belief from 'Boongthingsom' into other religion, mostly towards Buddhism and few of them towards Christianity. Apart from this, he also has described about the traditional customs, rights, and historical stories and as well the origin of clan, marriage custom, customary lanes of Lepcha people which they have been performing since their birth to death. The reason behind their conversion in belief is due to the impression of Bhutanese culture and British colonial rule.

Lepchas are the first tribe who put their footsteps as earlier settlers in Sikkim. The Lepchas are scheduled tribes of India in the state of Sikkim and Darjeeling district, Kalingpong in West Bengal (Lepcha 2006). In both state, the Lepchas have minor of population with about 10 percentage living in Sikkim (Census 1991) and about 4 Percent living in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. It is believed that the Lepchas are of the Limbu Origin. The writer has defined the present context of Lepcha community, how they are developing in the human society, impression of western culture and modernization. They are now gradually participating in education and social services.

The oldest mythology of Lepcha people is adjoined with the story of a brave soldier who killed a terrible demon to save the lives of people of a certain community who finally had come into the existence as Lepcha Community. (Lepcha 2005).

### **2.3 Lepchas in Nepal**

Even though the aboriginal place of Lepcha tribe is Ilam and the large numbers of Lepcha people have been living in Ilam district since the ancient period, we find some of the Lepcha people living in other districts of Nepal as well which is shown below in a tabular form.

**Table 1**  
**Lepchas in Nepal**

<b>1.1.1. District</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Ilam	1340	1194	2534
Jhapa	84	75	159
Morang	13	7	16
Sunsari	4	12	16
Terhathum	4	2	6
Okhaldhunga	2	1	3
Saptari	43	43	86
Siraha		5	5
Dhanusha	2	–	2
Mahottari	–	4	4
Sarlahi	2	4	6
Sindhupalchok	3	5	8
Lalitpur	31	29	60
Kathmandu	23	17	40
Nuwakot	4	3	7
Chitwan	1	3	4
Kaski	3	3	6
Mustang	348	286	634
Rupandehi	–	1	1
Kapilvastu	4	3	7
Arghakhanchi	1	–	1
Pyuthan	–	1	1
Dang	1	1	2
Banke	-	2	2
Bardiya	1	1	2
Surkhet	1	–	1
Doti	1	-	1
Kailali	–	2	2
Kanchanpur	–	1	1

Source: *Population Census, 2001 (CBS)*

## **2.4 Common Ground**

Different researchers have explained in different ways regarding the Lepchas, few of them have explained from the mythological point of view, where as others have tried to give the statement based on the scientific and practical views.

After the study of different researchers, writers and scholars one concluded view can not be traced out. The different writers have claimed the different places as the origin of Lepcha people with their strong argument and evidences. The different places that they

have claimed as the origin of Lepcha people are Sikkim, Kanchandzonga, Daramdin, Ilam, Asham, Upper Burma etc.

In order to prove their findings, they have taken the support of relative culture, language etc. Most of the Lepchas had scattered to other places from their original places. For the reason behind the scattering of Lepcha people given by them are the sovereignty of Tibetan and British impression on them, the search of cultivable land, their culture, habit and faith on nature were the feature of Lepchas. Because of these, they were attracted towards jungles and hilly regions. Although the different views are found, mainly the strong argument are presented by those writers who claim that Lepcha people were originally originated from Sikkim and there from, they scattered to different places.

Most of the Nepalese writers have introduced the whole Nepali Lepcha in brief, some of the writers have written regarding the Lepcha of Ilam named '*Ilam Jilaka Lepchaharu*' and in other topics like '*Lepcha Jatiko Sanskritima Aayeka Parivartanharu*', '*Ilam Jilama Lepchaharuko Pravesh*', '*Socio-Cultural Change Among the Lepchas*'. These all topics have just introduced Lepcha only as according to the topics. The study of mine is about the socio economic status of Lepcha in Fikkal VDC. This study studies about the Lepcha origin, language, culture, religious practices, education, social setting and economic activities. As well, this dissertation has also introduced about the past and present life pattern of Lepcha people which yet have not been covered by other Nepalese writers.

## **2.5 Government Policy**

Government policy regarded to this caste is benefiting to them. As an incentives, GON has made a policy to provide Rs. 1000 per months as social security fund. It has been changed their lifestyles also because, of that money, they are expensed in their quality education. Other NGOs/INGOs have been also investing their fund to bring up their golden days. In this sense, GON policy based on inclusiveness has brought massive change in all aspects of Lepchas as a result, a women has been representing in Constituent Assembly now from Ilam under UML party.

## **CHAPTER- THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology is the most important aspect of research work. Authenticity and reliability of any research depends upon the tools and methods used for data collection. Hence, the primary purpose of this chapter is to discuss and design the framework for the research.

#### **3.1 Selection of the Study Area**

Fickle VDC lies eastern part of Ilam District headquarter. It is one of the famous place for the Lepcha people. This VDC is surrounded by Pashupatinagar in the North, Samalbung in the South, Kanyam in the West and west Bengal of India in the East. This land is important from the ancient time. Besides Lepcha people, different tribes and people also live there such as Brahmin, Rai, Limboo, Kami, Damai, Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Sunuwar etc. In the history of Nepal, Lepcha has the great importance. They were the administrative people. Even though they are now least in number they have been taken as the most important tribe living there from the ancient period. The total number of Lepcha in Fikkal VDC is 418. This information has been extracted from the CBS. Where as the Lepcha Uthan Manch has shown that the total number of Lepcha in Shree Fikkal VDC is 183 ( *CBS 2001, L U M 2004*).

#### **3.2 Research design**

This study had applied exploratory and descriptive research design. Since, it is a new area selection; the data it agglomerated were primary from the field survey. So it was an exploratory. The data agglomerated were analyzed in descriptive way. In addition, case study had been taken for the household's survey.

### **3.3 Sampling procedure**

This study had been applied purposive sampling for area selection. There are 71 households with 183 population of Lepcha among which this study has been done in the sample size of 46 households by simple random sampling method.

### **3.4 Nature and Sources of Data**

The present study is based mainly on the primary data supported by secondary data.

#### **3.4.1 Primary Data**

The primary data were collected during the fieldwork by questionnaire and interview with lepchas, local peoples, Lepchas organizations and local government bodies, field survey was conducted from July 20 to Aug. 5, 2010. There are several scientific techniques are used to fulfill the requirements of the study in this field. In order to collect the required and relevant primary data following tools were used.

##### **(a) Questionnaire Method**

A set of questionnaire were prepared intending to capture the information regarding opinion of Lepchas sicio cultural status in Ilam, their general information and their present status socio- cultural and economic background.

##### **(b) Observation Method**

With the motive of collecting necessary and additional information observation method was also used during field survey. It was twice a time during the study period.

### **(C) Key Informant**

For accurate data, this technique was applied to the informed and educated people of this caste. In addition, the local institutions, VDC persons and other associated persons were interviewed openly.

#### **3.4.2 Secondary Data**

Secondary data have also been used to make this research much relevant and comparative and for understanding the comparative situation of ecotourism as well as tourism activities in the study area. Following are the main sources of secondary data collection.

- ) Nepal Planning Commission.
- ) Ilam Municipality, Information Section.
- ) District Development Committee, Ilam.
- ) VDC reports

Besides these, other related books and reports to ecotourism contributed by different scholars have also been collected from different libraries such as, Central Library, T.U., Kathmandu, , Lepchas Museum Ilam, DDC Library Ilam. These information are used for the purpose of analysis and comparison.

### **3.5 Techniques of Data Analysis**

The data and information collected from questionnaire were transformed into a master sheet and raw data were tabulated. On the basis of master sheet. Information was grouped, sub grouped and classified as necessary so as to meet the objective of the study.

The systematic analysis has been done by using both quantitative and descriptive techniques. To analyze the quantitative data, simple statistical tools such as percentage, average have been used, besides these, maps, tables, charts, bar diagram, pie charts are also used for the presentation of the findings. Study is mainly descriptive and the analysis of the result is described logically.



## **CHAPTER- FOUR**

### **INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY AREA**

This chapter deals with the general introduction of the Fikkal and specific introduction of the study area in terms of their geo-physical settings, economic and social characteristic.

#### **4.1 General Background of Ilam District**

Ilam is known as Queen of Hill, Which is located in Eastern Development Region of Nepal with an area of 1703sq.km. It is extending from 26<sup>0</sup>40' to 27<sup>0</sup>8' north latitude and 87<sup>0</sup>40' to 88<sup>0</sup>10' east longitude. The altitude of this district ranges from 250 meter to 3636 meter above from the sea level with minimum temperature of 0;c and maximum temperature of 31;c .Geographically link to Darjeeling in the east, Morang and Dhankuta in the west, Jhapa in the south and panchthar in north. The altitude of Ilam bazaar is 1208 meter from sea level.

It is believed that the name 'Ilam' is derived from limbu language (spoken in Ilam by limbu ethnic group). It is made up two words 'l' means twisted and 'lam' means road, so Ilam means a twisted road. The beautiful of Ilam can hardly be exaggerated.

Ilam is pronoun of Biodiversity, Geo-diversity, linguistic diversity, Cultural diversity and sunrise. Ilam is famous for different 'As' (like aalu, olan,amlisho, akabera, alaiche, athathi satkar, arothodus tea, aaduwa), Native culture, unique natural resources, traditional customs, handicrafts, innocent smiling people, hills prefer the view of sunrise and sunset, panoramic mountain view of Kanchenjunga cardamom and ginger fields, green tea gardens, different sports of rhododendron, production of cheese and chhurpi, holley pilgrimage sites (like shriantu, chhintapu, Sandakpur, siddhithunka ,Fikkal etc.) are some of the remarkable characteristics of Ilam.

Wikipedia Dictionary introduced Ilam like this Ilam is a municipality and tea producing town in Nepal. It is in Ilam District which is in hilly Eastern Region of

Nepal. It is famous for its natural scenery and landscapes. Ilam is a today one of the most developed place in Nepal. Its product ILAM TEA is very famous and exported to many parts of Europe. The main source of income of this district is tea, cardamom, milk, ginger and potato (CBS, 2001).

## **4.2 Lepcha, their Origin and Social Setting**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

It is obvious that most of the Lepchas have been living in the eastern part of Ilam in Nepal. Although Lepcha tribe is less in number in Ilam, we find them living there since long time ago by the use of data collection techniques like interview, questionnaire, observation, etc with the present living Lepcha tribe. However, it is not found yet that where they had come from, where was there original place, due to the lack of historical background, manuscript and any other fact regarding the Lepcha tribe. That's why it is difficult to get the fact about the Lepcha tribe.

Some researchers on Lepcha tribe are Chemjong 1969, Tshiring 1971, and Vaidhya, Schwerzel and Tuinstra 2000. According to Chemjong 1969, during the fourth century, a king named Shankaldwip expanded the boarder of his country from Asham (eastern part) to Kabul (western part). At that time, the name of a country of South Asia was Ilam. The king of Ilam was Afrasiyab who was very proud of his power. So the king of Ilam Afrasiyab ordered the king Shankaldwip to pay the tax. Instead of that, king Shankaldwip sent the message to the king Afrasiyab that they are ready for war.

Shankaldwip was kiranti king whereas Afrasiyab was Mongol king. They fought with each other. Afrasiyab was defeated the war; he that's why went towards mountainous jungle of Northern part in order to protect his life. Later on, they destroyed the jungle and settled there by building the houses.

They gave a name for that place 'Ilam' in order to remain in the place from where they had come because the name of the place they had come from was also 'Ilam'.

According to Tshiring N, Lepcha tribe doesn't believe that their tribe was originated from any others blood relation. After the God created earth, peak, mountain, Jungle, insects etc, also created man and woman (male & female). To create male and female, God had taken snow from a high peak Kanchandzonga on his both hand and created male (pha-Dong-Thing) from the snow of his right hand and female (Jyo-n-new) from the snow of his left hand. They were created like a brother and sister. God ordered them not to live together and said; if they live together they will be punished. They did not care about the god's suggestion and started to live together, secretly. The female (woman) became pregnant. But God knew about the fact that female was pregnant. That's why God ordered them to live under the mountain. The children born by them were continuously thrown by the male in the Jungle due to the fear of the God. But after the eighth birth, they kept the baby with them. All the children after the eighth birth are now called as Lepcha.

The thoughts of Tshiring G about the Lepcha are also same as that of Tshiring N. He has also said that male and female where created from the snow of god's hand. Regarding the actual meaning of Lepcha, different intellectual persons have kept different thoughts. Some have said that the word "Lepcha" became popular by its own language 'Lapcho'. The meaning of Lepcha was "*Deurali*" in the Lepcha language.

According to researchers like Vaidhya, Tuinstra and Schwerzel, Tshiring N and Tshiring G Lepcha people used to go to Tibet in order to bring salt. They had to go to Tibet passing the long path of Jungle where they had to face many difficulties, like robbery, theft and wild animals attack. They therefore, used to go into groups Tibet after gathering way in the place called 'Lapcho'. They used to come back through the same way and used to go to their own different places after they had reached at the place called 'Lapcho'. So, they were named as 'Lapcha'.

Tshiring N writes that the people of different countries nearer to Sikkim, couldn't pronounce the word 'Lapcho' and started to say 'Lapche'. Later on; British

people changed the word 'Lapche' into 'Lepcha'. One historical story has claimed that, one Lepcha people called Imepya had married with the daughter of Limboo. After his marriage, he had gone to his further spouses' house and presented them with a chicken. After he presented the chicken, the brother and sister of his wife started to tease him with the word 'Lapche' by catching the wings of the chicken. According to Limbu language 'Lapche' means something like wing-eater. It is since this time that the Lepcha are called "wing - eaters".

Vaidhya, Tuinstra and Schwerzel have also said that the word 'Lepcha' was given to them by the English colonizers. They further have said that the meaning of 'Lep' connotations with 'cave' in their own languages, so they are called as "cave people".

#### **4.2.2 Introduction of the study area**

I have concentrated my study region within the boundary of Fikkal VDC in Ilam. It is a hilly region which is located in the eastern part of Ilam district of Mechi zone in Nepal. The elevation of this area ranges from 1100 to 1827 meter. It is situated between  $88^{\circ} 6'$  East to  $88^{\circ} 10'$  East longitude and from  $26^{\circ} 51'$  North to  $26^{\circ} 56'$  North latitude.

This land is important from the ancient time. Besides Lepcha people, different tribes and people also live there such as Brahmin, Kshetries, Rai, Limboo, Kami, Damai, Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Sunuwar etc. In the history of Nepal, Lepcha has the great importance. They were the administrative people. Even though they are now least in number they have been taken as the most important tribe living there from the ancient period. The total number of Lepcha in Fikkal VDC is 155 i.e. 3.4% of the total population i.e. 4452 of Fikkal VDC. This information has been extracted from the CBS. Where as the Lepcha Uthan Manch has shown that the total number of Lepcha in Fikkal VDC is 183 (CBS, 2001).

#### **4.2.3 Lepchas in Ilam**

Lepchas are basically found in 15 VDCs of Ilam district. The total number of Lepchas of these 15 VDCs of Ilam is 2559. The largest numbers of Lepchas live in Fikkal VDC. Similarly the 2nd largest numbers of Lepchas are in Samalbung

VDC and the 3rd largest numbers of Lepcha are in Iroutar VDC. Likewise the less number of Lepchas are in Laxmipur VDC and Gorkhe VDC respectively. The Lepchas of Fikkal live in 71 different houses and the total number of Lepchas of 183.

The reason behind less in number of this caste is because of the low fertility rate in these castes and it is because they used to eat food like '*kukur Tarul*' which slightly affected in the fertility rate (Vaidhya). The table below shows all the number of Lepchas of 15 different VDCs of Ilam.

**Table 4.1**  
**Distribution of HH and Population of Lepcha in Ilam**

<b>1.1.2. VDCs</b>	<b>HH</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
Fikkal	71	197	171	368
Samalbung	61	169	127	296
Iroutar	61	142	131	273
Kolbung	59	168	142	310
Panchakanya	40	184	110	224
Kanyam	42	128	100	222
Antu	33	92	91	183
Jirmale	29	84	73	157
Shantipur	28	69	76	145
Godhak	23	60	66	126
Namsaling	<b>7</b>	24	18	42
Gorkhe	3	8	8	16
Laxmipur	2	4	6	10
Pashupati Nagar	13	33	40	73
Jogmai	27	87	57	144

Source: *Lepcha Uthan Manch*, Fikkal 2004.

#### **4.2.5 Lepchas in Fikkal**

Fikkal is a place consisting of different types of tribes, among which one of the most important tribe which have been there since the ancient period till now is the “Lepcha”. There are 31 Lepcha houses in Fikkal VDC and 155 Lepcha population. They have their own type of special culture, religion, customs and tradition.

Most of the places and rivers of Fikkal as well as the eastern part of Ilam has got their name from the Lepcha language. That’s why this tribe has its own historical significance.

One of the most known rivers among many rivers which were named from Lepcha language is "Mechi River". The Lepchas used to say "menchu" for this river in the beginning which meant hot spring where they used to bath. After some period, the ‘menchu’ river changed into Mechi River.

Similarly, the different neighboring places and VDCs like Shreebung, Pandam, Namsaling etc were also derived from the Lepcha language. This aboriginal tribe of Fikkal is very simple and peaceful. Some people hesitate to talk even to one another because of the community-feeling and lacking of proper plans and initiatives for their upliftment. Though they have their own language not every Lepcha speaks Lepcha language.

The lifestyle of ancient period Lepcha has been changed. So, the present living Lepcha are spending easy life style than that of the ancient period. But the main occupation these tribes have been implementing since the ancient period till now is ‘Agriculture’.

## CHAPTER V

### DATA PRESENTATATON AND ANALYSIS

This is a major chapter which presents result of the study. It sketches out the findings of the study. On the basis of the findings, the researcher has made the recommendation for the further improvement. Thus, it is a heart of the research study. This study has dug out the following findings.

#### 5.1 Population

The total population of sampled household is 46. Sex and age are the basic characteristic or the biological attributes of any demographic groups and affect not only its demographic but also its social, economic and political structure for they influence birth and death rate, internal and international migration, marital status, man power, the gross national product, planning regarding educational and medical services and housing etc.

**Table 5.1**  
**Sampled HHs by Age and Sex**

Age group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Below 15 years	1	1	2	4.34
15-60 years	18	18	36	78.26
Above 60 years	4	4	8	17.39
Total	23	23	46	100

*Source: Field Survey, 2010.*

Table 5.1 shows that in study area, the population between 15-60 years of age accounts for 78.26 percent. The other two age groups i.e. below 15 years and above 60 years share 4.34 percent and 17.39 percent respectively. In Fikkal VDC, the economically active population of the Lepcha community (15-60 years) is more than children and older people.

## 5.2 Family Structure

Family is a primary social group of people residing together and related by blood, marriage or adoption. It constitutes a single household where interaction and inter communication takes place with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister who practices a common culture. Lepcha's family is broadly divided into two broad categories i.e. single and joint family. The single family can be described as a married couple with or without their unmarried children, but on the other hand joint family is a complex family structure. It includes people up to three to four generation eating together.

**Table: 5.2**  
**Number of Households by Family Types**

Types of Family	No of Households	Percentage
Joint family	30	65.21
Single family	16	34.78
Total	46	100

*Source: Field survey, 2010.*

In this study area, out of the total respondents the maximum members of respondents are living in the joint family, which shares 65.21 percent and rest 34.79 percent are found single family. It shows that they prefer joint family. Most of the households has single son in the family and the parents are not willing to separate their children from family.

### 5.2.1 Size of Family

The size of the Lepcha family depends highly on status of education of household head. The literate family size is small and illiterate family size it is just the opposite. According to intergeneration wealth flow theory of J.C. Caldwell now a days parent prefer small family size because children are an investment, they need to be provided with good education and facilities. In the past big family was considered as an asset. But now a big family is considered as liability.



**Table: 5.3**  
**Number of Household by Size of Families**

Size of Families	No of Households	Percentage
2-5	20	43.48
6-7	13	28.26
8-9	10	21.73
More than 9	3	6.52
Total	46	100.00

*Source: Field Survey, 2010.*

Table 5.3 show that out of total respondents, the family size having 2-5 shares 43.48 percent the highest followed by 28.26 percent by the families having 6-7 members and 8-9 members represent 21.73 percent and families with more them 9 members shares 6.52 percent. Though the family size is still large among the Lepchas, it has been declining in recent years. People are aware with the modern trends and they have to pay for education and health services to their children.

### **5.3 Marriage**

Marriage is an institution, which admits union between man and women. It is a stable relationship in which a man and women are socially permitted to have children, the right to sexual relations. Marriage is the more or less durable connection between male and female. Marriage is also one of the most universal and most important social institutions of human society.

#### **5.3.1 Types of Marriage**

In the study area, arranged, love, love cum arranged marriage are commonly practiced. Polyandry form of marriage is no longer exist within the Lepcha community of the study area. However traditionally Lepcha families prefer monogamous marriage. Traditional practice was the son-in-law should stay for at least one year prior to marriage as a sponging son-in-law in the father-in-law's home. The main features of the Lepcha marriage consists of a number of ritual

and customary practices all along the different stages of the rather long drawn-out wedding processes. There are four main stages of marriage ceremony i.e. 'Nyom Byet, meaning " making inquiry about the bride 'Ashek', which means joining or linking it is almost appropriate synonym of analyze the term 'Engagement" 'Katyap' meaning boy and girl are formally engaged in presence of a gathering of relatives and friend. "Bree" meaning wedding ceremony day of the bride and bridegroom.

**Table 5.4**  
**Number of Respondents with Types of Marriage Practices**

Types of Marriage	No. of Households	Percentage
Love Marriage	10	21.73
Arrange	15	32.60
Love cum Arrange	21	45.65
Total	46	100.00

*Source: Field Survey, 2010.*

The table 5.4 shows that in Fikkal 21.73 percent of the total surveyed household have practiced love marriage, 32.60 percent have opted for pure arrange marriage and only 45.65 percent comes under love cum arranged marriage. In study area when asked what sort of marriage do you prefer for your son/daughter, about 75 percent respondents said that they given their children freedom to choose their life partner on their own choice. Only 25 percent of the respondents said that it would be better if the children get arranged marriage within the same caste. The statements argue that now a day the Lepcha communities of the study area are not conservative because of education and other development. So the parents are making themselves free, whereby there is no need to search a good spouse for their son/daughter.

### **5.3.2 Marriage Age**

In Fikkal , the highest number of male population were married within the age group of 25-30 years which accounts 43.48 percent whereas the maximum number of female were married within the age group of 20-25 years representing 54.34 percent. The age group of male with marriage age less than 20 years is

only 8.70 percent whereas the marriage age group of the female of same age group comprises 17.39 percent. In the study area females are married earlier than males. Late marriage is less preferred in both sex in the study area, which comprises 10.87 percent in males and only 4.35 percent in females.

In the past polyandry form of marriage was in practice. In recent time monogamous form of marriage is dominant. The levirate and sororate marriage is totally outdated in the Lepcha community, and this is due to their changing socio-culture as well as economic condition.

Monogamy marriage exists as told by the key informant because of education and modernization. Monogamy marriage which is love cum arranged, was due to the believe that such marriages turn out well since love is a mutual understanding between two people. Other notable change in marriage system was in terms of cutting down huge expenditure on marriage ceremony. Less people are being invited. According to the change of time the compulsion rules and practices are avoided in recent time. The age of marriage has also risen, because earlier the Lepchas used to get married at a very early age of 12 to 15 years. Today they get married after they enter 18 to 20 years.

### **5.3.3 Women's Child sex Preference**

Women and children are respected in the Lepcha families. Women get up early in the morning and being their household chores. Usually in large families the youngest daughter-in-law has to do the cooking under the direction of the eldest daughter-in-law. But in small families, the housemother does the cooking. The Lepcha women equally contribute in the economy of the household by working in the field or forest.

Women are usually hard worker. They work in the fields usually during plantation and harvesting periods. They are good weavers; make mats, baskets out of the bark of bamboo which are used for a variety of purposes. A married daughter inherits the movable property, women inherits property through marriage or by adoption girls usually to look after their younger siblings. Women are more

inclined towards household chores and field works but they never participate in hunting and fishing. It is considered to be a sin.

In the Lepcha society, harmonious relationship exists between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. The relation between daughter-in-laws is also cordial. Children in the Lepcha societies are treated lovingly, there is no discrimination regarding age and sex. Boys of the family look about their livestock and the girl are inclined to tag along with their parents or look after their younger once. The Lepcha children are extraordinarily unselfish. They never quarrel among themselves. In study area 80 percent of the respondents reveal that at least two children is sufficient whether the child is either male or female but 20 percent of the respondent think that one son is most essential. It shows that moreover the Lepcha are bias towards sex, although they do not want to show it directly.

#### **5.4 Family Planning**

Family planning is an important controlling factor of population growth. But it is based on the demographic characteristic of particular area, it differs from place to place. In the study area, out of total respondents 65 percent have accepted family planning and rest 35 percent do not yet accept family planning. The reasons for not practicing family planning is that some respondents have only two babies, some are just married and are not interested some think they ought to be conscious about that matter and other perceived that it is not necessary to practice family planning.

#### **5.5 Education**

Education is the key indicator of socio-economic development of any community, state or nations. It helps to develop skilled manpower to participate in nation building efforts. According to VDC Report 2005 the literacy rate of state has 56.94 percent in 1991 and it is increased to 69.68 percent in 2001. However a great priority within the state has been give in training in professional fields, as well as to strengthening disciplines like information and technology, accountancy, medical science, physics, chemistry, business, management administration, rural development and tourism. In study area there is only one senior secondary

school (+2 level) one high school and two primary school. All the children of the study area are getting free and compulsory education.

The development of free education in government schools in terms of books, uniform and even mid-day meal have definitely attracted more children to the schooling system, in secondary and senior secondary and above level the population of female is lower than male. It is mainly due to social custom, negative parental attitudes, and some how at +2 level most of the female get married and tie with marriage system.

Change and development of a society is a continuous process. In recent time in study area there is a drastic change in education system. In earlier time there was only two primary school and one high school in the study area, but in recent time there are two secondary level schools and one senior secondary school within the Fikkal VDC area. In earlier time only male used to go to school, female used to help their parent at home. But nowadays both male and female are entitled to compulsory education. Parents are strict and conscious about education system. The institution are strict and well-trained educated teacher provide quality education aiming for the all round development in the study area.

## **5.6 Food and Drink Habits**

The Lepchas take two principle meals a day. Rice and maize are their staple food. They take vegetable with chilies. Most of the Lepchas take meat regularly at meal. The meat consists of different animal i.e. ox, buffalo, goat, pig, fish, fowl etc. In fact pig and fowl is essential for a marriage ceremony. They keep pig goat, ox and fowl for different purposes including as a source of alternative income. The wealth of a Lepcha is also estimated by the number of cattle and agricultural land especially cardamom field. Children eat first than followed by their parents.

Every house has a garden attached to it where they grow vegetables and fruit. Main fruit grown by them are banana, orange, mango, passion fruit, guava and papaya. Barley, wheat, millet maize and rice are the main crop and important cash crops are broom (Amlisho), cardamom and ginger. The farmers and other,

take rice 'Zo' and 'Chi' rice or millet beer in the morning before they go to the fields where they take lunch, which comprises rice, meat/vegetables. In the evening the women prepare buckwheat or millet bread (*Khuru-khu* or *Mung-khu*). The women give 'Chi' to men after meal. Tea is taken frequently with salt and butter. Lepcha have their own traditional method of preparing tea, The system of making tea varies from other communities. The butter is mixed with tea leaves, hot water and salt with churned, that there is no grease floating on the surface of the tea. All class of people takes 'Chi' or beer made of millet. It is used for every ceremony for example-right from birth to the funeral rites of the people. But in recent time in funeral rites they do not use 'Chi' and meat instead of that they use pure vegetarian type of food and drinks. The traditional methods of the Lepchas food and drinks habits are being changed with the change of time. More hygienic methods are applied to follow up the manners of their customary habits. Moreover the children's also discourage their parents to consume alcohol.

## 5.7 Religion

Religion is more or less coherent system of belief and practices. It is connecting to a supernatural order of being, forces, places, or other entities. A system that for its adherents has implications for their behavior and welfare, implication that the adherents in varying degrees and ways take seriously in their private and collective life. There are supernatural beings (god and goddesses, angels), supernatural places (heaven, hell) supernatural forces for examples (The Holy spirit: The Hindu "law" of cause and effect), by which men's deeds have inevitable consequences not only in this life but also in the next life. Religion is any set of belief that fulfills certain function in an individual life; it means of providing social cohesion in a community.

Religion is a part of culture. Each and every society of world has its own religious traditions. The religion of every ethnic group is interwoven with their cultural process. The Lepchas are rigid in their religious beliefs. Each and every part of their cultural activities is related to religious myths. The main religions of Lepcha is "own ancient religion called *Boongthism* and *Munism*". They believe in existence of god called "*Rum*" and to him they offer prayers and thanks giving. They are nature worshippers. They believe in two types of spirits, the god, which

brings good things to the people and the bad, which do harm to them. They also believe in supernatural power and evil spirits who cause illness and misfortune. The *Boongthings* and *Mum* (female Priest) who are regarded as religious priests are responsible for the religious ceremonies and rituals from the birth to death and till the soul of dead person is taken to heaven(Photo 3.)

The greater number of *Mum* and *Boongthing* ceremonies are preformed for the benefit of individuals, households or geographical group of households. The prophetic possession, the calendrical harvest rituals have to be performed separately for each household. The '*cherim*' ceremony which is held twice a year, at the beginning of the rains and at the beginning of winter season, to keep of illness from the community, is performed. At least one individual from each household has to be present, and each household contributes a little amount of money and grain. *Boongthism* and *Munism* teach or advocate the doctrine of one ultimate substance or principle, as mind or soul of something that is neither mind nor matter but are ground of both the position that reality is one. In *Boongthism* and *Munism*, there is no recognized cathedral church, or mosque or temple, pagoda or monastery etc. like in other religions of the world. The Lepcha believe that this world is a living house of all human beings, so it is the heart of every man, it is the cathedral, church, mosque, temple, pogada, or monastery of god and therefore according to Lepchas God resides in every one of us, in our very own heart.

**Table 5.5**  
**Number of Respondents by Religious Group**

Religion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Hindu	44	95.65
Buddhism	0	0
Christianity	2	4.05
Total	46	100.00

*Source: Field Survey, 2010.*

Table 5.5 shows that in the study area, majority of household belonged to in Buddhism i.e. 95.65 which is now major religion of the Lepcha. Only 4.35 percent were converted from old religion to Christianity. In the study area it has been

found that nowadays many Lepcha families have changed their old religion into Buddhism and some families have changed their religion into Christianity. According to key informant, the main reason for the change in their religion from *Boongthism* and *Munism* (their old religion) to Buddhism is that the old traditional religion has plundered their economy. In festival and ritual time, they have to spend lot of money and it is quite compulsory for every Lepcha household. Lacks of cooperation among them are the main draw back and encouraged them to change their religion from *Boongthism* and *Munism* to Buddhism and Christianity.

The Lepcha's are nature worshippers and earlier used to worship lightening, thundering, sun, rain etc. by performing sacrifice and making offering spending lot of money and time but today they perform rites by only offering flower and fruits etc. In the past they used performed ritual for each and every household, separately at the interval of every month of year, but in recent time they perform such a ritual only once in a lifetime with combined way if there is necessary (Photo 4.)

## **5.8 Language**

Language is a systematic means of communication by using of sounds or conventional symbols. A written and spoken method of combining words to create meaning is used by a particular group of people. Each language has symbols, which can be understood by its own group, and they communicate to each other. Language is a backbone of culture.

The Lepcha's language is one of the dialects of Sikkim/Darjelling district west Bengal spoken by Lepchas only. In the case of the Lepcha language, (Tamsang, 1983) writes "The Lepcha language has developed independently in the course of past millennia presenting its simplicity and purity of a language unaffected by other languages". Though the Lepcha language has perished in other part of Sikkim Darjelling, Kalimpong but the in study area the language has been preserved and nourished through its usage. They use Nepali language while communicating with other ethnic groups but within the society and home the Lepcha language is in practices.



Majority of male and female speak in their mother tongue. In the study area the Lepcha language is very much in use and is spoken by majority of the Lepchas. So there has not been any change in the language spoken so far in term of the number of people. But today majority of the people speak Nepali and English equally well. The official language is Nepali and English, so they use to speak Nepali and English at the time of communication for trade and business.

## 5.9 Dress and Ornaments

The Lepchas so called "*Rongkup*" by them wear cloths, which are known as '*Paki*' by them. The term "*Paki*" generally refers to the male dress of the Lepchas. It consists of long cotton stripped material, which is worn round the body, keeping the arm free. It is an old dress of the Lepcha which was also used in the past period. In recent time the dress of males Lepchas is divided into two parts (Photo 5b.) '*Yantaz*' is worn in upper parts and '*Gyadoo*' (Quarter pant) is worn in the lower part. The middle part is covered by the main dress called "*Thokroo*'. They always kept a broad knife, which is called '*Bamphok*' in the Lepchas language. On the other hand the Lepcha women put on a '*tugo*' (blouse) as and the "*Dhumbuhn*" (like a *sari* of Nepali women (Photo 5a.) Both men and women worn finger rings of various cuneal bones, gem, gold and silver. Today very few of them use ornament made of bones instead they prefer gold and silver.

## 5.10 Festivals

Festival is an event of celebration. In all countries, festivals are celebrated in different ways and with varying degree of intensity, depending upon location, economic and social status, and religion, education and family background.

The Lepcha people of the study area celebrate various festivals according to their culture and traditions. During festivals they celebrate and enjoy themselves by eating, drinking and dancing. The major festivals celebrated by the Lepcha are *mukjurdung Rum faat*. This festival is celebrated during the month of March. They worship "*itbu Rum*" means the (creator god). The second festival of the Lepcha is '*Thekung mun solong saknon Sukhim*. It is observed in the second week of April. It is celebrated as a commemoration day of *Thekung mun solong*.

The third festival of Lepchas is "*Tendong Lho rum faat*" i.e. on the 7th and 8th of August. It is celebrated by worshipping of Mt. Tendong, on its role as a protector of mankind. It is one of the important festivals of the Lepchas. Another festival of the Lepcha is *Dushi Munlom* i.e. second week of August, they worship for prosperity. The *Sokue Rum Faat* and *Sugi Tyek Rum faat* which are observed for good harvest and they worship *Lepon rum* (mentor). The last and important festival of the Lepcha are the *Mardik sukhim, larsong mungtya maar lavo Tyangzing sonap*. These festivals starts from last week of December and end at the first week of January. These festival are celebrated as the victory day of god over evil. *Lasongmung purn* was executed by the Lepcha and *Jor Boongthing*. During the festival the Lepcha people worship Mt Kanchandzonga and they put on their best attire. This festival is celebrated as a mark of respect to *Jor boongthing*.

Change can be observed in the manner by which festivals are celebrated. An elderly key informant said that earlier Lepchas used to celebrate for a longer duration accompanied by high expenditure. Today Lepchas have broadened their horizon and realized that too much of expenses were leading them to poverty.

Earlier, Lepcha used to celebrate *Muk-zikding-Rum-faat* that is a festival connected with nature for greenery every year. This festival was celebrated on a community level where *Boongthing* offered prayers to *Rum* (God) for the timely rains, sunshine, water and for good production of crops. Chanting mantras and offering prayer followed by merry-making, eating, dancing, but today this festival is celebrated either on a household level separately or only during times of drought and uncertain monsoon.

### **5.11 Occupation**

The Lepcha people in the study area are engaged in different occupation but their main traditional occupation is agriculture, hunting and fishing, weaving, gathering of wild fruits, handicraft, animal husbandry and joining army. They depend directly or indirectly on primary occupation. Now in recent time due to the development of education and infrastructure they are engaged in different

sectors i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary. Table 5.6 shows the occupation patterns of the Lepchas in the study area.

**Table 5.6**  
**Number of Respondents by Occupational Type**

<b>Occupations</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
Government service	0	0
Private Service	1	2.17
Trade/Business	1	2.17
Wage labor	1	2.17
Agriculture	40	86.95
Others	3	6.52
Total	46	100.00

*Sources: Field Survey, 2010.*

The table 5.6 shows the number of sampled HHs by occupational type in Fikkal VDC. In the study area there is an increase in every occupation since 1975 except wage labor and agriculture. At present, agriculture is the major occupation i.e 86.95percent. There is not job on government office in the sampled HHs however, slightly; they have increased their access on it. Nowadays Lepcha people are quit interested in trade and business due to increasing in unemployment in the study area.

### **5.12 Farm Size**

Agriculture is the most important source of family income. Every household in the study area has their own farm land either it is big or small in size. In the past agricultural land and forest were the main sources of their economy, but now forest area in controlled by the government though they practice cardamom and broom (Amlisoo) cultivation in forest area. Nowadays there is a decrease in the production of cardamom and broom. People are considering alternative farming. Nowadays few people have started to convert their cardamom fields in to

agricultural land. The table 5.7 gives the clear picture of the distribution of the land holding size.

**Table 5.7**  
**Number of Household by Landholding Size**

Land holding size in Acres	No of household	Percentage
1-3	4	8.70
3-5	11	23.91
5-7	17	36.96
> 7	14	30.43
Total	46	100.00

*Sources: Field Survey, 2010*

There is no landless household in study area. In Fikkal VDC, the total land of forty-six households is about 255 acre including forest land, barren land, wet land and dry land in the study area. Maximum number of household has land in between 5-7 acres, which accounts 36.96 percent. Those having more than 7 acres comprise 30.43 percent. In the study area there are only four households that have less than two acres of land and eleven households has 3-5 acres of land, which is 23.91 percent. In Fikkal VDC the maximum household occupy large portion of land.

### **5.12 Ownership of Land**

Land is mostly owned by the family. Small family with less land is engaged in agriculture in order to sustain their livelihood. In study area are three types of land ownership can be found such as owner cum cultivator, owner cum tenant or rented in and rented out. The Table 5.8 shows the different types of land ownership in the study area.

**Table 5.8**  
**Number of Household by Ownership of Land**

Types of land ownership	No of household	Percentage
Owner cum cultivator	31	67.39
Owner cum Rented in	6	13.04
Rented out	9	19.57
Total	46	100.00

*Sources: Field Survey, 2010.*

Owner cum cultivators means those who cultivate their own land by themselves comprise 67.39 percent in this area. Owner cum tenants are those who have land and also cultivates other land. In the study area only 13.04 percent household cultivates others land. The rented out means those who have given land to other for cultivation. In the study area this types of ownership accounts 19.57 percent. In the study area majority of respondent cultivate their land by themselves. Population growth compelled large families to opt for tenant farming, however in the past this practice was absent.

### **5.13 Crop Production**

The major food crops and cash crops in the study area are paddy, maize, millet, blackgram, potato, ginger, cardamom and broom (Amlisoo). Agricultural production is like gambling with nature. Production fluctuates in every year. The table 6.4 shows the annual crop production by the Lepcha household.

**Table 5.9**  
**Number of Household by the Level of Annual Production**  
**of Different Crops**

Level of Production (kg.)	Crops					
	Maize	Ginger	Millet	Cardamo m	Paddy	Broom
Without Production	-	-	11	5	-	2
< 100	2	-	1	6	-	-
100-200	17	-	12	3	-	3
200-300	8	-	10	3	-	7
300-400	9	-	9	4	-	10
400-500	3	5	3	6	-	10
> 500	7	41	-	19	46	14
Total	46	46	46	41	46	44

*Source: Field Survey, 2010*

In the study area the major crops are paddy, maize, millet, ginger cardamom and broom. Out of the six major crops and cash crop, ginger maize and paddy are grown by all households. Broom is cultivated by only 44 households, cardamom farming is practices by 41 households and only 35 households have cultivated millet. Paddy, maize and ginger are the main crops for rendering their livelihood. The majority of people cultivate paddy and maize for household daily use as well as few quintals are sold in the near by market. Ginger, large cardamom and broom is cultivated for commercial purpose and some of the farmers depend upon these cash crops for monthly or yearly expenses. Out of 46 households, there are 41 households cultivating large cardamom, it is also one of the important cash crops for generating household income. In the study area the production of paddy, cardamom, gingers and broom is higher. There is a favorable climate and good network of transport and market system. They cultivate millet for making beer during festivals. Though they have sufficient land but few households experience food shortage for few months. In the past there was traditional method of farming but at present it is modern methods of farming

has been used. In order to meet the feed demand, H.Y.V seeds, fertilizer and modern tools and techniques are used.

#### 5.14 Foods Sufficiency

Food sufficiency status determines the economic condition of households, society and state. In the study area the food grain production of The Lepcha community is sufficient too as well as insufficient. The table 5.10 shows the food sufficiency status of the Lepcha community in the study area.

**Table 5.10**  
**Number of Household by Level of Food Sufficiency Status**

Food sufficiency Status	No of household	Percentage
Up to 6 month	3	6.52
6-9	12	26.28
9-12	23	50.00
Surplus	8	17.40
Total	46	100.00

*Sources: Field Survey, 2010*

From table 5.10, it is clear that in the study area, out of total household only 17.40 have surplus food, 6.52 percent have food sufficient for six months, 26.08 percent have sufficient food for 6-9 months and 50 percent have adequate for 9-12 months. In the study area few household is deprived of sufficient food grain. In large family there is high consumption. So in order to fulfill their requirement they purchase or borrow from near by market or relatives. The farmers of the study area have to improved their production either by using high yielding variety of seed and by using modern tool and technique or chemical fertilizer or by taking proper training regarding crop cultivation. Previously production was to sustain household needs. Nowadays surplus is sold in the market.

#### 5.15 Livestock Farming

Livestock farming is also an important source of income. This farming is not seasonal whenever they need money they sell and fulfill the basic demand. In the earlier time in the study area, the Lepcha community rear all kinds of domestic

animal for their domestic use, their product were used for household consumption and they used to get little amount of money from goat, pig, and fowl. So, in those days the value of domestic animal was low.

In recent years the development of dairy farming in the study area opened the eye of the people. The pig, goat poultry are often associated as the side activities of dairy farming. They rare cattle and their product are sold in the dairy of near by market. The dairy product are collected in the local dairy and supplied to the main market. The development of good network of transportation between rural and urban area, the value of dairy product and animal products (pig, goat, poultry) provide a good income for the people of the study area. Nowadays the dairy farming has multi-purpose use, manure is used for agriculture. From 2002 onward the government of Sikkim has banned on the use of chemical fertilizer. Sikkim is a chemical fertilizer free state. Every Lepcha household keeps cattle in order to meet their requirement of daily life.

#### **5.16 Horticulture Farming**

It is a specialized cultivation of vegetables, fruits and flowers. The horticulture farming is developed during 2000s in the study site. It is also one of the alternative sources of income beside agriculture and livestock farming. In the study area the farms are small and transport and communication linkage with consumption centers are quite good. In the study area, the warm and sunny climate allows the cultivation of wide range of green vegetables, fruits and flower (both seasonal and orchid). Vegetables include, beans, carrots, onions, radish, cabbage, tomatoes, pumpkins, long-guard, bitterguard, chili (*Akbaray* or *dalley*) cauliflower and many types of leafy vegetables. The main fruits are orange, guava, passion fruit, banana, papaya, mango, pine apple, jack fruit and grapes.

#### **5.17 Income Pattern**

Normally, cash income is earned by working in government and private services and as wage labor in agriculture and transport sectors. Another source is the interest or rent lending money or by renting out a building. The income is the major indicator to know the living standard of the people, it also shows the



livelihood status of the Lepcha community in the study area. Table 5.11 shows the monthly income of the Lepcha community in the study area.

**Table 5.11**  
**Number of Households by Level of Monthly Income**

Monthly Income in Rs	No. Of Households			
	1975	%	2006	%
< 1000	6	13.04	-	-
1000-5000	21	45.65	6	13.04
5000-10000	16	34.78	15	32.61
10000-15000	3	6.53	11	23.91
More than 15,000	-	-	14	30.44
Total	46	100.00	46	100.00

*Sources: Field Survey, 2010.*

The monthly income of the Lepcha community of this study area has been increasing since 1975 in the last thirty-one years. In 1975, six households had their monthly income less than Rs 1000, which constituted 13.04 percent and not a single household had a monthly income more than Rs 15,000. But their monthly income has increased. This has led to increase in expenditure. Presently there are no households with less than Rs. 1,000 monthly income, now the households with monthly income more than Rs 15,000 account 30.44 percent and maximum number of households have monthly income between Rs 5,000 and 10,000 which constituted 32.61 percent. It is clear that the monthly income of the Lepchas of this area is increasing.

### **5.18 Expenditure Pattern**

Expenditure pattern is also an important indicator of socio-economic condition of the people. Generally people having higher income spend more.

**Table 5.12**  
**Mean Monthly Household Expenditure (in Rs)**

Items	Mean Monthly Expenditure	Percentage
Food (crops)	1543	9.58
Health	465	2.89
Education	1043	6.48
Cloths	785	4.88
Meat	547	3.52
Drink	586	3.64
Vegetable	528	3.28
Electricity	63	0.39
Religion/festivals	8913	55.36
Others	1608	9.99
Total	16101	100.0

*Sources: Field Survey, 2010.*

The table 5.12 shows that the mean monthly household expenditure (Rs) of Lepcha community in the study area. In study area the highest percent of mean monthly expenditure are found in Religions/festival which share 55.36 percent. Similarly household mean monthly expenditure on food and other items account 9.58 percent and 9.99 percent. There is similar mean monthly expenditure on education, clothing, Drinks, vegetables and meat but low average mean monthly expenditure found in Health services and electricity.

### **5.18.1 Expenditure in Health**

From the table 5.13, it is clear that every household spends on health. In this study area, most of the Lepcha households (34.79 percent) spend Rs 200-400 per month in health. The percentage of household spending less than Rs. 200 per month in study area is 8.70 percent and 10.87 percent household spends more than Rs 800 per month.

**Table 5.13**  
**Number of Households by Monthly Expenditure on Health**

Amount in Rs	No of household	Percentage
<200	4	8.70
200-400	16	34.79
400-600	15	32.60
600-800	6	13.04
>800	5	10.87
Total	46	100.00

*Sources: Field Survey, 2010.*

### **5.18.2 Expenditure in Education**

Out of total of 46 households, the Lepcha households in Fikkal VDC spend less cash education. Because, up to class 12, there is a free education facilities to the child of Lepcha provided by the government of Nepal. So the households having up to 12 class children have little expenditure in tuition and other necessary items. Some households have children less than three years of age who are yet to go to school. In the study area number of households having higher expenditure in education, accounts 32.61 percent.

As a whole, the socio-cultural and economic strength of the indigenous caste, the Lepchas has been ameliorating at present days in Ilam district. It is the homeland of Lepcha so as a matter of fact, good rays will see in future.

## CHAPTER- SIX

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 6.1 Conclusion

Every society change from simple to complex. So the Lepcha community of the study area is not an exception. It has also undergone through different phases of changes and development. The Lepcha are the original inhabitant of Ilam, now declared the primitive tribes of Ilam, their historical documents and legends are the evidence for this. The economic condition of the Lepcha of study area is quite well as majority of household depends on primary occupation, grows enough food grains to feed all year round, and remaining population supplement their production by working as either tenant or adopting non-agricultural occupation. There is no landless household in Fikkal VDC. They also rear cattle for their economic betterments. New innovation has been introduced in the development of daily farming and horticulture. Nowadays-new generation is not only engaged in agriculture but also looking for alternative way of livelihood according to their ability such as government service, private service, trade and business and contractor etc.

Regarding family size, the joint family is dominant and few single families are existed. Women and children are respected in the Lepcha families but gender discrimination exists to some extent in all spheres of life. Nowadays it has been changing and there is an equal participation among both in each and every works. Monogamous type of marriage is dominant which interlinks through love cum arranged marriage. The Lepchas have their own typical culture and custom regarding childbirth, marriage rites, funeral rites, food and drink habits, dress and ornament and language etc. The Lepchas are the nature worshippers believe in God, good spirit and evil spirit, but now majority of them are converted into Buddhist and few of them have totally changed their religion into Christianity. The Lepcha of the study area celebrate eight festivals in a year, some of the important festival are *Namsoong* (Namboon) and *Tendong Lho-Rumpat*. The traditional dress and ornament by the new generation is only worn during festival

and a few occasions. The traditional dress was replaced by modern fashionable dress like jeans, pant, vest, T-shirt, Kurta-Surwal so on.

On the education status the highest percentage is found in secondary level. Education status has been improving mainly due to increased self-awareness and compulsory education for both sexes. The rate of illiterate female is higher than male. Nowadays no sex biasness exists and there is an increase in literacy rate too but still needs some improvements in education system. The Lepchas are good botanists and mediciners. But nowadays awareness among the Lepcha community has increased and they frequently visit hospital, health centre, in order to overcome sickness and diseases.

Since thirty-one years in the study area there has been tremendous change in the lifestyle of the Lepcha community. With the incoming of modernization and westernization there is rapid erosion of the Lepchas culture and tradition. No doubt the Lepchas have adapted to the process of modernization and they are not ignorant about their rights and duties. In order to sustain the future development of the study area, it is necessary to introduce new approaches of development that improves quality of life as well as all round development of the entire community is achieved.

## **6. 2 Recommendation**

- The Lepchas are indigenous people who are a minority. There should be encouraged to form voluntary organization in order to promote socio-cultural and economic condition.
- The Lepchas should be made needs of formal local institutions for their preservation of rich culture and heritage. Every Lepcha should be made for all the responsible for preserving their culture and identity. In order to promote the language and culture various programmes should be organized within the school, college and society. Inter-caste marriage may advantageous in certain context. But for a minority group it is not welcoming, it should be discouraged.

- The Government should formulate laws, policies, whereby the rights and identity of the Lepchas are safeguarded. During the religious ceremonies, alcohol is a basic requirement. The educated and younger generation should play a constructive role in discouraging alcohol.
- The majority of the Lepchas are engaged in agriculture. Current agriculture production is not sufficient to fulfill their needs. In order to overcome such shortage current farming practices should be improved. The study area is suitable for the cultivation of cash crops like ginger, cardamom, broom. The government should provide assistance pertaining to cash crops cultivation.
- Most of the farmers sell their agricultural products to the middleman, who maximizes profits. Co-operatives with active participation of the Lepcha community should be developed. In addition to this market centers should be developed.
- Majority of the educated Lepcha youth in the study area are unemployed. The government should tackle the problem through various effective implementations in order to meet household beneficiary for economic enlistment.