

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Sikkim lies between 27⁰ North latitude and 88⁰ East longitude stretching just 115km from north to south and about 65km from east to west. It shares the total area of 7,096 sq. km with population of 5, 40,493. It has a rugged topographic features and mountains terrain. Its elevation range from 1200ft. to 28,000ft; above the sea-level (Census of India 2001).

Dramdin, is situated in the average altitude of 1300ft. Human habitation is confined to 45% of this area. Although it occupies a small land area it is densely populated. It has very high population i.e. about (12) twelve persons per sq. km. (Goparma 2001).

Lepchas who are one of the tribes included in the list of scheduled tribes in India. The Lepchas love to call themselves Rong-Kup-Pum-Kum i.e. the beloved children of mother nature and god.

The principal concentration of Lepchas today is found in north district of Sikkim, the Darjeeling district of West Bengal and Illam district of Nepal. Some of them also settled in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal and few others in Bhutan. According to a Rong scholar called “The – Kong-Man- Salang was the inventor of the script”.

According to Lepcha version the script was invented by Shaweug, Dhuri, Dhumgrup Golay and Munsalong the five Lepcha scholars. Whatever, be it is but true that the Lepcha script was in use long before the advent of the Tibetans from the Kham province of Tibet (G.B, 1876).

Lepchas are very simple, shy and relatively timid people. They are very friendly with other communities. Lepchas are not good in business. They are often indebted because they are highly addicted to alcoholic drinks. The clever businessman of local market which happen to be that of Sombaria Jorethang which is close by Daramdin lend them money to purchase food, clothing goods, and than continue to compound the interest. But as compared to the Lepchas of West Sikkim Daramdin, is more advanced than the rest of Sikkimes Lepchas.

There is a wide controversy about the origin of Lepcha tribe. Some scholars believe that they came from North East and Burma. Some believe that they have not come other land but some of them have migrated to other place in course of time. To prove this they place an argument that the names of all the rivers and the streams, the hills and the mountains of Sikkim. Lepchas are the original inhabitants of this sacred land of Kanchenjunga. There are many legends about the people, the land and the mountain, which proves that, Lepchas belongs to this land.

Sonam Tsering Lepcha the Lepcha bared of the Himalayan and a walking history of the Lepcha culture has been doing a great service in this respect. His service to the community and the nation was recognized when he was conferred awards by the government of Sikkim in 1995 and also received the prestigious Sangit Natak Academy Award in New Delhi in 1996 (Gurung and Lama 2004).

The Lepchas are catagorised under scheduled tribes of Sikkim because they are economically weak and are in underdeveloped stage. They have low population growth, low level of literacy, and pre-agriculture level of technology, due to which this tribe is listed by the Dheban commission in

the year 1961 as extremely underdeveloped tribe and listed in scheduled tribe of Sikkim (Gurung and Lama 2004).

The study focuses on the life among the Lepcha, a Mongoloid tribe of Daramdin area of West Sikkim. In order to make the study manageable, the study is based in the Daramdin, which is one of the constituency of West Sikkim. The inquiry revolves around primarily to an understanding of socio-cultural traditions and economic perspective that considers the transition of a community from, hunting, food, gathering and shifting agricultural stage to settled agriculture, thus, consequently leading to complex production systems.

R.K. Spirgy formerly school of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of London University stationed at Kalimpong since many years who is lovingly called the Lepchas Sahib has done and is still doing commendable task in this respect (Gurung and Lama, 2004).

It also inquires about Lepchas custom, religious practices, life style, food habits and dress, which is completely different from the Lepchas who live outside Daramdin.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are many things, which are still undocumented about the Lepcha tribe, as not much is known about this tribe. There is inadequate knowledge about the Lepcha language, race, religion and economy. Overall, the people of this tribe have started migrating to other places in search of better life and earnings and have started living in the place where there is diverse and mixed social-cultural practices. The Lepchas who have migrated to other place like Gangtok, Darjeeling, Kalimpong or even Nepal has given up some of their traditions in respect of fooding,

housing and clothing. Moreover, it has become a trend which can be seen in the Lepchas, since they have started converting themselves to Christianity. So the study of this tribe and immediate documentation of their original traditions has become an urgent need.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overall objectives of the study is to provide a brief ethnography details of the Lepchas of Daramdin, is West Sikkim. It covers different aspects of their life like their origin, religion, settlement pattern, family's life, kinship system, marriage practices, festivals, life cycle ceremonies and economic condition.

The specific objective are as follows:

- i) To describe the existing socio-cultural and economic condition of Lepchas
- ii) To describe Lepchas family life, kinship system, marriage system, religion and festivals.
- iii) To analyze the changes of social, cultural and economic system in the Lepcha community.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The Lepchas are one of the tribal communities of Sikkim living in the underdeveloped stage. They live in isolation from other communities, living in forest and the Himalayan valley of Kanchenjunga. Lepcha community is a closely knitted and self contained social unit and due to their isolation from the other communities, they are deprived from every process of development and change. Besides the Lepchas are characterized by traditional values, which are not suitable with the value

and behaviour patterns of modern world. However, the government has been engaged in the task of uplifting the Lepcha people through specially designed programmes which are expected to solve their basic problems of illiteracy, superstition, low agricultural production, lack of transportation. So, the present study is very important and expected to contribute towards a better understanding of this aspect in sociological as well as anthropological studies.

1.5 Organization of the Study

The study is presented in the sequential flow of acknowledgment, tables of contents illustrations and chapters. Chapter first covers introductory portion including background, statements of the problems, objectives of the study and significance of the study.

Chapter second mainly deals the review of literature where all possible relevant information was consulted and finding of the similar types of research have been cited. Regarding the literature review a number of unpublished different reports and books have been consulted to proceed this research.

Chapter third explains research methodology including sampling, techniques, research design, nature of data and methods of data collection.

Chapter four is related to description of the study area and general information of the study area. Chapter five related with social and demographic feature of Lepcha people including family type, marriage, kinship system, housing condition, population composition ethnic composition and literacy status of Lepchas community.

Chapter six related with cultural characteristics of Lepcha people in Daramdin, which includes religion and superstition, festivals, life cycle ceremonies songs and Dances.

Chapter seven related with economy of Lepcha people in Daramdin including landownership, agriculture, animal husbandry, source of income and sufficiency of food grains.

Chapter eight related with changes including social, cultural and economic changes.

Chapter nine includes summary and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER - II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various writers, both indigenous and foreigners have carried out various ethnographic studies in Sikkim. Some of the relevant studies have been reviewed in the chapter. Most of these reviewed studies have focused in the demographic behavior, socio-economic and cultural heritage of Sikkimes people.

Early anthropologists (H. Spencer, Lewis H. Morgan, and Edward B. Tylor) followed holistic approach to study society and culture. They combined history biology, archaeology, linguistics, sociology, religion, together as a unified field of study. Their evolutionary theory and approach dominated the nineteenth and twentieth century (Gurung 1990). Likewise, Frazer (1890), W.H.R. Rivers (1914) and Henry Maine (1871) followed the holistic view of human kind and studied contemporary human societies and culture in relation to the past.

Social and cultural anthropology flourished in different historical social context in Britain and United States of America respectively (Gurung 1990). Although, there were already many anthropologists in America, it was Franz Boas who was the profunder of ethnography based on field-work. Kwakiutl ethnography is one of the several publications of Franz Boas after his fieldwork among Kwakiutl communities of Northwest coast of America.

Economically, Kwakiutl are subsistence societies depending upon fishing sometimes supplemented by hunting. Different levels of status are achieved by a man in different place and time. The source of social status are marriage, wealth and potlatch. They consider son as chief father,

plants as life owner and women as life long maker (Gurung, 1990:1-3). He studied native America people in relation to their past. This tradition was also followed by Margaret Mead (1928) and Ruth Benedict (1934). After 1960s, the American anthropology is characterized by diverse fields. It consists of a wide range of subjects covering, physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, psychology, ecology, symbolic anthropology and political economy. Although the field is diverse, the study of culture still remained the core feature of the American anthropology.

On the other hand, social anthropology flourished in Britain as a colonial research centre. It was Bronislaw Malinowski whose first ethnographic field work from 1914-1920 among the Trobriand Islanders to the East of New Guinea. This (*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*) ethnography provides field-workers both the theoretical and methodological guidelines to study human behaviour the main theme of *Argonauts* is the economic enterprises of Trobriand Islanders well regulated by Kula, a form of Inter-tribal exchange system. Although Kula is essentially an economic Institution, Malinowski found it closely associated with communal enterprises socio-political organization, mythical background and magical rituals. The trading enterprises are carried on by the communities inhabiting a wide range of geographical areas covering over 100 of miles of close circuit along with two kinds of articles Saulava, long necklaces of red shell, and Muwali, bracelet of white shell travel in opposite direction, clockwise and anticlockwise (Gurung, 1990). Beside it (Kula) economic functions, it serves social, political as well as religious functions, Malinowski interprets every cultural element of native people in terms of functional unity, universality and indispensability as it fulfills human needs (Gurung, 1990).

Geoffrey Gorer is one of the foreign writers who made an ethnographic study about the Lepchas of Sikkim. His book “Himalayan Village; An Account of Lepchas of Sikkim” (1938) established an ethnographic tradition in Sikkim. Gorer has studied the Lepchas of West Sikkim. His study throws ample light on the socio-economic life of the Lepchas, and covers every aspect of Lepchas life in terms of origin, settlement, family life, kinship system, marriage system, religion, economy and food habits. This work has been based in a field survey of 11 months.

In the case of religion, Gorer (1938) writes “Lepchas have two or perhaps three religions”. But this statement seems to be quite controversial and hence needs to be further tested, because if there was any third religion of Lepchas what happened to it? The question remains unanswered.

First religion is Boongthingism and Munism of Lepchas and in case of second religion Gorer refers to Buddhism and it is followed by Lepchas outside Daramdin.

Gorer’s findings contrasts with Tamasang’s in case of religion. Hence, the present study will try to reveal Lepchas religion which they follow and practice on daily basis.

Tamsang (1983) studied the Lepchas community of Sikkim, Darjeeling, Bhutan, Kalimpong in his book titled “The unknown and untold reality about the Lepchas” which gives an inside view of the information and events as narrated by the aged and authoritative of Lepchas. In this book there is no documentation dug out from library stacks but legends from the lips of aged Lepchas. It is based on fieldwork. It covers various aspects of Lepchas ancient history, tradition, myths, legends, religion, language art and architecture. His study provides short descriptive

cultural information about the Lepchas and Points that the Lepchas culture is reflected in their art and architecture in which Bamboo (po) plays an important part in Lepchas life.

Tamsang (1983) states “there are 108 Lepcha clans in Lepcha race.”

In contrast Bhasin (1989) in her book “Ecology, Culture and Change: tribals of Sikkim Himalayas” there are about 12 different clans among Lepchas” (1989). These settlements can hardly be ignored due to having two different findings which need to be further tested. Bhasin has written especially on two tribes of north Sikkim, the Lepchas and Bhutias.

In case of Lepchas she studied about the people and their history and found Lepchas to be the sole inhabitants of Sikkim before the advent of Bhutias and Nepalese. She further states Lepchas culture in its unaltered form is found surviving only in Dzongu area of north Sikkim, where they have retained their originality against the alien influence of Nepal, India and Christian Missionaries.

While studying trade and economy of Lepchas, Bhasin describes about a third type of kinship in the Lepcha society called fictive kinship which is a relationship based on friend ties and the persons related are called fictive Kins (Ing-zong) also known as special friends with whom Lepchas start business and continue throughout their life.

Regarding religion Bhasin concludes that today Lepchas are Buddhists following Bhutias religion as they were earlier animists, and do not have a religion of their own. I would argue that the Lepchas of West Sikkim do not follow Buddhist religion at least in the reserve area they follow their own religion Boongthing and Munism, further more she has stated Lepchas culture in its unaltered form is found surviving in Darangdin

area, therefore one would expect religion also to be found surviving and very much in practice. Hence the accounts given by Bhsin cannot satisfy the quest for knowledge in case of religion, clan and kinship.

Foning (1987) in his book “Lepcha my vanishing tribe” presents an inside view of one of the lesser known Himalayan tribal population. His study focuses on Lepchas rich culture and traditions. He states “Lepcha culture is not only rich but it has a unique place in Sikkim, the cultural practices of Lepchas are simple but have an indepth meaning in the life of a Lepcha person”.

He has studied the changes which is coming forth in the life style of Lepchas and in their traditions focusing mainly on the younger generation, and the Lepchas outside the reserve area. Foning has tried to study the changes in the Lepchas culture over the decade and his main aim as per the book is to make the Lepchas understand their culture and help them preserve and practice it so as to keep this tribe alive. Foning argues changes in the Lepcha society are due to Lepchas being exploited and out maneuvered by Bhutias and Nepalese. The effect of the Tebeto-Bhutias made them to convert into Buddhism. The Christian Missionaries also led a big black dot of conversion of Lepchas to Christianity which have made Lepchas assimilate into Buddhist or Christianity, this seems very much true in case of Lepchas who live outside Davamdin in other parts of Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong but foning seems to have generalized his views in case of Lepchas of Daramdin as well, which may not be the case, Hence he seems to have ignored the Lepchas of Daramdin and developed his generalizations based on the study of Lepchas outside the reserve area. Even though this book served as secondary source for my study to some extent but present study aims to

find out whether changes have occurred in the mainstream of Lepcha culture of Daramdin or only in some parts of it.

According to Verma (2002), in his book “A Guide and a Hand Book of Sikkim”. He has tried to explore the historical aspect of Lepchas of Sikkim and has focused on the political side of Lepchas history. He identifies after the last named Panu (king) the name The Kung Thek comes up prominently as the leader of Lepchas.

Chopra (1979) in his book “Sikkim” has done a good study on the Lepchas of Sikkim and described about their origin, social customs, food habits dress and ornaments, folklores and lifecycle ceremonies; to prepared a ethnographic picture about this tribe. But this study ignored Lepchas religious, festivals, economy, family kinship. which is the main aspect of Lepchas culture. Hence his study on Lepchas people are incomplete. In this context the present day will take into account all those aspect.

Other various writers who studied the Lepcha culture like A.K. Das (1962) in “Lepchas of Darjeeling” and Nayan Tshering Lepchas (1970) in his book titled “Sikkim-Ek-Khoj” have focused mainly on Lepchas of Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong , Kursheong but this study mainly concentrates on the macro-analysis of Lepchas religion, festivals, settlement pattern, food habits, dressing pattern and language. It fails to study the micro-analysis of Lepchas social life within Sikkim.

CHAPTER - III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Rationale of the Study Area

Sikkim is divided into four districts namely, West, East, North and South. For the present study, Daramdin was selected. It lies on the Western part of Sikkim. West district has an area of 1166sq.km. It is the second largest district in terms of area and third largest district in terms of population 123147 (Census 2001)

The Lepcha people of study area possess unique culture and their way performing rituals and others ceremonies makes them even more unique. Their cultural traditions and rituals practices have attracted the attention of many people because, there are so unique that nobody finds them parallel with the customs and traditions of other ethnic groups. So, the uniqueness of the culture of the Lepcha people in the study area was the main reasons behind choosing the very area.

3.2 Research Design

The research design for this study is of descriptive type. The descriptive research study aims at describing the present state of affairs. In descriptive study we describe recent phenomenon in details by answering “What is happening or what has happened?” Hence the present day study aims at describing the life among the Lepchas.

3.3 Nature and Source of Data

In order to collect the information regarding this study, both primary and secondary sources has been used. The primary data were collected from the field administering interview using structure questionnaire and by

observation of various aspects of the village. Secondary data were collected from various sources like Sikkim Government records, Statistical Profile of Sikkim, community library resources and from Information and Public Relations Department.

3.4 Sampling

In order to complete the proposed study, simple random sampling has been done, and out of the total 400 households, only 50 households have been randomly selected.

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

To collect the required information the researcher has visited the selected households for household survey, and filled of the questionnaire. For the further and supplementary information, interview and observation method have been carried out.

3.5.1 Household Survey

In the research 50 Lepcha households information were collected. In this method information were collected on the bases of households family type, marriage, kinship, religion, health, practices, life-cycle ceremonies, source of income and education.

3.5.2 Interview

For the study interview has been taken from the predetermined structure questionnaire to all 50 respondents from each households to collect necessary quantitative data of family structure, education, sources of income and sources of drinking water.

3.5.3 Observation

The overall objective of the present day study is to identify and describe the present life condition of the Lepchas, so observation was one of the basic techniques of data collection. Settlement patterns, housing condition, sanitation, sources of water for drinking and irrigation, livestock and agricultural crops, forest and land types, and other village activities were carefully observed so as to document the condition of village life and to acquire qualitative data.

3.6 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data collected through observation and interview in the field were analyzed descriptively. All filled up questionnaires were checked and transformed into preliminary data sheet. The collected data were classified and tabulated to make them more clear and scientific, so simple tables are derived from the data sheet.

3.7 Limitation of the Study

- (i) The study area is small, consisting of 50 households of Lepcha community, which may not represent the entire Lepchas of Sikkim
- (ii) The study was intended to focus on the life among the Lepcha community of Daramdin. Thus, other Lepcha community inside and outside Daramdin are not included.
- (iii) The fulfillment of the objective entirely depend on the availability of the required information both from primary and secondary sources.

CHAPTER - IV

SETTING OF THE STUDY AREA

4.1 Physical Setting of Study Area

Daramdin lies in the Western part of Sikkim. Sikkim is the 22nd state of India, sandwiched between the of Nepal in the West Bhutan in the East, Tibet in the Northeast, Darjeeling district of West Bengal in the South. It is the land inhabited by three groups of people - Nepalese, Bhutias, and Lepchas. The principal concentration of Lepchas are found in North Sikkim because of the Reserved Area, but in the West District, Majority of Lepchas are settled.

Daramdin, the Western part of Sikkim literally means plain of Sikkim surrounded by dense forest in the North and the Southern part is surrounded by the river Rammang. The river Rammang cerates the boundary between Sikkim and West Bengal (Darjeeling). Rammang and Rengyen are the two important rivers of Daramdin, which finally meet with the river Rangeet near Jorethang. Other small monsoon streams like Limkhim and Menchu which are important source of irrigation, which finally meet with the river Rammang near Twile Bari (Pipal Bote). Today Daramdin is famous because of the holy Sai Mandir, which was constructed by the Sikkim Government under the directives of Dr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, the Chief Minister of Sikkim.

Daramdin area is not well-connected to the District Headquarters Gylshing on the West Sikkim highway as there is only one poorly maintained Jeepable road. Heavy summer rains cause landslides and frequent blockage prevents the road from being open more than few weeks of the year. Bujeck is the main area situated little before Daramdin,

which cause yearly disturbance during the rainy season. The average altitude of the Daramdin area is 1300metres above the sea level.

The total areas of Daramdin is 247.35sq km. The land is more or less uneven, the rivers are at about 1200metres above the sea level and the average height of hills is about 7,000feet. Within Daramdin there are some beautiful places which were made by Government of Sikkim with a view to lookafter the whole beauty of the area. Among these Chakala Dara, which is just above the Sombaria Senior Secondary School, Love Dara is another view point which is situated above the Lungyam village. Likewise Bursey is another important place for tourism, which is situated 17km away from the Hillay.

Daramdin occupies a larger land area, having high density of population. Above the cultivated land there exist forest, and above the forest level we find the rhododendron trees and small bushes. Most of the houses and cultivated land are below the forest areas. According to the survey taken by FWD 2001.

Daramdin's forest extends over 72sq.km of which Gorucharen (grazing land) is 1.223 sq.km and Khas (communal land) is 71.15sq.km. The irrigated land comprise of 8.6sq.km, un-irrigated or dry land comprise of 27.06sq.km, Banjo or wasteland comprises of 1.23sq.km.

4.1.1 Climate

Daramdin lies in the Western most part of Sikkim, and the climate of the valley is moderate, the annual rain-fall being approximately 150cm. It rains June to September and rest of the months have little rain or almost dry season. During the monsoon it rains heavily. The temperature do not greatly vary. The weather is not much cool in winter and hot in summer.

The winter temperature is 10 to 15 Degree Celsius and summer ranges between 20 to 28 Degree Celsius. Most of the lands are cultivatable.

4.1.2 Demographic Features

The population of the Daramdin is composed of the members of different caste groups. The total population of Daramdin is 13,000 (census 2001). Population density differ from place to place due to topography and climatic conditions. There is high density of population in daramdin.

The major caste groups inhabiting this area are Bahuns, Chhetris, Lepchas, Bhutias, Limboos, Rais, Bhujels and other few STs and SCs. In terms of ranking Chhetris come first followed by Bahuns, Limboos, Lepchas respectively.

4.2 Economic Activities

4.2.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is the most important economic activity of this area. Most of the people of Daramdin have their own land from where they get maximum agricultural productions. In this way now the farmers can cultivate on about 60% of the total area and other remaining area are covered with forest.

Agriculture is carried out by almost all households in this area. It is the primary source of income. The people in this area practice mixed farming. Maize, Paddy, Millet and Wheat are the major crops of this area. Some people also cultivate cash crops ginger, orange and cardamon.

4.2.2 Livestock

Livestock rearing is also an important source of income and the people of this area keep domestic livestock only for their own needs. But, nowadays commercialization livestock has began in this area. Now people are spending their money in poultry farming, they are taming goats in large number for business purposes. They rare cattle either to meet with their demands or self-use. Each households involving in agriculture keep a pair of oxen for ploughing of their land. Hindu people such as Brahmin, Chhetris do not raise the animal like pig. Except Brahmins and Chhetris other ethnic groups like Limboos, lepchas, Rais, Bhutias and SCs keep pigs.

4.2.3 Other Activities

Besides agriculture and livestock rearing the people of Daramdin are involved in other various activities. Some are in government services and some go for labour work. There are few government contractors and few in NGOs. Altogether, the people of different castes practicing different professioner are found.

4.3 Transport and Communication

Transport and communication play vital role in the process of development of an area. This area is not developed in terms of transport. Roads are not well-connected to the District Headquarters Gylshing on the west Sikkim highway as there is only one poorly maintained jeepable road. Heavy summer rains cause landslides and frequent blockage prevents the road from being open more than few weeks of the year.

The study area is well-off in terms of communication. Almost all households have access to communication system of any kind. Apart from internet, people of Daramdin are availing the available communication systems like telephone, F.M and radio.

CHAPTER – V

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter deals with the people and their ethno-history, family, kinship, settlement patterns and houses, marriage system, food and education, population of Lepchas in Darmdin, ethnic composition of Lepcha and literacy status of Lepcha people.

5.1 History of Lepcha People

There are not many authentic written documents about the origin of Lepchas. The word Lapche may be of Limbu origin. The word ‘lap’ means wing and ‘che’ means eat or take. Since Sikkim formed a kind of wing for the Limbu Kingdom of East Nepal, the Limbu word Lapche does make some sense.

The Lepchas call themselves Rong, which means the son of the snowy peak. According to the Lepchas legend, the first primogenitors of the Lepchas were Fodongthing (male), and Nazaongnyoo (female), who were created by god from the pure virgin snow of mount Kanchenjunga, and sent them down to live, prosper and spread all over the place. Today, Lepcha family’s clans descent from the ten sons of Fodongthing and Nazaongnyoo, as such both of them are regarded as father and mother of the Lepcha tribe.

In the study area, there are mainly two types of clan that is the Hee-Yongming and Aram. Geographically, now Lepchas are divided into four clans but culturally they are all one. These four clans of Lepchas are the Renjyongmoo, Illammoo, Tamsangmoo and Promoo. According to this information “Renjyongmoo Lepchas are Lepchas of Sikkim, Darjeeling

and Kurseong and Renjyong” means Sikkim, ‘Moo’ means belong to Illamoo Lepchas are Lepchas of Kalimpong, who are descendants of Tamsang King Gaeboo Achok Pano. Promoo Lepchas are Lepchas of Bhutan, where ‘pro’ means Bhutan and ‘moo’ means belong to. Whatever in the origin of Lepchas, they are open minded people with flat nose and sunken eyes.

The Lepchas belong to the clan of Nagas of the Garo and Khasi hills which lies to the South of the Brahmaputra valley. According to a legend, they originated from Mayel Lyang, a mythical land at the foothills of Mount Kanchenjunga in Sikkim itself. The Lepchas who are the earliest settlers of Sikkim, are originally of the Mongoloid race but they differ from the Mongols of Central Asia.

Lepchas came from Assam and belonged to some Tibeto-Burman tribe group. It is mentioned by some scholars that “thousand of years ago, a group of people crossed over, to Sikkim from China via Assam. They are ‘Tai’ people of China. In ‘Tai’ Language, the king of the Mother Tribe is known as Mau Taigcho- Rong. The corrupt form of this word is Mutanchiang-Rong who are also known as Rong. Therefore, present Lepchas are also believed to be the descendants of Tai family Lepchas. The Lepchas believe that they are the original people of Sikkim. The legend, folktales are found to be connected with their belief. Whether the legend can prove or not, but undoubtedly the Lepchas are the oldest inhabitants of Sikkim. It was the Lepchas who had migrated from Sikkim to other parts of Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern Countries.

5.2 Settlement Pattern and Houses of Lepchas in Daramdin

In Daramdin, the Lepchas settlement are mostly found into clusters, each household have their own land. A typical Lepcha house consists of two rooms, a kitchen and a living room. There were wide overhanging roofs, which were used to keep the walls completely dry throughout the rainy season. But today we can see various changes, instead of bamboo and mud, Lepcha people make their houses with hard bricks and concrete.

5.2.1 Housing Condition of Lepchas in Daramdin

The majority of the houses in the study area were made up of bamboo plastered with mud bricks, cements. Many of the houses were not separated from each other, and few houses were far from each other. Housing condition of Lepchas in Daramdin is presented in Table No. 1

Table 1: Housing Conditions of Lepchas among study Household in Daramdin

Housing	Total number
Bamboo/ mud	16
Wooden	14
G.I. Sheeted	10
Brick/hard	6
Concrete	4
Total	50

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Table No. 1 shows that majority of houses are made from bamboo plastered with mud, which is followed by wooden houses, and G.I. sheeted ones, which shows that bamboos are abundantly available and are

the basic material for construction of houses and used for other purpose as well. G.I. sheets are provided by the government. Many of the houses are built of bamboos and wood as the forests are rich and abundant. The brick-hard houses are those which is made up of cement, sand, bricks and gravels. Concrete houses are different from brick-hard. The house which is made up of hollow blocks. This type of houses are very few in number in the study area.

5.2.2 Water Supply and Sanitation of Lepchas in Daramdin.

As in other village, the people of Daramdin also use drinking water from two main sources namely streams/rivers and taps. Almost all households have tap water supply. The sources of Drinking water of Lepchas in Daramdin is presented in Table No. 2

Table 2: Sources of Drinking water among study household in Daramdin

Sources	Total number
Taps	35
River/stream	15
Total	50

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Table No. 2 shows that majority of the household 70% have tap water as the main source of drinking water within their compound, only few houses 30% have to go out to fetch water within a walking distance 6-10 minutes.

Each households have proper toilet and bathroom, some households have attached toilet bathroom and some have separate toilet. They supply regular water to their toilet with the help of rubber pipe or G.I pipes.

5.3 Family Type

A family is a primary social group of people residing together and related by blood, marriage and adoption. It constitutes a single household where interaction takes place between husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister creating a common culture. The institution of family has a universal existence. Household and family structure of Lepchas in Daramdin is presented in Table No. 3

Table 3: Household and Family Structure of Lepchas among study household in Daramdin

S.No	Type of family	Number of household	Population		
			Male	Female	Total
1	Nuclear	42	99	75	174
2	Joint/extended	8	74	75	154
3	Total	50			328

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Table No. 3 shows that they follows the nuclear family, which consists of 42 household in the study area, and the joint family consists of 8 households. The size of the families is small among Lepchas because grown up sons set up their own seperate establishment after getting married.

5.4 Kinship System

All people are bound together in groups by various bonds. It is universal for the societies in the world. These bonds are based on reproduction and inherent human drive, which is called kinship in Sociology and Anthropology. Kinship play an important role within the family structure as well groups.

The desire for reproduction gives rise to two kinds of bonds. Firstly, there is the bond between spouses and their relatives on either side; and secondly, there is the bond between parents and their children and that between sibling i.e. children of the same parents. The first kind of bond, which arises out a socially or legally defined marital relationship is called affinal kinship and the relatives so related are called affinal kin. The affinal kinship are not connected to each other through blood, which is the case with relatives of the second kind enumerated above, who are called consanguineous kin. The relationship based on blood-ties are called consanguineous (same blood) kinship.

Two types of kinship group, consanguine and affinal are found in every human society. But, Lepcha culture is unique because we find more than two kin groups called fictive and adoptive. Marrigae are allowed if people of the same clan are separated nine generations ago into a father's clan and four generation into a mother's clan.

Most of the Lepchas of study area use classificatory as well as descriptive terms to refer their relations. Such as Abo (father), Amu (mother) are descriptive and Ajyong (mother's brother), Annue (mother's brother) Anome (elder sister), Theekung (grandfather), Neekung (grandmother) are classificatory kinship terms. In Lepcha society of Daramdin there is a

arrangement for adopting child according to one of the ex-panchayat president, which very according to whether the child is a son of a near relation, of unrelated person or an orphan. For a near relation, adoption is conducted with little formality. For a child of a stranger presents are given in which the adopting father takes the presents himself and brings the child with him. For an orphan no such presents are given. Another senior number of a Lepchas of household told me he had adopted his younger brothers son, as he had no children of his own, and his brother has two daughters and three sons. Adoptions is done so as to have benefit of the childs labour because as soon as children grown up, they become active members of the family and take part in full household work as well as field work.

In the study area, there is another type of kinship, which is called 'Ingzong'(fictive kinship). Six persons of this community have had this type relationships. The Ingzong (special friend) system does not occur between the same community. It generally occurs in two different community's members. So, when they are bound in this type of relation, the two different society members interact with each other. They enter in this relationship either because one or both lack anybody they can call brother, or wish for somebody they can look to for help in emergencies and with whom they can continue their trading relationship. An elderly woman who was continuing this relationship with a Bhutia woman said that as a general rule the Ingzong relationship is hereditary, i.e. the sons of Ingzong being themselves Ingzong but their is not compulsion about it, the two Ingzong are regarded as special friends or brothers and intermarriage between their descendants are forbidden, as incestuous up to nine generations. Both Lepchas and Bhutias who are from Daramdin enter in this Ingzong relationship. Lepchas used to give grains to Bhutias

and in return Bhutias gave clay China pots as presents to the Lepchas. So, Ingzong has helped in the material exchange within the two communities as well as helped to strengthen the social ties. One of the elderly women told me that Lepchas set up Ingzong relationship only with Bhutias, because other Nepalese and Marwaries community have exploited them in the form of trade.

5.5 Marriage System

Marriage is an institution, which socially allows a man and woman to form a family. It is a legally permitted to have children, the right to have children implying the right to have sexual relations. Marriage is the more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring. The system of marriage differ from place to place and one ethnic groups to another groups. In Lepcha society, marriage means not only contract between two individuals but also a contract between two groups. Lepchas marriage is caste endogamous and clan exogamous. That is to say, marriage takes place within own caste groups and outside ones clan group. In Lepchas marriage, the first thing have to find out is to inquire about the clan of the bride and groom. Nowadays the chief function of the clan in the regulation of marriage and the prevention of incest. Marriage are allowed if people of the same clan are separated nine generations ago into a father's clan and four generation ago into a mother's clan.

Marriage system of Lepcha community is different from other communities. Marriage consists of a number of ritual and customary practices. Marriages are never arranged by the parents of the child concerned but they are usually proposed by the Mandal/Athing (village head) or by any maternal uncle of the boy side.

5.5.1 Monogamous Marriage

Monogamous marriage is the universally accepted form of marriage, which has been widely practised by Lepchas. It is a form of marriage in which a man is allowed to take only spouse at a time. In the study area most of the Lepchas households practised monogamous marriage.

5.6 Food and Drinks

The Lepchas take two principle meals a day. Rice and maize are their staple food. They take it with vegetables, chilies. Meat curry is also relished. In fact, pig is a universal present for a marriage ceremony. They rear pigs, goats for this purpose. Goats and fowls, especially the latter are also frequently used for offering sacrifices. The wealth of a Lepcha is also estimated by the numbers of cattle and other animals they have. The poor people also take millet and buckwheat. They usually take the food by their hand and do not use spoons. The farmers, as others, take 'Chi'(traditional drink) and 'zo' (rice) the morning before they go to the fields where they take lunch which usually comprises rice or maize and vegetables. In the evening the women prepare sour buck- wheat bread from the plant called 'Ka-hru- Khu' or sweet bread flour boiled Indian corn. The women give 'Chi' (traditional drink) to man and take it themselves. Tea is taken frequently with salt and sometimes with butter. The system of making tea varies from other communities. The mode of making it is as much as it is churned with butter and salt, till the butter is so mixed with the tea leaves hot water and salt that there is no grease floating on the surface of the tea.

'Chang' or beer made up of millet is taken by all class of people. It is used for every ceremony, right from the birth to death. The social life of

these people is incomplete without ‘chang’(millet beer). After harvesting of millet it is dried in the sun fermentation again applied in a closed vessel. After 8 or 10 days Chang(millet beer) is ready to drink. But the change can be seen in the traditional food and drink among the Lepchas of Daramdin. Today most of the Lepchas people do take Chang(millet beer) only in a special occasion. In the study area Lepchas small children are not permitted to take Chang(millet beer). Economically sound Lepcha people have forgotten their traditional methods of fooding and drinking.

5.7 Dress and Ornaments

Lepchas dress and ornaments are unique. Most of the Lepchas wear ‘Paki’(male dress). The term ‘Paki’ generally refers to the male dress of Lepchas. This Paki consists of long stripped material which is worn round the body, keeping the arm free. The Lepcha have extra –ordinary type of dress to wear which is not similar to others. Along with this Paki they also wear bamboo pins. A belt is generally tied round the waist

During the winter season they put on an upper garment with loose sleeve and even with a sweater. This type of dress is very common in village Lepcha people, but those Lepchas who generally live in towns like Darjeeling, Gangtok and Kalimpong wear modern dress like shirt and pants.

The age old traditional Lepchas men do not cut hair but keep them as long. They wear a hat made up of bamboo called ‘Thaktop’ its main function is to protect from heat and rain. At the weeding ceremony they put on traditional dress like black hat made up of bamboo and piece of coloured cloth on the crown, and a feather of a bird fixed in the point of their hat.

Lepcha women are natural beauty they have their long hair smiling face. Lepcha women put on a ‘Tugo’ (blouse) as an upper garment, while lower garment ‘Domdyani’. It is a piece of cloth tied cut the waist, which hangs down to the knees. Both men and women wear rings made up of animal’s bones.

5.8 Language and Education

5.8.1 Language

Language is a means of communication. Different ethnic groups have their own language. Each language has symbols, which can be understood by its own groups and they communicate to each other. So, symbols play an important role for the development of particular culture. The Lepcha use one of the dialects of Sikkim spoken by Lepchas people only. The Lepcha language has developed independently in the course of time preserving its simplicity and purity of the language, unaffected by other language.

They use Nepali language (Lingue franca) while communicating with other ethnic groups but within their society and house the Lepcha language is practiced.

Out of the 2,500 population of the Daramdin few Lepcha people speak their language properly.

5.8.2 Education

Educational status of the Lepchas people in the study area is less appreciable as compared to the other community. They are considered as the tribble people of Sikkim state. Recently various schools were established with a view to increase the literacy rate among the Lepcha people of Daramdin. Educationally and economically sound Lepcha

household send their sons and daughters outside their community to receive quality education. Lepcha people are deeply interested in receiving technical education too. They have the deep interest to spend money and time to receive higher education.

5.9 Health and Belief System

The concept of health is wealth is mostly recognized by the Lepchas. Most of the Lepcha households of the study area are aware of the health awareness programmes. Most of the Lepcha people go to near hospital for treatment and few households believe in spirit and witchdoctor. When a person falls ill first of all they carry him/her to the witchdoctor or Mun. And then Mun (priest) start his prayers and offering to God. Sometimes a Mun offer a hen, goat, pig to the god with a view to recovery soon. But educated Lepchas did not do so, first of all they sent the patient to the nearby hospital. Causes of illness among the Lepchas of Daramdin is presented in Table No.4

Table 4: Causes of Illness of Lepchas among study household in Daramdin

S.No.	Causes of Illness	No. of household
1	Germs/bacteria	35
2	Evil/spirits	15
3	Total	50

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Table no. 4 shows the main causes of illness of Lepchas in Daramdin. Of the total 50 household 35 households believed that the main causes of

illness is germs/bacterias and rest of the households i.e. 15 households believed the main causes of illness is evil spirits.

But one of the senior member of a Lepcha household told me that two years back he had been very ill, that he could not eat and drink or move his legs. Then a Mun(priest) was called who first of all recognized the spirit which was causing the illness, then the Mun made sacrifice of a fish than a ginger, popcorn the spirit. And asked him to accept the offering from her own hands, she fed Chi to him, gave a scarf and a silver coin and from that day itself he started recovering and two days later he was able to move.

5.10 Population of Lepchas in Daramdin

Daramdin occupies a large land area which is thickly populated. According to the National Census undertaken by government of India 2001, the total population of Lepchas in Daramdin was 2500 consisting of 400 households. The total male population was 1500 and the female population was 1000. The population distribution is sparser further in Western region due to geographical and climatic conditions. Sampled population of Lepchas of 50 household in Daramdin is presented in Table No. 5

Table 5: Population of Lepchas among study household in Daramdin

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0-10	30	20	50
10-20	33	27	60
20-30	20	19	39
30-40	30	25	55
40-50	25	20	45
50-60	15	14	19
60-70	10	9	19
70-80	9	8	19
80-90	5	3	8
90-100	4	2	6
Total	181	147	328

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Table no. 5 shows that the total population of Lepchas in Daramdin was 328, out of which male population was 181 and female population was 147. The total number of adults were 278 who are above 10 years of age and the children below 5 years of age were 50

5.10.1 Ethnic Composition of Lepchas in Daramdin

Lepchas are the indigenous people of Daramdin. The people of other community are not allowed to buy their land and settled over their places. Sikkim government have given numerous types of facilities to Lepchas with a view to preserve their indigenous cultural heritage, customs and rituals.

5.10.2 Literacy Status of Lepchas in Daramdin

In Lepcha community, educational status of male is greater than the female educational status. Literacy status of Lepchas among study household in Daramdin is presented in Table No. 6

Table 6: Literacy Status of Lepchas among study household in Daramdin

Educational Category	Male	Female	Total
Literate	45	30	75
Illiterate	57	62	119
			194

Sources: Field Survey 2009

Table No. 6 shows the literacy status of Lepchas in Daramdin. Out of 328 Lepcha Population, only 194 people have been found literate, who have either completed a studying in different educational institutions. And rest of the Lepcha population, i.e 130 persons are found to be illiterate, who did not attend any educational institutions.

CHAPTER-6

CULTURAL-CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter deals with cultural characteristics of Lepcha people in Daramdin which includes religion, superstition, festivals, life-cycle ceremonies, songs and dances.

6.1 Religion

Religion is more or less coherent system of beliefs and practices concerning a supernatural order of being, forces, places or other entities. Religion play an important role for the functioning of whole societies. There are supernatural places, supernatural forces and supernatural being by which men's deeds have inevitable consequences not only in this life but also in the next life.

The Lepchas consider themselves as the children of the Himalayas. They believed that the first man and woman being created by Rum out of the snow of the untrodden peak of Kanchenjunga. They are nature worshippers. They believe in two types of spirits, the good, which brings good things to the people and the bad, which do harm to them.

The Lepchas of Daramdin have their own ancient religion called Boongthing and Munis. They believe in existence of God called Rum, and they offer prayers and giving thanks to him. They also believe in supernatural power and evil spirits who cause illness and misfortune.

The Boongthing, and the Mun (female priest) who are regarded, as religious priests are responsible for the religious ceremonies, and ritual from the birth to death and till the soul dead person is taken to heaven. "The term Boongthing comes from the two Lepcha words "Aboong" and

“Athing” Aboong means mouth and Athing means a good orator or a speaker”. He has the power to stop evil spirits from doing harm. He acquires these constant power by prayers and deep meditation.

Mun priesthood goes by the possession of a manifestation of supernatural spirit which is attached to a family line, so that there can never be more than one simultaneously in each group (there may be one simultaneously in each group, (there may be two in one biological family, one spirit descending from the father’s group and one from the mothers).

The chief function of a Mun is to overcome off the misfortunes and illness caused by devils which is done partly by sacrifices, especially animal sacrifices and partly by direct communing with the supernatural in certain occasion the Mun becomes possessed by their guardians spirit and prophesy. At death ceremonies they summon the soul of the dead man to speak his last wishes through their mouth and than conduct it into the Rumlyang (the place of the gods) where it is reborn as an infant and grows up to an external life similar to the life here on the earth.

The supernatural are divided into three categories, mostly benevolent, natural and mostly malevolent. The supernatural which are mostly benevolent are called Gods, Rum, those mostly malevolent are called Devils.

The Mun religion carries with it no social organization. The Mun and Boogthing priests are simply individual who, through their possession by a spirit, have certain gifts and duties. Besides the Mun three other types of priesthood by possession are recognized in Daramdin’s Lepcha these are the Padem, the Yaba and the Pau. The Mun spirit is a female spirit, the other three are male. They are attached to family lines and roughly

hereditary. They often descend from grandfather to grandson or from grandmother to granddaughter, but there is no regulation about this and a man may inherit a possessing spirit from a woman.

Both man and woman can be Mun, but only a man can be Padem or (Boongthing as they are called outside Daramdin). Padem is optional whereas for Mun a three-years course of instruction is obligatory. Padem are weaker than Mun and capable of exercising for fewer devil, they cannot prophesy nor perform the death ceremony.

The other two groups of possessed priest resemble one another and different from Mun and Padem (Boongthing) in so far as neither can make sacrifices nor perform exorcism but can merely get possessed by supernatural; they dance until the supernatural speak through them and disclose its wants and where about both wear special clothes for their performances. The Yaba (women are called Yam) wear long white gowns with tinkling bells and they hold a metal plate and beat it as they dance-pall (women are called Nandjemu) wear elaborate woolen dresses and dance with a skull-drum in one hand and a bell in the other. Both Yaba and pau have been very rare because the possessing spirits are not Lepchas but have been introduced through inter-marriage between foreign women, the Yaba spirit comes from Limbu women of Nepali Tribe and the Pau from Sikkimes Tibetans. There is a tradition that there is a similar spirit called Jhankri (witch doctor) belonging to the Chhetris.

Lepchas believe that this world is a living house of all human beings so, it is the heart of everyman; it is the Cathedral, Church, Mosque, Temple Pagado or Monastery of God and therefore according to Lepchas, God resides in everyone of us in our very own heart.

6.1.1 Superstition

Lepchas have beliefs in supernatural forces, like sun, air, moon and water. Retention of beliefs and superstitious are prevalent in every society whether it is traditional or modern but the degree of its retention differ from community to community. One of the elderly women of a Lepcha household in the study area told about their beliefs. Some of the noteworthy popular fallacy that prevails in the Lepcha society are pair that is both husband and wife should not expose themselves outside during the time of solar and lunar eclipse during child bearing stage. They have belief that if they do so, than then child to be born may encounter with disease like epilepsy. Similarly during the time of wife pregnancy her husband should not make any sin like killing animals and hunting. If he did so, his new born baby would die immediately.

6.2 Festivals

Festivals is an important event in which all people of the related religion enjoy their best. In sociological view point, festivals play an important role for the functioning of society as a whole. Through festivals people can meet and exchange their happiness each other. Different religious group communities celebrate different kinds of festivals in their own way. Festivals differ according to one culture to another. Each festival has it's own importance.

In Daramdin, there are various types of festivals which are still celebrated by the Lepcha people, which gives different meanings and importance within Lepcha society.

Some of the major festivals of Lepchas of Daramdin are below:

- a) Naam Soong or Namboon (Lepcha New Year)
- b) Tendong Lho Faat Rum Festival (Legend of Deluge: a great flood)
- c) Mukzikding Rum Faat Festival celebration of nature and its greenery

a) Naam Soong or Namboon (Lepcha New Year)

The Lepcha new year falls every year in the month of Lepcha Calendar (Kurnyit Lavo) during the last week of December to first week of January which is celebrated for a week in Sikkim, Kalimpong and Darjeeling.

This is one of the most important festivals of the Lepcha and is connected with the legend when truth triumphed over evil and brought ever lasting peace in the land of the Kanchenjunga.

According to the legend, Rum (God) created the earth, the hills, the mountains, the sun, the moon and the star. He also created the air and the water, the tree and vegetation, animals, birds, insects and many other things of the earth. God also created day and night. At last he picked up two fistful of snow in both hands from the top of the sacred 'Kanchenjunga' from the right hand and he created 'man' whom he called 'Fodong-Theeng' which means most powerful, and from the left he created 'Na-Jong-Nue' the women which means full of everlasting bliss. The Lepcha (Rong Kup) believe these two were their first ancestors. As God had created them from the same snows of the sacred Kanchenjunga with his own hands their relationship was that of a brother and sister. In the months of December - January in the name of ChooRum (God of Himalaya), while performing this ceremony they prepare two large Chokaongs (a figure representing the shape of Kanchenjunga with the help of moulded rice), after that they place a bamboo platform outside the

house towards Himalayas. They place a cupful of Chi (traditional drink of Lepcha), three fresh eggs, rice, flowers and a small offering various lamp made up of moulded rice and red rooster is also needed at the end. After arranging everything systematically, they hoist red and white coloured flag in the pole of bamboo or wood. Lepcha priest Boongthing chanting their prayers continuously, giving thanks to the god to live happiest and prosperous life.

b) Tendong Lho Faat Rum Festivals (Legend of Deluge: a great flood)

This festivals is celebrated with great pomp and splendor at Sikkim in the 8th August every year. Realizing its importance, the Sikkim Democratic Front government has declared state holidays since 1997. This festival is connected with a legend of deluge which nearly swallowed Sikkim that was ultimately stopped by Rum (God) and saved Sikkim from drowning.

Rongnue which was later called Teesta and Rangeet were born at the sacred place, lap of the Himalayan mountains. They grew up together happily and as their youth bloomed they began to love each other secretly. But some people got to know about this and started taking all sorts of thing about them. They than decided to leave the place of their birth and go far away down to the meeting place of the hill and the plains. This place was called “Pazoaka” by the Lepcha (the present day Peshok) which means covered by dense forest near the Teesta Bazaar. Both did not know the actual path leading to the place. So they decided to take guides with them separately Rongnue (Teesta) the female caught hold of paril-Bu a Snake and Rangeet the male caught hold of a bird called Tut – Fu (Lophophorus). He at first hesitated but than agreed to a guide.

The snake head Rongae wriggling and running with all his strength. He did not feel the necessity of stopping where any on his way except at the top of a hillock to have a glance of Pazaok (Peshok) from there. He gave a smile to Rongue and with his head held high started moving forward with all his strength.

The sun was yet to set in the Western horizon, looked crimson with the rays of the setting sun. It was certainly a beautiful sight to behold for a lover. Reaching (Peshok) in the time she anxiously waited for her lover Rangeet to appear. Time tickled away and it was already dark but he was no where to be seen. She at last lost her patience and her heart was filled with grief. She waited there hour after hour throughout the night. The first light of the dawn began to descend on earth and covered the hills beyond. Still there was not a trace of her lover. Rangeet which had been guided by the bird Tut-Fu (Danphey) had taken a longer and steeper road through the rock and difficult terrain. Being hungry he has stopped on the way to collect insects for his food. So at last he arrived at their destination seeing the Rongue waiting for him he was surprised and from his mouth come out of the words, (This-thaa) which means already arrived. Rongue now is called Teesta, which has come from the Lepcha words (This – thaa). Rangeet the male got very much ashamed to be defeated by a female. So, he decided to go back to his usual home in the Himalayas. The people of Renjyong had gathered at the peak of Tendong to save them from the deluge. They saw the water on the river slowly touching the hill of Maanom. They began to pray the almighty to save them from the deluge. They offered ‘chi to Hbu-Debu-Rum- Daar’, the creator and destroyer. A hill partridge called “Kohom-Fo” appeared on the hill and drank “chi” offered by the people.

c) Muk Zikding Rum Faa (celebration of nature and its greenery)

This festival is connected with nature and its greenery. The Lepcha are lovers of nature and all things living and now living things connected with it. It is observed during the month of February every year. The Lepchas feel that a balanced ecology and environment is most necessary for the survival of the human being as a whole. The word Muk means greenery, Zikding connotes sprouting of vegetation. It is a prayer to Rum the almighty God. This is the season of sprouting of all vegetation, trees and shrubs and is also the mating season of all animals and birds. The Boogthing offers prayers to Rum for timely rains and sunshine, clean air and water and to shape the world from the natural calamities of flood landslide and famine.

6.3 Life-Cycle Ceremonies

Every society performs certain ceremonies for regulating individual's life. Ceremonies which are performed at regular intervals throughout an individual's birth to death is called life-cycle ceremonies. The Lepchas of Darang perform their own distinct life-cycle ceremony differently. Lepchas have a rich culture and values.

6.3.1 Birth Ceremony

The birth ceremony of a newly born baby is performed by the Mun (priest) by chanting a prayer. The prayer goes as:

“O lord Almighty! The creator of all beings please do give along and peaceful life to the new born. Please protect the child from all ills and the evils spirits, accidents, injuries and all kind of diseases. Please do always remain with child to save him or her from death and other natural

calamities. We do offer fish, bird, chee and fruits. I do humbly pray that these offerings may be accepted we have now purified the house, so humbly request again to kindly hear our prayers”. During the feast every guests is given special ‘Chi’(traditional drink) and as much strained rice and Chi (traditional drink) as they can drink. On this day the child’s horoscope is prepared and the child is given its name by the officiating Mun. “The name given to a person at the time of his/her birth may relate to his appearance, behavior at the time of his/her birth or he/she may be named after, the day or the months of his/her birth.

6.3.2 Marriage Ceremonies

There are three stages of a formal marriage among the Lepchas of Daramdin:

Lepcha’s marriage ceremonies consists of :

-) Nyom-Vyal (Inquire about the Bride)
-) Ashake (Engagement)
-) Bree (Wedding Ceremony)

Nyom-Vyal (Inquiry about the Bride)

Nyom-Vyal is the first stage of Lepchas ceremony, which means making inquiry about the bride it is also referred to as Jhom-Vyal. After the boys side have got their eye on a girl, someone from the family who act as a Bek-Bu (between man) visits the girl’s village. On this visit he will take with him a packet of Chi (traditional drink of Lepchas). He will go to the neighbour’s house and through him try to find out that the parents of girl are not already obligated to give the daughter away to another family. The parents on both sides pretend to stay completely neutral. He also find

out which man of the village is acting on the girl's Bek-Bu. To this man he will give the packet of Chi (traditional drink) and start negotiations for the marriage. The girl's Bek-Bu discusses the proposition with the girl's family; particularly uncle but the father and mother are also unofficially consulted. If they do agree, the Bek-Bu will present them with the ceremonial scarf and a Rupees and both sides will keep in touch with each other through the original negotiators and a date will be fixed for Ashake.

Ashake (Engagement)

The second stage in Ashake originally comes from the word Ashake meaning joining of linking and it is almost equivalent of what Westerners terms as "engagement". Once the parties are bound down by Ashake (engagement) it touches not only the two people concerned but also involves the far clans that are drawn in directly through this affairs of the boys and girls. The far clans that are effected are the boy's father's clans and the mother's clans likewise the girl's mother and father's clan. For Ashake considerable gifts are demanded and these are called the price of the bride. The gifts includes the articles, which are given over to the girl. It consists of two pigs, a large copper pot, or in lies of it the money equivalent to it, a length of fire clothes, some money for the bride and mother and a ceremonial scarf and some Rupees for the girl's Bek-Bu. When these gifts have been collected they are declared sacred by a special Mun rituals in the groom's house before being taken to the girl's family.

Bree (Wedding Ceremony)

The third and last stage is Bree or the wedding ceremony. After the Ashake function, they often visit each other's family with members of each other. The Bree may take place after the Ashake with a few weeks or months or even after few years. This depends upon the preparation for the big feast, which the parents of the boy are required to give, the need for daughter – in- law in the houses. The marriage ceremony is performed for three days. They enjoy the wedding ceremony with beautiful songs and dance.

6.3.3 Death Rites

“According to the traditional custom the dead person is buried. The Lepcha carry the dead body in a box to the burial ground away from the village. This place of burial is known as Chyok-Brang (tom). The corpse is taken out from back door and not through the front door of the house. The corpse is seated in a sitting position, facing to the Himalayas and with hand folded in a praying position. A Mun or a Boongthing accompanies the funeral procession.

Reaching the burial ground the Mun or the Boonthing announces the name of the deceased three times and tells him or her not to return to the world again. Some eatable things or drinks are also placed in the coffin box. After the burial a big stone is kept on the grave and is fenced. Each night after the buried a red hot stone is thrown outside the house taking the name of the deceased telling him/her not to come back to harm the dear and near ones. The Mun or the Boongthing carries the soil to the cremation ground or the fourth day and watches the footprints, if there is none it means that the soul has left the world and if footprint is found the

soils are bought back and the prayers continue till the 4th, 7th, 14th, 21th and 49th days.”

6.4 Songs and Dances

Song and dances represent wealth of the Lepcha community. Every songs and dance carries their own meaning of sorrow and happiness. Every human societies have their own songs and dance, similarly in Lepcha community have their different types of songs and dance. The Lepchas of Daramdin speak their own language. So they have their separate songs. The different types of songs and dances of Lepchas are as below.

Chu Faat (Lepcha Folk Dance)

This dance of Lepcha is performed in honor of the Kanchenjunga. The snowy peak is believed to be the repository of five hidden treasures such as salt, medicine, minerals, sacred books and food grains. Carrying butter lamps and green bamboo leaves, the dancer perform this dance with the devotional song. It is performed on the fifteenth day of the seventh months of the calendar every year.

Kar Gnok Lok (Lepcha Folk Dance)

Literally meaning “Dance of Swans” is a famous Lepcha folk dance, which depicts the temporary seasonal migratory flight of a group of migratory swans, which take flight from the warm plains towards the Himalayan region in the month of February, March and from cold region to the warm plain in the month of October and November.

Mon Dryak Loks (Lepcha Folk Dance)

It is a hunting dance of hunters who are supposed to be skilled hunters. They never kill the wild animals and birds for pleasure. Their hunting approach is highly ritualistic. The dance depicts Lepchas' weapons.

Tendong Lho Faat (Lepcha Folk Dance)

It is a Lepcha Folklore, which is often retold to the new generation in lyrical poetry. This folklore corresponds to the divine occurrences as described in the Vedas "Matsya Purana" and in the Bible as the 'Great Flood'.

Mun Hait Lok (Lepcha Folk Dance)

It is one of the Lepcha folk dance performed by both male and female to the accompaniment of devotional hymns. This dance depicts the 'Mun' of the witch doctor performing the age-old ritualistic dance.

CHAPTER - VII

ECONOMY

Economy deals with those activities, generally production, consumption, trade supply of money. Lepchas of Daramdin's economic activities is primarily based on agriculture. They gave primary importance for agricultural production. only few numbers of Lepcha household are engaged in non-agriculture sectors. This consists of trade and business employed on government sector and International Non Governmental Organizations(INGOs) and Non Governmental Organizations(INGOs). In study area, during the interview, more than 35 households occupation was agriculture and 15 household have adopted non-agriculture occupation. Like trade, service in government sectors.

They practised both subsistence and commercial types of farming. Most of the Lepchas land of Daramdin is utilized for cash crops. They earned handsome money during the season of cash crops. In the name of cash crops they cultivate cardamom, orange and ginger.

Another important source of income of the Lepcha people of Daramdin is animal husbandry. Besides agriculture animal husbandry, trade and commerce also play an important part in educated Lepcha's economy.

7.1 Land Ownership

Most of the Lepcha people of Daramdin have their own land. So, they have the choice to show any types of crops, basically the they had shown such types of crops in which they earn maximum profits. In the study are some of the Lepcha people have big land and all the household members are engaged in government employed services. They give their land to other households for (share-cropping) or we called in Nepali Adhya (share

cropping). Other communities have no right to buy their land, because Lepchas are the tribal people of Sikkim and they can not sell it out.

The land ownership pattern of Lepchas of Daramdin is presented in Table No. 7

Table 7: Land Holding Pattern of Lepchas among study household in Daramdin

S.No.	Size of land holding	No. of household
1	Less than 1 hectare	22
2	In between 1-3 hectare	10
3	In between 3-8 hectare	8
4	In between 8-10 hectare	4
5	Above 10 hectare	6
6	Total	50

Source: Field Survey, 2009

7.1.1 Land Tenancy

Among Lepchas, the class of landless tenants and landless labourers is small. Tenancy is largely between landowners with large land holding leasing a part of their land to those with smaller landholdings

Shymoo or Adhiya (Share-cropping) is a form of tenancy in which land, agricultural implements, bullocks, seed, fertilizes are provided by land owner. Labor is employed by Shymooboo (tenant). And tenant share-cropping is more common for paddy field.

Another important land tenancy among the Lepchas of Daramdin is Kuth, in which the landowner fixes the amount of particular type of food grain

to the tenant/ a person who take the responsibility to fulfill the owner's demand. In this system whatever, a tenant produce in the field mostly fulfill the owner demand. In the study area most of the land of big landowners are given to the kuth (Share-cropping). Because landowner's family member could not work in the fields. More than 24 households are engaged in such types of agricultural practices. Both Shymoo and Kuth are not permanent.

7.2 Agriculture

Agriculture is the main source of income among the Lepchas of Daramdin. They work very hard to produce more and more. Out of the 50 households of Daramdin, more than 35 household work in agriculture. More than 9 hours a day they worked outside their house, especially in the field.

In the study area those households who have their own land, work in their own fields and those households who do not have their own land work as a tenant or Kuth. They have good knowledge about the rotation of crops. Seasonwise they sow different types of crops. In summer season they sow paddy, pulses and other leguminous plants but in winter season wheat and maize are sown. Wheat, millet and maize are the staple food of Lepcha community of Daramdin area. Oranges, cardamom and ginger are the main cash crops, which are sown by the Lepchas. Earlier they practised only subsistence farming but today they practise both subsistence and commercial farming.

7.2.1 Agricultural Production

Paddy, wheat, maize, millet are the main crops of Lepchas of Daramdin.

Paddy: Paddy is one of the important crop among the Lepchas. In each and every festivals and ceremonies of Lepcha paddy plays an important role. A variety of paddy called (IR-60) what we called in nepali (Basmati) is cultivated in Lepcha community of Daramdin. They cultivate paddy during the month of June and harvested in the month of November.

Millet and Maize: They produce millet and maize in large scale. Millet and Maize is used for peparing local ‘chang’ by the Lepcha people without this two Lepcha’s life is incomplete. Bazra, Jwar are the millet which are sown by the Lepcha people. In the name of cash crops they produce oranges, cardamom and ginger. In the month of harvesting of cash crops they earn handsome money. Each households of Lepcha community have their own small land around their surrounding and within there land they planted the oranges trees which adds their annual income. The total production of cash and cereal crops in Daramdin in the year 2009 is presented in Table No. 8

Table 8: Production of Cereal and Cash Crops of Lepchas among Study Household in Daramdin

S.No	Production(in kgs)	No.of Households					
		Maize	Paddy	Wheat	Millet	Orange	Cadamom
1	Less than 100kgs	7	9	6	6	10	10
2	100-200	6	8	5	4	4	4
3	200-300	7	6	5	5	10	6
4	300-400	7	7	4	4	6	3
5	400-500	5	4	3	4	4	2
	Total	32	34	23	23	34	25

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The above table shows the production of cereals and cash crops of Lepchas in Daramdin. The major food crops of the study area are maize, paddy, wheat, millet, orange and cardamom. out of 50 households only 32 households produce maize, 34 households produce paddy, 23 households produce wheat, 23 households produce millet, 34 households produce orange and 25 households produce cardamom.

7.3 Animal Husbandry

Livestock farming plays an important role in Lepcha community. It is widely practised by the Lepcha for various purposes. Lepchas keep bulls, pigs, goat, hens and dogs. All animals play an significant role in their social and religious life.

Bulls are the most important animals and are symbols of prestige, bulls are also used for sacrifice, during the time of ceremonies and festivals. It

also used to till the land. Cows are used for milk and even meat, goat and hens are raised for meat and sacrifices. Every households of the Lepcha community raised pigs for meat and sacrifices and are kept in small sites beneath their houses and are fed on disposes things of chi and chang. Large number of poultry birds were kept all Lepchas households of Daramdin. Number of farm animals of Lepchas in Daramdin is presented in Table No. 9

Table 9: Number of Farm Animals of Lepchas among Study of Household in Daramdin

S.No	No. of animals	No. of households				
		Cows	Bulls	Goats	Pigs	Chicken
1	2-4	20	5	30	10	2
2	4-6	5	3	10	5	3
3	6-8	3	2	2	7	5
4	8-10	2	1	3	2	20
5	10-12	2	1	1	2	20
Total		32	12	46	26	50

Source:- Field Survey, 2009

The above table shows the number of animals raised by the Lepcha people in Daramdin. The animals which are raised by the Lepcha of the study area are cows, bulls, goats, pigs and chicken. out of 50 household only 32 households kept cows, 12 households kept bulls, 46 households kept goats, 26 households kept pigs and 50 households kept chicken.

7.4 Source of Income

The Lepchas of Daramdin are engaged in different occupational activities. The study of Lepchas life remains incomplete without its reference to occupational pattern. More than 35 (70 %) of households involved in agriculture as their primary source of income. Out of 50 households of Lepchas in Daramdin, 35 household's economy is depend upon agriculture and the remaining 15 households earn through non-agricultural sectors. The monthly income of Lepchas of Daramdin is presented in Table No. 10

Table 10: The Monthly Income of Lepchas among Study Household in Daramdin

S.N.	No. of household	Income (in IRs.)
1	22	IRs. 10,000
2	15	IRs. 10,000-IRs. 12,000
3	10	IRs. 12,000-IRs. 15000
4	3	Above IRs. 15000
Total	50	

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Out of 50 households 22 households have income less than Rs. 10,000, 15 households have income Rs. 10,000 – 12,000, 10 households have income Rs. 12,000- 15,000 and only 3 households have income above Rs. 15,000

7.4.1 Wage and Labor

In the study area, two types of labors system are found

(i) Daily wages

Daily wage labor is mostly practised by Lepcha in Daramdin. The Lepchas have their own small land, they also work on the daily wages. Labors are hired individually for a days work and paid on wages. During the time of cash crops season labours are in big demand. They work in the field of another Lepchas who has large size of land. The wage rate are in IRs. 200 to 350 per day with afternoon tea and lunch.

(ii) Labor Exchange

This type of labor is commonly practice in Lepchas of Daramdin. The family who have large land holding size, employees labors to produce agricultural production. This type of labor is employed only for seasonal works, like plantation of paddy, harvesting seasons, but there is not difference between male and female values i.e. wages or exchange.

7.5 Sufficiency of Food Grains

In the study area among the fifty (50) household of Lepcha community, each household have their own land but less in size as compared to other. There are 25 households who do not produce adequate food grains, for all round the year consumption, only 22 households grow sufficient food grain for all year round consumption. The sufficiency of food grains among the Lepchas of Daramdin is presented in Table No. 11.

Table 11: Sufficiency of Food Grains of Lepchas among Study household in Daramdin

S.No.	Category	Number of households
1	Grows sufficient food grains for all year round consumption	28
2	Do not grow sufficient good grains for all year round consumption	22
3	Total	50

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The alternative sources of income of Lepcha families is presented in Table No. 12

Table 12: Alternative Sources of Income of Lepchas among Study Household in Daramdin

S.No.	Occupation	Number of households
1	Working as tenant	18
2	Non-agriculture sectors	7
3	Total	25

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Table No. 12 shows that families with less production, maintain their livelihood by working as either tenants or working in non-agriculture sectors, which makes a total of 25 households who supplement their agricultural production by either working as tenants or doing business of working in, service sectors.

CHAPTER VIII

CHANGES

This chapter deals with changes that have been found in social, cultural and economic patterns in the Lepcha community. Change is a universal phenomena, everythings changes with time.

8.1 Social Change

Social change is a term used to describe variation or modification of any aspects of social processes, social pattern, social interaction and social organizations. Social change is change in social sphere of human life that can be realized either qualitatively or quantitatively.

8.1.1 Change in Family system

According to some respondents, previously, the Lepchas lived in joint family system. But at present they prefer nuclear family rather than joint family system. It is because of the changing socio-economic condition. This type of family is also practiced in other ethnic groups of Sikkim. Main causes which are responsible for bringing nuclear family system into practices are as follows:

-) Today main aims of the government is to control the growing population, so that government itself has given the priority to the small family. That is why most of the community live with nuclear family.
-) One of the senior member of the households told me that in nuclear family system, the number of family member is low so each member get equal opportunity in the households and are not neglected as in joint family. In this way in a nuclear family, each

member's interests and needs are fulfilled. Today nuclear family is gaining importance because government had to given importance for nuclear family.

-) Another reason for the existence of nuclear family in Lepchas community is due to the shortage of their father's property and lower economic condition of the family which cause family friction and finally divided into nuclear family.

8.1.2 Change in Marriage System

From earlier discussion, it can be generalized that the Lepcha people generally prefer monogamous marriage rather than other types of marriage, and this is due to their changing socio-cultural as well as economic condition.

-) Monogamous marriage has been today widely followed as told by one of the senior member of Lepcha household because in polyandry marriage, women were used as a commodity and a property of the group.
-) Another reason for preferring Monogramous, which were arranged, is due to their belief that such marriage turn out well since love and founded on mutual oblizations and benefits, which can be set-up between any two people.
-) Minor reasons behind practicing monogamous marriage are that a great majority of co-wives quarreled with each other and the expenses for each marriage were double.
-) Other of cutting down huge expenditure on marriage rituals, on food items and also fewer relatives and neighbours are invited these days.

8.1.3 Change in Dress and Ornaments

Change have been in the Lepcha's Dress and ornaments. One of the senior members of Lepcha's households told me that today Lepcha young boys and girls wore modern dress like coat, paint and shirt instead of (Togo) male dress and (Paki) female dress. They also use various types of cosmetics to show their beauty. They even wore gold and silver rings instead of ivory.

8.1.4 Change in Language and Education

In the study area most of the Lepcha people speak in Nepali language. Lepcha speaking people is decling days by day. However, change can be seen in Lepcha speaking households but not in language. Change can be seen in the field of education system of Lepchas community. Earlier girls were not permitted to go to school and colleges but today boys and girls are treated as equal and they are to given equal opportunities to receive education.

8.1.5 Change in Health and Belief System

In the study area, the concept of health is wealth is not applicable became as told by one of the respondent, earlier they highly believed in (Mun) religions prist at the time anybody falls ill. But, nowadays they follow modern measures like, sent to the patient to the nearly by hospital.

8.2 Cultural-change

Like social change cultural change is also a universal phenomena. Cultural change is broader than social change and social change is only a part of it.

8.2.1 Change in Religion

In the study area most of the educated Lepchas are recently converted into Christianity and I asked one of the senior members of a Lepcha household, why most of Lepchas are converted into Christianity? What is the main reason behind it? He simply answered that their customs and traditions are very expensive. Lepchas are the nature worshippers people, they worship earlier like thundering, lightening, moon, sun and stars too and sacrifice large numbers of animals to the God. Today, they are performing such worships by only offering flowers and fruits. Earlier they used to spend lot of money and time while performing worship, now they are saving out of those.

Changes can be seen in beliefs on superstitious things. Earlier they believed in witch doctor, but today most of the Lepcha people of study area first go to the hospital at the time of sickness.

8.2.2 Change in Festivals

Change can be seen in the celebration of Lepcha's festivals. Earlier they used to spend lot of money while celebrating the festivals but today they celebrate major festivals within their own households. Most of the Lepchas of the study area are converted into Christianity. So, they do not take part in the traditional festivals. Earlier they used to spend lot of money while preparing the local drink for festivals, but today they totally gave up such traditions. Earlier they used to mortgage their land and other valuables things to the moneylender while celebrating the festivals, as a result, they become landless being impoverished.

Earlier Lepchas used to celebrate Muk-Zikding-Rum-Faat, which is festival connected with nature's greenery every year, while celebrating

this festivals Boonthing offered prayers to Rum (God) for timely rain sunshine, water air and for good growth of crops, they used to worship and offering prayers but today this festivals is celebrated only during the times of drought or even less growth of crops.

8.2.3 Change in Life-Cycle Ceremonies

Various change can be seen in the Lepcha's life-cycle ceremonies. One of the elder member of a Lepcha household told me, that most of the Lepchas ceremonies are expensive and they do not arrang all those things which are needed for the ceremonies. As a result, most of the Lepchas are converted into Christianity.

Earlier they observed stage of marriage i.e. second stage Ashake , the gifts consists of valuable and expensive ornaments, which was not managed by the common Lepcha family. But today, wedding ceremony is an ordinary event where few relatives and close guests are invited and yet there is no music and dance.

8.2.4 Change in Songs and Dance

Society itself is dynamic in each and every aspects. Hence, the songs and dance of Lepchas also not static. In the study area, their exist various types of Lepcha songs and dances, but except 3 or 4 elderly man and women, rest of the Lepchas family member does not sing and dance properly.

Earlier they used to sang Lepcha songs everyday life but today they sing only in the special occasions. Earlier, Lepcha folk dance, (Chu Faat) was performed 5/6 times a year but today they preforme only once in a year.

8.3 Economic Change

Economy generally refers to those activities which deal with production, trade and supply of money. The economic activities of the people of Daramdin are primarily based on agriculture.

8.3.1 Change in Land Tenancy

In earlier days, most of the Lepcha people in the study area practiced traditional system of land tenancy. But nowadays, changes can be found in land tenancy system. Earlier, they practiced Shymoo or Adhiya (share cropping), in which land, agriculture tools, bullocks seeds, fertilizers were provided by land owners. But nowadays, apart from agriculture, Lepcha people are engaged in other different activities. However, agriculture seems to be their basic source of livelihood.

8.3.2 Change in Agricultural System

Agriculture is the main source of income among the Lepchas of Daramdin. Nowadays changes have been found in agriculture system. Lepchas work in their town land and their land holdings are always divided into a number of plots, so that different crops can be grown in winter and summer to meet the requirements of their family. Due to the introduction of many new crops and methods of cultivation, the economy of Lepchas has shifted from subsistence to commercial. So, at present the Lepcha economy can be characterized partly as subsistence and partly commercial.

8.3.3 Change in Animal Husbandry

Livestock rearing also plays an important role in Lepcha community for income generation. But, nowadays, change has been found in livestock

rearing as told by one of the elderly women of a Lepcha household. According to her earlier they used to raise cattle only for their own use but, now they rear cattle and poultry on a large scale for commercial purpose. All these have lessen their economic burden on their livelihood.

8.3.4 Change in Source of Income

There are 44 households who are involved in agriculture as their primary occupation, which is the main source of income for Lepcha people. But, nowadays changes have been found in the source of income as told by one of the senior member of a Lepcha household. Earlier, they were totally dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. But, nowadays Lepcha people also work in non-agricultural sectors like trade and business, government service and other institutions. Nowadays, they get more income from other sectors than agriculture.

CHAPTER – IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary

The aim of this study was to trace out the life of the Lepchas of West Sikkim, especially in Daramdin. The study has investigated the existing condition of Lepcha to prepare their ethnography and to trace out their culture and social organization. A limited number of literatures comprising the origin of Lepchas, their social organization, economic condition and their culture are found and studied. There are many things which are still unknown about this tribe and have inadequate written records on their language, life and economic conditions. The majority of Lepchas are converted into Christianity due to their very expensive traditions and they have forgotten their customs and traditions. So, that sociological study is more important than others. Daramdin is the only place in which traditional Lepchas community are found.

The study is both descriptive and analytical in nature in which sociological perspective are used. Daramdin village of West Sikkim is chosen as the study area, where 50 households of Lepchas were interviewed using structured questionnaire. The geographical socio-cultural and economic conditions of Lepchas are described in different Chapters.

Lepchas are the indigenous tribal people of Sikkim. They are the peace loving community and are friendly with other groups. Children are treated as the God within Lepcha community. Men and women are treated as equal and high respect is given to women in Lepcha community. The total population in the 50 households of Lepcha of Daramdin is 328 in which males are 188 and females are 140. Among 50 households, 42 are nuclear and remaining 8 are extended family type. Out

of 50 households and 328 population, 11.28% are literate population. Lepchas of Daramdin have no faith in traditional village organization system, like Mandal. At present, the power of Mandal is shifted into the hand of local administration, panchayat bodies. Some Lepchas of Daramdin have recently converted into Christianity because, according to them their traditional customs and values are highly expensive. That is why they could not manage all those materials which is necessary for maintenance of their tradition and finally they converted into Christianity.

The Lepcha people are nature worshipper they believe in existence of god and they believe in evil spirit too. They celebrate major festivals like Namboo, Tendong-Lo-Faat-Rum, Muk-Zinkding-Rum-Faat. Religious festivals and ceremonies help them to unit each other and provides entertainment among themselves. But these festivals and ceremonies needed huge amount while performing and it make them economically very weak. The Lepchas of Daramdin have their own rituals and customs regarding childbirth, marriage, death rites, food drinks, dress and ornaments. Marriage is fixed by Bek-bu (middle man) and perform certain rituals. Monogamous marriage is commonly practiced in Lepcha community. In the study area more than 37 households are engaged in agriculture. They have their own land but the size of their land is different. Among 50 households, 22 households do not produce food grains for all year round consumption. There are 18 households who work in tenant or Kuth system. Paddy, Millet, Maize, are the major food grains of Daramdin. Comdamom, orange and ginger are the major cash crops. Pigs, chicken, goat bulls and cows are the main livestock among the Lepchas of Daramdin. Wage Labour and exchange labour are the two types of labours system practicing in Daramdin. Migration is totally nill in Daramdin's Lepchas. Lepchas of Daramdin have some bad habits, one

of the bad habits among the Lepchas people is drinking chi/chang, which makes them economically weaker than other communities.

Nowadays Government has launched various programmes with a view to uplift their economic status. Government provides them G.I sheet for house construction, scholarship for abroad studies, free and compulsory education. All these facilities have to make them self dependence and self reliance. Recently central Government has launched National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) scheme, by which all the households members have their individual job card. According to this scheme, one member of each households has an opportunity to do daily work for Rural Development. Without discrimination of caste, education, age he/she will get a monthly salary of IRs. 3,000. And it also help them to solve unemployment problems.

9.2 Conclusion

Lepchas are the oldest tribal group of Sikkim. They used to live in jungles, mountains and highland. They are historical documents and legends to prove this. But nowadays, effects of development can be seen in Daramdin in terms of primary schools opened by Education Department, G.I. sheets provided by Government for housing, drinking water procured through taps, loans given by government for purchasing various seeds, which have at present improved the life style of Lepchas. Lepchas were exploited very easily by other communities due to being honest and simple in nature, and above all due to being exposed to other Cultures they started losing their own customs and traditions. Hence, reserve area has been declared for Lepcha tribes to prevent them from economic exploitation by other groups. On the non-agriculture sectors, few families have started business and works in service sectors, which is gaining popularity.

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ANNEXES

Questionnaire for life Among Lepchas of West Sikkim

1. General Information of the Respondent:

Date: _____ State: _____

Name of Respondent/ H. Head _____ Dist: _____

Caste: _____ Ward No.: _____

Age: _____ Sex: _____

Religion: _____ H.H. No.: _____

2. Family Information

S.N.	Name of the Respondent/ H.H.	Family type			Sex		Education	Marital Status	Occupation
		Nuclear	Joint	Extended	Male	Female			
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
7.									
8.									
9.									
10.									
11.									
12.									

3. Land Holding Size

3.1 Does Your household own any land?

- (a) Yes (b) No

If yes, how much cultivatable land do you have?

- (a) Acre (b) Hectare (c) Square feet

3.2 Does your household cultivate on other's land?

- (a) Yes (b) No

4. Household Income:

4.1 How much income and from which source did you get in the year 2009?

Source of Income	Amount Rs.
(i) Agriculture production cultivation own land	
(ii) Service sector	
(iii) Business/ Trade	
(iv) Cultivating on other land	
(v) Wage labour	
(vi) Others	

5. Production

5.1 What are the main food crops your household produces for year daily consumption? (in kgs.)

- (a) Paddy (b) Maize (c) Wheat
(d) Millet

5.2 Does your family grow any cash crops?

Cash crops/ Types of crops	Amount (in kgs)
1. Zinger	
2. Orange	
3. Cardamom	
4. Potatoes	
5. Others	

5.3 Does your family grow adequate food grains all your round consumption?

- (a) Yes (b) No

If no, what are the alternative source of fulfill this deficiency?

- (a) Working as Tenant (b) Working in non agricultural sector
(c) Others

5.4 How many months of food scarcity does your household face in a year?

6. Livestock Farming

6.1 Does your household raise domestic animals?

Name of Animals	No. of Animals
1. Chicken	
2. Pigs	
3. Goats	
4. Bulls	
5. Cows	

7. Hunting and Fishing Activities

7.1 Is your household involved in fishing and hunting practices?

- (a) Yes (b) No

If yes, when do you go for gathering?

- (a) Daily Basis
(b) During leisure/ spare time
(c) Once in every months

7.2 Does your household go for gathering raw materials to the forest?

- (a) Yes (b) No

8. What is the sources of drinking water?

- (a) Taps (b) Streams/ river

8.1 Does your family use toilet?

- (a) Yes (b) No

8.2 Where do you dispose off your household waste?

- (a) Dispose in open field
- (b) Dispose beneath the space of your house
- (c) Dispose in your kitchen garden

8.3 What are the causes of illness?

- (a) Germs/ Bacteria
- (b) Evil Spirits

8.4 What types of health measures do you commonly practice?

- (a) Modern (Taking medicines)
- (b) Traditional (Offering prayers and Jhar-Phuk)

PHOTOGRAPHS



A Lepcha Boongthing



Traditional house of Lepcha



A woman carrying fodder



A traditional house of Lepchas

CHECKLIST OF THE INTERVIEW

1. About the origin of Lepcha people.
 -) Their clan/ caste system
2. About the family structure.
 -) Nuclear, joint family,
 -) Change in family structure.
3. Marriage system
 -) Arrange or love.
 -) Process of Marriage.
 -) Why do you practice Monogamous marriage?
 -) What kind of changes have occurred in your marriage system?
4. About the kinship system.
 -) Address of Kin.
5. About their religion.
 -) Buddhist or Christians or an Atheist?
 -) God and Goddess.
 -) Have your own deities?
 -) About the village deities.
 -) Is there any change in your religion performances?
6. About the festivals?
 -) Have you own festivals.
 -) How do you celebrate your festivals?
 -) Is there any change in your festivals?
7. About the songs and Dances.
 -) Male and female dances.
 -) Different types of songs and dances.
 -) Any change in your dances.

8. Dress pattern and food habits.

-) Male and female dress pattern.
-) Ornaments of female
-) Change in dress patterns.
-) Food and drink.
-) Main food, meat, fish, vegetable.
-) Change in food habits.

9. Utensils

-) Clay and wooden utensils.

10 Marriage Ceremony

-) How do you perform these ceremonies?
-) Death ceremonies.
-) How it is (death) performed?
-) Pollution.
-) Who participates in all these occasions?

11. Social Relationship

-) Neighbouring Nepalis Bhutias.
-) Trade relation with Marsalis.