

Ethnoecological studies on Tribal Communities of Sikkim.

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Abstract: Beautiful small state of India Sikkim is the collection of many natural treasures. Holding enormous diversity of flora and fauna, major mountain peaks Khangchendzonga-8,846 m, Jonsang-7,444 m, Talung-7,351 m, Kabru-7,338 m, Siniolchu-6,887 m, Pandim-6,691 m, Rathong-6,680 m, Kaktang-6,148 m, and Simvo-6,811 m, two major rivers the Teesta and the Rangeet, numerous perennial lakes among which, Khechiperi, Gurudongmar, ChhoLhamu, Changu and Menmetsho are some of the more scenic, dense covered big forest this state becomes big attraction for nature loving people. Sikkim is renowned for its astounding variety of birds, animals, and flowers over 450 species of birds, 400 species of butterflies, 450 varieties of orchids, and 40 species of rhododendron. The culture, religion, customs and traditions of different communities of people living in Sikkim constitute a homogeneous blend. Sikkim is one of the most peaceful States in the country and the ethnic groups with their different languages, dialects, cultural backgrounds live in total harmony, symbolizing the essence of unity in diversity. The tribal people in this small Himalayan State have set an example as to how different ethnic groups can coexist. To study the relationship between these ethnic communities of Sikkim, small Darap village which is rich in natural resources, bio-diversity and very rich in cultures and customs of Local Tribes (Limboo, Lepcha, and Bhutia Tribes) are selected for the study.

Keywords: Ethnoecological study, Limboo tribal community, Lepcha tribal community, Bhutia tribal community, Darap village, folk dance, folk medicines.

I. Introduction

Ethnoecology is the cross culture study of how people perceive and manipulate their environments. The study of tribals in different locations understand ecosystem of the environment in which they live including their relationship; this whole process termed as Ethnoecology. It began with some of early works or Harold Conklin, a cognitive anthropologist who did extensive linguistic and Ethnoecological research in South East Asia.

Planet Earth is made more beautiful by its different types of creature living here. Human being the smarter of them also found in different forms whether in life style, place etc according to their adaptation. Tribals are one of them. Having different types of habitat, tradition, custom, clothing, etc they are still today one of most unknown factors for us as they keep themselves in isolation form. More than 60 countries in the world above 150 million tribal people lives. Near about 100 tribes lives with their strict customs around the world and they choose to reject contact with outsiders. They are most vulnerable people on the planet. Those who at least are seen by us we should have to bring them in light so they can also live and survive, like us and develop because all the creatures in our planet have right to live and survive equally. According to census 2011 India has 104 million tribals consisting 8.6% of total population. They live cloistered exclusive, remote and inhospitable areas such as hills and forest. Their livelihood is based on primitive agriculture, a low-value closed economy with a low level of technology that leads to their poverty. They have low level literacy and health. Poor literacy rate since independence has resulted in absence of tribals in academia and higher education. The literacy rate for STs has gone up from 8.5% (male – 13.8%, female – 3.2%) in 1961 to 29.6% (male – 40.6%, female – 18.2%) in 1991 and to 40% (male – 59%, female – 37%) in 1999-2000. States with large proportion of STs like Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya have high literacy rate while States with large number of tribals like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh have low tribal literacy rate. Communities have developed their own languages and religion, tribal children entering school must begin by learning the official regional language, often one completely unrelated to their tribal language. They have marginal degree of contact with other cultures. 75 tribal communities have been identified as particularly vulnerable tribal groups in different states of INDIA.

Ethnos meaning “People human race” that’s mean ethnic is the race of man kind. The questions about relationships between humans and their environment helps in the contributions of rural development poverty alleviations, health care and conservation. Here we I am going to arrange the lifestyle of tribal community of Darap town of West Gangtok, the role and influence of plants and animals in the culture of tribals; transient forest in habitants; other primitive communities; their way of life; interaction with the biologist and physical environment; etc by making data related to the subjects. These data will help us to know their basic needs and demands towards the healthy life, “how and in what amount”. Whole process is based on Ethno-ecology subject which is study of the description of local people’s interaction with the natural environment.

The tribal knowledge their relation to plants & animals have been recorded under different titles like "Ethnobotany". "Ethnozoology", "Ethnobiology", Ethno-medicine from time to time. Saxena et al (1975) contributed in the flora of Bastar, Jain (2005) described the Magico-religious beliefs about plants in the tribals of Baster. Jain (2004) also described the wooden musical instrument of Gonds of central India. Jain (2002) reported on the wild plants used for food by the Bastar tribals. Bhaskar (2000) reported on plants of medicinal and other uses in various parts of the country under All India Coordinated Research Project on Ethnobotany. The subject matter of ethnobotany has been periodically reviewed by Saha (2002) Jain (2004) Aniket et al (1999) Jain (2002) Bhatt et al (1998).

Indian state Sikkim, the Northeastern region established on 16-May-1975. Total area of Sikkim is 7,096 km² including 7,057.75 km² rural area and 38.25 km² urban area. Sikkim has a population of 6,10,577 peoples. There are 1,29,006 houses in the state.

Sikkim was inhabited in pre-historic times by three tribes namely Naong, Chang and the Mon. The Lepcha who entered Sikkim sometimes later absorbed them completely. The origin of Lepchas is shrouded in mystery but it seems that they belonged to the clan of the Nagas of the Mikir, Garo and Khasia hills which lie to the south of the Bramaputra valley. Some believe they came from somewhere on the borders of Tibet and Burma. According to their own tradition they came to Sikkim from the east in company with Jindaxs, who went to Nepal and shared their tradition. The Lepchas were a very peace loving people, deeply religious and shy, which characteristics they still have retained. They were in fact the children of nature, and worshipped nature or spirits of nature. These Lepcha lived quite close to the nature by way of leading sustenance. Some of them practiced shifting cultivation and raised grains like maize and millets. They led a tribal life at the beck and call of their tribal leader.

Geographical view: In the Eastern Himalayas with steep mountains and deep valleys this least populous state in India and the second-smallest state after Goa lies between latitudes 27° 5' N to 20° 9' N and longitudes 87° 59' E to 88° 56' E. Sikkim, is oblong in shape with a north to south covering the area near about 7,096 km² (2,740 sqmi). Surrounded by Nepal in the west, Bhutan in the east, China in the north and northeast also shares its Indian border with the state of West Bengal. The major mountain peaks of Sikkim are; Khangchendzonga-8,846 m, Jonsang-7,444 m, Talung-7,351 m, Kabru-7,338 m, Siniolchu-6,887 m, Pandim-6,691 m, Rathong-6,680 m, Kaktang-6,148 m, and Simvo-6,811 m. Sikkim's two major rivers are the Teesta and the Rangeet. Almost 25% of the state is covered by the Khangchendzonga National Park. Sikkim is a small state in the north eastern India and a major portion of its total population lives in the villages, mostly located in the hilly regions. The villages of Sikkim have a rich tradition and cultural heritage and the people celebrate various fairs and festivals together. Their way of celebrating the festivals is distinct from other parts of the country. The big city and capital of Sikkim is Gangtok.

The largest town of the Indian state of Sikkim having the headquarters of the East Sikkim district Gangtok is located in the eastern Himalayan range, at an elevation of 1,650 m (5,410 ft). The town's population of 100,000.

Gangtok Population

Census	Pop.	%±
1951	2,744	—
1961	6,848	149.6%
1971	13,308	94.3%
1981	36,747	176.1%
1991	25,024	-31.9%
2001	29,354	17.3%
2011	98,658	236.1%

Population 1951–2011.

Negative growth attributed to reduction of notified town limits.

Darap is a medium size village located in Gyalshing of West Sikkim district, historically known as Therap-meaning flat land. Darap Subba Village is a small settlement of people of the Limboo community and many other small families like Bhutias, Chettris, Tamangs, Rais, Gurungs and Lepchas.

II. Material And Methods

To study the lifestyle of tribal community Darap village of west Gangtok is selected. This village has small collected community of Limboo tribes with other communities of Bhutias, Chettris, Tamangs, Rais, Gurungs and Lepchas.

The field survey is done here. By taking interview with the local people, long discussion with them many informations are collected. The information is about history, population, educational profile, gender profile also the herbal Remedies of the tribal community. Plants were collected and preserved in the form of herbarium (Jain and Rao, 1976). The entire field survey is based on the interview, observation and discussion with the local people. These local people were both tribal and non-tribal but that person who was resident of the village. The information was also collected from the old persons of the area. Quarries were repeatedly made either from same or different persons in order to fulfil the enquiries.

Darap village historically known as Therap-meaning flat land and is home to few of the Limboo people. Situated in the lap of Himalayan belt Darap is very cold village. It is at an altitude well over 1600 mts (approx.) above mean sea level, this valley is exposed to temperature variations of -05 degree centigrade to +28 degree centigrade. This makes Darap storehouse of various rare and endangered species of flora and fauna and various unique and rare aspects of the Limboo culture are well preserved in this valley. Darap village is the home of 95% of Limboo population and their rich cultural traditions.

III. Result and Discussion

Location: Located in the west of Sikkim Darap is medium size village having population 1743 in which females are 842 and males are 901 in numbers (Population Census 2011). Average Sex Ratio of Darap village is 935 which is higher than Sikkim state average of 890. Population of children is 0-6 age 208 making 11.93 % of total population of village, Child Sex Ratio for the Darap as per census is 1000, higher than Sikkim average of 957. In Darap village literacy rate is very weak as compared to Sikkim. Male literacy stands at 85.32 % while female literacy rate was 70.05 %. (Table No.1)

Limboo Tribes

Total population - 463,100

Regions with Significant population :-

Nepal	-	387,300
India	-	30,000
Languages	-	Nepali, Limbu
Religion	-	Hinduism, Shamanism, Buddhism

Limboo is an exonym of uncertain origin having meaning an archer or 'the bearer of bows and arrows'. Their approx population of 700,000 is centered on the districts of Sankhuwasabha, Tehrathum, Dhankuta, Taplejung, Morang, Sunsari, Jhapa, Panchthar and Ilam, all within the Mechi and Kosi zones in Nepal, also known as Limbuwan, as well as the East and West districts of Sikkim. Belonging to Kirat confederation they include the Rai and Sunuwar who are believed to be the descendants of the ancient Mongolian-Tibeto people and are still referred as "Mongolians" in Nepal. Limboo Clans and Tribes are divided into the Lhasa gotra (those from Lhasa, Tibet) and Yunangotra (those who come from Yunan China). The Limboo are known as dasLimboo (ten Limboo), even though there are actually thirteen Limboo sub-groups.

Limboos are one of the indigenous tribes of Sikkim belonging to Nepali stock, Mongoloid looking by figure having their own language, faith, costume, culture and life style. They are mostly found in the villages of Darap, Nambu, Simpheng, Rimbi, Heegaon, Uttarey and some in Tigjek Lingchom. These villages are in the distances of 10 to 30 kms from Pelling. Limboo language is mostly spoken in Sikkim, Kashmir and parts of Northern India, Nepal, by the Limbu community.

The Limboo tribes are said to be physically strong and independent with an open heart. Limboo women wears ankle length traditional dress (bright colour woven fabric) Sim and Hambari (Figure – 8). The Limboo men wear Po-hok-ma and 'Sumba' similar to Nepali dress i.e. Daura Suruwal. They enjoy their traditional limbo dance and song with 'Chabb-rung' (drum) in their traditional festivals and important occasions, as they are fond of folk songs and dance. Near about 95% of the tribes do farming. They cultivate wheat, buckwheat, maize, paddy, millet and cardamom mainly. They deeply believe in worship of God (their Deity). Figure- 6

Bhutia Tribes

Total population - 70,300

Languages	-	Sikkimese, Nepali, Dzongkha, Tibetan
Religion	-	Buddhism, Bön
Related ethnic groups.	-	Bhotiya

The **Bhutia** community is one of the Scheduled tribes category in Indian Constitution. Bhutias, they called themselves "Lhopo" or "Lhorees" which means "The dwellers of the southward" and one of the earliest inhabitants of "The Greater Sikkim". They originally migrated from different places of Tibet. The Bhutia live in Sikkim, Darjeeling, Nepal and surrounding areas. The Bhutia word is derived from Nepalese language which means 'original habitat of Tibet' since 13th Century. Their traditional legal system called "Dzumsa" means the meeting place of the people. 'Pipon' the village headman head the Dzumsa and full protected by the state

government by deeming a status of panchayat ward and the Papon, a status of panchayat head. In Northern Sikkim, Bhutias are known as the Lachenpas or Lachungpas, meaning inhabitants of Lachen (big pass) or Lachung (small pass). The language they speak is Sikkimese in Sikkim combination of Tibetan and Dzongkha. They are Buddhist followers of Vajrayana Buddhism. **Losar** festival marks the start of the Tibetan New Year which is celebrated in the first week of February. They celebrate it by fire dance in the evening. Another main festival celebrated by them is **Losong**, usually celebrated as the end of the Tibetan year i.e. in December. In Sikkim they celebrate it by their traditional chan dance with dance forms depicting narrativized tales from the life of Padmasambhava or Guru Ugyen. The traditional outfit of women are bakhu (a loose cloak type garment fastened at the neck on one side and near the waist with a silk/cotton belt) without sleeve with a silken full sleeve blouse known as honju, (figure- 11) a loose gown fastened tight near the waist with a belt. Married women used to wear a loose sheet of multicolored woolen cloth with exotic geometric designs is tied known as pangden. Men used to wear bakhu with loose trousers. Embroidered leather boots or footwear are worn by both men and women.

Mostly aristocrats of Bhutia used to be called as Kazis after similar land lord titles in neighbouring regions, especially in modern day Bangladesh. Bhutias depend on agriculture, dairy farming and pastoralism. They are mostly employed in the sector of Government, field of Agriculture and in the area of Business. They are often employed in government and commerce in the district of Darjeeling.

Lepcha Tribes

Total population - 30,000]–50,000

Languages - Lepcha, Sikkimese (Dranjongke), Dzongkha, Nepal

Religion - Mun, Buddhism

The **Lepcha** people themselves do not have any tradition of migration, and hence they conclude that they are aboriginal to the region, currently falling under the state of Sikkim, Darjeeling District of West Bengal, eastern Nepal and the southwestern parts of Bhutan. They may have originated in Myanmar, Tibet or Mongolia but the Lepcha people themselves firmly believe that they did not migrate to the current location from anywhere and are indigenous to the region. Some anthropologists suggest they emigrated directly from Tibet to the north, or from Eastern Mongolia, Japan or Korea etc. but the Lepcha people did not believe in this. The Lepcha have their own language, called Lepcha, they also speak Tibeto-Burman language and write in Róng or Lepcha script, which is derived from the Tibetan script. Mostly they are Buddhist brought by the Bhutias from the north, also they have today adopted Christianity. Large number of Lepchas are Christians in the Hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Men dress is the dumprá multicolored, hand-woven cloth pinned at one shoulder and held in place by a waistband with white shirt and trousers. Their cap is called thyáktuk which is flat and round with black velvet sides and a multicolored top topped by a knot. Traditional dress for women are cone-shaped hat, ankle-length dumdem which is made up of smooth cotton or silk with contrasting long-sleeved blouse.

Ornaments of Sikkim Tribes—Tribal women of Sikkim love to wear many jewels madly in their many parts of the body. **Limbu** women used to wear Ear-ring and called it Chaptasur, Nose-rings Mundari, Sangali as necklace, Bangles as Chuda (silver) and Rings as Mundaro. Limbu women are famed for their use of gold jewellery.

Namchok as ear-ring, Lyak as necklace, Gyar as bracelet etc are used as ornaments by the **Lepcha** women.

Women of **Bhutial** love to wear Yencho (earring), Khao (necklace), Phiru (pearl ornament), Diu (gold bangle), and Joko (ring).

Folk Medicinal Plants: Lacking of modern medical facilities, the tribes are here are dependent on Traditional Medicine Systems for their health-care. Near about 17 medicinal plants were recorded in west of Sikkim. (Table No.2)

Table No. 1 Darap Village Data

Village data	Male	Female	Total
Population	901	842	1743
Child (0-6)	104	104	208
Schedule Cast	18	21	39
Schedule Tribe	694	631	1325
Literacy	85.32%	70.05%	77.98%

Table No.2 Folk Medicines used by the Tribes.

S. No.	Plant Name	Local Name	Parts of Plant	Uses
1.	Curculigo orchioides (Hypoxidaceae)	Kalo	Rhizomes infusion	Gastritis and Piles problem

2.	Dactylorhizahatagirea (Orchidaceae)	Panchanguli	Tubers paste	Bone fracture, jaundice, Gastritis
3.	Nardostachysgrandiflora (Valerianaceae)	Jatamansi	Rhizomes powder	Urinary Problem, and liver complaints
4.	Hippophaesalicifolia (Elaeagnaceae)	Daalechuk	Berry (fruit) and Roots nodule	Berry part is used as juice for digestion and Root nodule are chewed against Vomiting, also remove foul smell from mouth
5.	Nardostachysjatamansi (Caprifoliaceae)	Jatamansi	Rhizomes powder	Nervous disorder
6.	Onosmahookeri (Boraginaceae)	Lalijari	Oil	Extracted oil from root are used as Hair tonic and antidandruff agent
7.	Osbeckianepalensis (Melastomataceae)	Lattey	Roots decoction	Diabetes and urinary problem
8.	Rubusellipticus (Rosaceae)	Aiselu	Roots paste	Bone fracture
9.	Taxusbaccata (Taxaceae)	Dhengresalla	Leaves and bark extracts	Breast and throat cancer
10.	Ammomumsubulatum (Zingiberaceae)	Elainchi	Seeds	Seed paste; liver tonic, bowel and appetizer [64]
11.	Ammomumaromaticum (Zingiberaceae)	Ban Elainchi	Seeds	Seed paste used in Stomach trouble, and wound
12.	Schimawallichii (Theaceae)	Chilawna	Fruits	Dandruff
13.	Peperomia reflexa (Piperaceae)	Piplay pati	Leaves	Fever
14.	Cyathula prostrate (Amaranthaceae)	Luga Kara	Shoots	Joint pain
15.	Engelhardiaspicata (Juglandaceae)	Mouwha	Green bracts	Stomach ailments and throat pain
16.	Pterisbiaurita (Pteridaceae)	Thadayuniu	Stems	Stop bleeding and infection
17.	Physalis minima (Solanaceae)	Jangaliphakphakay	Dried fruits	Toothache problems

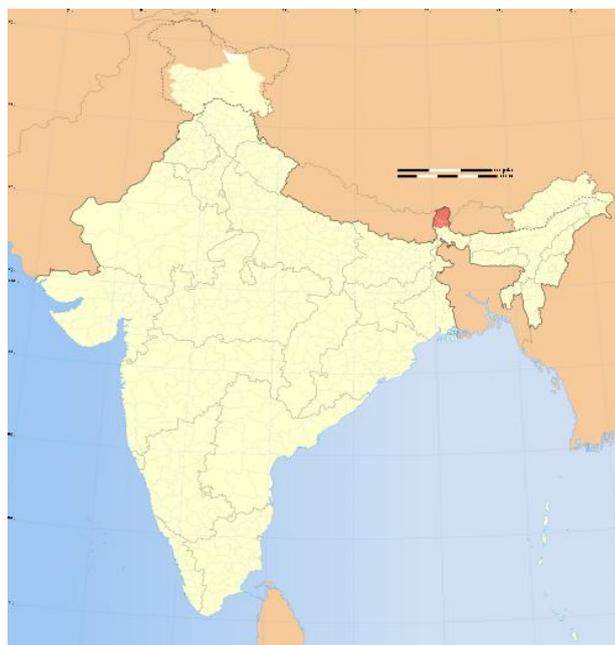


Figure – 1 Map of India showing Sikkim in red colour Area.

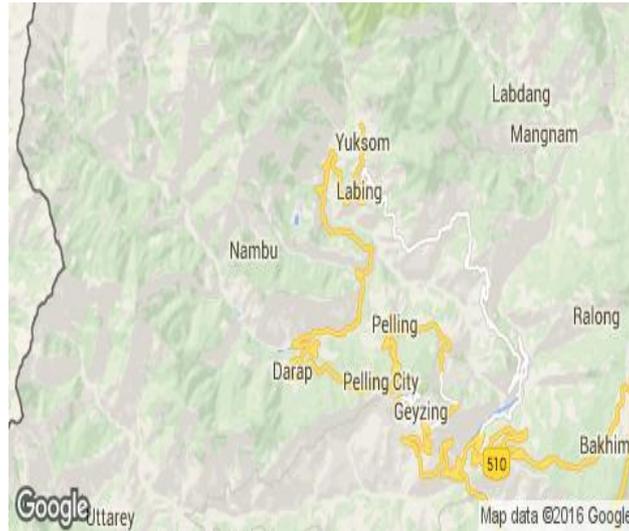


Figure – 2 Map showing Darap village of Gangtok



Figure – 3 A Limboo woman of Darap Village.



Figure – 4 A Limbooman of Darap village.



Figure– 5Limboowoman wearing their Ethnic Ornaments.



Figure -6 Deity of Limboo.



Figure – 7 A view of village Vegetation.



Figure – 8 Limboo woman wearing Traditional Dress.



Figure – 9Darap’s children enjoying dance on filmy song.



Figure – 10 Domesticated animals of Darap tribes.



Figure – 11 Woman of Bhutia Tribe.

IV. Conclusion

For these Tribal communities the Tribal welfare programs of Government is very important. Exploitation of natural resources can be controlled if this ethnic community get stability. This ethnic community has it's beautiful traditional character which can be saved if some important steps is taken by Government strictly related to their education as they are very smart and wants to live close to modern society by developing themselves as Darap is tourist place. Small children also wants to study in English medium school but they can't because of their poor economy status. For them school, hospital, employment etc are their basic needs.

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