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Title on
Constructing Social Identity: The Limbu Tribe in Darjeeling Hills
since Independence

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Statement of the Problem:

Darjeeling hill is a place of different ethnic groups. It is considered as the place of biological and cultural diversity. Among these ethnic groups, Limbus are considered one of the aboriginal tribes of Darjeeling.

The term 'Limbu' has been explained by various writers with different meanings. Some explain that the word 'Limbu' is derived from 'Li' and 'Abu'. 'Li' means 'bow', and 'Abu', meaning 'shooter'. Hence, 'Limbu' means 'bow shooter' or 'archer'. Thus, in the Limbu language, it means the person who carries a bow and arrow. In Darjeeling and Sikkim Limbus are popularly known by the name of 'Subba'.

The Limbu tribe in Darjeeling hills are living for centuries, during the colonial period they were treated as tribal people but after the independence, they were categorised as general. Since the independence of our country till 2003, the Limbu were not recognised as a scheduled tribe. Many other tribal communities were inserted in the scheduled tribal Act of 1950 but the genuine and warrior tribal community such as Limbu were blindly left out. Here, it is important to note that in spite of being aboriginal and indigenous people of Darjeeling, the Limbus have been left out and Lepchas became the only aboriginal indigenous people of Darjeeling. Thus, with time they began to lose their distinct identity through the process of acculturation with tribal and non-tribal people of the hills of Darjeeling.

Therefore, the question that looms large is what about the identity of the Limbus? Has it been totally lost under the impact of the forces of modernization and commercialization that they have been confronting in post-independence India? Is it a fact that the progress achieved in the fields of education, economy, and politics made them deprived to be inserted in the scheduled tribe list?

Thus, for the 53 years, they were considered and treated as the people of general category and after their long struggle, Limbus of Darjeeling were inserted in the scheduled tribe list of the Indian Constitution in 2003. So, there are social, economic, cultural, and political reasons behind selecting the research topic. During the 53 years, how did they become successful to preserve their tribal language, culture, and religions? How did they fight for tribal status? After getting tribal status what types of changes have come in their life? Being unreserved and being reserved what types of differences have come in their social, economic, and political life? How much have they become conscious regarding their culture? How do they use ethnomedicinal treatment?

Thus, this research work intends to know more about the changing ethnic identity of the Limbu community from tribal to general and again general to tribal status. The study also focused on the culture, economic, social, and political conditions of the Limbu community of Darjeeling hills. Here, the culture of Limbus has been viewed as a symbol used by the Limbus to fight for the tribal status and make themselves different from other communities and also helped them to get tribal status.

Area of Study:

We have located our research at hill areas of Darjeeling district. The total area of Darjeeling is 3,149 Square Km. It has a length from north to south 18 miles (29 km) and a breadth from east to west of 16 miles (26 km). It is surrounded by four neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bhutan, China, and Bangladesh. According to the census 2011 total population of Darjeeling was 1,595,181 (excluding Kalimpong).

Though the Limbu population is found scattered in both hill and plain areas of Darjeeling district. My research work is completely focused on the Limbus of the hill areas of Darjeeling district. Our research area includes those places in Darjeeling hills in which Limbus are found in the majority in rural areas such as Bijanbari, Sumbuk, Lamagoan, Bunkulung, Pachang Bazar, and Hope Town (Phoolbari) and the Limbus who are scattered in the urban areas of

Darjeeling municipality (Ghoom-Jorebanglow) Kurseong municipality. We visited all places where Limbus are found in the majority as well as in minority in order to see the variation in their tradition and cultural change.

This study has made an attempt to explore the ethnic identity of the Limbus of Darjeeling hills with the help of the historical sources and oral sources which says that not only Lepchas but Limbus were also the aboriginal tribe of Darjeeling hills. Secondly, till today, no study has been made on the Limbus' struggle for ST status and the political participation of the Limbus in the ethnic movement of Gorkhaland. Though some studies are done before, on their socio-economic condition, and their cultural life, of the Limbus of Kalimpong district.

Limitation of the Study:

The study has certain limitations like it is confined only to the hill area of Darjeeling district. A total of 500 households were taken as samples by using the purposive random sampling method.

The period has been chosen since independence to till September 2021 to understand the Limbu community and their social, cultural, economic, and political development. The period of 2003 is very significant among the Limbu community because, since 2003 the, Limbu tribe were inserted in the scheduled tribe list of the Indian constitution. From independence to 2003 Limbu community had lost their ethnic identity, as the original tribal inhabitant of Darjeeling and they remained as a non-tribal community till 2003.

So, the study has mostly focused on the post-2003 period, immediately after the inclusion of the Limbus in the scheduled tribe list of the Indian constitution for a better understanding of the social and economic status of the Limbus, their cultural status, and changes. Their struggle for ST status, their political participation, and the health care system with the help of field study and secondary sources. Simultaneously, historical backgrounds are also discussed for a proper understanding of the current statement of the problem.

Simple statistical tools are used to analyze data.

Literature review:

We have reviewed the three categories of books. In the first category, we have reviewed the books and journals based on the Limbu community, secondly, books of Darjeeling, and the third one is books belonging to tribal people of Darjeeling as well as India.

Chemjong Iman Singh, "*The History and Culture of Kirat People*"(1967) written in English was published in 1967 A.D. The book has two parts. The first part of the book contains two chapters. The first chapter mainly dealt with the historical period of Kirat, their culture, religious marriage, and death rites, and the second chapter mainly discussed the coming of the Limbus, the birth of their name, social custom of the Limbus, and their different forms of dances. The Second part provides valuable information on various Kirat kings and their achievements and the Gurkha invasion. Chemjong has divided the revolution of the Kirat people into four parts and has claimed that Phunshuk Namgyal to be the king of all Sikkim including the Northern part of Limbuwan. The author writes that during the time of integration, Gorkha king Prithivi Narayan Shah brought all the Kirat Kingdoms into one unity with the common name of Gorkhas.

Subba. J.R. "*The Philosophy and Concept of Yuma Samyo Tradition*" (2005) we can get detailed information about the Limbu religion. The book has contained seven chapters and Five Appendix. In chapter one, the author has given the introduction of Yuma Samyo Tradition (Yumaism) and in chapter two he has clearly mentioned the concept of God according to Yuma Samyo Traditions. In chapters three and four we can get information about the creation of the universe and the concept of life and destiny in Yuma Samyo tradition and in chapters five, six, and seven we can get the concept of soul, afterlife, and purpose and meaning of life in Yuma Samyo tradition. One of the interesting things we found in this book is that from chapters three to seven we can not only get religious information about the Limbu Tribe but the author has made every possible effort to write about the concept of the other religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrian, and Judaism. Overall, we can say that this book is very helpful to get information about the Limbu tribal religion as well as other religions. In this book, the author has made beautiful comparative studies of all religions so that we can understand the true meaning of religion. Most of his books are based on the Limbu religion (Yumaism) and its Mundhum. He has published three and four analysis books on Yumaism Mundhum namely "*Cognitive and social Function*" New Delhi (2009.) secondly "*Yumaism, the Limbu Way of life- A Philosophical Analysis*" Sikkim (2012.). In this book, the writer has attempted a structured approach to exploring the conceptual beliefs, ethic ideas, elementary ideas or folk ideas, including supernatural powers such as the Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, other supernatural powers, and spirituality, the Eight Souls tradition (Yetchham Thim), the eighteen stages of life and other spiritual practices of Yumaism. It also explores the origin of matriarchy in Yumaism, indigenous knowledge of food and other

livelihood bio-resources management culture, and origin, pre-history, and history of the Limbu (Subba) tribe.

Subba.J.R., “*The Limbu of the Eastern Himalayan with special reference to Sikkim* “, (1999) (*Sikkim Yakthung Mundhum Saptopa*) this book is mainly based on the Limbu life, cultures, Customs, belief system, Yumaism religion, and its philosophy and teaching of West Sikkim. This book has been divided into thirty-one chapters in which the author has nicely described the original homeland of Limbu and Limbuwan, the history of Kirat, and Limbu as an original inhabitant of Sikkim, and the unified treaty of Lho-Men-Tsong sum. This work then goes on to discuss the economic, social, cultural, folklore, literature, languages, and religion. This book is very much helpful for Limbu people who want to know about their culture and for any scholar who wants to know in detail about the Limbu tribe and their cultures. It is an information-packed book of the Limbu tribe.

Northey W Brook and Morris C.J. in their combined book “*The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country*” (1927), give a full account of the Gurkha dynasty and Nepal. The authors have discussed in detail its government, administration, tribes inhabiting it, and also discussed on a lucid account of the rise of the Gurkha dynasty. In chapter fifteen authors have discussed in detail the Limbu Tribe, their origin, their country “Limbuwan” their war against the Gurkhas, and their customs. Authors write about Limbu and their country that Limbuwan, or the country of Limbus, lies between the River Arun on the West, and the Singalela ridge on the East. About the Limbu people the authors write “Limbus were first known by the name of Yakthumba, and they are descended from ten brothers. With these ten brothers came three spiritual advisers. These thirteen men were all residents of Benares, and they agreed to make themselves homes in the mountain of Nepal. The first five brothers and their descendants are called Kashigotra, and the second five brothers and their descendants are called Lhasagotra because they respectively journeyed from Banaras to Tibet and from Lhasadinga to Nepal. Now, these ten brothers settled in a place called Ambepojoma Kamketlangma Sumhalangma. The ten brothers had many children, and their descendants multiplied very quickly, till they became a nation and were called Limbus. Besides their original authors have also vividly described the customs of the Limbu tribe.

Risely, H.H. in his “*The Tribe and Caste of Bengal*” (1892) is full of discussion regarding the tribal and caste of Bengal. About the Limbu tribe of West Bengal author has written that the Limbu (meaning archer) belongs to the Kiranti Group or Kirat confederation. The Yakkhas,

the Limbus, the Rai, and the Sunwar are together known as Kirat. The Limbu, probably of Mongolian descent ranking next to the Khambu (Rai) and above the Yakkha among the three upper divisions of the Kiranti Group the name Limbu or Das Limbu from the ten Sub-tribes (really - thirteen) into which they are supposed to be divided, is used only by outsiders. The Lepchas and Bhotias of Tibetans settled in Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal speak of the Limbus as 'Tsong', because the five thums or sub-tribes included in the class known as 'Lhasha-Gotra', emigrated to Eastern Nepal from the district of Tsong in Tibet. Lepchas call them Chang, which may be a corruption of Tsong. By other Members of the Kiranti Group, they are addressed by the honorific title of Subba or Suffah, a chief. Further, he writes that they have their own Tibetan - Burman dialect called Yakthungpan, and also have their own script and their indignity is based on Gotra. Among the ten Sub-tribes (really thirteen) five came from 'Lhasha' called 'Lhasha Gotra' and five from Banaras called 'Khashi Gotra'.

Malley, L S S O' "*Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling* (1907). This book has been divided into sixteen chapters. This Gazetteer book provides a wealth of material on all aspects of the regions covered by their districts or provinces. The sixteen chapters of the book give detailed information about the physical aspects, history, people, public health, flora and fauna, tea industry, different types of administrations, and education. About the Limbu tribe author has written in page number 29 that, "Formerly, beyond a few Lepchas and Limbus with their little clearings in the forests, and occasional raid from Nepal or stray visitor from the table-lands of Tibet, the Darjeeling Hills were practically uninhabited". So, this historical writing of Malley helps the Limbus of Darjeeling to identify themselves as the aboriginal indigenous people of Darjeeling.

Ray, Ranjana (ed.) "*Tribal Health Care System. A Tribute to P.O. Bodding*" (2019) the book is an outcome of an International Seminar which was dedicated as a tribute to P.O. Bodding, who was a linguist, ethnographer, and folklorist who has done a deep study on the health care system of Santal tribal group. The book explores a wide range of work on indigenous health care, disease, cure, and remedies on numerous tribes of India. This book will help all those researchers and readers who want to know about the traditional medicines system and health care of tribal people.

Middleton Townsend and Shneiderman Sara "*Darjeeling Reconsidered Histories Politics, Environment* (2018). This is the new book written on Darjeeling with a new perspective. The book rethinks Darjeeling's status in the postcolonial imagination. The book has been divided

into three sections. The first section Histories of Exception comprises three chapters related to the history of Darjeeling, About the people author has written that Limbu and Lepchas were the original inhabitants of Darjeeling. The second section, Politics and Social Movement contains five chapters that are mainly based on the political movement of Gorkhaland. The third section of the book comprises three chapters related to the environment and Labour. The author has mentioned that the book has two goals, first, it explores how perspectives from the contemporary social science and humanities may open up a new understanding of Darjeeling 's past, present, and future. Second, to ask what Darjeeling might teach us about South Asia, the Himalayan region, and the postcolonial world more generally.

Liwang, Min book's "*Gorkha A Glance at their Culture and Traditions*" (2008) is based on the customs traditions and cultures of the Gorkha (Nepali) community. The author has divided the Gorkha community into two different races. The Aryans and the Non-Aryans. Under the Aryans falls Chettri, Bahun, Thakuri and under Non-Aryans falls, Gurung, Magar, Pradhan, Tamang, Bhutia, Limbu Rai etc. The author has discussed customs, traditions, and culture of every Aryan and non-Aryan race of Gorkha community like their language, scripts religions, birth marriages, death, festivals, dress food, ornaments, weapon tools, Jewellery, house, utensils, etc. I would like to say that this book is a treasure of information about the Gorkha community.

Subba, T.B. on his book "*Ethnicity State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*" (1992). Has discussed about the Gorkhaland movement of Darjeeling hills. The history of Gorkhaland movement starting from the evolution of the Gorkha identity, ethnic movement in Darjeeling hills, towards conciliation, the politics of expediency, impact of the movement, and lastly the media and the movement , the Gorkhaland movement and its related political aspects are deeply expressed, the importance of the statehood, the identity of the Gorkhas and movement of the Gorkhaland from the Theoretical perspective have been described, the role of the different Political parties such as GNLF for launching the movement and CPIM for the suppressing the movement and how the expression of the media were being utilised in opposing and spreading the movement.

Singh, K.S. "*The Scheduled Tribes (people of India. National Series Volume iii)*" (1997) has generated a wealth of information on the hundreds of tribes that exist in this country. The name of the all-tribal communities is presented in alphabetical order and the author has discussed all

aspects of culture and society, location, language, script, biological variation, educational level, and impact of the development of all the tribal people of India. But unfortunately, we, could not find the name of the Limbu as a tribe of India, it might be that Limbus were not inserted in the scheduled tribes' list of the Indian constitution when the author was doing an Anthropological Survey of India.

Bagchi, Romit “*Gorkhaland Crisis of statehood*” (2012). The book has been divided into four parts. In part I: which contains the topic ‘The Moving Trajectory’, here the author has started from historical and assimilations of Darjeeling and discussed up to Madam Tamang’s assassination and its possible impact on the hill politics and in part II ‘Shifting Scores’, the author has covered the whole activities of GJMM and in part in part III ‘Reflections’ where the author has mentioned about the Black Darjeeling, Legends and Darjeeling and Darjeeling Beckons and lastly in part IV contain the topic ‘Views’ here the author has written views of different political leaders of Darjeeling hills and North Bengal. This book is an attempt by an author to present the Gorkhaland Movement of the Nepali-speaking community of the Darjeeling hills from different new perspectives.

Limbu Dil Kumar & Basanta Kumar Rai, “*Ethno-Medicinal Practices among the Limbu Community in Limbuwan, Eastern Nepal*”, (2013) in their research paper they have written exclusively on the ethnomedicinal practices among the Limbu community. They further write that they have documented 225 species of medicinal plants from their study areas which are used for the treatment of 48 disorders in the Limbu community. They have nicely described the treatment of different diseases by different medicinal plants among the Limbu people. They have mentioned that the Limbu religious priest and Shaman used all these plants for the treatment of diseases and sometimes they also recite some magical words called mantra during the treatment.

Chatterjee, Suniti Kumar, “*Kirata-Jana-Kriti, The Indo Mongoloids*” (1951) is said to be an authentic account of the history of Kirata. It provides valuable information on the Mongoloid in Ancient India as Kirata and also the meaning of the word Kirata. Chatterjee has mentioned that the first word ‘Kirata ’has been used in Vedic literature Yajurveda. He further writes that Kirata indicated the wild non-Aryan tribes living in the mountains particularly the Himalayas and in the North-Eastern areas of India who were Mongoloid in origin.

Mullard, Saul, “*Opening the Hidden Land: State formation and the construction of Sikkimese*” (2011) has discussed in detail the construction of Sikkimese history on the basis of religious

and political concern. The book also deals on how and why traditional historiography was developed and continued with the Tibetan understanding of state, kingship, and the role of Buddhism in justifying political administration as well as social stratification and also has discussed the economy of pre-modern Sikkim. Mullard has also made critical analysis on the importance of 'Lho-Mon-Gtsong Gsum', an Agreement between the Phunshuk Namgyal and two other indigenous Lepcha and Limbu people.

Research Gaps in the Literature:

Though all these books give lots of information about Limbus culture, tradition and religion, and tribal people of India until date no research work is done on the Limbus of Darjeeling as an indigenous inhabitant of Darjeeling, their political processes, the ethnomedical beliefs, and practices of the Limbu community of Darjeeling hills. There are many historical writings on Darjeeling in which it has been written that Limbus were the original inhabitant of Darjeeling like Lepcha and oral tradition also supports it. There has not been any significant research work on the Limbus' social, economic, cultural, and religious lives after getting tribal status in Darjeeling. What types of changes have come in their socio-economic conditions and how they have been able to preserve their culture and language when they were as general category people? The Limbus are not active in the political arena of the hills. The Limbus are marginalized because of the presence of other oldest, superior, and advanced tribal communities in the hills of Darjeeling.

So, we find that there are research gaps in matters of their socio-economic condition before and after getting the tribal status of the Limbu tribe of Darjeeling hills, their declining linguistic status, their cultural changes, their ethnomedicinal beliefs and practices, their struggles for inclusion in scheduled tribe list of Indian constitution and changes in their political participation in the ethnic movement. So, the present study has been a humble attempt to fill up these research gaps to some extent.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this research are to know more about the history of the Limbu tribe of Darjeeling hills. The study has focused on the transforming socio-economic condition of the

Limbu tribe in different ways. To find the actual scenario of linguistic status and changing cultural dimension about Limbu tribe of Darjeeling hills. The study also focused on indigenous treatment which are withering away slowly from society and marginalised political activity and the Political role of Limbus in the ethnic movement. The major focus of study can be enumerated as follows:

- 1) To examine the Limbu as the original inhabitant of Darjeeling.
- 2) To examine the basic demographic attributes and socio-economic and cultural status of the Limbu tribe in the hills of Darjeeling on the basis of field study
- 3) To analyze the social and economic development of the Limbus before and after inclusion in the scheduled tribe list.
- 4) To assess the ethnomedicinal treatment and medicine system of the Limbu tribe of Darjeeling Hill
- 5) To find out the political participation of Limbus in Darjeeling hills
- 6) To develop a well-written document of the Limbu community for future references to the forthcoming researchers, educationists, and Government and non-government officials.

Research Questions: To fulfill the objectives of the present study, we have formulated the following research questions.

1. Were the Limbus people indigenous tribe of Darjeeling like Lepchas?
2. Does the Limbu community migrate to various parts of India from their ancestral land with special reference to Darjeeling hills?
3. What were the livelihood practices of the Limbu tribe? Is the Limbu language under the threat of extinction?
4. What are the indigenous treatments of the Limbu tribe?
5. Does Limbu of Darjeeling politically marginalize?
6. How far has the Limbu community benefited from the Scheduled Tribe status?

Hypothesis:

We can assume the following hypothesis of the present research paper:

1. Limbus are the indigenous tribe of Darjeeling along with Lepchas.
2. Socio-Economic status of the Limbu people of Darjeeling hills has been changed after getting tribal status.
3. They are very conscious regarding their language and script and always preserved their culture and religion and their unique culture help them to get tribal status
4. Limbu tribe of Darjeeling is very conscious regarding their health and hygiene.
5. Limbus of Darjeeling are politically marginalized.
6. Limbu tribal peoples' conservative nature is responsible for their indigenous treatment practices in their society.

Methodology:

The present research has been agglomerated various data from primary as well as secondary sources of information.

Primary Sources:

The primary data for the study was collected through a sample survey and fieldwork. Interviews have been conducted mostly structured interviews and, in some cases, unstructured interviews. The basic primary data is based on a house-to-house census survey which helped to know demographic as well as the socio-economic condition of Limbus of Darjeeling.

Secondary Sources:

Secondary data were collected from published documents of Government Departments such as the Census Report, District Statistical Hand Book, District Census Handbook, District Gazetteers, and information collected from offices like Panchayat offices and Municipality, etc. Published books, book chapters, articles journals, unpublished Ph.D. thesis were chiefly consulted for the study. To obtain inclusive data various libraries like the National Library of Kolkata, Central Library of Jadavpur University, Departmental library of Jadavpur University,

District library of Darjeeling, Rural Library of Sonada, Bijanbari and Sumbuk in Darjeeling district were also visited. Some secondary and primary sources have been accessed through the internet as in the case of the online resources of JSTOR, DOAJ, JURN, and Shodhganga, etc.

Sampling Procedure:

A sample size of 500 households has been selected where Limbus are found in the majority. The Limbu community mainly resides in the rural areas, so in panchayat areas of Bijanbari, Ringtong T.E (Sonada, Pachang Bazar, Phoolbari), Mirik (Bunkulung Busty) where Limbu are in respectable majority have been interviewed as the primary source of information. The Limbus who are scattered in the urban areas of Darjeeling Municipality (Ghoom-Jorebanglow) Kurseong Municipality have been interviewed. Religious priests, Tumiyanghaang (Limbu elderly men) were interviewed. Ceremonial functions of Limbus have been attended. Presidents and Secretary of Limbu Associations of Darjeeling, Ghoom-Jorebanglow, Kurseong, and President of All India Bhartiya Limbu Association were interviewed and their interviews were supplemented by the documentary sources. Oral history and case studies also helped in revealing the socio-economic and cultural condition of the Limbus community of Darjeeling hills.

Method of Data Analysis:

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The quantitative and qualitative data were collected from sample households through schedule interviews, Census Report, District Statistical Hand Book, District Gazetteers and Published books, book chapters, articles journals, etc. The collected data were thoroughly checked, compiled, and tabulated to make the data set suitable for analysis. The data has been analyzed through descriptively and simple statistics methods (i.e., Bar Graph, Pie Chart, Clustered Bar and Mean). Data processing was performed with the help of a simple calculator, computer, and other electronic and manual devices. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis technique has been undertaken.

Chapterisation:

Introduction

CHAPTER I: Ethnographic Study of the Limbu Tribe: A Brief Outline

CHAPTER II: Socio-Economic Status of Limbu Community of Darjeeling Hills

CHAPTER III: The Cultural Changes of the Limbu Tribe of Darjeeling Hills

CHAPTER IV: Health, Hygiene, Indigenous and Ethnomedicinal Treatment of Limbu Tribe
of Darjeeling Hills

CHAPTER V: Role of Limbu Tribe in Ethnic Movement of Darjeeling Hills

Summary of finding, Recommendation

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In research work organization of the study has played a very vital and important role. This research work has been divided into five chapters, excluding introduction and conclusion, on the basis of extensive field studies among the Limbu community of Darjeeling hills and secondary sources.

Introduction:

Introduction' starts with the introduction of the Limbu tribe and main areas of research and its basic problems. It has also included the review of literature, research gap, the objectives of the present research, the research questions, hypothesis and methodology, and the brief discussion of the different chapters and research findings and recommendations.

Chapter I: Ethnography Study of the Limbu Tribe: A Brief Outline

The first chapter has dealt with the ethnographic study of Limbus of Darjeeling. The study has focused on the Etymology of Limbu, the origin of Limbu, their country Limbuwan, Limbu as Kiranti, their cultural life including Limbu dance and songs, dress, ornaments, food habits, festivals, marriages, religion, religious priest, Maangheem, the birth of a child, language and funeral. The study also focused on the ethnic identity of Limbus of Darjeeling, Limbu as the original inhabitant of Darjeeling along with Lepchas, their affinity with Lepchas, their struggle

for including them in the scheduled tribe list of the Indian constitution. Regarding their original homeland, various writers and historians have written many books and their writing has now become a dominant story. Such writing helps to re-defined and re-interpreted the identity issue and original inhabitant of the Limbu tribe of Darjeeling hills.

Chapter II: Socio-Economic Status of the Limbu Tribe of Darjeeling Hills

The second chapter deals with the demographic and socio-economic profile of Limbus. This chapter depicted the demography of Limbu such as age and sex ratio, the family size, head of the family, their marital status of the Limbu of Darjeeling hills. The social and economic status of Limbu has been presented through different occupations and their income and expenditure, their livestock, house pattern, landholding, sanitation facilities, the lifestyle of villagers, various amenities, and health and entertainment enjoyed by the limbu. The educational status of the Limbu has been studied through their rate of literacy and illiteracy ratio, level of educational achievement, reservation and educational opportunities and we have also discussed the status of Limbu women, their equal rights and freedom with men, their inheritance of property, divorce system and status of the widow of limbu in Darjeeling hills.

Chapter III: The Cultural Changes of the Limbu Tribal Community of Darjeeling Hills since Independence

This chapter deals with the different aspects of the culture and traditions of the Limbu tribes of Darjeeling hills. The cultural attributes are depicted on the basis of the linguistics status of Limbu at present in Darjeeling hills through statistical data. Reading and writing ability of the Srijunga script by the Limbu tribe, their communication skill and methods in different other languages have been covered. To know about the religion of the Limbu, the Limbu religion of Yumaism has been discussed, the study also focused on their religious priests, and their religious temple called ‘Maangheem’, Their belief system in nature worship and animal worship, and their changing religious interest have also been discussed, this chapter also focused on the festivals, Limbu songs, dances and dresses, their attire and ornaments. Here we have also discussed the Limbu Development Board and its merits and demerits.

Chapter IV. Health, Hygiene, Indigenous and Ethnomedicinal Treatment of Limbu Tribe of Darjeeling Hills

The fourth chapter has been divided into three sections. First section deals with the consciousness of Limbu about their health and sanitation system with statistical data. We have tried to present a true picture of sanitations among the Limbus, their health and hygienic through the study of their daily life routine, whether they have sanitation facilities at home or not, sources of safe drinking water, habits of daily toothbrush and bath, etc. In the second section, we have focused on their indigenous treatment for different-different diseases. How and which medicinal plant they use for the treatment of diseases have also been discussed. First of all, they follow their religious priest and after that, they used medicinal plants, and lastly, they go to the allopathic treatment. The Phedangbas play a very important role in their indigenous treatment. Here, we have explored more than 30 diseases and their treatment by the ethnomedicinal plant. In the third section, we have discussed women's health care system through the study of their daily behavioral study. Sanitation habits during their mensuration and at the time of delivery of the child have been discussed, preferences of women for delivery at home and hospital have been covered.

Chapter V: Role of the Limbu Tribe in the Ethnic Movement

Here in the chapter, we have explored the historical background of the ethnic movement of Darjeeling hills and the political participation of the Limbu tribe in the ethnic movement. Their understanding of the Gorkhaland movement and their participation in the movement as political activists, apolitical, and a spectator has been shown. Their participation in the democratic processes such as elections and voting behaviours have also been discussed. Those Limbus who lost their life (martyrs in view of the Limbus) during the movement has also been discussed. We have also inquired how the Limbus are taking interest in the local government institutions such as GTA, DGHC, Panchayat Raj, and Municipality. How Limbus of Darjeeling is politically marginalized has also been discussed.

Summary of Finding and Recommendation:

The conclusion has been reached on the basis of the field survey and the secondary sources which verified the research questions and hypothesis and the different chapters of the study have been discussed briefly and suggestions are placed in the concluding chapter.

Research Finding:

The present study on “*Constructing Social Identity: Limbu Tribe in Darjeeling Hills since Independence*”, is a humble attempt to explore the Limbus as the ethnic original inhabitants of Darjeeling hills and being tribal and non-tribal what types of changes have come in their political, social, economic, cultural life with the help of field survey, interview, literary sources, and oral narratives.

We found that Limbus of Darjeeling always claimed that they are also an original inhabitant of Darjeeling hills along with the Lepcha and there are many historical writings and oral narratives which also support their claims.

In the matters of the tribal status for Limbu in 1950, we found that the secretary and president of Limbu associations and elderly Limbus clearly stated there was a misconception among limbu that they thought that scheduled tribe means very lowest caste in the society, and if they accept it, they would be lower caste in the society so they declined to accept it. All these narrations are based on oral narratives and there are no written documents.

It was the year 1993, for the first time Limbu Association of Kurseong raised their voice for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list of the Indian constitution. In our research work, we found that previously all these Limbus were divided into many associations like Limbu Association of Kurseong, Limbu Association of Darjeeling, Limbu Association of Kalimpong, Limbu Association of Siliguri, and Limbu Association of Jalpaiguri but later they decided to merge into one association and on 15/01/1995 at Darjeeling Dukh Niwarak Sammelan they organized the conference of all the Limbu association and founded the one association of ‘*All India Limbu Tribal Association*’ and under this banner, they began to fight for tribal status and finally they were successful to insert the Limbu community in the scheduled tribe list of Indian Constitution.

We have done the field survey to know about the demography and socio-economic profile of the Limbus of Darjeeling hills. To get a clear idea of the socio-economic conditions of the Limbus of Darjeeling hills a survey including 500 households from Darjeeling District’s selected villages were carried out and found that the majority of Limbu populations are concentrated in rural areas. The total population of the Limbu tribe in our sample households are 2237. Here we found that the 49.4% male and 50.5% female populations. We found that the female ratio is slightly more than male and young population are larger than old population.

The Family pattern of Limbu showed that 95.2% belong to nuclear family and only a few families were found living together.

We found that they follow the monogamy system of marriage system and their form of marriage is mostly based on elopement and 79.79% of Limbus have got married through elopement. It is because elopement is part of the Limbu marriage culture.

The literacy rate among the Limbus has been increased, previously the literacy rate was very low among Limbu, 18% in Darjeeling Sadar and 14% in Kurseong subdivision whereas we found that 48.9% male and 51.27% female are literate in our research study which indicate the improvement in their education system.

Economically the Limbu are dependent on Tea Garden and agriculture, daily wages, carpenter, driver, etc, and the young generation always preferred to join the Indian Army. We found that 34% of households' monthly income was less than 5000, 31.4% of households' income is between 5001 to 10000

Among the 500 households of Limbus of Darjeeling 84.6% of Limbus strictly followed their culture and tradition at home. Limbus tribe have their own language and we found that only 38.8% of Limbus of Darjeeling can speak their language and 53.6% of Limbus of Darjeeling cannot speak their language. Total 95.2% limbu among the 500 households who followed their own religion 'Yumaism and others follow "Satyahangma" and other religions.

The study also brings out the true picture of indigenous treatment which is prevailed among the Limbu tribal community of Darjeeling hills. We found that they have their own cultural and social practices to treat various illnesses. They follow the two types of indigenous treatment. First, they prefer the treatment of Phedangba (Shamans), and second, treatment is by Paharay Dabai (herbal medicinal plants). We found that 97.6% of respondents preferred their first-hand treatment should be done by their religious priests like Phedhangba, Dhami or local priest, Mata and Bhaun Baje (Hindu priest), etc. After that, if patients did not recover from illness, then they would take them for modern treatment. We also found that there are 0.6% of Limbu people who do not believe in religious priests like Phedhangba, Dhami or local priests, Mata and Bhaun Baje, etc. They preferred medical science treatment instead of indigenous treatment.

The Limbus are participating in the ethnic movements due to political compulsions; however, they are more or less passive as far as participation in the local government and other local

institutions are concerned. In the ethnic movement, the Limbu of Darjeeling are politically marginalized, 83.8% of Limbu are conscious about the ethnic movement of Darjeeling hills. But they are not so active in politics and support the ethnic of Darjeeling passively. In our survey, we found that there are only 7% of Limbus are active members in the Gorkhaland movement but 73.4% of Limbus are passive party members. There are 3.4% of Limbu people also who are totally apolitical.

The finding of the research work shall be helpful for the planning and policymakers to understand this community for their development and this work also will be helpful for upcoming scholars who want to know more about the Limbu tribe of Darjeeling hills.

Recommendations/Suggestions:

- (a) Government and local bodies should conduct the awareness programme among the tribal communities of Darjeeling hills. The contents of the programme should include gender equality, political participation, health hygiene and malnutrition, education, economic self-sustainability, tourism, village tourism, women and child trafficking, drug abuse, self-help group, MSME, women's empowerment, human rights, and so on.
- (b) Government should take initiative for the preservation of ethnomedicinal plants used by tribal people. Traditional knowledge systems should be carefully documented for the next generation.
- (c) An immediate step should be taken by the All-India Limbu Association with the help of the West Bengal Government for the preservation, promotion, and development of the Limbu language, literature, culture, and tradition.
- (d) As most of the Limbu children do not understand the Limbu language, so, the curriculum and textbooks for the basic level education should be developed by West Bengal Government in such a way that it should make compulsory to learn the traditional language. In this context, West Bengal Government can take ideas from Sikkim Government who has already started to teach the Limbu language in Sikkim from primary level to PG level.

(e) A documentation project should be launched to preserve the Limbu language, rituals, Limbu dance, songs, dress, and cultural Programme, which will be the biggest treasures for coming generations.

(f) 31.60% Limbus of the study areas are depended on agriculture for their livelihood. They are following the traditional method for cultivation and depend on rain-fed. Thus, the government should take steps to minimize their problem by providing alternative irrigation facilities and a new method of cultivation.

(g) 21.80% Limbus of the study areas are depended on tea plantations for their livelihood. Unfortunately, tea garden planters are given meager wages which is not sufficient for their daily life so the owner of the tea Estates should increase the wages of the workers as per the minimum wage scheme.

(h) Limbu Association must form a trust for the economic development. They should ask some affluent tribals of their society to contribute financially. The total collected cash can be deposited in the bank account or that can also be given to needy as a loan which will fetch huge interest in their account, in this way the trust can perform many social, educational, cultural and religious Programme without collecting donation every time.

To sum up, Limbu culture, language, tradition, and society are a cluster of multi-ethnic. multi-religion, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural heritage of Darjeeling hills. So, Limbus of Darjeeling always should be aware and active for social, economic, cultural, political, and linguistic upliftment and preservation. On the other side, the Government sector should also play an active role to preserve and develop the Limbus' cultural heritage by providing beneficial opportunities.

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