Lepchas in Kalimpong District: An Ethno-methodological Analysis

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Abstract—**Lepchas are the original inhabitants of Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills and have an important place in the historical narrative of the region. Colonial discourses of British administrators have mostly typecast Lepchas as "quiet" and "shy". Contemporary politics has however shed a different light on the community which has begun to assert its distinct identity without any apologies. In the wake of the Gorkhaland movement, dominant majority in Darjeeling hills comprising of Nepalis co-opted the Lepchas within larger Gorkha identity. This was done through a process of a liberal interpretation of Nepali identity consisting of various ethnic groups. Lepchas who did not openly resist the assimilation within the Nepali/Gorkha community are now beginning to assert their distinctness. In 2008 most of the minority communities like Lepchas, did not support separate state demand of Gorkhaland within the Indian Union. Despite being in numerical minority, Lepchas have started intervening effectively in the politics of Darjeeling hills. Ethnicity and identity issues have led to the establishment of organisations like Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association and Mayel Lyang Lepcha Development Board which are leading to increase consciousness among Lepchas about their crisis of identity during the age of globalization. Mayel Lyang Lepcha Development Board was a huge milestone for Lepcha community hitherto perceived as docile and accommodating by colonial discourses. This paper proposes to investigate how ethnicity and identity have an important role to play in the political outlook and participation of the Lepchas in Darjeeling Hills. The question of how Lepcha identity as moulded by colonial discourses have been responded to, refuted, and revised by the community will also be looked into.**

Index Terms—**Colonial Discourse, Ethnicity, Identity, Lepchas**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Lepchas are the indigenous inhabitants of Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills. They call themselves '*Mutanchi RongKup RumKup*' meaning 'mother's loved ones, children of the snowy peaks, and children of God' [i] and their country 'Mayel Lyang'. 'Mayel Lyang' extended from the Himalayas in the north to 'Titaliya', in the south (now in north western Bangladesh). In the east it was said to begin from 'Gipmochi' mountain, the trijunction of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet to the river Arun of Nepal in the west. This vast Lepcha kingdom was formerly known as '*Nye Mayel Renjyong Lyang*' literally meaning 'holy, hidden, eternal land of the gentlemen'. Today, the Lepchas in short call it 'Mayel Lyang.'

The Lepchas being numerically weaker have been considered as not having a noticeable political presence in the Hills (Thakur, 1998: 131). However, with the increase in the number of educated Lepcha youths the Lepchas have become politically conscious with the passage of time. The Lepcha people's awareness to lend continuity to their culture, language and identity can be traced back to the formation of the Lepcha association 'Mutanchi Rong Shezum' back in 1925. The 'Lungten Chok Lee' was also established in 1967 by A. R. Foning to revive Lepcha language and culture. The Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association was launched in 1990s and formally registered in 2004 (Arora and Jayaram, 2017:90).

Article 350A of the Indian Constitution declares endeavours shall be made towards providing adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education in order to protect tribal languages and culture (Thakur, 1998:162). In Sikkim, Lepcha language is being taught right up to university level but in the Darjeeling hills it is not even taught at the primary level. The marginalization of the Lepchas in terms of their language, culture and politics has disadvantaged them no doubt. However, in contemporary times, one can consider how identity politics particularly ethnic identity in the context of the

Lepcha community has influenced the Lepcha community and, in many ways, worked to its advantage.

II. LEPCHAS IN COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSE

Linda M. Alcoff argues that the narratives that are produced by colonization involve a glossing over of the truth, while the contestation of colonial power involves recovering or disclosing truths (as cited in Medina, 2004:94). Prem K. Poddar and T. B. Subba also contend that there is the existence of what they term as 'home grown orientalism'; Indian scholars are caught up in the tyranny of the Orientalist discourse in which they were educated. They are Orientals in that they have been 'othered' in the discourse of the West about India; they are Orientalists in that they study and 'other' their objects of study-the subordinate (in this case, Himalayan) Orientals (Poddar and Subba, 1991:1).

This paper is based on ethnomethodology, an approach developed by Harold Garfinkel which deploys a 'sociological attitude' on the part of the researcher to grasp the perspective of the actors so as to produce descriptions of social organization that the actors themselves recognize and consider relevant (Lehn, 2017:234). In this paper, the perspective of the Lepchas regarding their place in the society and their lived experiences have been taken into account. The paper seeks to analyse the ways in which the Lepcha community has responded to colonial discourses of identity and the methods that the Lepchas have adopted in order to safeguard their interests in the contemporary society. Secondary sources as well as primary sources like observation, newspapers, informal talks and–interviews have been used in the completion of this paper. The description and analysis are contextual taking into account the Lepchas of Kalimpong District, West Bengal.

When the British consolidated its rule in India, they did not just conquer the geographical territory. Bernard Cohn argues that British authorities in India came to construct a knowledge of the peoples they governed that served their own needs and purposes. As a result, the British appropriated indigenous practices and beliefs within the 'discursive formation' of the West; Indian forms of knowledge were reshaped into European objects (Kennedy, 1991: 57).

Indian hill stations in the early nineteenth century were centers of recuperation and recreation but soon the hill stations acquired reputations as exclusive enclaves of British life. Shimla, Darjeeling, and Ootacamund were the most prominent of these highland retreats. The social, political and symbolic importance of these places or hill stations to the British gave them 'the crucial context within which their indigenous inhabitants were described, defined, confined, reduced and ultimately recast' (Kennedy, 1991:57- 59).

The Lepchas of Darjeeling[ii] were described by the British as honest, happy, gentle, candid people. Joseph Dalton Hooker found the Lepchas to be 'amiable and obliging, frank, humorous, and polite.' Lepchas were described as being very cheerful, as being happy with what they had with little or no anxiety. It goes without saying that Hooker was writing his journals for European readers. He compares the Himalayas with the Swiss Alps and though the Himalayas are greater in height and in extent than the Alps he says that the Alps are far more beautiful (Hooker, 1854:123).

Hooker, in his journals has classified and categorised the people of the Himalayas with an oriental gaze. His writings reinforce the fact that knowledge about the orient was indeed dear to the colonisers and that it played a vital role in the growth and sustenance of the Raj. W. W. Hunter also reiterates Hooker's observations, arguing Lepchas were a frank race, free and naturally open hearted. However, W.W. Hunter writes that Lepchas were not keen on improvement even when 'brought into contact with civilization' (Hunter, 1876:47). Hunter's comment on the Lepchas again indicates how Europeans considered the inhabitants of the lands east of Europe as having no civilization of their own.

L. A. Waddell says that the Lepcha represented the state of the primitive man who used to keep up by hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits and digging roots. Solitary life in the forests had made them 'timid' and 'shy' of strangers, the harshness of the forces of nature had made them worshippers of malignant devils and also very superstitious. Mild Mongolian features: parted hair down the middle, scanty beard and moustache gave Lepcha men a somewhat effeminate look. The honest eyes of the Lepcha reinforced his image as the 'simple contended child of the forest' who had hearty laughs at the 'comic side of things' (Waddell, 1900:91-94).

Geoffrey Gorer writes that European travellers in the accounts of their journeys to Sikkim and Tibet show great unanimity in referring to Lepchas as 'fairies' or 'elves' or 'woodland folk.' He says that it varies according to the personal fantasy and self-consciousness of the writers. As for other Europeans who have a lengthier stay and prolonged contact with the Lepchas, they have considered the chief qualities of Lepchas to be their 'mildness' and 'truthfulness' with emphasis (Gorer, 2005: 249).

A.C. Campbell in his article "On the Tribes around Darjeeling" clearly believes that the British Government and the Ethnological Society of London had other interests with regard to Asiatic tribes; interests other than just studying the size of their skulls, or comparing their languages, for the objective of systematic classification. Campbell is certain that without the proper knowledge of the tribes, legislative duties could not be performed at an optimum level. He considers that the role of the Ethnological Society of London is of great value, or in his own words 'instrumental in disseminating' information related to tribes to the Government (Campbell,1869:145).

Orientalist discourse presents itself as a form of knowledge which is superior and at the same time different from the knowledge that the people concerned have of themselves. Ronald Inden has identified two schools of Indian orientalism or Indology: both posited India as Europe's opposite, but one emphasized the positivist, empiricist, materialist concerns relevant to matters of power, while the other gave stress to romantic, spiritualist, and idealist considerations that had a distinct thrust of their own (Inden, 1986: 410-411). The latter mode of representation was operational in the British knowledge of the indigenous inhabitants of the hill stations like Darjeeling, Shimla, Ootacamund (Kennedy, 1991:58).

A.R. Foning in his *Lepcha, My Vanishing Tribe* at times sounds like the British administrators and subscribes to the same formulaic discourse of Lepchas being shy and timid (Foning,1987: 163). His comparison of Lepcha oral stories with Biblical events points towards his inclination to look for cultural parallels in a setting that would be more comprehensible to the British. He compares the Great Flood/ Deluge of the Lepcha folkore with the Great Flood of the Bible, commonly known as the story of Noah's Ark among the Christians. Further Foning also draws analogies between Mount Ararat and Mount Tendong, the hill where Lepchas took refuge from the great flood. For Noah, it was Mount Ararat where his ark finally found land. The Garden of Eden of the Bible becomes Mayel Lyang in Lepcha analogy (Foning, 1987:114-121).

One wonders whether Foning too had internalised the gaze of the orientalist scholar or administrator and looked at everything in binaries: West versus East, civilised versus savage, superior versus inferior. The ironical part is Foning himself mentions that beside the imitation of the Tibetan way of life the Lepchas were now being swept by other trends too. These trends were 'the cheap imitation of Western culture' (Foning, 1987: 302) that involved wearing European clothes, celebrating birthdays with birthday cakes, among others[iii]. In A.R. Foning's own words 'we have become and have converted ourselves into sort of quasi-Europeans' (Foning, 1987: 303). However, one must concede that Foning's account is indeed invaluable. It was his book with its very thoughtful title "My Vanishing Tribe" that heralded the awakening of the now resurgent Lepchas. His book still holds a seminal position among mandatory books to be read in Lepcha studies.

T.B. Subba and Prem Poddar have suggested that there is a trend which can be referred to as 'home grown orientalism' (Poddar and Subba, 1991:78). The received dominant discourse of the West is assimilated without really challenging it. This discourse continues to carry forward its hegemony in imposing the same values and weaknesses on their objects of inquiry which are thereby rendered marginal. The same kind of mindset which the Orientalist had can be seen in works of writers like R.N. Thakur, A.K. Das and Veena Bhasin. Thakur in his *Himalayan Lepchas* at the very outset says that 'a knowledge of the races, tribes, and culture is a pre-requisite for an efficient administrative system and strategy of development.'[iv] Thakur is at the receiving end of the criticism that there is no effort on the author's part to distance himself from the state as a scholar. T.B. Subba and Prem Poddar say that 'the project of orientalising the Orient is repeated over and over in the orchestrated activity of tribal ethnography on the Himalayas.' They state that culture or cultural traits that differ with the ethnographer's is not considered to be rational or meaningful just as in the case of the colonial ethnographers (Poddar and Subba, 1991:79).

Subba and Poddar also identify A. K. Das to be following the same oriental gaze of Campbell, Hooker and Mainwaring, to mention a few who have written about Lepchas. The services of Lepchas were sought by them as 'servants,' 'porters,' 'plant collectors' and as 'companions' and 'subjects.' They write that Lepchas were rewarded with epithets like 'amiable' and 'cheerful.' They reiterate Said's argument that an author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances in the production of knowledge cannot be ignored. The Orientalists viewed the orient as Europeans and Americans first and as individuals second. In a similar fashion Das also looks upon the Lepchas of West Bengal through the eyes of a Calcuttan first and as an anthropologist second. This is evident when Das writes "lanes and bye-lanes are hardly visible in the Lepcha villages"; "No planned drainage system has developed in the villages but the hilly tract does not pose any drainage problem." 'Jhoras,' 'Simsarmul' and 'Manes' have been translated by him as 'waterfalls,' 'water-logged areas' and 'Memorial Pillars' respectively. If Das had not been looking upon the 'Lepchas of West Bengal' from the view point of one belonging to the Bengali community who form the ruling class, he would not look for lanes and bye lanes nor for proper drainage irrespective of whether the hills were inhabited by Lepchas or not. He would not have translated streams as waterfalls, marshy lands as water logged areas nor Buddhist temples as memorial pillars. The orientalist dogma that the 'Other' cannot represent themselves, that they must be represented, runs deep in these writings as well as in the writings of Veena Bhasin. Subba and Poddar mention that it is not just anthropology as discipline which has been deriving representational strategies from the Orientalists. This has taken place 'at the level of episteme and the mindset.' (Poddar and Subba, 1991:79-83).

III. FROM LEPCHA SHEZUMS TO DEVELOPMENT BOARD: ROLE OF LEPCHA ASSOCIATIONS IN REPRESENTATION

The Lepcha community has generally been a close-knit community that has tried to resolve communal issues and disputes in an orderly manner, as evidenced by the shezums or councils that were instituted as early as 1925. The shezum or the 'council system' as a social body sought to look after issues related to the community. This shezum worked on a three-tier system of governance, comprised by the village council of elders at the base, elders of villages in the middle and the council at the topmost level representing the Lepcha community (Lepcha, 2013:196).

The Lepcha Association or Rong Mutanchi Shezum was rejuvenated from the year 1972, after its establishment in 1925, with specific goals for the community. It wanted to spread consciousness about the Lepcha language, script and traditions. The association also wanted to get Lepcha language recognized as the official language of Darjeeling and to have the All India Radio, Kurseong, to broadcast programmes in the Lepcha language too. The shezums worked largely at the village level and were not very keen on political developments happening in the larger public sphere. The need for proactive intervention and representation in the larger political discourse of the Hills led to the institution of the Indigenous Tribal Forum that sought to secure constitutional guarantees for the indigenous Lepchas. The formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988, as an aftermath of Subash Ghising's demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland led to disillusionment amongst the Lepchas who felt they had no adequate representation in this new scheme of things. The fact that the Lepchas did not have a reserved seat in the council further cemented their suspicions of under-representation and urged them to press on for the securing of their community interests. Lepcha youths, both Buddhist and Christians alike, associated with the Lepcha Rights Movement started staging peaceful protests and demanding for a 'Lepcha Development Council' (Lepcha, 2013: 198). The Council put forward the following demands:

a) A separate Lepcha Development Council/ Board for the protection of Language, Culture and Economic Development of Lepcha Community.

b) Recognition of Lepcha Language and its introduction in Formal Education System.

c) Reservation for People's Representation in State Assembly and Parliament.

The Lepcha Development Board was formalised and its proposal approved in the state cabinet in 2013. While the Lepchas were excited and enthused at this development, the GTA was not pleased at all. The GTA called for a bandh to oppose the government's move. The Lepchas, on their part, organised hunger

strikes to express their concerns over the welfare and security of the community.

After the institution of the WBMLLDB, the Lepcha community has become very visible in the public eye and identity politics in the Darjeeling Hills have been affected in more ways than one. Many communities in the Hills have since then pursued the State government for development boards. The Tamang Development Board was instituted in 2014, the Bhutia Development Board in 2015, among others. The Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha alleged that the setting up of various boards was a "divide and rule" ploy set up by the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in order to weaken their Gorkhaland demand (Telegraph 2016). In a bid to counter Mamata Banerjee's overtures GTA had announced their decision to form development boards for 19 different communities to strengthen unity in the hills. The Lepchas thus found themselves caught in the eye of a political storm, as it were.

Colonial discourses surrounding the Lepchas that had firmly taken root, suggesting they were a peace-loving and innocent lot, suddenly began to change their tune. The Lepchas and their demand for a development board made them stand out as a rather disagreeable community that threatened the demand for Gorkhaland. This indicates how discourses change over time, along with the larger social and political contexts and power relations at play. Discourse as a means of creating and disseminating knowledge that serves those in power is evident in the case of the discourse of Lepcha identity in the Darjeeling Hills from the time of colonial intervention. The Lepcha identity was defined along specific lines that lavished praise on the community as a simple and peace-loving people while also limiting them. The Foucauldian notion of discourse as more than a mere means of communication but a rather complex phenomenon that seeks to cater to power relations is clear in the case of the Lepchas. Spivak's postulation of the silenced subaltern who had been shunned from the possibility of self-representation is also useful in the context of the Lepcha case. In fact, scholars like Vibha Arora and Denis Lepcha have argued Lepchas have been rendered subaltern in their homeland because of different waves of political power that have swept over the Eastern Himalayas (Arora, 2017:85-88, Lepcha, 2019:15). The subaltern Lepchas have over time been able to counter these generalising discourses and effect a change in their status quo as far as the visibility and voice of the community is concerned. Certain "organic intellectuals" (Arora, 2017: 90) like Lyangsong Tamsang, Sonam Tshering Lepcha and P.T. Lepcha have been identified as being instrumental in effecting this change. Moreover, discourses that termed the Lepchas as shy, peace-loving people and happy to be close to nature have been in a way claimed by the Lepchas themselves to justify the need for a distinct space for their security and development. The very discourses that were used to limit Lepchas have now begun to empower them, in a manner of speaking. This is also true in the postcolonial context regarding the community's relationship with the West Bengal Government.

The colonial discourse of vanishing tribe put forward by patrons like G. B Mainwairing has now been overturned. When this trope was later used by A. R. Foning in his seminal book *Lepcha*, *My Vanishing Tribe*, many Lepchas came forward and opined that Lepchas were not vanishing. Lyangsong Tamsang, the Chairman of WBMLLDB, and one of the most popular Lepcha figures in the Darjeeling Hills declared, "People are saying that Lepchas are vanishing but I want to prove them wrong." [v] However this trope was an eyeopener to the Lepchas as it rejuvenated the Lepcha community and urged them to work towards the preservation of their cultural heritage.

During the course of the Gorkhaland movement the GJMM chief Bimal Gurung issued certain diktats which were not sensitive to the Lepcha community. People in the Darjeeling Hills were instructed to don the traditional Nepali dress as a means of putting forward a common Nepali identity to protest against the alleged cultural hegemony of the Bengal Government. This caused a lot of discomfort amongst the Lepchas who began to wonder why their own traditional dress code and their identity thereof was completely overlooked. The Government of West Bengal vide Notification no.1099-SE(EE)107-147/2010 dt.13/Nov/2013 had introduced Lepcha medium section in forty-six (46) Government primary schools in the Darjeeling Hills for Lepcha children (Lepcha, 2018:118). However, this order has not been put into effect in Hills under the GTA. This has served as another huge deterrent for the Lepcha Community that could not trust GTA leaders to fulfill the aspirations of the Lepchas.

There have been instances where Lepchas have dissented against the ruling party's diktats during the

Gorkhaland movement of 2013 with Bimal Gurung leading the masses in the Darjeeling Hills. The GJMM (Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha) had called for an indefinite strike from 3rd of August 2013 with the demand of Gorkhaland at its helm. Even though the hills were faced with a political lockdown, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee decided to go to Kalimpong. Lepchas in thousands had already been waiting for the Chief Minister's arrival at Kalimpong. However, a section of the community under the banner of All India India Lepcha Association, opposed the CM's visit and started a relay hunger strike protesting against the state's "Divide and Rule" policy. When GJMM had called for the 'Ghar Bhitra Janta' programme (public inside home) in the hills on 2nd and 3rd of September 2013 in addition to the indefinite strike, Lepchas poured out onto the streets of Kalimpong despite Gurung's orders. Consequently, there has been a lot of antagonism between the Lepcha community and other communities who have alleged that Lepchas are against the Gorkhaland movement and issue. However, Lepchas have never really been averse to the idea of Gorkhaland. They have been participating in all the bandhs and aandolans (agitations) and also suffering along with every other community every time the Hills have been rocked by the Gorkhaland movement.

IV. CONCLUSION

Lepchas in contemporary times have dismantled certain generalizing identity categories that mark them as shy, quiet, passive and so on. The participation of the Lepchas in the political life of Kalimpong, and of West Bengal seems to be indicating how Lepchas have in a way transcended simplistic identity categories constructed for them so far by the powers that be.

While the West Bengal Mayel Lyang Lepcha Development Board (WBMLLDB) has been able to win many perks for the Lepcha community from the government of West Bengal, one cannot deny the fact that showing special favour to this community has been helpful for the State. With the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland threatening peace and stability in West Bengal, showing concern for the Lepchas as distinct from the greater Gorkha populace has no doubt benefitted the State.

The Lepchas have only been trying to do away with the age-old shackles of identity politics, formulated by the colonial discourse and later by the State, one that has tried to limit them in more ways than one. By taking the Lepcha community under its wings, as it were, the State has not merely done a simple favour to the community respecting its attachment to and value for the land. Ironically, one sees a continuation of the infantilisation and the patronising attitude attached to the colonial discourse in the State's dynamics with the Lepcha community. The State sometimes poses as a higher authority validating the autochthonous claims of the Lepchas, humoring them, keeping them perpetually obliged to the State. It is interesting how the Lepchas, on their part, have named the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee "Kinchum Darmit", a goddess of good fortune, as a gesture of gratitude and acknowledgement.

The Lepcha community has come a long way in asserting its identity and history as being intimately linked to the land, and has even managed to garner some amount of State patronage. This patronage, of course, has its own downside. However, they still have a long way to go in order to negotiate identity politics in the Hills where ethnicity and identity have a crucial role to play in shaping the present and the future. The Lepcha community has no doubt suffered many drawbacks due to their demographic minority. According to the 2011 census, the Lepcha population in West Bengal stands merely at 33,962 (Thirty-three thousand nine hundred sixty-two). Other dire consequences of being a demographic minority is the depletion of their animistic practices and the diminishing numbers of Lepcha language speakers, among others.

Against all odds, the community still shows signs of perseverance and hope, pursuing their relationship with their land with a determination that is commendable. The ILTA and the WBMLLDB together are working for shaping the present Lepcha youths as well as the coming generations to build them up with a holistic knowledge of their culture and identity. The gap between the Lepcha Buddhists and the Lepcha Christians is gradually being bridged especially because of the formation and wise maneuvers of WBMLLDB. The resurgent Lepchas finally seem to have realised that "colonialism never gives anything away for nothing." [vi]

The Lepchas have surely transcended certain stereotypical identity categories and started to vocalise their reservations and their fears in the public sphere.

Modern Lepcha identities have given way to primordial identity tropes like the 'shy and silent' Lepcha. However, certain primordial categories like 'nature lovers', 'sons of the soil', 'children of Kanchenjunga', 'peace-loving people' have been retained and accommodated within the contemporary discourses of Lepcha identity politics. Since identity is fluid and not static, Lepcha identity in the context of ethnic and identity politics is always in the making. The Lepchas have been making lot of efforts to preserve their language as language in a modernising society is not just about sentiments it plays an important role in education too. Lepchas are being and becoming as they try to negotiate with the power relations, politics and life in general while trying to secure a strong foothold in their homeland.

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[i] Pema Wangchuk and Mita Zulca (2007). Kanchendzonga Sacred Summit.Gangtok: Little Kingdom.p.31

[ii] Kalimpong was formerly a sub division of Darjeeling district, Kalimpong was given the status of a separate district in the Year 2017, February 14th.

[iii] With the shrinking of the world due to globalisation, different cultures have been undergoing changes and the Lepchas are no exception. Among other effects of globalisation one pertinent issue would be worth highlighting. The Lepchas lately have been adjusting to the global economic pressure on Indian farmers that demands the agricultural activities of subsistence farming practices like that of the Lepchas to change for good adopting the capitalist way (Lepcha,2019:114).Though Cardamom and Ginger seem to be fetching good returns on short term basis, its long-term viability is doubtful. The agricultural policy of West Bengal which is in tune with the Mckinsey report has not taken into consideration the adverse effects that it would have on tribal agricultural practices (Lepcha,2019:113).

[iv] Thakur, R.N (1988). *Himalayan Lepchas*. p1.

[v] Saving the Last of the Lepchas. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh4i_ZtgyN0

[vi] Frantz Fanon in his book *Wretched of the Earth* urges that the natives of the land must become aware of the political rationality of colonialism and that colonialism never gives anything without implications or consequences (Fanon,1963:141). This argument can also be employed in the context of Lepchas who have been victims not just of British colonialism but the colonialism of Tibetans and to a certain extent the Bhutanese oppression in which the Lepchas of Kalimpong or *Damsang* region were at the receiving end.

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