

The Cry for Democracy in Sikkim: Tracing the ‘Subaltern Voices’ in the Historiography of Sikkim

Rajeev Rai

PhD Scholar

Department of International Relations

Sikkim University, Gangtok, India

Abstract: The task of historiography is to elucidate the past in order to help in changing the idea of the contemporary world, and such a change involves a radical transformation of consciousness in explaining the meaning of its actions. In the Sikkimese historiography or in the field of Sikkimese Studies where much of the narrative relating to Sikkim is enunciated, question drawn from critical studies on the postcolonial discourse has never been raised. Subaltern studies and other examples of post-colonial scholarship have not yet been as influential for the study on Sikkim. The historiography of Sikkim has been continued in orientalist descriptive mode inherited from the British Raj. The orientalist traditions and the politics of knowledge about contemporary Sikkim are much more important in explaining the absence of subaltern approaches in Sikkimese studies. India and Latin America shared the experiences of colonialism, revolutionary peasant movements, and Marxist intellectual traditions. By contrast, it might be tempting to say that subaltern studies would be developed in the Sikkimese studies as Sikkim was not subject to the direct European colonisation, had no peasant movements before the 1940s and the Marxism was not influential in Sikkimese society as in India or abroad. However, Sikkim did experience the peasant movements, which in most of the narratives have been obscured. This paper contextualises the people’s movement in Sikkim for democratic transition in terms of Guha’s ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’, a classic essay from ‘Selected Subaltern Studies’ (1988). To acknowledge the peasant as the marker of his rebellion is to attribute consciousness to him, and this is what this paper seeks to do. The historical writing on the 1949/1973 uprising in Sikkim provides representative examples of each type of discourse which Guha provides in the ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency.’

Introduction

The task of historiography is to elucidate the past in order to help in changing the idea of the contemporary world, and such a change involves a radical transformation of consciousness in explaining the meaning of its actions. In the Sikkimese historiography or in the field of Sikkimese Studies where much of the narrative relating to Sikkim is enunciated, question drawn from critical studies on the postcolonial discourse has never been raised. Subaltern studies and other examples of post-colonial scholarship have not yet been as influential for the study on Sikkim. There is yet to develop fluency in the theoretical frameworks in the Sikkimese Studies. The historiography of Sikkim has been continued in orientalist descriptive mode inherited from the British Raj. Orient was mainly an idea that has a history and tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that has given a form of reality. Thus, orientalist traditions and the politics of knowledge about contemporary Sikkim are much more important in explaining the absence of subaltern approaches in Sikkimese studies (Guha 1983: 336; Hansen 2003: 7-10; Guha 1998: ix; Altern 2012: 58; Guha 1988: 37). Gayatri Spivak (1994: 94) suggests that ‘today to ignore the subaltern studies is to carry forward the imperialist project.’

The originality of ‘Subaltern studies’ came to be its striving to rewrite history outside the state-centred national discourse. The subaltern discourse was an effect of the dominant discourses of colonialism, nationalism, and modernity. The term ‘subaltern’ now appears with growing frequency in studies on Africa, Latin America, and Europe, and ‘subalternist’ analysis has become a recognisable mode of critical scholarship in history, literature, and anthropology (Ludden 2002: 12; Prakash 1994: 1476; Hansen 2003: 7-9; Chakrabarty 2000: 14). India and Latin America shared the experiences of colonialism, revolutionary peasant movements, and Marxist intellectual traditions. By contrast, it might be tempting to say that subaltern studies would be developed in the Sikkimese studies as Sikkim was not subject to the direct European colonisation, had no peasant movements before the 1940s and the Marxism was not influential in Sikkimese society as in India or abroad. However, Sikkim did experience the peasant movements, which in most of the narratives have been obscured (Chakrabarty 2000: 9; Guha 1988: 46).

The omission of the subaltern agency was often signified by metaphors assimilating peasant revolts to natural phenomena as ‘they break like thunderstorms, heave like earthquakes, spread like wildfires, and infect like epidemics’ (Guha 1988: 46). It is this misrepresentation this paper tries to highlight and contextualises the people’s movement in Sikkim for democratic transition in terms of Guha’s ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’, a classic essay from ‘Selected Subaltern Studies’ (1988). To acknowledge the peasant as the marker of his rebellion is to attribute consciousness to him (Guha 1983: 4), this is what this paper has tried to do. The historical writing on the 1949/1973 uprising provides representative examples of each type of discourse which Guha provides in the ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’ (Guha 1988: 46; Hansen 2003: 11-2).

From a Pre-Literate Culture to Literacy

Political activities in Sikkim started simmering since the end of 1945 before it was confined to isolated pockets with social rather political aims. At the capital, Gangtok there was Praja Sudharak Samaj under the leadership of Tashi Tshering, there was Praja Sammelan at Temi Tarku (South Sikkim) under the leadership of Gobardhan Pradhan and the Praja Mandal at Chakhung (West Sikkim), under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa (Kotturan 1983: 94; Datta-Ray 1984/2004: 52). Indian independence and the establishment of popular governments in some states encouraged these organisations to come together with pronounced political aims. The movement aimed to overthrow Bhutia-Lepcha elites' control in general and the authority of Kazis (landlords) in particular. They also aimed at destroying the power of *Thikadars* (landlords); a *kalo bhari* system of forced labour resulted in considerable hardship, and it is the reason why people voiced against this system (Datta-Ray 1984/2004: 34, 52).

The role of the intelligentsia in the history of modern Sikkim was decisive. They integrated to a great extent the Sikkimese people and organised various progressive socio-economic reform movements in Sikkim. The intelligentsia became the first leaders. Tashi Tshering, Chandra Das Rai, Dimick Singh Lepcha, Raghubir Basnet were the product, or it would not be wrong to say by-product of the modern education in Sikkim. The introduction of modern education in Sikkim was primarily motivated by the politico-administrative and economic needs of the British¹ (Desai 1948: 129). Therefore, the education Sikkimese attained was mainly a by-product of the British colonial policies². The educated Sikkimese who had assimilated modern ideas of democracy and freedom and who knew about the social, cultural, and scientific achievements of the West came out with profound socio-political reform movements in Sikkim (Desai 1948: 183-85).

The historical narratives all go on talking exclusively about the peasants being forced, seized, compelled and manipulated against their will into the rebel caucus. The launch of the movement is attributed to a pre-literate culture or to be more precise a pre-literate culture transiting slowly, indeed very slowly towards literacy, that was what the case in Sikkim (Guha 1983: 197, 226). 'In no country with a predominantly illiterate population has a subaltern protest of any significant strength' states Guha (ibid: 252). In the colonial period much urban growth occurred, the development of urban working class and salaried people planted the seeds of 'agitation' which sprouted as the political movements in due course (Killion 1989: 129). According to Basnet "The net result of the Chogyal's rule was the growing strength of corrupt sycophants, who lined their pockets with little or no care for administrative efficiency or the wellbeing of the people" (1978: 209). It is this mismanagement and discrimination which triggered the profound socio-political movements in Sikkim. Thus, this paper tries to trace the suppressed 'subaltern voices' in the agitation of Sikkim, which has been obscured in most of the narratives of modern Sikkim.

The Uprising of 1949

The uprising of 1949 is perhaps the crucial event in the history of Sikkim because it was for the first time the 'voice' was raised against the authority of Chogyal (Monarch) which was a profound expression of the subaltern agency, but this agency has been obscured in most of the histories of the event. As a result of the protest movement, the prominent rebel leaders, namely Namgyal Tshering, Chandra Das Rai, Ram Prasad, Jam. Ratna Bahadur Khatri, Jam. Budhiman Rai, Ongdi Bhutia, Chanchula, Abichandra Kharel, Brihaspati Prasai, Chukchum Sangdarpa, and Katuk Lama were arrested by the Sikkim Government. A warrant had been issued to detain its President Tashi Tshering. However, on the written advice of the Political Officer³, Harishwar Dayal, the execution of the warrant was kept in abeyance (Rai 2011/2013: 104).

The first type of discourse was usually written by the officials reacting to the news of the agitation and is identified with the interests of the state. The Political Officer's letter call for the calming things down, but their official character, and contemporary context all suggest Guha's category of primary discourse on the insurgency (Hansen 2003: 12-3). As a repercussion, about 5,000 people poured into Gangtok bazaar and held a demonstration against the arbitrary arrest of the rebel leaders (Rai 2011/2013: 104). In secondary discourse, the events are narrated to demonstrate a sequence of causality. None of this instantaneous percolates to the next level that is secondary discourse. The uprising is, for example, the responsibility of the upper social strata, who spread rumours; and then

¹ See in McKay (2007: 174) and Desai (1948: 129) Sikkim was strategically famous as the gateway to Tibet and beyond, as the imperial stepping-stone with their regional Political Officer resident in Gangtok, and the British inevitably became involved in the internal affairs of Sikkim. It, therefore, became necessary to establish schools and colleges to turn out educated people who would staff the administrative apparatus of the British rule. The British Government entrusted the critical posts in the state machinery to the British and filled the subordinate posts with educated Sikkimese.

² See in Desai (1948: 128, 132-33, 145), Khapoya (2016: 103), Basu (1982: 66), and McKay (2007: 237) many families were able to uplift themselves in the social ladder and men from lower castes could raise their social status by acquiring a Western education. The little education they acquired opened their minds and provided them with the practical and intellectual skills they never had before. It was a progressive act of British rule.

³ John Claude White was the first British Political Officer in Sikkim, and after the independence of India, this position was taken over by the Indian officer.

using this rumour as a pretext, they staged rebellion; a discourse in which the causality of events excludes any space for the consciousness of subaltern insurgents (Guha 1988: 50).

Ascribing it to the secret design of a small number of outlaws rather than the initiative of individual offenders against the law. Insurgency is thus mistaken for that more important type of crime which is produced by the conspiracy (Guha 1983: 80). The administration in the four districts of the state had been collapsed. In Gangtok, the police had been disarmed and confined to their barracks for fear of retaliation by the thousands of people who had joined the agitation from all over Sikkim (Das 1983: 2, 13). The initiative of such activity as purely spontaneous, an idea that is elitist as well as erroneous. It is elitist because it makes the mobilisation of the peasantry altogether dependent on the involvement of appealing leaders, sophisticated political organisations or upper classes (Guha 1983: 4).

Antonio Gramsci says, 'there is no room for pure spontaneity in history' (Guha 1983: 5). The thousands of people turned up and were expressing their anger against the highhandedness of the Government. The demonstration displayed the gulf between the people and the ruling class in Sikkim. It marked the irreparable breakdown of the relationship between the masses and the ruling class (Hansen 2003: 16). The resistance comes, at last, it comes after all the other elements of dominance and subordination because there can be no operation of dominance and subordination beyond this (Hansen 2003: 14; Guha 1998: 55).

Primary Discourse on Insurgency

An article shortly published after the launch of the movement in 1973, the General Elections of 1973 proved to be a crucial point in the history of Sikkim. There was a widespread allegation in the State that Durbar having rigged the 1973 polls to the advantage of the National Party⁴. Later developments which completely eclipsed the National Party makes one believe that there must have been some truth in the allegation. It was discovered during the counting of the votes in the White Hall (in Gangtok) that some ballot papers from Rawang not been separated along the perforation and it was found in the National Party candidate's box. The National Party came out as the largest single party capturing as many as eleven seats out of the eighteen elected positions to the State Council. The National Congress Chief, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, was utterly disillusioned and decided that the only alternative left under these circumstances was intense popular agitation. The leader of another mass-based party K. C. Pradhan of the Janata Congress also seconded the Kazi. Kazi Lhendup Dorji and K. C. Pradhan charging the presiding officer with 'aiding and abetting the Sikkim National Party in rigging the elections' walked out of the counting hall alleging the polls have not been conducted in a free and fair manner (Kotturan 1983: 107; Grover 1974: 59-60; Datta-Ray 1984: 166-7). The following is an example of such an account which constitutes Guha's primary discourse on insurgency shortly published after the uprising:

"Terror in Sikkim", Current Weekly, November 24, 1973, p. 7.

While the victims till now are mainly people who have been the active supporters of the Sikkim National Party, the Sikkim Congress's lone rivals in Sikkim politics, anybody who dares to raise voice against the mounting excesses of the hooligans wearing political masks runs the risk of public humiliation... the Sikkim police have been shorn of its powers to take any action against the Sikkim Congress leaders and workers following the April revolt, and the uniform of the Sikkim police neither inspires confidence in the populace nor respect for the law in the elements who break the law with total impunity.

This article depicts the people's movement as the movement of hooligans, and it does not justify in any way the sanctity of the movement which was triggered for the demand of the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination. This kind of articles and letters reacting or reporting to the launch of the event are later on elaborated into much longer histories. However, the official records do not get the content from the elitist will alone; it is predicated on another will, that of the insurgent. It is, therefore, possible to read the presence of a rebel consciousness as a necessary and pervasive element within that body of evidence (Guha 1983: 15). When an official document speaks of badmashes (mischief), this does not mean any ordinary collection of rascals but peasants involved in a struggle (Guha 1983: 16). As such, in the article, people are accorded with the noun of hooligans who breaks the law and does not have any respect for the law. Most, though not all, of the records, is elitist in origin, this has come down in the form of official archives (Guha 1983: 14).

In the mid-half of the twentieth century, the active power in the state still rested with the Dewan J. S. Lall appointed by the Government of India after the chaos of 1949 (Kotturan 1983: 100). In February 1949 the leaders of the State Congress comprising Tashi Tshering, Chandra Das Rai, Dimick Singh Lepcha, and Raghubir Basnet held an annual party meeting at Rangpo, East Sikkim and called on the launch of the protest movement in Sikkim for the abolition of landlordism and the formation of a democratic government. To press for the fulfilment of the twin demands, the State Congress, under the leadership of Tashi Tshering, took a first positive step towards *Satyagraha* (true-plea) movement. At the Rangpo Convention, a resolution was unanimously passed calling upon the people to start 'non-

⁴ See in Rao (1972: 148) party sponsored by the Maharajah which was composed of mainly of the minority ethnic communities of the Lepchas and Bhutias.

rent campaign' whereby, "until the demands of the Congress would be met, the people would refuse to pay land revenue and house tax" (Rai 2011/2013: 104). The historians have treated the agitation as spontaneous natural phenomena, but the launch of the protest movement in Sikkim was pre-planned and executed through the protracted consultation among the local masses (Guha 1988: 46).

With such chaotic conditions, the whole administration seemed to be heading towards a total collapse. Thus, the Maharajah of Sikkim wrote to the Political Officer, expressing his inability to carry on and to take over the administration (Grover 1974: 90-1). Accordingly, a senior civil servant, Mr. J. S. Lall, took over the administration as Dewan⁵ (Kotturan 1983: 97). Sikkim was recognised as a 'protectorate' state of the Indian Union. Moreover, with the recognition of the 'special status' of Sikkim (Treaty of 1950)⁶, the Durbar began to move forward to consolidate its position. The Durbar used various moves and tactics to weaken the popular agitation and introduced a 'parity' system. Most famous for Sikkimese political development, the divisive politics of Chogyal reinforced the ethno-religious divisions among Sikkimese people (Kotturan 1983: 100; Killion 1989: 129). The communalism was deliberately placed as a stumbling block in the path of the candidates who enjoyed the popular support. According to the formula laid down in the Proclamation of the Durbar regarding the parity system, a candidate representing a particular community would not be declared elected even if he had polled the highest number of votes unless he could secure 15% of the votes of the other communities in that particular constituency (Grover 1974: 47).

Apa B. Pant (1955-1961), the then Political Officer of Sikkim mentions that Chogyal (Sir Tashi Namgyal) never considered the Nepalese people as his people. He states in a letter to Kaul, "He indeed knows that he is the ruler and historically as well as dynastically these people belong to Sikkim, but he does not feel that the Nepalese are his people. It was amusing as well as pathetic to hear him speak of the Lepchas, the Bhutias, the Limbus as my people"⁷. In this connection, he further states "if the Maharaj Kumar (Palden Thondup Namgyal) also feels really a love for the Nepalese and takes them more and more into his confidence and also seeks confidence from them I think there is a good chance of his becoming, as I have said elsewhere, a leader par excellence for Sikkim. Nari Rustomji think that may be difficult"⁸. The divisive politics of Chogyal never allowed to develop a nationalist feeling among the Sikkimese people and resulted in a fragmented society (Basnet 1978: 15).

A letter sent by Kazi Lhendup Dorji, one of the rebel leaders to Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, beginning on the first day of the uprising of 1973 constitutes Guha's primary discourse on the insurgency. The first type of discourse was usually written, reacting to the news of the events, and it is later on elaborated and developed into longer histories.

Letter from Kazi Lhendup Dorji to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, April 4, 1973

The Joint Action Committee of the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim Janata Congress, on behalf of the people of Sikkim, beg to bring the following matters of indiscriminate use of tear gas and shooting with live bullets on the peaceful procession of the people today at 7 A.M. at Gangtok. As a result, several persons were injured and the condition of three persons is reported to be serious. The imposition of curfew on the eve of the Chogyal's birthday and ruthless firing on the peaceful unarmed people on the very morning of Chogyal's birthday is clear indication that law and order in this tiny Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim have collapse...The black flag demonstration by more than fifteen to twenty thousand people at Gangtok, on the day of Chogyal's birthday and total boycotting of such celebrations throughout with black flag demonstration go to show growing unpopularity of the Chogyal amongst his own people...

The Chogyal had promised the progressive reforms in the state, but it could not suffice the growing resentment of the people. Tension crackled in the air as Gangtok observed the Chogyal's 50th official Birthday on 4 April, defying the Section 144⁹ early in the morning the crowd began to pour into the town. The offensive had been carefully planned, a fact ignored by many subsequent historians who have depicted as spontaneous. There were rumours that many groups of young agitators were on their way to Gangtok. The youthful volunteers of the two political parties who had formed the joint front took over the police posts in many places, established a parallel administration and continued their demonstration against the Chogyal. The general upsurge affected the countryside more than the capital. While in Gangtok itself, the situation became severe, in the countryside, there was a complete collapse of the administration (Datta-Ray 1984: 171-74, 180; Kotturan 1983: 108).

⁵ See in Grover (1974: 9) and Kotturan (1983: 97) by then, China had emerged as a unified, centralised and militant regime under the control of Communists in October 1949. The Government of India consequently started negotiations regarding the status of Sikkim and her future relationship with India and Sikkim Durbar in the late 1940s.

⁶ See in Kotturan (1983: 98-9) Treaty of 1950 recognised the special status of Sikkim with complete internal autonomy while external affairs with defence and communications remained in the hands of the Central Government at Delhi.

⁷ Apa B. Pant, Political Officer Sikkim, Letter to T. N. Kaul, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, 22 March 1955.

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ See in Datta-Ray (1984: 177) section 144 had been imposed operative from 3rd April, and later it was extended for a week.

Secondary Discourse on Insurgency

In the secondary discourse, the events of the insurgency are rendered as 'history', in documents written for public readership with pretensions to neutrality as well as official histories shortly published after the uprising for overtly political purposes, and they contain new interpretations of the insurgency typical of secondary discourse that is later elaborated and developed in longer histories (Hansen 2003: 13). The following is an example of such history:

Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim, Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, 1984 p. 56

There were strikes and satyagrahas, rowdy meetings in Gangtok's Paljor stadium, and threats of invading the Palace...Mobs were collected in Singtam, Namche (sic), and Gyalzing, brought to Gangtok and allowed to free run of the capital's liquor shops. Drunken brawling, street-corner orgies, and a constant repertoire of offensive songs blaring out of wayside loudspeakers marked the campaign for civil liberties.

The pressures exercised by rebellion on elite discourse force it to reduce the phraseological range of many words and expressions and assign specific meanings to them in order to identify peasants as rebels and their attempt to turn the system upside down as crime. When the letters written by the officials reacting to the launch of the event and the articles published shortly after the launch of the event which identifies itself with the interests of the state are turned into elaborated, and much longer histories, this kind of narrative would emerge; which assign the peasant rebels a metaphor of rowdy mob who ran over the liquor shops, drunken brawling, street-corner orgies etc. For Guha 'thanks to such a process of narrowing down it is possible for the historian to use this impoverished and almost technical language as a clue to the antinomies which speak for a rival consciousness which is so firmly inscribed in elite discourse will' (1983: 17).

The indigenous government constructed the official nationalist narratives to justify their position (Hansen 2003: 11). Combined with a fair amount of force, the indigenous elite kept the antagonism of the subject population well under control despite the rebellion (Guha 1998: 34). The 'methods' and 'forms' of peasant agitation is for a historian to be represented as nothing but chaos, confusion and disorder; a sort of 'blindness and madness' as a modern scholar has written of the Sikkim uprising echoing the sentiments of the ruling class who endeavoured to contain it. What this view misses is that there is much order in this seemingly 'madness' a great deal of discipline in what looks like pure spontaneity. Myths of peasant savagery and rebel heroism estimated in both cases in terms of magnitude, the incidence of the latter appear to have been so low indeed as to be negligible (Guha 1983: 136, 161).

The secondary discourse follows the primary at a distance and opens up a perspective to turn an occasion into history in the perception not only of those outside it but of the participants as well. The secondary discourse draws from primary discourse as material but transforms it at the same time. The other class of writings to be qualified as secondary discourse is also the work of officials. They too addressed themselves to be a predominantly non-official readership but on the themes not directly related to their own experience (Hansen 2003: 14; Guha 1988: 51-2). The following is an example of such discourse written by B. S. Das, who was appointed as the Chief Administrator following the breakdown in 1973:

The Sikkim Saga, B. S. Das, 1983 pp. 3-4

Its (Indian Government) intervention was obligatory in circumstances where law and order had broken down...India wedded to democratic ideals and consequent obligation devolving on her to lend support to forces fighting against tyranny in spheres of her responsibility, had a moral obligation towards the people of Sikkim. Decades of suppression by the Sikkimese ruler had made the people docile and subservient. People joined the movement in the hope of a quick response to their demands.

Here, the people are depicted as docile, and the reason has given due to the decades of suppression by the Sikkimese ruler who joined hands with the Indian Government in the hope of a quick resolution to their demands. The rebels are denied the position of being conscious and rebellion triggering off merely as a sort of reflex action, that is, as a mechanical and almost mindless response or as a passive reaction (Guha 1988: 47). All the force of the ruling ideologies is pandered to the peasant by eulogising the virtues of loyalty and devotion so that he could be persuaded to look upon his deference not only as tolerable but almost preferable. Strangely enough, his revolt against that authority when the hour struck derived much of its strength from the same awareness. However, this did not constitute a mature and fully evolved class consciousness. It would not be wrong to regard this as the very beginning of consciousness (Guha 1983: 18-9).

Tertiary Discourse on Insurgency

None of this would percolate to the next level that is the secondary discourse if the rebellion had triggered passively, affected or produced by something external. In the secondary and tertiary discourse written at an even greater remove in time and space from the agitation, Guha notes that some historians attempt to break away from the code of counter-insurgency and adopt the insurgent's point of view. These historians want the insurgents, not their enemies to win (Hansen 2003: 14-5; Guha 1988: 47, 52-3). The tertiary level of discourse does not rely on these to sustain due to the aura of the neutrality it has about it, according to Guha (1988: 52). Authors, by keeping their narrative resolutely beyond the pale of personal involvement, they managed if only by implications, to confer on it a semblance of truth. They are supposed to have forced for their discourse a niche in that realm of perfect neutrality—the realm of history—over which the aorist and the third person preside (ibid: 52-3).

When historians of insurgency attempted to explain in more human terms, Guha (1988: 46) suggested, they either assumed “the identity of nature and culture, a hallmark of the deficient state of civilisation or specified the enumeration of causes” (Guha 1998: 34). Guha (1988), examined historical writing about peasant insurrections in colonial India. He wanted to portray peasant insurgency as ‘a motivated and conscious undertaking,’ and not as historians usually depicted them as ‘purely spontaneous and unpremeditated affairs’ (Hansen 2003: 11-12). In the words of Guha, ‘there is nothing in the primary sources of historical evidence suggest anything other than this. This gives careless and impressionistic writing on the subject of peasant insurrections being purely spontaneous and unpremeditated affairs’ (1988: 45).

Conclusion

The reform movements represented the strife of the conscious and progressive sections of the Sikkimese people to democratise social institutions and remodel old religious outlooks to suit the new social needs. This consciousness has a historical tendency to come to the surface in the vicinity of some radical sections of the rural masses long before being generalised on a national scale in any country. These tenets have not always received the attention they warrant. The determination of the first class of leaders of the social movements was to secure the authority so that they could use it to gather up the tempo of social and religious reform in Sikkim. The British colonialism in India developed an Indian national consciousness; there is a causal relationship between colonisation and the development of national consciousness. However, the divisive politics of Chogyal in Sikkim failed to develop Sikkimese national consciousness.

The insurgency was indeed the site where the two mutually contradictory tendencies within this still imperfect, almost embryonic, theoretical consciousness met for a decisive trial of strength. Far from shaping a national consciousness, the Chogyal's policies produced a politically fragmented population, and this fragmentation was mirrored in the referendum on Sikkim's future political status which was held in 1975, which was asked by the Chogyal. On April 14, 1975, the referendum was held thus authoritarian conceptions were replaced by the libertarian ones which affirmed that all individuals should have equal rights and freedom irrespective of anything. A new chapter in the history of modern Sikkim began that of 22nd state of the Indian Union with the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination ushering democracy in Sikkim.

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