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**FEMINIST ASPECT IN ANITA DESAI'S CRY, THE PEACOCK**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The proposed research work will undertake a study of feminist consciousness in Anita DESAI's novel CRY THE PEACOCK, with the objective to highlight the place and plight of women in a world governed by patriarchy. The study also means to investigate the role and contribution of patriarchy and patriarchal values towards the misery, suffering, loneliness and unhappiness of women or other psychological, social and economic problems experienced by them. Let's take up firstly a detailed study of the term "FEMINISM".*

**Keywords:** Feminist

The term FEMINISM is an ideology which denotes female .Feminism is the liberation in all its approaches as a woman who recognizes herself and is recognized by others as feminist .the feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization .As a philosophy of life, its oppose women's subordination to men in the family and society, along with men's claims to define what is the best for women. Feminism is defined as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome whether it is the husband or the father or the community or religious and ethnic group. Even today an average woman feels uncertain about his identity as a social being. So feminism is committed to the struggle for equality for women right historically and politically. It emphasizes Feminism the value of women as they are.

The present paper attempts to probe Desai's expression of her pre-occupation with the modern idea of building the society free from male domination. An attempt has been made to show how Desai represents the theme of uniqueness of sensibility of women as compared with male counterparts and how they suffer on account of emotional as well as physical repression and become the victim of male dominated social and cultural order.

Anita Desai is one of the most eminent and distinguished Indian English writers writing today. Her dual heritage, both racial and cultural has been a strong impact on her life and had also influenced her writing at the thematic as well as stylish level. She was born of a Bengal father and a German mother in Missouri ,India , on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1937.she was educated at Queen Mary's Higher Secondary school ,and then at Miranda House ,Delhi University ,she took her bachelor's degree in English literature in 1957.Born and brought up in India ,she was definitely influenced by her mother's foreign cultural also. At the age of seven, she began to write prose, mainly fiction and published some small pieces in children's magazines. Anita Desai is a recipient of many awards in India and abroad. She held many prestigious posts in India and other countries of world. Her novel Fire on the Mountain for which she won the Royal Society of the literature's Wini Fred Holt by Memorial Prize and the Sahitya Academic Award for English for the year1978. Her Clear Light of Day was short listed for the 1980 booker prize. Her In Custody was also listed for Booker Prizes.

Published in 1963, Cry the Peacock is the one of the most poetic and evocative Indian novel in English. It brings out the unique sensibility of a sensitive woman in sharp contrast to the ditched and practical attitude of an insensitive husband. The novel can also be seen as spectrum of presentation of

the ways of dealing with the binary as object. It is seen to be difficult for a woman to reconcile with the reality of life, bend down as she is down as she is weighed by the traditional Hindu values.

Cry the Peacock is the story of highly emotional, sensitive and imaginative woman Maya. Maya is shown to be fast disintegrating under the pressure of marital discord. Married to an unresponsive and insensitive husband Gautama, she is driven from emotional instability in the beginning to madness, Insanity and murder towards the end. Her only sin is that she is sensitive, imaginative, passionate and sensuous and thus represents the disturbed psyche of modern Indian woman. She tries to strike balance between institution needs and intellectual aspirations and is deeply bewildered when the existence absurd of life is brought before her. When she experiences loneliness and lack of communication, she feels herself in mental crisis. She is seen to share a very affectionate marriage. Her problem up bringing caused before her mother's death makes her detached from the world outside. The expectations she had at marriage of her husband, who is much older than her are not fulfilled. As a result, she becomes stultifying. She finds her husband Gautama, as a man in whom understanding was scant, love was merged. But as one reads through the novel, one finds that her husband love and cherished her, but does not take her seriously and that too because she is a woman. He identifies her with "MAYA" which repulses her and to which she objects. As time passes, she becomes more and more restless, starts brooding over the feeling of emptiness in her heart. It is clear from the following statement regarding the marriage:

.....It was broken repeatedly, and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and  
Put together again. As of sacred iron with which out of the prettiest superstition, we  
could not bear to par.....(40)

The cold and unresponsive attitude of husband becomes further clear as he asks Maya to go to sleep "while he worked at papers". Maya is a victim of emotional as well as physical depression.

.....he did not give another thought to me either soft wiling body or the lonely  
waiting mind that waited near the bed.....(9)

Maya and Gautama are poles apart. There is a lack of communication between the two. This is clear from the attitude of her husband towards her after the death of Toto. He fails to realize her" misery "and does not know how to "comfort "her. Insensitivity of the husband becomes clear from the following:

.....he knew nothing that concerned me. Giving me an opal ring to wear on finger, he  
did not notice the translucent skin beneath. The blue flashing veins that ran under and  
out of the bridged of gold and jolted me .....(9)

Maya's attitude to nature and physical world also shows her obsessive love of life. She gives highly sensuous account of the world of nature of flower and fruits, forms and colors. She has the deep sensitivity, quite deeply inclined by the sights and sounds, forms and colors of the natural world. She is infuriated when she finds that her husband fails to notice the dust storm. Gautama for her is representative of male centered materialistic civilization and culture. The act of murder is revolt against callous materialistic social order. Maya believes that she is not fit to live in this world based on male centered wisdom, reason and order. She wants to be free from the chains of slavery based on customs and established norms of the society.

.....all order is gone out of my life. All formality, there is no plan, no  
peace nothing to keep me with the pattern of familiar, everything living  
and doing.....(195)

There is other trait of Maya's character which transcends the idea of feminism. She is in search of new vista for a woman's space in which she is at par with man. The dance of the peacock's who destroy each other in spite of being madly in love. Maya thinks of her married life with Gautama as a deadly struggle in which one is destined to kill the other. Rebuffed by her husband, Maya is torn between her love of life and her fear of death. She says:

God; now I am caught in the net of the inescapable, where lay the possibility of mercy, of release. This net is no hallucination, no. am I gone insane? Father! Husband, who is my savior? I am in need of one. I am dying and I am in love with living, I am in love and I am dying, god let me sleep, forget me, But no I'll never sleep again. There is no rest any more only death and waiting".

The gloomy state of affairs is unacceptable to Maya. Hence she eases her tension psychologically by thinking how peacock stamps its and strikes its break against rock, and how it seizes the snakes to breaks its body to relieve its own pain ety of past and present dilemmas.. This affects her consciousness badly and she craves for an urgent outlet of her emotions. Thus under the spell of delusion, she kills Gautama and commits suicide. Her unconscious desire to kill her husband is a revenge reaction arising out of her own basic frustrations- unhappy married life, unfulfilled longings and a reaction against her husband's cold unresponsiveness. Through this murder and suicide, she experiences fulfillment and is relieved from the anxiety of past and present dilemmas.

Women in Desai, tend to make constant comparisons between their father's houses. In their search of fulfillment, women continue to rely on the house. When it becomes clear to that the house cannot fill their emotional spiritual vacuum, they choose to withdrawal becomes a symptom of Maya. To study the predicament of Maya, it is important to see her life as structured between her father's house and her husband's both locations act as a reflection of her attractive figure-nurtured by the values of her class, she also becomes a threat to that very system.

### CONCLUSION

The novelist has thus highlighted the female predicament in various aspects. She excels, particularly in elaborating the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women tortured by negligence and loneliness. Through Maya's character, Anita Desai upholds a new vista of feminism writing.

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**MEDICINE, WOMEN AND PATTERNS OF HEALTH CARE IN  
COLONIAL BENGAL (19TH CENTURY)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This essay analyses the comparative study of medicine, position of women regarding medicine and healthcare between ancient and colonial Bengal. Besides this article analyses the intention of the government in promoting medical care and knowledge for the women and also the response of the Indian society. It also discuss about the practitioners, who were the creation of the British Medical system and their impact on the contemporary society. This paper also shows that what were the objectives of the government in promoting medical care and medical knowledge for women and why did the Indian female medical practitioners accept this western medical knowledge and what kind of problems they had to face during that time .Actually From the Beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century women were neglected by the male dominated society of Bengal. No proper education was given to them. They were entirely confined in some house hold activities and the curse of superstitions made their lives next to hell.*

**Keywords:** Mythology; Materialize; Natives; Contagious Diseases; Midwives; Dhais; Oriented; Lucrative; Discrimination

**INTRODUCTION**

Nineteenth Century was very important phase in the history of modern India. During this period the history of science, technology, environment and medicine was a less explored area of historical research. It witnessed the growing patronage of medicine. This century we can also observe the gradual undermining of indigenous medical system by the colonial state.

Before we discuss about this topic it is important to know the history of medicine, medical education for women and patterns of healthcare in ancient India in briefly.

The Atharva Veda, the last of the four classic treatises handed to man by divinity according to Hindu Mythology, embodies information of the maintenance of health and cure of diseases. It has been variously date from 1600 BC to 600 BC. It mentions fever, consumptions, diarrhea and leprosy among other diseases and contains descriptions of magical practices and herbs for their treatment . The Atharva Veda is supplemented by the works left behind by some of the great ancient Indian Medical teachers. Chief among them were Charaka, the physician at Taksasila and Susrata, the surgeon at Varanasi. Sushruta samhita describe the existence of 1120 diseases including smallpox and tuberculosis.

Ayurveda is the indigenous Indian system of medicine. Prevention of diseases is an important aspect with emphasis on hygiene, yoga and exercise. That hygiene was important to the ancient Indians is



obvious from the excellent sanitation system. Seen at the excavation sites of the ancient civilization at Harappa and Mohenjadaro. Similar to the Greek theory of humor's, Ayurveda is based on the Dosha system which maintains that health was dependent on equilibrium among the three doshas-Vata(wind) Pitta (gall) and Kapha(mucus). Vedic India recognised three types of doctors-Salya Vaidya (surgeon) bhisaks (physician) and bhisag alharvans (magic doctors).

A succession of invasions of northern India further devalued extant medical routines and saw the development of imported variants based on Persian and Arabian practices. Unani was introduced into India around the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the mughal and siddha replaced Ayurveda. These in turn gave way to modern western medicine with the arrival of Europeans to the sub-continent.

The Portuguese were the first to attempt to setup a hospital, a medical school in Velha Goa. The present Goa medical college is a continuation of that effort. Danish, Dutch and French settlers made no serious effort at propagating their medical system. The credit for establishing footing throughout India goes to the British.

The Indian Medical Service was started in the Mid-18<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal to provide medical care for the soldiers and officers of the East India company armies as well as for civilian. A school for native medical doctors was setup in Calcutta in 1853. A similar school followed in Madras in 1837.

Ayurveda is still a popular treatment among Hindus, particularly in the rural areas, where most use only this system of medicine. Expense may dictate from of treatment especially when the alternative for a village is expensive. Allopathic treatment on travelling large distance to visit a modern hospital. Siddha is practiced mainly in Tamilnadu, being characterized by the importance of the pulse in diagnosis and the therapeutic use of a substance called kuppu and metals such as mercury, iron and Zinc.

Homeopathy flourishes and has overtaken Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha in popularity. Indeed some practitioners of modern medicine have either supplemented their practice with homeopathy or have abandoned allopathic medicine in its favour.

### **Women in Medicine in India**

The first woman to become a doctor in India was Anandibai gopal Joshi, who travelled to the women's Medical College of Philadelphia, graduating in the class of 1886. Her thesis was entitled "Obstetrics among the Aryan Hindus". Unfortunately she died of pulmonary tuberculosis soon after her return to India.

Women gained entry into Indian Medical Colleges in the 1880s. Their entry was not as painful or frustrating as that of their counterparts in Britain or the USA. The Grant Medical College Bombay, for example, opened its doors to women for the medical courses in 1888, the first woman graduate being Freney Cama in 1892. Between 1892 and 1915, 63 Indian women obtained this degree.

### **Education for women**

From the Beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century women were neglected by the male dominated society of Bengal. No proper education was given to them. They were entirely confined in some household activities and the curse of superstitions made their lives next to hell.

The upliftment of women from the degraded condition is one of the important areas of historical research and it had been furthered by progress of education among them. Christian missionaries, promoted by religious zeal, took interest in female education. But there was strong opposition from the orthodox society. Generally education for females was extremely discouraged. In spite of some opposition in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a growing acceptance for female education. To materialize the movement, three sections of the society took the initiative the British rulers, the Indian male reformers and educated Indian women. The first initiative in this regard came from the Missionaries. Unmarried female missionaries arrived in India and started working for the Indian women and

children. To educated women they established many school for them. But these missionary school were not very popular for several reasons.

The Indian male reformers played an important role in the sphere of women education. The initial step was taken by men like Radha kanta Deb, the Secretary of the Calcutta school society, and later by Keshab Chandra Sen and the Brahmo Samaj. In western India Mahadeb Govinda Ranade began to promote female education through Parthana Samaj. In northern India Swami Dayananda Saraswati and his Arya Samaj played a crucial role in popularizing female education among the women. But it is true that the real motive behind the initiative taken by British Government for female education was different than the male. They wanted to educate the wives of their civil servant so that the loyalty towards the Raj could be extended among the inner world of the Bengali community. They also believed that the Eastern educated Indian wives would gave birth only western minded child. But Indian reformers truly wanted the developing a progressive society. If women were educated, the society could no longer be characterized as decadent and backward.

### **Medical Education for women**

In the field of health and education there was a widespread insensibility among the British government. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century medicine reminded an essentially male oriented and male dominated field.

However, the Indian Medical Services (IMS) was established in 1764 with a view to cater the medical needs of the British in India. In addition to IMS doctors, the British employed native compounders, dressers, and apothecaries who belonged to the subordinate Medical service. By 1820's increased demand from the military and civilian populations for western medicine led to the decision to train 'natives' as doctors. Calcutta Medical College established in 1835, became the first Indian institutions to award medical degrees.

In 1860's the British officials became conscious to medicalize the bodies of Indian women when venereal diseases threatened and tried to capture the capacity of the army. So in the form of the Contagious Diseases Act (1868) the state directly intervened into Indian's women health. It was designed to protect the health of the soldiers in lock hospitals to alleviate the evil of venereal disease. Western medical care directed at Indian women began in earnest with the missionaries. It was until the 1860's that single women were grudgingly admitted to the missionary calling but, like the wives and daughters of earlier missionaries, they were to confine their work to women and children.

The Countess of Dufferine's Fund, began in 1885, became the first programme with official support to focus on medical care for Indian women. The Home Department immediately informed municipalities that some of the funds at their disposal could be spent on female hospitals and dispensaries, while other branches of the government lent their support to the educational programmes that would train these women. These efforts initially became successful through the missionaries because they needed assistants in different sections of female medical professions)

### **Training Indian Women as Medical Practitioners**

The Countess of Dufferin's Fund materialized to provide scholarships for doctors, nurses and midwives. The position of midwives in the Western medical system in Bengal was a discussable matter. Midwives were not a creation of British practitioners. It had a position in pre-British era. They were the professional in charge.

Pandit Madhusudan Gupta, in 1837, recommended that Calcutta Medical College should sponsor a programme to train midwives and built a lying-in-hospital for poor women, that means poor women would come to these hospitals for free treatment and it was also good news to the medical students because they were allowed practicing what they were learning. Pandit Madhusudan's suggestion materialized as midwives hospital of C.M.C.

In the middle of the century, some Indian women used to take the midwifery training. Some scattered information tells us that. But it is not enough for us to know the details about these programs.

There is considerable evidence that midwifery-training programmes were emancipator for the women who obtained this credential. Hemangini Das, the wife of Dr. Sundarimohan Das (1857-1950), who received his MB from Calcutta Medical College in 1882, and had the credentiality and completed the midwifery course in 1880. Gradually the demand of midwives profession was on the rise.

But in the case of Dhais, it was difficult to train them. Margaret Balfour and Ruth Young mention that Indian Medical Service organized a retraining scheme to train the Dhais in western medical system, which, however, failed. Because 'the young men teachers had probably no practical experience in midwifery. One of these institutions was Dr. Aitchison's Class for Dhais which started in Amritsar in 1866. Later it was survived and became the Amritsar Dhais' School under the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society.

### Medical Lady Doctors

Before 1870, few missionaries came to India as medical practitioners to provide medical assistance to Indian women, but this was hopelessly inadequate. After 1870, many missionaries came to India after getting proper medical degree, such as Clara Swain, Fanny Butler, etc.

From the beginning of the Western medical treatment medicine was oriented and dominated by male. The condition of women was not good in the medical field. They never used to go to the hospitals. They were bound to their homes by religious customs. These women even could not see the male doctors for treatment. For them the only medical aid was the unscientific Dhais.

In that context, Duffrein Fund (also known as the 'National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India) decided to train lady doctor, nurse and midwives. The missionaries at first started the programme with the help of some Indians. Duffrein Fund established many hospitals and dispensaries, but for smooth running of these institutes, the requirement of staffs was huge. So they decided to train females as doctors.

In this field there were some eminent female medical practitioners who devoted their lives for the emancipation of women from their degraded health condition. Kadambini Basu, later on Ganguly, was prominent among them. In 1883, after completing B.A. from Bethune College, she applied to Calcutta Medical College. At that time Lieutenant Governor, Rivers Thompson overruled the previous decision of the Medical Council and put more emphasis to the admission of female candidates at the Calcutta Medical College. Luckily during that time Kadambini sought admission at the College and got the admission. Shortly after entering Medical College, she married thirty nine year old widower Dwarakanath Ganguly, her teacher and mentor. In 1884 government announced a scholarship of Rs. 20 a month for female medical students. Kadambini was able to secure that scholarship throughout her tenure of study. Three years later, in 1886, she was awarded the GBMC (Graduate of Bengal Medical College) which gave her the right to practice. She did not qualify MD degree which was more prestigious than GBMC as she failed in one paper of the final practical examination. But she appeared in all the written papers for the final medical examination. In the same year she entered C.M.C.

In 1888, Kadambini was appointed as a doctor at the Lady Dufferin Women's Hospital. She received a monthly salary of Rs. 300 and also started a lucrative private practice. In 1893 she was sent to Edinburgh for higher studies. Kadambini was criticized by a section of the Hindu society who gave vehement false spoken statement. In 1891, Bangabasi, a journal of the Hindu orthodoxy, accused Kadambini of being of fitting and therefore despicable example of modern Brahmo women. Though by then she was a mother of five and a responsible housewife, the author of the article accused her of being whore. It was feared that her example would inspire other women to come out and compete with men.

After 1885 many hospitals and dispensaries were opened by the financial assistance of Dufferin Fund. They provided employment for many women including Kadambini. But these showed racial

discrimination. Appointments were given to white doctors even when more efficient Indian female doctors were available. Kadambini held temporary post at the Calcutta Zenana Hospital. Such kind of discriminations was the practice of the day. These attitudes prevented the Indian doctors from developing their skills. Especially the fate of the female doctors was worse than their male counterparts.

The next eminent female medical practitioner was Dr. Haimavati Sen(1866-1933). She was a Campbell graduate. She was born in Khulna in a wealthy zamindar family. She was married at the age of 10, but became a widow within a year of marriage. Facing immense hardships after the death of her parents, Haimavati went to Benaras and became a teacher at a small girls' school. Hearing about Brahma Samaj and their programme for widow education, she joined the institution. Later she remarried a Brahma, Kunjabehari Sen. In 1891 she entered the Campbell School. She received a scholarship of Rs. 8 per month from the government. She graduated with a silver medal from this institution. Later in her career she had to accept the position of a lady doctor at Hooghly Dufferin Hospital (1894) with a low salary. She was placed under the supervision of the assistant surgeon and the Civil surgeon.

Dr. Jamini Sen who remained single and had long career. She graduated in 1886 at the age of 25. She was the only Bengali girl in her class. After graduation she went to Nepal and worked in Bir Hospital and attended the Royal family.

Surprisingly, we came across the names of the first muslim girls to participate in full measures in the formal system of education instituted by the colonial government, as early as the 1880's and that too in the field of medicine.

The names of two muslims ladies appear in official records upto the year 1905. One of them were put down as Iddenesa bibi or Mussamut Iddenesa. She was 19 when she graduate from Campbell Medical School with a VLMS (Vernacular Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery). She was under promise to return to mymensingh where she went back and was put down in the official record 1903 as 'Bengali Mahomedan', Native lady doctor, Bidyamoyi Female Hospital, Mymensing.

The other lady was Mussamut Latifanisa (born on 1877) obviously the British Spelling for the Latifunessa who had passed the Campbell Medical School examination with distinction and mentioned in the "Bamabodhini Patrika" in 1897. The record mention that she was a Bengali Mahomedan studying for the VLMS at a monthly scholarship of Rs. 7/- and being in the second year medicine course was expected to graduate in 1896. The VLMS degree this women received was nto given the equivalence of the more prestigious MB conferred by medical colleges, but passing the examination of the Compbell Medical School was a perquisite. The fact that Iddenesa is listed as working in my mensingh till 1905 and Latifanisa is not, could have meant that the latter did not work in a place where records were readily maintained.

The real agony is the majority of women were deprived from the medical care of trained and qualified women doctors who were products of colonial medical education.

### Nurses

The female hospital nurses came mainly from the European community. In England, this profession had a long and continuous tradition. There was no existence of nursing education or profession in India. Since India lacked the tradition of female nurses, it took a long term endeavour for starting nursing education in India. Nursing as a profession and education was first started by Baptist missionaries. Then gradually with the acceptance of the society it developed.

The concept of nursing was popularized by Florence Nightingale after the Crimean war. Florence never did come in India, but her works became he pathway for nursing all over the world including India. After 1857 the necessity of nursing was vividly felt in India. The Indian Army Nursing Service was established in 1888. It introduced a nursing course. It was the the first step towards professionalization of nursing. Gradually it developed in Bengal along with Bombay and Madras

presidency. Many schools -Colleges were opened to impart nursing training to women. Here missionaries played an important role. The Calcutta Hospital Nurses' Institution was famous in this regard.

### CONCLUSION

Finally we may say that actually science helped Europeans to dominate the world and confined the superiority of western culture. When brought to India science would regenerate this old civilization. Western medicine according to this construct, could bring relief to the Indian's suffering millions.

But in professional education or Medical education there were two major problems. One is expensive and secondly, even if every woman in England studied medicine and came out to India, they would not be able to treat all Indian's women and children. It had only one solution, which was agreed by every one, was to train Indian women in western medicine and hire them at lower salaries than required for British women.

In addition, to structural condition made the medical education more problematic. There was no proper infrastructure for making and moulding this education. There was little school for girls and only a few prepared students for the university examination. In Bengali, this examination was not open to women until 1878 and when it was made available for them, they came out successfully. There was no women's college for them to attend. Later few colleges were set up, but it was difficult to find science teachers to cater the needs of these college students had to face many problems as well.

Actually delivering western medicine without an adequate support system was really hard for the female medical practitioners. Still in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, few Bengali women distinguished in the field with limited resources. Gradually the demand for better medical education increased. The Bengali Bhadramahila community realizing the importance of medical education, actively joined in the project, as they participated in various social reform movements of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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**FOLKLORE, ART AND CRAFTS OF THE LEPCHA OF  
SIKKIM AND DARJEELING**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This essay is a study of cultural life of Lepcha. The view that, Lepcha are the original inhabitants of Eastern Himalayan region is accepted by the most of the scholars. Lepchas have their own language, script but they are not getting the opportunity of education in their mother language. The Lepcha community lived in five countries, but their number are very poor to get political identity, the major number of Lepcha live in India. Earlier they were animists, and their life was within the world of mountain. Study of their folk lore, tales, story, music are shows that they are very close to nature, this closeness help them to get a vast knowledge about nature, flora & fauna, and wild animal. These essay tried to analyse their culture, craft work, specially skill of their women in making dress, their musical instrument, their song and tales which indicate their origin and separate identity among himalayan tribes.*

**Keywords:** Mutanchi Rong Kup Rum Kup; Mayel Lyang; Kanchenjunga; Eetbo-Deybo; Indigenous; Animists; Chyee

**INTRODUCTION**

Mutanchi Rong kup Rum Kup, (Beloved children of mother nature and God) popularly known as Lepcha, the name which is given to them by their neighbour Nepalees. The Lepchas call themselves "Mutan Chye Rumkup" in their native language Rong-Aaring or Lepcha language, which in literal, means 'Mother loved one children of god'. Among the three major ethnic group (Lepcha, Bhutia, and Nepali) of Sikkim Himalaya, Lepcha are the most primitive and indigenous tribe. The Lepcha are born naturalists who live in relative isolation from outside world with their own tradition practices and beliefs. Lepcha belongs to Mongoloid racial stocks. Though the question about the origin of Lepcha has created a controversy among past and present scholar. Some anthropologist believe that Lepcha were emigrated long long before from the various part of Tibet and Mongolia. Whereas the Lepcha believe that they are the son of the soil, that is Mayel Lyang and they have many tales in favour of their beliefs. Scholar like Dr. D. C. Roy has the view that Lepcha are the aborigines of the western Himalayas, and Tibetans came later and occupied the Lepcha land. Mayel-Lyang, the Mythological lands now covered by Sikkim, Ilam region of eastern Nepal, the district of Darjeeling and some pockets of Bhutan from time immemorial.

Present day the population Lepcha lived in five countries-India, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Tibet, but they are now mainly lived in first three country. In Nepal they have settled from ancient times in eastern part of Mai Khola in Ilam district and very small number in other district. In Bhutan Lepcha lived in south and south western part, that is close to Indian border. India is the homeland of the Lepcha, here they live in Darjeeling district of West Bengal (main concentration is Kalingpong subdivision), Sikkim, and a very few number in Tripura. Earlier Lepchas were nature worshipper but gradually they converted into Buddhism -Lamaism (under Tibetan rule) and Christianity (during British rule). Some Lepcha also follow Hinduism.

Peace loving Lepcha lives a very simple tribal life, which is very much enrich in culture. Some characteristics of tribal art is their music which is their signature tunes. The dancing legs are the motion whereas the folk-tales and folk song are props of their art music and dance as a whole the tribal folk craft, folklore, folk-dance wood carvings and their countenances combine to offer them an aesthetic life which is worth mentioning. In the activities the age as such has no place and person of all age group take active part in all these occasions. They are also fond of riddle and practically everybody knows some but a few of them are famous for their repertoire. These arts presents vivid picture of tribal life. The artistic activities concern their hunting, agriculture and other aspects of their everyday life. Various aspects of tribal life such as their economic life, social life, conjugal life, sacred life their thoughts, their cattle and poultry, vegetable and fruits are also amply represented in their folklore, art and craft. The folklore contains in itself their unwritten record of cultural life. In other word folklore is the mirror of the tribal culture. The Lepchas folklore are melodious and contain interesting folkstory, some important stories are as follow

**Creation of the world-** The creation story (Aa-Ect-Sung) is the core part of Lepcha traditional story (Lungten sung) It takes more than thirty days and night to complete the whole story.

Lord Eetboo-deyboo Rum created the Koongchyenkoonglo-chyoo (Kanchenjunga mountain) and matli Pano (Earthquake king) Kanchenjunga is the elder brother of Matli Pano. Lord Eetboo-deyboo Rum created the two but this creation was not habitable for any creature because the whole world was covered with water Eetboo-deyboo Rum was concerned about human beings and where they would live. The lord thought about the shelter for human beings, hence it was decided that Matli Pano would lie above the Talyo da. Lord Eetboo-deyboo Rum made the soil on his body which became the earth, where the creatures could live. Matli Pano did not want to live under the soil, so he moved below the earth and caused the whole world to shake. There was no control over his body movement and thus there were floods and earthquakes everywhere and no creature could live comfortably.

Eetbo-deybo now decided that Kanchenjunga should stand on Matli Pano's chest so that he could control the movements of his young brother. Towards creation of human the story goes like this: The God out of pure snow from the top of the mount Kanchenjunga made a shape of man into which he infused nine Nongyong, and the life appeared. That person was named Fudong Thing. Perceiving his state of loneliness God thought of creating his partner. Then God made another shape of a Woman and infused nine Nongyoung as sample from the body of founding thing (Thus causing only eight Nongyong in case of a male). She was named Nongyong Nyu'. They started life as friend. The place where the two ancestors of the Lepcha's were kept was called Nye Mayel Kyong.

The place supposed to lie near Kanchenjunga. In spite of everything they were not content with their life. Because God forbade them to enter into any physical relations till they attain full maturity after which they automatically got the opportunity of cohabitation and procreation. But as they grew they forgot the words of their creator. Nuzong Nyu proposed in such a way that fudongthing could not control himself and began to act like her husband. The result was, God by way of punishment sent them nine steps down to this mundane world i.e. Tarvong Partam. There they blessed with the children. Thus Fudongthing and Nuzoan Nyu were the first parents of the Lepchas.

**Origin of Lepcha Marriage:** The myth on origin of Lepcha Marriage on a justification on the Lepcha marriage ceremony and it is very interesting to listen, as it is in below.

Thousand of year ago a young robust and powerful Lepcha Tarbongthing after journeying and exploring Mayel Lyang for many months arrived at a placed called pari pagyen. He was very tired fatigued and hungry. Tarbongthing looked, for a shelter for the night but no village or human settlement was in sight. He saw a fruit tree nearby with hundreds of birds on it. To satisfy his hunger he set Radoo Ramyang, a bamboo trap, to catch birds on the fruit tree. He caught a few birds and satisfied his hunger. The next day Tarbongthing set Radoo Ramyang once again on the same fruit tree and went away to look for a village. Where he returned to his shelter in the afternoon, Tarbongthing found to his annoyance, there were only dry twigs and leaves hanging on his trap instead of birds.



Tarbongthing was puzzled angry as well as curious to find out the person who was perpetrating a mischievous deed on him. The next day once again he very carefully set Radoo Ramyang on the same fruit tree and hid himself under the bushes and keep eyeing on the tree. In the late afternoon, Tarbongthing saw a young beautiful girl coming out from the wood towards the trap and freeing the birds one after another from the trap and putting dry things and leaves on the trap. On seeing this Tarbongthing sneaked behind her and caught her very firmly. The young and beautiful girl, although surprised, fought back to free herself from Tarbongthing but Tarbongthing somehow over powered, subdued her at the end.

Tarbongthing asked her, why did you free the birds from the trap? The young girl replied that she was the guardian preserver and champion, of the birds and asked him, 'What harm did these innocent birds do to you? She also said that, she freed the birds from the trap because they have equal right to live in this beautiful Mayel Lang. Both of them were young beautiful and handsome, both of young attracted to each other in fact it was love at first sight.

When she wanted to go home because it was too late, Tarbongthing barring her way, asked her & her's village name. The girl replied that her name was, ' Narip Naom' and she came from sakyong. Tarbongthing again asked her if she would run away with him to start their own family life. She replied you must ask my mother and uncle's permission. My mother is Tace-Tanye Moo-Nyoo. Having said this she disappeared into the woods. Tarbongthing returned to his mother Numkoot Amoo Nyoo and expressed desire to marry her. After that Tarbongthing's maternal uncle went sakyong with marriage proposal. His proposal welcomed there but Narip Naom's mother and uncle said that Tarbongthing and his uncle must adhere to and fulfill marriage conditions.

Tarbongthing and his uncle agrees to the all conditions of the Lepcha Marriage customary law and bride price. Thus the first Lepcha marriage ceremony was solemnised between Narip Naom and Tarbongthing and Lepcha Marriage customary law originated in Mayel Lyang. In Lepcha society in marriage ceremony they sing to bless the new Bride:

Hâ aey . . . . !

Let the bride and groom live long

Like the Himalayas standing strong.

Let them flower and fruit

With bright sunshine on them,

In this world.

Like the love of Teesta and Rangeet

Let them flow together forever, and

Let their love endure for all time.

Hâ aey . . . . . !

Into the laps of groom's parents,

The jewel bride is entrusted,

Amid uncles, aunts and relatives as witnesses.

Let the jewel bride shine,

Let her bring the light to this house

From this day onwards.

Hâ aey . . . . . !

On completion of the marriage vows and blessings,

On the union of these two,

Let the young boys and girls

Dance, sing and play together,

To celebrate the wedding with joy and delight

**Origin of clans:** Origin of Lepcha clan is also related to mythological tales. According to myth Lepchas fought under Tamsangthing against Laso- Mung- Pano(a devil), and win the war. When the devil was slain the Lepchas and Tamsangthing moved the place called Tarkaol Tam-E-Tam (Valley of deliverance), then Tamsangthing give the title to Lepcha according to their role in the war .The descendents of those Lepcha are known on the title. Thus clan had originated in Lepcha community. These are as below.

1. The Lepcha prayed to God Eetboo-Deyboo were called Mallamu.
2. The Lepcha who plucked all the teeth of the demon were called Lukshongmu.
3. The man who pierced the eye of monster were called Simakmu
4. The Lepcha who cut the body of the monster were known as Suthungmu
5. The man who threw dust at the eyes of the monster in war were called Sadaamgnu
6. The man who prepared the swords for the work were called Korvomu
7. The man who made the string of the bow were called Brimu
8. The person who supply food for the soldier were called Jeribu
9. The person who served Lepcha leaders during war were called Ademmu
10. The Lepcha who make the bow and arrow were called Frenthatimu

**Origin of Chyee :-** To use the super natural powers bestowed upon Nyolik Nyosongmun by Eetboo-Deyboo Rum,she revealed that the medicine for the restoration of lost morale of the Lepcha soldiers lay in the form of Buth (ferment ). Buth was in possession of matlimanyoo and Tungdyer Palyung a Cockroach agreed to bring the Buth from matlimanyoo.

On the way back while tierd Tungdyer Palyung was resting, pamaol Bu, a pure Black Cobra snaked in and stole a bit of Buth from tungdyer Palyung and tested it and became mad and very poisonous. A honey bee (hu) tested a little Buth, developed sharp needle to prick with seemingly negligible string, like this sum large birds became carnivorous, a tree (kantek ) develop sour taste. Finally kundong koonge a plantain tree touched it and it fruit's became sweat. Lepcha people believe, in this process, Buth became poison less and got ready for them.

Tungdyer Palyung finally arrived with Buth and gave it to priestess who cooked millet, mixed Buth to prepare Chyee, fermented beverage the ultimate power potion, and distributed it among Lapcha soldirs to raise their morale in the war against Laso Mung – Pano, the devil. With their high morale the Lepchas fought gallantly.

The Lepcha have some more tales about the origin of year, creation of Lapcha priest and Priestess, the two sun etc. all the story passes one generation to another as Folklore. Folklore thus reciprocally related to the life of the Lepcha of Sikkim & Darjeeling. Folklore shows indication to construct the history of Lepcha.

**Art and Crafts:** Folksongs, Music and dance of the Lepcha are a composite whole which is one of the dominant characteristics of their culture. In folksong verse and music go together and the musical aspect is much more reflected in practice. The folk-poetry is merely a vehicle for the folk-tune. The Lepcha people go on singing a small poem of four to eight lines for hours together with help of flok-

music. The simple catchy folk-tunes conveying the feeling and sentiments of their ancestors, their lives and thoughts, their activities and achievements, their moral and discipline are of great value. One of their famous folk song is -

“Golden snowy peaks of Kanchanjunga

Is your crown,

The shining morning dews

Playing on Kurseong and Survo flowers,

Your ornaments.

Oh! Mayel Lyang.....

In Mayel Lyang, the Lepcha land,

In the lap of Mount Kanchanjunga,

To be born, live and to die,

And to be able to meet

My ancestors in Poomju in the Himalayas,

After death,

Through the old and ancient path,

I am happy and glad.

Oh! Mayel Lyang.....”

Lepcha people celebrate different occasions in different way. They have various dance style for various celebration, that shows their cultural enriches. these are

**Zo-Mal-Lok:-** This is a popular folkdance of Lepcha community where young and the old jointly take part of singing and dancing this dance depicting the showing reaping and harvesting of paddy.

**Chu faat :-** In the honour of Mt. Kanchenjunga and its four associate peaks Mt. Pandim, Mt. Kabru, Mt. Simbrum and Mt. Narsingh this dance performed by Lepchas. Carrying butter lamps and green bamboo leaves, the dancers performed this ritualistic dance with devotional songs. It is their belief that this peak are repository of five hidden treasure such as salt, medicine, minerals, sacred books and food grain.

**Tedong Lho faat :-** It is a folklore, which is often retold to the new generation in lyrical poetry. This folklore corresponds the divine occurrences as described in the Indian Vedas Matsya Purana & in the Bible as the ‘Great flood’

**Kar Gnok Lok :-** Is famous Lepcha folkdance which depicts the sojourn of a group of migratory swans who take a flight from the warm plains towards the cold Himalayan region in the month of Feb-March and from cold region to the warm plain in the month of October- November. The seasonal migratory flight of the swans guide the Lepchas to begin sowing and harvesting their crop.

The Lepcha community have rich variety of their indigenous musical instrument, some notable are Sut-saang (Played like violin) Tung-bak (Played like a pass mandolin) Bangho, Tangdyu, Bampathut, Pan thongtalit suno, palit-kheng etc. the themes of the most of Lepcha songs are mainly based on their culture and tradition which include birth of the child marriage, death, returning soul to the Lyap of Kanchenjunga and other natural surroundings. Though the songs and music of Lepcha's are being influenced by electronic media and western music but effort are being made by Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association to protect their enriched culture, language and literature.

Lepchas are like magician in bamboo craft. They can make variety of products for their daily usage with great artistic sense, their dress unique and colourful. The Lepchas prepare their own dress from time immemorial for both men and women. Dum praa use as garment of men in day time and it also use as blanket at night. Thyak Tuk may be round or almost conical in shape and is a colourful dress other men dress Tago is a Shirt, covers the upper part of body and Tam is a Lepcha's Trouser.

Female dress known as Dum-dem is worn by covering the body criss-crossing just below the neck. It is a long dress which covers whole body up to feet. They use long sleeved loose blouse inside the Dum-dem. Ladies cloths are not coloured like men dress.

Lepchas hat are the representation of their skill in crafts work. Lepcha's hat are different in size and shape. The hats are Sumok Thaktuk, Papri Thaktuk, Seyraaboo Thaktuk, Soring Thaktuk. Most of hats are made of wood and used for different purpose. The Baanpok, a short knife also have good decoration Tunggip, Lepcha handbag & Tukvil Lyak Lepcha women's necklace are example of their handicrafts. It shows skill of Lepcha artisans.

### CONCLUSION

Lepcha the real inhabitants of the Sikkim and Darjeeling region is living there from a time immemorial. They stay very close to nature and thus they gain a vast knowledge on the plants, flora and fauna, poisonous snakes of their region. That's why they are honored as good botanist. This region not only cover most part of their folk knowledge but also their ritual belief which are reciprocally connected with the mountains and hilly Kanchenjunga. Folklore, folktales, folk-dance, everything which related to Lepcha life is related to mountain. The worshiper of nature lepcha limited their life within the area. Study of their folklore tales indicates their origin of these regions. The folklore folk-music shows their relation with nature and crafts shows various aspect of their daily life. Folklore art and craft provide a mirror through that the world can see the enriched culture of Mutanchi Rong Kup Rum Kup.

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**SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITION OF LEPCHA COMMUNITY  
OF SIKKIM (INDIA)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In Sikkim Lepchas appear to subsist fairly well in the mixed communities, to a very great extent adopting the habits, culture and even the language of their neighbours; they share with them the religion of Lamaism, which is the official religion of the state. In India they constitute only a tiny minority of the population of the districts; they appear to have lost almost all-corporate unity they have practically completely forgotten their own language and it would appear that none of the children round Kalimpong at any rate can speak anything except Nepali.*

**Keywords:** Lepchas; Communities; Lamaism; Sikkim; Minority; Nepali Kazi

**INTRODUCTION**

The indigenous Lepcha culture which is a product of the hills still clings precariously in the areas where Lepcha are numerically big. The Lepcha political and social status in the set up was that of an inferior class. Once raised to the status of a Kazi, their social elevation dependent on their acceptance of Bhutia superiority in culture and spiritual matters conceivable the Lepcha commoners then as they do now lived a separate life wedded to their age old tradition and looked down upon the aristocracy with benign indifference.

The Lepcha leadership fully condoned this unequal arrangement and agreed to be counted as a composite ethnic group, Bhutia-Lepcha in the political man oeuvres of the ruling elite immediately after India independence. By that time a new danger to the Bhutia political supremacy had been thrown in by the emigrant Nepali settler, and their aspiration for democratic rights. There after the history of Sikkim is a chronicle of continuous conflict between the establishment that is the ruling Bhutia and Lepcha elite and the emergent aspiration of the people, mostly let by the now numerically predominant Nepali settlers.

Socially, however this did not rise to any violent turmoil. The political differences of the elite at Gangtok seldom reached the common man who continued to live in harmony in their isolated hamlets in the vast starch of mountain terrain. Even communications with Gangtok were few or far between. The ethnic groups were left unhindered to lead their own way of life in their settlements. As a protectorate under the republic the status quo was maintained.

When finally revolution struck this tiny Himalayan state in the early seventies, three parallel social steams were discernible. The Lepcha stream, submissive accommodating and introverted, based on a latent attachment to animistic beliefs and tribal norms but openly subservient to the Lamaist hierarchy. The Bhutia streams was more aggressive having had the support of the chogyal and aligned to the Tibetan in religious and cultural norms and the Nepali streams of the settlers which were still striving to get of food hold in the country.

### Early settlement of Lepchas in Sikkim:

During the early stages of the development of their civilization, they settled near the river Teesta and Rangeet and dense forest of the Himalayas and the region known called 'Dzongu'. Their language is also called cha Lepcha and is of Tibeto-Burmese origin. Their script was introduced by five Lepcha stages (i) Targey (ii) Sayoon (iii) Goley (iv) Tungrab and (v) Dorring. According to Mr. K.P. Tamsang, the Lepcha alphabet was invented by Thling Menselong, who was an administrator to the earliest Lepcha king. The third ruler of Namgyal Dynasty, Chador Namgyal invented these scripts according to the Gazetteer of Sikkim. It seems that the script was invented by the Lepchas and further improved by the Namgyal, king of Sikkim in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A grammar was written in 1876 by General Mainwaring, the folklores were mostly compiled by Europeans and their literature consisted of translations of Tibetan scriptures only. Till very recently the Lepcha language was not taught in school. After the merger of the state with the union of India, the language is receiving proper attention, it is being taught in the school. The directorate of education is publishing text books in Lepcha, which is taught up to VIII.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

A review of related literature is a vital component of the research process. Many studies on the socio-economic condition of Lepchas is conducted abroad. To cite a few, it is observed that most of the studies related to political right, economic right etc a study conducted in north east Asia focused on investigation of origin, culture, tradition of the Lepchas. As the present study focuses on socio-economic conditions of Lepcha community in Sikkim.

Bhasin in her book "Ecology, culture and change Tribals of Sikkim himalays" he has made a study on the long term change in the Lepcha economy, where by agriculture system, as agriculture is their primary occupation.

Sonam Rinchen his book "the Wealth of Sikkim" he have made the different valuable information regarding the different communities living in Sikkim including Lepchas.

Rajesh Verma in his book " A Guide and a Hand Book of Sikkim" explain the historical aspects of Lepchas of Sikkim and focused on the political side of the Lepchas history, where he states after the last named Panu(king) the name Thekung Thek comes up prominently as the leaders of Lepchas.

Maitreyee Choudhury, who has studied the changes which are forth coming in the life style of different communities and in their traditions and festivals focusing mainly on the younger generation.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the life style of the Lepcha living in the ancient time and to compare their lifestyle with Lepchas of today.
2. To know about what changes has taken place from the ancient scenario to the present scenario in the lives of the Lepchas.
3. To understand what type of relationship did the Lepcha and with the other communities.

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology that was used for the present study of the problem was a survey intensive field work together with the thorough accounts of ground reality, its problem and nature. The study was conducted mainly on the basis of primary data collected through interview schedule prepared with earlier studies on the topic. But, some secondary data were also used.

### RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

There is insufficient knowledge about the Lepchas race, religious, custom, tradition and economy. But the Lepchas were tried to fine out the better life style and earning and have started living in the place where there is diverse and mixed socio-cultural practices. The present study will explore and analyze



different socio-economic and political aspect of the community which will be helpful for the policy makers and planners in formulating policies for the development of this community.

Research work have been carried out on Sikkim's society, polity, economy etc but studies on the Lepchas who are residing in Sikkim has attracted less attention from modern day researches. Therefore, keeping all the above in view this work has been done with the objective of creating awareness among the masses about the Lepchas residing in Sikkim hills.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

Lepcha cultivate patches of ground below the elevation of 6,000 ft. Which are situated to the growth of rice their staple food. They also cultivate different other crops such as millets, buck wheat, Indian corn, particularly the Murwa. Their wants being few they get all that they need from the forests of Sikkim. Being party of nomadic habits, they generally roam at large in the thickets in search of food, in common with the monkeys whose flesh they eat. They consume what their harvest yields in less than three months and hence they are nicknamed together Menthurgya or improvident, who do not think the narrow. Being thoughtless of the future, the Lepchas wander merrily about the forests inhaling health, plucking wild fruits during almost all the seasons.

The primitive Lepchas had good many interesting tales and legends which evidenced largely, their simplicity and liveliness of fancy and their innocent and guileless character. Formerly it was customary with them to invoke, after they had taken their daily meal, the cup-bearer goddess for more good cheer. She was supposed to preside at every fire-hearth. They also used to pay great obeisance to the serpents because they had a legend that the serpent king Mur-Nyobu, let the waters from Ta-lyade in Tong-dek. And it is owing to this that they are very fond of bathing in the rivers. Another tradition among the Lepchas is that before the Tibetans emigrated to the south of the Himalayas, Sikkim was inhabited by three tribes, called Na-ang, Chang and Mon of these the Na-ang was the earliest inhabitants.

The polyandry marriages are permitted amongst the Lepcha although this is now becoming very rare. The nuptial customs are quite intriguing after both the parties have evinced interest in establishing martial relations; the boy's maternal uncle approaches the parents of the girl with some bottles of liquors, Scarf and some money. The marriage came easily be ended but the husband have to pay some money to the girl's parents. The government feels protective towards the Lepchas, believing that they represent a conservative force- a balance wheel which helps save a way of life from being overwhelmed by western culture.

Originally, the Lepchas were hunters. They gradually started domesticating animals. Agriculture was also one of their main occupations. In the remote past they were the self-sufficient people, who were economically well off. They lived in closely knit community of their own.

### CONCLUSION

The Lepchas now take to weaving, make beautiful baskets, hats and carpets. They display their engineering feat by lying bamboo water pipes all over the area inhabited by them. They cultivate crops like rice, millet, cardamom and maize. They have a great affinity with the outside world and the civilization.

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