

that Sikhs refer. In terms of the *Adi Granth*, moreover, its standard interpretation is also a product of a Singh Sabha ideologue, Bhai Teja Singh, whose four-volume *Shabadārath Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib Jī* (The Meaning of the Guru Granth) is an invaluable guide to the scripture. Indeed, the success of the Singh Sabha both inside and outside of India may be clearly noticed in many of today's world religions textbooks, because what these narrate is in fact an interpretation of Sikhism handed down to us by this august group of intellectuals.

[See also Hinduism; India; and Religion.]

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**SIKKIM.** The small landlocked state of Sikkim, India's least populous and second smallest, has a geopolitical significance far beyond its size. Bounded to the north and northeast by the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, to the west by Nepal, to the southeast by Bhutan, and to the south by the Darjeeling district of the Indian state of West Bengal, Sikkim occupies an important ecological niche along one of the oldest Himalayan trade routes. Much of the state's north and west is perpetually covered by snow and is dominated by the Kanchenjunga massif, India's highest and the world's third highest mountain.

The concept of a unified Sikkimese nation emerged around 1646, when the kingdom was established under

Phuntsog Namgyal (1604–1670), the first Chogyal, or "temporal and spiritual king." King Phuntsog belonged to the Bhutia community, a people from eastern Tibet who entered Sikkim from the north and began settling there in the thirteenth century. Sikkimese narratives suggest that early Bhutia leaders signed a pact of nonaggression and cooperation with the Lepcha, Sikkim's indigenous tribal community, who speak a Tibeto-Burman language of considerable antiquity. The term "Sikkim" may well be derived from the Limbu *su khim*, meaning "new house," while the Bhutia refer to the region's fertile soil as the "valley of rice" with the indigenous place-name *denjong*.

Beginning in the mid-1700s, Sikkim was involved in several territorial wars with Nepal and Bhutan, after which stretches of western Sikkim and its lowland plains were occupied by foreign forces. By the nineteenth century, Nepalese workers had begun migrating to Sikkim and neighboring Darjeeling. Some settled, while others continued to migrate seasonally for wage labor.

Sikkim sided with Britain during the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814–1816, marking the beginning of considerable British influence in this otherwise sovereign kingdom. Starting in 1835, the British East India Company, which had trading and political interests in Tibet, leased Darjeeling from Sikkim. However, friction between the British and Sikkim over perceived violations of Sikkim's territorial integrity led to war in 1849 and to the restrictive Anglo-Sikkimese Treaty of 1861. From 1889 the British stationed a political officer in Sikkim, allegedly to assist the Chogyal in domestic and foreign administration; really this marked the first step in Sikkim's demotion from sovereign nation to colonial outpost.

Three years after India gained independence from Britain in 1947, Sikkim became an Indian protectorate, with Delhi assuming responsibility for Sikkim's external relations and defense. In a much-publicized wedding ceremony, Crown Prince Palden Thondup Namgyal (r. 1965–1975), later the twelfth Chogyal of Sikkim, married the New Yorker Hope Cooke. Their royal rule ended in 1975 with public riots outside the royal palace in Gangtok. Under the prime ministership of Indira Gandhi (1917–1984), Sikkim came under increasing control from Delhi, culminating in its annexation by India on 15 May 1975.

Modern Sikkim is a culturally diverse state with a blossoming tourism sector and a fast-growing economy. Gangtok is the capital. A populist chief minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling (b. 1950), has been in power since 1994. The population census of 2001 records Sikkim as being home to 540,000 residents, of which the indigenous Lepcha



and Bhutia make up only a tenth each. The remainder are mostly of Nepali ancestry.

With the improvement in Sino-Indian relations for the first time since the 1962 war, China finally recognized India's claim over Sikkim. A direct trade route between India and China opened in 2006 using Sikkim's Nathu-La pass, once again highlighting Sikkim's strategic significance.

[See also East India Company, British; and India.]

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**SILK** [This entry includes two subentries, an overview and a discussion of silk in East Asia.]

### Overview

Silk production begins in the sericultural sector with the raising of silkworms fed on mulberry leaves. Cocoons spun by the silkworms are first boiled to soften the silk threads, which are then extracted by winding or reeling. Several threads of raw silk may be twisted together to form thrown silk. Raw silk and thrown silk are further woven or processed to make a great variety of silk fabrics and goods, including clothing, ribbons, furniture coverings, and draperies. Silk is prized for its natural sheen, light weight, high absorbency, and resilience, and it has long been associated with high fashion and elegance.

Historically silk goods were high-cost, low-volume luxury products exported from China along the Silk Road. Knowledge of silk production eventually spread from China to other countries. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, northern Italy and southern France had long been leading sericultural and silk-weaving centers. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 resulted in the flight of many Huguenots from France; many were skilled silk throwsters and weavers from Lyon and helped establish the silk-weaving industry in England, Switzerland, and Germany.

Silk production and trade were revolutionized in the nineteenth century. The Lyonnais Joseph-Marie Jacquard

invented in 1801 a loom that made it possible to weave elaborate and multicolored patterns directly onto the silk fabric through the use of perforated cards. Initially opposed by weavers who feared displacement by the labor-saving loom, the loom quickly gained acceptance, with eleven thousand in use in France by 1812. The Jacquard loom spread to neighboring European countries. Another Lyonnais, Joseph Ferdinand Gensoul, invented in 1805 a steam-powered machine to both heat the water for boiling the cocoons and reel the silk threads. Later improved models were widely adopted in silk filatures in France and Italy from the 1830s, leading to the transformation of silk reeling into a modern industry separated from sericulture.

Even as demand for silk goods expanded with rising living standards, the silk industry in Europe faced a crisis with the spread of the silkworm disease called pébrine that devastated raw-silk production in Europe as well as in Turkey and Syria from 1855. French sericulture never recovered from this epidemic, and French silk manufacturers had to seek new sources of supply of raw silk, relying first on British reexports of Chinese silk and then turning to direct imports from China and Japan from the 1860s. This trade was greatly facilitated by improvements in transportation and communications: the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the laying of the transcontinental cables, and the spreading adoption of steamships.

A new silk manufacturing industry emerged in America in the late nineteenth century, protected by heavy tariffs imposed during the Civil War and jumpstarted by immigrant skilled workers and managers from England, France, Switzerland, and Germany. Centered at Paterson, New Jersey, the U.S. silk-manufacturing industry soon developed its unique patterns that deviated from European practice. Power looms were adopted earlier and more universally in the United States: in 1900, 99.6 percent of 44,430 looms in use in America were power looms, as compared to 33.8 percent of 90,600 looms in use in France. American power looms were more automated, bigger, faster, and more labor-saving than European ones.

Moreover, American manufacturing was especially suited for producing standardized and inexpensive silk goods suitable for everyday use in large quantities to meet the demands of a democratized consumer market. In contrast, the French industry centered at Lyon excelled in turning out high-quality silk fabrics and products with distinctive and ornate designs. Before the 1880s European imports supplied the bulk of American demand for finished silk goods, but thereafter American production grew by leaps and bounds: