

Democratic Associations and Political Representation of Tribal Population in Sikkim: a Study of the Associational Activity of Bhutias and Lepchas.

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Abstract- The issue of political representation played a significant role in the unification, consolidation and reconstruction of a small Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim. Even after Sikkim's merger with India (16th April, 1975) this issue continues to be a source of contention among different communities and political parties in Sikkim. In this light, this paper examines the politics and functioning of one-man-one-vote system of political representation which replaced "communal" parity system of political representation in Sikkim. It analyses the democratic effects of tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in asserting tribal identities and ensuring "genuine tribal representation" in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. The major thrust of this study is the fundamental transformation in the nature of these ethnic associations from being discriminatory and political to becoming more exclusive and democratic.

Index Terms- Association, constituency, democracy, identity, minority, original inhabitants, political representation, political parties, Scheduled Tribes.

I. INTRODUCTION

During monarchical rule (1642 to 1975) in Sikkim the Kingdom was governed by conventions and proclamations issued by the Chogyal (ruler) as he was considered to be an incarnation of God or Bodhisattvas (body of high monks) by the Sikkimese people. The Kingdom's feudal economic structure and theocratic political structure ensured representation to only Kazis (landlords) and lamas (monks) in the nominated Advisory Council of the Chogyal. Also, there were no organised pressure groups and strong political parties to ensure fair representation of all the communities. It was only in 1953 that the Executive Council assumed democratic form by including elected members apart from the nominated members in the Council. This was followed by the establishment of the State Council comprising of both elected and nominated members but the mode of election was discriminatory as candidates belonging to the majority Nepali community were to be directly elected while candidates belonging to the Bhutia-Lepcha community were to be elected in both primary and final elections.

In 1958, Article 2 (i) (b) of the Royal Proclamation issued by the Chogyal introduced the "communal" parity system of political representation in Sikkim. It ensured equal representation to all the communities in Sikkim irrespective of their population ratio. It was applicable to all the domains of the state like

representative institutions, administrative posts, welfare activities, cultural life and economic facilities but the mode of election was complicated as a candidate in order to win a seat had to secure highest number of votes from his own community and at least 15 per cent of votes from the other community. Furthermore, if the candidate failed to secure 15 per cent of votes from the other community then the candidate who secured the next highest number of votes from his own community and 15 per cent of votes from the other community was declared elected provided the difference between the number of their votes did not exceed 15 per cent of the total votes secured by the highest candidate.

Political parties in Sikkim had differing views with regard to this system of political representation. Sikkim State Congress (SSC) having Nepalis support base emphasised on abolishing it, Sikkim National Party (SNP) that was backed by the Chogyal emphasised on retaining it while Sikkim National Congress (SNC) which was an annexationist party emphasised on abolishing the monarchical rule itself. Sikkim National Congress (SNC) considered the parity system of political representation to be discriminatory and divisive based on the argument that it served the interests of only the upper strata of the society and created friction among different communities and political parties in Sikkim.

"Nepali dominated political parties" like Sikkim Janata Congress (SJC) and Sikkim National Congress (SNC) played a significant role in facilitating the replacement of "communal" parity system of political representation by one-man-one-vote system of political representation. These political parties formed a Joint Action Council (J.A.C) and concluded a Tripartite agreement in 1973 with the Chogyal and the Government of India which paved the way for the passage of 36th Amendment Act in 26th April, 1975 that not only replaced "communal" parity system of political representation by one-man-one-vote system of political representation but also ensured representation and participation of Sikkimese people in the democratic institutions of India.

Ordinance No. 7 of the People's Representation Act stipulated that under one-man-one-vote system of political representation the contesting candidate has to be from his own community and the candidate must acquire maximum votes from the entire electorate of Sikkim in order to be elected. This system of political representation reduced the number of reserved Assembly seats of Bhutia-Lepchas to twelve from fifteen and increased the number of general seats to eighteen from fifteen by abolishing the Assembly seat reserved exclusively for the

Nepalis and representing them in the general seat which even included plainsmen from India settled in Sikkim for generations. However, this system retained representation of Sangha (monk body) in the State Assembly as it represented the beliefs and culture of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim. Political leaders in Sikkim have differing opinions with regard to one-man-one-vote system of political representation. Some educated leaders emphasise on its replacement by “communal” parity system of political representation as it equally represented all the communities while other group of leaders emphasise on replacing one-man-one-vote system of political representation with a more democratic formula.

II. SCHEDULED TRIBES IN SIKKIM

Art 366 (25) of the Indian Constitution defines Scheduled Tribes as such tribal communities in India that have been declared as such by the President of India through a public notification. Its classification is done for administrative purpose by employing the criterion of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical location, shyness of contact with the community at large and economic backwardness. According to 2011 census report, the total population of Sikkim is 607,688 out of which 111,405 are Scheduled Tribes (STs) which account for 20.6 per cent of the total population. In 1991-2001 the state has registered 22.56 per cent decadal growth in Scheduled Tribe (ST) population. The original inhabitants of Sikkim that are the Bhutias and Lepchas constitute 63.4 per cent and 36.6 per cent respectively of the total Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of the state. Together they constitute the minority population of the state with Bhutias accounting for 16 per cent and Lepchas accounting for 14 per cent of the total population of the state.

After Sikkim’s merger with India the Scheduled Tribe Order of 1978 included other tribal groups like Sherpas, Dukpas, Tibetans, Dophthapas, Kagateys, Yolmos, Trompos and Chumbiapas in the category of ‘Bhutia’. Consequently, by 1994 around forty per cent of the Sikkimese were officially recognised as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Sikkim. Most importantly, in December 2002 Limbus and Tamangs were recognised as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Sikkim but till date they have not been represented as Scheduled Tribe (ST) in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly due to which they are now demanding for reserved constituencies in the State Legislative Assembly.

III. DEMOCRACY AND ASSOCIATIONS: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Associative democrats have offered various definitions and understandings on the nature and contributions of associations to democracy. Mark E. Warren in his work ‘*Democracy and Association*’ defines association as an organisation having shared purposes and interests. He considers associations as normatively significant for extending democracy beyond the reach of tyrannical state. He highlights four inter-related features of contemporary societies such as globalisation, differentiation, complexity and pluralization to denote the significance of associations. He argues that associations became important with states losing their control over its population and resources, both

state and market employing coercive measures to mediate political conflicts which adversely affected human capacities and increasing pace of pluralization of identities caused by changing patterns of individuation (individual distancing itself from a group).

Furthermore, he argues that associations apart from producing variety of complementary democratic effects facilitates socialisation, provides direct self-governance, promotes public participation, ensures political representation, cultivates political skills and forms public opinion. The three classes of democratic effects of associational life are developmental effects on individual’s skills and orientations, public sphere effects on democratic judgements and democratic effects on the actions and policymaking of formal state political institutions. He believes that not all associations can produce all democratic effects as the democratic potential of any association depends upon their contexts or “ecology” for example identity based associations ensures representation in public spheres and fosters solidarity of the marginalized groups but it undermines the development of civic virtues or critical skills and restricts deliberation. He uses the phrase “democratic ecology of associations” to underscore the need for different democratic effects or associational mix for any association to produce all the democratic effects. He also believes that associations cannot be truly democratic as they often exclude and discriminate few.

Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers in their work ‘*Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance*’ consider associations to be artifactual (artificial constructs) as their character, powers and patterns of interaction are determined by the structural features of political economy in which they form, public policies that are implemented and individual preferences that are formed. They argue that quasi-voluntary secondary associations mediates between individual and the state, provides alternative forms of governance (social governance, public governance and associative governance), changes the structure of group representation, ensures distributive fairness, educates citizens, fosters solidarities, forms political agendas, develops uniform standards, facilitates cooperation with private actors, provides information about social needs, promotes public deliberation, allows citizen’s participation and ensures fair representation.

Paul Q. Hirst in his essay titled ‘*Can Secondary Associations Enhance Democratic Governance?*’ considers associations as the primary means of social organization in modern pluralistic societies and better alternative to state institutions. Claus Offe in his essay titled ‘*Some Skeptical Considerations on the Malleability of Representative Institutions*’ suggests that voluntary and encompassing associations ensures effective governance by unburdening the workload of governments, allowing implementation of policy and shaping preferences of the constituent members. Iris Marion Young in her essay titled ‘*Social Groups in Associative Democracy*’ emphasises on the importance of civic associations in forming identities, promoting participation, allowing deliberation, providing opportunities, representing marginalized interests and maintaining autonomy of civic groups.

Archon Fung in his essay titled ‘*Associations and Democracy: Between Theories, Hopes and Reality*’ considers associations to be an important part of the structure of civil society that creates participatory institutions, facilitates direct

political participation of citizens, ensures freedom of association, educates and socializes citizens, offers political resistance to illegitimate authority and promotes public deliberation. He believes that the contribution of associations to democracy depends on the political context of particular societies and also the forms, purposes and membership of associations.

IV. POLITICAL DYNAMICS: THE ROLE OF TRIBAL ASSOCIATIONS IN SIKKIM

During monarchical rule in Sikkim there were no organised pressure groups due to poor economy, absence of industries, lack of the means of information and communication, lack of modern technology, widespread illiteracy, centralised form of governance, theocratic political structure and traditional structure of the society. There were only non-associational interest groups like the kinship groups, ethnic groups and religious groups which articulated their interests through the religious heads. In addition, to that few tribal associations like Denzong Lhade Chogpa (monastic association) which existed in the state could only indirectly influence the decision of the Chogyal.

Since late 1980s there was a cultural revival of tribes in Sikkim with different tribal groups forming tribal associations in the state. Tribal leaders belonging to Bhutia-Lepcha communities felt the need to form credible and vocal tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas taking into account the changed political scenario and demographic change in the state as the minority Bhutia-Lepchas felt threatened by the increasing influx of the majority Nepalis population. These newly formed tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim are mostly associational pressure groups linked with certain political parties in the state. They usually employ the technique of persuasion in articulating their interests and sometimes resort to strikes and demonstrations.

The tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim can be broadly classified on the basis of encompassing membership, the constitutive media of social interchange or reproduction and the manifest purposes or constitutive goods. Tribal associations in Sikkim were not encompassing till recently as each tribal groups had their own tribal associations for example Bhutias formed associations like National Sikkimese Bhutia Organisation (NSBO) and Bhutia Kerab Yargay Tshogpa (BKYT) while Lepchas formed associations like Mayel Lyang Tribal Organisation, Concerned Lepchas of Sikkim, Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association (SLYA) and Sikkim Lepcha Association (SLA). Few Lepcha associations in Sikkim like Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association (SLYA) disassociated themselves from the Bhutia community as they sought to liberate themselves as subordinate partners of tribal alliances by virtue of being the “most primitive tribe” of Sikkim or “sons of the soil” and the most backward community in the state. Such assertion of indigeneity (emphasis on indigenous roots) has become an important political tool for these associations in Sikkim as it facilitates political mobilisation, self-affirmation and creation of ethno-nationalist identities

But with the changed political scenario of Sikkim in the new millennium many tribal associations were formed in Sikkim which collectively represented the interests of minority Bhutia-Lepchas such as Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association (STWA),

Denzong Tribal Yargay Chogpa (DTYC), Denjong Chyarig Tsogpa (DCT), Bhutia Lepcha Protection Force (BLPF) and Sikkim Bhutia-Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC). Such tribal alliances were forged by the process of “Bhutianisation of Lepchas” with Lepchas adopting Bhutia identities, Buddhist culture and Bhutia life-styles.

Warren suggests that the constitutive media of social interchange or reproduction (state, market or civil society) determines the social character, goals, capabilities and structural pressures of an association. Most of the tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim are embedded in the social media of civil society but there are also few non-political associations like Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association (STWA) and Sikkim Bhutia-Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) that are embedded in the coercive power of the state with the ruling party determining the membership of these associations by choosing their convenor, executive members and office bearers. Many prominent members of these tribal associations have joined political parties in the state to contest State Assembly election which in turn has strengthened the support base of these political parties.

Warren suggests that the kind and extent of state involvement in the operation of associations is determined by the nature of association and its constitutive media of social interchange. He argues that if an association is embedded in the coercive power medium of the state then it is most likely to intervene in its operation. Whilst associations embedded in social media of attachments facilitates identity formation, provides the principle of subsidiarity (direct collective action), promotes public deliberation, develops civic virtues but fails to effectively resolve internal conflicts and conflicts with political associations. He argues that the manifest purposes or constitutive goods determine the aims and objectives of an association. The dominant good of most of the tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim is inclusive, excludable and interpersonal in nature as they aim at ensuring genuine political representation of the original inhabitants of Sikkim (Bhutia-Lepchas). In 1983, Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association (STWA) became an intervening party to R.C Poudyal vs. Union of India case in order to justify reservation of twelve Assembly seats for Bhutia-Lepchas and lone Assembly seat for Sangha. It has also submitted a number of memoranda to the Central government with demands being raised for a suitable form of political representation, fresh delimitation of Bhutia-Lepcha constituencies, appointment of a Special Officer for the Scheduled Tribes of Sikkim and establishment of “permanent standing committees” in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly comprising of Bhutia-Lepcha Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

The other classes of goods which Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association (STWA) seeks to provide are preserving the distinct and “original identity” of the Bhutia-Lepchas and protecting the special rights and privileges granted to the original inhabitants of Sikkim under Art.371 F of the Indian Constitution which allows old laws in use before the merger to continue in order to protect the original inhabitants of Sikkim. In this regard, Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association (STWA) submitted a number of memoranda to both the Central and State governments with demands being raised for granting of citizenship to “stateless persons” based on the provisions of Sikkim Subject Regulation which was in

operation before the merger, removing the names of “foreign nationals” from the electoral rolls and extending inner-line permit system in order to check the influx of outsiders. In 1988, Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association (STWA) formed a separate tribal body known as Denzong Tribal Yargay Chogpa (DTYC) in order to push forward the aforesaid demands.

Likewise, the most dominant good for Sikkim Bhutia-Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC), an apex body of the Bhutia-Lepchas is ensuring fair political representation of the original inhabitants of Sikkim in order ensure their survival in the state. It demands proportionate increase in the total number of Assembly seats reserved for Bhutia-Lepchas from the existing twelve to seventeen if the Central government increases the number of assembly seats from thirty-two to forty. It also demands immediate delimitation of Bhutia-Lepcha Assembly constituencies on the basis of Art. 371 F of the Indian Constitution.

It made a boycott call on 1999 Assembly and Lok Sabha polls by holding a protest rally and one-day hunger strike in the state as a response to the ruling party, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) and opposition party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) decision of fielding other tribal candidates in the reserved Assembly seats of Bhutia-Lepchas. In 2000, it submitted a memorandum to the State government demanding reservation of twelve Assembly seats for “bonafide Sikkimese Bhutia-Lepchas” and removal of other tribal communities from the category of “Bhutia”. But in its “BL manifesto” released in 2004 it made a compromising claim by excluding only Sherpa, Kagateys and Yolmo from the definition of “Bhutia” thereby, accepting five other communities within the ambit of “Bhutia”. It formed Sikkimese Nepalese Apex Committee (SNAC) in order to garner the support of the majority Nepalis population in the state with regard to the issue of restoration of Assembly seats reserved for Bhutia-Lepchas.

Whilst there are few tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim whose dominant good is social, exclusive and non-excludable in nature for example Bhutia Lepcha Protection Force (BLPF) emphasises on securing the future of Sikkim through the collective efforts of all the communities of Sikkim. It passed a number of resolutions on upholding Sikkim’s distinct identity within the Indian Union, ensuring special protection to the aboriginals Lepchas, restoring Assembly seats for Nepalese of Sikkimese origin (majority population) and granting rights to 400 families of Indian origin settled in Sikkim prior to its merger with the Indian Union.

V. METHOD USED

This paper has done theoretical and conceptual analysis of the two inter-related and important concepts of this study that are democracy and association. It has done an analytical survey of both primary and second sources including gazetteer, official reports, memorandum, books, newspapers, journal articles and archival materials. The research procedures adopted in conducting this study are as follows:

1. Mapping associational activity of tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim;
2. Distinguishing these associations on the basis of their composition, purpose and affiliation;

3. Analysing the changing trends in the demands of these associations over the years and;
4. Questionnaire based interview of important tribal leaders of these associations.

VI. MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of this study is that the tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim have failed to ensure “genuine tribal representation” of the original inhabitants of Sikkim (Bhutia-Lepchas) along the lines of Sikkim’s tradition. Parallel to this major finding this study also highlights that the “communal” parity system of political representation which fairly represented the original inhabitants of Sikkim during monarchical rule is not likely to be restored in Sikkim and the number of Assembly seats reserved for the Bhutia-Lepchas is also not likely to be increased under the present framework of one-man-one-vote system of political representation.

VII. SHORTCOMINGS OF THE STUDY

1. This study is purely theoretical and lacks empirical findings;
2. It has not highlighted upon the tribal associations of recently recognised tribal groups in Sikkim and;
3. It has not reflected upon the ethnic associations of the majority Nepali population who comprise 70 per cent of the total population in the Sikkim.

VIII. CONCLUSION

To conclude, most of the tribal associations of Bhutia-Lepchas in Sikkim provided goods that were excludable and individualistic in nature which threatened the very ethos of democracy but in recent years, their focus has shifted to providing more social, inclusive and non-excludable goods as they have started demanding for reservation of Assembly seats to all “bonafide Sikkimese” including the old business community residing in Sikkim prior to its merger with the Indian Union. Despite of that they have achieved limited success in accomplishing their agenda of ensuring “genuine tribal representation” in the state due to differing claims and interests of tribal associations and growing state involvement. Likewise, political leaders in Sikkim have not been able to restore assembly seats of the original inhabitants of Sikkim as laid down under the framework of “communal” parity system of political representation. They have rather fielded other tribal groups like Sherpas, Dukpas, Tibetans, Dophthapas, Kagateys, Yolmos, Trompos and Chumbiapas in the Assembly seats reserved exclusively for the Bhutia-Lepchas.

IX. APPENDIX

PROCLAMATION OF HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA TASHI NAMGYAL MAHARAJA OF SIKKIM

Dated 23rd Day of March, 1953

Whereas, it has been our earnest desire to associate our people more and more closely with the Governance of the State. And whereas, in pursuance of the said desire, village panchayats were established throughout the State. And whereas, it is considered desirable and necessary that measures should now be taken to complete the process and to realise the objective in view. Now therefore, by virtue of power vested in us under the law and usages of the State and its exercise thereof, we are pleased to proclaim and ordain, and it is hereby proclaimed and ordained as follows:-

1. This proclamation may be cited as the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation, 1953 and shall come into operation immediately on its publication in the Sikkim Government Gazette.
 2. There shall be constituted a State Council for the State of Sikkim.
 3. The State Council shall consist of :-
 - a) A president who shall be nominated and appointed by Maharaja.
 - b) Twelve elected member, of whom six shall be either Sikkim Bhutia or Lepcha and the remaining six shall be Sikkim Nepalese and.
 - c) Five members nominated by His Highness the Maharaja in his discretion.
 4. Constituencies for the election of the members of the State Council specified in clause of the last preceding Article shall be set on territorial basis in accordance with the provisions of the Proclamation of the 28th day of December, 1952.
 5. The election of the members of the State Council shall be based on universal adult franchise and shall be in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the Proclamation dated the 28th day of December, 1952.
 6. a) A person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the State Council unless he satisfies the requirements prescribed in that behalf in the Proclamation dated the 28th day of December, 1952.
b) No person shall be qualified for being chosen as and for being a member of the State Council if he suffers from any of the disqualification set forth in the Proclamation dated the 28th day of December, 1952.
 7. a) The State Council shall be summoned to meet twice at least in every year and six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session.
 - b) Subject to the provisions of the last preceding clause, the Maharaja may at any time:-
 - i) Summon the State Council at such time and place as he thinks fit;
 - ii) Prorogue the State Council;
 - iii) Dissolve the State Council;
- c) The State Council, unless sooner dissolved by the Maharaja, shall continue for three years from the date appointed for its first meeting.
 8. The Maharaja may address the State Council and for that purpose require the attendance of the members thereof, or may send message to the State Council, whether in regard to a matter pending before it or otherwise.
 9. Meetings of the State Council ordinarily shall be presided over by the President or in his absence by such other person as may be designated by the Maharaja in his behalf.
 10. Every member of the State Council shall before taking his seat, make and subscribe before the Maharaja, an oath or affirmation according to the form prescribed for the purpose.
 11. All questions at any sitting of the State Council shall be decided by a majority of votes of the members present and voting other than the President or person acting as such. The President, or person acting as such, shall not vote in the first instance, but shall have and exercise a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
 12. The State Council shall have power to act notwithstanding any vacancy in the membership and thereof, any proceedings in the State Council shall be valid notwithstanding that it is discovered subsequently that some persons who have not been entitled so to do, sat and voted otherwise took part in the proceedings.
 13. Subject to the assent of the Maharaja, the State Council shall have power to enact laws for the peace, order and good governance of Sikkim provided that the State Council shall not without the previous sanction of the Maharaja make, or take into consideration, any law affecting any matter, herein after defined as a reserved subject.
 14. The following shall be reserved subjects :-
 - i) Ecclesiastical
 - ii) External Affairs
 - iii) State Enterprises
 - iv) Home and Police
 - v) Finance
 - vi) Land Revenue
 - vii) Rationing
 - viii) Establishment
 15. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the last preceding article, the State Council shall have no power to discuss, to ask questions about or to deal in any manner, any of the following matters :-
 - a) The Maharaja and members of the Ruling family;
 - b) The external relation of the State, including relations with the Government of India and any commitments entered into by the Maharaja with the Government of India;
 - c) The appointment of the Dewan and of the members of the Judiciary; and
 - d) Any matter pending before a Court of law.

16. In every financial year the estimated receipts and expenditure of the State for that year shall be laid before the State Council and such estimated shall be voted upon by the State Council. Provided that always in the event of any demand in the budget estimate being rejected by the State Council, the Maharaja shall have the power to certify it and thereupon such demand shall become part of the sanctioned estimate.
17. The following expenditure shall be chargeable on the revenue of the State and shall not be subject to the vote of the State Council :-
 - a) The Civil List, including expenditure on the household department of the Maharaja;
 - b) Pay and allowance of the Dewan, the judiciary and officers on deputation from the Government of India; and
 - c) Secret and discretionary expenditure.
18. The validity of any proceedings in the State Council shall not be called in question in any court on the ground of alleged irregularity of procedure.
19. There shall be constituted an Executive Council for the State, members of which shall hold office during the Maharaja's pleasure and shall be responsible to him for the executive and administrative functions of the government.
20. The Executive Council shall consist of :-
 - a) The Dewan by virtue of the office which he holds under the Maharaja; and
 - b) Such number of elected members of the State Council as may be appointed by the Maharaja from time to time.
21. All or any of the following departments may be entrusted to the charge of elected members of the Executive Council, each of whom shall be individually responsible to the State Council for the administration of the Department entrusted to him :-
 - a) Education
 - b) Public Health
 - c) Excise
 - d) Bazars
 - e) Transports
 - f) Forests
 - g) Public Works.
22. The Dewan and the other members of the Executive Council shall exercise such powers as may be delegated to them from time to time by the Maharaja under his seal and signature.
23. All members of the Executive Council other than the Dewan but including the official members shall retire from office at the commencement of the first session of each new State Council but shall be eligible for re-appointment.
24. The Dewan shall be the President of the Executive Council and in his absence it may be presided by such person as may be appointed in his behalf by the Maharaja.
25. The proceedings and deliberation of the Executive Council shall be secret and every member thereof shall

be under an obligation not to disclose the same outside the Council.

26. Notwithstanding the provisions of the last preceding Articles, the Maharaja may veto any decision made by the Executive Council and substitute his own decision thereof.
27. The Maharaja may make rules for the regulation and orderly conduct of the proceedings of the State Council as well as of the Executive Council in general, for carrying out the object of this Proclamation.

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