

Tendong Lho Rum Faat Festival: Art & Culture

Tendong Lho Rum Faat is a traditional Lepcha festival of Sikkim celebrated to thank Mount Tendong for saving the Lepcha people from a great flood. It involves rituals, offerings, and cultural performances symbolizing gratitude to nature.

1. Tendong Lho Rum Faat Festival

Nature-Worshipping Festival

Celebrated annually by the Lepcha tribe of Sikkim. Tendong Hill is revered for protecting the Lepcha people from a great flood in ancient times, according to their legend. Festival is an expression of gratitude towards nature and the guardian spirits for sustaining life.

2. About the Lepcha Tribe

1. Geographical Distribution

Indigenous to eastern Nepal, western Bhutan, Sikkim state, and Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Concentrated mainly on the southern and eastern slopes of Mt. Kanchenjunga (world's third highest mountain). Elevation range of habitat: From 230 m (Sikkim basin) to 8,586 m at the Kanchenjunga summit.

2. Ethnic & Linguistic Identity

Self-designation, as 'Rongs' or 'Rongkups'. Regarded as earliest known inhabitants of Sikkim, predating Tibetan migrations. Historically influenced by Bhutia culture after their arrival from Tibet in the 14th century. The Language is Lepcha (distinct from Bhutia), which has its own script derived from Sanskrit. Intermarriage with Bhutias exists but the two communities maintain distinct identities.

3. Demographic Profile

Scheduled Tribe status in Sikkim. Population: ~42,909 (Census 2011) – considered a vanishing tribe with a declining population.

4. Livelihood Patterns

1. Traditional: Hunting, gathering, and fishing.
2. Present-day: Farming (paddy, maize, millet, vegetables) and cattle breeding. Known for their eco-friendly subsistence practices and intimate knowledge of local biodiversity.

5. Religion & Belief Systems

Nature worship, animism, belief in spirits, witchcraft, and sacred landscapes. Worship of Mt. Kanchenjunga as their guardian deity. Over centuries, many embraced Buddhism while retaining elements of indigenous animist practices. Some also converted to Christianity in recent times.

6. Cultural Practices & Festivals

Festivals involve traditional songs, dances, and archery contests. Tendong Lho Rum Faat stands out as a major community event linked to natural disaster legends. Oral traditions, folktales, and ritual chants preserve their cultural memory.

Significance in Cultural Heritage

1. Represent one of the oldest tribal cultures in the Eastern Himalayas.
2. Their traditions embody environmental stewardship and cultural resilience.
3. At risk of cultural erosion due to migration, intermarriage, and declining language use.

Source: https://eastmojo.com/sikkim/2025/08/08/sikkim-lepcha-tribe-festival-tendong-lho-rum-faat-celebrated/#google_vignette