

CHAPTER: 2

POPULATION GROWTH AND CHANGING SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

In continuation to the previous chapter where the colonial aspect was vividly described, this chapter discusses the trends in population growth, the spatial distribution and the changing landscapes of Siliguri. What were the driving forces that led to expansion of population in Siliguri? What is the place of Siliguri in context to population index, density and urban concentration when compared to other nearby regions of North Bengal? How migration shaped the urban discourse of Siliguri and became an important vehicle for urban process and social mobility for Siliguri? This chapter tries to offer answers to some of these important queries in the process of understanding the city of Siliguri.

At the turn of the 20th century Siliguri was just a village with a population of 784 heads and there were only two towns in the region: Darjeeling and Kurseong.¹³² This village which grew up and expanded to be a metropolitan city, says Ghosh, was called Saktigarh or popularly known as ‘puratan Siliguri’.¹³³ However, Ashok Bhattacharya¹³⁴ recalls that the original town was the area known as Hakim Para near the Siliguri town railway station and it started expanding towards north and north east towards Ashram Para. In 1931, Siliguri was made a non-municipal town and received recognition as a municipal town in 1951. The population in the corresponding year was 32,000 only and the total area was 15.54 sq. km. Till 1994, Siliguri Municipality had only 30 wards under it but in 1994, after the announcement of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, 17 new wards were added to its jurisdiction. The total area was also

¹³² O’ Malley writing in 1907 never mentioned Siliguri as a town and he stated that in the Darjeeling District “there were only two towns Darjeeling and Kurseong which between them account for only 21393 persons. See, O’Malley. *Op.cit.*, reprint 2001, p. 189

¹³³ Presently it is located near the Bardaman road under Rajganj police station, Jalpaiguri District. Also see Chattopadhyay, *Puratan siliguri*, 2010.

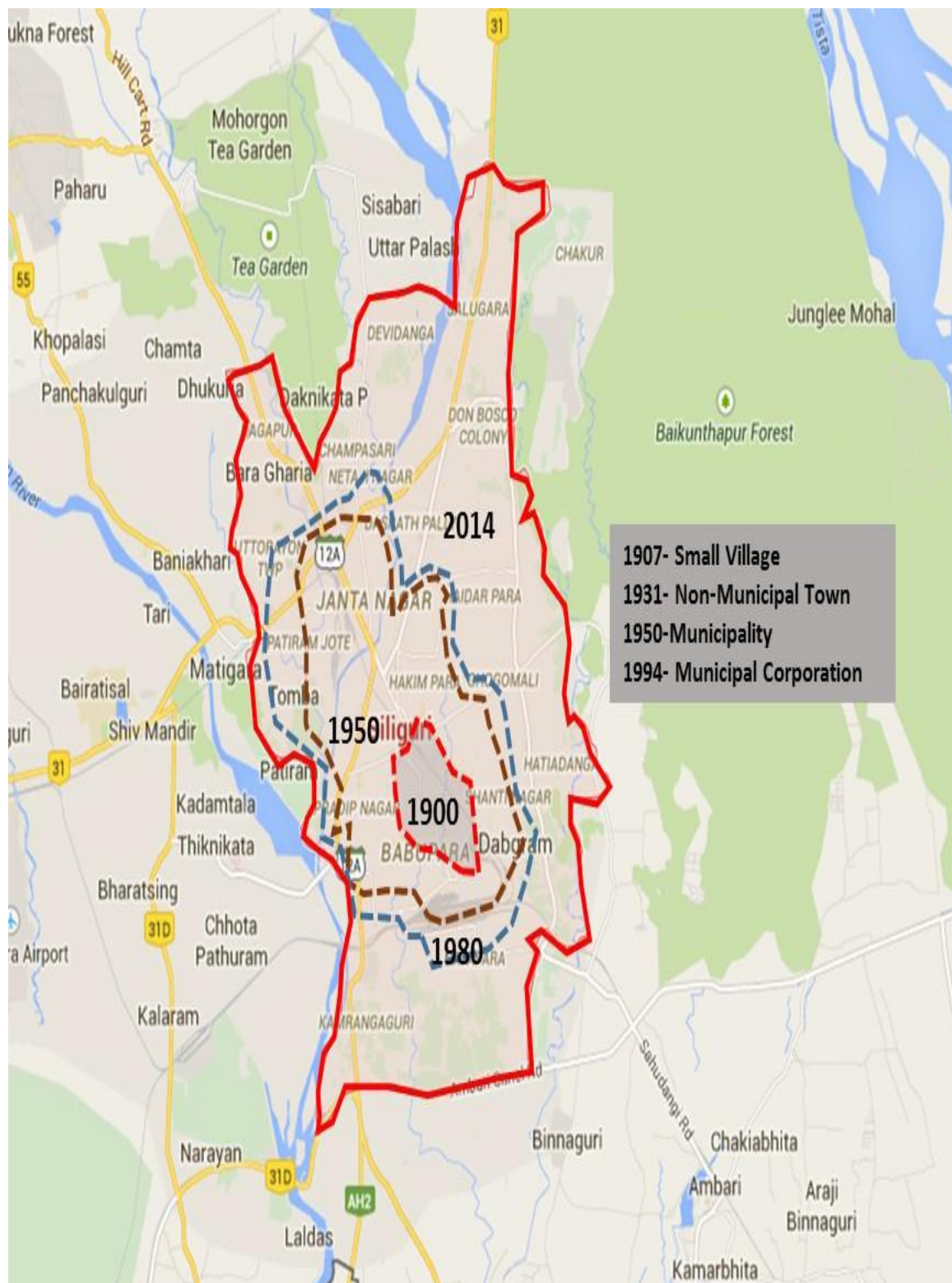
¹³⁴ Interview with Ashok Bhattacharya, Mayor of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, dated: 23rd April, 2018.

increased from 15.54 sq km to 41.9 sq km. It should be noted that the Siliguri Municipal Corporation officially caters to two districts – Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling (as depicted in the map:3.2 below), 14 out of total 47 wards of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation fall under Jalpaiguri district.

Population Growth Trends of Siliguri City

The population of Siliguri increased even though it had no industrial fundamentals. In 1907 the population of Siliguri was only 784. In the year 1931 it got an urban status and the population increased to 6,067. The next decade saw a population growth of 10,487, a decadal variation of 4,420 which was 72.85%. With the establishment of Siliguri municipality in 1949, we see that the census report of the year 1951 witnesses 209.72% of increased decadal variation with a population of 32,480. We see that the growth of the town gained momentum just after independence of India. Firstly, there were thousands of refugees pouring in from East Pakistan after the partition. The census report of the year 1961 shows the population of 65,471, the decadal variation was 32,991 and the percentage decadal variation was 101.57%. Similarly the census report of the year 1971 shows the population of 97,484, the decadal variation was 32,013 and the percentage decadal variation was 48.98%.. The census report of the year 1981 and 1991 shows the population of 1,54,378 and 2.16950, the decadal variation was 56,894 and 62,572 respectively and the percentage decadal variation was 58.36% and 40.53%. The census report of 2001 reflects a huge decadal growth rate of 117% with a population of 472,374 This was mainly because of the up gradation of Siliguri from municipality to Corporation in 1994 and inclusion of the peripheral areas. Till the year 1994, Siliguri Municipality had 30 wards under it. Post declarations of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, 17 new wards were added to the existing 30 wards.

Map 1: The Growth of Siliguri since 1900



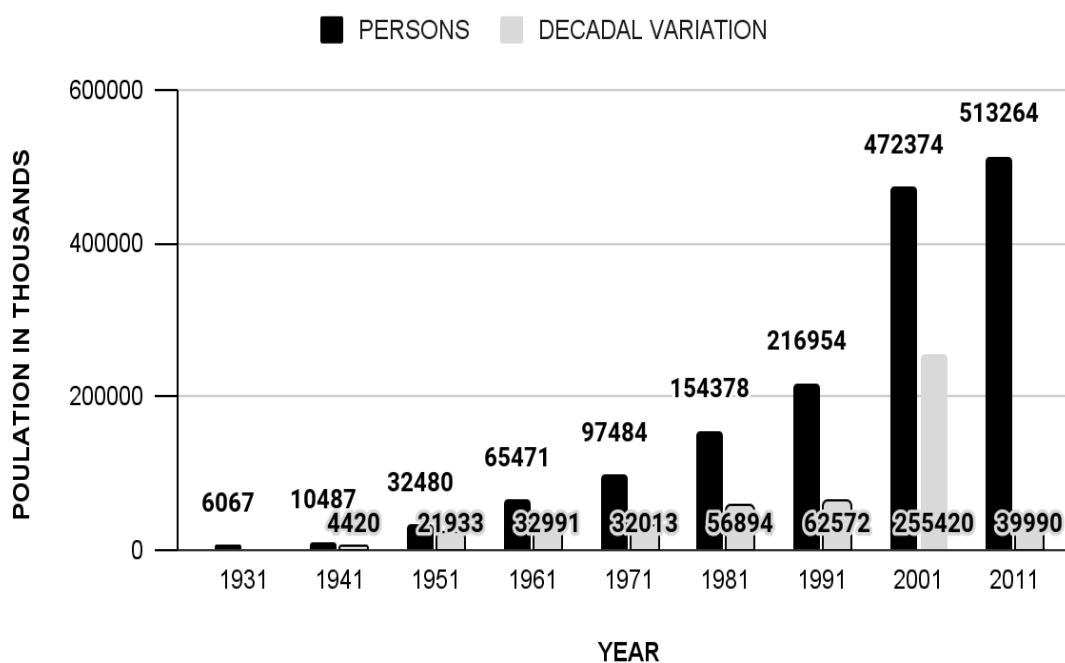
Source: Google (Image), SMC & CRIS

Map 2: The Administrative Boundary of SMC in Darjeeling District and Jalpaiguri District



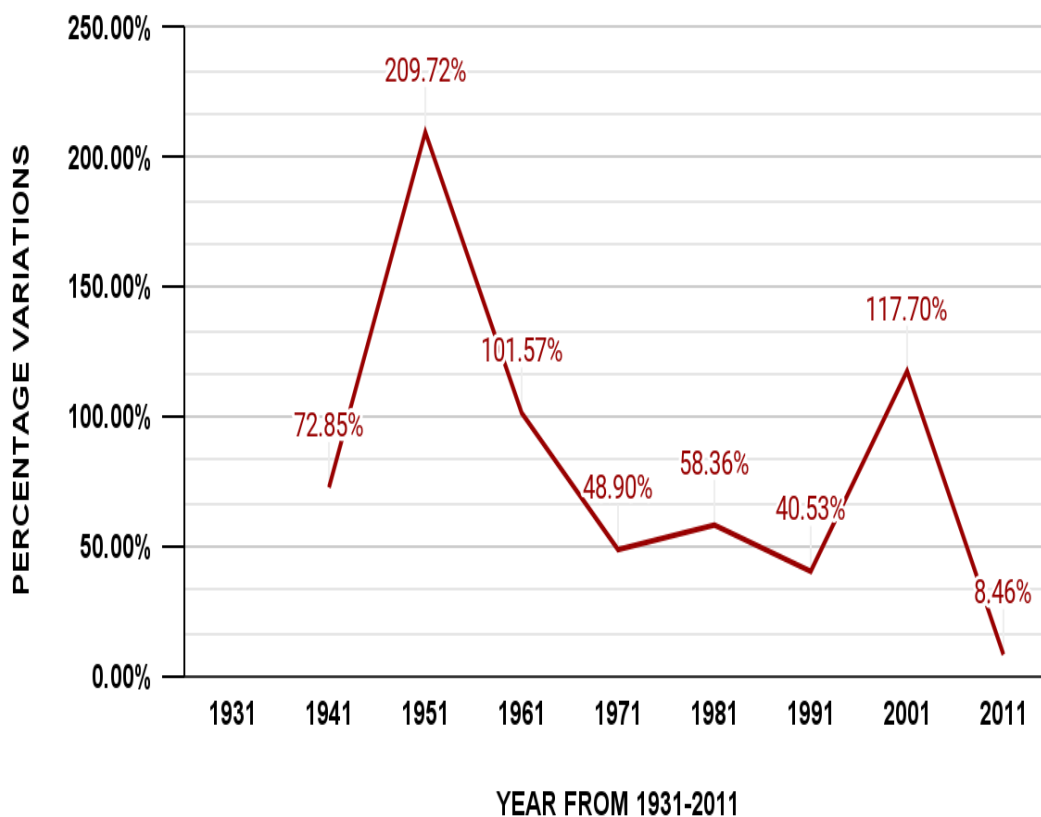
Source: Siliguri CMP, 2011

Graph 1: Population and decadal variation of Siliguri Municipal Corporation



Source: Computed by the author from Data provided by Siliguri Municipal Corporation.

Graph 2: Percentage decadal variation of Siliguri Municipal Corporation



Source: Computed by the author from Data provided by Siliguri Municipal Corporation

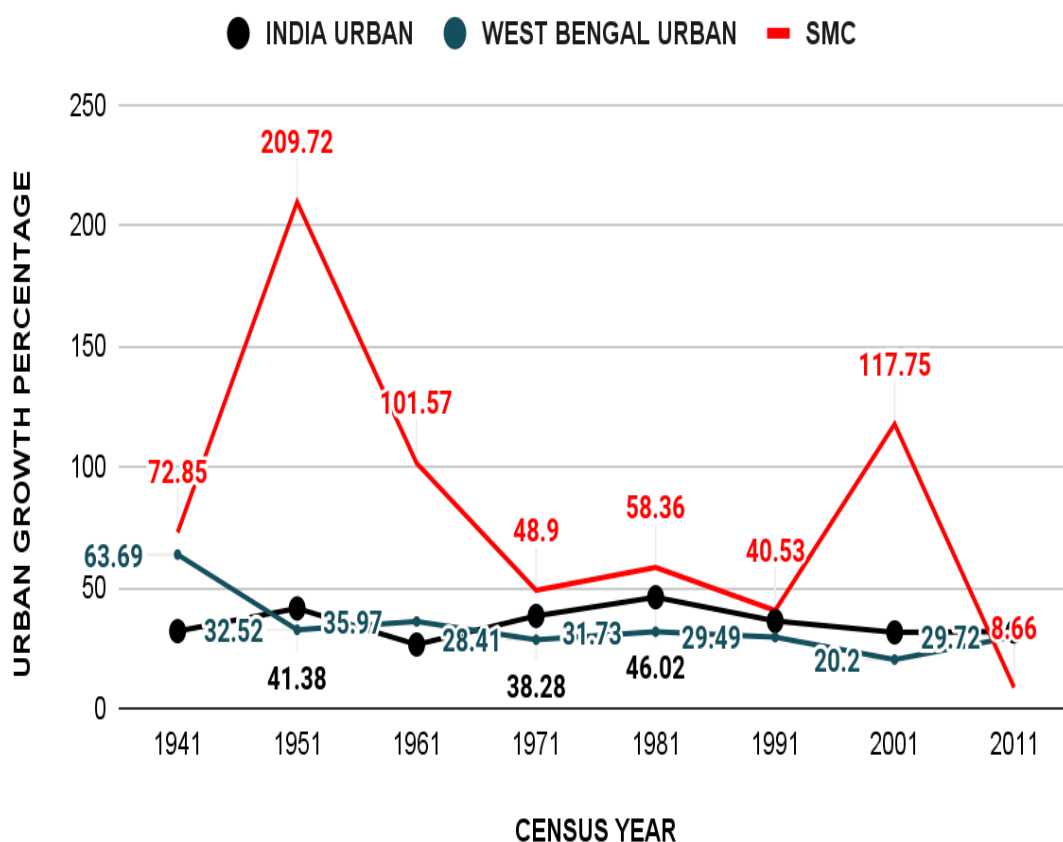
To understand the demographic scenario of Siliguri it is apparent to briefly understand the urban position of Siliguri. A comparative study of urban growth rate in West Bengal, Darjeeling District and Siliguri further confirms the idea about the abnormal rate of growth of Siliguri.

Table 2.1: The Urban growth rate of India, WB and Siliguri Municipal Corporation

CENSUS YEAR	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
INDIA URBAN	31.97	41.38	26.42	38.28	46.02	36.19	31.46	31.87
WEST BENGAL URBAN	63.69	32.52	35.97	28.41	31.73	29.49	20.2	29.72
SMC	72.85	209.72	101.57	48.9	58.36	40.53	117.73	8.66

Source: Census of India

Graph 3: urban growth percentage of India Urban, West Bengal Urban and Siliguri Municipal Corporation



Source: Census data.

As per details from Census 2011, West Bengal has a population of 9.13 crores, which marks an increase from the figure of 8.02 crores in 2001 census. The total population of West Bengal as per the 2011 Census is 91,276,115 of which males and females number 46,809,027 and 44,467,088 respectively. The total population progress in the decade was 13.84 percent but in the previous decade it was 17.84 percent.¹³⁵ Out of the entire population of West Bengal, around 31.87 percent live in urban areas.¹³⁶ The population growth rate documented for this decade (2001-2011) was 29.72% in the urban areas. These urban areas are spread across 19 districts of the state.

¹³⁵ In 2001, the total population was 80,176,197 among which males were 41,465,985 and females 38,710,212. See Census, 2011

¹³⁶ The total population of the urban areas of West Bengal state was 2,90,93,002. See Census, 2011

Table 2.2: Total Urban Population and its Percentage of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling District.

S.No.	Area	Population (Million)	Percentage	Population (Million)	Percentage
1.	WEST BENGAL	91.28	100	29.09	31.87
2.	JALPAIGURI DIST	3.87	4.24	1.06	27.37
3.	DARJEELING DIST	1.85	2.02	0.73	39.42

Source: Census of West Bengal, 2011.

Jalpaiguri district has a population of 38,72,846¹³⁷ and a population density of 622 inhabitants per square kilometre. Its population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 13.87%. Jalpaiguri has 27.37% urban population from the total population of the district. Jalpaiguri district has 4.24% of West Bengal's total population.

In comparison to Jalpaiguri District, Darjeeling district has 2.02% of West Bengal's population. The urban population of the Darjeeling district is 7.27 lakhs which is 39.42% of the total population of the district and 2.02% of the total urban population of West Bengal.

Siliguri is a fast-growing city and according to Census 2011, the population of the city was 5.13 lakhs. The population of SMC which falls in the Darjeeling district accounted for 0.32% of the total state's population and the SMC population which falls in the Jalpaiguri district accounted for 0.24% of the total state's population. SMC population which falls in the Darjeeling district, accounts for 15.93% of the total Darjeeling population and SMC population which falls in the Jalpaiguri district accounts for 5.53% of total Jalpaiguri's population. SMC's population accounts for 1.01% of the urban population of the state in Darjeeling district and 0.75% of the urban population in Jalpaiguri district. The comparison of Siliguri city's population is given in Table below:

¹³⁷ This gives it a ranking of 66th in India (out of a total of 640).

Table 2.3: Comparative Population of Siliguri City, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri as per 2011 Census.

Indicator	Total population in lakh	Rural population	Urban Population	% of urban population w.r.t. Total population	Urban population comparison	Total population comparison
WEST BENGAL	912.8	621.8	290.9	31.9%	1.0%	0.3%
DARJEELING DIST	18.5	11.2	7.3	39.4%	40.4%	15.9%
SILIGURI CITY IN DARJEELING DIST	2.9	-	2.9	100%	100%	100%
WEST BENGAL STATE	912.8	621.8	290.9	31.9%	1.0%	0.3%
JALPAIGURI DIST	38.7	28.1	10.6	27.4%	20.6%	5.6%
SILIGURI CITY IN JALPAIGURI DIST	2.2	-	2.2	100%	100%	100%

Source: Census of West Bengal, 2011

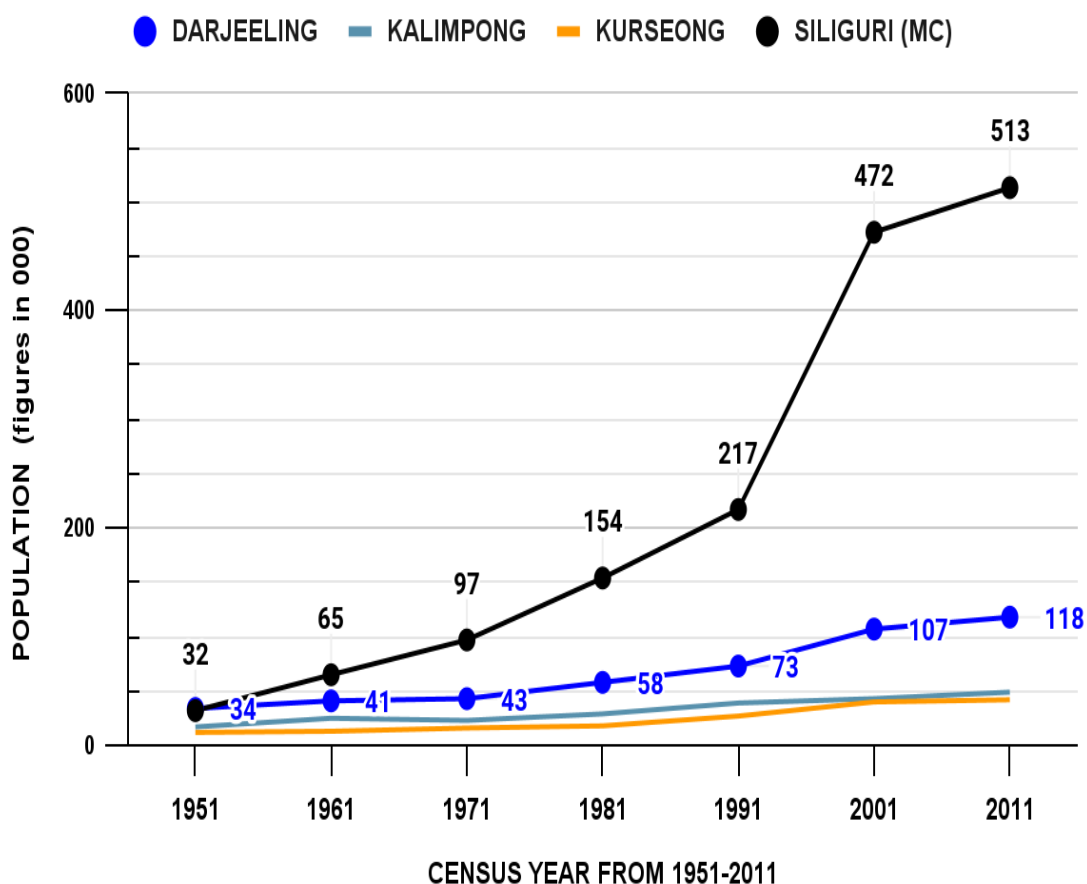
Share of Population of SMC to the Total Urban Population of the District

Siliguri showed consistently a high growth rate of population over the 60 years of its existence. From 1951 onwards, the demography of Siliguri and its adjoining areas changed rapidly due to the influx of refugees from the neighbouring districts, states and other countries. In absolute terms, the population of four Municipal towns in Darjeeling district has increased rapidly but the increase in population of Siliguri Municipal Corporation has reached sky high over the period between 1951 and 2011. According to census data, the population of Siliguri Municipal Corporation has increased by 15 times between 1951-2001, followed 3 times each by Darjeeling and Kurseong and Kalimpong by about 2.5 times. According to Census 2001, among the four municipal towns in Darjeeling district, the population of SMC was about 4 times higher

than the Darjeeling Municipality, 11 times higher than the Kalimpong Municipality and 12 times higher than the Kurseong Municipality.

From Table below it has also been observed that out of four municipal areas and the urban Darjeeling district, the SMC has recorded the highest relative increase in population during all the decades. The highest relative increase has taken place (117.51 percent) during 1991-2001, partly due to reclassification of the municipal area among other reasons, followed by (103.13 percent) in 1951-61, possibly because of huge immigration due to partition of India in 1947, 58.76 percent in 1971-81, primarily due to further immigration during and after Bangladesh war of liberation in 1971, and between 1981-91, the relative increase in population was the lowest (40.91 percent).

Graph 4: Population of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri Municipal Corporation



Source: Census data Computed by the author.

Table 2.4: Urban Population and its share to the Total Population in the District

	Total Population ('000)							Share of Population to the District's Total Urban Municipal Population.					
	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
DARJEELING	34	41	43	58	73	107	118	35.5	28.1	23.7	20.4	18.4	20.6
KALIMPONG	17	25	23	29	39	43	49	17.6	17.3	13	10.2	9.8	8.26
KURSEONG	12	13	16	18	27	40	42	12.4	9.27	9.11	6.38	6.7	7.69
SILIGURI (MC)	32	65	97	154	Ok	472	513	12.4	45.2	54	54.7	54.7	90.7

Source: Compiled and computed by the author.¹³⁸

From Table above, it is clear that the share of population of SMC to the total urban Population of the district was comparatively higher than that of the share of all other Municipalities in the district from the period of 1951-2001, except 1951, when the share of population in Darjeeling Municipality to the district's total urban population was higher than the share of population in SMC. Siliguri municipal town accounts for not only the largest share of urban population among the towns of Darjeeling district but accommodating more than half the total urban population of the district since 1971. From the above table, it is also observed that the share of population has reduced substantially in almost all the municipal towns/cities except SMC during the period of 1951-1981. Between 1981 and 2001, the share of population increased marginally in Darjeeling and Kurseong Municipality. On the other hand, in SMC, the share of population to the district's total urban population has increased significantly since 1951. As mentioned earlier, it has been noted that SMC has two parts; part-I belonging to Darjeeling district with 54.69 percent population to the total urban population of Darjeeling district and part-II belonging to Jalpaiguri district with 30.94 percent population in SMC belongs to

¹³⁸ See Mitra et al (1990): "Population and Area of Cities Towns and Urban Agglomerations 1872-1971" ICSSR, *District's Census Handbook* of 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 ((Village and Town Directory), Census of India- 2001, WB, Series-20, Vol.1, 3 Note: projected population based on the AGR of 1951- 2001. b Note: SMC has been considered in Darjeeling district because the smaller proportion of population belong to Jalpaiguri district.

Jalpaiguri district, hence SMC as a whole has been considered under Darjeeling district and that's why the share of population in SMC to the total population of Darjeeling district in 2001 shown the figure of 90.77 percent and as a result the total percentage of population in all the municipal areas has crossed 100 percent.

Density and Urban Concentration of SMC Compared To Other Municipalities of the District

In the study of density, urban concentration and annual growth rate of population of the municipal towns of Darjeeling district, it is found that the density of population of Siliguri Municipality area was substantially high over the decades. The alarming point is that the density of population in SMC was much higher than that of the density in all other Municipalities of the district and the state since 1951. On the other hand, compared to other municipal corporations in the state, the density of population in SMC was significantly higher than that of the density in other municipal corporation in the state except Kolkata and Howrah Municipal Corporation, where the density of population were much higher than the density of Siliguri Municipal Corporation in 2001.

It can be deduced from the table below that among the four municipal towns in Darjeeling district, the index of concentration of urban population (a process in which an increasing proportion of urban population is concentrated in a particular area i.e. the higher the degree of urban concentration the higher is the inflow of migration in that area) in SMC was the highest over all the decades. Of the four municipal towns, in terms of urban concentration SMC alone accounted for around 55 percent of the total urban population between the periods of 1971 to 2001

From the table below it is also observed that during the periods of 1951-1991, the degree of urban concentration was declining in all the municipal towns, but in 2001, the index of concentration increased further in Darjeeling, Kurseong and SMCA. The annual growth rates of the four municipal towns in Darjeeling district showed that the growth rates were exceptionally

higher in SMC compared to the growth rates of all other municipal areas in the district for all the decades

Table 2.5: Density, Urban Concentration of Siliguri compared to other Municipalities of Darjeeling District.

MUNICIPALITY/ CORPORATIONS	DENSITY PER SQ. KM							INDEX OF CONCENTRATION. ¹³⁹				
	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	1951-61	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-01
DARJEELING	3164	3864	4065	5450	6912	10142	1135	-7.46	-4.32	-3.37	-1.97	2.15
KALIMPONG	1789	2892	2699	3328	4474	4954	5388	-0.29	-4.36	-2.76	-0.43	-1.54
KURSEONG	3020	2655	3252	3566	5299	7847	5407	-3.13	-0.16	-2073	0.37	0.93
SILIGURI(MC)	3485	4213	6273	9934	1396	11274	12250	10.89	8.83	0.62	0.06	35.99

Source: District's Census Handbook of 1971, 1981, 1991 (Village and Town Directory), Census of India-2001, 2011 WB, Series-20, Vol. I

. The annual growth rate of SMC during the period 1991-2001 was not only higher (8.09 percent than the north Bengal region (2.51 percent), rest of Bengal region (1.76 percent) and the state (1.83 percent) but was also higher than the growth rate of million plus cities like Greater Mumbai (2.70 percent), Kolkata (1.82 percent), Delhi (4.34 percent) and Chennai (1.92 percent).¹⁴⁰

Ward-Wise Population Distribution, Growth Rate and Density of SMC

Siliguri Municipality consisted of 30 wards till 1994 and 17 new wards were added to its jurisdiction after its declaration as Municipal Corporation. Subsequent to the conversion to Municipal Corporation in 1994, many of the original wards have decongested (wards 9-12 and 17) and wards in added areas have seen population increase in range of 75% to 270%. Population of 10 wards was above 100%. The decongestion of older wards has continued whereas the population increase in the added areas grew in the decade of 2001-2011. Hence, the

¹³⁹Index of urban concentration = share of urban population to the total urban population of the district in the current year- share of urban population to the total urban population of the district in the previous year

¹⁴⁰ National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) Report, 2008.

decadal population growth has reduced from 47.5% in 1991-2001 to 7.8% in 2001-2011. As depicted in Figure 18 the areas surrounding NJP station and Hill Cart Road continue to be the most congested parts of the city.

Table 2.6: Ward Wise Population, Growth Rate, Density & Area of Siliguri Municipal Corporation

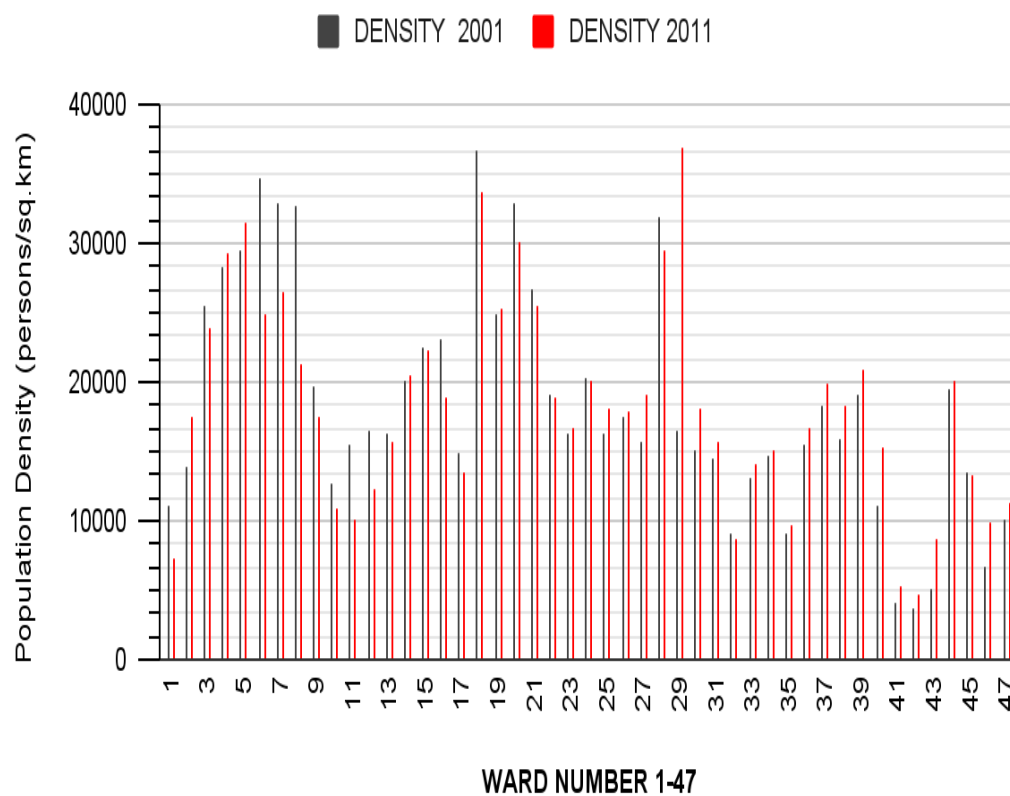
WARD NUM	POPULATION 2001	POPULATION 2011	GROWTH RATE%	DENSITY 2001 IN SQ. KM	DENSITY 2011 IN SQ. KM	AREA OF WARD IN SQ. KM
1	17843	18928	-33.63%	11083	7356	1.61
2	11436	14327	25.28%	13946	17472	0.82
3	11753	10993	-6.47%	25550	23898	0.46
4	20028	20745	3.58%	28208	29218	0.71
5	15326	16369	6.81%	29473	31479	0.52
6	9023	6484	-28.14%	34704	24938	0.26
7	9889	7954	-19.57%	32963	26513	0.3
8	7843	5097	-35.01%	32679	21238	0.24
9	7306	6481	-11.29%	19746	17516	0.37
10	4720	4019	-14.85%	12757	10862	0.37
11	2933	1912	-34.81%	15437	10063	0.19
12	3772	2832	-24.92%	16400	12313	0.23
13	5070	4886	-3.63%	16355	15761	0.31
14	6407	6566	2.48%	20022	20519	0.32
15	8103	8002	-1.25%	22508	22228	0.36
16	5984	4922	-17.75%	23015	18931	0.26
17	5485	5029	-8.31%	14824	13592	0.37
18	8440	7774	-7.89%	36696	33800	0.23
19	3233	3286	1.64%	24869	25277	0.13
20	9869	9009	-8.71%	32897	30030	0.3
21	5875	5624	-4.27%	26705	25564	0.22
22	10293	10182	-1.08%	19061	18856	0.54
23	6205	6340	2.18%	16329	16684	0.38
24	11165	11045	-1.07%	20300	20082	0.55
25	8525	9459	10.96%	16394	18190	0.52
26	4873	5038	3.39%	17404	17993	0.28
27	5630	6892	22.42%	15639	19144	0.36
28	9578	8836	-7.75%	31927	29453	0.3
29	4783	10703	123.77%	16493	36907	0.29
30	6510	7819	20.11%	15140	18184	0.43
31	13404	14424	7.61%	14570	15678	0.92
32	11845	11334	-4.31%	9182	8786	1.29

33	13543	14518	7.20%	13149	14095	1.03
34	16560	16999	2.65%	14655	15043	1.13
35	14945	15820	5.85%	9113	9646	1.64
36	13653	14734	7.92%	15515	16743	0.88
37	14421	15690	8.80%	18254	19861	0.79
38	11235	13022	15.91%	15824	18341	0.71
39	11237	12353	9.93%	19046	20937	0.59
40	18164	25152	38.47%	11008	15244	1.65
41	12951	17351	33.97%	4022	5389	3.22
42	14711	19139	30.10%	3641	4737	4.04
43	9661	16339	69.12%	5112	8645	1.89
44	11522	11843	2.79%	19529	20073	0.59
45	7117	7001	-1.63%	13428	13209	0.53
46	21222	30665	44.50%	6780	9797	3.13
47	8363	9327	11.53%	10076	11237	0.83
SMC	472454	513264	8.64%	11276	12250	41.9

Source: Siliguri Municipal Corporation.

Graph 5: Ward wise population density of Siliguri Municipal Corporation.

comparative data for 2001 and 2011



Source: SMC data 2001 and 2011

As indicated in the Figure above, ward numbers 29, 18 and 5 are the densest wards in the city. These wards have reported density between 4,022 to 36,907 persons per sq.km. Further, 29 ward has the highest density of 36,907 persons per sq.km. Further, it has been observed that within the city there has been internal movement from the core city to peripheral areas due to congestion in the core city. Hence, wards in the core city experienced a negative population growth in the last decade.

The Making of a Migrant City

As we have seen in the above section, the population of the City has shot up at some particular phases. This has happened due to the high rate of migration from the neighbouring areas. The contemporary political developments will help one to understand the trend. It is the location of the city that has attracted the people from different neighbouring regions and ultimately made it a migrant city. Siliguri emerged as a migrants' town and the profile and the nature of migration have considerably changed throughout the years. It was a village at the start of the twentieth century with only a few thousand inhabitants and it was because of the influx of refugees and other migrants from across neighbouring countries and states that Siliguri turned into a second largest city in West Bengal only after Kolkata. The rapid increase in population of North Bengal - most importantly Siliguri- as per the notes of the Planning commission is "not due to the result of natural growth but because of significant migration".¹⁴¹ This part of the Chapter discusses who these migrants were and how Siliguri accommodated this bulk of migrants.

The bulk of migrants not only constituted the Bangladeshi refugees but also the persecuted Bengalis that migrated from North Eastern states like Assam etc., and the non-Bengali speaking population like Marwaris, Biharis and Nepalis that came from nearby areas in search of employment and new homes. This part of the Chapter also tries to establish the relation between migrants and corresponding rise in the number of slums in the city.

¹⁴¹ Manpower Journal, Institute of Applied Manpower Research publication, 2002, p. 10.

The first batches of migrants in the post-independence period were from East Bengal. Almost every district of West Bengal was equally affected by the exodus post partition of India. In most of the case the uprooted people from western parts of East Pakistan trekked hazardous paths to adjoining districts of West Bengal and their preferred destination was to resettle in and around Kolkata and undivided 24 Pargana. In the same way the oppressed, abused, victimised and frightened population of the northern part of East Bengal migrated to the neighbouring districts of North Bengal like Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur etc. Siliguri was in close proximity to Bangladesh as it shares a direct border with some parts of Bangladesh. This made it a favoured destination for the migrants. The Annual Report of the Department of Rehabilitation stated that during the 1st phase of refugee exodus (1946-1952) approximately 2.52 million of refugees came to West Bengal. The period from 1953 to 1956 was marked very important (see table 3.6). The table gives clear indication about the scale and magnitude of displacement during the post-partition period from the East to West. The unprecedented atrocious communal violence that broke out in 1946 at Noakhali of undivided Bengal just on the eve of independence on 15th August, 1947 was a Black day in the history of undivided India. Noakhali was the epicentre of communal riot and centering round Noakhali the flame of communal unrest scattered throughout Bengal

Table 2.7: -Migration from East Bengal to West Bengal since 15 October, 1946 to 15

January 1951(Outside Camps)

SL NO.	DISTRICT	Number of families one or more migrants	Number of persons including migrants	Total migrants since 15 October 1946 to 15 January,1951	Migrants since 31 December 1949 upto 15 January 1951
1	Burdwan	24616	106514	100805	39777
2	Birbhum	2655	12351	11524	5545
3	Bankura	2294	10223	9814	6017
4	Midnapur	6058	31797	28722	5581

5	Howrah	16827	92778	86444	49094
6	24 Pargana	100564	598833	541720	265966
7	Calcutta	76078	476759	415970	178799
9	Nadia	84913	411733	403804	267872
10	Murshidabad	14424	67763	65578	32170
11	Malda	14876	70201	68197	56806
12	Jalpaiguri	20596	107178	100675	65234
13	Darjeeling	3425	18910	17643	8757
14	Cooch Behar	22526	95890	94242	80350
15	TOTAL	429272	2308044	2143228	1200479

Source: Government of West Bengal, Report on the Sample Survey for Estimating the Socio-economic Characteristics of displaced persons migrating from East Pakistan to the state of West Bengal, 1951 (Calcutta: State Statistical Bureau)

. The Partition of India and achievement of independence paved the way for an inflow of refugees in different parts of India, especially in the territory of West Bengal which the uprooted individuals considered to be their happiest and peaceful abode of settlement after being migrated in the soil of West Bengal. Immediately after leaving behind their dear motherland, enormous valuable properties and near and dear relations; they started their journey of uncertainty in search of peace, safety and security.

The Government of West Bengal issued a declaration in 1948 stating that the cause of the then exodus was due to economic reasons. So the proper identification of a migrant as a refugee was really essential. According to Bengali public discourse the words *Udbastu* and *Bastuhara* carried two different connotations; *Bastu* was related to ancestral background whereas the word *udbastu* referred to the loss of home; as was in the case *bastuhara*. Both these implications not only indicated the shelterless condition but presented the pang and agony of Partition. When the displaced from East Pakistan were awarded with the right to franchise the displaced had switched over their allegiance to the Left in order to redress their grievances.

They voiced their demands with the slogan Amra kara? Bastuhara! (Who are we? Refugees!). In later periods those displaced persons continued to identify themselves as —refugees.¹⁴²

A migrant's recognition as a 'refugee' was the prime clause for the rehabilitation assistance in India. A 'refugee' or a —displaced person, was he who was originally the resident of East Pakistan and due to political turmoil, panic of civil disturbances and following the vivisection of India he was forced to quit his birth place.¹⁴³ But while acknowledging that fear of persecution or violence as a valid and justified reason for migration, the official definition was inaccurate regarding the preconditions of fear. It was also imprecise on the fact that to what extent it would be implemented by the Government for allotting refuge in India. The Indian government under the aforesaid circumstances took a tactical policy ignoring the complaints of everyday insecurity of East Bengal refugees and diverted attention to spectacular worse-case scenarios in Pakistan. The Government instantly declared that it was unaware of the fact that the Hindus of East Bengal had problems or it was totally ignorant of those incidents in East Pakistan which were responsible for the massive displacement.¹⁴⁴

Scenario post Bangladesh Independence:

Another major influx of Refugees came during the Liberation-War of Bangladesh. The Hindu population residing in Bangladesh tried to escape the mass killing by migrating to India. It is estimated that approximately 10 million East Bengali refugees entered India in the early months of the war and 1.5 million may have stayed back in India after Bangladesh became independent.

With the formation of the new country Bangladesh, a rapid migration of refugees came to Siliguri and started living a settled life. The illegal migrants from Bangladesh into Siliguri are mainly due to unregulated and unchecked porous international boundaries of India.

¹⁴² "East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal ... - Swadhinata Trust." <https://swadhinata.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/chatterjeeEastBengal-Refugee.pdf>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2021.

¹⁴³ Reports of the Ministry of Rehabilitation, 1957.

¹⁴⁴ *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, February 21, 1948.

Table 2.8: Refugee inflow from East Pakistan into India (Jan 1964-24 March 1971)

Year/states	West Bengal	Assam	Tripura	Total
1969	3713	2756	3290	9768
1970	232675	11905	6580	251160
1971	6622	968	686	8276

Source: Ministry of Supply and Rehabilitation, *Annual Report, 1977-78*

The Bangladeshi population in the Siliguri region can be seen in every nook and corner of Siliguri. It brought tremendous changes in every sphere of human life viz. social, political, economic, and cultural. Bangladeshi population mainly comprises of Hindu and Muslim population who came to territory of India so called Siliguri. It is a very difficult task to estimate the overall illegal migration. According to the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly, the reason behind the illegal migration is that due to pathetic and adverse conditions Bangladeshi people and most of them migrated to Indian territories. Actually it is to be said that mostly Hindus migrated to West Bengal to escape the atrocities of rape, murder and forced conversion to Islam. Later, a lot of Muslims started fleeing from Bangladesh to West Bengal because of extreme poverty.

The refugee inflow in the district of Darjeeling was mainly confined within the plain areas of Darjeeling district. Darjeeling district consisted of four subdivisions viz. Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri. As the displaced persons hailed from East Pakistan, they preferred to settle in the plain areas of Siliguri subdivision. The displaced persons were not accustomed to accommodate themselves in the hilly regions of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kallingpong following an uncongenial climate of the hilly localities. Moreover, there was no industry except the tea industry. On the other hand Siliguri was a growing promising city of commercial importance. Up to 1958 there was no camp or home in Darjeeling district, only 2 Government colonies were there. Those two colonies were Mohitlal colony and Phansidewa.

Those two colonies comprised 3375 refugees. But the total number of refugees including outside camps and colonies in Darjeeling was 30,043.¹⁴⁵

In the course of time several recognized refugee colonies were set up at Siliguri. They were :Dabgram G.S. Colony(1), Dabgram G.S Colony (2), Chowpukaria G.S. colony, Matigara G.S.colony, Pati Colony, Baghajatin Colony, Mahakal pally, Adarsha Pally, Jyoti Nagar 2, Nutan Para, Adarsha Nagar, Subhas Nagar, Durgadas Colony, Prantik Colony, Shramik Nagar, B.B.D Colony, Das Colony, Debashis Colony, Dabgram Unnayan-1, Dabgram Unnayan -2, Deshbandhu colony and Udayan Unnayan etc. The following were the refugee colonies situated on the railway lands, viz. Prankrishna colony, Harizon-Masbur colony, Matangini colony-1, Matangini colony -2, Chittaranjan colony, Raja Rammohan Roy colony, Sraban nagar colony, Khudiram colony, Promod nagar colony, Swami nagar colony, Rana basti colony, Lichubagan colony, Porimol colony, Suryasen colony, Hawkers' corner market, Vivekanandanagar colony, Panchani colony, Sarbohara colony, Ambedkar colony, Jyoti nagar colony -1 and Durga nagar colony.¹⁴⁶ In Dainik Basumati, a report was published that the refugees who built huts and small cottages by the sides of the main roads of Siliguri town for running small business, the Government of India extended monetary assistance if Rs. Three lakhs were granted for the construction of new markets at Siliguri town. The Sliguri administration had to face adverse criticism regarding the construction of the markets.¹⁴⁷

Many colonies were established during this period in the city and surroundings. After the formation of Siliguri Municipal Corporation the native authority declared 154 residential areas as slums. For the migrated Bangladeshi inhabitants Siliguri had emerged as the largest urban centre of North Bengal. Thus the population of Siliguri town and its adjacent urban areas got boosted manifold and it brought new economic opportunities as well as a new scope of resettlement of the migrants.

¹⁴⁵ Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay.Udbastu. Sahitya Samsad, 1970, p.29.

¹⁴⁶ Biren Chanda. *Gana andoloner prekhyapote Darjeeling jelar udstu andolon.* Swaranika, Sukanta Mancha, Cooch Behar 10-11 June, 2017

¹⁴⁷ *Dainik Basumati*, November 29, 1954

The refugee problem in the eastern region of the subcontinent is no doubt compounded by religion, language and ethnic factors, but the core of the conflict is not purely ethnic. The conflict is a form of negotiation between unitary national citizenship and ethnic plurality. We can see that refugees mainly came mostly in West Bengal and a large number of them came into North Bengal especially in Siliguri. The period of 1971-80 is known as the War Period. Mainly at that time the population of Siliguri saw a flow. So, it can be said that population growth in Siliguri was due to migration, refugee influx and also illegal immigrants that came from Bangladesh.

Table 2.9: Migration data of SMC based on original birth place (1989)

<u>Original Birth Place</u>	<u>Migration In Percentage</u>
1. Bangladesh	52
2. Siliguri Surroundings	01
3. Other Districts of W.B.	16
4. Other States	30
5. Other Countries	01

Source: Problem and Prospect of Development of Siliguri and Jalpaiguri Towns: A comparative study – Dr. Purnima Saha (1991).

The refugee influx helped iliguri town to grow in many ways. The Refugee Rehabilitation Department made donations to educational institutes in Siliguri like the Siliguri College and the Siliguri Commerce College. These donations were used for the construction of buildings. Land was also donated to Siliguri Girls Higher Secondary School for construction of the building because of ever-increasing demand for education from the new settlers. The State Government granted Rs. 1,50,000 to Siliguri Municipality for construction of roads, to make sanitary arrangements and also to arrange clean water supply in the refugee areas within the municipal limits.

The Refugee Rehabilitation Department also made arrangements to open a market and a 3-acre plot of land was arranged at an expense of Rs. 10,000,00 for the benefit of approximately 800 refugee traders and it was named as “Bidhan Market”. Out of total refugee colonies, half of the existing refugee colonies are situated within Siliguri town and those staying there were

mostly employed in urban occupations related to the tertiary sector of the economy. Two colonies were located in the semi-urban area whose inhabitants were also employed in the same sector. However the other two colonies located in rural areas were engaged in the primary sector.¹⁴⁸

The Coming of the Nepalis Settlers:

The dynamics of the Nepali migration is very different from the Bengali migration from Bangladesh. The socio-cultural uniformity and continuity between India and Nepal has made the Nepali entity much a part of the Indian psyche and ethos.¹⁴⁹ The ethnic cultural space shared by Nepal and Bangladesh with India intrudes the territorial space of the others.¹⁵⁰ As per the researches of Micheal Hutt on “being Nepali without Nepal”¹⁵¹ and the 1951 census report of A. Mitra on Darjeeling we see that only 19.96 per cent of the total existing population of 88,958 of the District spoke Nepali language. According to the census of 2011, there are about 10 lakh i.e 55% of the population speak Nepali language in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong district combined.¹⁵² It is very difficult to get the exact number of Nepalis living in Siliguri but today Nepalis live in every corner of Siliguri. The origin of Nepali diaspora in the region is very obscure. However, Nepalis do have a dominant presence in and around Siliguri. They came to Darjeeling when the tea plantations were established in the region by the Britishers in the 1800s. Many others came from Nepal to join the British army and they never returned back. After India’s independence, the Ghorkha forces became part of the Indian army and served the Gorkha Regiment and Assam rifles.

¹⁴⁸ Report of sub divisional officers of Siliguri as discussed in Mitra’s “*Siliguri Puraton*”.

¹⁴⁹ Behera, 2001, p iii.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Michael Hutt, “Being Nepali without Nepal: Reflections on a South Asian Diaspora.” In *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. D. Gellner, J. PfaffCzarnecka, and J. Whelpton eds. Pp. 101-144. London and NY: Routledge, 1997, pp. 109.

¹⁵² "Siliguri-The Legitimate Claim since the Old Gorkha Days - The" 6 Jan. 2020, <https://thedarjeelingchronicle.com/siliguri-the-legitimate-claim-since-the-old-gorkha-days/>. Accessed 10 Jul. 2020.

Many Nepalis have lived for generations in Siliguri. Initially there were two localities where the Nepalis mainly inhabited, Pradhan Nagar and Gurung Nagar (earlier Busty). Champasari area was also Nepali inhabited locality named after Champarani Rai. Gurung basti was named after Bhagbir Gurung. There follows a few examples of settlers of Siliguri.

Aniket Rai Bahadur, an old man in his early 60's was a resident of Puttabong Tea Garden in Darjeeling. His family members were employed in the Tea Garden and he remembers that they were extremely poor. He could not attend any school due to poverty even though Mount Hermon School was not very far from his home. He says that when he was only 22 years of age, he was married to a girl from the same tea garden. The economic condition got worse and he finally decided to leave the place and migrate to some other place for livelihood. He chooses Siliguri over Gangtok and Delhi thinking the city would accept him and ameliorate his worsening economic condition. Wow he owns his own momo-shop at Sabji Bazar *gali*, in Hongkong market in Siliguri. His economic condition has improved a lot. He has managed to buy a piece of land and live with his family. He has also sent his youngest son to Hyderabad to study computer engineering. Aniket Rai Bahadur loves the city very much. He showers bunches of praiseworthy words for Siliguri. It was because of this city, his second home he could improve his livelihood.¹⁵³ Ashok Lama is now a permanent employee at Siliguri IT Park. At 46, he owns a LIG flat at Uttorayan and sends his daughter to ST. Joseph school. He remembers his childhood when he used to live with his parents at Gangtok. An engineer by profession, he quickly understood that Gangtok was not the place where he could expand his dreams. He was a bright student at Sikkim Manipal Institute but he found Siliguri as the city of his dreams. He is proud to have migrated from Gangtok and says that Gangtok is not very far from Siliguri. He

¹⁵³ Interview with Aniket Rai Bahadur Rai resident of Parihavan Nagar, Siliguri , pin:734001 dated 15th June 2021

goes to his paternal house weekly to look after his parents. He proudly admits that the city has looked after his needs and dreams for the last 22 years.¹⁵⁴

That the Nepalis were present in Siliguri from the very early days, it can be inferred from the fact that the first MLA of Siliguri was George Mahbert Subba. He was also the first mayor of the town. The land over which Kanchenjunga Stadium was built was denoted by Tilak Bahadur Rai and the oldest Nepali School ‘Krishnamaya Memorial School’ was established in 1950. Now Nepalese live in almost every corner of Siliguri. They live in rented houses if they cannot own one. The Nepali people in Siliguri work as businessmen, who are obviously rich and well off but a huge number of young Nepalese are employed in malls and hospitals. They are seen as efficient salesmen and nurses and the big malls and hospitals readily give them employment. Among the common sights are Nepali women and men working as police constables in Siliguri. One can spot them at many checkpoints and traffic points. Nepalese are also employed as waiters in hotels, bars and restaurants.

Other than the Nepali migrants there were a huge number of Marwaris and Biharis who had migrated to Siliguri. According to a sample survey conducted in 1990’s writes Samir Das, among the immigrants 60% came from Bangladesh, 17% were Biharis and approximately 8% were Marwaris. The remaining 15% immigrants came from south Bengal and Assam.¹⁵⁵ A detail of the different community migrants are discussed in the section below. The Biharis and Marwari immigrants preferred to stay within the heart of the city and refrained from settling in the outer fringes of the City. Both the Biharis and Marwari community controlled the commodity trade of the whole region and they also dominated the retail supply of all consumer goods.

Tibetan Refugees in Siliguri

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Ashok Lama, resident of LIG Flat, Uttorayon Township. Uttorayon is located along National Highway 31 near to Matigara. It is 9 km from the Bagdogra International Airport and is just 3 km from Siliguri City proper.

¹⁵⁵ Das, Samir Kumar, “Homeless in Homelands”, Theme Articles, *Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 7, Issues III & IV, Autumn & Winter 2011, p. 80.

With the annexation of Tibet by China, the exodus of Tibetans Refugees to India began about the middle of 1951, which gained momentum and assumed fairly large proportions in 1956. But the main bulk of Tibetan refugees began arriving in India from 1959. The responsibility of rehabilitating the Tibetan refugees rested with an organisation called the Central Relief Committee, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India. The expenses of running the colonies and the Self-Help Centres for the Tibetan Refugees are borne jointly by the Central Relief Committee, Government of India and Central Tibetan Administration at Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh.

The Tibetan Refugees are settled mainly in the hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong and all the surrounding areas. They live either in the settlements or outside where they are known as scattered communities. But they maintain a close tie with Siliguri also. Many are settled in Salugara peat of Siliguri where Tibetan Buddhist monasteries belonging to different sects and medical centre etc have come up. The Dalai Lama Himself has visited this part of Siliguri and performed Kalachakra ceremony there. In winter many Tibetans set up shops in the Bhutia market of Siliguri where they sell woollen items.

Siliguri and the Pattern of In-Migration:

The analysis of the changing nature of in-migration and the rapid urban growth rate in Siliguri city can be studied from different sources like census of India, Migration Table (D series, 1991, 2001), Ministry of Urban Development report (2013), District statistical hand book, Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority Report, and others.

According to the census of India (1991), Siliguri city and adjoining area received 106,098 migrants from the period of 1981–1991. Table 1 shows that among the total migrants, 55.1 percent are male and 44.93 per cent are female migrants. But in the period of 1991–2001, Siliguri city and its adjoining area received 139,418 migrants. It means, around 33 per cent

migrants have increased from the period of 1991 to 2001. It is clear that Siliguri city has several pull factors for high rate of migration in North-East India.

Table 2.10: Total migration into Siliguri city, census period 1991–2001

Migration, 1991 Census			Migration, 2001 Census		
Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
106098	58434	47664	139418	73710	65708
In percent	55%	45%	In percent	53%	47%

Source: Census of India 1991, West Bengal and Migration Table: Migrants by Place of Last Residence to Cities by Reason for Migration, Census of India 2001, West Bengal and Migration Table: Migrants by Place of Last Residence, Duration of Residence and Reason for Migration.

Rendering to the place of last-residence in the migration data, Siliguri City has experienced a wide range of divergence. Almost half of the total migration into this city came from the different districts of West Bengal, which is generally called as migration from within the state (2001 census). This city received a huge number of migrants from its neighbour districts like Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Malda, Darjeeling and others because this region has a great opportunity to fill-up different kinds of job demands.

Among the total migrants, 53.09 per cent migrated from within the state, 32.39 per cent from other states in India and 14.78 per cent from other countries especially from Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan (Table below). Here, the most important thing is those persons who migrate from other states into India; among them, most of these migrants are male because most of them migrate in this city to search for a job.

Most of the urban areas have experienced a higher proportion of migrated people from rural areas. Siliguri has also seen a great bulk of migration from different regions; certain regions have experienced a higher concentration of rural out-migration into Siliguri that needs special attention. Table below shows that amongst the total migration, 32.39 per cent migrants have migrated from different regions of India. Among the five regions, this city experienced the highest percentage (67.22 percent) from plain states (like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) and

mountain states of North India; South India (plateau states) shows least per cent. This city also experienced migration from North Eastern states of India.

Table 2.11: Migration stream into Siliguri city, 1991–2001

Migration stream into City	Migration , 1991			Migration,2001		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Migration from within the State	41.47	49.17	50.83	53.09	49.36	60.64
Migration from outside the State	36.19	61.49	38.54	32.39	55.77	42.23
Migration from other country	22.34	55.69	44.31	14.78	57.16	42.39

Source: Census of India, West Bengal and the Migration Table D-3: Migrants by the place of Last Residence, Duration of Residence and Reason for Migration (computed by the author).

Table 2.12: Migration into Siliguri city from different regions of India, 2001 census

Regions of Migrations		
Migration into Siliguri From different regions of India 2001	Total number of In Migrations	Percentage to Total Migrants
North India (mountains states)	264	0.58
North India (plain states)	30,357	67.22
North-West India (dry plain States)	4,155	9.2
North-Eastern India (hills, plain, plateau states)	8,520	18.87
Central India (highland states)	1,293	2.86
South India (plateau states)	570	1.26
Total	45,159	100%

Source: Census of India 2001, West Bengal and the Migration Table D-3: Migrants by the place of Last Residence, Duration of Residence and Reason for Migration (computed by the author).

Table below shows some foremost states from where Siliguri received approximately 90% migrants among total migration from other states in India in the year 2001. The first five states from where this city received migrants above 90 per cent are Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. Among the five states, the highest migrants came from Bihar (59.02 per cent). The city also has 16.14 per cent migrants from Assam, 7.71 per cent from Uttar Pradesh, 5.15 per cent from Rajasthan, 2.88% from Haryana and rest 9.01 per cent from other states of India.

Table 2.13: Migration into Siliguri city from first five leading states

States	Total		Male		Female	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Bihar	26653	5902	10507	61089	16146	55.1
Assam	7289	16.14	3746	13.58	3543	19.46
Uttar Pradesh	3483	7.71	1401	7.98	2.082	7.35
Rajasthan	2325	5.15	987	5.13	1338	5.18
Haryana	1299	2.88	531	2.83	768	2.78
Other States	4110	9.1	2884	8.59	3551	9.95

Source: Census of India 2001, West Bengal Migration Table (Migrants by Place of Last Residence, Duration of Residence and Reason for Migration).

Rural out-migration can be defined as the moving of population from rural areas towards the cities either willingly or cogently for the betterment of their lifestyle. In India as well as West Bengal, most of the people live (68.11 per cent, 2011 census) in the rural areas and the rural workers mostly depend only on agriculture activities and majority of the rural people are agricultural labourers. Out-migration is greater in the less developed agricultural areas, particularly high among the landless farmers.¹⁵⁶ An increase in agricultural productivity and

¹⁵⁶ Parganiha O, et al. "Migration effects of labourers on agricultural activities." *Indian Research Journal*, Vol.9, No. 3, 2009, pp. 95–98.

technological changes in agriculture offers a surplus for the transfer of labour to the growing industrial sector.¹⁵⁷

The Table below shows reasons for in-migration into the Siliguri city since 1991. A large number of rural populations from different districts of West Bengal and also other states in India migrated to Siliguri city to search for jobs, better educational facilities, better medical facilities, betterment of life style, and others. Among the total migrants, a large number of migrants have moved for employment, business and other purposes. About 19.44% (1991) and 14.55% (2001) of the migrants went for marriage purposes and around 30 percent migrants moved with their household. Nath and Choudhury¹⁵⁸ said that male migration rate of the age group 15–25 is greater from rural to urban areas due to educational and employment opportunities. It is clear that most of the migrants came to Siliguri city for job purposes and improvement of lifestyle.

Table 2.14: Reasons for migration into Siliguri (1991–2001 in percent)

Reason for Migration	1991 Census		2001 Census	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Work/employment	23735	17.02	23940	22.56
Business	722	5.4	8216	7.74
Education	996	0.71	2715	2.56
Marriage	20289	14.55	20628	19.44
Moved after Birth	3886	2.79	-	-
Moved with Household	37889	2718	35280	33.25
others	45101	32.35	15319	14.44
Total	139418	100	106098	100

Source: Census of India, D-3 (Migrants by Place of Last Residence, Duration of Residence and Reason for Migration).

The city is witnessing a rapid expansion of its population particularly in recent years. The population grows and the city expands, it gobbles up the existing tea gardens and the

¹⁵⁷ Barnum HN. "The interrelationship among social and political variables, economic structure and rural-urban migration." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 1976, pp. 759–764.

¹⁵⁸ Nath D.C and Choudhury L. "Two regional (rural–urban) life tables for India." *Genus*, Vol. 51, No. 1/2, 1995, pp. 45–67.

neighbouring areas, evicting the tea labour and the marginalised and further chasing them into the adjoining rural areas. The city has no space for the evicted. They live mostly in slum and shanties, in the banks of Champasari and temporary sandbars that emerge during dry season on the Mahananda and the Balason River cutting across an otherwise vertically spread out city and become homeless almost as a ritual when the river and their tributaries are in spate during monsoon.

The new migrants settle in the town – occupy the high rise – raising phenomenally the land price and price of essentials. Thus we see that the heterogeneous population composition of Siliguri was one of the spin-offs of urban transformations. This issue will be taken into consideration in detail in the next chapter. The social system of this border town took shape through migration of various groups from the neighbourhood following different political developments. Massive migration led to differentiation of social and economic space. The illegal cross border movement of goods further led to expansion of urban markets. The region faced both internal as well external threats leading to heavy militarisation. The establishment of many army cantonments added to the urban growth of Siliguri. The social, military and the economic spaces of Siliguri were re-defined in phases after independence.