

CHAPTER -1

Introduction

1.1: Background

North Bengal, at present a narrow strip of land at a short distance from the Chinese border connects two divisions of India as a vital point in the bottom of the Himalayas. It is surrounded by Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the north, Assam in the east and Bangladesh and rest of West Bengal in the south and Bihar in the west. This location has provided her a special place of strategic importance. Since the time immemorial North Bengal has been serving as the eastern gateway for the passage and the communication of people, commodities and ideas between the Indian sub-continent in the west and Assam, Burma, China and other parts of South Asia in the east. This is situated in the centre of the network of national highway connecting different civilizations through the inland mountain routes (Bhattacharyya and Mukherjee, 1987).

More recently, the portion of West Bengal from Ganges on the south and the Himalayas on the north is physically called "North Bengal" within the state of West Bengal. It consists of six districts viz. Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda. Mountains, valleys, undulated foothills and the plains covered by forests and agricultural lands, criss-crossed by rivers and streams have given the place a natural background of unique character. North Bengal is considered to be a place of floral, faunal, ethnic, lingual and cultural diversity. The region of North Bengal is very important to the travelers, tourists, and researchers not only for its natural wealth but also for its people and their culture.

North Bengal occupies about one fourth portion of West Bengal. The population structure of North Bengal consists of various indigenous as well as immigrant communities like Rajbanshi, Poliya, Beldar, Bhunmali, Dosad, Gondi, Mal, Mushahar, Nuniya, Kami, Dami, Namasudra, Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepali groups. During the census year of 1991, the total population was 12036292. On the basis of religion the population structure is characterized by

Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, and Animist communities (Bose, 1998). The number of population is in gradual increase. According to the census of 2001, the population is 14724940.

1.2: Statement of the Problem and Justification of the Study

India is predominantly characterized by her rural communities, city and urban dwellers form only about one-fifth of the total Indian population. The culture matrix of India's rural communities is not uniform and is rather marked by the regional and ethnic diversity. Therefore, to understand Indian rural society, one has to understand the social structure of village India. Villages as representatives of various subcultures are to be covered for the purpose (Mann, 1979).

From the teaching of history it is found that the existence of villages in India and the history of the people in village are very old but in India, village studies have their roots in the colonial rule. Actually the village study is the 18th century phenomenon and it developed through various stages. Sometimes it is called that the study of Indian villages began in the 18th century with intensive survey work regarding land holdings. Later on the Indian villages were compared with the villages of West. However in the last century, intensive empirical studies on village economy and society gained much popularity (Dumont and Pocock, 1957).

The "village studies" has been developed through a historical process and the contributions made of individuals, government organizations were very helpful for its origin and growth. Initially, 'village studies' were conducted to see the economic situation of the villagers but the social aspects like caste; marriage, family-condition etc were not looked similarly. It is found that village studies during 1920-50, the emphasis was laid increasingly on purely economic categorization of rural societies; and even the social relations which the villagers had evolved with reference to their economic organization were not attended properly or at all. The economic distribution, landholding the expenditure pattern, and such other economic attributes of the villagers were often treated in meticulous details, but the social relation of rural folks had

developed with respect to such economic attributes were almost invariably lost sight (Mukherjee, 1965).

Regarding the nature of the Indian village, earlier studies considered that the Indian village society was 'closed' and 'isolated' system. While the studies on Indian village in 1950's and onward was based on the assumption that the Indian village was not 'static', 'isolated' and homogenous but rapidly changing due to interaction with outside (Quoted from Sharma, 1997).

In the decade of 1950's some important studies on Indian villages were conducted by Indian as well as foreign anthropologists and sociologists viz. Srinivas (1955), Gough (1955), Dube (1955), Bailey (1955), Marriot (1955), Mukherjee (1957), Bose (1984), and many others.

At this stage some scholars have contributed to the studies of border villages like Swarup and Singh (1988), Bhowmick (1976), Samaddar (1999). In the context of trans-border ethnic movement and consequent ethnicity and political instability of contemporary times, it is desirable that an intensive anthropological and sociological study of the frontier areas must be taken into consideration. Recently North Bengal is bounded by three international borders viz Indo-Nepal, Indo-Bhutan, and Indo-Bangladesh. The social dynamics of these frontier areas are quite-complex in nature. Because, due to open border system, the incoming and outgoing of people in the frontier areas are quite continuous. The frontier areas are the meeting ground of various groups of people and their relationship is designed by reciprocal as well as conflicting pattern. Even the frontier areas have been the evidence of various illegitimate activities like political instability, smuggling, kidnapping, disturbance of law and order, cow-stealing and some other anti-social activities.

The border study has a very wide scope in contemporary social science research. Because in recent times, due to various reasons, international migration is very often notified, this is leading to form ethnic disturbance in frontier villages. This new social formation has generated a unique pattern of inter-ethnic relations which is reflected through ethnicity and trans-border movements. It is desirable that a socio-economic study of border villages is very necessary both for academic as well as politico-administrative and

developmental reasons. But unfortunately the study of border villages in Himalayan and sub-Himalayan areas of North Bengal is significantly lacking. The Indo-Nepal frontier areas are the important places where the non-Nepali and Nepali people are living together. Due to their interaction, the socio-economic, political and cultural lives of both the communities are changing. In the present study, the frontier areas located very near to Indo-Nepal border line have many villages and villagers, with their own economic, socio-political and cultural life, and they face many changes in their established relationship. Some aspects are losing their importance and some are existing with increased importance or new type of social formation is being emerged. They are occurring due to some special reasons. The sociologists and social anthropologists do not show their much attention in this field.

1.3: Review of Literatures

In the field of sociological and social anthropological studies on village society, village social structure, village social life etc have been made by some Indian and foreign scholars. Though a good number of studies have been conducted on the villages of West Bengal and as well as the villages of other states of India, but the studies on frontier villages of North Bengal is very scanty. Hence, a few of the noted village studies, some other studies, survey reports, census reports which are related to rural society, rural social problem etc made by scholars are reviewed.

Ahuja (1993) in his book shows the role of dowry in selecting bride. He says that importance and typicality of the problem of dowry today is to be assessed not because the number of the reported cases of burning of brides is increasing but also because a good number of girls remain unmarried even after crossing the marriageable age due to parents' inability to pay dowry. This creates the problem of spinsterhood too with its own sociological repercussions. The dowry problem is also crucial because many girls are humiliated and harassed for not bringing adequate dowry to the satisfaction of their in-laws and husbands creating the crisis of their personality disorganization; because it compels many parents to use illegitimate methods in earning money and increases corruption in society; and because it poses dilemmas and conflicts of

varied types of individuals, families, and the society. He also says that due to cruelty of dowry, the bride-burning is in gradual increase in different parts of India.

Basak (1992) in his study reveals the formation of the community panchayat. His works on the community panchayat of the caste Hindus which is based on the elderly male members of the village or villages. They constitute according to their own convenience with five to seven members according to their own strength of the community. The Panchayat is headed by a male member who is wise and influential in the society is called Mandal or Morol in the village terminology and is assisted by other elderly male members of five to seven according to the capacity of number of the village households and caste differentiation i.e. of the number of the castes and sub-castes living in the villages.

Bhowmick (1976) discusses various aspects of the socio-cultural life of the people of frontier Bengal. In this study an accurate emphasis has been laid on studying the particular ways of life of different communities. The author has given more stress on description and analysis of the ways how a great number of communities have interacted with one another. In terms of religious festivals he says that religio-festive life in a village is closely associated with certain supernatural concepts or traditional beliefs and ritual patterns observed by different castes, constant group participation in those affairs, perpetual and unified social order or relationship amongst the individuals concerned which become strengthened further and develop some norms in course of time. But beliefs in different religions or faiths sometimes segment the society vertically into different strata, largely associated with the exclusiveness of the rituals.

Bailey (1955) makes a study on Bisipara, an Orissa village. He reveals the changing social structure of the village with the change in political and economic scenario. In terms of economic change Bailey shows that the impact of market-oriented production has decreased the class differences between classes. It is found that the demand of turmeric in Bissipara in Orissa has brought agricultural profit to one and all irrespective of caste or agricultural skill and experience.

Barua (1978) makes an intensive study of a single village named Moranjan. The author has examined the character of Ahom Social relations. She tried to assess the trend of changes in the socio-cultural life of the community. She expresses the social relation through the understanding of the people, economic profile, household, religion, kinship and community relation. She shows that though changes are taking place in the socio-economic, religious and political life, yet strong traditional elements persist, often manifested in a strong urge to revive distinctive socio-religious rites and maintain a separate identity.

Basu (1962), in his study of a village, Kanchanpur in Burdwan district, West Bengal shows that the high caste had a larger proportion of joint families than the lower castes.

Bose (1984) analyses the economic structure of rural society in terms of the combination of two aspects – the forces of production and the relation of production. He says that the highest percentage of nuclear families is found among the peasant proletariats. The poor peasants and the middle peasants generally have nuclear families, but in the villages, these classes have supplemented nuclear families and joint families also. The big landowners like rich peasants and landlords usually live in joint families. And finally he shows that the contribution of caste to family structure is not statistically significant and we have found members belonging to high caste but low class have nuclear families. This shows that the subsistence pattern, modes of livelihood, landownership or lack of it or, in short, a person's class position is related to the family types.

Carstairs (1983) makes a study on a small village named Sujarupa, in Rajasthan. The author shows how a small, tightly knit but not always harmonious community of Rajput farmers has reacted to the pressures of modernization.

Conklin (1973) in his study reveals that marriage to either mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter, or elder sister's daughter is the ideal type of all Hindus in twenty six villages in Karnataka.

Danda (1984) in his study at Basuda shows the family size of different caste groups. He shows that there is variation among the different caste groups. Finally he points out that the average family size of the village is 5.6 persons.

Danda and Danda (1968) are of the opinion that on the one hand, the upper caste group rarely grants a position desired by a lower caste; on the other hand, caste members of the former parallel social position never recognize the superior position of the aspirant caste.

Doshi and Jain (2004) in their study state that India's villages are highly disposed to religion. Religion and its associated aspects such as ritual and magic also influence the society. It may be said that at the outset that Indian rural society is much characterized by the observation of rituals and magic than religion itself. The rural society is basically a caste society. And, caste has religion as its inherent part. In practice caste and religion can hardly be separated.

Dube (1955) in his study says clearly Hinduism as it is practiced in the village is not the Hinduism of the classical philosophical height, nor the abstract content of the latter. It is the religion of fast, feast and festivals, in which the prescribed rituals cover all the major crisis of life. Worship and propitiation of gods and spirits follow the annual round of festivals and the rituals of human life-cycle. Disease and difficulty may also necessitate invoking assistance from the sources. Analysis of life histories reveals that spiritualism can not be said to be the keynote in the life of the community, far from it, the religion appears to be a practical one.

Dube (1963) in his another study observes that cross-cousin marriages are general rule in the tribal communities and are allowed among both upper and lower castes in Western and Southern India. Moslems permit parallel cousin marriages also. Among certain groups of the Hindus in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in South India, maternal uncle and niece marriages are preferred as they involve a cyclic change of hands in regard to substantial property.

Driver (1962) makes a comparative study between city, town and villages and shows that there are more joint families in rural areas, and more nuclear families in the urban areas. He also points out that the highest and the

lowest income groups show the preponderance of nuclear families and that the highly educated also have preference for nuclear families. The middle class or the middle income group appears more traditional in that it shows preference for a joint family.

Gough (1955) in his essay, the social structure of a Tanjore village, has outlined the social organization of a typical "Brahman village" named Kumberpetti. He has tried to focus the social change in the village and its underlying causes like internal migration of people. In terms of family and occupations he says that the Brahmans who, as large landowners do not manual work and totally dependent on land, have extended families while the landless labourers, known as Adidravidas, live in nuclear families.

Gomes (1987) makes a study to show the social structure of a composite village named Chandor, a typical Gaon village. The physical environment, demographic characteristics, caste structures, economic affairs, cultural activities, religious practices, feasts and festivals, influence of church and folklore of the Gaon people with the changes operating in various spheres of their living have been depicted.

Hiramani (1977) makes his investigation in two villages named Kolghar and Golatgaon of the Arungabad Taluka in the region of Marathwada. The author has tried to present the social structure of the villages and to bring together some of the responses of the rural areas of the region to industrial urban influence. In terms of family structure he shows that the number of the nuclear family is higher than the number of joint families found in Kolghar and Golatgaon villages.

Kamal Krishna (1969) shows in his study that majority of traders were from high caste, though their socio-economic background was very near the middle class. He also found that illiterate leaders were slowly being eased out.

Kapadia (1956) in his study of family types in the Navasari town, (Surat district), in the surrounding rural areas, and in the fringe areas of the town shows that both the town and rural areas show a predominance of the joint family.

Kolenda (2003) in his study shows the importance of village endogamy in determining the marital relationship. According to him in North India, marriage alliances are dispersed with a preference for maximizing ties so that seldom do two sisters marry into the same village or family. And in South India, it is children of brother and sister who should marry. This means that there is a special closeness between the brother and sister, whose children may marry, although there may be enmity between a sister and brother whose children of the right age, but who did not marry. For the bride in cross-cousin marriage, her mother-in-law may be her father's sister, or else her father-in-law may be her mother's brother, she does not move into a house of stranger at marriage.

Klass (1966) makes a study to discuss the marriage rule in West Bengal. He observes that in order to avoid land disputes to receive deference and respect from the girl's father after marriage, and to refrain from strained relations which might result as a consequence of virilocal marriage, one would not prefer to marry children into his own village.

Kissinger (1974) in his study of Vilyatpur, a village in Punjab, combines the perspectives and methods of the historian and the anthropologist to reconstruct the social and economic history of the village. He has also pointed out the processes of migration, commercialization, occupational differentiation, population dynamics etc.

Lewis (1958) in his study of Rampura, a village in U.P. points out that the Brahmans and the Jats both of high castes have the highest proportion of joint families but the Bhangis, a low caste, have a smaller proportion of them. The structure, size and type of the families in Indian society are associated with income, landholding, occupation, education etc. It is right that society is not static, but it is dynamic. Many changes are occurring in many traditional as well as modern social organizations in society.

Lieten (1992) conducts a study on a village named Ektagram of Birbhum district in West Bengal. The author examines in detail the land reform records of the state of West Bengal which has been governed by left front since 1977. He also examines the impact of this land reform programmes on various

agrarian classes and on productivity and social progress in general. He has also pointed out literacy, family planning, political changes, poverty alleviation programmes, caste, and religion, the fate of the share cropping system, depeasantization and ends with a discussion on improvement.

Marriot (1955) has studied the social structure and change in a U.P. village named 'Kishan Garhi'. He has also studied the structural features of the cooperation which was provided among the kin groups of Kishan Garhi.

Mathur (1964) observes that religion helps a society integrate and perpetuate its social order in two ways: (i) it provides to the total system in the form of doctrine, dogma and myth; and (ii) the rites, that is ceremonial actions and ritual prohibitions, dogmatize the social system and transit from one generation to another sentiments on which the constitution of the society depends.

Mukherjee (1958) in his study has made an attempt to study the society as living and moving entity as revealed by the process of change. The study has also given a general description of the people, a broad narration of the economic activities and the effect of the economic activities on a few social complexes. It gives a broad but overall picture of the changing society.

Misra (1988) in his study reveals an account of the changes in life in a village in one of the coastal districts of Orissa during the last sixty years from the twenties to the eighties of twenty centuries. He has presented the activities of zamindars, and their agents, money-lenders, share-croppers, agricultural labourers, artisans, service classes, village lenders, and some social practices like untouchability, dowry, superstitions etc. Some social problems like crime have also been discussed. Finally, the author has also pointed out some factors like urban contact and economic factors in developing new society and values after independence of India.

The report of NFHS' (1998-99) reveals the fact that in West Bengal, the mean size of households is 4.9 persons and size of households in rural areas is larger than the urban areas. The mean sizes of household in rural and urban areas are 5.1 and 4.6 persons respectively. According to census report of 2001 the average size of household in West Bengal is 5.1 persons. The report (2001)

also shows that the average size of the households in India is 5.3 persons which is higher than the average size of household of West Bengal, Darjeeling district, Kharibari block, and the Gandagol mouza where the village is located. According to the report the sizes of household of Darjeeling district, Kharibari block and the mouza are 5.0, 5.1 and 5.1 respectively.

Pramanik (1993) makes a study on community life of the fishermen communities of Hara and Sultanpur villages in 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. The author finds the patriarchal dominance on the women. The exploiting roles of the money-lenders and aratedars have also been discussed. Finally, the author observes that the fishermen due to several hardships like insecurity in fishing, unavailability of fish etc were changing their occupation and were adopting other occupation like rope making etc.

Raj (1970) in his study mentions that the rural society is based predominantly on agriculture, land and agriculture is still the most important source of livelihood of village folk. Burden on the land is very much increasing, the people on the whole are poor and have low living standard, there is very little occupational mobility and most of the people follow ancestral occupations, landed property is considered sacrosanct and no one will like to sell that unless compelled to do so. There are several land tenure system and several land reform measures taken so far have not done much good to rural people, yet in the villages not many cottage industries have started and thus between the sowing and harvesting there is sufficient time for the village folk to enjoy and also to recreate.

Rajani (1970) in his study shows that caste is being more and more strengthened because these castes are forming caste associations. Caste association works for the caste in regards of providing some educational job facilities and political reservations.

Rao (1985) in his study reveals the role of kinship relation to regulate the marital ties. It also restricts an individual to marry with certain specific individuals and in some cases the marriage alliance is prohibited between certain kinds of kin groups. In this connection variation is also followed between North and South India. In general, the families in the South tend to

maintain, strengthen, and solidify the kinship relations through marriage, while in the North; the families tend to extend their relations to people with whom they do not have kinship ties. National endogamy also influences the limit of the marital relationship.

Ray (1964) makes a study on tribal and rural settlement pattern and house types, village planning, house planning, town planning, planning of forts, planning of richer houses, materials and techniques and rituals. An appendix contains evidences gathered from recent archeological excavations, the period covered is from C 150 BC to C 350 A.D.

Reddy (1998) in his study makes it clear that the Hindus, a predominant segment of the Indian society have both endogamous and exogamous rules limiting the selections of a mate or a life partner. It is a common feature among the Hindu community having been divided into different castes, which are mostly endogamous groups. And in practice, the caste is again divided into a number of sub castes, sub castes into number of sections. These sections are again divided into different sub sections as *visa* and *dasa* or in terms of locality. And these different sub-castes in a broader caste community are more often exogamous.

Sachchidananda (1977) in his study of 720 families in 1970 selected from thirty villages in Shahbad district in Bihar shows the relationship between the family pattern and landholding. He found that as landholdings increase, the number of joint families also increase, or less the landholdings, less the joint families and more the landholdings, more the joint families.

Samaddar (1999), dealing with transborder migrants from Bangladesh to West Bengal has analysed the issue within a richer perspective which accommodate the historical, cultural and geographic dimensions along with the economic and demographic aspects. The author has demystified the constructs of 'borders' and national territory by bringing to the fore the view points of the migrants themselves. He found that pitted against the natural urge for survival. 'Nation' and 'border' are easily marginalized in the minds of the people who then find illegal ways to tackle this obstacle in the path of their well-being. Finally, the author said that the very future of transplanted concepts such as

'nation-state' and 'national security' and 'national-borders' is in doubt in present day South Asia.

Sahay (2001) conducts a study on four villages in Buxar district of Central Bihar. The author has analysed the economic structure, political structure and caste structure to understand the social formation or mode of production in Bihar. By this study, he has shown the existing mode of production is not feudal or semi feudal, but it is a capitalist social formation.

Sen (1965) in a study of four Bengal villages finds the predominance of the nuclear families over the extended families. Again he finds that the non-cultivating owners, day labours and non-agriculturists have a very high proportion of nuclear families as compared to the owner cultivators and share croppers. This indicates the fact that differences in occupation and subsistence pattern within the society will also explain the distribution of the nuclear and extended families among the various sections of the population.

Sengupta (1973) makes an ethnographic study on the social system in a Bengal village named Kotaigarh, under Midnapur district. The author shows that the village has complex social system having seventeen Hindu castes and two tribal groups. The latter participates in the community life of the village but they have not lost their separate identity. They speak their tribal dialects, observe many of their old customs and maintain the traditional political organization. The author suggests that lower castes do not look up to any one caste or to provide a model and he offers some evidences regarding the presence of multi reference group. Discussing the political dimension of village organization, he notes the existence of tribal councils, new statutory councils.

Singh (1973) points out that in India, for example, lower caste families where the chief occupation was agricultural labour were mostly nuclear, but this nuclearity was often due to negative rather than positive causes. These negative factors were absence of landed property, lack of landed property, lack of sufficient and stable means of livelihood and shifting mode of occupation.

Srinivas (1955) in his study of Mysore village (Rampura) describes about the strong and traditional ties that bind together the members of the village community. He also mentions that the village is an independent unit,

largely self-sufficient having its own assembly, watch and ward, official and servants. But he was not definite about the future of the villages. He also says that it is not an exaggeration if all Hindus are said to be essentially religious. Religiosity is pronounced more among the people living in the countryside than among those in a city. The degree of variation in religiosity is caused due to several factors - individual, caste, creed, sect, community etc.

Sukla (1976) gives a vivid description about the changes in social structure of a village in the state of Bihar. He shows the changes in the field of family structure, caste structure, economic structure, political structure and religious structure. He points out that the influence of some modern avenues like influence of city life, developed communication has brought changes in joint family structure, authoritarian structure of the family head, and the introduction of panchayati raj system, community development projects brings structural change in rural economy. Finally he does not observe the similar change in religious field. He says that the influence of religion and rituals on the people of India or on the whole of the Hindu society is still very powerful and great. Religious beliefs and practices are held essentially as supreme in both the city and the country. In showing the relation between family and castes he points that among the members of the higher castes, the tendency to remain in the joint family is greater than what it is among members of the lower castes.

Venkatarayappa (1973) in his study says that there are many instances of child marriage. They are a violation of law. But people do not seem to abide by law in this respect. Some girls are married at the age at 10 or 12. Some girls may be married off on the brink of puberty, post-puberty marriages are rare. The people are against it. The parents of the girls try to marry them off for fear of incurring criticism or blame. They believe that a girl who has already attained puberty is a risk and her continued stay without marriage may give rise to scandal. With the consent of the bridegroom's party, however, a girl may stay in her parent's house.

Wiser William H. and Charlotte viall wiser 1971 have shown many changes in their diachronic study on a village Karimpur. The first edition of this book published in 1930 was based on a joint work. But in 1961 when William

Wiser died then, Charlotte wrote down the changes observed in 1960 and visited Karimpur once again in 1970. She observed that village had changed negligibly in a span of 30 to 40 years with regard to social institutions like family, caste and religion but the changes in material culture were remarkable.

The above review clearly indicates that studies on frontier villages in India specially in West Bengal are very negligible. It was also noted that village studies in India were mostly found towards caste and religion. Further, studies on dynamics of Indian villages are also not much highlighted. Under such a context, I have decided to conduct an intensive study on the frontier villages specially, of Indo-Nepal border to examine the nature, character and problems as well as changes of the border villages of Bengal.

1.4: Aims and Objectives of the Proposed study

The proposed study is a humble attempt to examine the dynamics of social structure in border villages. To deal with this, social, economic, political and cultural activities of the people living in the border villages have been examined in details. More specially, this study has made attempts to make an inquiry on the following aspects:

- (1) To know the growth and development of the border villages and the socio-cultural life of the people living in them.
- (2) To examine the social organizations of the people living in the frontier villages with special reference to the existence of communities, castes and the relations as well as interactions among them.
- (3) To examine the economic activities of the people living in the border villages.
- (4) To highlight the marriage and family pattern in the border villages.
- (5) To examine the state of education of the people living in the border villages.
- (6) To find out the political behaviour of the people with special reference to party politics as well as caste and ethno-politics in the border villages.

- (7) To find the religious fairs and festivals as organized and enjoyed by the people in the border villages.
- (8) To reveal the problems faced by the villagers living in the border villages.
- (9) To compare the characteristics of border villages for examining their similarities and differences.
- (10) Finally, to highlight the changes witnessing by the people living in the border villages.

In short, this study aims to highlight the history and the growth of the border villages (settlements) and the pattern of livelihood as well as economic activities of the people living in them. The study also attempts to examine the infrastructural amenities available in the frontier villages to meet the growing needs of the people. A special emphasis has been given to highlight the law and order situation of the border villages. In this study, the concepts of border and frontier have been used to mean the same thing i.e. these concepts are used interchangeably.

1.5: Research Questions and Hypotheses

Keeping the above aims and objectives in mind the present study attempts to deal with the following set of research questions

- (1) How and when did the villages emerge in border areas?
- (2) Who are the indigenous and non-indigenous people living in the border villages and what is the relationship prevailed among them?
- (3) What are the infrastructural facilities enjoyed by the people living in the border areas?
- (4) What are the structural and functional attributes of the border villages?
- (5) What are the basic features of livelihood pattern of the people living in the border villages?
- (6) How do the people in the border villages respond towards the modern education and other developmental measures available to them?
- (7) What are the forces to motivate the political behaviour of the people living in the border villages?

- (8) What are the religious and ceremonial activities performed by the border people?
- (9) What are the problems faced by the villagers living in the border villages ?
- (10) What are the socio-cultural changes noticed among the people of the border villages ?

Hypotheses

For the present study, the following sets of hypotheses have been formulated.

- (1) The border villages are the abode of different ethnic communities of indigenous and non-indigenous varieties who share the elements of each others culture.
- (2) The people of border villages develop a unique way of life owing to migration and immigration followed by acculturation as well as diffusion.
- (3) The people of border villages are more adaptive in character owing to the nature of habitat which is characterized by complex socio-cultural system.
- (4) The people in the border villages are usually bilingual or multilingual for the sake of their day to day necessities.

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1.6: Significance of the Study

In India "village studies" is not new. But the village study on border villages is scanty and even in case of North Bengal this type of study is very rare. In this regard, this study has been undertaken to fill up this gap in certain extent. Secondly this study has been considered to highlight the similarities as well as dissimilarities among the attributes found in frontier village and non-frontier village social structures. This study has been estimated to reveal the

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continuity and change of the social structure in border villages. To substantiate the above purposes, the study has been considered to inquire social, economic, cultural and political behaviour of the people living in border villages. It is expected that the findings of this study shall be used for academic understanding of the life of the people living in the frontier areas on one hand, and shall also help to resolve the problems faced by the people in the frontier areas on the other hand. In this connection, it is also to be noted that the study of border villages or settlements is an important dimension of area study programmes in recent times.

1.7: Theoretical Perspectives Adopted

As the present study is to show the social dynamics of the border villages of Darjeeling district, hence it is necessary to mention the theoretical perspectives on society, social life of the people and their changes.

The present study has been conducted on the basis of some theoretical perspectives. The study is primarily based on structural-functional approach. However Marxist approach has also been adopted to a some extent.

1.7.1: Structural-Functional Approach

In sociology, the structural-functional approach is very much helpful to understand the society, social structure, social relation, its continuity and change in it. In the frontier village there is a society, social structure, and social relation. Here this approach is very much applicable to know the above aspects. It is found that the village social structure and relation is consisted of the multi-castes, multi-religious groups, multi-communities, multi-linguistic groups, multi- occupational groups and migrant and non-migrant or early migrant peoples. Here the multi-dress-pattern and multi-food habits are the important cultural features of the frontier peoples. From the very past this kind of social relationship is prevailing there. It is found that the people living in this area are not free from competition and conflict within them and outsiders. And even the political interest of all the peoples are not the same and similar. All the peoples are not belonged to same political party. But the people living here are very adaptive in nature and assimilation is also happening spontaneously. If any

dispute arises among the villagers, they call meeting. Here some respected peoples of all the communities living in this village and outside are called at the meeting and they dissolve the dispute collectively. In this regards the political parties and religious fairs help them largely to be very much interactive and integrative. Here the peoples from some other places like other villages, districts, states and nations etc. and they become easily adjusted. In this society the number of population is not stabilized. Sometimes the number of the population becomes very high and sometimes it decreases also. Here this change is not static .It is continuous in nature.

1.7.2: Marxian Approach

The social relationship in this frontier area is very interactive. Many people are engaged in illegal trading activities through the Mechi River and also through some other ways. The peoples basically the male are leaving their traditional occupations (i.e. agriculture) as primary occupation and they are adopting non-cultivating occupations as their primary occupation. The intergenerational mobility among almost all the communities living in this area is observed. Here due to less income in the agricultural activities people are leaving their traditional occupations and are adopting some other new occupations. It is also found that in terms of education, the students of these villages do not go to school regularly. Some students go to school mainly for the mid-day meals. The children of the rickshaw pullers leave the schools before 12 and they go to Panitanki market to bring rice and vegetables purchased by their fathers. Many children go to school eating foods less than necessary quantity. Theoretically it is related to the base and superstructure theory. Here the base (i.e. poor economy) determines the superstructure (i.e. culture, social relationship etc.).Due to poor economic conditions the socio-cultural behavior of many peoples is not same and similar with the behavior of the rich people in larger extent. Due to this poor economic condition the children of the rickshaw pullers do not attend class and regularly.

1.8: Concepts used for the Present Study

In this study some necessary theoretical and conceptual issues have been used. These are mentioned below.

1.8.1: Border, Soft Border and Hard Border

The term border is complicated in use. International borders are borders which are hard facts and define the parameters of state's sovereignty. There is nothing 'soft' about them as they have to be zealously guarded to ensure a nation's territorial integrity, both against conventional threats and non-conventional security threats. So let there be no doubt on the security of borders. 'Soft borders' is more of a political coinage seeking to connote that movements of people, trade and commerce takes place freely, without too many restrictive controls (Kapila, 2005).

1.8.2: Caste

It is said that caste is an institution most highly developed in India where Hindu society is divided into a large number of separate groups, mostly functional and tribal in origin (Royal Anthropological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, 1874). According to Majumdar (1972), 'Caste' is an endogamous group which has gained some position in the Hindu Hierarchy, topped by three higher castes Brahmin, Kshasthya, Vaishya, the higher position of these three castes being never contested by any other castes.

1.8.3: Cross-Border Trading Activities

Now-a-days international trade is an important phenomenon. The people living in frontier villages easily take part in cross-border trading activities. They purchase the goods available in frontier areas and sell those goods in other areas of the border line and purchase some goods available in those areas and bring into his own area for selling purpose. This type of trading activities may be called cross-border trading activities. Except this, it is also found that some people take part as carrier of goods illegally from one frontier to another frontier area. Here the people do not purchase or sell any goods. They carry the goods for the direction of others. Most of the cases the goods are carried in hidden way.

1.8.4: Cultural Boundary

Heewon Chang's study "Reexamining the Rhetoric of the Cultural Border" mentions that a cultural boundary refers to the presence of some kind

of cultural difference. Cultural boundaries are characteristics of all human societies, traditional as modern. A border is social construct that is political in origin. Across a border power exercised as in the political border between two nations. A cultural boundary connotes a barrier that a more powerful side constructs to guard to its own political power, cultural knowledge and privileges. The cultural border rhetoric is grounded in the essentialist view of culture. This view makes several assumptions regarding culture: (1) a culture is viewed as a bounded system which is separate and distinguishable from others, (2) a culture is expected to be homogeneous. (3) a culture is expected to be shared by members of society (Chang, 1997).

1.8.5: Ethnic Groups and Ethnicity

Weber (1978) proposed a definition of ethnic groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both or because of memories of colonization and migration, this belief must be important for group formation, furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists. Anthropologically by an ethnic group we mean a hereditary group which defined by its members and others as a separate people sociologically, biologically and culturally (Marriott, 1958; cf Mondal, 2004). According to Cohn (1978) ethnicity is a series of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness. Ethnicity can be narrowed or broadened in boundary terms in relation to the specific needs of political mobilization. The concept 'ethnicity' ordinarily refers to certain quality or affiliation based on heredity as well as cultural consideration (Webster, 1967). Winik's Dictionary of Anthropology does not include any entry like ethnicity as such. Nevertheless there exists the term 'ethnic' having somewhat a restricted connotation, primarily referring to a group distinguishable by certain common cultural attributes. In recent years, ethnicity has emerged as an analytical tool in the social sciences. Etymologically, the term 'ethnicity' draws its origin from the term 'ethnic' that refers to community of physical and mental traits, possessed by the members of a group as a product of their common heredity and cultural tradition

(Danda, 1991). Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity which has been defined by Devos as consisting of the 'subjective, symbolic or emblematic use' by a group of people of any aspect of culture 'in order to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups' (Paul, 1991).

1.8.6: Frontier and Frontier Villages

Here the use of the term 'frontier' is significant. It is found that each village, district, country may have the frontier area and even each of the village, district, nation may be considered as frontier tract or area. Sometimes, it is stated that a frontier zone is an area between two social systems or entities. It is that geographical position at which opposite forces of expansion or resistance neutralize each other and become steady. It is also stated that the word 'frontier' has been derived from the Latin 'frons' (and more directly from the French 'front') meaning 'forehead', which is etymologically suggestive of 'that which is in front' designated an area which was part of a whole, specifically that part which was ahead of the hinterland. Hence, it is often called the foreland or border land, or March. The Russian equivalent of the English 'March' is 'Ukraina' and that of French is 'Marche' and that of German is 'mark', all meaning literally 'border land' or 'margin'. Intrinsically, the word 'frontier' is indicative of the "spearhead of civilization (Adhikari 1997). Sometimes it is said that a 'frontier tract' is a boundary or buffer region, which generally witnesses many migrations, aggressions and conquests. Generally such a frontier, with all its backgrounds of the past, has to adjust with historical upheavals and to respond to and to absorb every knock of the waves of changes due to circumstantial exigencies (Bhowmick (1976)). The term has also been used in wide sense. It is stated that the prime function of a frontier is to mark off one area from another, one state from another, and the people of one state from those of another. On this view, the great Himalayan range of mountains is a great divide – the natural demarcation between Central Asia and South Asia (Rahul 1970).

Frontier villages indicate the village located very near to border line. In this present study, the frontier villages include some villages located very near to the Indo-Nepal border line in Indian Territory.

1.8.7: Family-Nuclear, Joint, and Broken

The term family is normally used to mean a primary social group. It is found that the family, the institution in society consists of one or more women living with one or more men and their children. It has socially approved sex relationship. The family is characterized by various rights and obligations. The nuclear family consists of a married man and women with their offsprings although in individual cases one or more additional persons may reside with them (Jha, 1994). A joint family indicates a group of closely related conjugal-natal families into a single property holding, residential group (Hoebel and Frost, 1979).

1.8.8: Illiterate people and Literate People

It refers to those people without any formal or informal education. A literate person refers to those people who have formal education and it also includes the people without any formal education but is able to read and write.

1.8.9: Marriage-Monogamy and Polygyny

Marriage is a domestic institution. It is defined as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognized by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties both in case of the parties entering the union and in case of the children born of it (Westermarck, 1926). Monogamy is a prevalent form of marriage in all societies for the good reason that the sex ratio is approximately 1:1 and not 1:2. Polygyny is a form of marriage in which a man has more than one wife at a time. It is the prevalent form of marriage among the tribal and backward peoples, as among the Eskimos who live on hunting (Bhattacharyya, 1994).

1.8.10: Migration and Immigration

Dictionaries generally refer to migration as a change of residence from one place to another. It is generally a movement of a person or persons involving a permanent change of residence. It is mentioned that migration is a form of population movement which in the course of cultural evolution follows dispersion. The participants are sufficiently advanced in economy, culture,

intelligence and geographical knowledge so that they are conscious of a true destination. The movement is planned, purposeful and deliberate. The movement is as rapid as the available means of transportation make possible.

Immigration is used to indicate a population movement between two countries on approximately the same culture area, the former being relatively older, more densely populated and less attractive politically, economically or socially; the latter being relatively sparsely populated with definite attraction in the way of economic opportunity or political, religious and social liberty. True immigration is voluntarily on the part of the migrants, and in the majority of cases is on private resources, although there is frequently state's support or subsidy of some sorts. True immigration always crosses a political boundary. A country of destination may be an independent state or colony (Henry, 1970).

1.8.11: Plural Society

It is found that there will be a region that was formerly inhabited by a particular community with their own social structure. Then the literate people by peaceful or forceful means established control over the region. A new social structure comes into existence and then undergoes development. There grows a new political and economic structure in which the literates exercise dominating influence. Societies of this kind would be called composite societies or plural societies (Brown, 1964).

1.8.12: Primary Education and Secondary Education

Primary Education refers to the level of formal education from 1st to 4th class. Secondary education refers to the level of formal education from 5th to 10th class.

1.8.13: Religious Syncretism

Religious syncretism exhibits blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system or the incorporation into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions. This can occur for many reasons and the latter scenario happens quite commonly in areas where multiple religious tradition exists in proximity and function actively in this culture, or when a acute is conquered and the conquerors bring their religious beliefs with them, but do not

succeed in entirely eradicating the old beliefs or especially practices. In modern secular society, religious innovations some times create new religions syncretically as a mechanism to reduce inter-religious tensions and enmity, often with the effect of offending the original religion in question. Such religions, however do not maintain some appeal to a less exclusive audience (Webster's Revised Unbridged Dictionary, 1913).

1.8.14: Sex-Ratio

The sex ratio refers to the number of the females per 1000 males in a given area at a specified time period (Census of India 2001).

1.8.15: Social Dynamics

According to Comtean point of view the concept of dynamics involves the theory of progress, the law of three stages and the inevitable evolutionary development or order. In short, social dynamics studies the law of succession (Comte, 1966). But in present study, the term social dynamics is used to mean the social change that refers to any modification in the social organization of a society in any of its social institutions or patterns of social roles.

1.8.16: Social Structure, Social Institution and Social Organisation

It is stated that social structure can be described as identifiable patterns of roles that are organized primarily around the fulfillment of social function or activity, for example educational structure refers to the cluster of roles organized around the function of transmitting culture and forming social personalities. Social system refers to a set of patterned relation among structural elements so that changes in one element set up pressures for adjustment or other type of change in remaining units (Smelser, 1967). Social structure is also defined as a continuing arrangement of persons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions, i.e. socially established norms or patterns of behaviour (Brown, 1960). Social institutions are generally patterns of norms that define behaviour in social relationship. They define how people ought to behave in social relationship. It is said that an institution is an organised system of social relationship which embodies certain common values and procedures.

and meets certain basic needs of the society (Horton and Hunt, 1964). Organisation generally indicates a process which differentiates one part from another in a functional sense and at the same time creates an integrated complex of functional relationship within the whole. Social organization is used to mean the organization of a society into sub-groups, including in particular, those based on differences in age, sex, friendship, occupation, residence, property, privilege, authority and status. (Henry, 1970).

1.8.17: Tribe

According to the Royal anthropological Association of Great Britain and Ireland (1974), a tribe may be defined as a political or social coherent and autonomous group occupying or claiming a particular territory. Imperial Gazetteers of India mentioned that tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and usually endogamous though originally it might have been so (Hunter et al, 1907). Weber's (1958) definition of the term 'tribe' includes the following elements; a fixed territory, lack of occupational specialization, lack of social ranking, with reference to a larger community, presence of political association, presence of exogamous sibs but no clear cut endogamy of the tribe as a whole absence of commensality rules. US History of Encyclopedia (2009) indicates the tribe as group of indigenous persons, families, or clans believed to be descended from a common ancestor and forming a close-knit community under a defined leader, chief or ruling council.

1.8.18: Village

The term "village" attracts and simultaneously denounces any legal definition. It discards to be delimited by either size or population criteria. In India officially stands for the area demarcated as a mouza meaning "parcel of ground with definite boundaries, for revenue purposes. Obviously, village, gram and gaon are synonymous terms which denote a cluster of houses including the surrounding land almost self-sufficient and usually grouped at a convenient site (Singh, 1994). The definition provided by the Census of India, the term "village" used here means an administrative unit that having a parcel of land the boundaries of which are defined, cluster of houses, or more than

one such cluster and bearing a distinctive place name. Oxford University Dictionary (vol. 2, p.204) defines village as a collection of dwelling houses and other buildings, forming a centre of habitation in a country, district and inhabited place larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town or having a simpler organization and administration than the latter. According to the Notes and Queries on Anthropology, 1960, p.64, a village has been defined as a territorially separate collection of homesteads, which is regarded as a distinct unit and of such a size that its inhabitants can all be personally acquainted. Sometimes it is called that the village settlement, as a unit of social organization, represents solidarity different from that of the kin, the caste and the class and plays a vital role as an agency of socialization and social control (Dube, 1955).

1.9: Research Methodology

1.9.1: Research Design

The design of this research has been formulated on the basis of nature of this project. The study area, the people i.e. the informants or respondents of this study and the tools and techniques for data collection have been decided as per aims and objectives of the work. The main purpose of this study is to gain insights and experiences on the problem.

This research has been carried out mainly on the basis of structural functional approach. It is purely an exploratory study with diagnostic outlook, in some cases. The approach of this study is purely an analytical one. The comparative method synchronic as well as diachronic over space and time has been adopted for understanding the present village social structure in North Bengal frontier areas and the changes therein. The data for the study have been gathered both from primary as well as from secondary sources. Various published and unpublished materials have also been consulted for knowing the frontier area, people etc in historical retrospect. While the empirical facts have been collected through intensive field investigation in two border villages of Darjeeling district in northern region of West Bengal. For data collection, field study was conducted. Both extensive and intensive methods were adopted for

field study. Primary and secondary data pertaining to various aspects of village communities were collected.

1.9.2: The Locale of the Study

The study has grown out of field research in two villages in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The villages Chhoto Dilsaram Jote and Dulal Jote are located very near to the Indo-Nepal border line. These two villages are located in Indian frontier areas of North Bengal in the state of West Bengal. Both the villages are consisted by multi-ethnic groups. The village Chhoto Dilsaram jote has the Rajbanshis, the Santals and other Hindu caste groups (i.e. Potters and Hindu agricultural caste). The village Dulal Jote is also formed by multi-ethnic groups. They are the Nepalese, the Rajbanshis, the Haris and the Lepchas. In Chhoto Dilsaram Jote, though the Rajbanshis are major group, their interaction is not limited within them only and at the same time in the village Dulal Jote though the Nepalese are major group; their interaction is also not limited within themselves only. Even the interaction is also not limited within the two villages, it exceeds the border line. Due to the nearness of the Indo-Nepal border line the changes in their social, cultural, economic, political life are happened. In this research emphasis on village studies has been given because village is the most important unit of sociological and anthropological investigation in rural areas. Although most of the primary data were collected from above mentioned villages, yet many observations were made in course of the study related to wider areas.

1.9.3: Data Sources

In this study the used data have been collected from two sources. These are (1) Collection of Primary Data and (2) Collection of Secondary Data.

1.9.3.1: Collection of Primary Data

This study on frontier villages is based on data gathered from the field studies in two villages located in Indo-Nepal frontier area.

1.9.3.2: Collection of Secondary Data

For this study some necessary secondary data have been collected from the published materials like books, research papers having direct and indirect bearing on the subject.

1.9.4: Field Work

Field work on the two frontier villages located near the Indo-Nepal border line was conducted between November 2001 to January 2003. At the beginning a survey was made in all the households found in two villages. After that an intensive field work was made in 40 percent households. So far villages are concerned these were purposively taking into consideration. The size of the villages, existence of social groups etc are necessary for this research. While selecting the villages certain adjacent villages were also included for the sake of this study. In addition to these demographic social and infrastructural characteristics, the physical and locational features of the villages were also taken into consideration to study those details. Although most of the primary data have been collected from those two villages, yet, many observations were made in course of the study related to wider areas. But before the starting the field work or at the initial stage, I had to encounter some difficulties in doing field work. The main difficulty faced was to convince the people about the purpose of this research. To tackle the problem, I had to convince the people by stating the fact that the data obtained from them will not be shown to any other concern or individual and their secrecy shall be strictly maintained. They were also convinced by stating that the object of this study was not to submit the report to government or to any other organization but for the academic purpose, with these assurances the people's resistance was diluted to a considerable extent and they extended co-operation enthusiastically.

1.9.5: Field Experience and Problems

It is here notable that people in the frontier areas are very suspicious about any outsider. This suspicion is more effective among the latter migrants. They fear that their migrant identity may be disclosed to government. Even some more times were spent to convince the local leaders of migrant people. But after being convinced they become very friendly to others. It is also observed that when I went to Panitaki market regularly. I took launch and tiffin

there in a hotel, some people who acted as carrier of illegal goods; they looked at me with hesitation and suspicion. Another experience I gathered from the field is that one day, a young boy who worked as goods carrier through the Mechi River came to me and said that a man of S.S.B (Special Service Bureau) has come to near a house where I was surveying. Even the boy said that the man may come to me to know about me and my purpose. Then I answered the boy I need the man of S.S.B for my interview purpose. Then the boy left me with the man S.S.B. Latter on I came to know that the man of S.S.B was not originally a government employee. The man of S.S.B was a friend of the boy. Actually it was a planned game to make me feared. However gradually I established the rapport with the villagers and that helped to me to conduct my field studies in a smooth manner.

1.9.6: Selection of Informants

Informations on population structure i.e., the number of social groups etc. of the selected villages were obtained from the village officials i.e. the members of the panchayat and also from the knowledgeable senior persons of the villages and other villages. The other necessary basic informations, the actual census were conducted in all the villages. Thus, the data were collected from every household of the selected villages. Out of the total households of each of the villages a sample of 40 percent were selected for intensive study. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the households as well as the informants or respondents. Rough lists of the households of high and low socio-economic categories in each of the villages were prepared on the basis of census data. Proportionate to total figures in each category the required number of households and informants (respondents) were selected from all the villages. The objectivity was maintained while selecting the households as well as the informants. The head of the household was the respondents in almost all the cases excepting in a few cases where the next persons in rank were selected as the heads of households were away for some time. In this context some females were also selected as respondents.

To obtain relevant information necessary for this research, informants were selected from both the villages. The informants were chosen on the basis

of stratified random sampling technique to represent every section of the village community with particular reference to their socio-economic strata in the rural society. To select the informants, it was decided to depend on their sincerity and reliability for giving correct information, fair appreciation regarding the questions they were asked to answer and their capability to serve the proper and correct information. The informants were both males as well as females and they were of two types viz. key informants and occasional helpers. The key informants were used for furnishing most of the data on the basis of sets of questions framed for this research. While the occasional helpers were mostly used for checking and verification of the collected facts.

1.9.7: Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The informations for the study were collected both from the primary and the secondary sources. The data about the village study, village social structure were gathered from published materials. The informations furnished by several officials in the context of various aspects of this study have been taken into consideration. The empirical facts were collected through intensive field work on two selected villages in the Indo-Nepal Frontier area of Darjeeling district in West Bengal. The primary data were collected through conventional anthropological tools and techniques, viz. census survey, interviews, case studies, collection of genealogy, group discussions and observations.

A census schedule was prepared for collecting basic demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the selected villages. To obtain comprehensive data, standard interview schedules were prepared. The interview was taken with the heads of the families mainly and sometimes it was taken with other senior educated persons of the families. Though, the questions were in English, the informants were interviewed in local languages like Rajbanshi, Bengali, and Nepali. Informations were also obtained through informal discussion from other members of the family and of the locality who voluntarily took part in discussion. Formal group discussions were also arranged for data collection. These data were supplemented by participant and non-participant observations during the field work. Cross checks were done in a limited way to ensure accuracy of the collected data. Bulk of the data, for this study were collected

through census survey, direct observations, case studies and by interviewing the selected informants with the help of structured interview schedules. Besides the villagers of the selected villages, some leaders, intellectual persons were interviewed separately for the purpose of this study.

The interviews were conducted by taking prior appointment with the informants or respondents. The interviews were conducted at the residences and sometimes at the places of work. On an average each interview took about one and a half hour depending on the type and nature of the informants. To get maximum cooperation and good response during the first 15-20 minutes only general issues were discussed and then the formal interview was followed. Informants who were absolutely illiterate or had very little education expressed some difficulty in reporting certain factual information. In their case interview took a longer period. Difficulties were also faced with regards to the accumulation of data relating to past generation because of lapse of memory and recall.

1.9.8: Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected through field study were processed after checking and editing carefully. In course of data processing the completeness and accuracy of data was looked pinpointly. Tabulation was done manually. Data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Simple statistical methods consisting mostly of percentages were calculated. The analysis of qualitative data was made through systematic and analytical descriptions of the collected facts. In course of analysis methods of comparison has also been used. The data were finally organized into relevant chapters.

1.9.9: Presentation of Data and Chapterization

The material has been presented into eight chapters.

Chapter-1 is on Introduction which deals with the statement of the problem, review of literature, aims and objectives of the proposed study with research questions, hypotheses, significance of the study, theoretical perspectives, and some important concepts used for the present study and methodology.

Chapter- 2 is on Profile of The Border Villages under Study which shows the history of the Tarai region, socio-cultural and demographic features of the villages under study. It specially highlights the settlement pattern, house type, economic pursuits, transport and communication, medical facilities, foot-habits and dress- pattern, population structure by age and sex, family structure, marital status, occupation, education, migration and language.

Chapter-3 is on Economic Profile of The Border Villages under study which reveals agrarian structure, major and other economic activities, and agricultural practices like agricultural implements, use of manure and chemical fertilizers, use of improved seeds and pesticides, irrigation and crop-pattern of the villagers. Inter-generational occupational mobility and participation of women in economic activities is also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter-4 is on Social Structure, Social Institution and Social Organization of The Border Villages which is concerned about the social structure, social stratification, and family in terms of size, composition, types, and its relation with occupation, income, land-holding and education. It analyses marriage in terms of age at marriage, marriage distance and selection of marriage. Kinship system and informal and formal village organization are also discussed here.

Chapter-5 is on Religious Practices, Fairs and Festivals in the villages under study- Social Interaction among the villagers and the People of Either Sides of The Border which outlines the discussion of fairs and festivals, gods and goddesses of the Rajbanshis and the Nepalese and the syncretic tradition of their religious and cultural traits.

Chapter-6 is on Border Villages-Identities and Problems. It mainly highlights some important attributes of the border villages, some major problems faced by the people living in the border villages and some case studies have also been discussed.

Chapter-7 is on The Changing Scenario of the Two Border Villages under study which deals with historical, social, cultural, political, economic and infrastructural changes occurred in this setting. Factors of changes have also been highlighted.

Chapter-8 is on Major Findings, Concluding Remarks and Recommendations. The tables are presented in the relevant chapters and references are presented at the end of all the chapters.

1: Limitations

The study has some major limitations. Since the empirical study on Indo-Nepal frontier villages of Darjeeling district in North Bengal or in northern part of the State of West Bengal is undertaken for the first time, benefits of earlier research studies were not available. This study is a new vista to know the life in frontier villages in North Bengal. This is an exploratory study. Hence as an exploratory study, it has its own limitations. This study was made in two villages in Indo-Nepal Frontier areas and the observation drawn from this study can not be generalized too far covering the whole state and its outside, though the study provides broad clues about the social, economic, demographic features of frontier villages elsewhere in the state and the country as well.