CHAPTER IV

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION

INTRODUCTION

Man, a social creature, for his living and existence requires some social facilities and scope for cultural activities especially when he is in an urban society. Though the need of amenities for different communities is not uniform, the civic amenities generally express a common-style living. The terms infrastructure, amenities, services and facilities are often inter-changeably used to denote the provisions made to satisfy some of the basic needs of the people. These needs cater to a variety of requirements from the basic life-sustaining needs like safe drinking water, health and nutrition services, sanitation, housing and sewage disposal to 'felt needs' like educational facilities including libraries, shops, hotels, restaurants and recreational facilities, public transport facilities, electricity as a consumer good and police protection.

The term 'social infra-structure' which is more comprehensive in nature and includes a variety of amenities/services/facilities is gaining greater currency (Prakasarao, 1983). In any urban centre municipal authorities try to deliver all types of urban amenities and utility services to the town dwellers but creation of a full-fledged urban society is a far cry. Still, the minimum urban amenities that are thought essential for the urbanites such as piped water supply, streetlights, sanitary and conservancy services are restricted to limited parts of the town. Lure of amenities availability boost the rush of people from smaller towns or semi-urban areas to big cities and towns, where it causes congestion. The town under study shows that it enjoys varying amenities and utility services (Fig.4.1). Insufficiency of availability of data and information form disadvantages in bringing out the exact picture of the existence of such services and an intensive field survey was carried out at different offices and wards to fill up the shortage of information.

4.1 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The educational institutions play a very important role in the growth of Kurseong town. Since its inception as a municipality in 1879 the town has played an important role as a centre of education. The first school was started in 1879. Since then it has seen a steady rise in

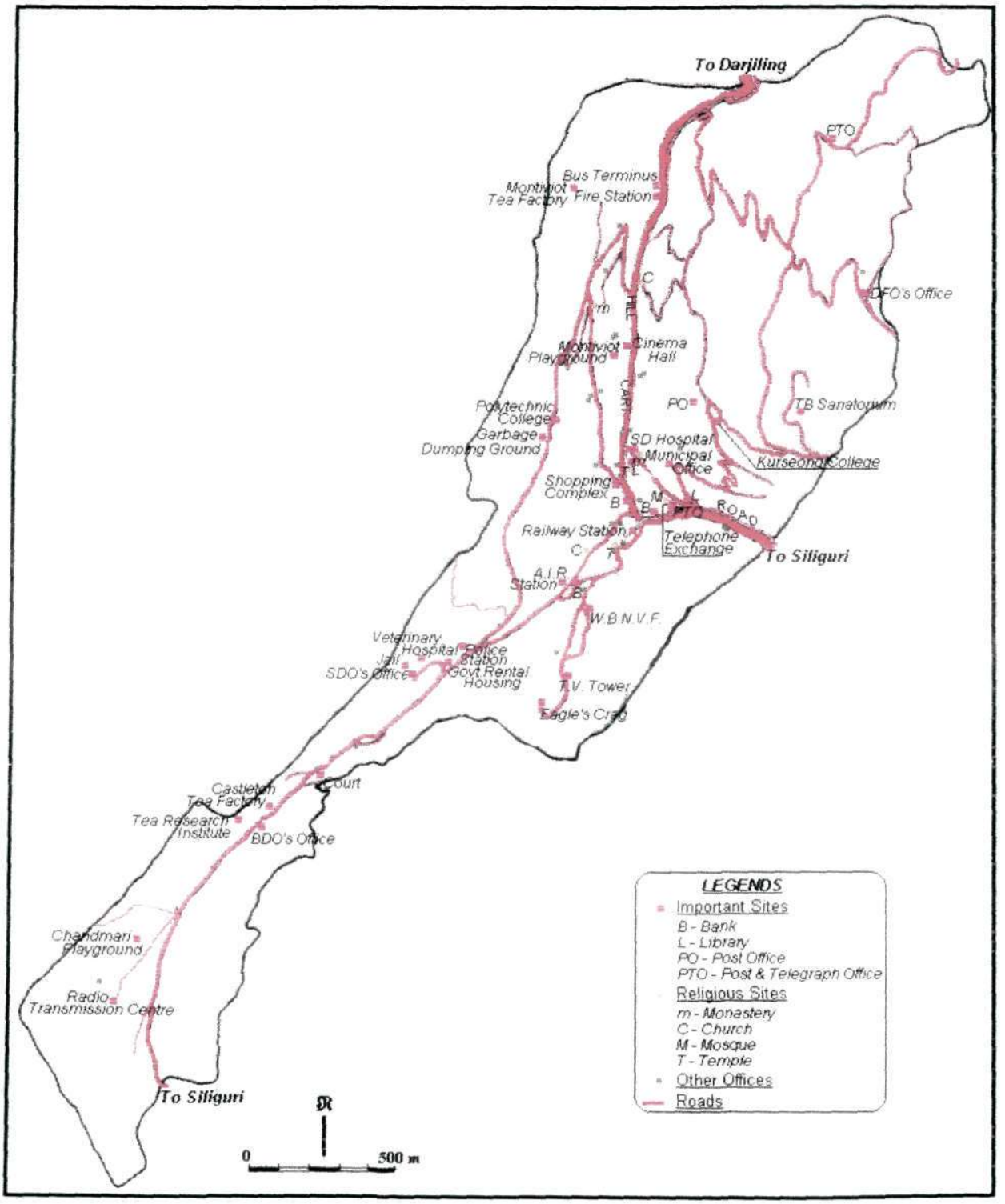


Fig. 4. 1: Location of different socio-economic functions in Kurseong town.

the number of institutions and the maximum rise in the last two decades.

4.1.1 Location

During the early phase, i.e. pre-1900 period, three schools to impart education to the Europeans were established in Kurseong town. Out of these three, two were meant for the girls and one for the boys. The three schools namely Dow Hill School, Victoria School and St. Helen's Convent were set up within the municipality. Goethals Memorial School was set up in 1904 and came up along the Hill Cart Road between Kurseong and Darjiling towns, far away from the municipality. When these schools were set up they were slightly away from centre of the township but later on when new schools were started they were mainly in and around the centre of the township (Fig. 4.2). Due to the shortage of land in the town there is again a reversal in the trend and new private schools are coming up outside the municipal boundary mostly near Gidda Pahar, 3 km from the town centre. With the exception of ward VII, schools are found in all the wards of the municipality. The maximum concentration schools are in the wards V, IX and XI and the least in the wards II and VI (Fig. 4.3). The main reason for not having any school in ward VII is because of the concentration of business establishments. Pusparani Roy Memorial School is situated just near the meeting point of the Acharya Bhanu Path with the Hill Cart Road, in front of the Kurseong Railway Station.

4.1.2 History

The first school to come up in Kurseong was a Government school at Constantia in 1879. Sir Ashley Eden, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, started the school for the benefit of railway personnel as Kurseong was made the headquarters of the Darjiling Himalayan Railway. In 1880 the school was shifted to Dow Hill and classes were started in a barrack left vacant by the Darjiling Himalayan Railway with the completion of the railway line between Siliguri and Kurseong. The school continued as a co-educational institute for few years and in the meantime a new site was selected in Dow Hill and in 1898 the Boys section was shifted to the new site. At the old site some more buildings and a dormitory were added and a school meant only for the girls was started. These two schools, namely Victory Boys' School and Dow Hill School, were basically set up for the wards of government servants of European origin but later on students from Indian families were also allowed to join.

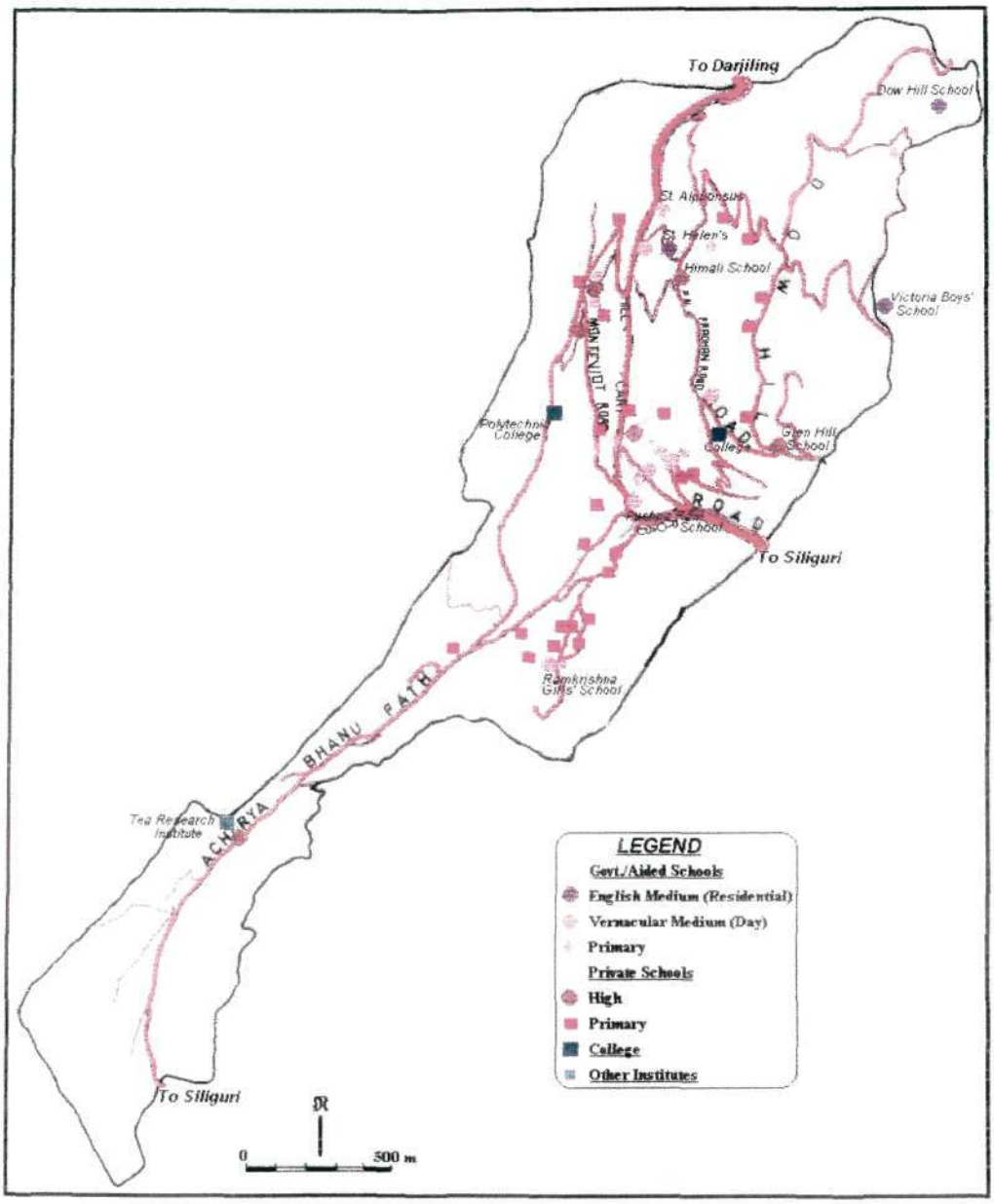


Fig. 4.2: Distribution of Educational Institutions in Kurseong town.

The next school to come up was St. Helen's Convent and was started by the Daughters of the Cross in 1889. This school was initially started at Fatak Dara near Constantia and was later on shifted to its present site in ward III. The school was started to impart education to the European girls. In 1904 another school was started for the Europeans and it was meant only for the boys. This school was started by the Goethals Brotherhood and was set up 3 km north-east of the town, along the Hill Cart Road.

These four schools, out of which two were government schools and two missionary

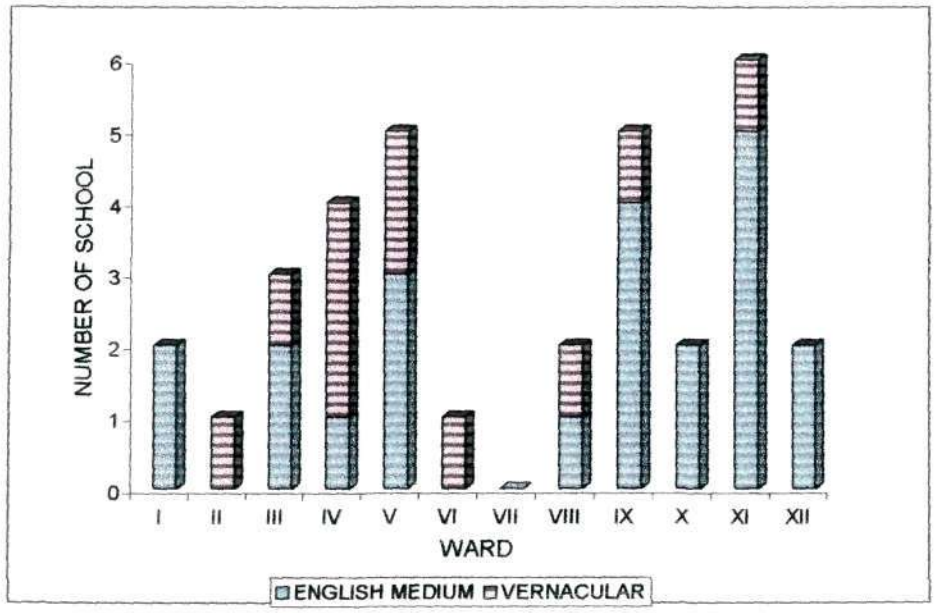


Fig. 4.3 : Ward wise distribution of schools.

schools, were the first to be started in Kurseong. And one important point to be noted here is that these schools were started in large campuses with spacious buildings and playgrounds which are conspicuously absent in the present day privately-run English medium residential schools coming up in Kurseong.

In 1905, the Scott's Mission started a missionary school for girls. This school was started mainly for the local populace and education was imparted through mother tongue. The next school was started in 1935 and was meant for the poor people of the locality. In 1937, the Alphonsus School, set up by a Canadian missionary, was started mainly for the local people and in this school more stress was given to vocational training. In 1943, Pushparani Roy Memorial School was started and in 1944 the Daughters of the Cross started another school in the town but both were meant for the local population.

With the passage of time more schools were opened up but mainly for the benefit of the local population. In 1964, the Kurseong Polytechnic College and in 1967, the Kurseong College were started at 'Kakina House' (ward IV). Later on in 1980 the degree college was shifted to its present site at ward V and in 1991 the polytechnic College was shifted to its present campus in ward IX.

4.1.3 Classification of the schools

There are about 44 schools in and around Kurseong Municipality, out of which 40 are within the municipality and 4 are outside the municipal boundary. Of the 40 odd schools in the municipality 25 are primary schools, 11 are secondary schools and 4 are higher secondary schools. Three secondary schools and one higher secondary school are situated outside the municipal boundary.

Out of the 25 primary or junior schools 5 schools impart education through vernacular medium and for the rest of the schools medium of instruction is English. Of the 14 secondary schools, 4 are under the Madhyamik Board (state) and 9 are under the New Delhi based ICSE Council. The medium of instruction in the State Board School's are English in 1 school, Nepali in 2 schools and Bengali in 1 school.

There is only one higher secondary school under the New Delhi based ISC Council and the rest, i.e. four schools are under the West Bengal Higher Secondary Council. The medium of instruction in three Higher Secondary Council's schools is English and in one school Nepali. One important point to note here is that one of the West Bengal Council's school (Holy Cross Institute) imparts education only to the students of classes XI and XII.

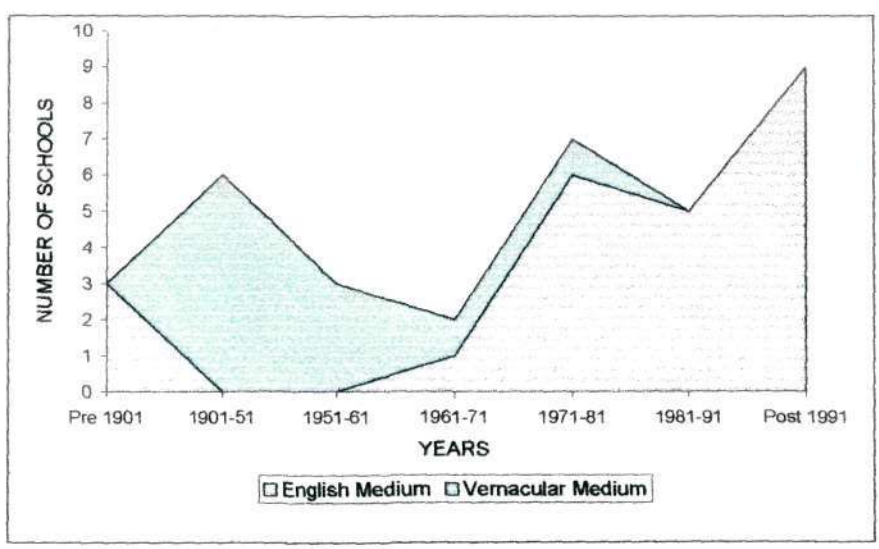


Fig. 4.4 : Growth of Schools.

The English medium residential schools in Kurseong can be divided into two distinct groups – schools of pre-1970 and schools of post-1970 period. The reason behind dividing the schools as such is that in the pre-1970 period the schools in the town were set up either by the

government or by the missionaries but in the post-1970 period private entrepreneurs set up all the schools. The first school in post-1970 period was started in 1971 and with the passing of time more entrepreneurs joined the fray. The schools were initially started with a few students by the private entrepreneurs on their private or rented buildings and later on in few cases new buildings were added to accommodate the growing number of students. The demand for good education and that also in English medium has led to the growth of these schools (24) in the post-1970 period (Fig. 4.4). The trend shows that there had been an addition of a school in each year with the exception of the period between 1986 and 1988, when the whole of the Darjiling Himalayas was swayed away by an agitation for a separate state.

A survey was carried out in 34 schools (32 within the Municipal boundary and 2 outside the Municipal boundary) to know about the composition of the schools (Appendix). The total number of students studying in these schools is 12,502 and the percentage of boys studying is 54.7 and that of girls is 45.3. The number of day scholars (9,239) is high whereas the number of boarders studying is only 3,263 (Fig. 4.5).

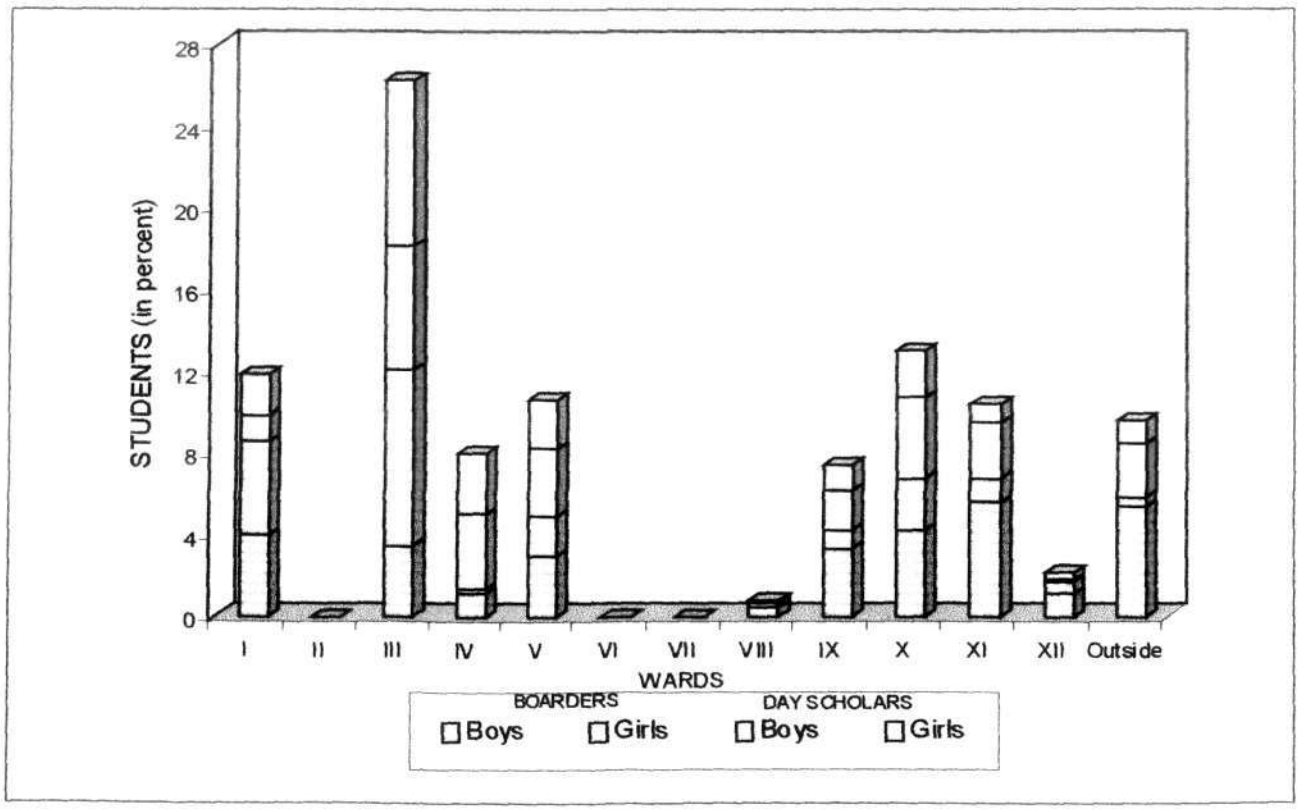


Fig. 4.5: Categories of Students.

Out of the 34 schools surveyed, 10 schools fall under the category of day schools whereas 24 are residential schools. Even though the number of day schools is less in comparison to the residential schools, the student's strength is more in the day schools than in the residential schools. The total number of students studying in the day schools is 6,412. Most of the students studying in the day schools are from the municipality and its neighbourhood, which includes the tea gardens, villages, and places like Mahanadi, Tung etc. situated along the Hill Cart Road. The students coming from the settlements situated along the Hill Cart Road take advantage of transport facilities like buses and trucks but the students coming from settlements not connected by motor able roads sometimes have to walk for an hour to reach their schools. Most of the students those who come from the tea garden settlements and villages walk an average distance of 3-6 km to reach their respective schools.

The 24 residential schools, which imparts education through English medium and the total strength of students is 6,090. Some of these schools are very small in size and the total strength of students in the case of 4 schools is less than 50. There is only one school in this group where the students strength 1,030. The percentage of boarders (53 percent) is more than the day scholars in this group but there are exceptions in few schools where the number of day scholars is more than the boarders in spite of the fact that the schools classify themselves as residential schools. The number of boys (57 percent) studying in these schools is more than the girls. There are two schools entirely for the boys and two for the girls and rest of the schools are co-educational. Among the day scholars and boarders the number of boys is more than the number of girls.

The students studying in these schools are not only from the local area but they also come from the neighbouring districts, states and countries (Fig. 4.6). The number of students those who are from the town itself is 2,803 but this figure is somewhat misleading because even though they are studying in their respective schools as day scholars, few of them do not reside permanently in the town. These students, because of not getting a place in their respective school's hostel, are staying in private hostels, which are cropping up like mushrooms in the town or are staying as paying guests. These private hostels, big or small, accommodate a good number of students and have turned out to be a profitable business in the town. Anyone who has a room to spare are utilising it as a place to accommodate students in

search of a shelter. And because of this particular reason it was not possible to extract the exact figure from the school authorities regarding the number of students coming from other places.

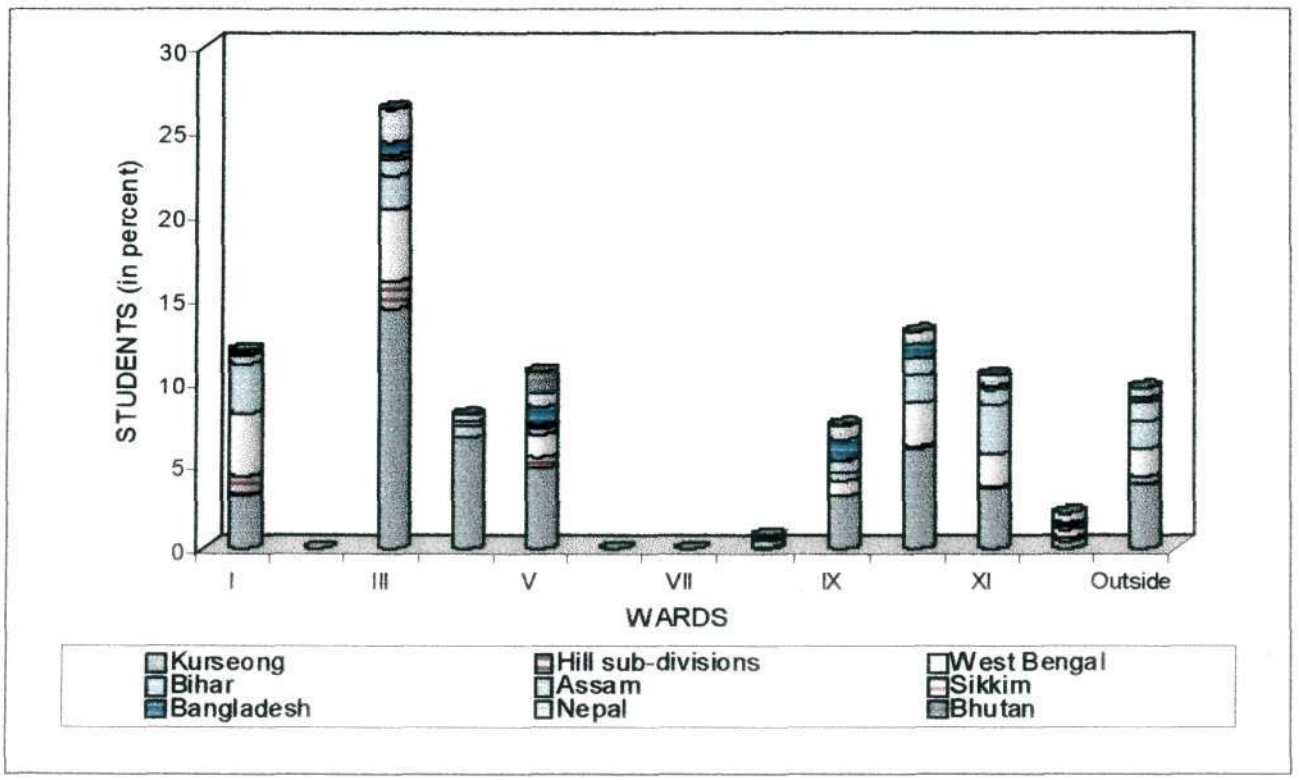


Fig. 4.6: Status of Students coming from different places.

The number of students coming from the state of West Bengal, excluding the three hill sub-divisions of the Darjiling district is 1,031 and it accounts for 16.9 percent of the total number of boarders. Most of the students from West Bengal are coming from the districts of Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Maldah, Murshidabad, Barddhaman and Calcutta and its suburbs. The next state in importance is Bihar and the number of students coming from this state is increasing every year. It accounts for 13.3 percent of the total number of boarders and most of the students came from the districts in the eastern and northern part of Bihar. Assam is the next state from where about 5.9 percent of the total students come to these schools. The number of students from Sikkim is negligible and accounts for only 0.4 percent of the total.

The number of students coming from the neighbouring countries account for 24.46 percent of the total number of boarders. The number of students coming from Nepal, even though it accounts for 6.8 percent of the total number of students or 12.75 percent of the total

number of boarders, is declining and one of the reasons attributed to this decline by the authorities is that a number of schools have been started in eastern Nepal, which has resulted in the decline in the number of students coming to the district. The number of students coming from Bangladesh to Kurseong is increasing. There is one particular school where their number accounts for about 41 percent of the total strength of the school. The students coming from Bhutan account for only 1.5 percent of the total students. About 90 percent of the students coming from Bhutan are studying in a particular school because of being the only ISC School in Kurseong.

There are many factors, which have helped in setting up of English medium residential schools in Kurseong in the private sector. The most important factors are –

(a) demand for education through English medium;

(b) growth of a neo-rich class; and

(c) a hill station near Siliguri.

Unlike in the olden days, the demand for education through English medium is increasing now a day among a section of parents. This section doesn't want their wards to study in a government or government sponsored school where teaching is done through the mother tongue. There are many in this section who are first generation literate or their wards are going to be the first generation literate. Occupation-wise most of the students come from business families. It has been observed that there has been a growth of an affluent class in the villages, towns and cities in the last two decades who can afford to spend money on the upbringing of their wards, which they couldn't get during their time.

The third factor is also very important. The lure for schooling in a hill station was always present and Kurseong's nearness to Siliguri has helped in the growth of these schools. As it takes only one hour to travel from Siliguri to Kurseong via the Pankhabari Road, parents coming from different places in the plains prefer this hill-station to other hill stations in the Darjiling Himalayas.

The schools, especially the opening up of new English medium schools in the private sector, have helped in the generation of employment opportunities. The combined staff

strength is 1,053 and most of them are from the town or are from the neighbouring areas. In the non-residential schools category the total teaching staff strength is about 200 and the male teaching staff accounts for 58 percent of the total teaching staff (Fig. 4.7). About 86 percent of the teachers are from the town, 12 percent are from neighbouring places like Darjiling, Tindharia and Siliguri, and only 4 teachers are from the other districts of West Bengal.

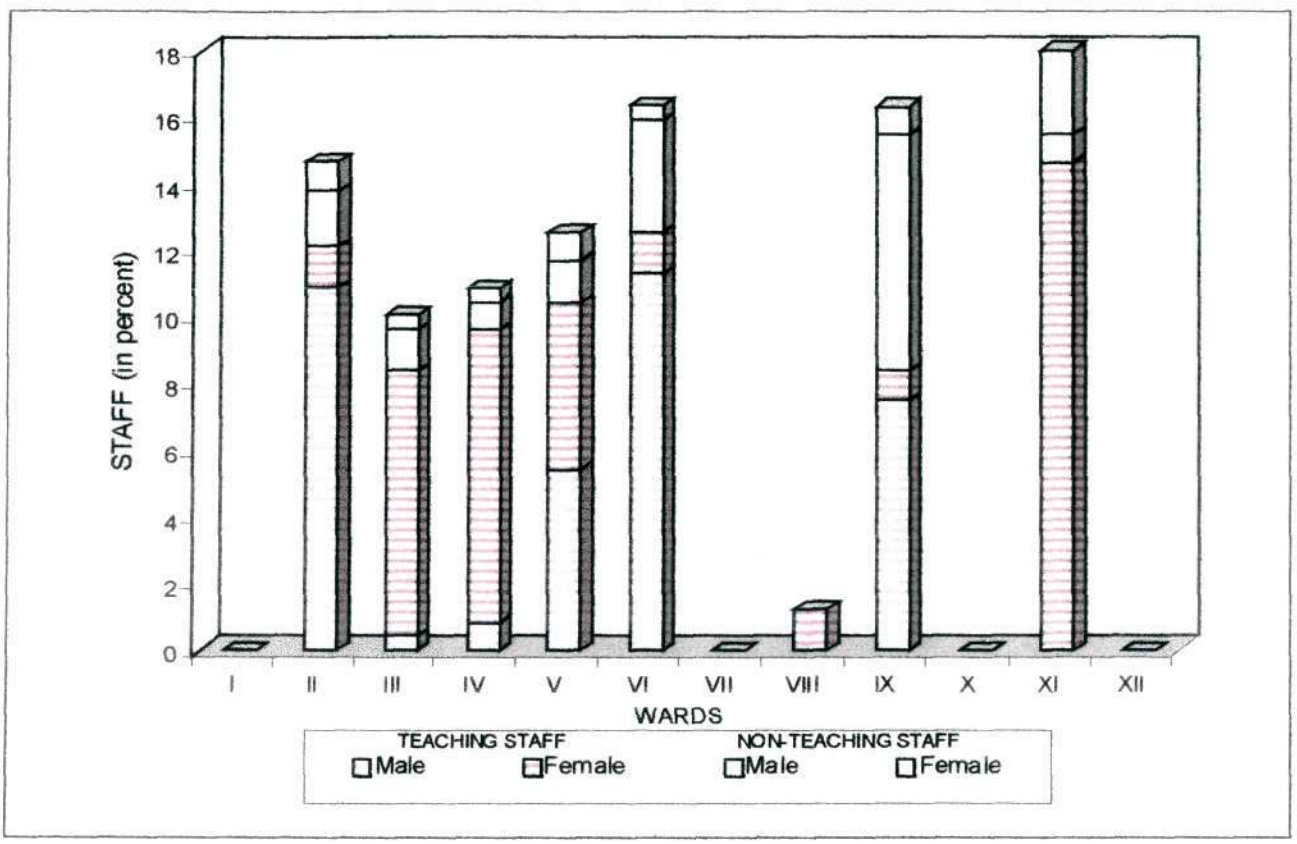


Fig. 4.7: Categories of Staff in Vernacular Schools.

In the residential schools category the total staff strength is 853 of which the total number of teaching staff is 445 and non-teaching staff 408 (Fig. 4.8). The female teaching staff accounts for 66.5 percent of the teaching staff but in the non-teaching staff category male staff accounts for 60 percent of the total. Fig. 4.9 shows the educational status of the teaching staff in the English and Vernacular medium schools in the town. Number of post-graduate teachers is more in the government and government aided schools where as in the private schools the number of graduate and under-graduate teachers is more than the post-graduate teachers. About 63 percent of the teachers are from the town and 5 percent of the teachers are from the other parts of the district (Fig. 4.10). The teachers coming from other parts of West

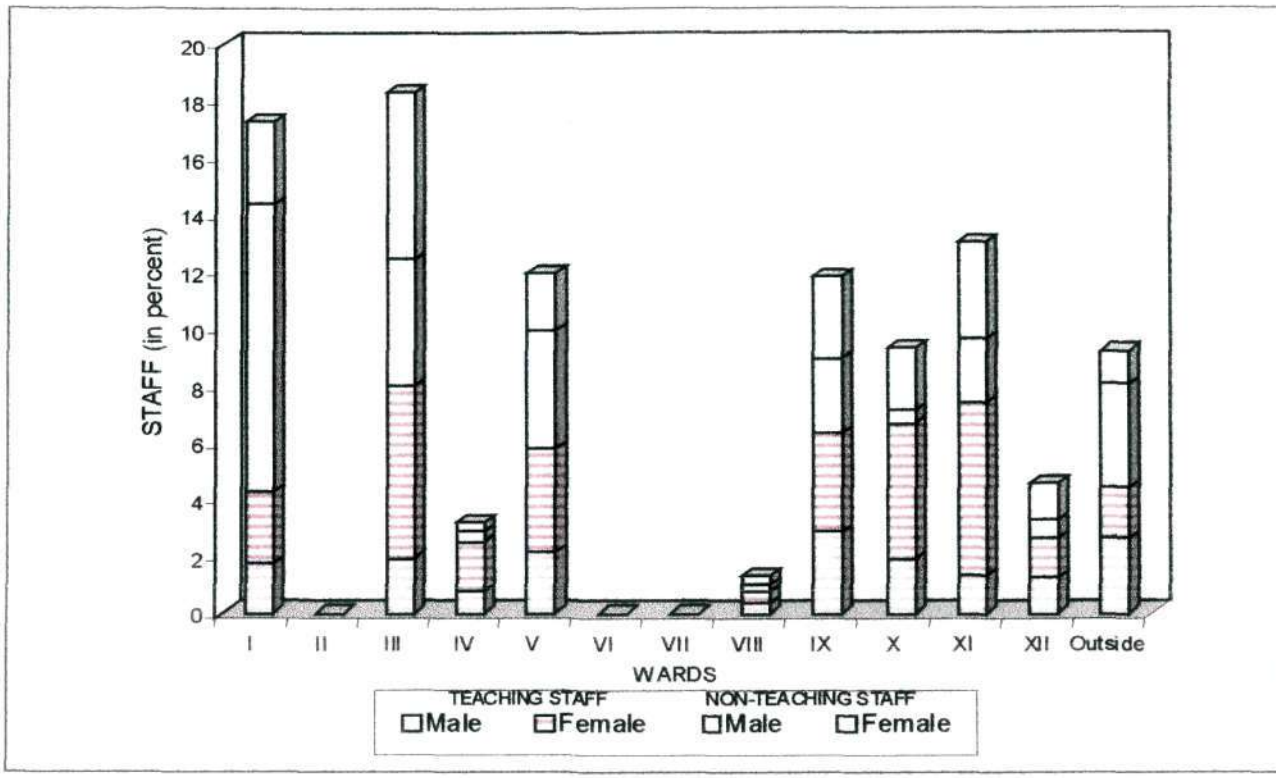


Fig. 4.8: Categories of Staff in English Medium Schools.

Bengal account for 26 percent of the total and there are 15 teachers from Kerala, 7 from Bihar and 1 from Bhutan.

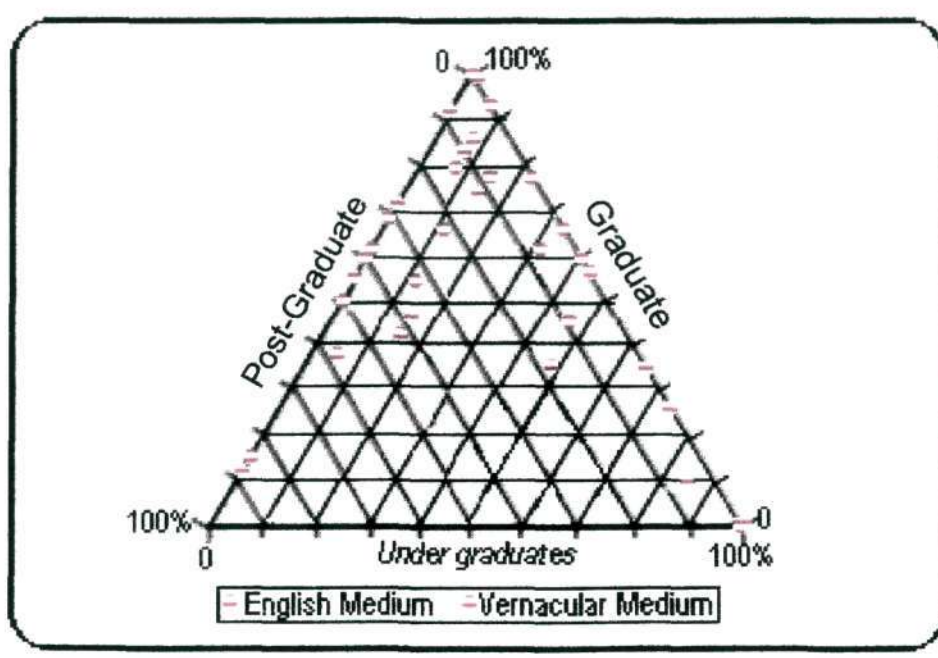


Fig. 4.9 : Educational status of the teaching staff in different schools in Kurseong town.

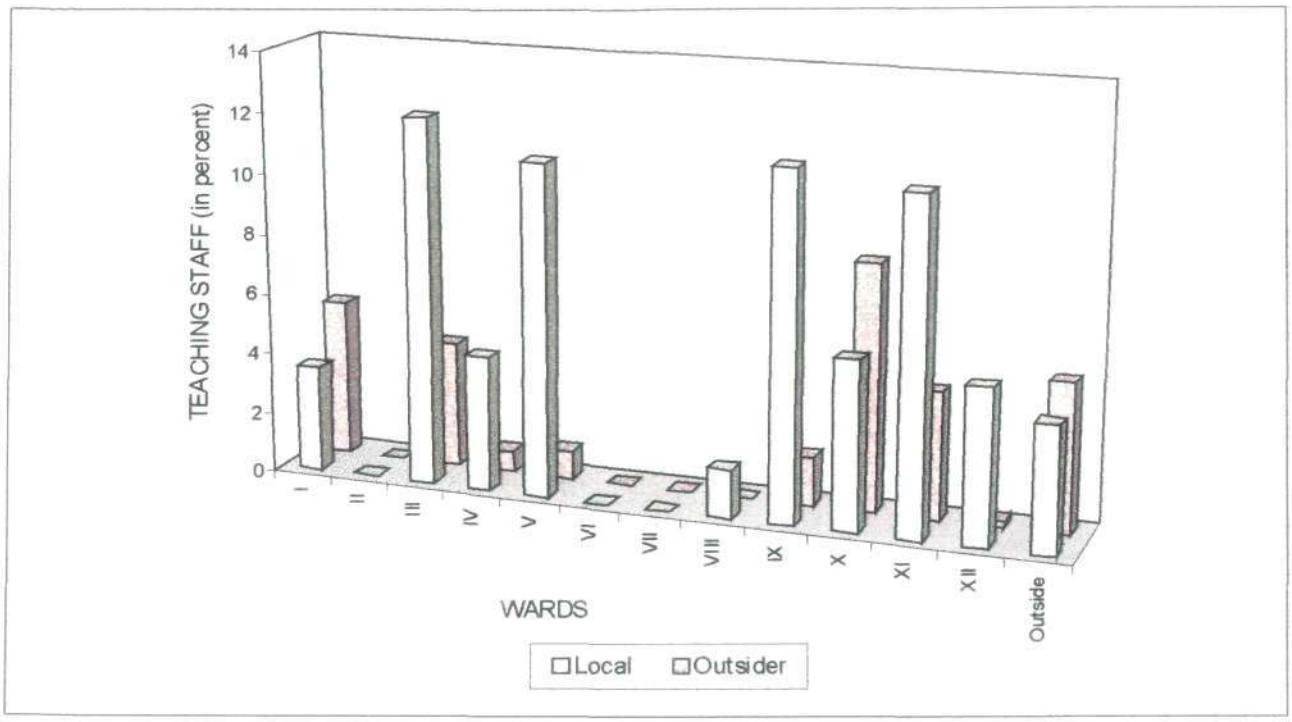
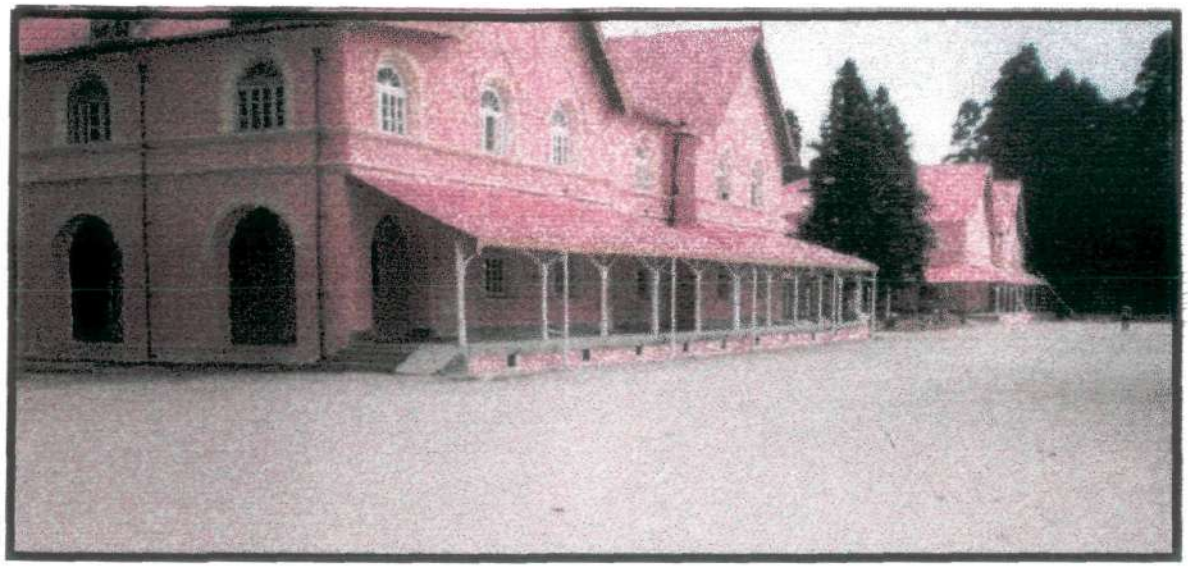


Fig.4.10: Place of origin of teaching staff in English medium schools.

All the residential schools of the post-1970 period category have certain disadvantages. The most important are lack of playgrounds and scarcity of water especially during the lean months. The four schools, which were set up before 1970, have spacious compounds with large playgrounds (Pic. 5), spacious classrooms and dormitories (Pic 6) and have their own

Pic. 5 : Playground of a pre-1970 period English medium residential school.



Pic. 6 : School building of a pre-1970 period English residential medium school.

source of water. But the schools of the post-1970 period are lacking in these facilities. Most of these schools are primary schools and do not have proper playgrounds (Pic. 7) and the charm of childhood is lost within the four walls of the classroom or caged enclosures of the school compound. The classrooms are small in size and the dormitories in some cases have tier system to accommodate the boarders. The shortage of water is evident in all these schools and they have their own method of bringing water, usually in plastic water tanks, from the jhoras and spend a substantial amount of money for carrying water especially during lean months.

Pic. 7 : Playground of a privately-run English medium residential school.

The day schools also do not have proper playground of their own and this problem of shortage of playground is going to remain in Kurseong town due to the nature of the terrain.

Other than the presence of these schools, Kurseong town also has a degree and a polytechnic college. The degree college suffers from the problem of scarcity of permanent teachers and has to carry on its classes with part-time teachers. The polytechnic college is located in a spacious campus and provides courses in civil, electrical and mechanical engineering streams. Students are admitted to this college on the basis of marks received in class X's examination although in the rest of the polytechnic colleges in the state students are admitted after getting qualified in a competitive examination.

Outside the municipal boundary of the town, there are two training institutions of the forest department, one is located at Dow Hill and the other is located at St. Marys. The West Bengal Forest School now called the Forest Training (North) at Dow Hill was established to impart practical forestry education to sub-ordinate field cadres of the Department of Forest, namely, Foresters and Deputy Rangers. The course is of 10 months. The training institute at St. Marys (Eastern Forest Rangers' College) gives in-service training to students for the post of Range Officers of the Department of Forest. The course is of two years. Both of these institutes are located on spacious campuses. As the number of trainees coming to these institutes are decreasing the infrastructure of the se institutes remain under utilised and the Government of West Bengal is thinking of closing down the Rangers' College due to lack of students.

4.2 MEDICAL FACILITIES

There are two hospitals in the town *viz.* the Kurseong Sub-Divisional Hospital and the S.B. Dey TB Sanatorium. Other than these two hospitals there are dispensaries maintained by the Railway, the tea gardens and the residential schools.

4.2.1 Sub-divisional Hospital

The account of O'Malley (1907) shows that there was a charitable dispensary at Kurseong where 4,000 patients were treated in 1905. A plan was made to erect a hospital and dispensary containing a European ward in a central position in the *bazaar* to meet the growing demand for better medical facilities. After the completion of the hospital the Municipality

maintained it and in June 1944 it was taken over by the Government. Dash's (1954) account shows that the hospital had 41 beds – 28 for males and 13 for females. There were two rooms in a separate ward for paying patients and a separate phthisis ward with 4 beds each for males and females. The Chief Medical Officer, Kurseong, was the Superintendent and a Sub-Assistant Surgeon worked under him. The total number of patients dealt by the hospital during 1942 was – indoor-730 and outdoor-10, 075.

The hospital, now called the Kurseong Sub-Divisional Hospital, has 100 beds at present. It provides both outdoor and indoor facilities to the patients. Regular treatment of patients in all the major disciplines is done and advice and medicines are offered to all patients attending the Out Patient Department (OPD). There is a separate clinic for treating tuberculosis. Laboratory facilities along with radiology facilities are provided to the OPD patients at a nominal cost.

Patients needing admission in any discipline are admitted either from the OPD or from patients admitted during emergency hours. Biochemical and pathological tests are conducted on a daily basis on patients needing such tests at nominal rates. All major biochemical parameters *viz.* sugar, urea, creatinine, widal test, bilirubin, linear profile etc. are done. X-rays and contrast X-rays are done on patients needing such. ECG facility is also available for needy patients.

Operation facilities are available for surgery and gynaecology patients. There is a labour room with separate resuscitation facilities for newborn babies. A new blood bank has been opened up which caters to the need of patients needing urgent blood transfusion. The blood bank also stores blood of different groups and tests blood for Hepatitis and HIV. Ambulance facility is provided by the hospital for transporting patients at a nominal rate. There is a morgue adjacent to the hospital where post-mortem is done.

In the sub-divisional hospital the number of doctors are 17 and the number of technical staff including the nurses are 74. The total number of indoor patients treated during Mar'98-Feb'99 was 6,104 and the total number of patients in the OPD during the said period was 56,824. The number of beds available in different discipline is Medicine – 37, Surgery – 30, Paediatrics – 12, Maternity –8, Gynaecology – 10, and paying cabins – 3.

4.2.2 S.B. Dey T.B. Sanatorium

The Calcutta Medical Aid and Research Society of Jadavpur set up the Sanatorium in 1936. This was possible due to the philanthropy of late Rai Bahadur S.B. Dey. The hospital opened with a two-storied building having twenty beds. In 1942, accommodation was increased to 44 beds and an out door clinic was opened. In 1942-43, the institution received a gift from the Governor of Bengal of 8.094 ha of adjoining forestland after deforestation. Till Independence the number of beds provided by the hospital was only 61.

A three-storied hospital building was completed in 1951 and in 1960 the North East and North Frontier Railway built the Railway Annexe. The tuberculosis ward with 28 beds of the Kurseong Sub-Divisional Hospital was transferred to the Sanatorium in 1963. With the untiring efforts of late Dr. B.C. Roy (ex-Chief Minister of West Bengal) and late Dr. K.S. Roy the number of beds was increased to 349. In 1975, the North East Railway, the department of Post and Telegraph and Tea Board withdrew their reserved beds and the number came down to 299. On 2nd October 1979, the Sanatorium was taken over by the Government of West Bengal from the management of the Calcutta Medical Aid and Research Society. The Sanatorium was given the status of a State Hospital and the number of staff – both technical and non-technical, was increased. The present strength of staff stands at 180, of which six are doctors. In August 1995, a devastating fire destroyed the office and an incinerator of the hospital. Hospital wastes are now either dumped in an open garbage pit or thrown into the drains or in a nearby jhora. Due to a change in the pattern of treating patients suffering from tuberculosis and the establishment of Primary Health Centres at Block Level the number of patients reporting to this State Hospital has decreased tremendously.

4.2.3 Other Medical Facilities

The Darjiling Himalayan Railway maintains a dispensary for treatment of its staff at Kurseong. Patients suffering from serious problems are either referred to the Railway Hospital at Tindharia or at New Jalpaiguri. The dispensary is under the supervision of one medical officer and 12 other staff.

There is one modified leprosy control unit at Kurseong under the supervision of the Sub-divisional Medical Officer. The staffs under this unit are mainly field staff and are

stationed at designated villages. They help in dissemination of information on leprosy to the villagers and guide the patients afflicted with the disease.

4.3 TRADES AND COMMERCE

Even where trades and commerce are not responsible for the origin of an urban area, they play an important role in the development of urban life and activity. Development of trades and commerce is necessary to meet the demand of the local and surrounding rural population. Trades and commerce usually grow – (a) at the junction of transport network, which helps in quick marketing of perishable agricultural products; and (b) at the place, which determines a very high density of population resulting in high aggregate demand of goods of various kinds. A small town has less number of business outlets and the central business district is located close to the geographic and population centres.

The status of shopping centres depends on density of population per sq. km, economic conditions of the people of that area, location and accessibility to the customers. The structure of shopping centre changes with the size of residential area and demand of goods. The shopping centres are usually linear in pattern unless there is a departmental store or shopping complex. The arrangement begins to get disturbed as the number of stores and shops increases. The ideal arrangement is one where the shoppers can make use of transport facility. Thereafter, the shops begin to cluster in a place so that the user can walk minimum distance to get their desired goods. As a result many shops dealing with similar goods are concentrated in a particular place or side-by-side so that the customer can compare and select the best one at competitive prices (Jana, 1978).

Most of the shops in Kurseong town are located in the central part of the town along the Hill Cart Road and at the junction of Acharya Bhanu Path with Hill Cart Road. The business activities are mainly concentrated in wards VI and VII and small part of wards VIII, IX and X, which are situated near them (Fig. 4.11). The *hat bazaar* in ward VI has been in existence for very long time and was owned by the Raja of Burdwan. The *bazaar* mainly catered to the needs of the local inhabitants and the workers of the neighbouring tea gardens. In the last century few hotels came up along Pankhabari Road and Hill Cart Road for the tourists, mainly those who were travelling to Darjiling. Few shops came up which dealt with groceries, coal and items needed for tea gardens.

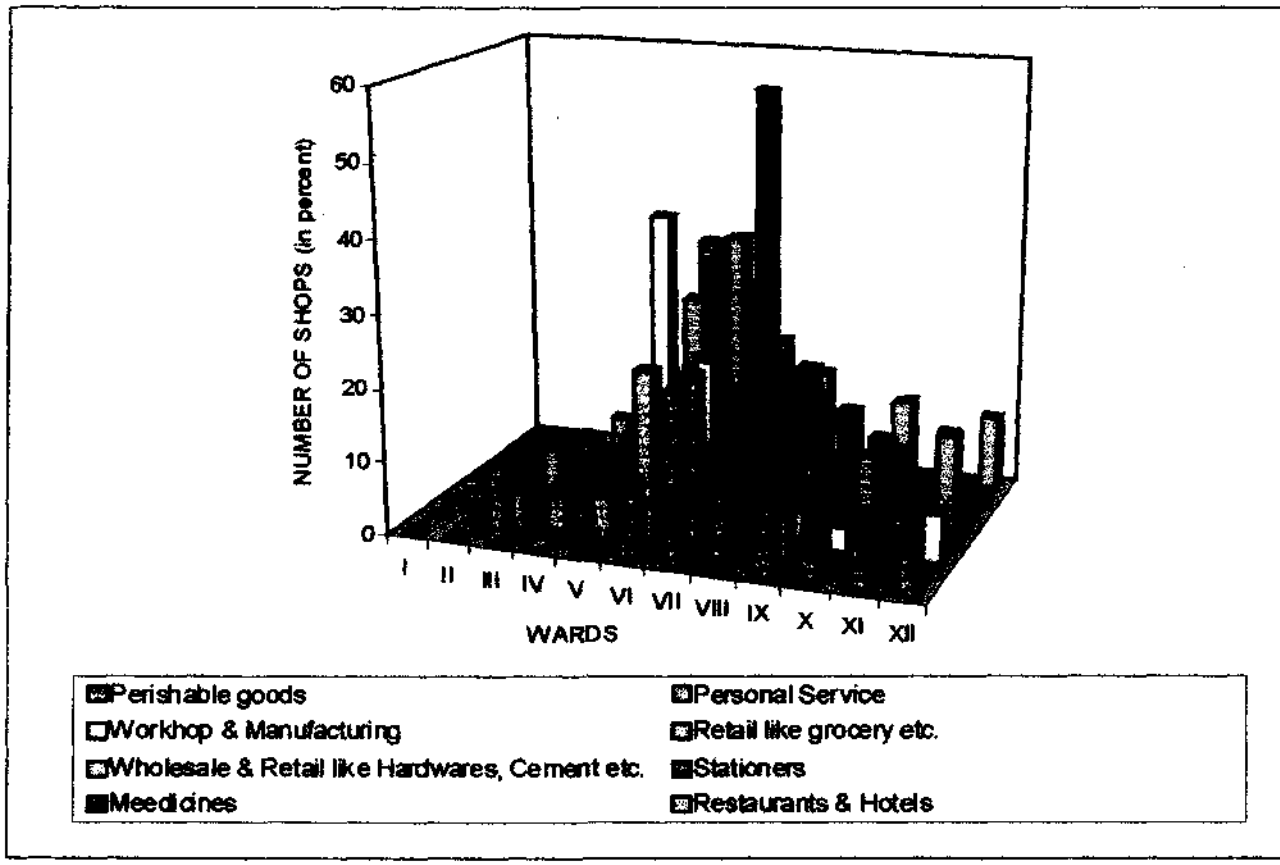


Fig. 4.11: Categories of shops in different wards.

There are at present 879 shops dealing with different types of goods in the town of which wards VI and VII accounts for about 52 percent of the total number of shops. Another 24.5 percent of the shops are located in wards VIII, IX and X that make a part of the central business district. Table 4.1 shows the number of shops by functional types in different wards of Kurseong town.

Grocery and betel leaves shops account for about 27 percent of the total number of shops followed by stationers' (20 percent) shops and hardware (15.13 percent) shops. Actually, in Kurseong town the shops cannot be compartmentalised into wholesale and retail because many of the shops play the dual role of wholesalers as well as retailers. Most of the goods, which are sold in the market like vegetables, fish, provisions, hardware's, cement, coal etc. are, imported from Siliguri. Some goods are imported directly from Calcutta, Delhi and some other places of the country. The wholesale business mainly caters to neighbouring villages and tea garden settlements. Kurseong town used to play an important role in wholesale business for a large section of the hill population even a couple of decades ago but

due to the improvement in transport facility with Siliguri the dependence on Kurseong town has declined over the years.

Table 4.1 : Categories of shops in Kurseong town.

Categories of shops	Number of shops	Percentage of the total shops
Perishable goods like vegetable, meat, fish	48	5.46
Personal services like barber saloon, beauty parlour, photo studios, laundry	17	1.93
Workshops and manufacturing like bakery, jewellery, tailoring, motor repairs, press	150	17.07
Wholesale and retail like grocery and betel leaves	239	27.19
Wholesalers and retailers like hardware, cement, coals	133	15.13
Stationers like footwear, cloth and stationeries	176	20.02
Medical stores	18	2.05
Hotels and restaurants	98	11.15
Total	879	100.00

During the last decade, Kurseong has experienced an increase in the number of shops in all categories due to the increase in population not only within the town but also in the periphery. The increase in the number of residential schools has helped in the increase in the volume of trade in the town. Even though most of the shops have remained concentrated in the central part of the town, a few shops dealing with vegetables and stationers and hotels have come up in other parts of the town.

There are ten medium sized hotels in the town situated along the Hill Cart Road. The business of these hotels depends mainly on the schools. As tourists' flow to this town is negligible, the occupancy rate of these hotels is depended on parents or guardians of residential schools, who come to the town either to give or take their wards or to meet their

wards in the schools. As these stays are of short duration and during a particular period of the year, the number of people occupying the hotels fluctuates.

A field survey of the commercial area of the town reveals that individuals or their families own the shops selling perishable goods and these goods are either procured from Siliguri or from wholesalers within the town. The other category of shops are also owned by individuals or families but the scope of employment exist in those shops and shops dealing with jewellery, grocery, cloth, hardware's, stationers, medicine etc. employ workers, mostly in the range of one to four, depending on volume of transaction in the shops.

4.3.1 Finance

The economic development of any town is closely linked with the banking activity carried on within it and is an important index of economic development. In this town, there are 4 scheduled banks (3 nationalised and 1 non-nationalised). Altogether 87 employees are working in these banks. Among the banks in the town State Bank of India (S.B.I.) ranks first in view of its customers and employees (57) followed by Central Bank of India with 16 employees (Table 4.2). The non-nationalised bank is the Darjeeling District Co-operative Bank. Two banks (Central Bank of India and Allahabad bank) are located in the CBD where as the other 2 banks (State Bank of India and Darjiling District Co-operative Bank) are located near it. The State Bank of India is the main bank in the Kurseong Sub-division. At present the S.B.I. has about 22,000 account holders including pension account holders.

Table 4.2 : Banks in Kurseong town.

Name of the banks	Location	Number of employees		
		Male	Female	Total
State of India	XI	53	4	57
Central Bank of India	VII	14	2	16
Allahabad Bank	VI	8	1	9
Darjiling District Co-operative Bank	IV	5	-	5

4.4 TRANSPORTS AND COMMUNICATION

Few forces have been more influential in modifying the earth than transportation, yet transportation itself is a result of other forces. Economist and others have recognised through the ages that, in general, trade and improvements in transportation to facilitate it raise the standard of living of all parties concerned, although not necessarily equally. Interaction in the modern world has been enormously increased by improvements in transportation. Improvement in transportation and circulation has produced two contrasting and contradictory results: (i) in many cases it has made the world and its people more alike, since they are enabled to share ideas, products, and services; (ii) simultaneously, in many cases it has made areas more unlike, since each region has been enabled to specialise in activities it can do best, whether based on factors of production related to land, labour, capital, or simply economies of scale (Ullman, 1956).

The functional efficiency of any urban centre is influenced to a great extent by movement space and circulation pattern as it provides to the users. Without sufficient move[illegible] space, transportation system cannot work efficiently. Again, the circulation pattern is intimately related to transportation. Trip length, trip frequency, movement efficiency in terms of speed, safety and convenience of movement etc. are closely dependent on circulation system. So the study of circulation pattern is necessary that help in the identification of various traffic problems. Traffic problems need intensive attention and their solution will provide improvement and development of the town. A glance at the transportation system of the town shows that road transport is important on account of direct linkages with other urban centres as well as for its time-distance factor and frequency.

The traditional modes of conveyance in the Darjiling hills were the hardy porters and mules. In the autumn of 1848, Hooker trekked the Darjiling and Nepal Himalayas on foot, and everything was carried on men's back. By the end of the nineteenth century modes of conveyance had improved a little bit. In O'Malley's words "strong bullock carts equal to very rough work ply along the few roads where the gradient is not too severe for wheeled traffic, but these roads are few in number, and the majority are paths too narrow and steep for any carts. Pack-ponies or human carriers are consequently most generally used for transport. The coolies are capable of great feats of endurance. It is not uncommon for a tea garden cooly to

carry a tea chest weighing 110 to 130 lbs (49.9-59 kg) for a distance of 5 or 6 miles (8.05 or 9.66 km) up an ascent of 2,500 to 3,500 feet (762–1,067 m); ..... In Darjiling itself the commonest conveyances for those who do not ride are the luxurious rickshaw and the hill dandy". The laying of railway line between Siliguri and Darjiling improved the mode of transportation in the hill but a major change took place only when the management of Grand Hotel, Calcutta introduced a passenger-automobile service between Siliguri and Darjiling after World War I. It cut short the train journey by 3 ½ hours.

4.4.1 Railways

Based on the belief that a train line could substantially reduce the cost of bullock cart transport between the plains and Darjiling and still earn a good profit, Franklin Prestage, an agent of the Eastern Bengal Railway (EBR), in 1878 submitted a detailed scheme for laying a railway line between Siliguri and Darjiling to the Government of Bengal. An agreement was signed on April 8, 1879 between the Secretary of State and Franklin Prestage for the execution of the work. Prestage settled for a 0.6096 m (2 ft) rail gauge and formed the Darjiling Steam Tramway Company. The agreement gave a number of concessions to the company *viz.* the government land and the right to use the existing cart road was granted free of cost and other land necessary was acquired by the Government and transferred to the Company at cost price. On September 15, 1881, title of the company was changed to Darjiling Himalayan Railway (DHR) Company. Kurseong was selected as the headquarters of the Darjiling Himalayan Railway Company. The progress of construction of Darjiling Himalayan Railway line was remarkable as could be seen from Table 4.3. Midway between the *bazaar* and the St. Helen's Convent in Kurseong, sites were acquired by the Company for the construction of residential quarters for its officers and staff. Construction of the present railway station was completed on June 24, 1885. There is an interesting account by Dozey regarding the location of railway offices in Kurseong: " Had the project which Major Lindsay, R.E., the Manager of the Eastern Bengal Railway, had in mind, when the Darjiling Himalayan Railway was in the process of development materialised the combined Eastern Bengal and Darjiling Himalayan Railway offices would have been located in the buildings at present in occupation by the Dow Hill Girls' School. These quarters were soon found inadequate and then the authorities of the former line hide off to Saidpur from where there was a further exodus to Calcutta. How business could have been conducted right up in the clouds is beyond ordinary mortals even to

conjecture .... Fortunately someone with a modicum of common sense over-ruled this quixotic scheme at the eleventh hour, and so we have offices within the reach of the public at Sealdah and Kurseong, respectively ".

Table 4.3: Progress of construction of railway line of Darjiling Himalayan Railway.

Main line	Date of opening	Distance (in km)
Siliguri to Kurseong	23.08.1880	51.096
Kurseong to Sonada	01.02.1881	16.093
Sonada to Jore Bunglow	05.04.1881	9.656
Jore Bunglow to Darjiling	04.07.1881	4.828
Darjiling to Darjiling Bazar	16.06.1886	0.402
Total Distance (in km)		82.076

O'Malley wrote in 1907: " The railway (D.H.R.) cannot compare for speed, comfort and cheapness with mountain railways in other parts of the world, though it was no doubt a creditable achievement in the days when it was built. It must be remembered that the construction of mountain railways was more or less of an innovation in India at that time and cheapness of construction and the safety of the line were matters of the first consideration. Great credit is due to the railway staff for the continued safety of the line, which is liable to be breached by torrents and landslips. The portion of the line passing by the water course known as Pagla Jhora or the 'mad torrent' is a typical example of the difficulties which have to be encountered in maintaining the stability of line and in keeping up through traffic". Long stretches of the line were completely destroyed by stupendous landslips caused by the cyclone in September 1899. O' Malley further writes that " the difficulty and costliness of keeping the line in repair is one of the causes of high rates prevailing on the railway; but this is the only cause, and the absence of competition is the chief reason why the railway is so expensive. The dividends paid are extraordinarily good, and the result is that, though the railway has been largely instrumental in developing the resources of the district, it may reasonably be contended that the high rates charged for transport have to some extent hindered its further growth".

The monopoly of the railways was reduced to a great extent by the introduction of passenger-automobile after 1920. But even then it played an important role in transporting goods and people, tourists in particular. In 1942-43, the total number of passengers those who travelled to and from Kurseong were 44,910 and 54,069 respectively (Dash, 1954). It is interesting to note that the Darjiling Himalayan Railway never needed Government's financial support, and was a profiteering venture till its nationalisation on October 20, 1948. In pursuance of the Union Government's policy to re-group the Indian Railways into zone system for imparting greater efficiency and economy in their operations, the Darjiling Himalayan Railway was merged with the North East Frontier Railway with its headquarter at Maligaon in Assam.

Pic. 8 : The *Toy Train* passing through Kurseong town.

Keen rail-road competition has placed the Darjiling Himalayan Railway at a disadvantage as because road transport is comparatively cheaper and quicker. The number of passengers travelling in the *Toy Train* (Pic. 8) has dwindled over the years as can be seen from the following figures (Table 4.4). At present the Darjiling Himalayan Railway runs only one set of train between Siliguri and Darjiling and one set between Kurseong and Siliguri. Goods transportation was totally stopped in 1992 by the Railway Authority.

Table 4.4 : Passengers travelled during different years from Kurseong.

Year	Passengers travelled from Kurseong
1983-84	22,400
1996-97	14, 790
1998-99	12,634

Even though the *Toy Train* has lost the competition to road transport in terms of trip frequency and time, it still attracts tourists from within and outside India. Although the Ministry of Railways has taken initiative but it is not sufficient for the proper maintenance of the oldest mountain railway line in India. Recently due to an initiative taken by the Ministry of Railways and associations like the D.H.R.H.F. and the 'Friends of the DHR' to give it a heritage status, the UNESCO set up a technical committee to look into the matter. In December 1999, the UNESCO put the Darjiling Himalayan Railway on its list of World Heritage Sites. It is expected that with this declaration initiatives will be taken to revive the old glory of the *Toy Train*, a recognition that, apart from making available some funds for restoration, would oblige the government to conserve the railway and report every five years to UNESCO on the state of its preservation.

4.4.2 Roads

Influenced by rough topography, street pattern in Kurseong is highly irregular (Fig. 4.12). Two principal roads serve Kurseong Township. Hill Cart Road, a National Highway (NH 55), is the main traffic-way, passing through the centre of the town, extending in the north to Darjiling and in the south to Siliguri. Acharya Bhanu Path (Old Military Road / Pankhabari Road) is the other major traffic-way that extends on the north to Ghoom and on the south to NH 31 at Matigara near Siliguri. This route developed by the earliest explorers, though more direct, is suitable only for small vehicles because of its steep gradients. Entering the town from southwest, Acharya Bhanu Path runs in gentle slope up to the railway station from where it winds up in sharp ascent towards Dow Hill on the northeastern part of the town. This 7-kilometre road stretch is the longest within the town and serves as the most important link road for majority of the institutional and public facilities available in the town.

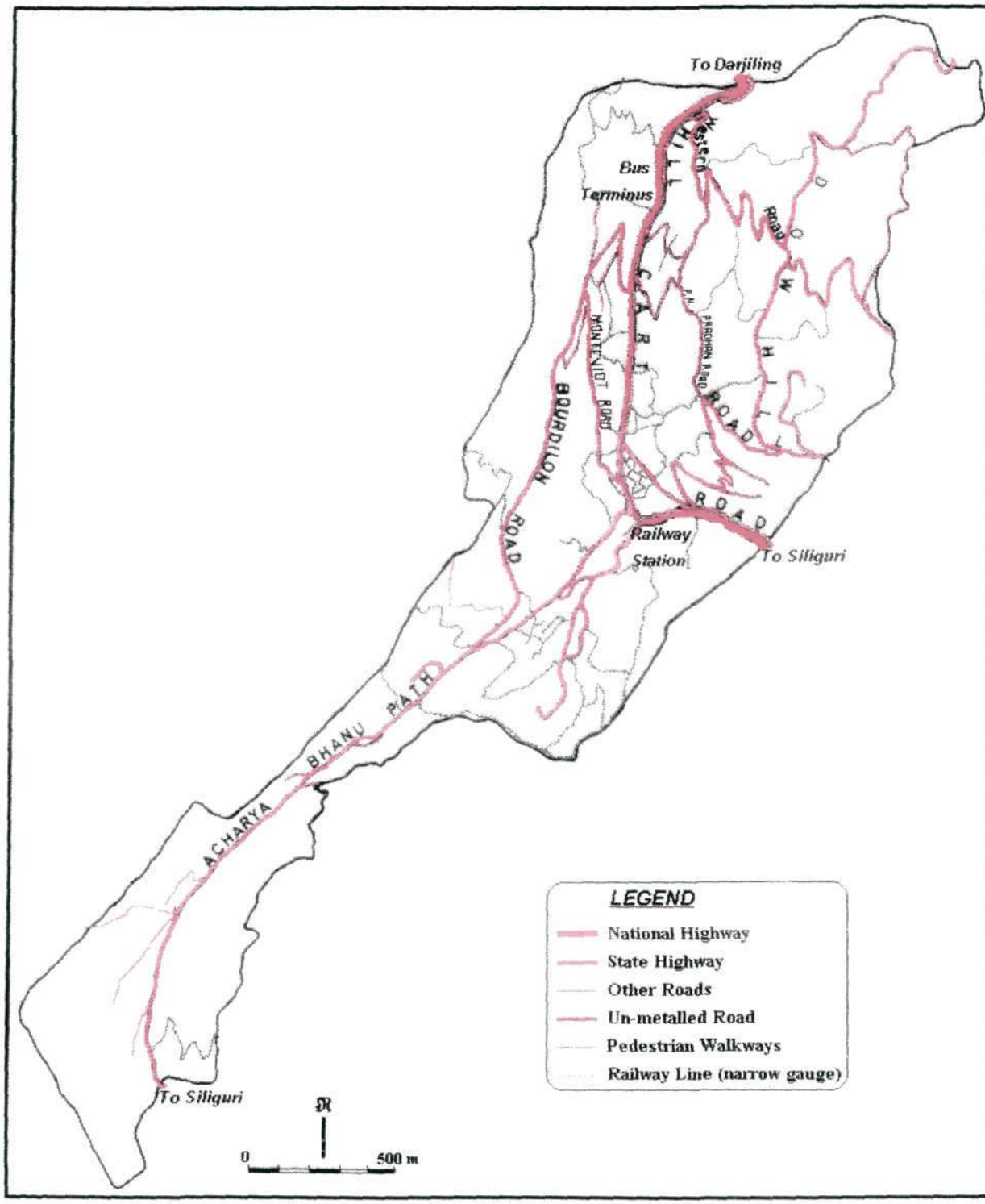


Fig. 4.12: Communication map of Kurseong town.

Burdwan Road serves the very important function of a by-pass to the Hill Cart Road from the P.W.D. office to the railway station. Montiviot Road provides access to one of the most intensive residential area from Hill Cart Road, J.M. Goenka Road provides access to Rajbari area, the oldest residential area of the town and Eagle's Crag Observatory. Bourdillion Road was constructed in 1905 as a north-south connector between Hill Cart Road at the Monteviot end and Acharya Bhanu Path on the south. This road now acts as a bypass for the vehicles coming from Siliguri via the Pankhabari Road. Western approach road, an east-west alternative approach road to Dow Hill starts from the northern end of the town and connects Dow Hill Road at Debisthan. The vehicles do not frequently use this road.

Access roads to residential localities in the eastern and western part of the town are by pedestrian walkways in steep grades or steps. Patterson Road, the most important east-west pedestrian walkway, extends from Burdwan Road to Dow Hill Road. P.N. Pradhan Road, a north-south pedestrian walkway parallel to Hill Cart Road, connects Western Approach Road with Patterson Road.

4.4.3 Traffic flow

As Kurseong town is situated along the Hill Cart Road, it experiences heavy traffic flow of both passenger and goods vehicles. Vehicles not only originate and terminate at Kurseong but the town also experiences the flow of traffic plying between Siliguri and

Pic. 9 : The *Taxi Stand* near the Railway Station.

Darjiling. Buses, jeeps and cars plying between Kurseong and Siliguri and Kurseong and Darjiling originate and terminate at *Stands* near the Railway Station (Pic. 9) even though a terminus, INA Bus Terminus, has been constructed for the vehicles. The jeeps plying between Kurseong and Dilaram-Tung originate at the stand near the new municipal shopping centre, jeeps plying between Kurseong and Mirik, Dudhia and Ambootia start from the stand near the State Bank of India. The intra-town traffic movement is seen only between the town centre and Dow Hill and the vehicles originate from the stand at Burdwan Road.

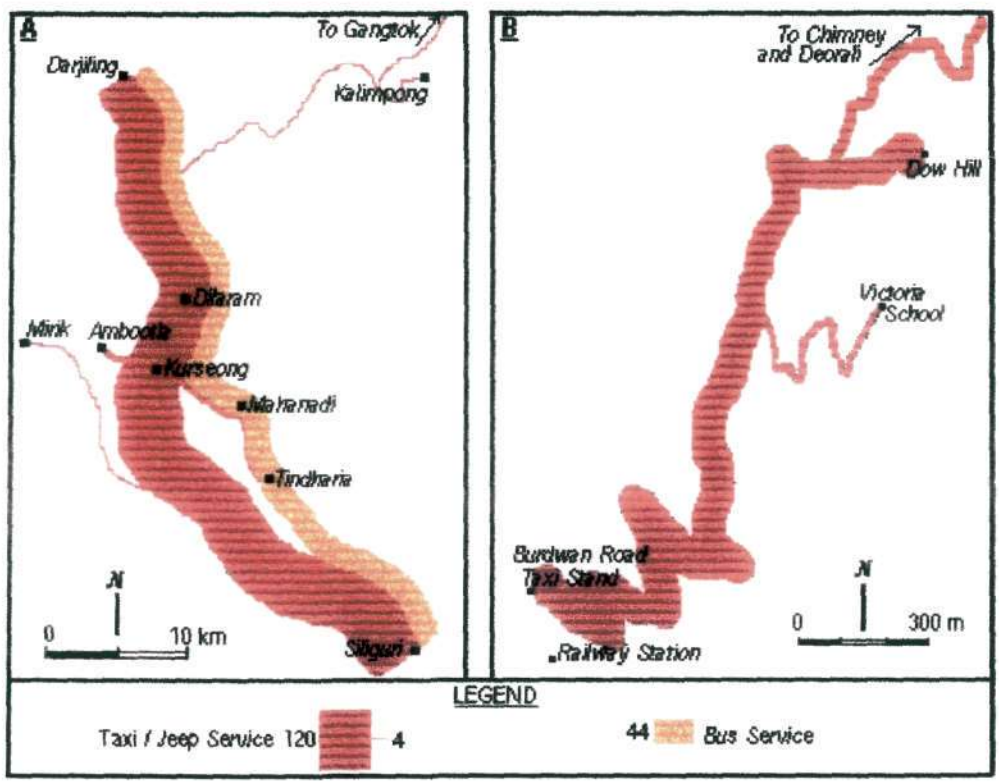


Fig.4.13: Traffic flow chart – A-with other Urban centres and B-within the town.

A survey of trip frequency of passenger vehicles on a daily basis reveals that 16 buses ply between Kurseong and Siliguri and 2 buses between Kurseong and Darjiling (Fig. 4.13). Other than these there are about 70 trips of buses plying between Darjiling and Siliguri, passing through the town. There are about 50 trips of jeeps from Kurseong to Siliguri, 25 trips to Darjiling, 1 trip to Gangtok, 2 trips to Kalimpong and 4 trips to Mirik. There are about 140 trips of jeeps plying between Darjiling and Siliguri passing through the town. The

neighbouring areas served by Kurseong Town are Dudhia – 4 trips, Ambootia – 8 trips, Dilaram-Tung – 10 trips, Chimney-Deorali – 15 trips and Mahanadi – 10 trips. There are about 40 trips of cars to Dow Hill.

4.4.4 Postal and Telephone services

There are three post offices in the town, one, the main post office, is located at the centre of the town (ward VI) and the other two are located at Dilaram and Dow Hill in wards III and I respectively. The main post office handles about 1,000 registered and ordinary letters everyday. The post office sells stamps of different denominations of about Rs. 5,000/- everyday. It has about 5,000 savings account holders and about 10,000 recurring deposit holders.

The Sub-divisional Office of the Department of Telecommunication is situated in Kurseong town. The department has a C-DOT SBM (Single Base Module) with a capacity of providing connection to 1,600 subscribers. In 1947, Kurseong had a Rural Automatic Exchange with a capacity of 50 direct working connections (Dash, 1954). In 1967 the capacity of the Exchange was increased to 300 lines with 185 direct working connections. There was only one Public Call Office (PCO) located at the main Post Office (Gazetteer, 1980).

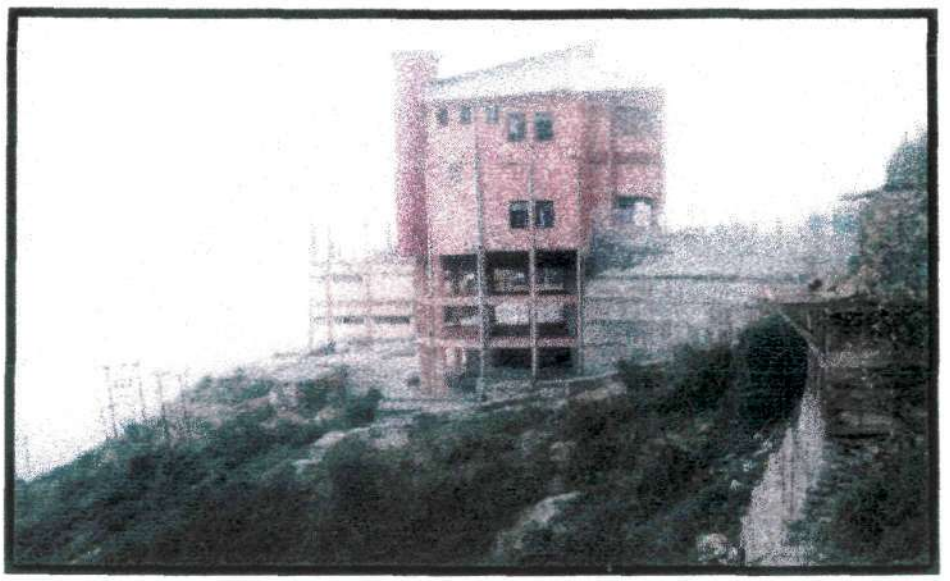
Presently, the number of subscribers in the town is 1,526. The number of subscribers that was only 878 in the month of November 1998 has increased to 1,526 in the month of June 1999. This was possible due to the improvement in equipment and it also shows that there is a growing demand in the town for new telephone connections. The Kurseong Telephone Exchange also provides facility to Tindharia, south-east of the town and Tung, northeast of the town. The number of subscribers at Tindharia and Tung are 148 and 146 respectively. There are 19 PCO booths in the town and 17 of them are located in the market area.

Kurseong is also important for the location of 140 MB digital microwave, which helps in having telecommunication link between Siliguri and Darjiling. The microwave is located on the ridge, between Eagle's Crag and Constantia, facing the plains.

4.4.5 Fire Service

The Fire Station in the town was set up in 1976 at Burdwan Road in ward IV. On 22nd March, 1998 the new complex of the Fire Station (Pic. 10) near the Bus Terminus (ward

VIII) was inaugurated. The Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority did the site selection and construction of the building. The station has a reservoir with a storage capacity of 1,13,650 litre and the water is collected from the Debisthan Jhora. The station has at present



Pic. 10 : The Fire Station.

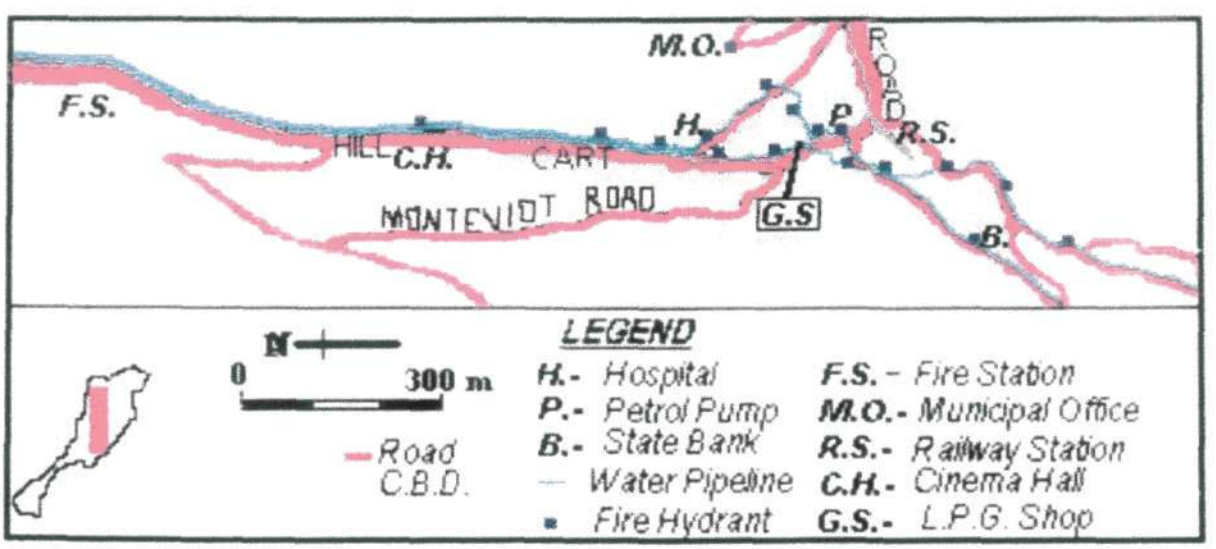


Fig. 4.14: Location of fire hydrants in Kurseong town.

2 fire tankers with a combined capacity of 5,455 litres. Recently, the Municipality has constructed 16 fire hydrants in the market area to be maintained by the Fire Brigade

(Fig.4.14). These hydrants were constructed along the water pipeline, maintained by the Public Health Engineering, from 8-Mile Jhora and Thotey Khola, to the town. But these fire hydrants are yet to get water connection from the Directorate of Public Health Engineering.

4.5 INDUSTRIES

Industries play an insignificant role in Kurseong town. The only known industry in this town is the tea industry. There are two tea gardens – the Castleton Tea Garden (ward XII) and the Montiviot Tea Garden (ward IX), which manufacture tea. The Railway Printing Press, which was set up for supplying printed materials to the different railway offices in the eastern part of India, has been experiencing a decline in its output over the last few years. The Cutlery Servicing Station, which was set up in 1957 during the Second Five Year Plan with lot of hope for the tea gardens, has experienced an untimely death. The Station was set up to render assistance by way of heat treatment, grinding, polish, electroplating, and supply of modern machinery, improved raw materials, power and technical know-how to traditional artisans manufacturing tea garden implements locally. The centre was also engaged in producing pruning knives and saw, skiffing knives and forks for supply to tea gardens.

The factory of the Montiviot Tea Garden is located in ward IX. The tea garden was established in 1856 with an area of 59.91ha. In 1988, the ownership of the tea garden changed hands. The company now manufactures bio-organic tea for the international market. The factory not only manufactures tea of its own tea garden but also of Edenvale and Mullootar tea gardens. The total production of tea from the factory during 1998-99 was 65,000 Kg of which 22,500 Kg was from Montiviot Tea Garden. Manufactured tea is packed in tea chests and paper sacks and then transported to Calcutta where it is auctioned. Average selling price of the factory's tea is at Rs 250 per kilogram. The best grade of tea manufactured at the factory is Flavoury Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe or FTGFOP-1. Other grades of tea manufactured here are TGBOP, GOF and FOF. The number of workers engaged in the manufacture of tea is seven, of which six are permanent and one is temporary. All the factory workers are male workers. The number of office staff at the factory is 16 and all are male staff.

4.6 OFFICES

In 1875, Kurseong town was made the headquarters of the Kurseong Forest Division. In 1879, it was declared a municipality and the Darjiling Himalayan Railway set up its headquarters here. In 1891, it was made the administrative headquarters of the Kurseong sub-division. With the passage of time more offices started coming up at Kurseong and before independence of India there were 21 offices of the different government departments in the town (Fig.4.15). After the independence more offices of the central and state government departments were set up and at present there are 57 offices, excluding the banks, in the town. The offices are distributed all over the town and it does not have any specific office zone with the exception of an office complex of the Sub-divisional Officer.

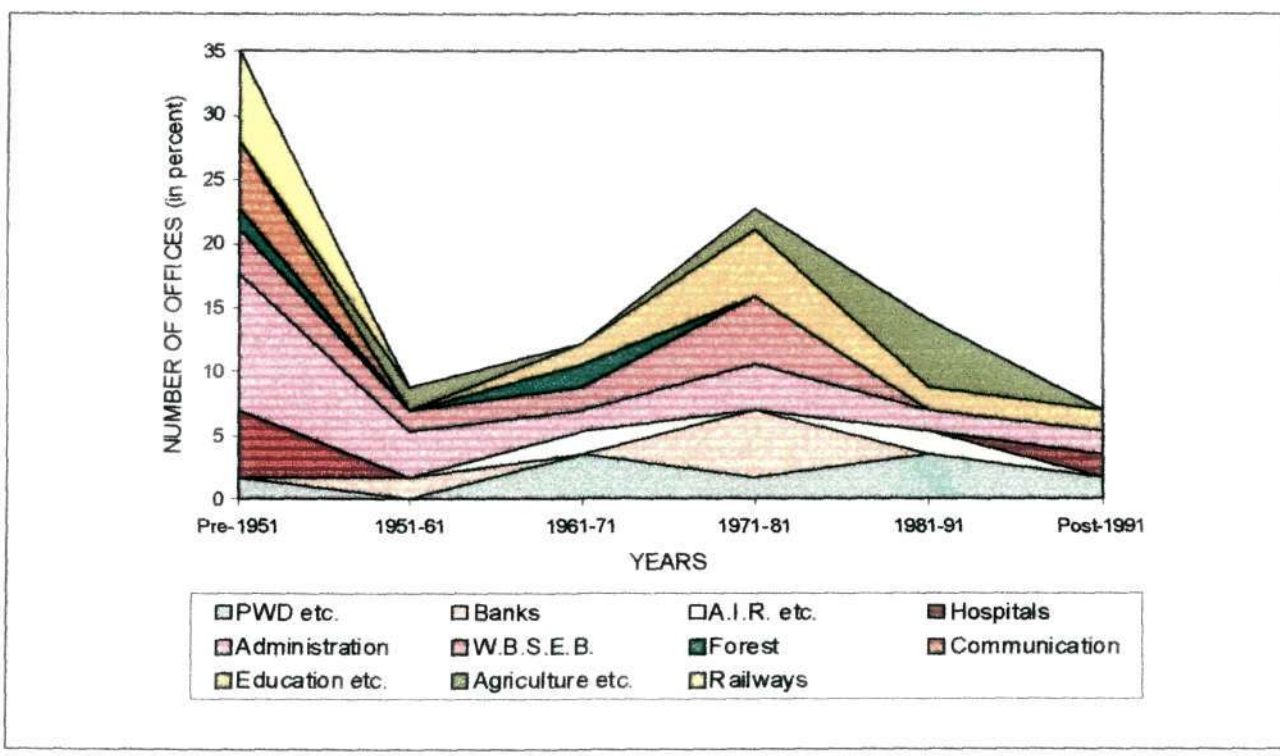


Fig. 4.15: Establishment of different categories of offices in different census years.

There are about 2,511 employees working in the different central and state government offices of which the Railways, administrative and law and order, hospitals and the state electricity board are the major employers. About 86 percent of the staff is male and 14 percent of the staff is female (Fig. 4.16). About 12 percent of the staff working in these offices are from the plains and about 88 percent of the staff belong to the hills (Fig. 4.17). About 38

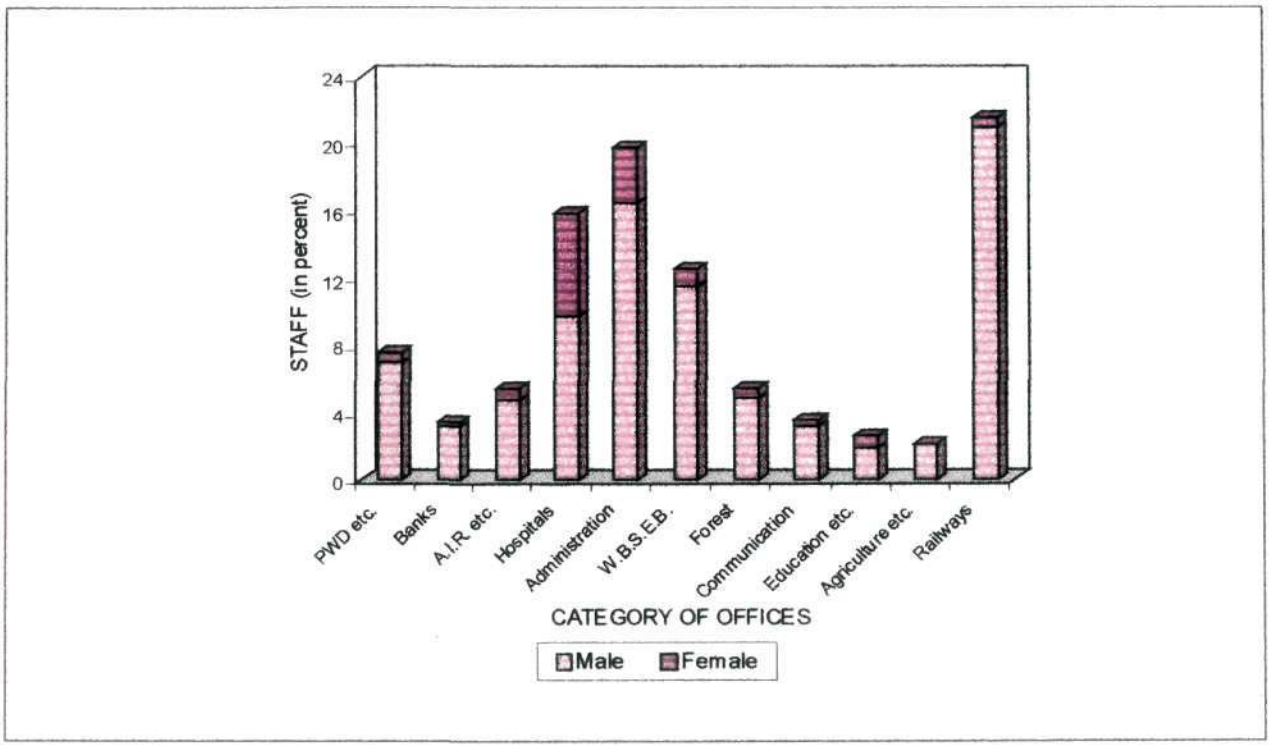


Fig. 4.16: Percentage of male and female staff in different categories of offices.

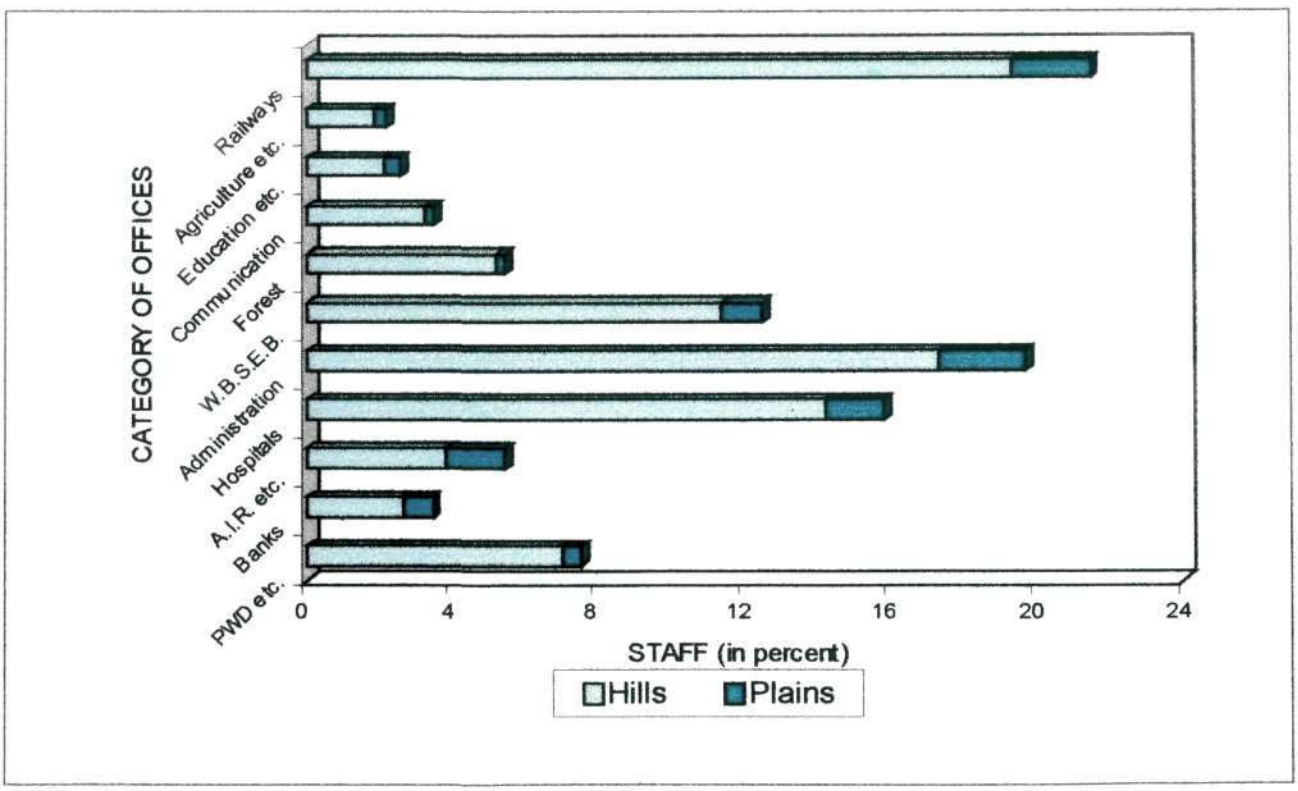


Fig. 4.17 : Place of origin of staff in different categories of offices.

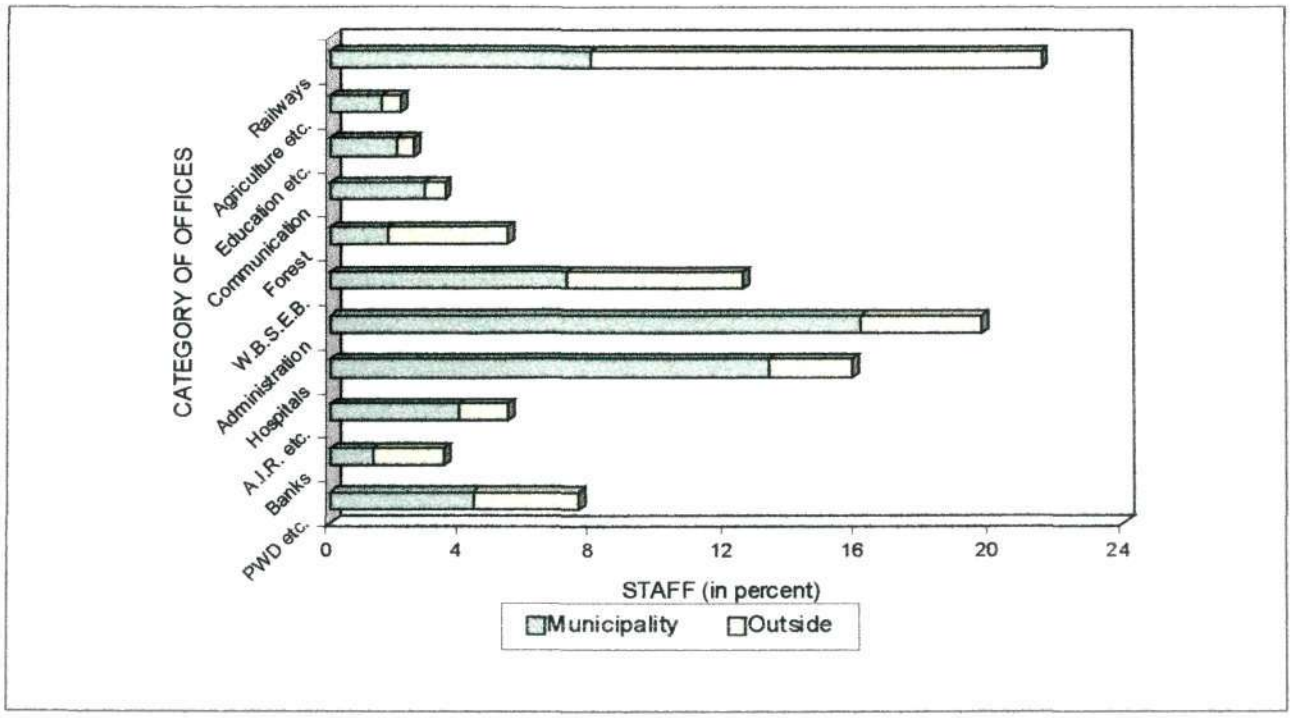


Fig. 4.18: Place of residence of staff in different categories of offices.

percent of the staff commute to the town from the neighbouring areas like Darjiling, Sonada, Tung and Tindharia everyday and 62 percent of the staff reside within the municipality at government quarters or at rented or private houses (Fig. 4.18).

4.7 LIVING CONDITIONS

4.7.1 Housing

Characteristic to its physical features, residential development in this town has occurred in cluster fashion. The type of houses does not show any distinct character like many other hill towns and over the last few decades deterioration and congestion are wide spread. However, the town has some good institutional buildings with great architectural merits. In Dow Hill, there are some western style sloped roofs single family residential houses which reminds the old reputation of Kurseong town as a good place to live.

According to census records Kurseong had a total of 4,432 occupied residential houses in 1991, which were 1,184 in 1971 i.e., an increase of 274 percent during this period. The number of persons living in each of the occupied residential houses was 14 during 1971 and it decreased to 6 in 1991. This shows that the problem of accommodation has lessened to a certain extent during the last two decades.

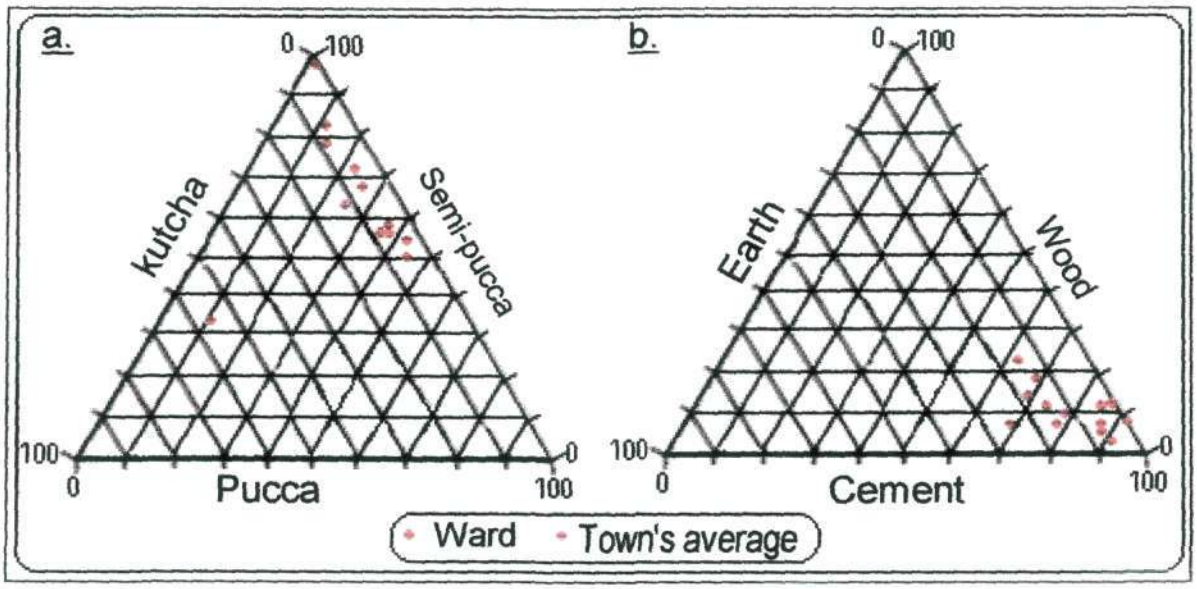


Fig. 4.19: (a) Status of housing units and (b) materials used for floors in Kurseong town.

A physical condition survey of housing units in the town shows that about 25 percent of the houses were entirely pucca with concrete roofs, about 64 percent of the total were pucca with corrugated iron or asbestos roofs and about 11 percent of the houses were kutcha (Fig. 4.19 a). Ward wise distribution shows that pucca houses with concrete roofs are more in number in 4 wards where as in 7 wards the number of pucca houses with corrugated iron or asbestos roofs is more (Appendix). Kutcha houses are found in, all wards except ward I. About 75 percent of the houses have cemented floors, 10 percent have wooden and about 11percent have earthen floors (Fig. 4.19 b).

4.7.2 Water Supply

Kurseong Municipality after its formation developed a water-supply system. Water was obtained from catchment area situated above Dow Hill through 15 springs, which supplied 2,72,760 litre of water. Water was collected in a reservoir with three tanks and was distributed by pipes having a length of 6.44 km. (0'Malley, 1907). In 1913, the Kurseong waterworks scheme was formulated by the Municipality in order to provide filtered water and augment the supply of water to the town. The perennial jhoras around Sepoydhura, about 6.5 km north-east of the town, were tapped and along with the supply from Dow Hill, the water works used to supply about 6,95,540 litre of filtered water and 1,81,840 litre of unfiltered

water to the town daily. A 3,63,680 litre reservoir was constructed near St. Helen's School and water was supplied to this reservoir from Sepoydhura and was distributed 400 house and 60 street hydrants (Dash, 1947).

As the source of water remained the same in spite of considerable growth of population in the town, the Public Health Engineering Directorate formulated a scheme *viz.* Kurseong Water Supply Remodelling Scheme and was approved by the Government of West Bengal in August 1964. The works on the scheme were completed in January 1970 at a cost of about Rs. 12,00,000/-. With the completion of the said scheme, two distinct water supply agencies *viz.* Kurseong Water Supply works under the Kurseong Municipality and the Directorate of Public Health Engineering emerged. It was contemplated that the two agencies would be able to supply about per capita 90 litre of water per day but the target remained a distant dream even though same improvements were made.

Pic. 11 : The service water reservoir at Eagles Crag.

In 1977, a storage reservoir with a capacity of 2,72,76,000 litre was constructed at Dow Hill for tapping the water of Baba Khola, Panigaira and Dharay Khola. Two service reservoirs of 4,31,870 litre were constructed at Eagles Crag (Pic. 11) to increase the supply of water to the town. Earlier water was supplied to this reservoir from the storage reservoir at Dow Hill but due to damage to pipeline, water is now supplied to this reservoir from Thotey Khola near Tung and 8th Mile Khola, north-east of the town.

The total water supply, which the town gets from different reservoirs, is 10,45,580 litre per day. Depending on the supply of water from different sources, the town is divided into

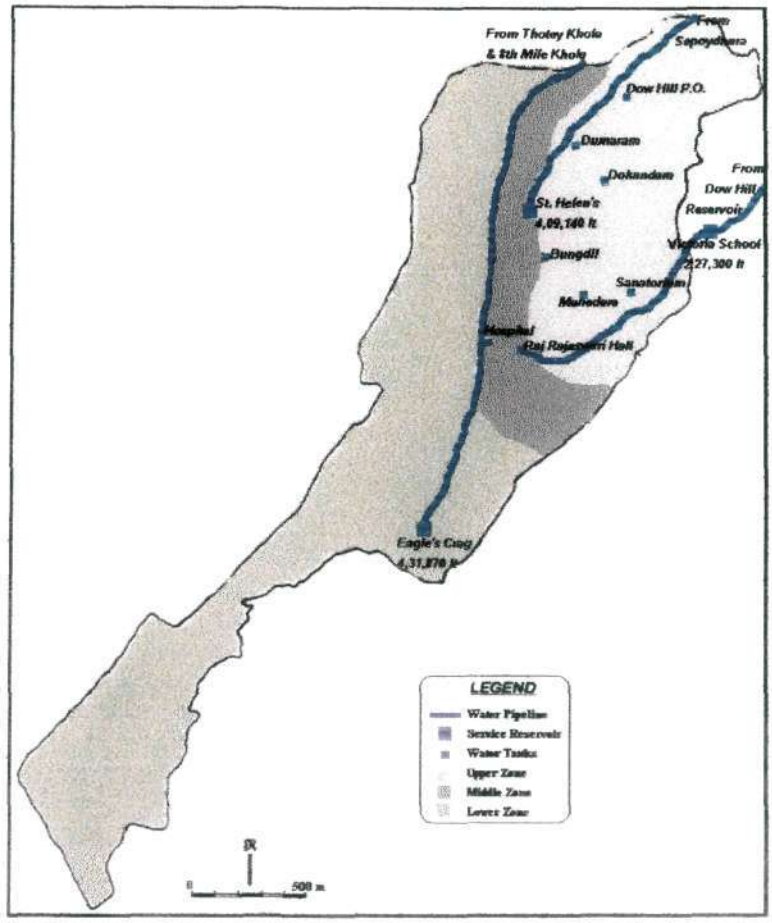


Fig. 4.20 : Water Supply map of Kurseong town.

three zones – upper, middle and lower (Fig. 4.20). The upper zone comprises the eastern part of the town and receives water from the service reservoir of 2,27,300 litre capacity located near Victoria Boy's School. The service reservoir gets its supply from storage reservoir at Dow Hill and Chitray and Pawa Kholas. Water from the service reservoir is supplied to water tanks located at Dow Hill Post Office, Dokandara, Dumaram, Maney Dara, TB Sanatorium, Bangdil and Sub-Divisional Hospital.

The middle zone is located between the upper zone and the Hill Cart Road and gets the supply of water from service reservoir of 4,09,140 litre capacity located near St. Helen's School. Water from this reservoir is distributed directly to the houses in this part of the town. This service reservoir taps its water from springs at Sepoydhura and Aringalay Basti near Tung.The lower zone comprises the western, central and south-western part of the town and

receives the supply of water from service reservoirs at Eagles Crag and is distributed directly to consumers.

The drinking water from different service reservoirs and water tanks is conveyed to individual consumers by gravity flow through a network of distribution system of pipelines. The municipality maintains this distribution system. The filtration plants are located at service reservoirs near Victoria Boys' School, Sepoydhura and Eagles Crag.

Despite tapping of new sources by the P.H.E., effective supply of water to the town's population has not improved to the desired extent and thus, the supply of water to the consumers is restricted to one hour (7 a.m.-8 a.m.) during the lean period and during the monsoons the supply is for two hours – one hour in the morning (7 a.m.-8 a.m.) and one hour in the evening (5 p.m.-6 p.m.).

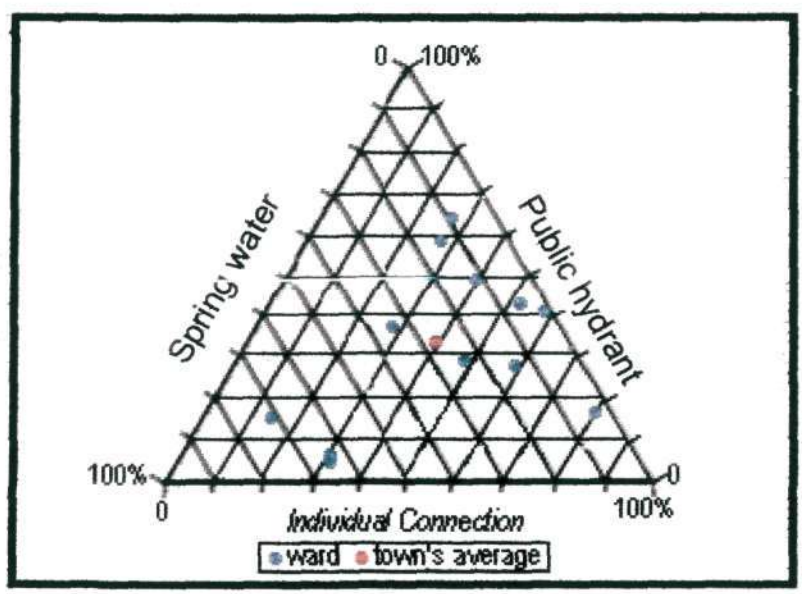


Fig. 4.21: Availability of drinking water in the town.

Data collected from the field survey reveals that about 39 percent of the town dwellers have individual water connection whereas about 33 percent get their water from outside sources like public hydrants and another 28 percent collect their water from jhoras, untreated (Appendix). Ward wise distribution reveals that percentage of individual water connections is poor in 6 wards whereas percentages of people depending on unfiltered water from jhoras are high in 4 wards (Fig. 4.21).

4.7.3 Drainage

Kurseong is one of the heavy rainfall areas in Darjiling district with an average rainfall of around 4000 mm. Due to the natural advantage of a steep east-west slope and a number of jhoras running through the town, drainage of storm water is not a serious problem. Despite heavy rainfall run-off is very quick and the storm water finds its outlet finally to Balason River through any of theses jhoras. Dhobi Khola and Hussein Khola are two perennial streams demarcating the southern and northern boundary of Kurseong respectively. These two jhoras pass through sparsely inhabited areas of the town and are of less importance as service drainage. But Bhagatbir, Kantli, Septic Tank, Tekbir and Debisthan jhoras serve as major disposal channel for storm water as well as household wastage.

However, due to high storm discharge during rainy season, these jhoras often causes serious problems of landslips and soil erosion along their courses. Measures have been taken in the past for guiding these jhoras but due to lack of proper maintenance the bed of these jhoras has eroded away. Major slips have also occurred in some places. Moreover, collection of building materials from these jhoras has also made them more prone to landslides

4.7.4 Sewerage

In 1918, a partial sewerage system was developed for the town for servicing ten public hydrants and a few houses in the *bazaar* area. The total length of the pipeline was about 6 km. and the entire system was run by gravity flow. The sewerage was previously treated in a closed septic tank and finally discharged into a jhora outside the town. This old and under designed sewer system, due to long neglect and improper maintenance, is now in a very bad state. The sewer lines leading to the jhora remain seriously damaged and the central septic tank is out of commission since 1978. Between 1986 and 1994 the municipality laid new sewer lines of diameter of 225 mm and 300 mm having a length of about 2.25 km.

There are at present 1,869 sanitary latrines in the town of which 958 latrines were converted from service to sanitary latrines. There are 19 community latrines (Pic. 12) in the town of which 18 are managed by the municipality and 1 by the Sulabh International Society. No community latrines are available in wards VII and XI. Ten community latrines are connected to individual septic tanks and the rest are connected to sewer lines. The effluents

Pic. 12 : A community latrine in ward IX.

from these latrines are generally discharged directly into the nearby jhoras and these latrines do not get sufficient quantum of water for flushing the system. The inhuman practice of carrying night soil from service privies by head load continued in this municipality since its

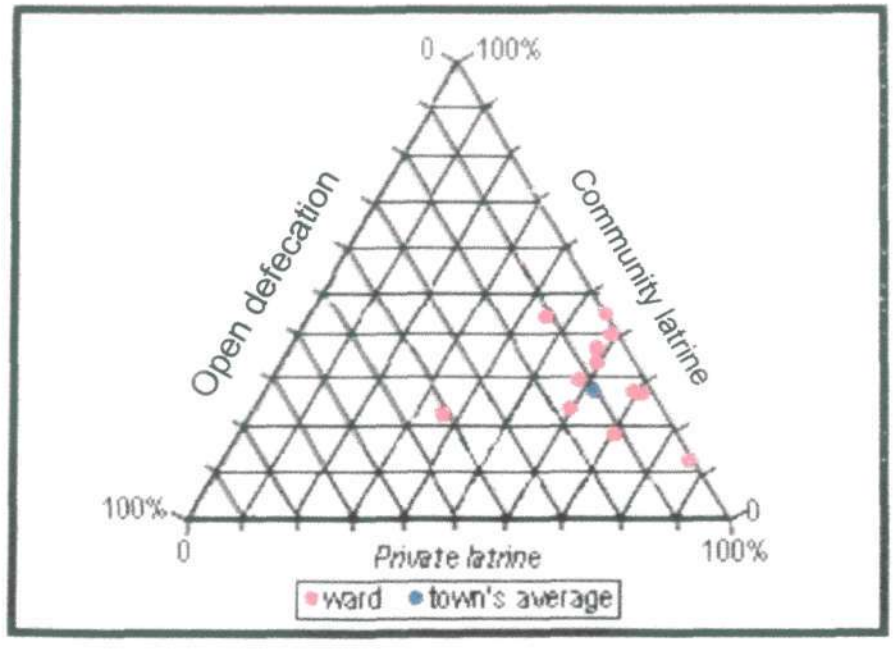


Fig. 4.22 : Availability of sanitary facilities in the town.

inception till 1998. The night soil was carried by the sweepers during the early hours of the day and dumped into the septic tanks of the public latrines or into the sewer lines. The

sweepers and scavengers were to work in an environment with full risk of health hazards. But with the financial help from the government, the municipality has helped in conversion of service privies into pour flush latrines and practice of carrying night soil by head load was done away with since 1999.

It is evident from Fig.4.22 that sanitary standard in Kurseong town is much below the essential norm laid down by the Public Health Authorities. About 11percent of the town dwellers defecates in open areas whereas about 28 percent and 62 percent of the town dwellers use public or community latrines and private latrines respectively. Open defecation is more (40 percent) in ward V and using public or community latrines are more prevalent in 6 wards (Appendix).

4.7.5 Solid Waste

Major sources of solid waste are the domestic sector, residential schools and the market area. At present solid wastes are collected from roadside by the municipal sweepers, which are then dumped into the community vats, 44 in number. A tractor-trailer and a truck owned by the municipality collects solid wastes from the vats and dumps them in the dumping ground beside Bourdillion Road located in ward IX (presently ward XIII). At present about 8 tons of solid wastes is generated of which about 50 percent is handled by the authority. About 60 percent of the vats are located along the main thoroughfares of the town *viz.* Hill Cart Road, Burdwan Road, Monteviot Road and Acharya Bhanu Path and the rest are located in the residential areas.

Refuse characteristic depends on a number of factors such as food habits, cultural tradition, and socio-economic and climatic conditions. It varies not only from city to city but even within the city and also seasonally. The analysis of collected refuse samples reveals almost the same trend as obtained from the analysis of refuse of other municipal cities/towns in India. The physical analysis is on wet weight basis, which helps in choosing the system for collection and processing. Table 4.5 shows the comparison of solid waste characteristic of two hill towns – Darjiling and Kurseong with that of Silguri.

The present total strength of sweepers is about 65 but this number is highly inadequate for the increased volume of sanitation and conservancy services that are now being provided by the municipal authority.

Table 4.5 : Solid waste characteristics of Darjiling, Kurseong and Silguri.

	Item	Darjiling	Kurseong	Siliguri
1	Colour	Greyish black	Greyish black	Greyish black
2	Odour	Obnoxious	Obnoxious	Obnoxious
3	Density (dry basis, gm/cc)	0.48	0.51	0.55
4	Paper, card board, cloth, jute, rags etc. %	7.8	5.63	10.3
5	Rubber and leather %	1.84	0.88	1.00
6	Vegetable wastes and putrescible matters %	38.16	35.23	40.4
7	Plastics %	7.54	8.71	7.66
8	Glass %	0.31	0.36	0.38
9	Stones and unburnt coal wastes %	5.13	6.72	6.00
10	Ash, loose earth, cinder, sand etc. %	38.28	41.68	33.6
11	Ferrous and non-ferrous metals %	0.94	0.79	0.66
	Total in %	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Draft report of Consulting Engineering Services (India) Pvt. Ltd.

4.7.6 Electricity

The peak demand of electricity in the town is during 6 p.m.-9 p.m. and it is around 3 MW and the demand during non-peak hour is around 1 MW. Bulk consumers like the All India Radio, Doordarshan and the Castleton Tea Garden also consume this electricity. Initially electricity used to come from Faji Hydel Power Station in the Balason valley. But with the setting up of the 33 kV Salbari Sub-station near Siliguri and the 33 kV Ghoom Sub-station near Darjiling, power now comes to the Phankhabari 11 kV Sub-station in Kurseong town from either of these two 33 kV Sub-stations. At present power comes from the Ghoom Sub-station but the supply is usually low and remains at 8-8.5 kV (approx.). Faji Power Station supplies about 20 percent of the town's total demand of electricity. Rinchintong Hydel Power Station, which used to supply electricity to the town, is now defunct due to technical fault. The electricity received by the 11 kV Phankhabari Sub-Station is distributed to the different parts of the town by step down transformers. There are approximately 5,000 domestic consumers and 10 industrial consumers in the town. The main industrial consumers are the *atta chakies* (flourmills) and the grill fabrication units. The West Bengal State Electricity Board (W.B.S.E.B.) also supplies electricity to the municipality for streetlights. There are 520 street lamps of 100 watts, 9 street lamps of 200 watts, 51 street lamps of 150 watts and 44 street

lamps of 250 watts. The last two categories have sodium vapour lamps. The municipality maintains these street lamps.

The Kurseong unit of the W.B.S.E.B. is under modernisation drive and a computer section has been set up for providing better facility to the consumers. For that purpose the town has been divided into four zones with each zones again divided into sub-zones and there are fifteen sub-zones in the town. The zones and sub-zones were demarcated on the basis of number of domestic consumers and the prospect of development in terms of consumption in a particular area.

4.8 RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

4.8.1 Libraries

There are three public libraries and one Sub-divisional library in the town. The oldest library in the town is the Gorkha Public Library, established in 1913. The library is affiliated to the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi and runs without any recurring assistance from the government. The old building of the library, which came up on a plot of land donated by the Raja of Burdwan, was destroyed in a devastating fire in 1986 and the present building was completed in 1989. The next library to come up in the town was the Muslim Library Institute in 1932. This library is also a privately run library although it received a one-time grant of Rs 1,000 from the Wakf Board. The Bloomfield Library was set up in 1944 and in 1964 it was given the status of a sub-divisional library. It is a privately managed government-aided library and has three staff to look after it. The other library is the Unit Library of the WBNVF and is primarily meant for the personnel of the National Volunteer Force.

Table 4.6 : Libraries in Kurseong town.

No.	Name of the library	Year of establishment	Number of members	Number of books
1.	Gorkha Public Library	1913	350	1,703
2.	Muslim Library Institute	1932	100	1,000 (approx.)
3.	Bloomfield Library	1944	141	10,000 (approx.)
4.	Unit Library, WBNVF	1960	50	700 (approx.)

Other than these public libraries, the numerous residential schools in the town also maintain their own libraries for the benefit of their students.

4.8.2 Public Halls

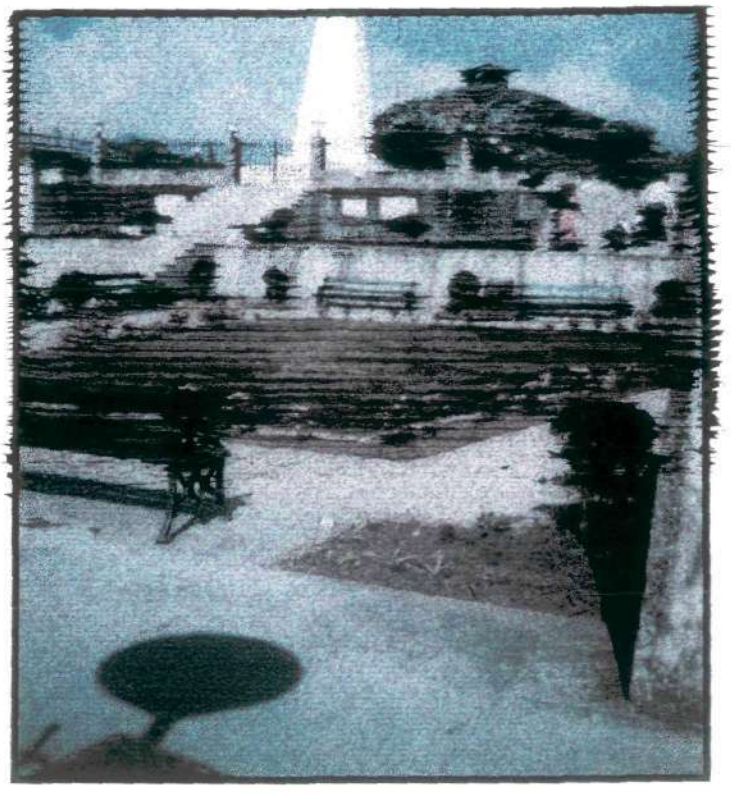
There are two public auditoriums and one cinema hall in the town. The oldest auditorium is the Raj Rajeswari Hall, established in 1930 with a sitting capacity of 350 seats. It is a privately managed hall run by the Bengali Association of Kurseong and was built by the munificence of S.B. Dey and the Raja of Bardhaman. The other auditorium is run by the Gorkha Dukha Nibarak Sangha (G.D.N.S.) and has a sitting capacity of 425. The cinema hall has a sitting capacity of 400. The Raj Rajeswari Hall and the G.D.N.S. Hall are situated near the office of the Municipality and the Montiviot Road respectively and the cinema hall is situated along the Hill Cart Road.

There are at present four video halls in the town. Even four years ago there were 14 video halls in the town, which were doing brisk business, but due to the spread of cable network in different parts of the town the demand for watching movies in the halls has dwindled. Over the years owners of some of the halls either closed them or started different business in the existing premises.

4.8.3 Parks and playgrounds

There are two parks located in and around Kurseong town. One park is situated at Eagles Crag and the other park named as Deer Park, is located at Dow Hill, outside the municipal boundary. The park at Eagles Crag (Pic.13) has one monument constructed in the memory of the people who gave their lives for demanding a separate state – Gorkhaland. The park also has an observatory tower from where one can have a view of the plains in the south and Mt. Kanchenjunga in the north. The Deer Park is situated 5.5 km from the Railway Station and as the name suggests has an attraction of few animals like yaks, rabbits, Himalayan Civet, monkeys and birds.

There are two public playgrounds – Chandmari and Montiviot in the town. Of the two playgrounds, Chandmari ground is bigger than the Montiviot but no development has taken place at Chandmari due to the unwillingness on the part of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India to handover the right of land to the civil authorities. A pavilion has been recently constructed at the Montiviot ground and most of the games and public functions like the celebration of the Independence Day on 15th August are conducted here.



Pic. 13 : The park at Eagles Crag.

CONCLUSION

The educational institutions play a very important role in the growth of Kurseong town. Over the years the number of educational institutions has increased and there are 40 educational institutions in the town of which 11 are secondary and 4 are higher secondary schools. During the pre-independence period two distinct types of schools came up in the town – one for the Europeans and another for the local people. Private entrepreneurs set up all the English medium schools, which came up in the post-1970 period. About 55 percent of the students in the surveyed schools are boys. Most of the post-1970 English medium residential schools are small in size. The vernacular medium schools cater to students coming not only from within the town but also from neighbouring villages and tea gardens. The students studying in the residential schools come from different places but about 50 percent of the students are from the town itself. The demand for education through English medium in a hill station and growth of a neo-rich class has helped in growth of schools in Kurseong town. The

English medium schools have helped in the generation of employment. Female teaching staff are more in number than male teaching staff.

There are two hospitals in the town of which one deals with general patients and the other with tuberculosis stricken patients. The general hospital (Sub-divisional Hospital) has at present 100 beds and offers different facilities to both outdoor and indoor patients at nominal cost. The number of patients reporting to the tuberculosis hospital has dwindled over the years.

The grocery shops account for about 26 percent of the total number of shops in the town followed by hardware, stationers', small workshops and wholesale shops. Most of the shops are concentrated at the centre of the town (wards VI and VII) and in wards around the CBD. Few shops have come up in the localities away from the centre of the town. There are three nationalised banks and one co-operative bank in town of which State Bank of India is the largest.

The Darjiling Himalayan Railways, which was laid in 1881 to improve the transportation network in the hills, has lost its importance over the years as a carrier of people and goods. Kurseong town is well connected with Siliguri by the Hill Cart Road and Pankhabari Road and with Darjiling by the Hill Cart Road. The different localities in town are well connected with either metalled roads or with pedestrian walkways. Due to the centralised location of Kurseong town near about 180 taxis and buses plying between Siliguri and Darjiling pass through Kurseong town every day. There are 1,526 telephone subscribers in the town and 19 public telephone booths. There are two factories in the town, which manufactures tea for the market.

Because of the town's status as a sub-divisional headquarters, offices of different government departments are found in this town. There at present 57 offices and are scattered all over the town. Most of the employees are from the hills and reside within the municipality.

Different types of houses from corrugated roofs to concrete roofs and from single storied to multi-storied buildings are found in Kurseong town. About 25 percent of the houses are pucca and about 11 percent of the houses are kutcha. The town at present gets a supply of 10,45,580 litre of water per day from different sources. Only 39 percent of the town dwellers have individual water connection where as about 22 percent of the town dwellers still depend on untreated jhora water. The central septic tank is out of commission and the entire sewerage of the town is discharged into the jhoras. About 62 percent of the town dwellers have

individual latrines where as about 11 percent defecates in the open. Every day the municipality handles about 50 percent of garbage in the town. The electricity is supplied to 5,000 domestic and 10 industrial consumers in the town through 11 kv Pankhabari Sub-station.

The growth of different functions and social infrastructures in the town has on one hand resulted in economic prosperity of the town and on the other hand resulted in congestion, sub-standard housing and unhealthy environment. There is a need to know in detail the basic problems faced by the town.