

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF JALPAIGURI TOWN

#### INTRODUCTION

Jalpaiguri is said to have derived its name from the olive-trees [Jalpai in Bengali], which grew in the town and were seen even in 1900. The suffix guri means a place. The name Jalpaiguri might be associated with Jalpesh, the Lord Siva, who had been in the minds of men there from time immemorial.

Jalpaiguri was the nucleus of the district formed in 1869 by the British rulers. The local name of a place like Jalpaiguri, which happened to be the seat of a military cantonment, thus gave first its name to the sub – division and then to the district. Hooker and Renel (1788) both mentioned the town as 'Jelpigory'. According to Hooker (1854) Jalpaiguri was 'a large straggling village near the banks of the Tista. (Himalayan Journal). Some similarities are common in the naming as suggested by Hooker as well as by Renel.

The town of today had a complete different appearance even a couple of centuries back. Most of the areas in the region was covered with thick forest and inhabited by ferocious animals. The plains, river tracts, foothill were abound with back fever and malaria, as such the region was almost unhabited (Chakrabarty. P. 1987). However the Jalpaiguri district came into being on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1869 by way of merger of the Western Duar District and Jalpaiguri subdivision of Rangpur District.

In prehistoric times the district formed and became a part of the powerful kingdom of Pragyotisha or Kamrupa, which extended in far west at the Karatoya. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D king Bhaskaravarman, who was a contemporary of Harshavardhan of Kanauj and Sashanka of west Bengal, ruled over the whole Brahmaputra valley in Assam and a part of North Bengal. The Bengal 'Pal' dynasty included Jalpaiguri district as well as Varendra in its dominions. In

the 11<sup>th</sup> century the 'pal's were disposed off their kingdom in varendra by the Kaivata Chief Divyak. According to Kamrupa Buranji (a chronicle of Assam King) a Buddhist monk named Jitari, who was referred by the 'Pal' king Mahipal, had established himself as a feudatory chief some where in the western Kamrupa. The capital of western Kamrupa was probably Kamtapur, located in Jalpaiguri district.

In 15<sup>th</sup> century 'Khen' Rajas such as Niladhvaj, Chakradhwaj and Nilamber extended their dynasty from Kamrupa to Karatoya. Khen Raja Niladhvaj introduced himself as 'Kamteswar' and settled in the capital named kamtapur near Kochbihar. Later in the memory of ascended Khen Rajas, people who settled near River Tista began to use 'Sen' as their title, subsequently the area is known as 'Sen Para'. In 1545, Sishya Singha or ShivDev capture the area presently known as Jalpaiguri district and established its capital in the Baikunthapur forest, on the bank of river Karatoya. He introduced himself as 'Raikat' king. In 1587 king Nara Narayan's son Lakshmi Narayan ascended the throne of Kamtapur, and his son Maharaj ModNarayan (1665-1680) completed the construction of the temple and made grant of 44 jotes or rent free land for the maintainance of the Jalpeswar Temple, located in present Jalpaiguri district.

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a cousin of the Kochbihar king continuing to farm Mughals on his behalf, and expanded his capital in Baikunthapur forest. The country west of the Tista belongs to the Raja of Baikunthapur, who had in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century become quite powerful with the help of 'Sanyasi'. During this time river Karatoya started drying out and as a result Raja Dharma Deva Raikat (1709-1724) shifted his capital to the present Jalpaiguri town (Rajbari). Under the 'Dewani- grant' at the time of Shah Alam, emperor of Delhi (1765), Jalpaiguri was acquired by the East India Company. Captain Steuart of the East India Company captured Jalpaiguri on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1773 during the time of Raja Darpa Deva, son of Raja Dharma Deva Raikat. And the independent Raja of Baikunthapur became the Zaminder of Jalpaiguri. Jalpaiguri was then included in the frontier faujdari (Magisterial Jurisdiction) of Fakirkundi or Rangpur District. Raja Sarba Deva (1809-1848), son of Raja Jayanta Deva constructed the famous Rajbari Deeghi in 1829. The Jalpaiguri subdivision was formed in 1854 with its headquarters at Sookanee and was called the Sookanee subdivision until the formation

of a military cantonment at Jalpaiguri leading to the transfer of the headquarters and the alteration of the name to Jalpaiguri Subdivision. River Tista at the east and River Karala flows through the heart of the town with plenty of drinking water and the favourable location which offered the necessary security to 73 Artillery and 11 Mounted Regiments, associated with the transfer of cantonment in Jalpaiguri town just a few months before the out break of mutiny of Barrakpur Cantonment. In 1869 the southern part was united with the Titalya subdivision of Rangpur to form the new district of Jalpaiguri. The district of Jalpaiguri as an administrative unit came into being on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1869, by the amalgamation of the western Duars District with the Jalpaiguri subdivision of Rangpur. It may be noted that a portion of present Jalpaiguri was a subdivision in the Rangpur District now in Bangladesh (From 1854-1869).

### 1.1 FORMATION OF JALPAIGURI MUNICIPALITY

The Municipal Administration was first introduced in 1885 in Jalpaiguri town and in this respect it has been one of the oldest municipalities of North Bengal. Historically the development of the district started only after the growth of tea plantations which began in 1874-1875. The western Duars, which had been once a very thinly populated forest area, became gradually populated with the development of inhabited village, tea gardens and small factories and Jalpaiguri became the main center of transaction of tea as well as the center of trade and commerce. Hooker visited this place in 1854, and while traveling from Rangdhamali to Baikunthapur, he described the area as 'miserable country'. But, within 1901 the area was developed so much, that Gruning said that, there was a few district in India, those area developed so rapidly as Western Duars.

Swadesi and Intipartition Movement (1905-1911) had their revibration in the town. At Dinbazar, the boycott of foreign goods movement led to the arrest of Durgadash Chakrabarty, Rabindra Nath Sikdar, Ananda Biswas and others. In 1939, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee held its Annual conference in Jalpaiguri town. In this time, the congress had captured the Jalpaiguri Municipality. District committees of the Muslim League (1940) and the Hindu Mahasabha were formed on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, independence came with the partition of the country, which affected Jalpaiguri to a great extent.

## 1.2 DEVELOPMENT OF JALPAIGURI TOWN

The urban fabric of Jalpaiguri town in the beginning of last century was almost rural in nature. According to Hooker, it was a large village dotted with jungles, bamboo bush and marshy tracts. Present Silpasamiti Para was covered by dense jungle, infested with wild animals including leopard. The 1<sup>st</sup> tea garden near Jalpaiguri town was established at Gajoldoba (Gurjanghora) in 1875. From 1875 to 1910 more than 150 tea gardens were setup in the district, and attracted people from the other parts of the country. Modern transport system was introduced different places with Jalpaiguri by 'North Bengal State Railway' and Bengal Duars Railways in 1878 and 1896 respectively (Dasgupta. M. 1987). Many people specially traders from Rajasthan, Punjab, and U.P settled during the period from 1870 to 1878. Most offices, residential, commercial houses were kuncha houses with tin roofs. The Head Post Office was constructed in 1878. The Iron House built by Maharaja of Kochbihar in 1880, was the oldest pucca building of the town situated opposite of P.W.D office. Rajbari, Head Post Office, Iron House were the only pucca houses in the town. A church was established in 1882 near Kutchary only for Europeans. Later another church was established in 1896 for Indian Christians at Race course. During this time the roads were very narrow and unmetalled. To improved the communication between the east and west bank of river Karala, a wooden bridge was constructed on Karala near Dinbazar in 1884. The 2<sup>nd</sup> bridge was constructed on Karala near Head Post Office in 1885, which was known as Iron Bridge. This Iron Bridge was useful to connect kutchary to Head Post Office and Railway Station. Residential areas developed in Raikat Para, Babupara, Ukil Para, and near Dinbazar. In present Silpasamiti Para and near Rajbari rubber plantation was initiated by one European named Mansion in 1879, which expanded beyond the residential zones of the town. Municipality union Board functioned from the Iron House up to 1893 and its own house was built in 1893 near European Club. Municipality established with 5wards, covering 9.61 km<sup>2</sup> area. The town gradually becomes the center of transaction of tea. The first Bank was established by the British Ruler in Damdim, which was transfer to Jalpaiguri town and named as State Bank Of India. A number of schools were also set up in the town and the town has become a great center of business, service, culture and religion. The Town Club was established in 1898. The 1<sup>st</sup> published monthly subscription of newspaper was Trisrota (1900), which was one of the oldest published news paper of North Bengal. The population increased from 4,17,855 in 1872,

to 5,80,570 in 1881 and further increase from 680736 in 1891 to 7,87,380 in 1901. In 1901 more than 1/5 of the population was composed of immigrants from elsewhere. In 1915-16 one bridge was constructed near kutchary (court) for the use of Europeans. For the easily accessibility to Suniti Bala Girls school (Sadar Girls School) and the other part of the town, specially to the Sadar Hospital. Dolna Bridge was constructed in 1921-22 and the old wooden bridge near Dinbazar was renovated at the same time. In 1940 the 'Iron Bridge near Kutchary was converted into concrete bridge and name Brabome Bridge, which is presently known as Subhash Setu. The modern transportation facility of Jalpaiguri town and tea based economy help to grow very rapidly both in population and socio-economic condition.

The creation of Jalpaiguri Division consisting of five districts. After independence large influx of refugee population put tremendous pressure on the urban fabrics of the town. In 1961 the geographical area of the Municipality expanded to 10.075 km<sup>2</sup> and the number of wards also increased from 5 to 7. The Zilla Parishad came into being on 23 Oct 1964. Large colonies at Panda Para and Mashkalaibari were established. Later due to the fragmentation of the wards, the number has been increased from 7 to 19 in 1980. In 1995 the Municipal area again expanded up to 12.975 km<sup>2</sup> and the total number of ward increases to 25. But due to the emergence of Siliguri, and partition with Bangladesh, Jalpaiguri losts its communication and locational advantage and later known as the district of 3T – Tea, Timber and Tobacco. Presently it includes another T that is Tourism.