

CHAPTER - V

Conclusion

By the turn of the 19th century Darjeeling had definitely attained maturity as an urban centre by any definition; be it population, or political/administrative role, or availability of civic amenities or economic/institutional role. When Darjeeling was taken by the British from the Raja of Sikkim there were not a hundred inhabitants¹, but by the 90's of the 19th century Darjeeling had a population figure of 14,145.²

This phenomenal increase was made possible by migration, a characteristic of urbanization. The immigration took place from all the neighbouring countries like Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, and Nepal. ³ People came from the plains also to take advantage of the various potentials it held for them by way of business, employment etc. Darjeeling, thus, became a cosmopolitan place with people of different ethnic groups,⁴ speaking different languages, following different religions; a true heterogeneous character 'a Babel of tribes and nations'

Darjeeling did not have any administration worth the name in the thirties but in course of time, a well developed administrative infra-structure grew. It had the seat of the district administration and during the summers it had the privilege of having the Bengal Government's Head-quarter seated here. The life of insecurity was a story of the past, for Darjeeling had by the 70's a well organised police force with the Superintendent having his office as well as residence here.⁶ People could lead a tension free life. With the establishment of the Municipality in 1850, the responsibility of providing civic amenities to its residents was taken up by it and was discharged with efficiency. By the 90's, Darjeeling had all possible amenities. Even the suburbs of Singamari on the north, Bhutia busti on the north-east, Tunsoong busti on the east, and Jorebunglow and Ghoom on the south, were steadily improving in every way. Almost all the drains in the market and native Town had now Mirzapur stone floors or half round glazed earthenware pipes. A few of the drains in the European quarter had been soled with Mirzapur stone during the year. All the

main drains and most of the minor-drains were flushed with water and were deodorised regularly and when necessary. There were covered bathing places, latrines and urinals to suit males and females at convenient places. The town was fairly lighted with kerosine-oil lights. Later, it was replaced by electricity. Darjeeling happened to be the second city after London to have electricity. The general and sanitary condition of the town had been satisfactory.⁷ The protagonists of a Local administration and amenities as criterion to qualify for being a town could have no reason not to certify that Darjeeling was a Town.

Economically speaking, it proved to have ample potential. Though in the initial stages nobody would have dreamed of it. Even the Britishers were concerned at the initial stage to develop it into a sanatorium the purpose for which it was acquired. It was only after the fifties that its commercial potential was realised, perhaps more so after the 60's when the authorities seriously started thinking to use it as a centre for trans-frontier trade particularly with the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. The idea was not wrong and by the 90's millions of rupees worth import and export took place from here. Besides, it could also boast of a well organised local market with shops of every description doing good business, instead of 'getting everything of every description from the plains at a great cost'.⁸ Darjeeling, once oblivious, now became known worldwide for its superb, flaboury tea, an industry, starting moderately, grew into a great number having 186 gardens by 1895. ⁹ By the end of the 19th century, it had also earned a great name for itself as an enchanting tourist place and had developed a reasonably well hotel industry.

Darjeeling became an important centre for education, especially an education on the European pattern and in a familiar European environment, and proved a boon for many European parents living in India, and those who were not as fortunate as others of their community could now send their children to these schools.¹⁰ Even those Indians who could afford the cost could avail the opportunity for their children. It now had the solace for the sick, even for the poor in the form of a Charitable Dispensary.¹¹

Thus, Darjeeling did not end up by being a sanatorium only for the British and other European personnels engaged in the services of the Government. It gained importance of its own by performing many other functions. However, one must not forget that whatever potential Darjeeling might be having they could not have flowered had there been no road. Part of Major Garstin's report

deserves mention here to highlight the importance of a proper road if Darjeeling had to become what it finally became. "From Titalya to Punkhabarree is about 25 miles and from this to Darjeeling 32 miles more nearly all up hill. A porter used to receive Re. 1.00 for taking a load of thirty seers (28 kg. approx.) these fifty seven miles. In the rains no food was available on the entire route of fifty seven miles except at two or three places at an exorbitant rate, therefore, a porter had to carry his own provisions also; an extra load of ten seers along with the assigned load of thirty seers. A porter had to encounter a number of difficulties during the ten days' journey to reach Darjeeling. The journey used to be particularly horrible during the Monsoons when the hills had at times incessant rains. The nights were very cold all the year round. A porter had but little clothing to protect himself from the cold and not a dry spot to sleep on. The hostile weather often forced him to go without food for he would be unable to light a fire to cook his food or keep himself warm or dry his clothes. In some part of his journey, he was even faced with scarcity of drinking water. To make things worse his feet would be inflicted with peepsah bites which festered and rendered him if not lame, at least incapable of performing the journey in proper time; consequently expanding his provisions and adding hunger to his other sufferings. In many instances, the poor fellow's miseries would be put to an end only by death. Major Garstin was told that fourteen bodies were lying exposed on the road at once. The number might probably be exaggerated, but the fact that several of such unfortunate people used to die in this manner on the roads was incontestable.¹²

Things improved after 1842 when the Old Military Road was completed, though not suitable for cart traffic.¹³ But still this road made life much easier for the pioneers to carry on with their work of improvement of the station. Meanwhile efforts continued to make an alternative road. By 1849, the small township enjoyed the facilities of a hotel, holiday-bungalows, a market, a hospital and even a jail. In 1848, convalescent barracks were built on nearby Jalapahar as part of the expansion of Darjeeling Cantonment, meant to accommodate 400 men. It featured a parade ground 7,520 ft. above sea-level; there could have been few parades held at higher altitude anywhere in Europe.¹⁴

Presumably, Darjeeling would not have reached the height of its glory without the Hill Cart Road which was finally opened to wheeled traffic in 1869.¹⁵ This was its life-line and linked it with the main stream of the plains. Within another twenty years Darjeeling could boast of several roads connecting it to

the neighbouring countries as well, besides a labyrinth of roads within the town. But the crowning moment came in 1881, when the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway ran its 'Toy train' on the tracks running parallel to the Hill Cart Road. Darjeeling was then approachable easily from any part of the country and was very much brought on the map of India.

Europeans, especially the British were desperately anxious to convince themselves that parts of India were like Britain... and they recreated areas which were practically indistinguishable from the real thing.¹⁶ The names of the gates of the new houses in Darjeeling had their origin elsewhere and tea-party on the terrace at Cedar Cottage, Meadow Bank, or Verbian Villa often gave the participants the feeling of being in Brighton or Dorchester, an illusion almost dispelled by the scenery with its deep ravines and thickly-wooded slopes, a setting on a scale grander than the tidy fields and winding, hedge lined lanes so often yearned for. Almost, but not entirely, for a stroll around the twisting, steep pathways among villas, draped in ivy, their comforting chimneys peeping up from the flanks of the ridges kept the illusion alive, like the hazy memory of an afternoon dream on an idyllic summer day long ago, for the tops of the ridges were exclusively European. As at other hill-stations, the most prominent citizens lived in the dress circle, as the altitude decreased, so did the social standing of the inhabitants.¹⁷ In this respect, Darjeeling presented itself as the typical British township—quiet, elegant, nestled in the arms of nature, urban, yet without the hubub of a city.

During the long journey of its urbanization thousands of people contributed their bits, but among them the name of Dr. Campbell will always stand out as unforgettable. A report filed by a special Commissioner sent to Darjeeling in 1853, leaves no doubt that it was he, who turned a desolate forest into a lovely garden. The introductory remarks of this very comprehensive document, splendidly sums up Dr. Campbell's achievements. "In speaking of the administration of this district generally, before going into the details of the various departments, it is necessary to observe that whatever has been done here has been done by Dr. Campbell alone... By his exertions an excellent sanatorium has been established for troops and others, a Hill Corps has been established for the maintenance of order and improvement of communication, no less than 70 European houses have been built, with a bazar, a Jail and

buildings for the accommodation of the sick in the depot, a revenue of Rs. 50,000/ has been raised and is collected punctually and without balance, a simple system of administration of justice has been introduced, well adapted to the character of the tribes with whom he had to deal, the system of forced labour formerly in use has been abolished and labour with other valuables, has been left to find its own price in an open market, roads have been made, experimental cultivation of tea and coffee has been introduced and various European fruits and grapes, and this has been effected at the same time, the various tribes of inhabitants have been conciliated and their habits and prejudices treated with a caution an easy task. The way has been shown and those who succeed Dr. Campbell have only to follow it as far as they are capable of doing so....I may in short say of him, that to him is the Government indebted for the formation of the District of Darjeeling, for the revenue which is now derived from the district and for the organisation of the whole system of management. The people on the other hand, are indebted to him for the blessings of just and parental government, under which they, at this moment, enjoy a degree of liberty as well as of protection of property and person, unknown to them under their former masters and they are fully aware of this advantage. It is to the personal character of the Superintendent that this success is won and to the admirable temper, deliberation and forethought with which he has acted throughout and this success would have been greater had he received more support and more means of carrying out the sound views which he entertains of improvement of the District entrusted to his charge.¹⁸

No doubt that Dr. Campbell's contributions were numerous and great but one must not forget the name of Col. Lloyd also, who for some mysterious reasons did not have a word of appreciation from the government for which Fred Pinn rightly holds its conduct as an act of gross meanness and stunning ingratitude.¹⁹ For, there is no denying the fact that Lloyds' contributions were by no means insignificant towards the establishment of the sanatorium. For five years, he had lived almost uninterruptedly in the hills..He must have walked and ridden, literally thousands of miles up and down and all over the Sikkim mountains. For twelve months he served in the company of Dr. Chapman as a guinea pig, by living at Darjeeling under most primitive and trying conditions, testing the effects of the climate on a European constitution. He kept a diary during that time which was embodied in his report with the recommendation of Darjeeling's suitability as a sanatorium.²⁰ But even this credit has been taken

away from him, for on the record it is J.W. Grant, the Commercial Resident at Malda, to whom 'the place would be indebted for any importance into which it might hereafter rise.'²¹

When the actual settlement of Darjeeling and construction of road began, Col. Lloyd was conceivably the hardest worked man in the Presidency of Bengal, if the voluminous correspondence and the keeping of records and accounts the administration of this undertaking entailed are added, the Colonel's achievement fills one with admiration for his physical fitness and stamina.²²

Yet this man died at Darjeeling unsung; no wonder the compiler of a Darjeeling guide exclaimed, 'And such is his fame! and the gratitude of posterity that his name is not preserved in Darjeeling for the road and Botanic Garden perpetuate the name of Mr. W. Lloyd the proprietor of a bank of that name.'²³ When he died there was no public demonstration to honour his memory. It was left to his widow to remind the posterity, of service he had once rendered to generations to come by her putting up a plaque in St. Andrew's Church :

Sacred to the memory of
George Aylmer Lloyd, C.B.
a Lt. General in the Majesty's Bengal Army
who died at Darjeeling on 4th June, 1865, aged 76.

To his exertions and personal influence with the Rajah of Sikkim the Province of Bengal is indebted for the sanatorium of Darjeeling, this tablet is erected by his bereaved widow.²⁴ The forgetfulness about Col. Lloyd is unusual in British culture, because their sense of Archive is very strong and they have been found to memorise the achievement of the predecessors in very many ways. So, British forgetfulness about Col. Lloyd cannot be explained by any incident of amnesia than by the fact that the social structure was hierachic in which importance was attached to a person on consideration of official and social standing. Kennedy had very ably argued ²⁵ on the basis of researches done by Bernard Cohn ²⁶ David Arnold, ²⁷ Ballhatchet ²⁸ Waltrand Ernt²⁹ that the British society was not a homogeneous unit of a 'middle class aristocracy'.³⁰ It was a conglomerate of merchants, missionaries, planters, railway workers, soldiers and various other groups who preferred to live within the universe of their subcultures. The relationship between the different rungs of official hierarchy and the official and non-official communities was dominated by a feeling of disdain. Lloyd was perhaps victimised like many others by this

disdain of the high-official dom. Besides, the British population in the hills was swelled by vagrants, orphans, prostitutes, the insane, who were usually held to be bracketed, without being differentiated for their racial origin, as the European class. But this illusion is being dispelled by modern researches³¹ that their being British nevertheless they held to be what precisely they were and therefore shifted to the social out-skirt of the British society.

Notes and References

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GLOSSARY

Bannghee	Person carrying loads evenly distributed on a pole slung across his shoulders.
Beneah	Merchant or trader
Dooly	Covered litter especially to carry injured soldiers or sick people
Duffdar	Petty officer of local police
Gharrie Wallah	Coachman
Gomastha	Local agent
Hackery	Bullock-cart
Muchan	A raised platform for protection of crops or hunting.
Palnkeens	Box-litter with a pole projecting before and behind which is borne on the shoulders of four to six men transporting travellers
Toujohn (Taunjauns)	A sort of portable chair. It is carried as a palankeen by a single pole and four carriers.