

CHAPTER – IV

POST COLONIAL URBAN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF DARJEELING

A classical view of urbanisation characterized an urban area as an economic parasite thriving on the agricultural surplus produced in the hinterland. Today the view is no longer relevant and the city now is the focal point of productive activities. The city today grows and exists on the strength of the economic activities existing within it.¹ Today instead, the hinterland is economically dependent on the city for services and goods. The city has important economic relations with the hinterland and other national and international cities. A city generates growth by the nature and level of economic activity and thereby furthering urbanisation. Modern urbanisation is an economic process and urbanisation depends on the nature of economic production prevalent in the city.

There is a great demand of economic models of urban growth and a valid rationale for this is that most of what has been termed as “urban economics”. One has not yet mastered how to adapt to growth theory to the urban level of desegregation or also faced up to the question of whether such an adoption is possible ². The complexity of urban growth process, the diversity of urbanization experiences, particularly in towns and cities at different levels of development and the mindset, that the city is not only a cultural,

social but also an economic phenomenon is obvious on which urban politics depends.

Problems relating to urban economics lies in the lack of a satisfactory measure of urban growth. As a nation India has never followed the path. Growth in the national economy is invariably measured in output or income terms. However data of the kind is impossible to achieve because most cities and towns in India lack economic data except revenue expenditure accounts from local authorities. Under such circumstances one tends to rely heavily on demographic data and associates urban growth with increase of a town's population. ³ Though good number of economists regard population as a very poor proxy for an index of growth, it is mostly used for the measurement of urban growth.

Despite the parlous state of urban growth theory, understanding why and how cities develop is important both for its own sake and because of planning implications. Today market forces are not the only determinant of city growth. As to the reasons why cities have grown in the past is not to speculate their future growth since planning decisions are capable of controlling many institutions of city development. But a controlled appreciation of the economic detriments of the urban growth process will help planners to analyze to make concentrated decisions and to help "shape a city".⁴

The study of urbanization in India centres on several dimensions of analysis.⁵ Basically it includes a time period covering

a dimension of nearly 5,000 years, a spatial dimension that spans 2,800 kilometers east to west, and 3,300 kilometers north to south and a socio-cultural dimension, that covers a wide spectrum of people of diverse ethnic origins speaking a variety of languages and practicing some of the world's oldest religions. "A fourth dimension relevant to the study of India's urbanization has to do with the economic and political process that have shaped and are continuing to shape the basic character of urban life in India".⁶

British India contributed greatly to the urban scene in India. One of their major urban creations was a chain of hill stations in the Himalayan foothills and the introduction of tea and other plantations, which produced a number of small settlements with distinct urban characteristics. The hill stations therefore are an inheritance from the British, though thoroughly Indianised. During the post independence period these urban settlements originated as an entry point to the needs of the British population in India. Apart from its popular image of health resorts, pleasure spots, civil lines or cantonment areas the hill stations generated another type of settlement that of tea and coffee plantations in the hilly areas of West Bengal, Assam, Kerela, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. These urban settlements were brought about by voluntary and forced migration from Nepal and Bihar in the case of the estates in Darjeeling and Assam, and from neighbouring districts in the case of tea and coffee plantations in the hills of southern India. Plantation settlements had

a distinct urban characteristic relating to commodity, labour and migration, which reshaped the local settlements, cementing urban economy with local culture.

Historically the location and organization of various economic activities on urban land determine urbanization in most towns and cities to a large extent. Apart from social cultural and strategic advantages most cities have risen due to distinct economic advantages of land.⁷ Further the economic growth of any city is dependent upon the availability of major inputs for the production of economic goods and services and the quality of infrastructure. One of the major factors determining the nature and extent of urban development is land resource available in urban area for deployment in production and infrastructure. Land resource for urban development is essentially governed by three major factors: (a) Constraints relating to land mass, (b) Institutional framework for allocation of land, (c) Socio-economic process influencing the allocation of land, on the other hand, the demand for land is largely determined by the nature and organization of socio-economic activities.⁸

Sustained urban economic growth is usually accompanied by urbanisation "Thus urbanization is regarded as a societal process, and the important social and economic characteristics associated with the process of urbanization include; greater commercialization and dependence on cash income to carry out day to day

transactions, greater participation of women in labour force, change in life style, greater access to health and economical facilities as well as provision of services".⁹ Krugman has mentioned that the process of urbanization deals with tensions between forces that tend to attract people into urban settlement and the "centrifugal" forces that tend to break up such settlements. The centripetal forces usually include the (a) natural advantage of certain cities, hills, harbours, rivers strategic vocations etc., (b) market related economics e.g. easy access to markets products and skilled labour. On the other hand centrifugal forces constitute commuting costs, house rents in urban areas, congestion, pollution and the cost of public service.

Expansion in settlement patterns and urban activities have their impact on the environment. This is because of the excessive burden on the absorptive capacities of the local environment on land and land resource leading to a tremendous scarcity of urban land. Urban expansion leads to urban change in the economic, cultural and social conditions culminating in unprecedented growth of urban population generating negative environmental social and political effects.

The trend in the growth of urban population both in general and in particular and in particular urban exhibits certain features in India. While the total population in India increase from 361 million in 1951 to 1027 million in 2001, the urban population increased from 62 million to 285 million during period indicating 17.3 percent

in 1951 to 27.58 percent in 2001. If we take up the process of urbanization from state to state we find a very surprising range of variation. The most urbanized state in India is Maharashtra where 35.03 percent of its population is urban. Tamil Nadu in which 34.98 percent is urban closely follows it. The other states in which more than 30 percent of the population is urban is Gujarat (31.08 %). Karnataka, Punjab, Manipur and West Bengal. As far the percentage of population in urban areas to total population of the state is concerned, the first position continues to be held by Maharashtra, Gujarat occupied the second place in 1951 but was pushed to the third place in 1961 by Tamil Nadu. In 1971 and 1981 also, Tamil Nadu continued to hold the second place while Gujarat was a close third.

One of the most urbanized states in India is West Bengal. Urbanisation in West Bengal has shown an increasing trend rising from 24.45 percent in 1961 to 32.44 percent in 2001.¹⁰ West Bengal occupies fourth position among the Indian states in terms of absolute size of urban population. Post independence urbanisation in West Bengal was much ahead in relation to the whole nation. But slowly the scale of urbanisation is getting slower. This can be attributed to slow growth of industry immigration of a huge number of people from Bangladesh and acceleration in agricultural growth in the 1980(s). The most important aspect of urbanisation in West Bengal is its high degree of spatial concentration with Calcutta

holding the pre-eminent position. One of the import criteria of the process of urban growth in West Bengal is the pyramidal urban hierarchy in which the class I towns/cities account for the bulk of urban population and growth while others lag behind.

In the secondary and tertiary activities of the urban areas of West Bengal, a significant growth has been noticed., leading to the development of small towns. While in the state as a whole, the contribution of tertiary and secondary sectors stood at 37 percent in 1980-81 and 27 percent in 1980-89, the corresponding percentage figures for urban West Bengal were 51 and 32 during 1988-89. Urban West Bengal accounts for 57 percent and 69 percent of secondary and tertiary Sector State Domestic Product for the state as a whole. The widespread agricultural prosperity aided by distributive land reforms has generated impulses for the growth of small towns. The high rate of growth occurred in all the districts with the exception of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. The average daily rate for male and female agricultural labourers has increased significantly recent years. It has generated demand for wage and non-wage goods, and has resulted in significant off-farm activities. These developments have contributed to the expansion of urban secondary and tertiary activities, and hence growth of small towns.¹¹ In 2001 the level of urbanisation in most of the Eastern Himalayan towns was about 15% and Darjeeling has been designated as most urbanized. (52%) The level of urbanisation differs from area to area.

Economy in Darjeeling is mostly administration based, where instruments of administration have been used for carrying out policies and programmes.

Darjeeling Hill which is most urbanized is a pointer to the kind of urbanization that may happen in hills if it is left uncontrolled. Size of urban settlements varies greatly one or two urban centres are large while others are very small. In Darjeeling hill area, Darjeeling has been a city in 2001 with a population of more than 1 lakhs, while Kalimpong and Kurseong have 42 and 40 thousand population respectively.¹² The average town size varies considerably across the various parts of the Eastern Himalayas, indicating that urbanisation process is passing through different stages in different parts, and possibly the influencing forces are also different. The share of urban population of the Darjeeling hill area in comparison to the urban population of Eastern Himalayas is highest 52 %.¹³

The urbanisation process in Darjeeling is mainly exogenous maintained through surplus from outside. If one scans the revenue generated locally and the productivity in the local economy and compares it with the funds provided by the central and state governments to develop and maintain the present infrastructure of Darjeeling the generation of urban employment and income, one, cannot but conclude that the present level and space of urbanisation in Darjeeling would not have been able without the transfer of surplus from elsewhere. To access the urban economy of Darjeeling

it is necessary to look into its natural resources, which may be divided into three categories: Non-renewable, renewable and specific advantages.¹⁴ Coal, dolomite, metal sulfides, graphite and tungsten occur in Darjeeling as non-renewable source. The renewable sources are forest, plantations, pastures, bio-diversity and water. The specific advantages are its hilly landscape, scenic beauty, cold climate and wide-open mountains.¹⁵

Agriculture is the third most important economic activity in Darjeeling following Tourism and the Tea Industry. In Darjeeling it is the sedentary terraced land use on steep hill slopes that is under cultivation. Out of the total area in Darjeeling is used for agriculture and agro-farming. Economically Darjeeling presents a unique situation especially in a comparative analysis between its urban centers and the hinterland. But availability of land for agriculture is limited in Darjeeling. The traditional food grain based agriculture and surplus derived prosperity is not prevalent in the urbanisation process in Darjeeling. The non-renewable resources are available but not in large amounts. The Hydro Electricity generated in Darjeeling is not enough for furnishing the economic activities of the region neither can Darjeeling export power to the plains, rather it is heavily dependent on receiving power from the plains.

Water in Darjeeling is scarce and water resources in Darjeeling cannot cope up for economic activities hotels and related tourism. Moreover one has to keep in mind the fragile, hazard prone

ecosystem and environmental constraints of Darjeeling. As regards to the growing population of the region for which both natural growth and migration is responsible urbanisation involves a fast increase in urban population.¹⁶ It is true that in Darjeeling has non farm-less land and other non intensive economic activities have provided livelihood to many people. As compared to the rural belts, the urban unit of Darjeeling uses less forest resources in terms of fuel use. But at the same time high density of population, concentration of consumption, generation of waste over space, vehicular pollution has affected the environment of Darjeeling severely. Added to all this is poor sanitary and sewerage systems, a lack of space for recreation such as playgrounds, inadequate communication links, a shortage of essential facilities and commodities, relative isolation and distance from the plains or centres of production, communication failure in the event of heavy rainfall and landslides. An acute shortage of essential commodities and high prices are prevalent under such condition. Moreover the supply of energy resource such as kerosene gas and electricity is erratic and inadequate especially during the monsoons.¹⁷ Darjeeling being a hilly area, the environmental constraints on urbanisation are more binding. Urbanisation with a high degree of urban concentration in Darjeeling is not at all environmentally viable.¹⁸

Tourism is certainly the major livelihood in urban Darjeeling. Out of the four main occupations tourism, trade (mainly tea industry

based and construction work) agriculture and crafts – the first two occupations are controlled by the upper sections of the society and the other two are controlled by the lower rungs of society, being less profitable. Tea, Tourism and Timber and trade have become the principal occupation. Tourism and transport, till 1975, was managed privately with little interference by the government. The tourism department Government of West Bengal came into being in 1958 and the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation in November 1975. Tourism is the backbone of the regional economy of Darjeeling “Unlike Industry” tourism is much more pervasive in its economic impact. It represents an injection of external purchasing power into the economy widely distributed in its initial regional impact and acting as a stimulus to every sector of economy. Therefore it embraces different trades like transport industry, accommodation industry, Catering, souvenir industry, recreational industry etc. The economic stability of the resort towns depends upon the expenditure on different trades by tourists. A large share of the total earning is dependent on tourism.

The establishment of the Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council in 1988 led to tourism activities being transferred to the DGHC. However the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation continues, to operate in the area. Tourism in Darjeeling is the most important activity. The tourist industry in Darjeeling generates income in crores. Everybody from the ‘Chaiwala’ to the hotel owners

benefits from tourism. The increased income including foreign exchange earnings has a direct effect on the regional economy of Darjeeling. Demands for local products – links between trades directly involved in tourism, tourist expenditures filter through the economy and generates other economic activities. The multiplier effects is based on links between the trades directly involved in tourism and those trades and industries which supply the tourist trades with goods and services. Infrastructural improvement in the form of electricity, water supply, drainage sewerage, transport network, road construction, and tourist based industries have helped in the development of the region. Today Darjeeling tourism has a new buzzword “eco-tourism”. Previously, the main tourist spots were Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, but today there has been eco-tourism development in places like Lava. Lolygaon, Rimbik, Sukhiapokhri, Mirik, Bijanbari, Sandakphu, Rohini etc.

Many mountain trekking trips have also changed the face of tourism in Darjeeling. With the growth of middle class in India and the Maruti taking over the Ambassador there has been a welcome change in the tourist activities in the area. New tourist traditions are taking place. Travelling to many tourist destinations within Darjeeling hills have become more viable and economic. In addition to the contribution in economic growth the labour intensive nature of tourism has led to significant generation of employment in this urban centre.

However inspite of tourists still loving the “Queen of the hills” and the mighty Kanchenjunga, tourism in Darjeeling faces a lot of problems today. Tourists complain of overcrowding, poor water facilities and poor infrastructure. Unplanned urbanization uncontrolled tourism activities, lack of conservation measures and pollution has robbed the “Queen of the Hills” of its glory and has created service environmental hazards. The development of tourist activities has moreover also brought serious damages to the urban centre. Extension of hundreds of hotels, road building, and infrastructural facilities have mauled the ecosystem and leading to the degradation of the urban centers. Darjeeling caters to over two lakhs of tourists in the peak seasons and this is one burden that is creating serious socio-economic dislocations. The fundamental problems in Darjeeling are that mountain tourism in this area like the rest of Asia has very little impact on poverty alleviation environmental care, and the empowerment of local communities in addition to environmental degradation. There is a glaring lack of linkage with the local and regional production. Though tourism is the major economic factor yet it is neglected by state based agencies as a potential positive force. Complementary sectoral policies, more baseline information on communication capacity integrated development are the need of the day. Unlike the neighbouring state Sikkim Darjeeling tourism lacks networking, monitoring impact. Where then does the money go? Inspite of all the revenue generated

through tourism – major hotels are owned by the rich tour operators, hoteliers have the lion's share – domestic tourism suffers. Most of the real beneficiaries of tourism in Darjeeling operate largely outside the formal economy.

Darjeeling tourism lacks custom – designed experience of the oriented, quality travel. With the beginning of GNLf agitation in the eighties, and frequent threats of bandhs, throughout the year the tourism management in Darjeeling has been disoriented, lacking coordination. For subsequent years many hotels in Darjeeling have remained empty, creating financial ruin. Apart from this, Aids, flesh trade, drug abuse, economic disparities, depletion of common resources of land, water and forest for the benefit of a few and loss of confidence and faith in the traditional lifestyle and culture have led to the slow poisoning of Darjeeling tourism.

But whatever prosperity tourism has brought to Darjeeling it has been at the cost of the environment. Moreover the growth potential of Darjeeling tourism has added pressure on the limited land resources of the hill like, land degradation, seasonal water scarcity, drainage problems, landslides and also the rapid degradation of the scenic beauty of Darjeeling. With the formation of the DGHC local compulsions arose leading to the development and expansion of transport, communication, tourism and commerce. Each of these processes involved pouring of man money and technology from outside with very limited participation of the local

people. Various social groups being actively involved with development issues, spread of modern communication, media exposure and education, of late there has been growing awareness as regards to democratic rights and better living. All of this has further led to more ethnic conflicts and tensions, indicating the fragile nature of economic urbanisation in Darjeeling.

Apart from tourism the other most economic factor that has decided the fate of urbanisation in Darjeeling is the tea industry. Tea industry is not only the mainstay of the hill people of Darjeeling but also the backbone of the hill economy. There are at present 86 tea estates covering about 19020.29 hectares and employing about 50 thousand permanent labourers. But during the last two decades the industry has been in deep trouble. Many diseases from low productivity old age of the bushes, high input cost, labour unrest, and industrial sickness have lead to the final closedown of many tea gardens. Apart from these, different environmental problems like landslide, drought, and problems of encroachment are also affecting the gardens. The present scenario reflects that the famed tea estates of Darjeeling are weighing tourism as a means of ensuring their economic survival amid slumping markets for the hill station's most celebrated crop. The tea gardens of Makaibari and Mariyanbari have opened their doors to tourism related activities where the original Manager's Bungalow have been converted into Heritage hotels. The number of tea gardens has come down from 132 in 1991 to 86 in

2001 in the district. The closure of 46 gardens in 10- 12 years is in itself an alarming situation. (Besides this is the official record of West Bengal Government. The unofficial record shows the number of present gardens is only 65). This means nearly 50% of the gardens were closed in Darjeeling district in the last 10-12 years.

Independence of India from British Raj brought in new changes in the tea industry. As most of the tea gardens were sold to Indian Companies, the new management did not have prior experience regarding tea industry and their sole interest was profit maximization. Indian enterprise had taken over the reins from their British counterparts but in absence of any long term policy of the Government of India, in respect to management in tea plantations, their role in tea gardens has, however, been to carry on the old business rather than to open new gardens. Since these companies carried on tea business in a stereotyped manner the position of tea companies particularly in Darjeeling, continued to deteriorate. The new garden owning class did neither have the experience to run tea gardens nor have the willingness to bring changes in the technology and machineries related for 19th century tea industry. Thus from management perspective and both from quality and quantity perspectives, post-independence owners have not been able to upgrade the standard of tea industry. Obsoleted machineries and fund pauperization have weakened the basis of tea-economy. The following table needs no elaboration.

Statistics of Tea in Darjeeling 1951 - 2001

Year	No. of Gardens	Total area in hectares	% increase / decrease	Total production in 000 kg.	Average yield / hectare	No. of labourers employed
1951	138	25325.3		13177.57	473	69590
1961	139	27708.9	+9.41	18050.2	543	59844
1971	140	25495.2	-7.99	200000	564	69000
1981	137	24986.9	-1.99	12656	628	55765
1991	132	26780.1	+7.17	13932	694	52659
2001	86*	18999.6	-29.05	9742	563	51223

*Source - Compiled from Census handbook (1951 - 2001) and Tea Statistics Tea Board 1979 and 2002. *West Bengal Government official record.*

There was a steady fall in production and acreage since 1961 and the number of labourers substantially decreased. But the situation worsened during the last decades (Table1). The most important reason is closure of uneconomic tea gardens specially those owned by the Government. Due to poor management practices, high social cost of production, decline in exports and competition with neighbouring countries and continued decline in price realization the tea industry in the district is virtually facing a crisis. The chart of ownership pattern of some of the old and major tea gardens may be presented.

Sl. No.	Name of the Garden / Owner in its inception	Present name of the Gardens	Year of inception	Present age of the garden
01	Darjeeling Company namely Ging, Ambutia, Takdah and Phubsering	Ging, Ambootia*, Tukdah* Phoobsering	1860-64	140-144 yrs.
02	Lebong Co. Namely Tukvar ^o , Badamtam and Pankhabari	Bamesbag, Badamtam	1860-64	140-144 yrs.
03	Tukvar Co.	Tukvar and N. Tukvar	1857	147 yrs.
04	Sum Co.	Soom	1862	142 yrs.
05	Land Mortgage Bank namely Minchu, Mineral spring and Changtang	Lebong and Mineral Spring+ Minchu (Bannockbum)	1862-63	141-142 yrs.
06	D. Wilson	Happy Valley	1862	142 yrs.
07	C. H. Barnes, Singtam	Singtom	1856	148 yrs.
08	C. H. Barnes, Pattabang	Bamesbeg	1858	146 yrs.
09	C. R. O. Donoghue, Pattabong	Pattabong Tukvar	1868	136 yrs.
10	W. Lloyd. Lebong ^o	Vah Tukvar+	1869	135 yrs.
11	S. Mackintosh, Minchu	Bannockbum	1862-63	141 - 142 yrs.
12	Karsiang and Darjeeling Co. Makaibari and Alubari	Makaibri*, Aloobari and Pandam	1856	148 yrs.
13	H. Stoelke Sternthal	Steinthal (Singtom)	1854	150 yrs.
14	Stoelke and Sinclair Rishihot	Risheehat	1895	109 yrs.
15	Sidrabong	Arya	1897	107 yrs.
16	Consolidated Tea and Lands Co. Ltd.	Bloomfield / Orange Valley	1890	114 yrs.
17	Ringtong Tea Co. Ltd.	Rungneet	1885	119 yrs.

* Gardens not located in Darjeeling P.S. area.

^o Garden area bifurcated or joined after 1900

+ Gardens closed

Source : Compiled from W.W. Hunters, A Statistical account of Bengal, Vol. - X London 1876, Report of the General committee of the Indian tea Association Feb. 1880-1915. Calcutta Bengal Secretarial Press and Survey done by the author in the tea gardens in 2002-2003.

Statistics of changing status and area of different tea gardens in

Darjeeling P.S. Area (1952-2004)

Sl. No.	Name of the garden	Tea area in 1952 in hectares	% increase or decrease	Tea area in 2004 in hectares	% increase or decrease
01	Aloobari	20.26	---	22.00	+8.57
02	Pandam*	163.09	---	131.32	-19.48
03	Arya	96.72	-5.91	123.26	+27.44
04	Badamtam	298	+169.74	321.05	+7.74
05	Bannockbum	132.63	+9.25	142.27	+7.26
06	Bamesbeg	112.31	+15.15	132.50	+17.98
07	Bloomfield / Orange Valley	232.24	+5.92	220.15	-5.21
08	Ging	218.98	+2.77	279.76	+27.76
09	Happy Valley	94.70	+112.73	103.00	+8.77
10	Lebong and Mineral Spring	235.73	-31.87	Garden closed	---
11	Phoobsering	146.70	-9.52	245.36	+67.25
12	Risheehat	140.21	-23.00	253.42	+80.74
13	Rungneet	75.22	+4.42	87.53	+16.37
14	Singtom / Steinthal	280.85	+17.63	286.32	+1.95
15	Soom	218.13	+12.29	237.28	+8.78
16	Tukvar (including Pattabong)	397.73	-21.38	436.66	+9.79
17	Tukvar n. / Singla	212.41	-30.02	182.21	-14.22
18	Vah Tukvar	195.41	+1.87	Garden closed	---
	Total	3271.31	+0.76	3204.29	-2.05

* Tea area included in Aloobari in 1897-1900

Source : Compiled from W.W. Hunters, A Statistical account of Bengal, Vol. - X London 1876, Report of the General committee of the Indian Tea Association Feb. 1880-1915. Calcutta Bengal Secretarial Press, Data obtained from DPA, Darjeeling and Survey done by the investigator in the tea gardens in 2002-2003.

The tea plantation industry was mainly set up in Darjeeling hills during the second half of 19th century and were built up with huge capital investment. This investment mainly came from the British entrepreneurs who were interested to do flourishing business in India for breaking the monopoly of China in tea. When the tea gardens first developed the whole area was covered by virgin forestlands. A large number of labourers were required to clear several hundred acres of land for tea cultivation from an elevation of 750 mts. to 1800 mts. above sea level. The first pioneers suffered a lot while clearing the vast jungles, making roads, terracing hillocks and erecting factories. By 1870, almost all the plantations began constructing factories with local materials, like bamboo, plank stones and thatch at the lowest levels. The development of motor able roads, the Pictures que bungalows of the managers, the planters club, the factories were all by the Britishers which remains more or less the same till date.

Mention should also be made that the growth of Darjeeling town largely depends on the surrounding tea gardens development because the town was the main centre of association for the surrounding garden employees. Thus infrastructural development contributed not only to growth of urban atmosphere but also gave impetus to more and more people to settle in Darjeeling raising the population. But this development also had its own share of problems. The topographical variation made the accessibility

opportunity poor. There was tremendous lack of transport and communication, energy and irrigation, which have profoundly hampered the productivity in these estates. Transport systems till today is still at its nascent stage some terrains are still inaccessible. This makes the task of bush care varying from manuring to managerial supervision almost a formidable venture. The cost of production thus goes up. Besides this has a negative impact on health, psychology and socio-economic welfare of the poor labour class. So though this sector attracts immense importance neither the management nor the government machinery's endeavour to develop these facilities seemed discernable.

In 1835, Darjeeling town was sparsely populated and the biggest problem faced was that of labour and that too of skilled labour. As tea is a labour intensive industry low population or lack of labour force did not point prosperity in this sphere. So the story goes that during that time a nobleman from Nepal, Sri Dakman Rai, had come to Darjeeling with a caravan of 20 black ponies and a retinue was a rare sight at that time and this event caught Dr. Campbell's attention. A meeting between the two followed and the nobleman agreed to help in this enterprising venture by bringing labour from Nepal. Each garden used to have labour agents known as sardars. A sardar was in charge of a small labour force of 50 to 60 strong men whom the sardar recruited and brought to work in the gardens.

Apart from supervising their work he was their headman looking after their daily needs and social welfare.

But there was still a labour problem in Darjeeling as ill sanitation, improper water supply and inadequate medical arrangements. The immigrant population of Darjeeling was mainly from Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan and this had two major long lasting effects. Firstly, the original tribe of Darjeeling the Lepchas were rapidly outnumbered by persons mainly from Nepal and secondly, this marked the beginning of rapid rise in population and consequently to urbanization. The majority of immigrant tea garden labourers from eastern Nepal comprised of the Gorkhas. In spite of a monthly wage as high as Rs. 5/- for men and Rs. 3/- for women and Rs. 2/- for children there were shortage of workers. Those people were encouraged to settle down in the company's garden permanently by assigning to them small plots of land for cultivation of cereal crops such as maize, millet etc. The management provided the labourers with additional facilities like free accommodation, free medical service and subsidized rations, which are continuing even today.

Labour being at premium the production used to be uncertain, especially with other agencies engaged in various constructional work in the district weaning away the labourers with more attractive wages. Dessertation was another problem as there was no special legislative enactment and the labourers were free to come and go, as

they like. To maintain a balanced work force, the management had to grant additional facilities, mostly financial to the extent possible. It is said that in order to attract the labourers, the kuly sardars with the help of the management, used to plant mint fresh coins around some tea bushes, where the work was to be done next day. In the morning while working the unsuspecting labourers happened to find their coins to their utter surprise and joy. Not only the labourers worked with more enthusiasm but also while on leave these stories were told to their friends and relatives back home. Thus more and more people migrated to the district with the hope of gathering fortune as they believed that in "Muglam" (Darjeeling) money grows in tea bushes.¹⁹

With more and more people migrating to Darjeeling the labour intensive tea industry flourished. New gardens were opened and the acreage under tea plantation substantially increased. The tea industry assumed prime position in Darjeeling industrial and agricultural sector as 1/3rd of the entire population resided on tea gardens. From 1951 there was a decline in immigrant population who would settle here but the natural population was on the rise. The reason behind this was that there was not much room for further extension as in the area reserved for tea cultivation almost all the land capable of being planted with tea had already been taken up.

**Statistics of Growth of Tea Gardens and Population in
Darjeeling District. (1951-2001)**

Year	No. of tea gardens	No. of Persons Employed	% increase / decrease
1951	138	69590	-0.16
1961	139	59844	-14.00
1971	140	69000	+15.30
1981	137	55765	-19.18
1991	132	52659	-5.57
2001	86	51223	-2.73

Source- District Census Handbook-Darjeeling 1951-2001

The initial period of tea industry saw a rapid increase in population growth mainly through immigrant population. Local labour could not meet the resultant demand of tea industry and immigration on a very large scale made up the deficiency. But the rate of immigration very vigorous in the past steadily came down in from 1900. From 1941 to 1961 there was decrease in percentage of labour in tea industry. Only from 1961- 1971 there were a 15% increase in tea garden labourers. From 1971 there has been a steady fall not only in the total working force in tea gardens of Darjeeling P.S. but also in relation to total workers. This may be attributed to the recession in tea industry and closure of sick and uneconomic units in which workers are migrating towards the town for better job opportunities.

The gardens of Darjeeling P.S. area remained mostly unaltered except regarding the name, which was changed several times due to

change in ownership. Moreover in recent years due to crisis in the tea industry the gardens are changing hands very rapidly as most of the owners are running their gardens either without profit or at loss. The gardens of Darjeeling P.S. area have been broadly divided into three groups according to their size or the total grant area. Such as -

(i) > 600 hectares (ii) 200-600 hectares (iii) < 200 hectares.

In case of Tea Gardens in Darjeeling P.S. the real discrepancy lies in the total area / grant area, which according to various sources are different. Three authentic sources -Government Publication (Labour Department) Census (1991), Tea Board Directory (1998) and Darjeeling Planters' Association have been shown to suggest the total or gross area of tea gardens. But in each case the areas of the gardens are different. So it is very difficult to make the exact estimation of total area or garden area, as the size of P.S. area remains the same. The same disparity may be noticed from the records of Tea Directory (Tea Board) in the years 1960, 1982 and 1998 though no official change regarding area is notified in any of these tea gardens. Moreover there is a large disparity regarding tea area and total grant area between the Census data (1952) and Tea Directory records (1961).

Darjeeling therefore portrays an important pro urban picture. Added to this the proportion of working age population is higher in urban Darjeeling than its rural counterpart and urban work participation rates have also increased in Darjeeling in comparison to

the rest of the state. Among the urban sectors that have shown a remarkable growth of employment generation in Darjeeling is wholesale and retail trade, transport, tourism construction and manufacturing.

Today as Darjeeling stretches its urban boundaries from Singamari to Batasia and from Jalapahar to Kakjhora the acquisition and use of land has remained unchecked. There is an old saying that great cities never die. They simply resurrect themselves adapting to the changed circumstance.²⁰ Darjeeling had been the 'tea' capital of India much before independence. Tourism, agriculture, natural resources, human resource were in place and perhaps the best in the state. Planters, army personnel, businessman, many lawyers' educationalists have made Darjeeling their home. Darjeeling is proud of its people and the people are proud to belong. Creaking economic infrastructure withstanding the Human Development Index on Darjeeling ranks it as the 4th major district in West Bengal in relation to consumption, poverty and life expectancy parameters on which urban economy depends. As Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee the Chief Minister of West Bengal has rightly remarked "Economic development does not mean the growth of income alone; genuine economic development requires that the quality of life of our people be improved..."²¹

Its important to remember that inspite of all its misgivings the urban economics of Darjeeling has always enjoyed a pre-eminent

status in comparison to the rest of the hill towns of the Eastern Himalayas. It has been the hub of commercial activity for decades. Economic conditions of Darjeeling have been positive in terms of resource mobilization, and control over basic economic processes, infrastructure and the provision of health and educational facilities. Darjeeling has been influenced by its strong historical and structural factors that have influenced both the degree of development as well as the relative backwardness of the urban unit. In Darjeeling any discussion on polity, economy or society must also take into account the role played by colonial administration in restricting trade to only certain social group and creating a complex system of land relations. Generally speaking the Indian economy as a whole was never really chosen as a favourite by international financial markets over the periods. In other words the economy did not receive large inflows of speculative capital, it did not suffer from large outflows either. This had unfortunate implications on the states productive expenditure, unemployment and crisis in agriculture have adverse effects on the stagnation of the economy. Its natural that as part of the nation the human development indicators have been relatively slow in Darjeeling too. Greater population pressure puts more pressure on basic infrastructure. Excessive high population density affects per capita resource allocation. Thus, whatever Darjeeling has achieved has been inspite of this factor of having high population density.

The Human Development Report indicates that Darjeeling stands fourth in the over all assessment of the state in relation to health income and education index and it is evident that in comparison to the rest of the state the position is undoubtedly positive. While in general the districts with lower HDI more than average per capita, district sector plan outlay – Darjeeling inspite of its relatively high HDI, the district has received the second highest plan outlay in per capita terms in the mid 1990(s). ²²

A cursory view of material indicators indicates that while incomes have been increased, infrastructure provisions still remain an important issue, with direct links to achieving better economic growth and improved human development condition. Apart from infrastructure consumption patterns, economic structures relating to agriculture, tea or tourism employment is clearly one of the most significant issues in terms of the living conditions of the people of Darjeeling. Quite simply, there are not enough jobs for all the people who are willing or forced to work. The rate of employment generation in terms of aggregate main wok has been lower than the rate of expansion of population and substantially lower than the rate of income growth. As a result the pattern of job creation in this urban settlement has shifted towards more casual, marginal, part-time and insecure contracts or self-employment. It is interesting that in Darjeeling more women are entering into the workforce as paid men workers are as well as self-employed specially in various services.

The most significant feature being that participation of women in work force is relatively higher in non-agriculture related jobs than in agriculture sectors. This might be the hidden matriarchy imbibed in the proto-Mongoloid tradition of the indigenous people of Darjeeling and the resulting impact of tradition in modernity in Darjeeling's Urban way of life. What is indicative is that there has been a diversification of employment, in general, from the rural to the urban sector.

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