

*Changing Identity of
Women of Darjeeling Hills
– A Study in Cultural, Social,
Economic and Political
Development.
(1835 – 1985)*

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Sm. Devika S. Lama (Roy), lecturer in history, St. Josephs' College, Darjeeling has been working under my supervision as a research scholar. She was registered as a scholar under the North Bengal University on 16.7.99, her topic of research is " Changing Identity of Women of Darjeeling Hills - a study in cultural, social, economic and political development (1835 - 1984). Her work is based on laborious investigation of both primary and secondary sources and is now ready for submission. I wish her every success.

Chanda Chakrabarty

Professor
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Acknowledgement

A plethora of social problems awaits diagnosis and appropriate measures. One such problem centres around gender studies. Vast information is required to develop a critical understanding of their problems, to bring about their betterment, as society moves ahead with modernization. In the case of Darjeeling, a colonial creation having its own post colonial dilemmas, the changing identity of the hill women is one such focus which needs to be properly examined and interpreted from the stand point of the 'other' or the natives themselves. My research on this vibrant theme, locating the strength of the Darjeeling women from 1835-1985 was possible only due to the help given by people from all walks of life. Therefore I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for helping me complete this work.

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CHANGING IDENTITY OF WOMEN OF DARJEELING HILLS – A STUDY IN CULTURAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT (1835-1985).

The fate of Darjeeling hills, a colonial creation, was settled permanently when the British took over it as a health centre in 1835. The hill tract otherwise was practically uninhabited at the time of the advent of the first European visitors estimated at a mere 100 in 1835. By attracting migrants from surrounding regions there was a steady growth of population to 10,000 in 1850, to 92,141 in 1881 and to a staggering 1,73,342 at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹ This growth is a remarkable instance of population expansion in Bengal. This colonial enclave has problems of colonial and cultural specificity and one such problem borders around the womenfolk of Darjeeling and how they have undergone phases of colonial and national reconstruction. The present work is a historical survey of the changing trends and the development of a sense of identity among the hill women in the last hundred and fifty years (1835-1985) as they have trudged along the path of modernisation.

Moreover in the wake of the importance of 'Women Studies' at present in developed and Third World Countries, the identity and status of women has become a matter of great concern. As a result this work will be an empirical inquiry into the dynamics of change in the role and status of hill women of Darjeeling. Apart from being a descriptive work on the colonial and postcolonial development of the native women of Darjeeling, the central focus of the present discourse is the women as projected by the colonial authorities in the hill station, which turned into a social space where the European 'selves' and the Indian 'others' started interacting. In doing so the women question became an important social domain for the exercise of colonial power for domination, inferiorisation and differentiating the 'other'. It has been argued here that differences between the east and west was projected in such a way that the latter was made to appear superior in every respect while the *Orient* was seen as a divided, fragmented entity, devoid of a universal language, without democracy, rationalism, capitalism that characterise the western mode of life. Thus the argument built up by the colonizers was that only western intellect, interference and enlightenment would enrich the east and imbue it with strength, vigour, zest and energy. This idea was vigorously projected in

every possible manner- the oriental women was one such focus. The women of the east with her total dependence on the male, belonged to a different universe, living in a closed world apart from the open world of men and their inability to handle important matters or to take any decision. They were typified as illiterate, sexually exploited and promiscuous, vulgar, quarrelsome, indecent and therefore needed to be enlightened by the white masters. Thus the hill women of Darjeeling were one such focus to put forward their discourse and logic. The colonial view of these women was the handiwork of both the British officials and the Christian missionaries. They betrayed their ignorance and showed an avoidance of the imperial truth for they overlooked the intricate, social variation, the long enduring system of oral learning. This research work tries to prove that such British prospective was not the real situation of the hill women, having a unique cultural background and part of the labour force in the tea plantation set up by the Raj. Further this work has highlighted the fact that the white man's burden of providing the native women with education or health facilities was due to the encounter of the colonized with the colonizers and as has already been pointed out, it was an attempt to justify their rule in the hill station as elsewhere in India. They regarded the locals of Darjeeling as the 'allured people' who were not to be disturbed by any Indian issues or problems, and thus were watchful for any signs of restlessness. Yet the colonial rule was a formative period for subsequent development and in the status and attitude of the hill women in particular. Since the shift in the cultural attitude is connected to a socio-economic, educational and political character, this work dwells as far as possible on the modernisation of women in all its perspective and their participation in social, educational, political, economic and cultural issues in the colonial and post-colonial period in their quest for an identity.

This type of gender study of the Darjeeling hills has one great obstacle and that is the difficulty in finding ample records and observations as these are sketchy in nature. Some vital records kept in schools, tea factories, office of political parties and in the Darjeeling Municipality have been destroyed due to fire. Church records on the other hand have been destroyed by humidity. This challenging work on the changing identity of the women of Darjeeling from 1835-1985 also takes into account and tries to systematically organise the fragmented works on some aspects of women studies in the

hills dealing with education, informal women workers, ethnographic works and the tea and cinchona industry that were undertaken by several scholars of the University of North Bengal.

The hypothesis that is proposed to be verified in this micro study is that the women situation in Darjeeling have undergone a multiple phases of colonial construction and have shown a unique reaction to it as expressed in the indigenised national discourse. In this context of post colonial construct of the colonial discourse, the methodology intended to be used, is a critical analysis of the response and changes of the hill women in colonial situation and in the period of nationalism. This belief is to be also studied in the broader context of the authentic consideration of the nationalist discourse. In order to study the change in women's development from colonial to post-colonial times materials have been collected from primary and secondary sources. The former includes Proceedings from the Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Bengal from the State Archives, Confidential Files of the Home Department, The District Magistrate's record Room, Church records, School and College records, The Planters' Association and factory records and The Tea Board of India records. It will also include old Darjeeling correspondence of government officials, reports by different governmental commissions, census, gazetteers and government statistics. Secondary sources have included memoirs, observation by foreign travellers, books, local and national newsletters, journals and related materials. Interviews with different personalities and mythological accounts have also served the need of oral sources. Random sampling has also been used for factor analysis.

The conceptual universe found in this study is that at the initial stage women's image in colonial Darjeeling was a construction of the white colonial authority. In fact the colonial construction of women by the British all over the world was the 'unfree' women. In India the key components in the colonial discourse formulated and propagated by a section of English writers comprising the Anglicists, Utilitarians and the Christian Evangelicals was that the colonised race was barbaric. It had no civilized history, no culture worth the name and that her entire past was a foolish quest after false ideals. The Hindu society and religion needed British interference and conversion. If India were to live she would

have to remould herself thoroughly in European civilization. The women question on which the British rulers focused their attention became a central question and a strategy of colonial domination and gender issues. Driven by their 'civilizing mission' British writers condemned Indian religions, culture, society as they believed that it was responsible for the degradation and downtrodden condition of the Indian women. The question about the status of women, a part of the colonial discourse of the moral inferiority of the Indians, became a significant tool of colonial ideology to justify its domination over India. This was argued by Christian missionaries as well as by historians like James Mill; both characterized Indian civilization to be crude and immoral. Indian women therefore required the protection and intervention of the colonial state. At this juncture it should be noted that the women were viewed in some specific relations with religion. Therefore the protection of the weak and passive Hindu women became then a strategy of colonial domination and gender issue. Or in simple words, gender characterisation became vehicles for the moral claims on the part of the colonial administrator. The missionaries joined hands with the authorities to make the Indian women the emblem of the downtrodden society. The middle class Indian intelligentsia, comprising social reformers, writers and Sanskrit scholars countered such severe onslaught and negative image on the Hindu religion. As the hypnotic spell of the alien civilization began to recede in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, self consciousness of the Indians rising slowly but steadily, took its place. To both the Reformers intent on reforming what colonial discourse presented as primitive and barbaric aspects of Hindu society, and the revivalist who challenged the colonial interventions into Indian traditions, the women issue occupied a central place in the articulation of indigenous response to the colonial claim. They harped on the wretched condition of the native women.

The social reform movement of the nineteenth century were decisively shaped by the colonial encounter. The derivative discourse, which influenced reformers, like Raja Rammohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidhyasagar could not view the women's problem as being different from those of the British colonial construct. The focus of social reform movements reflected the concerns of the upper caste which constituted the bourgeoisie. The several issues raised – widow's oppression, purdah, growing gender gap in

education – did not affect the majority of Indian women, for e.g. those in agrarian, manufacturing and trading activities or those in matrilineal tribal society where women enjoyed greater freedom.² As a result the stereotype was created to suit the purpose of the elite under colonial rule combining the self-sacrificing ideal Hindu women with the Victorian women's ability to co-operate in the furtherance of their husband's career. They were to be the educated companion and a dutiful wife at the same time. The women's question was a central issue in the debates over social reforms in the nineteenth century. But the issue disappeared from the agenda of public debate by the end of the century. The reason as Partha Chatterjee points was that nationalism did not want to make the women question an issue of political negotiation with the colonial state.³ While the conservatives of Bengal depicted women as symbols of tradition, needing protection against the reformist moves of the English, the nationalist group identified India with the Mother and inspired the countrymen to rise up in arms. Thus Hindu revivalism gradually turned women from passive objects of adoration to a powerful and effective agent for mobilisation. This development was extremely powerful and effective in the anti-colonial struggle because it proved that the Indian women were as superior as the western model.

At this phase the Indian women was constructed according to nationalist inclination as opposed to the women of the white construct. We can see a distinct dichotomy between the '*memshahib*' the Indian lady of white construction imitating the western educated women, independent with a personality of her own with that of the '*bhadramaila*' i.e. the typical Indian women not removed from the Indian tradition and culture, educated and strong. So the National discourse in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century was a critical response towards the white construct. Therefore the pattern of this research work is based on colonial, national and the post-colonial discourse model and investigation, analysis have been woven around the following key questions.

1. What was the colonial construct of the colonised women as applied in Darjeeling?

2. What was the Indian response during the first fifty years of British administration since 1835? The hill women's response to education, dependence on husbands as an independent earning member, and their reaction to the prejudicial influence of their respective religion is to be analysed.
3. What was the Indian response till 1900? The above mentioned points need to be discussed in this time frame and the study of reorganization of the family structure under above mentioned influence is to be examined
4. What was the nature of Indian reaction to the impact of the national movement in Darjeeling? Whether there was the formulation of a national construction of women on ideological grounds or the indigenisation of the national construct of women in Darjeeling hills.
5. To determine whether there were any colonial legacies remaining in the post independence period from 1947 to the year 1985 by focusing on the response of women to issues of ethnic identity, economic rights, political and educational opportunities and changes.

The conceptual frame work guiding the area of study is that in both developed and less developed countries, women are burdened with the cumulative inequalities as a result of socio-cultural and economic discriminatory practices which until recently have been taken for granted. This has led to a surge of feminist enquiry into female oppression and a growing body of literature with a variety of approaches to studies on women. The liberal school of thought feel that women's oppression is rooted in a set of cultural constraint and it is the traditional society that prevents women from competing in the public world as it believes that women are by nature less capable than men. Feminist thinkers in Marxist tradition agree with Engels that women's oppression originated with the rise of private property. The unwaged, unacknowledged work of women at home keeps them subordinate and dependent on the male. They argue that for women to be economically free from men and achieve equality, capitalism must be replaced by socialism. The radical thinkers are more concerned with the sexuality, socialisation, psychic, sexual and ideological structures that differentiate society and cast all women in the role of 'Mother.' They blame patriarchy, a system of power that oppresses women.

Psychoanalytical feminism traces the root of women's oppression in the deeply embedded psyche that makes 'normal' feminine personality excel in family relationship while the masculine personality in separation and autonomy. The Socialist thought traces the cause of Women's oppression in economic exploitation and the patriarchal control over reproduction and female sexuality. It explains how under capitalism everything (work, sex and play) and everyone (friend, relatives and the family) are sources of women's oppression and causes of her disintegration instead of her integration. Black tradition points out that race, class and sex are interrelated oppression on women. All these different approaches lead us to the conclusion that the position of women is not a universal uniform category but one that is culturally, socially and historically conditioned. In other words their position is both spatially and temporally conditioned.

Yet the mainstream feminist thought, has largely been the product of the relatively educated and privileged West. While women in India and the Third world share many of the disabilities with the western women, their experience of discrimination is more extensive because of sex segregation of society, poverty level in general, the traditional value system, patriarchal system etc. As a result the Third World feminist traditions are more sensitive to issues of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, colour, customs and traditions and to issues of colonialism. This would mean that post-colonial writings involve the re-examination of colonial issues and in this particular case gender issues from the point of view of the native people. For the women themselves may have quite a different representation of their own selves than projected by the dominant males in society.

Against this conceptual backdrop when one sets out to draw a picture of the changing identity of the women of Darjeeling hills one has to use the colonial, national and post-colonial discourse model. The condition of women at home and in society will be observed in their colonial construction and the national construct will be explored. It will also help in studying the winds of change affecting the traditional patriarchal society and identify the factors responsible for the transition in their status and personality.

The aims and objectives of the work is to fill up the gap caused by lack of systematic study and paucity of records; also to examine the workings of a colonial discourse in Darjeeling and the reaction of the native women to it. The work focuses on the factors for migration to Darjeeling hills, the adjustments made by women in her new settlement and their reaction to the colonial reforms and demands. It has studied the different ethnic groups and women related traditions, changes in their life style as compared to their original home; the impact of education on women, participation of women in the social, economic and political schemes of the *Raj* and their response to it. To analyse whether the colonial representation of the hill women was the absolute truth, and then it examines the working of a nationalist discourse in the hills with particular emphasis on the response shown by the local women to the various societal changes as part of post colonial studies, it seeks to identify the changes, if any, emerging in the patterns of role performance in the family, decision-making and behaviour pattern as a result of education and employment of hill women. Its aim is to investigate whether the changes in women have led to improvement in their status or deterioration. The work besides identifying the past and the present has focused attention on some of the change or change resistant socio-economic, political and cultural institutions. The work intends to investigate public health issues, economic and educational matters related to the hill women and whether they are legacies of the colonial past.

The different chapters in the present study includes a brief sketch of the history of Darjeeling to understand the social, economic and political conditions prevailing in 1935, which enhanced migration to this region. The push and pull factors involved leading to migration of individuals and families has been discussed. The second chapter of this work studies the response shown by native women to the new world where the general pattern of living, cultural tradition, social stratification, customs and attitude regarding women were greatly influenced by the dominant British culture and their respective ethnic specificities. By examining the dominant discourse on the colonised women it is possible to comprehend the subtle exercise of power in the various social, cultural and economic spaces created by the British for serving themselves. Focus has also been put on the participation of women in the colonial economic process, educational facilities

and the health measures offered by the government and in particular by the missionaries.

Chapter three deals with a comparative study of noticeable changes in the lifestyle, social attitudes and tradition of women in Darjeeling with respect to her original homeland. Some important ethnic groups such as Sherpas, Tibetans, Lepchas, Indians and Nepalese including those who were Muslims by religion have been taken into account. Cultural amalgamation and the rise of a culture unique to the hills have been examined. In doing so the work has focused on the hill women as a colonial construct confined to a stereotype role juxtaposed with the idea that they enjoy cultural specificity which no European model can conveniently describe. It seeks to study their traditional background and culture and the restructuring of the family due to rapid urbanisation.

The fourth chapter has taken into account the intensification of educational opportunities for hill women in the early twentieth century bringing about a gradual change in the perception and attitude of the local women of Darjeeling towards society, culture, colonial and national education, health measures and employment. Emphasis has also been laid on the participation of women in politics and the complexities of cross-national politics, that prepared the ground for awareness and a sense of a growing identity, in spite of the '*Ghurkha loyalty*' of the masses towards the colonial masters. Other than the participation of a few women in urban centric politics it was the tea belts that saw the mobilisation of the women in the labour union movements setting a new trend for the future. At the same time the beginning of the native's attempt to provide education as an alternative to the colonial education accelerated the pace of indigenous education and its effect on the hill women's quest for an identity. The work analyses the formulation of a national indigenous construct of the local women.

Chapter five has sought to examine the concept of post colonialism in the context of Darjeeling hills and the question of race, ethnicity and gender studies. The search for identity by participation in collective action leading to the *Gorkhaland* agitation has been discussed. The hill women's participation in economic activities and whether the post-colonial society is still negotiating with the various legacies of Pax Britannica has been

investigated. The work analyses the participation of women in governmental, non-governmental sectors, organised and unorganised work especially in agro-based industries, cottage industries and agriculture in the hills. The work explores the changes in the lifestyle, the effect upon the family with the entry of married women into the labour force in the post-colonial period. The final chapter of the work examines the response of the hill women to the educational opportunities and the health facilities offered by the Indian government and the problems involved in these areas.

In view of the above it can be said that the study has sincerely striven to put together all available records, observation on gender study to give a concise account of the status of women in the hills of Darjeeling along with the problems faced by them on their way to modernisation from 1835 to 1985. It has examined whether the dominant discourse mirrored the actual society as viewed by the local women as the 'others'. The research has tried to develop the native women's model rather than to accept the image as projected by the western culture. It also speaks of the subverted native discourse under colonial rule that gradually organised itself and expressed itself in various social, economic, political and cultural spaces leading to the changing identity of the hill women of Darjeeling.

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CHAPTER -1 LOCATION AND HISTORY OF DARJEELING

1.1 Introduction:

Darjyu Lyang, or 'the land of God' or 'heaven earth' is believed to have given Darjeeling (Darjiling, after the 1981 census), the northern most district of the Indian state of West Bengal, its name. It is also believed that the name is a corrupted form of *Dorjee ling* of the Lamaist religion, 'Dorjee' the Celestial sceptre of double-headed thunderbolt and 'ling' or the land, and thus, literally means 'the land of the thunderbolt' after the famous Buddhist monastery, which stands atop the observatory hill and was known by the same name.

1.2. Location:

Darjeeling district is located between 26°31'05 "and 27°27'10 " north latitude and 88°53'00 " and 87°59'30" east longitude. The plains area of the district lies between 26°30' and 26°45' north and between 88° and 88°30' east. The hilly region of Darjeeling which is the subject of study lies between latitude 26°30'30 " to 27°8'45" north 88° and 88°56'15" east longitude. Darjeeling town is situated in the lower Himalayas in 27°3' north latitude and 88°16' east longitude. The total area of the district is 3254.7 sq km, while the hilly region covers an area of 2320 sq km. The district occupies 3.68% of the total area of West Bengal state. Out of the 943.6 sq km area falling in the terai and plains, 837.4 sq km area falls under the Siliguri sub-division. Among the four sub-divisions of the Darjeeling district, the hilly regions have the following area – Darjeeling 935.5 sq km, Kurseong 425.3 sq km and Kalimpong 1056.5 sq km.¹

Darjeeling shares its boundaries with the international boundaries of Nepal in the west and Bhutan in the east. The state of Sikkim separated by the river Teesta forms its northern boundary while the districts of Jalpaiguri and Purnea of Bihar lies towards the south. The boundaries of Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling meet at the peak of Phalut (3600m) forming a tri junction. Another tri junction is formed at Rachela (at Tinsinmana 3100m) by the boundaries of Bhutan, Sikkim and Kalimpong. Excluding a part of the Siliguri subdivision the District of Darjeeling is exclusively mountainous with the

the altitudinal range varying from 132 m (at Sukna) to 3670m (Phalut). The altitude of the various hill ranges varies markedly and usually there is a distinct correlation between the altitude and vegetation. Thus altitude is one major factor that determines the range of distribution of different plant species and the associations that they form at different elevation ranges.² (Fig. 1.1. shows the Location Map of the Study Area)

1.3. Vegetation:

Various scholars have put forth the classification of the vegetation of this region and it includes workers like Gamble(1875)³, Hooker(1906)⁴, and Bhujel (1996).⁵ These authors have essentially classified the flora and vegetation according to altitudinal ranges, although they differ considerably in detail. Six major types of vegetation which are further subdivided to sub types can be recognized as shown by Table 1.1

TABLE 1.1. VEGETATION TYPES IN THE DARJEELING DISTRICT

Nos.	Vegetation types	Altitudinal ranges
1.	Tropical and plains	Plains to 800m
2.	Subtropical	800-1600m
3.	Temperate	1600m-2400m
4.	Cold temperate	2400-3200m
5.	Sub alpine	3200-4000m
6.	Alpine	4000 m and above

Source Bhujel, R.B. *Studies on the Dicotyledonous Flora of Darjeeling District*, Ph. D. Thesis, North Bengal University. 1996

A major portion of the Temperate and the Cold temperate forests have been cleared for cultivation and for plantations of tea, cinchona and cardamom.

1.4. Drainage and rivers:

The Teesta, a broad mountainous river with numerous shallows and rapids traverses a large part of the state of Sikkim and enters the district of Darjeeling at the point it meets with the Great Rangeet. Reyang, originating from Mahaldiram Reserve Forest (2438m), Peshok and Gail khola constitutes its main tributaries on the right bank after its entry

into the District of Darjeeling. The main tributary of Teesta is the Great Rangeet, which arises from the Pathong glacier and confluences with Teesta at the Teesta Bazar. It enters the district of Darjeeling at the point on the northern boundary where it receives the river Ramam arising from Singalila and Rangu arising from Senchal in Darjeeling on its right bank. Below the confluence the Teesta flows eastwards where it receives the Little Rangit from Darjeeling from where it enters the plains of North Bengal and finally joins the river Brahmaputra in Bangladesh.

The other important rivers of Darjeeling include, the Balason arising from the Ghoom saddle running south till it reaches the plains at an altitude of 304.8m and then turns south east and divides into two channels the New Balason and the Old Balason and subsequently joins the Mahanadi further south. It receives tributaries like Pulungdung khola, Rangbang Khola, the Marma khola, Dudhia khola on the right bank and Rinchingtong khola, Rakti khola, Rohini khola, Jor khola etc on the left. The Mahanadi has its source near the Mahaldiram Dime east of Kurseong and flows southeast receiving a few sizable right side tributaries the Siva khola being the most important one. Its left bank tributaries include the Jholi khola, the Jogi khola, Gulma khola Babu khola and Ghoramara khola. The Teesta and Jaldhakha form the western and eastern boundaries of the sub Division of Kalimpong. A number of rivers and tributaries originate in this sub-division the principal ones include the Lish which originates at the ridge of Pabringtar village and flows downwards receiving the Aml khola on the western side and Turungkhola on the east further southwards it is joined by the Phangkhola and Chunkhola near the Bagrakote Colliery and eventually joins the Teesta at the Kalagaiti Tea estate. The Gish is formed by the joining of two small rivelets, one originating below Lava and the other below the Chumang reserve forest. Ramthi and Lethi form the major tributaries of the river. The Neora originates from the Rechila Chawk just below the Rechila danda and joins the Thosum at the boundary of Thosum and Rechila. It then flows southwards and eventually joins the Teesta. The Relli originates in Khempong reserve forest below Lava-Algarah and runs along the southern boundary of Saihur reserve forest after which it is joined by the Pala and Lolley khola and moving southwards it joins the Rani khola. Murti originates in the Mo block south of Thosum hills flowing through the reserve forest and emerging in the Samsing area and eventually

joining the Jaldhaka river. Along with these, numerous small springs occur which meet to form small rivulets at the bottom of valleys.⁶

1.5. History:

Darjeeling does not have a pre-colonial history for it was a creation or the projection of British colonial imperialism. Darjeeling like Simla or Ooty, was a peculiar feature of British India; no parallel to be found elsewhere. The colonial masters unable to cope with the heat and dust of the Indian plains came to the hills for seasonal relief. Darjeeling served as a summer capital for governmental business. It was a military headquarter as well as a place to relax, far away from the maddening crowd of the vast Indian plains. Moreover it also served as a base for launching commercial links with Central Asia.

The territories of the district of Darjeeling were acquired by the British government of India from two neighbouring states of Sikkim and Bhutan. Prior to the formation of the hill station of Darjeeling in 1835 it was actually a part of Sikkim. From the eighties of the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, Sikkim was invaded several times by the Gurkhas who seized power in Nepal. Disturbances in the northern frontier brought the British into the scene. From 1804 to 1812 relationship between Nepal and the British continued to deteriorate along the frontier till war was declared in November 1814. After an arduous campaign the British took possession of the whole country between the river Kali and the Sutluj, which had been annexed by Nepal. The treaty of Segauli in 1816 finally settled British relation with Nepal. It gave the British direct control of the Himalayan district of Kumaon and Garwal. The East India Company's relation with Sikkim may be traced to the Anglo-Nepalese war. Due to the strategic location of Sikkim the British had sought its help during the war. It included the hill regions east of the Mechi and part of the Terai between the Mechi and Teesta rivers.⁷ In the eighteenth century Sikkim was engaged in warfare with Bhutan and Nepal. The Raja of Sikkim, Chador Namgyal (1700-1716) lost the territory to Bhutan in 1706, but re-conquered it by the closing decades of the eighteenth century. It was Nepal which overran Sikkim as far east as river Teesta.⁸

Nepal had to face another enemy the British whose expansion in the east led to border skirmishes between them and this eventually led to the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814 which was concluded by the Treaty of Segauli on the 2nd of December 1815 whereby Nepal ceded to the East India Company all its Sikkimese territories. By the treaty of Titalya of 10th February 1817, the whole country between the river Meechi and the Teesta (a vast tract of 4000 sq miles) was restored to Sikkim, and the sovereignty of the Raja of Sikkim was guaranteed by the Company. By this treaty the Company assumed the position of 'paramount power' in Sikkim the Raja being bound to refer to the arbitration of the British Government any disputes of his subjects and those of Nepal or any neighbouring state.⁹ In 1828, disputes between Nepal and Sikkim led to arbitration of the British Government who ordered Captain Lloyd and Mr. J. W. Grant the Commercial Resident at Malda, an enthusiastic explorer of the Himalayan foothills to bring about a settlement. In February 1829 Lloyd was impressed by Darjeeling for the purpose of a sanatorium.¹⁰ He urged the British Government to secure possession of such a strategically located place, commanding the doorway to the neighbouring countries of Nepal and Bhutan. For the nearest road to Lasha from the British territory lay through Darjeeling.¹¹ His views were supported by Captain Herbert, the Deputy Surveyor-General deputed by the Government. On the basis of their reports the Court of Directors approved of the project of having a sanitarium for invalids. Governor-General William Bentick ordered Major Lloyd to open negotiations on the 23rd of January 1835, offering land or money¹² and making the Raja understand that the British only wanted Darjeeling for a sanitarium.¹³

The Raja of Sikkim had a list of demands. He asked for an extension of the western boundary of Sikkim. The tax collector who owed him money was to be handed over to Sikkim and thirdly he asked for Dargong. The Government of India did not like the nature of the demands made by the Raja of Sikkim and asked Lloyd to stop negotiations but the Government was surprised that Major Lloyd did not follow the order and instead informed them that he was in possession of the deed of grant of Darjeeling. The British took over Darjeeling in August 1835. In December 1836 Lloyd and Chapman were sent for a year to make a report on Darjeeling and General Lloyd was made the Local Agent dealing with application for land plots. The settlements in Darjeeling grew from a few huts in 1836 to 60/70 locations by 1840. Relationship between the Company and

Sikkim deteriorated as Sikkim lost its right over the Lepchas settling as British subjects in Darjeeling.

In November 1849, Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker and Dr. Campbell the Superintendent were suddenly seized while travelling in Sikkim with the permission both of the Raja and the British Government. The Dewan of Sikkim wanted to pressurize Dr. Campbell to give up all escaped criminals and slaves of Sikkim. The Sikkimese Government was forced to release the British prisoners unconditionally on 24th December ¹⁸⁴⁹1849. The British withdrew the grant of Rs. 6000 per annum to Sikkim, which was part of the settlement made earlier, and the Sikkimese terai was occupied. Thus Darjeeling covering an area of 640 sq miles was connected to British India .¹⁴ Sikkim put a claim on the portion of territory lying to the north of the Ramman river and to the west of the Great Rangeet river. Sikkim was defeated and according to the treaty of 28th March 1861, Sikkim was forced to pay compensation for the losses incurred by the natives who had been disturbed by the Raja's men and the British troops. Sikkim was thus, flung open to free trade and travel. Travellers were guaranteed protection by the government.

Relationship with Sikkim was drawn out but the British still had to deal with the neighbouring kingdom of Bhutan. The Bhutanese were engaged in aggressive attacks on the frontier causing disturbances. In fact in 1862, British troops had to be mobilized at Dinapore in preparation of the Bhutanese attack. In 1863 Sir Ashley Eden the British envoy was sent to the Bhutan durbar, to demand restoration of the plundered territories but he was forced to sign a document by which the Bhutan Duars, on the Assam frontier was surrendered by the British. In order to re-annex the Bengal Duars the British sent an army in 1865 which conquered the territory and the humiliating treaty signed by Sir Ashley Eden was cancelled. Instead a new treaty was signed by which Bhutan Duars was ceded to the British in return for an annual subsidy. In 1886 Kalimpong was made a part of the Darjeeling district. Thus the formation of the district of Darjeeling was complete.

In shape the district resembled an irregular triangle of which the apex projected into the British territory, while the base rested in Sikkim. The district has retained its geographical

dimensions since 1886 but administrative placements kept on changing. Darjeeling was annexed to Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh) after 1850. In 1905 the region was placed in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar (Bengal, Bihar and Orissa then undivided) but was taken back to Rajshahi in 1912. The final annexure to West Bengal was an automatic incident in 1947 when India became independent. The present structure since then remains unaltered.

1.6. Migration to the Hills:

Contrasting sharply to the vast Indian plains, Darjeeling a colonial creation served as a favoured retreat for the colonial authorities. It was a nook in the Himalayan colossus that drew immigrants from neighbouring countries like a magnet. They came in search of jobs some bringing their families, both men and women enticed by the stories heard from others about 'Muglan' or Darjeeling hills. The wave of immigrants included the soldiers, artisans, petty traders, shopkeepers, slaves, fugitives, labourers and domestic hands. It was a multiplicity of factors that brought them to the hills.

It must be pointed out that when the British first acquired the hills in 1835 it was almost entirely a forest comprising of a population of 100 Lepchas and Limbus. A picture of Darjeeling drawn in 1841 shows a scattered village on the slope of Birch Hill and Jalapahar ridge.¹⁵ The Government made General Lloyd the local agent in charge of application for land mainly from the residents of Calcutta. The building of the Pankhabari road by the Executive Engineer and Superintendent of roads Lt. Robert Napier and the establishment of a staging bungalow at Mahaldiram and Pankhabari and a hotel each at Kurseong and Darjeeling led to gradual mushrooming of houses in Darjeeling. It served as an excellent sanatorium. By 1848, there were 70 locations or houses.¹⁶

The growth became rapid. Leading newspapers commented, 'the discovery of Darjeelling and the well accepted fact that it is justly entitled to be considered even in the light of a Providential blessing as to its climate, scenery and locality – the excitement that has been raised by it through the minds of the community – the positive public assurance that the government are now devoting their services intention to it as a station and sanatorium....for the establishment of an institution founded on the

principles, moral, religious, educational, of our proper proprietary grammar schools in England.....confined to the reception of children of the civil and military.....¹⁷ Thus, Darjeeling served the colonial needs.

Rapid development of the new settlement was possible from 1840 due to the efforts of Dr. Campbell the first Superintendent who worked tirelessly for twenty-two years to attract the immigrants to work in the new colony. At this stage it was the Lepchas, Bhutias and the early Nepalese settlers, who gave up the 'jhum' cultivation' (shifting cultivation) with the introduction of settled cultivation and reservation of the forest. Land was leased out to the cultivators.¹⁸ Encouragement was given to the settlers who received grants of the forest land. Campbell introduced a simple system of administration of justice well adapted to the character of the tribes; forced labour formerly in use was abolished and the various tribes of inhabitants were conciliated and settled in the hills. The British introduced new cash crops to the region like tea¹⁹ and cinchona²⁰ along with new small scale industries like woodcutting, sawing etc. All this gave the natives a chance to settle down as plantation workers, road construction workers and cultivators. The clearance of forest lands and the opening of railways provided employment to many. This labour movement into the station became the precursor of a permanent settlement in the hills.²¹

Military and civil buildings made steady progress. Dr. Campbell was helped by the Government in establishing the water supply, post office, bazaar, jail and the sanatorium. Dr. Campbell watched over the territory with parental anxiety. His object was to inspire the aborigines with confidence in the British rule, to induce the neighbouring tribes to settle in the territory. The British needed the labour of the Indian men and women to lead a comfortable life. As Darjeeling grew more important, it attracted more immigrants from the plains and the neighbouring states.

Moreover Dr. Campbell's supervision led to the growth of trade and commerce which added a new dimension to the importance of Darjeeling as a centre of 'trans-frontier trade and an entrepot for Central Asian trade'²² A sum of Rs. 30,000 was spent for building the market square.²³The market grew steadily after the Darjeeling Municipality

was founded in 1850 which took upon the task of erecting stalls, slaughter houses, and creating avenues for trade. The Darjeeling Municipality recorded a population of 22407 in 1869.²⁴ To the Superintendent Campbell credit must be given for the development of Darjeeling by his 'personal character', 'administrative temper, deliberation and forethought', 'caution and foreberance.'²⁵

Dr Campbell was also the pioneer to experiment with tea cultivation along with others like Dr. Withecombe, Major Crommelin and Mr. Jackson. The subsequent planting of tea resulted in the rapid progress of Darjeeling and the growth of population. Tea production was foreign to both Indians and Europeans but from 1833, seeds, plants and labourers from China were brought to India to work in experimental gardens and land was cheaply given on lease by the government for cultivation. The elevation, land and climate of Darjeeling were found suitable for tea cultivation. Tea production was vastly improved by Mr. Fooks, who experimented in growing tea bushes in rows keeping 3 feet distance between each bush.

By 1856 tea industry developed on an extensive scale thereby placing the industry on a solid footing of commercial enterprise. Between 1866 and 1874 the numbers of tea estates in Darjeeling hill was trebled, the area under cultivation increased by 82%. Tea labourers who were migrants from Nepal increased from 6859 in 1868 to 14019 in 1873, 19424 in 1874.²⁶ Darjeeling tea found markets abroad and the British encouraged tea planting in the hills. A part of the colonial discourse was to encourage immigration in the gardens along with the families so that the wives and children offered extra hands to help with the plantation and factory work in cheap rates. This kept them tied to 'an *invisible chain*' from which it was difficult for them to come out.

Moreover, the Nepalese from the hill area did not face any hazards of physical adaptation to this region. Table 1.2. gives an idea of the number of workers in the tea gardens in the District of Darjeeling.

TABLE 1.2. NUMBER OF GARDENS, AREA UNDER CULTIVATION, OUTPUT AND EMPLOYMENT 1866- 1895.

YEAR	NO. OF GARDENS	AREA UNDER CULTIVATION IN ACRES	OUT TURN OF TEA IN lbs.	NUMBER OF LABOURERS EMPLOYED
1866	39	10,392	433,715	N.A.*
1867	40	9,214	582,640	N.A.*
1868	44	10,067	851,549	6,859
1869	55	10,769	1278,869	7,445
1870	56	11,046	1689,186	8,347
1872	74	11,503	2938,626	12,361
1873	87	14,503	2956,710	14,019
1874	113	15,695	3927,911	19,424
1885	175	18,888	9090,298	N.A.*
1895	186	38,499	11714,551	N.A.*

SOURCE: FOR 1866-1874- HUNTER W.W.; 1877; - A STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF BENGAL, p. 165 for 1885-1895 O'MALLEY L.S.S. ;1906; - BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTERS; DARJEELING, p 74.

*[N.A. Data not available]

Like tea the colonial authorities regarded the entire hill area of Darjeeling west of the river Teesta a favourable zone for introduction of cinchona plantation due to suitable climate and cheap labour. In 1862 the Ranju valley at Lebong was chosen for cinchona plantation followed by Rambhi in 1876 and Rongchung in 1887. In 1893 the Namring valley came under cinchona plantation. The introduction of cinchona plantation at Mungpo attracted migrants from eastern Nepal and Sikkim who came in search of jobs. In Darjeeling District the local agricultural labourers and those from Nepal furnished a sturdy labouring force for these plantations. It was the Tagadharis followed by the Matwalis, a few Chettris, Rai and Limbus who migrated to work in these plantations.²⁷ The staple industry of tea and the great traffic moving up and down made it necessary to have a railroad. The opening of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in 1881 helped transport of goods and machinery for the tea factories. Railroad and road eased communication and many elite Indians came to enjoy their holidays in the hill stations. Darjeeling like Simla became an influential hill station for the British and their families, as well for the rich Indians.

The importance of Darjeeling as a military cantonment grew. British political interest in recruiting the Gorkhas preferably from their most martial tribes, to the British Indian army enhanced migration.²⁸ Kirantis had been recruited since 1828 in the

42nd, 43rd and 44th Assam Regiment at Assam, Sikkim and Burma. From 1890s Rais and Limbus were also recruited. But the Nepal government was reluctant to allow British recruitment of soldiers from Nepal. The British had to adopt certain clandestine measures for getting them into their army. They sent agents for bringing them from Nepal and encouraged them to settle in the hill areas of Darjeeling, Sikkim, Shillong and Dehradun.²⁹ Some brought their families others married local girls and settled down in the hills. In another instance during the time of Jung Bahadur Rana a force of 6000 Limbus were conscripted and stationed at Kathmandu but the outbreak of cholera killed many of them. Families who dreaded conscription flocked to Darjeeling.³⁰

Working along with the 'pull factors' mentioned above there were certain push factors that led to the large scale migration to Darjeeling hills. The increasing population in Nepal put pressure on land³¹ although land was plentiful and the terai had yet to be reclaimed. Nevertheless there were several factors that made the cultivators unhappy. The landowners were intermediaries between the state and cultivators. He was a revenue farmer with a considerable socio-political and economic power with a right to evict tenants in the terai and western Nepal. In central Nepal the 'small plots of cultivable land were directly under the peasants but the tenurial right was confined to the actual use of the land. However the permanence of the peasants' tenure was undermined by reallocation of land under the *raibandi* system that constricted each lot to nothing more than a subsistence holding. They forfeited their rights only when they did not cultivate the land themselves and no family was allowed to keep excess land.³² Destined to always remain an agricultural labour even if land was reclaimed the bitter cultivator preferred to migrate to neighbouring countries with his wife and children. Sometimes if the individual efforts made by peasants to reclaim cultivable land did not pay, the cultivator would take loans from private individuals with high rate of interest as high as 30%. The peasants fled from their lands and migrated to places outside Nepal.³³ Thus, the fragmented landholding, indebtedness, food deficiency acted as indigenous factors that led to an exodus from Nepal to the hill stations in India.³⁴

The discriminatory system of justice in Nepal made many men and women fugitives who found an opportunity to start a new life in the hills of Darjeeling under British laws. Documents of 1834 proved that a Magar Mongoloid woman's nose was cut off and she was declared an outcast if she had killed her infant by a slave. If an Upadhyaya Brahman lady, committed the same crime, her face would be blackened and she would be expelled. Sexual contact between an Upadhyaya widow and a slave would result in death for the slave. If Magar criminals died, their property and land was confiscated hence their families were not spared. For a crime of polluting other Magars by distributing wine to them, posing as a Magar, an outcaste woman was ordered to be killed.³⁵

The laws of Nepal differed for different caste. For sexual contact with the elder sister-in-law the Kirats, Limbu, Jumila were exempted but the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Sannyasis were to be declared an outcaste and exiled, the sexual organs of the Khasa, Rajput, Kshatriyas, Vaisya and Gurung-Ghale were to be mutilated, everything belonging to the Newar Sudras were to be confiscated while others like Damai, Sunwar, Kami, Sarki, Balami, Majhi, Tamangs and Chipangs were to be killed. The result of these strict rules was that many Nepalese ran away rather than face trial. Among the migrants the Kirats were in majority as they could not reconcile themselves to the Gorkhali conquest of their lands and many of them at the incitement of the Chinese rose up in arms in 1792. As fugitives they sought shelter in Darjeeling hills. One more factor that caused the exodus from Nepal to Darjeeling and Assam was the terrible practice of slavery. People were reduced to slaves on the charges of adultery. In many cases the woman's nose was slit and she was enslaved. This form of punishment was only for the women of low caste and the *matwali* tribes or Mongoloids.³⁶ Raper, an Englishman who visited Garwal in 1808, saw the sale of slaves at a Nepalese post leading to *Har-ka-Pir*. Many hundreds of these poor wretched of both sexes from 3 to 30 years of age were sold. Their price varied from Rs 10 to 100. A document of 1850 proves that a slave was gifted by a priest to his friend.³⁷ Slavery and bondage were common among the Magars and even little boys and girls were made bonded labourers by moneylenders till the debts were cleared by their parents. The socio-economic condition of the poor made this

system inevitable in Nepal. As a result these people fled to join the other migrants flocking to the hills of Darjeeling to lead a new life.

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CHAPTER -2

THE 'OTHER' IN THE COLONIAL SETTING OF DARJEELING HILLS. (1835 – 1900)

The misty hill station of Darjeeling created by the colonial authorities served as a military cantonment, headquarter for the governmental activities during summer, as a social recreational resort for the British officers and their families and a place for education of British and Eurasian children. As a result Darjeeling, like any other hill stations such as Simla, Mussorie, Almora or Kodaikanal was a bastion for colonial activity. Juxtaposed to the well established white society were the aboriginal inhabitants, the Lepchas and Bhutias of Sikkim¹ who lived in inaccessible tract of forest with very scanty population.² The British sought to incorporate them within the greater colonial framework and these people found themselves in a new set up merging with the pouring migrants from surrounding regions. It is understandable as pointed out by foreign writers, like Dane Kennedy, that the white men could put away the absolute pretension of imperial authority and satisfy their personal needs of social life in this enclave, that reminded them of home, as Darjeeling was unlike the diseased plains where a distance had to be maintained between the rulers and the subjects. However a deep study of their attitude towards the local people, especially the women, which is the focus of study here, reveals the working of a similar premises where the dichotomy between the superior construct and the inferior other can be viewed clearly and thereby making it possible to comprehend the implication of the exercise of power in various social, cultural, economic and political site created by the British in the interest of Pax Britannica. They considered the hill station their preserve and decided to give it a civilized construct and a certain placement to the "other".

Such a definition of the '*other women*' couched in colonial jargon should be deconstructed to give a 'correct image' of the hill women or by giving them 'a true voice behind the false image.'³ Therefore the relation between the 'other' women and the real women of Darjeeling as the subject of study becomes the central issue to be addressed in this work. For it is time as suggested by modern feminist writers like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, to move beyond the Marx who found it possible to say: They cannot

represent themselves; they must be represented.⁴ So we should disassociate ourselves from the European mindset, instead move to issues which are more real and relative to us, based on our experiences, then only will the native voice be free and authoritative says Susie Tharu, a post-colonial feminist.⁵

This work is inspired by the surge of such Third World writings that have opened challenging vistas of enquiry thematizing issues on colonialism and the colonial discourse arising out of these cultural sites. It is found that the attitude towards colonialism have varied greatly in terms of value and emotion. But first let us examine the meaning of colonialism which is essentially the establishment and maintenance for an extended time of rule over an alien subject, asserting racial and cultural significance over them. It is contact between a machine oriented civilization with Christian origin, having a powerful economy and a rapid rhythm of life with a non Christian civilization, that lacks technologies and had lost its dynamism. To put it simply it is the imposition of the first civilization's superstructure upon the inferior second.

At work here is the binary system of the inside/outside, indigene/alien, western/traditional; where the colonizer is the dynamic donor and the colonized is the docile receiver; when the west initiates and the native imitates. Thus while the reciprocity of the colonial relationship is stressed, all power remains within western discourse. This was a collective notion identifying 'us' with the European model and this Euro-centric idea made it superior in comparison to all non-European people and culture. This is precisely what Gramsci defines as the hegemony of the industrial west upon the Orient.⁶ By harping on the difference between the Orient and the Occident it showed the intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different or an alternative world. For the Orientalist were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens or even people but problems to be solved or confined or as the colonial powers openly converted their territory - taken over.⁷

Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a '*subject peoples*' through the production of knowledge in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a

complex form of pleasure/ unpleasure is incited. It seeks authorization for its strategies by the production of knowledge of the colonizer and the colonized that are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated. The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate type on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. Despite the play of power and the shifting potentialities of its subject, it appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity.⁸ Such knowledge results in the white man's belief that it is his human prerogative not only to manage the non-white world but able to own it, just because by definition, 'it' is not quite as human as 'we' are.⁹ Therefore the colonial discourse produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once the 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, which is structurally similar to Realism. One peculiar aspect of colonial discourse is that the knowledge of the construction of that opposition will be denied to the colonial subjects. They are constructed within the apparatus of power that contains, in both senses of the word, an 'other' knowledge - a knowledge that is arrested and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of otherness, that fixed form of difference called the stereotype. As a result it is seen that the object of colonial discourse - that 'otherness' is an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity.¹⁰

What such a reading reveals are the boundaries of colonial discourse and it enables a transgression of these limits from the space of that 'otherness.' Such a rethinking of the placement given to these 'other women' is clearly seen among the themes that have recurred regularly. As Chandre Talpade Mohanty emphasizes, 'It is only in so far as women/ women and the east are defined as the 'other' or as the peripheral that the western/male/humanism can represent him/itself as the centre. It is not the centre that determines the periphery, but the periphery that in its boundness, determines the centre.'¹¹ Whereby, the native hill women's perspective is given an identity instead of accepting the colonial stereotype. Thus focusing on the native women's identity would be 'refusing the European gaze' or the Euro centric assumptions.¹² Instead this work

will attempt to highlight the discourse of the subject women as natives in histories of subordination produced by anti-colonial movements deciphered from cryptic cultural forms and redevise from the vestiges perpetuated through contact transmutation in popular memory and oral traditions.¹³

Let us begin by examining the social set up in the hills – a way of life that adhered to the magnificent days of the Raj and the position of the local people, especially women in this particular case study, reveals the working of a colonial discourse. The English society was represented by different classes of people.¹⁴ At the apex were the members of the Indian Civil Service below them were those in the top ranking military post like the Colonel or brigadier and the rest consisted of uncovenanted officers, businessmen, missionaries, railway engineers, police superintendents, planters of tea, clerks, shopkeepers and doctors. A number of Eurasians or Anglo-Indians were also part of the white society. The different classes of British women who had settled in Darjeeling hills were those with official connections, female missionaries, widows, unmarried women as teachers, nurses and governess at boarding houses.¹⁵

It was a paradox that although the British had created Darjeeling to relax and distance themselves from the native Indians, the multifarious demand for labour that arose when they arrived led to the opening of the floodgates to the deluge of native workers such as servants, porters shopkeepers traders, water carriers, masons, butchers, washermen, dandy bearers, butlers, ostlers, battiwallas, carpenters, blacksmith, construction workers and tea labourers.¹⁶ The crowd of native immigrants also included middle and upper class Bengalis or the *bhadraloks*. The overwhelming majority of Indians in the hills were the adult male migrants and not all of them could afford to bring their wives and children due to economic constraints. The ratio of male and female population in Darjeeling was 2:1 as compared to Simla that recorded a ratio of 5:1.¹⁷ The Census report of 1869 shows that number of male adults was 11643 and male children was 3123 and the total population was 14766. On the other hand the census showed that the female adults numbered 5200 and female children numbered 2641 and total females numbered 7841.¹⁸ The number of Europeans, Eurasians and others were as shown in Table 2.1.

**TABLE 2.1. THE POPULATION OF DIFFERENT GROUPS
IN DARJEELING IN 1869.**

EHNIC GROUPS	TOTAL NUMBER
EUROPEANS	125
EURASIANA	14
NATIVE CHRISTIANS	3
HINDUS	9881
MUHAMMADANS	729
LEPCHAS	300
BHUTIAS	582
CHINESE	2
MAGHS	2
OTHERS (MADRASI AND ARMENIANS)	2

SOURCE: CENSUS 1869, UNDER DARJEELING MUNICIPALITY – as quoted by W.W.Hunter IBID . 1887, p. 89.

The migrant women of the hills came along with their husbands to settle down and work as porters and prized ayahs, tea garden labourers and shopkeepers or as simple housewives. The hill station of Darjeeling became cosmopolitan in character and the contact with the Europeans helped the local settlers to modernise. The British brought with them new ideas, institutions and improvements in the standard of living. The inhabitants of Darjeeling were involved in seeing, observing and participating directly or indirectly in these activities that served for them as the source of learning new and valuable things. The instruction, direction and guidance they received while participating or working for employment in the new venture was a sort of education for the hill people in general. Here it must be pointed out that the native women were not without their traditional knowledge of cooking, weaving, housekeeping, child rearing, midwifery, raising small stock, dairying, weaving, spinning, knitting, sewing, pickle-making and preservation of vegetables. In fact the Lepcha oral legends speak about a Princess named Gayamith who was often warned by the migratory birds that it was time to sow seeds given as a present by her mother. This is an instance of tribal knowledge gained about the seasonal changes and farming. So now to this traditional knowledge was added new experiences and ideas offered by the white society. This cultural contact was to bear its fruits in the near future.

Indeed a study of the dominant social structure would reveal the fact that it was a replica of the upper-middle class in Britain. There were seemingly endless series of social calls, tea strolls, around the Mall road, picnics, dinner, balls, fete, races, amateur theatricals, horse races and other festivities. There would be cricket matches, hockey at

the gymkhana, golf at Senchal, polo at Lebung, annual sports of the college, Loreto Convent fete, shows at the Palace of Varieties, dances, tableaux vivants, tennis, squash, flower shows, dog and horse shows, carnival circus at the market square where separate seats were reserved for the British and charity shows.¹⁹ The various factors like the pyramidal arrangement of the hill settlement, consisting of the British at the higher ridges and the native population located below the market square, with the Bengali *bhadraloks* placed in between marked a dominance of culture.²⁰ The native and the masters were supplied with water from different tanks.²¹ In order to avoid the general mass of people the Darjeeling Municipality created a new road to enable the Europeans to visit the Lloyd's Botanical garden in 1885.²²

A closer look at this society in the second half of the nineteenth century showed the close connection between the hill station and the British women who came to recover after childbirth and the children to build up robust health. Like in England there was gendered distinction between a male dominated public sphere of politics and production and the female dominated private sphere of domesticity and reproduction.²³ It was Victorian ideology that shaped the colonial discourse on women which harped on the biological and behavioural differences between the male and female. It was the women's duty to look after the family needs and the upbringing of the children.²⁴

The private life of a British family in the hills was well organized by the *memshahibs* who employed the hill men and women as servants. The native *ayahs* and maids emerged as a colonial institute in Darjeeling. They watched all activities closely and very soon learnt to take care of the colonial houses meeting their requirements of cleanliness, tidiness, house decor etc. They became accustomed to the western style eating habits and culinary expectation of an Anglo-Indian household. The *ayahs* had heavy responsibilities of bring the morning tea, brushing the *memshahib's* hair, laying out her walking boots and parasol. They saw the manner in which the mistress used materials from the local bazaar to brighten up the house and the use of Victorian furniture, pretty lace and even heavy curtains together with decorations on the mantel piece. They got an idea of home decor. The British houses in the hills were picturesque with a flower gardens looked after by the lady of the house helped by the hill servants.²⁵ A very

important duty assigned to the native ayah was looking after the children sometimes even acting as wet nurses. They bathed, fed, dressed the minors and made good baby sitters and even took the babies for an evening stroll in the perambulators. The British children were attached to their dutiful and loyal ayahs.²⁶ It can be safely assumed that the number of servants employed made housekeeping an easier task for the white women and gave them training to become colonial wives. The colonial discourse made the British women the authority at home, enforcing the ideal of cleanliness, order and industry. The treatment given to the hill men and women employed as servants was one of benevolent materialism, a feature of colonial policy for in treating them as children the servants ceased to be threatening and so could be safely chastised and guided.²⁷ The colonial mistress never forgot their roots and their relationship with the loyal ayahs and servants was based upon the Master and slave narrative. The local people readily accepted the European domination as majority of them did not look upon the British as an occupying force as they themselves were nascent to the hill station and were grateful for getting employment. It was the rulers who decided as to what constitutes native identity and they attempted to gradually relocate the hill women in a space created for them in the colonial society and economy. The hill women like their male counterparts were docile enough to be commanded by the colonist. While working perhaps they were shocked by the European way of dressing, eating habits etc yet the free intermixing of sexes among the British was also a common feature of the tribal people and they adjusted very well to the new system.

In view of the above points it can be concluded that the general picture of the bonded Indian women was made by the colonizers in order to hide colonial imperialism behind the facade of progress and enlightenment. It did not present the empirical truth about all Indian women at large; it betrayed an ignorance of social variation. The British did not study the rural women's enjoyment of freedom in contrast to the secluded upper caste Indian women. The former were involved in cottage industries, farming operations or worked as independent producers. If we take the hill station of Darjeeling as a case study, it is clearly seen that unlike the structured, compartmentalized world of the white women, the native hill women had no stereotype role to play as the fusion of work and home in their tribal life was involuntary. Moreover since the need to earn was

imperative for the family, in the colonial milieu the men and women together formed a domestic work unit and the women's power within the domestic group was directly related to her economic contribution and work. Healthy native women in the colony were valued for their skill as a result both the male and the female were important in the family decision making circle. Thus the native women's model was a contrast to the western culture's projection of women as soft, non-aggressive, complaisant and totally dependant on the male breadwinner or as being marginalized by society. In contrast the Darjeeling tribal women were more independent and their participation in the colonial economy in the nineteenth century would subtly bring about a sense of economic independence that would make them feel important as they began to fulfil an instrumental role within a dominantly male culture within the colonial setting. The hill situation was very much different and it is seen that the native women even within this limited colonial framework responded in various ways to matters of education, health and economy as discussed below.

RESPONSE OF THE WOMEN OF DARJEELING HILLS TO COLONIAL EDUCATION, ECONOMY AND HEALTH (1835 – 1900).

2.1. Education:

Both the colonial administrators and the Christian missionaries encouraged the policy of modernizing of the Indian society and culture. Both parties supported a programme of westernisation through education of the natives but with different aims. The administrators aimed at cultural imperialism. They hoped that through education India be reshaped in England's image and the people be reconciled to British rule. Education was to provide a cheap supply of clerks and interpreters to fill up subordinate posts in administration of the British Raj. On the other hand the missionaries who had been allowed to come to India by the Charter Act of 1833 hoped that education would lead to mass conversion. Like wise the colonial frontier of Darjeeling hills was also an experimental area that contributed to the colonist urge of the Empire. As a result the education of the colonial hills became the concern of both the Government and to a large extent of the missionaries. In this respect we have the voice of the high command Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent, who reported about the total negligence of the Government towards the education of the hill people.²⁸ Here the British attitude showed very clearly that as materials for study the natives acquired all the marks of an inherent

weakness.²⁹ In their report they stated that the people were a 'wretched unmanageable race living the life of wild animals' and there was no appreciation for the value of education due to poverty, backwardness and ignorance according to the inspecting officer Mr. W. B. Jackson in 1853.³⁰

The question of women's education was even worse as they had to do the household chores, collect firewood, fetch water, look after the young ones and graze the cattle. Moreover the natives were not prepared for wasting precious time or money in sending the girl child to school. Such a condition became an important aspect for the influential British writers to use their logic, interlaced with colonial discourse of leading the natives from darkness to light. In this work the delicate yet active English women were to join hands in helping the unfortunate Indian women to educate themselves. For the position of the native women was precisely an indicator of the development and progress of the colony and a justification of the British domination.

Unfortunately the colonial writings on the state of hill education failed to notice the indigenous form of informal education like monastic learning or with regard to women in particular the knowledge of myths, legends or fables, use of medicinal herbs and such form of traditional learning that existed prior to 1835. It is possible to locate traces and testimony of the women's voice on those sites where women inscribed as healers, ascetics, singers of sacred songs, artisans and artists. Taking the people's mind to be a *tabula rasa* the British offered formal education. At this point it can be argued that there was a certain ambivalence in the colonial approach to education in the hills as only elementary education was allowed with the wider goal of conversion and discipline.³² They were afraid that mere scholastic element would breed political discontentment.³³

However, in spite of this colonial framework it was the missionaries and their pioneering efforts among the natives, that was well received and their work clearly showed that if the colonial construct harped on differences it also showed the blurring of differences as they reached out to the general mass living among them and studying the local languages. It therefore became the concern of German missionaries like Rev. W. Start in 1841 followed by Treutler, Wernicke, Stocklthe, Schultz and Niebel to spread the gospel

in Lepcha language to help the work of conversion. At this juncture the pioneering efforts was made by the Church of Scotland who sent a dynamic personality – Rev. William Macfarlane who started a Normal School for elementary education at Locknagar, Darjeeling. It was an inexpensive method to spread education adopted by the British. The 'Monitorial System' or the 'Bell System' divided a class into groups each placed under the charge of a monitor who would help the students and also report the progress of the class. By this method a batch of teachers would be prepared to teach arithmetic, elementary geography, history to others. Hindi was the medium of instruction. He urged the government to offer scholarships to the students in order to deal with the problem of irregular attendance due to the financial constraint of the pupils.

Twenty-three catechists and three ordained native ministers – Padre Gangaprasad Pradhan, Pastor Dyongsi Lepcha and Namthak Ronggong., helped him to spread education.³⁴ In spite of difficulties by the end of 1874 there were seventeen male and two female students.³⁵ From eleven students in 1876 the number increased to twenty-four in 1886.³⁶ Within a short period Macfarlane's system had penetrated the entire district of Darjeeling and by 1873 there were twenty-five primary schools with 615 students.³⁷ Statistical accounts of 1876 mentions 613 pupils – 557 boys and 56 girls in the district.³⁸

The guiding spirit behind women's education in the Darjeeling hills was Miss Macfarlane the Reverend's sister who established the first girls' school in 1872. She had done her teacher's training at the Normal School at Glasgow and by joining the Ladies Association of the Church of Scotland, she came on a mission to help the hill girls. In 1872-73 there were 56 girl students and by 1877-78 the number of girl students increased to 80 out of a total population of 95000 in Darjeeling District.³⁹

TABLE 2.2. SCHOOLS IN DARJEELING 1870-71 TO 1872-73

Sl. No.				
1	16 aided Vernacular Schools run by the mission	1.	23 Lower School	Run by the Church of Scotland
2.	1 Government English School	2.	1 Normal School	
3	2 aided English School	3.	1 Girls, School	

Source: W.W.Hunter; Statistical Account of Bengal: Education and Statistics, vol. x, p. 189

**TABLE 2.3. NAME OF THE SCHOOLS IN THE DARJEELING HILLS
RUN BY THE MISSION 1872-1874**

Sl. No		Sl. No.	
1	Darjeeling Boys' School	10.	Sidayang Pathsala
2.	Darjeeling Girls' School	11.	Kalimpong Bhutia Pathsala
3.	Tukvar School	12.	Jorebunglow Pathsala
4.	Soom Pathsala	13.	Kalimpong Lepcha Pathsala
5.	Langden Pathsala	14.	Kurseong Vernacular School
6.	Nor Pathsala	15.	Kurseong Anglo-Vernacular School
7.	Lebonmg Pathsala	16.	Bungletar Pathsala
8.	Kalimpong Pathsala	17.	Gielle Pathsala
9.	Chongtong Pathsala	18.	Mongpoo Pathasala
		19.	Doteriah Pathsala

Source: Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Report of the month ending 30th September 1874.

If we draw a comparative of Darjeeling with the rest of Bengal then it is found that in 1873 only 56 girls had received elementary education in the entire district of Darjeeling while 20,000 girls had received education in Calcutta and the surrounding areas due to the encouragement given by the government, missionaries and the Brahma Samaj.⁴⁰ Undauntedly the ladies of the Church of Scotland Mission joined the cause of Miss Macfarlane for the upliftment of the native women. Working along with the Young Men's Guild Mission the Ladies Mission was active in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. In Darjeeling they established the Girls' Boarding School also known as Nepali Girls' School in 1890 for the native children. The government gave grant-in-aid of Rs 200 per month to the school.⁴¹

The idea behind the foundation of the school was to impart Christian education to the Christian native girls especially of the Eastern Himalayan region to prepare them for social work in future at very low fees or no fees charged in some cases. For Reverend Macfarlane these Lepcha boys and girls were first teachers, press workers and teachers of the Bible and Christian text for the goal was a Christian school in every village.⁴² Of the two divisions of the Darjeeling Mission, Darjeeling and Kalimpong it was the latter which witnessed a greater activity in the development of female education. By 1889,

nine schools had been established at Kalimpong alone namely Chibbo, Bam (Bong Bustee) Pudung, Samthang Mangzhing, Mangwa, Mongpu and Sitong. The total number of students in these schools were 274 in the day and evening classes. The names of the schools under the mission in 1890 are given in Table 2.4. below.

**TABLE 2.4. SCHOOLS UNDER THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
UNDER KALIMPONG DIVISION, 1890.**

Sl.No.	NAME OF THE SCHOOL	TEACHERS	
1	Kalimpong Anglo Hindi School	Harkadhoz	Nepali
2	Kalimpong Vernacular School	Prabhu Chand Sangya	Plainsman
3	Sunathong Verancular School	Sonam Cherring	Lepcha
4	Pudung Vernacular School	Nirmal	Nepali
5	Chhobo Vernacular School	Atang	Lepcha
6	Ram Vernacular School	Chhering	Lepcha
7	Tasiding Vernacular School	Dingba	Lepcha
8	Mangwa Vernacular School	Anambo	Lepcha
9	Rongpoo Vernacular School	Halo	Lepcha
10	Sitong Vernacular School	Tyangdo	Lepcha
11	Looksan School (Doars)	Naiman Chota	from Nagpur

SOURCE : CHURCH OF SCOTLAND REPORT FOR KALIMPONG 1890 Bengal.

The work of the missionaries was further strengthened by the arrival of two prominent members of the Church of Scotland namely Mr and Mrs Graham. Mr Graham appealed to India and Scotland for aid through his personal relations as well as the news bulletin 'Life and Work.' He was able to muster good support for missionary work.⁴³ Another missionary was Miss Higginson as Anglo-Indian sent by the Church of Scotland Women's Mission, Calcutta. She was helped by a very intelligent pupil Buddhimaya. When Miss Higginson took over there were 33 girls on the roll of which one girl in standard 1 could read English well, she and another girl in class 2 could do sums correctly.⁴⁴ The school curriculum included sewing, knitting, music and singing. The younger children learnt from lesson cards. Writing was taught on the blackboard and slate. Mathematics was of a simple kind, elementary geography was taught to the bigger girls. Hindi was the medium of instruction and the Hindi Reader was used as a text in the first, second, third and fourth grade.⁴⁵ The Church of Scotland also offered

learning to those men and women who had to work in the fields the whole day like in Chibbo, Pudung, Bam and Tasiding. The teachers were ex- students. In this way the first batch of natives receiving education encouraged their wives and sisters at home to go to school. Hill women were slowly brought within the folds of education as a report stated, a number of young women have been coming very regularly. These are the wives of the students in the Training School. We trust the instruction given will fit them to be of use by and when they go with their husbands to the out-lying districts.⁴⁶

These missionaries also brought about vocational and technical education for the poor natives which was of practical use and would enable them to earn a living in future. In 1894 an Industrial School for the women was started by Mrs Graham at Kalimpong where knitting and crochet work was taught to them. In 1897 it became known as the Kalimpong Home Industries and it was famous for its lace work and knitting. Women came from the neighbouring areas to learn. Mrs Graham also encouraged the hill women about poultry farming especially turkey rearing as the Mission realized that manual training was even more useful than book knowledge.⁴⁷

Another remarkable work of the Ladies Mission was reaching out to those women confined at home mostly Indian girls, Bengalis, Muslims and a few Nepali families.⁴⁸ The Ladies Zenana Mission was already active in the rest of Bengal by 1890s educating middle class Hindu girls. So even in the hills the missionaries were interested in spreading education to females kept indoors. The Ladies Zenana Mission got down to work but in 1890 due to conversion of a Brahmin lady by Mrs. Graham a lot of controversies were stirred up and Hindu men did not allow their wives to be taught by the missionaries.⁴⁹ Undaunted the ladies of the Mission worked to provide secular education for a small fee to Bengali and Nepali families along with Bible lesson. In 1895 they visited twelve Bengali homes and nineteen pupils were given education along with thirty seven Nepali students. In Kurseong they reached out to eighteen homes and to twenty nine pupils, teaching and preaching to those in purdah. The Zenana system of the plains was absent in the hills except for a few Bengali, Muslim and Nepali families.⁵⁰

Majority of the hill women were free to move about and elementary education was offered to all by the Church of Scotland Mission who believed that women's education was the key to social progress. The Ladies' Mission also took care of the destitute children of the natives providing them with food and shelter. These children along with the children of the coolies were provided with rudimentary education in the Hindi School a part of the Girls' School in Kalimpong. However its work among the poor men, women coolies and their children was limited in nature. The standard of learning was very low.⁵¹ A study of the roll and daily attendance of these schools run by the Church of Scotland shows average attendance or poor attendance due to financial difficulties, for example in the year 1893 the number on the roll of Kalimpong Girls' School was 40 but the average attendance was 23. The number of pupils on record of Chibo school was 8 for girls 35 for boys but the average daily attendance for the girls was 6 and 27 for boys.⁵² A letter written by W. W. Hornwell a member of the Church highlights this point when he wrote, 'Moreover parents were not at all enthusiastic about their girls receiving primary education on its own account but welcomed it when it was combined with useful industrial training which would give them economic independence.'⁵³

There were major defects in the education of the native women by the British such as the girl child sitting listless under lessons which were not adapted to their childish comprehension.⁵⁴ The method of teaching the girls to write the weight and measures in English and not in the vernacular made them unable to check the local shopkeepers. They were deprived of an opportunity of using their education.⁵⁵ The Government reported that there was reason to believe that the inclusion of religious teaching by the Church of Scotland in the course of study served in some cases to discourage parents from sending their children to school. They defended the stand taken by the missionaries by adding that it could hardly be expected that the Christian missionaries would devote their time to the work of education among the 'uncivilized tribes' unless some religious instruction formed part of the school course.⁵⁶ Another defect in the system was the want of trained teachers and even the Mission schools were unable to meet the demand sufficiently. For instance the Chidam Girls' school was closed as the only available teacher had left the district.⁵⁷ Moreover the authorities felt that the want for female education ought be felt by the natives themselves. In order to encourage the

natives, the reluctant school girls of Nepali Girls' School were offered one annas per day for attending classes in 1890.⁵⁸ The Governor General in Council was well aware of all these problems and showed interest in the question of elementary education in rural and urban areas and the facilities offered to the girl child and it often aided the Primary units run by the Mission in Darjeeling.⁵⁹ The Government released Rs. 5 lakhs to the primary schools in Bengal and the population was the guiding line for the aid. The District of Darjeeling received a grant of Rs.1,200 for the year 1881 as shown by the data below in Table 2.5.

TABLE 2.5. GOVERNMENT'S GRANT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT OF DARJEELING AND JALPAIGURI (1881)

District	Darjeeling	Jalpaiguri
Population	157,000	570,000
Aided Schools	742	1,637
Unaided Schools	80	1,056
Number of Primary Schools	822	2,693
Present grant	1,200	4,000
Proposed grant	1,200	4,000
Increase	—	—

Source- Proceedings of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. General P.V. Oct 1881 (293) No 7097, dated Calcutta the 14th Sept 1881. File 70-6-7. From A.W.Croft, Esq. M.A. Director of Public Instructions, Bengal to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General Department. (J.E.S. Reg No 7276C – 41-17-10-81.)

The total expenditure of these schools amounted to Rs. 2595 of which Rs.2219 came from the Provincial fund and Rs. 376 came from the Public fund during 1889-90. In 1892-1893 the total expenditure was Rs. 1249 and the cost per pupil for the government per annum was Rs. 54. By 1898-99 all the Primary schools in the district were stipendiary.⁶⁰ Rs. 12363 was released in 1899-1900 by the government, which was more than that given to the schools in the plains due to its backwardness.⁶¹ Table 2.6. shows the grant given to the Primary schools of the hills.

TABLE 2.6. SHOWING GOVERNMENT GRANT FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION IN DARJEELING HILLS.

YEAR	AMOUNT OF GRANT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF PUPILS
1888-89	Rs. 4152	39	931
1894-94	Rs. 8792	98	3830
1899-1900	Rs. 12363	101	3830

SOURCE: O'MALLEY 1907; *ibid*, p. 174.

Pioneering efforts of the Church of Scotland was also felt with regard to education of the children of the tea workers with the establishment of three schools at Soom, Takood and Lebong in 1872.⁶² Initially the tea planters who were the chief employers of labour in the district resented this idea due to economic factors, as they felt that the spread of education would lead to the shortage of labour. During 1877-78 itself, Rev. Macfarlane despaired about providing basic education for the children of the tea garden workers. He felt that the Deputy Commissioner should endeavour to induce the planters to cooperate with him. The missionaries sought their help by making them realize that Christian converts made better workers as they could be disciplined.

However, the education received was only up till the primary level and few children went beyond it especially girls. In 1890 the number of schools maintained by the tea gardens was twenty-one. Financial aid for the school building, repairs as well as scholarships were given. In Ging tea estate all the eleven boys and five girls were given Rs 5 per month by the Darjeeling Tea Company so they did not have to sacrifice their classes during the peak season.⁶³ This was a major problem as little girls and boys had to supplement the family income during the plucking season and received Rs 3 a month for their work.⁶⁴ A fall in attendance led to closure of garden schools.⁶⁵ Nevertheless education for the first time touched the lives of the children of the tea workers even though it was of an elementary kind.

Taking the above educational backdrop in Darjeeling hills it can be summed up that female education coupled with other aspects of social change was gradually bringing about a slow transformation in the role and status of women in the hills as well their self-perception. In the decade of 1880-90 there was a marked growth in the progress of education in the hills. The officials reported that the number of schools rose from 18 in 1880-81 with 460 students to 22 schools in 1884-85 with 1037 pupils and finally 32 schools in 1890.⁶⁶ The Mission report quoted a figure of 1042 pupils with 34 teachers in missionary schools in Kalimpong itself. Moreover according to them most of the Christian women some of them Lepchas could read.⁶⁷ By the turn of the century when Darjeeling District was compared to the rest of Bengal Province,

the hill station occupied a high place in education. At the census of 1901 a special return was made of those who were able to read and write in any language, listed as literate or illiterate. Only 1 male out of 10 males and 1 female out of 200 females could read and write in Bengal Province taken as a whole while in Darjeeling 1:8 male and 1:71 females were literate. This ratio surpassed the other districts in Bengal or East Bengal outside Calcutta. The percentage of school going boys was 38.1% and girls 5.9% at the closing decade of the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ These proportions were encouraging. By the first decade of the next century there were 746 children in the tea belt of Darjeeling District receiving education out of 9821 children of school going age.⁶⁹ The process may have been slow but at least a trend had been set for these children. Although education provided by the colonizers did not permeate the entire hill society and did not bring about a sudden transformation, nonetheless in spite of all its shortcomings, tremendous groundwork was done by the missionaries for the natives.

2.2. Health:

Like education another tentacle for injecting western cultural values into an Orient society was undoubtedly through medical science and it also served to preserve European life in the colony that was their foremost concern. In a country like India only a small section of Indians in towns and cities had access to western medical facilities, the others depended upon indigenous practices. Colonial policies were never committed to tackling the massive problems of village sanitation and disease control except during widespread epidemics, which the rulers feared.⁷⁰

Gradually, western science, hospitals and dispensaries replaced the indigenous methods. Within this context of colonial discourse if we study the medical history of the hill station of Darjeeling we find that other than establishment of a sanatorium for the British, they were also forced to look into the public health of the natives due to the increasing population in Darjeeling as shown in by various sources in the Table 2.7. given below.

TABLE 2.7. INCREASE IN THE POPULATION OF DARJEELING.

YEAR	POPULATION	% OF INCREASE	SOURCE
1850	10,000	-	Campbell
1869	22,000	120	Hooker
1881	92,141	318.82	1 st Census
1891	1,50,311	63.13	2 nd Census
1901	1,73,342	15.32	3 rd Census

In the urban areas the hill people lived in shanties or houses that were over-crowded and ill ventilated. Men, women and children working as porters and labourers were seen in the hills. The women carried heavier load as compared to men. Poverty resulted in their dirty habits and careless attitude regarding their food, drinking water and inadequate clothing. Common diseases amongst them included pulmonary infection, goiter, deaf-mutism, diphtheria, enteric, influenza, rheumatism and hill diarrhoea.⁷¹ A programme for sound native health was therefore imperative for the safety of the authorities although they preferred to cite humanitarian concern as is evident in the letter written by Dr. Pearson to the Government of India via Col. Lloyd a senior officer at Darjeeling saying, 'It must be admitted that most of the high placed administrators were well-intentioned, sympathetic and generous where their Indian subjects were concerned. Whenever an application be it for wages, a hospital, a doctor, shelter, food, vaccinator and vaccination was made on behalf of the coolies, it was granted without a murmur of protest and with immediate instruction to the relevant Board or Department.'⁷² Dr. Campbell the Superintendent of Darjeeling enthusiastically supported Dr. Pearson and his demand for a vaccinator.

In 1839 sixty two were vaccinated aged 2½ years to adults. In 1840 seventy five were vaccinated.⁷³ The hill people particularly the Lepchas faced the horrors of small pox year after year and it led to death amongst both children and adults, therefore they readily welcomed vaccination by dispensaries and small pox soon disappeared.⁷⁴ Vaccination programmes was looked after by the Darjeeling Municipality. In 1874-75- there were 42 vaccinators and 848,914 persons were vaccinated of which 454,391 were males and 394,523 were females or 53.5% and 46.5% respectively. In Darjeeling the excess of males to females was due to vaccination being prosecuted under much difficulty and opposition.⁷⁵ In consequence of the appearance of small pox

in some tea gardens, the managers and their native doctors vaccinated a large number of Nepalese tea coolies. While the amount of vaccination performed by the municipal vaccinators at the headquarter of Darjeeling was trifling and 6.6% vaccinated were under one year and 93.4% persons were above one year. The tables I, and II in the Appendix shows the number of males and females vaccinated by the authorities in 1873-74 and 1874-75 in Darjeeling District in comparison to the rest of Bengal.

In 1874-75 the villagers of Darjeeling, numbering 19119 were examined of which 54 were inoculated and 1821 were vaccinated while 32% were still unprotected. Therefore the number of cases increased in Darjeeling in 1875-76 and the members of the Darjeeling police force including their wives and children were all vaccinated. The same official report also stated that in a house-to-house visitation by the Superintendent and his staff disclosed a dangerous large number of unprotected native children at Darjeeling itself. They were all vaccinated. These reports showed the increase of females vaccinated. The raising numbers of those vaccinated is shown by the data given below.

**TABLE 2.8. VACCINATION OF MALES AND FEMALES IN 1875-81
IN THE DARJEELING CIRCLE**

Year	Total percentage vaccinated	
	Male	Female
1875-76	53.13	46.86
1876-77	52.05	47.94
1878-79	53.85	46.14
1879-80	54.66	45.34
1880-81	52.53	47.46

(Source- Vaccination in the Province of Bengal for the Year ending 31st March 1875 by J. Fullarton Beatson, Esq, M.D. Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department.)

Official reports showed the increase of females vaccinated. Yet in spite of this health programme the influx of unprotected persons from other districts as clerks, peons, servants and coolies from Nepal continued. By 1880 vaccination was generally accepted by the natives and the tea coolies although some trouble was experienced in gardens where European supervision was lax.⁷⁶ The Municipality spent Rs 334 in 1889-90 and Rs 392 in 1890-91 on vaccination drives.⁷⁷ The first hospital – Darjeeling Charitable Hospital was established in 1864 run by municipal funds and contribution of

wealthy British and natives. The number of native patients mostly Nepalese numbered 3209, the Lepchas and Bhutias kept away relying on their chants and charms.⁷⁸ The Eden hospital was made for the British and the Lewis Sanatorium was built for the natives of Darjeeling hills in 1887 with liberal donations. In the nineteenth century many charitable dispensaries were established in order to supplement the work of the government. In 1871 the Church of Scotland, appointed Henry Faulds the first medical missionary from Scotland to serve the villagers. The Chartist Hospital run by them at Kalimpong received a grant of Rs 3,500 from the government for construction works in 1894.⁷⁹ In 1897 a payment of Rs 1,200 was made from the Darjeeling Improvement Fund for the Kalimpong Mission.⁸⁰ The Womens' Guild also supported the medical work of the Chartist hospital that had 26 beds and was in charge of a medical missionary and two lady nurses. A number of parishioners received treatment through the dispensary. The same mission also maintained dispensaries at Nimbong in the Kalimpong subdivision.⁸¹

The rest of the hills under tea garden management took initiative of their own regarding the provisions of medical benefit of the workers. Dispensaries were built and looked after by a qualified compounder assisted by two men for treating outdoor patients. A number of tea gardens used to share the services of a single compounder who came on a horse. The workers were given free medical facilities.⁸² Unfortunately the colonial authorities were not very concerned about the native women's health and welfare in the tea belts. Women were not entitled to any maternity leave. In fact the gardens in Assam and Bengal showed a tendency towards low birth rates due to the physical labour demanded of them. The Government of India appointed a committee to enquire into the matter and the committee discovered the out of a total population of 7,50,000 coolies in 1871-1900 only a population of 5,50,000 was left in 1906 which allowing for departures and death testified to extremely low birth rates in the garden itself.⁸³ In the case of Bengal the Bengal District Gazetteers of 1947 points out that in the year 1871 the number of tea workers was 9,4712; in the year 1881 it was 1,55,179 an increase of 64%; in 1891 it was 2,23,314 which showed an increase of 44% and in the year 1901 it was 2,49,117 an increase of just 12%. The fall in the rate of increase was a result of depression in the industry and also due to low birth rates. But the colonial authorities

attributed the low birth rate in the tea gardens in the north and western India to the weakness of the marriage ties among the coolie immigrants rather than to the difficulties faced by the workers themselves. They admitted in their report cases of infant mortality⁸⁴ and the ill health among the labourers.⁸⁵

With regard to health another problem faced by the hill women like other Indian women was the disturbing factor of prostitution that was encouraged by the authorities for facilitating mercenary sex. It must be pointed out that the colonial policy of imperialism was to keep the British officers away from Indian mistresses as a distance was to be maintained between the rulers and the ruled. Officers were encouraged to marry British women but the authorities provided prostitutes for the ordinary soldiers. As the imperial authority of the British rested on the army more so after the revolt of 1857 every attempt was made to satisfy the needs of the troops even if these were morally repugnant and dehumanising. Moreover, prostitution in India made it safe for the British ladies to move about freely. The native prostitutes alluring and dangerous symbolized Indian degradation and they claimed colonial rights to bring about law and order. The Indian Act of 1888 enforced sanitary regulation of prostitution, which was widespread.

In Simla and Darjeeling prostitution was allowed in the cantonment region. There was a regimental brothel or lock hospital attached to the Darjeeling Dispensary compound under the Civil Surgeon Dr. H. B. Purves in 1873. The lock hospitals offered protection from general diseases. The diseased prostitutes were usually helpless women, creatures of misery, deprivation and exploitation.⁸⁶ They were accommodated in a room in the Police Hospital next to the sick constables. With the exception of the occasional visits of the military apothecary, the Dispensary Native Doctor, compounder of staff had to attend to these women and medicines were supplied from the civil station stores. The mid-wife attached to the Dispensary had to dress and apply medicines to prostitutes in the lock hospital. The lock hospital was later shifted to Jalapahar in charge of the regimental bazaar officer. The number of registered prostitutes in the lock hospital at Darjeeling was 24 in 1874 and an average of 16 females per month came for medical examination. However the number shown in the report as "sick treated" in the hospital did not actually show the amount of disease about the station but only a small portion of

it.⁸⁷ As a result the check that the Civil Surgeon imposed on unregistered females could not be applied as the cantonment and its neighbourhood was frequented by a multitude of females employed as coolies and who although though not prostitutes were ready to entertain the soldiers. Thus the disease was rife among them and the maintenance of the lock hospital for inspection of 12 to 14 registered females was a mere waste of money.⁸⁸ The tables given in Appendix number III, IV and V shows the annual statement of the Lock Hospitals for the year 1874.⁸⁹

Another official report supports the view that the venereal disease prevailed among the backward hill women of Darjeeling. It stated that, venereal disease was known to be prevalent amongst the indigenous population that included the Nepalese, Bhutias and the Lepchas, but only one Bhutia women was mentioned in the prostitution register; and the officer was convinced that that the troops contacted this disease from other unregistered women who were the residents of Darjeeling. Unless some more efficient checking was done than at present the objective of having the lock hospital was futile, lamented the authority.⁹⁰ These official statements proved that no concrete steps were taken for their betterment. While in Britain the reformers and the feminist fought for the right of women even prostitutes, and they were coaxed to undergo treatment in hospitals, no such concern was expressed in the colonies. It was left to the missionaries who worked with great zeal and enthusiasm to educate the women in general by imparting medical, industrial and formal elementary knowledge.

2.3. Economy:

The creation of urban towns in Darjeeling hills with forest reserves and plantation as part of the colonial agricultural plan had definite repercussions. On the one hand it closed large parts of the highland territory to the natives who till then had traditionally depended upon them for subsistence. On the other hand it globalised Darjeeling tea that served as a new avenue of wage labour for women and children in particular within the premises of the colonial economy. The recorded materials of the Raj are pointers towards the use of this cheap labour to suit the capitalist who never allowed the women's question to be taken up seriously although their participation in large numbers in the tea belts was of great future importance. An analysis of the rapid development of

Darjeeling tea plantations and to a certain extent the cinchona plantation proves that it was instrumental in opening of new occupational opportunities and in increasing demand for labour based on productivity rather than on sex. Women migrants joined the tea gardens in the hills to supplement the family income.

In Darjeeling Dr. Campbell was the first to seriously experiment the growing of tea in 1839. This was followed by the plantations of Dr. Withcombe, Major Crommelin in the lower valley, called Lebong. In 1856 tea industry developed on an extensive scale at Takvur by Captain Masson, at Kurseong by Mr. Smith, between Kurseong and Pankhabari by Captain Samler. The year 1856 was a landmark in the history of Darjeeling tea industry. The year marked the opening of Alubari tea garden by Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company and another on the Lebong spur by the Darjeeling Land Mortgage Bank. In 1859 Dr. Brougham started the Dhutaria garden. Between 1860 and 1864 four gardens at Ging, Ambutia, Takdah and Phubsering were established by the Darjeeling Tea Company.⁹¹ By the end of 1866 there were no less than 39 gardens with 10,000 acres under cultivation producing 433,000 lbs of tea and by 1870 it employed 8000 labourers producing 1,700,000lbs of tea. Recorded data shows that in the year 1870 Darjeeling hills alone employed 3,874 men, 2,609 women and 824 children in 33 gardens belonging to the hills.⁹² In 1874 there were 19,000 labourers in the gardens now numbering 113 in the entire Darjeeling District. From 1866 to 1874 the number of gardens under tea cultivation increased to 82% while the output multiplied nearly 10 times.⁹³

The data in the appendix, table number VI shows the state of tea cultivation in Darjeeling District and Jalpaiguri of the Rajshashi Division for the years 1895 and 1899. The report of 1895 stated that the number of gardens had increased from 177 to 186. Some estates were subdivided and as increase appeared in the production due to the favourable weather for tea cultivation. The mortality in the tea gardens was less than in the preceding years and the want of coolies continued to be felt in the tea gardens of Darjeeling. Recruitment operations with occasional exception had been carried under the district supervision.⁹⁴ The government report for the gardens for the year 1899 stated that the Labour Act was not in force in the district and coolies came mostly from

Nepal. They were all free labourers. They got sufficient remuneration and lived comfortably in the garden premises with their families. In all the gardens the coolies' health were looked after by the managers. They were given medical aid in the form of gratuity and the sanitation lines were looked after personally by the management.⁹⁵ Recruitment during the colonial period was done primarily through contractors most of whom employed arbitrary and through underhand methods. In 1892 a Tea District Association was formed to undertake the recruitment of workers. These reports prove that in Darjeeling hills and the Terai region the workers both male and female enjoyed greater mobility than Assam although there was a Sardar to look after the recruitment.⁹⁶ Among them the women came either as a married woman or a widow along with fellow villagers. If she had relatives in the plantation she would stay with them or she settled with a single male migrant.

A variety of tasks were suited for the women and children in the tea belts. The working condition in the tea garden in Doars, Terai and the hills were according to colonial authorities, ideal for women with agricultural background. She spent all day in the fresh air and not in unhealthy condition like in mines or mills.⁹⁷ Women's work included preparing the nursery bed by sorting out the stones and roots; planting the seedlings; plucking of tea leaves from March to November and plucking was so swiftly done that it was often impossible to follow the motion of their hands.⁹⁸

Other types of work performed by them were pruning of the tea bushes, weeding the garden, spreading out of tea leaves on trays, cleaning of the tea leaves and carrying the tea leaves to the factories on their backs. The payment for the work done by the tea labourers in the hills varied between the sexes and also from garden to garden. During the early colonial period in the hills the average rate of wage was Rs 6 for the males, Rs 4-8 for females, Rs 3-2 for children per month.⁹⁹ The Act VI of the Bengal Council of 1865 fixed the monthly wage of men women and children at Rs 5, Rs 4, and Rs 3 for nine hours of work everyday. By 1899 the wages had increased to Rs 6/7 for men, Rs 4/5 to Rs 8 for women and Rs 3 for the children workers who could more by doing extra work.¹⁰⁰ Payment of villagers in the hill area was based on piece rate- the *hazira* and *thekka*. The *hazira* or the daily wage paid to each worker on completion of a particular

task, which has been allotted to him/her for the day. *Thekka* referred to overtime work as well as the extra plantation work given on contract.

Fringe benefits included free housing made of bricks and corrugated iron roofs and rent-free land for cultivation of crops or grazing of animals. An overall study on the impact of the tea gardens on the lives of the hill women shows that the new colonial economy provided the women a livelihood, which brought about a change in the social set up. In the traditional society women were economically dependent on their husbands who controlled most of their productive resources, income, tools, knowledge and skill. This dependence decreased with the shift from home production to wage employment in which women had direct control over the income earned by them. Cultural inhibition against women seeking employment outside home tended to decline with increased exposure to the plantation life.

A further economic stimulus for the hill station of Darjeeling came with the introduction of the cinchona plantation in 1862 at Mungpoo. 160 acres of land came under cinchona plantation in Darjeeling. Rambhi was added in 1876 where 12,000 acres were brought under plantation and by 1893 another 500 acres was added in Kalimpong.¹⁰¹ The payment for the male and female workers differed as shown by the factory record at Mungpoo for the year 1899 as 5 annas per day for the male 4 annas per day for the women and 3 annas per day was given to the children worker. Whether it was the tea or the cinchona plantation the fact that no maternity leave was granted speaks volumes about the colonial exploitation of the unsuspecting female worker although the official reports speak of the rudimentary health service. These women had to face the burden of reproduction and malnutrition. The framers of the colonial policies were only interested in acquiring cheap labour to lower the cost of production and this came to them in the form of women and children. Moreover the female participation in the plantations was under estimated because the planter did not take into account the 'informal work' performed by the women at home which contributed to the goods and services produced in the family. They carried a double workload without their contribution being recognized. Like their male co-workers these women were vulnerable to the market slumps in the tea industry as the plantation economy had linked up

Darjeeling to the world economy. Another factor beyond their control was the *sardar's* arbitrary powers and low payment.

There were other ways of participating in the colonial economy other than wage labour as hill station witnessed an increase in population. In Kurseong the population was 44,649 in 1891 and in Kalimpong the population increased from 3536 in 1865 to 26,631 in 1891. In Darjeeling the population rose from 3157 in 1872 to 14,145 in 1891.¹⁰² Thus, the hill stations created a demand for fuel and fodder. The government encouraged traders and shopkeepers to settle in Darjeeling hills. Travellers noticed that on Sunday morning the villagers came in thousands to do the week's marketing decked in all their finery. The women and children were especially picturesque dressed in all the colours of the rainbow and laden with massive gold ornaments to participate in the '*Gundruka bazaar*' in Darjeeling and the '*Aitabarey haat*' in Kalimpong.¹⁰³

The very fact that Darjeeling and Kalimpong were the main centres of trade with Calcutta, Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan resulted in trading activities. Both male and female mounted Tibetans and Sherpas came as traders to barter or sale ponies, wool, coarse blankets, fur, yak tails, musk, turquoise, gold-dust, Chinese silk, brick tea and salt. They took back English broadcloth, piece goods of European manufacture, tobacco, rice, sugar, precious and semi-precious stones.¹⁰⁴ The people in Nepal were taking a liking to English piece goods and medicine.¹⁰⁵ These markets provided the women of the hills social interaction, gave her the rudimentary knowledge of economics and taught her to be thrifty and earn for themselves. The market price of goods in the hills was considered to be high in the early colonial period and some articles were priced as follows-'coarse rice at 14 seer per rupee, middling ditto 10 seer, table salt ditto 8 seer, dal 8 sees, ghee 2 seer, atta 6 seer, salt, tobacco, huldi, red pepper and garlic each 3 seer per rupee, sukkur 2 seer, Chines 11/2 seer, chuna 8 seer, fowl, milk, eggs, sujeer, butter sugar, candy not procurable at all...'¹⁰⁶ The prices of rice and pulses in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri in 1880-81 was as follows in the Table number 2.9.

TABLE 2.9. PRICE LEVEL OF EDIBLE COMMODITIES IN 1880-81

District	Commodity	Quantity per Rs in 1880-81		Average quantity per Rs during the 5 preceding years.	
		S	C	S	C
-					
Jalpaiguri	Rice	18	4 1/5	14	0
Darjeeling	"	11	10	10	13
Jalpaiguri	Pulses	8	12 4/5	7	9 3/5
Darjeeling	"	19	2	17	9

Source- Proceedings of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. General P.V. July 1881. No 290. General Department. Miscellaneous. No. 177 G dated Bhagalpore, the 30th of June 1881. File 116- 1/2. From G.N. Barlow Esq. CSI, Commissioner of the Bhagalpore Division and Sonthal Pergunnahs, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General Department.

The women had to manage the household keeping in mind the price level and her budget. The cost of living rose up higher as Darjeeling grew in importance and attracted more migrants.¹⁰⁷

Summing up it can be said that when the social construct of the Darjeeling women is viewed historically in the second half of the nineteenth century it is possible to evaluate the implications of the exercise of colonial power in the tea belts or for the matter in any social sphere. Their response has been characterized by the rulers as obedient and hard working migrants without an identity of their own. The absence of the native voice was due to lack of organization, in the absence of a powerful upper and a middle class that created a vacuum in their social structure. Therefore they needed a placement in the white man's construct. Acceptance of the master discourse by the natives was viewed in different fields like health, economy and education in the second half of the nineteenth century. It has been seen that the health measures in terms of vaccination and dispensaries established by the government was in view of safeguarding British health and bringing the hill women in the orbit of rudimentary health schemes. The lock hospitals provided for the British soldiers showed the exploitative attitude of the colonist for the local women.

The economic policies of the colonist in the hills coincided with the intensification of exploitation and deeper penetration that characterized the second stage of colonial domination all over India that took place from 1830-1860. The opening up of Darjeeling served imperialist and industrial needs. The natives were to be transformed, fixed

according to British requirements. The legal, judicial structures overhauled to promote the capitalist, commercial relation and to maintain law and order.¹⁰⁸ Side by side cultural transformation was attempted through education in order to reproduce and promote the culture of loyalty among the colonized people.¹⁰⁹

Therefore education of the natives was intended to fill up the lower ranks of administration and to discipline them. In the hills it was slow in reaching out to the masses especially women. It was the tireless work of the missionaries of the Church of Scotland who introduced elementary education, technical training at the Lace School in Kalimpong. Although the education given was not in tune to the needs of the villagers, it was the first step towards general awareness. Side by side the tea garden managers were finally induced to establish primary schools for the children of the workers run by the Mission. For the native women their participation in the limited colonial space be it health, education or economy was a process in their awakening and development. It helped to formulate the ethnic identity distinct from the western construct. It was based upon their own customs and traditions and largely shaped by the colonial experience in the hills. The local women worked side by side with the male sharing the workload at home and plantation thereby seen as a co-equal provider and decision maker within the domestic domain unlike the marginalized, dependent image projected by the colonial writings.

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CHAPTER -3

CULTURAL SYMBIOSIS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE HILL WOMEN.

3.1 Introduction:

The colonial paradigm in Darjeeling presented a different world altogether for the aboriginal as well as the migrant women who carried memories of different worlds with them. It was the fusion of these multiple worlds that created a new image of the local women who reacted spontaneously, contributing to the liberal, cosmopolitan identity of the hills. They were subject of study as 'natives' or migrant settlers belonging to various races and tribes in accordance to the colonial classification. These colonial writings harping on recorded facts relied less and less on oral records, myths, legends, traditions as great narratives or the local papers to study the reaction, real position of the native women as part of the societal structure of Darjeeling hills. Instead of accepting the *universal subordination theory* of woman that came to us from the west we should be aware that women diverge in terms of how race, ethnicity, customs and usages, historical experience and geopolitics affect them. All these factors need to be part of the framework in gender analysis and in determining the native representation of the hill women during colonial rule. Therefore the work here has been divided into nine parts in order to have an explicit and cross-culturally applicable definition of their status and power. They are (a) the background of the various tribes and races; (b) the status and position of the hill women; (c) costumes and ornaments; (d) childcare in the hills; (e) attitude towards sex and related matters; (f) inheritance rights; (g) marriage customs; (h) childbirth and the period of pollution (h) and the impact of the cultural diversity on the position of women.

The population of Darjeeling had considerable increased from a 100 heads in 1835 to 10,000 in 1850.¹ The population rose to 92,141 in 1881. However this data is not reliable as there was immense concealment of females in 1881. Many of them fled on the census night over the frontier to Nepal. Labourers absconded from the tea gardens due to panic and other causes. This may be due to the fear for the unknown the locals had for the newly introduced programmes like census recording or vaccination drives by the British. The census figures for 1891 were more scientific and the hills recorded a

healthy population of 2,23,314 in 1891. The males recorded were 1,23,046 and females were 1,00,268. There was phenomenal population growth in Darjeeling District from 1891 to 1921.² By 1941 it stood at 199,891 males and 1,76,478 females in the District. The Darjeeling subdivision alone showed a total population of 1,47,327 in the year 1941 which included 76,710 males and 70,617 females.³ The coming together of these various races and tribes was bound to have to have a repercussion on the lives of the native women in Darjeeling, bringing about a change in the cultural traditions and customs to a certain extent and evoking a response from them to the colonial policies and changes. The growth in the population in ht Darjeeling Sub-division is given below in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1. GROWTH OF POPULATION FOR THE DARJEELING SUBDIVISION FROM 1901-1941.

Subdivision	Year	Total	Male	Female
Darjeeling	1901	16,924	10,241	6683
	1911	19,005	11,631	7374
	1921	22,258	12,877	9381
	1931	21,185	12,101	9084
	1941	27,224	15,203	12,021
Kalimpong	1931	12,682	8776	3906
	1941	17,252	11,958	5,294
Kurseong	1901	4,469	2418	2051
	1911	5,574	3126	2448
	1921	6,445	3275	3170
	1931	7,487	4014	3,473
	1941	10,375	6,387	3,988

Source- Census reports of Bengal for 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931, 1941.

3.1.1 Background of the various tribes and races:

While examining the background of the original inhabitants of Darjeeling the Lepchas also known as '*Mutanchi Rongkup*' or the beloved sons of the Mother of Creation reveals the fact that they were the oldest inhabitants of Sikkim. These aborigines of the mountain forests surrounding Darjeeling regarded Sikkim as their fatherland. They are subdivided into the Rongs and the Khambas.⁴ Lepcha legends tell us that they were actually from a land called *Mayal Lang*. The Lepchas or the Rongs believed that their primordial God (*It- mo*) created *Fo-dong-Thing* and *Na- Zom Nyu* out of pure virginal.

snow of *Kin-tsom-zang-bu-nyu-chou* (mount Kanchenjanga) and sent them down to live and multiply all over the region. Among their children *Thi-Kung* and his wife *Ni-kung-agal* were venerated as the grandfather and grandmother of the Rongs. The Lepchas entered Sikkim under the leadership of their king *Turve Panoo*. They were conquered by the Tibetans invading Sikkim. Another legend states that the *God of Kanchenjunga* created the first man *Nongyo* from nine elements and a female *Nuzong* as his partner. They were kept in paradise called *Ne Mayel Kyong* where physical relations were forbidden. When they disobeyed God they were sent down to earth called *Tarvong Partam* where children were born to them.⁵ Other scholars believe that the original home of the Lepchas was mainland China from where they moved towards the South and settled in Assam, Sikkim and Nepal.⁶ Professor Sten Konow is of the opinion that the Lepchas form one of the links which connects Tibetan and the Himalayan dialect into the Tibeto-Burmese language of Assam.⁷ Religious hymns, songs and ancient folk tales were orally passed down generations and they spoke about the days of living in caves, ravines and eating fruits, tubers and flesh of wild animals.⁸ They were of the Mongolian type around 5 feet to 4/8 feet with broad flat faces, depressed noses, eyes oblique, no beard, a little moustache, olive complexion with the boys and girls having a ruddy tinge with good looks.⁹ They were the timid people, peaceful, disliking fixed employment and happy to live in the jungles. The Lepchas have been termed as the children of the mountains, free and happy, carefree, modest, with joyous disposition. They were fond of racing, hunting, quoits, wrestling and jumping. They were born naturalists, very poor agriculturalist with no ploughs and they were nomadic hunters.¹⁰ With the coming of the British the Lepchas had to lead a settled life and practice cultivation and their population numbered 4000 in 1874 and 10,000 in 1901.¹¹ Lepcha settlements grew up at different places like Darjeeling town, Algarah, Goubathan, Kurseong, Mirik etc.

A regular census of 1901 showed that the Nepalese numbered 1,34,000 and made up more than half the population. Of them the most numerous were the Khambus and Murmis. The Khambus numbered 33,000 and the title of Rai was conferred upon them as regional heads. The Rais belonged to the Mongoloid stock. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese. Rais found employment in the British army along with the

Limbus and Gurungs. Both men and women were engaged in agriculture, weaving of mats and baskets for local sale in the hills.

The Murmis numbered 254000 in 1901.¹² The Murmis or the Tamangs apparently did not come into general usage until the twentieth century. It has been mentioned in the Tibetan text of the early thirteenth century that they were a proto-group belonging to Gurungs and Thakalis.¹³ These Tamangs were descendants of the Tibetan stock modified more or less by intermixture with the Nepalese. Tamangs were mostly cultivators while the women found employment in the tea gardens.¹⁴ The next most numerous Nepalese caste were the Limbus numbering 14,300, serving as porters, herdsmen, farmers and traders.¹⁵ According to the Limbu tradition their original homeland was in *Limbuwan* or the country of the Limbus in East Nepal from which Darjeeling District first received settlers. These Limbus feel that they belong to the bigger world of the Kirates.¹⁶ They were of the Mongolian stock and are much mixed up with the Lepchas. Yet they were less Mongolian than the Lepchas and are taller, more wiry and resemble the lowland Turanians. They were agriculturalist producing maize, buck wheat and rice. The Limbus also spun, wove and dyed clothes.¹⁷ Next in line were the Magars numbering 11,900 in 1901 and they were probably part of a very ancient influx of the Mongoloids. They acknowledged the overlordship of the Khasas, Rajputs and the Senas and thus began the process of their Hindunization.¹⁸ Through intermarriage of the Khas males with the Magar women the Magars acquired the Khas language and habits without losing their own culture.¹⁹

The Gurungs numbering 8,700 as recorded in the Census of 1901 in Darjeeling were pastoral nomads and traders. These Gurungs coming from western Nepal were an amalgamation of several different people incorporating elements of both Tibeto-Burman and Indian-Aryan origin which could be seen in their religion and rituals.²⁰ Highest in the caste structure of the Nepalese were the Brahmans followed by the Chhetris and the census of 1901 recorded Brahman population as 5,000 and the Chhetris as 11,600. Traditional accounts state that the Brahmans and Rajputs fled to Chittoor and Kanauj during the twelfth century as a result of Muslim invasion and they settled in Nepal. Some married local Magar and Gurung women and were accepted as Chhetris or

kshatriyas or warriors.²¹ The Newars in the same period numbered 5,880 in the District and were traders, artisans, agricultural workers or domestic hands in the hills. The term Newar designate a number of former ethnic groups who have through centuries of intermingling formed a homogeneous community with common tradition of language and heritage. They have both Tibeto- Burmese and Brahmanic- Gorkha features.²² The population of the hills during the colonial period also included the Sunwars or the Mukhias of eastern Nepal believed to be off-shoots of the Magars but deeply influence by the Chettri culture. Among the lower caste the most numerous were the Kamis numbering 9,800 in the District of Darjeeling mostly workers in iron and gold.²³ Kamis were the descendants of people who were punished for disrupting the agnatic unity called '*had phode*' (breaking of bones) by marrying agnatic lineage and heading towards liberalization or emancipation. They are endogamous and divided into Lohars and Sunars.²⁴ Mention must be made of the Damais numbering 4,600 in 1901' the Sarkis 1,800 and the Ghartis 34,500 by the census of 1901.

The Bhutias of Darjeeling numbered 9,300 consist of the Sikkimese Bhutias, the Drukpas of Bhutan, the Kagatays or Yolmos and the Sherpas or the Bhutias of Nepal.²⁵ The Sherpas of Solua Khambu originally from the Tibetan province of Kham,²⁶ were unalloyed Buddhist and they settled as cultivators, porters, weavers and traders. The Drukpas numbering 2,350 in 1901 were practically confined to Kalimpong as farmers and traders and since olden times they have thrived on the trans-Himalayan trade. The fourth class of Bhutias the Tibetans numbering 1,700 were migrants from the tableland of Tibet and were engaged in trade. Other groups were the Tibetan Muslims and the Indians who were Muslims by religion and they were from the plains who settled in Darjeeling intermarrying local women to make up the native population of the hills.²⁷

3.2. Status of the Hill Women in the Family set up:

The above mentioned multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan character of the hills have not changed over time in which most of the families have a joint family structure in which the women enjoys a great deal of authority as among the Lepchas, Bhutias, and the Mongoloid tribes among the Nepalese. For the Lepchas the family unit is an important

their lives and families are closely knit together. Although the Lepcha family is patrilocal and the father enjoys supreme authority, the relationship between the husband and the wife is based upon love and co-operation of domestic and farm work. Lepcha women have co-equal rights over property and decision-making in family matters. A striking feature of the Lepcha community is that they work hard for the community as a whole and are not at all individualistic or self-aspiring like the hardworking Sherpa community. The Lepcha girls have the right to adopt the surname of their mother. Lepchas prefer the joint family structure unlike the Sherpas and new houses are made only when the family increases in size and accommodation is required. Lepcha couples respect each other and the spouses address each other using titles or kinship term like the mother of so and so or the daughter-in law and avoid names unlike the Sherpas of Darjeeling hills.²⁸

A Lepcha widow enjoys greater freedom and higher social status than her Hindu sisters. Widowhood is not considered unlucky or a curse as among the females in the plains and a Lepcha widow can remarry without any difficulty. However, the Lepcha women do not take hasty steps in matters of divorce as they regard marriage a ritual and not a contract like the Sherpas. It has been remarked that polyandry is not found among the Lepchas and a marriage ceremony is a serious affair.²⁹ The couple adjust well and a divorce only takes place when a compromise cannot be reached at the insistence of the elders of the family. In case of a divorce the lama pronounces the divorce and compensation is paid to the woman by the husband. In case of adultery the guilty party will have to pay the compensation. In Kalimpong it was a rule that in case a man drove away his wife and forced her to return to her father's house he had to pay a fine as the 'marriage price.' Similarly the second husband had to pay the former husband the 'marriage expenses' in case the wife eloped prior to getting a divorce or the family of the woman had to provide the former husband a suitable substitute in which case the payment made by the second husband went to the woman's parents.³⁰

The freedom given to the tribal women is denied to the females in the Brahman or Chettri women among the Nepalese in Darjeeling hills. Among the upper caste

Nepalese the household is patrilocal extended family and they function as a unit with regard to sharing of labour, rearing of children, festivities, marriages, death rites and a common budget. Generally speaking these upper class women are confined and cannot take decisions or mix with others in society except on formal occasions. The birth of a daughter is welcomed in Darjeeling but the upper class Hindus prefer sons as they are needed to fulfil the funeral rites of the parents. The women's surname changes after marriage to the clan of her husband. Yet a widowed or a divorced woman will be accepted back in her natal home and may participate in family affairs. They look upon marriages as a spiritual bond and an irrevocable act, thus divorces are not approved. There is great tension between the married lady and her in-laws in an orthodox set up even in the liberal surroundings of the hills of Darjeeling .

The Chettris have a puja relationship with their sisters. The girl is worshipped by her parents and brothers and often receives gifts from them. Right from childhood the traditional Nepali male grows up to respect his mother and sisters, a sentiment quite absent in western societies. The males of the Chettri family have to worship even their maternal aunt on the death of their father. There are certain exceptions to this rule of honouring the female gender. For instance the pure blooded Chettris are to marry partners of a similar kind. If the Chettri male marries a non-Chettri woman, the wife is not allowed to smear tika during festivities on the forehead of the sons of a pure Chettri lady nor is she allowed to cook for her husband or her own sons once they wear the sacred thread. A divorcee or widow in a Chettri household can never enjoy the same status as a married Chettri woman.³¹

A sharp contrast is seen in the status of women belonging to the Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Limbus, Sunwars and the Rais among the Nepalese of the hills. There is more flexibility and adjustability seen among them where the old and young share the workload, joke and sing in groups. They live in large joint families but the family units are well balanced. These tribes are patriarchal in nature excluding the Limbus but very flexible compared to the upper caste. All these tribes and races allow the females to take part in the family economy like hulling the rice, weaving, planting of paddy,

weeding, harvesting, collecting fuel, looking after the livestock and cooking the family meals. Little girls follow their brothers to the fields and learn quickly. There is no strict division of labour. The wives help the husbands in running the household. The tribal women of the hills lead a very relaxed and adjusted lifestyle even when they are married. Children of a Limbu man by a Bhutia, Lepcha, Gurung, Sunwar, Magar or Murmi woman or the children of a Limbu woman by a man of any of these groups are admitted without question into the Limbu community.³² This applies for the Rai and the Tamang women too. Consent of the society is shown by accepting the food given by her. This rule of adoption does not apply to the '*pani na chalna*' (low castes) women. The Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Magar, Kami or Damai women are allowed to speak out and take part in the home management and contribute towards the family income.³³ Strong grandmothers are often seen ruling the roost. Mention may be made here that for these tribal women the colonial discourse of the 'oppressed women' does not apply. Such power enjoyed by the women and the surviving matriarch of the joint family is something totally unfamiliar to the superior discourse.

For the Gurungs, Rais, Tamangs and Limbus of the hills divorce is easily handed over without a fuss and no social stigma is attached to divorce and remarriage for women is not difficult. Among the Limbus divorce is quiet prevalent. If a husband divorces the wife it is known as *khemjong* and if the wife leaves the husband it is called *najong*. In the former case rituals are unnecessary but in the latter case the woman has to return all the ornaments given by the ex-husband. The Tamang divorce procedure is simple. A thread tied to their waist has to be broken and a fee paid for the divorce after which the couple may separate. The husband of the Rais or Tamangs may keep two wives, as this is not an uncommon practice in the hills. The wives live in separate houses but the second wife has less status than the first wife, and her children have less claim to the father's property. If we turn our attention to the Newars of Darjeeling hills, it is seen that they have a strong sense of ethnicity and identity and have strict rules regarding customs, traditions and festivities. Yet the Newar lady is free to divorce and remarry provided the man does not belong to the lower caste. Compensation is to be paid to the husband. It must be pointed out that divorce is neither encouraged by the Magars nor the Damais who term it as called '*sinkopengo*'.³⁴ The divorced Magar woman is

separated from girls married as virgins during a funeral nor is she allowed to make an offering to the dead. Second Magar wives do not receive sindoor from their husbands and are given glass bangles instead. Among the Kamis a divorce takes place only with social approval.

Unlike the tribal society the Indian Muslims in Darjeeling hills have strict rules for the women to remain indoors. The Koran commands her to make herself attractive for her husband and must satisfy his libidinal needs. She must obey her husband and the relationship between them is to complement each other. While Islam permits prevention of pregnancy it does not allow infanticide or abortion. A Muslim mother is greatly respected as 'Paradise lies at the feet of the mother.'³⁵ A peculiar feature found among the Indian Muslims of Darjeeling is that, intermarriages between them and the Nepalese women works out well and these women adjust to the teachings of Islam and leads a settled life. Widow remarriage is not looked down upon by the Muslim society. Just as the women's right to decide about their marriage is recognized so also is their right to seek an end to an unsuccessful marriage. But in order to protect it from hasty decisions under temporary stress certain waiting periods are observed by couples who seek a divorce. Three chances or pronouncement of divorce is given to the woman provided she has no contact with the husband. After which the husband cannot meet her during the period of *iddat*. Neither can he remarry her unless she marries another man who may divorce her. Women have the right to divorce on the grounds of ill-treatment and the husband has to return the gifts given to her previously. On grounds of adultery a man may divorce his wife and is solemnized by the Qasi.³⁶

Unlike the higher caste Nepalese or the Indian Muslims of the hills of Darjeeling the Bhutia ladies go around unveiled, partaking in social activities and like the Lepchas are equal partners in the management of the joint family. Among the Tibetans, Drukpas, Sherpas and the Sikkimese Denzongpas of the hills there is great team work in the farm, money matters, trade and commerce. Girls are encouraged by their parents to work along with them. It helps to cultivate a sense of self-reliance and independence at an early age. The ladies of the house converse freely with visitors and dine along with male members without any shyness. Education of women was absent in Tibet except

among the very rich who kept personal tutors in the early twentieth century³⁷. In comparison the Tibetan ladies in Darjeeling were encouraged by the missionaries and government to go to schools and scholarships were given to them.³⁸ The life and economy of the average Bhutia woman revolves around animal husbandry, cottage industry, agriculture or trade and commerce along with the family members.

The Sherpas of the Dareeling hills do not live in joint families but opt for the nuclear family which they regard as an effective unit like those settled in Sola – Khambu in Nepal.³⁹ Sherpa women are very industrious and good at setting up their own family business. The lady of the house commands high respect. The Sherpa wife enjoys greater freedom and higher status than the Hindu Nepalese women of the hills. They keep themselves busy and are even more industrious than the male members. Sherpa ladies address their husbands by their names. In matters of divorce the procedure is very simple. The divorce is usually an act of mutual consent and takes place in the presence of the relations of the wife. A thread is broken in a symbolic gesture and 1 rupee is paid by the woman as payment. Compensation is to be paid by the second husband to the first. However, it should be noted that the wife cannot claim such payment from the second wife and the man has the right to introduce the two wives at home. Sherpa widows have to marry the elder brother of her husband but can remain free by a simple ceremony of disassociation. The Tibetans believe in easy divorce without any social stigma.⁴⁰

In view of the points discussed above, it can be seen that the rich mosaic of culture in the hills, shows the existence of more than one discourse on gender conceptualisation, based upon traditions and religious background. Apart from the religious and family values, the spatial organization of the traditional upper caste Nepali family like the Brahmins and Chhetris together with the Nepali Muslims separate the domain of the males from that of the females; while the tribal units like the Lepchas, Tamangs, Limbus, Rais and the Bhutias empower the women by allowing them to participate in the economic matters. These lead to a conclusion different from that of the western concept of the native women. Acceptance of the colonist discourse will only undermine the traditional rights, importance and flexibility enjoyed by these groups.

3.3. Costumes and Ornaments worn by the Hill Women:

As part of women studies it is necessary to study the colourful costumes and ornaments used by the hill women that are traditional and designed to keep off the cold. The Lepcha women wear their hair braided in two tails tied with silken cords or tassels. Their garments are coarse, silken or woollen, with an overall small sleeveless cloak, covered with crosses and fastened with silver chains.⁴¹ The dress consists of two pieces of cloth held in place by a metal clasp or bamboo pins and a cloth girdle. Colourful *dompras* are worn by men and *domdyams* by the women. The *domdyan* consists of a piece of a rectangular piece of grey cotton hanging down from the shoulders and reaching below the knees called *dumjom*. A shirt of bluish white striped cotton and a silk sash called *nyom rek*. A long white jacket like garment with long sleeves called *tago* and a rectangular head dress of cotton called *thyak tuk*.⁴² Before the introduction of factory items, weaving was done in a yarn called the *remi* which was extracted from *Urtica dioeca* (stinging nettle) called *ku-zoo* and coloured with vegetable dyes.⁴³ Lepcha ladies are extremely fond of ornaments like necklace called *tho* if made of gold or *leyap* when made of silver, wild boar tusk charm called *sa pik bu*, bracelets of metals and girdle pendent called *ja guk* and the simple chain called *leyap*. Precious and semi-precious stones, charms, idols, bones, teeth and hair of wild animals are worn profusely by women.⁴⁴

The Brahman and Chettris have no particular dress of their own. The Brahman men prefer the *daruwal sural* with a waistband or a dhoti and a shirt. Women wear the *phariya cholo* tightened by a *patuka*. They decorate themselves with the Nepali ornaments made of gold and silver like the Gurungs, Rais, Limbus and Magars who love to wear the *potae* or glass beads of different colours along with a *tilhari* or *naugedi* placed at the base of the throat. Both glass and gold bangles are used by them and necklaces made of silver coins arranged in rows called the "*patna*". Silver rings are worn as anklets along with gold clips on their hair. The Rai ladies wear a velvet blouse called the *chowbandhi cholo* with a shawl arranged at one shoulder passing from the waist and a bag called the *ghalek* slung across their shoulders.⁴⁵ The Gurung women's traditional dress consists of a petticoat under a white tubular skirt plaited at the front

held securely by a velvet cloth in forming a triangle in front together with the *patuka*, *chowbandi* and the shawl known as *majetro*. The Tamang women in addition to the Nepali dress use the '*pangden*' or an apron like the Tibetans tied at the hips. The Tamang women's ornaments include the gold and silver earrings called *bhutil* or *kiru*, bangles called *singikarmu*, *muga* and *gahu*, silver amulets called *jantar* and the traditional glass beads the *pota*. The headgear is complete with the *sirphuli* and the heavy *sirbandhi*.

All Nepalese ladies delight themselves in using the reji or silver *chandrahar*, *dhungri*, *bulchior*, *lawangfuli* on their pierced noses; the *lurke* or *kean dhungi* on their ears. Rai ladies are known to carry the musical instrument called the *binayo* and *murchunga* tied to the ends of their blouses. The wide piece of cloth around their waist or the *patuka* is used as a pocket to carry things including the *khurpa* or the sickle for cutting grass. Magar ladies have an added item in the form of silver necklace embedded with coral. Unlike them the Newari ladies wear the *parsi* or the pleated *saree*, tied at the waist by the *jani* or the waistband. They wear a long sleeved blouse called the *misalan* and throw a shawl over their shoulders called the *ga*. Footwear is made of cloth and ropes. They pierce several holes along the earlobes to wear the *tuci*, *mundari*, *palpwari*, *tuci* and the *makaphosi*. Newar women avoid the traditional Nepalese *tilhari* adorning the *potae* necklace or the *dhungri* on their noses. The silver necklace called the *wo-sikha* has religious importance. Their hands are adorned with bangles and rings called *luchuri*, *bahi*, *baju*, *pancharatnachuri*. Ladies prefer to plait their hair in two.⁴⁶

To this variety of ethnic costumes the Tibetan ladies gracefully walk around in different hues and colours of the *bhaku* or gown that has remained the same for several generations. *Bhaku* is worn along with a loose long sleeved brocade blouse called the *hanju*. Married women use the striped apron or *pangden* and woollen boots called the *doochas* during winter months. The headgear consists of a fish-shaped piece of felt reaching the forehead to the middle of the back decorated with all types of precious and semi-precious stones. Further from the temple area the felt projects on both sides and semi-circular pieces of cloth edged with fur cover their ears. This is called the *peyrak* and is a status symbol. Their jewellery is made of precious metals and stones. Mention

must be made of the special charm box called the '*gau*' set in colourful stones, corals and pearls in different shapes containing charms to ward off evil. This *gau* is suspended in a chain of pearls or agate called the '*zee*' and highly prized by all Bhutias.⁴⁷

Similar to the Tibetan *bokhu* is the '*anggi*' worn by the Sherpa women with an inner blouse called *bangjur* together with the woollen boots. The married ladies use two types of aprons- one at the front called the *pangden* and the other at the back called the *gele*. In fact in Solu Khumbu which has an altitude of 18000 m above sea level the apron is made of sheep wool or yak hair called the *matti*. But in Darjeeling the apron made of wool or thick cotton serves the purpose.⁴⁸ The headgear is called the *muksha* and the cap the *shyamahu*. The silver belt called the *ketik* and silver ornaments known as the *kaedak* is widely used. Bangles and necklaces are made of corals, turquoise and agate called *zheepcha*. Hair is piled up in a bun.⁴⁹

Similarly the Sikkimese Denzongopas wear the gown called *gho* and a loose shirt called *thego* tied with a colourful belt and a striped apron. A colourful headgear known as *thuri shambu* is also used. Heavy ornaments of precious metals and stones are preferred by these hill ladies. Shoes are made of sheep or yak skin.⁵⁵ The Drukpa Bhutias wear the *kira* a homespun gown made of cotton held at the shoulders by silver clasps joined by chains dangling lucky charms. A heavy coat of different design called the *yat* is used by them. Drukpa ladies cut their hair very short like the men at home.⁵⁰

Like the Bhutias, the Tibetan-Muslims of the hills wear the traditional *bokhu* and the Tibetan ornaments. While the Nepalese married to the Indian Muslims wear the *salwar kameeze* as Islam makes it compulsory for women to cover up their entire body without having any transparent clothing.⁵¹

3.4. Child care in the Hills:

The overall impression of the family structure in Darjeeling hills is one of flexibility and accommodation between the young and the old and it is precisely this joint family pattern that helps the parents to bring up the young children and babies with the help of the elder siblings or the grandparents when they go out to work in the farm, plantation or

go for marketing in the local bazaar. Unlike the Indian plains there is hardly any difference made between the boy and girl child with the exception of the upper caste Nepalese and the Nepali Muslims. Children are treated affectionately and babies are weaned after a year and fed on rice gruel with mashed vegetables, pulses, soup, cow's milk, meat, oat or barley paste according to the income of the parents. Toilet training is gradual and hygiene is not much emphasized by the masses. Lepchas in the hills make good parents and the mother does not allow the child to cry for very long periods. Mothers carrying their babies on their backs go about uninterrupted doing the household chores or the farm work. As a result Lepcha children are quiet, happy and content. Both the parents share the responsibility for the children's upbringing. At the age of two plus the child is allowed to play outside the house with leaves, flowers mudpacks, stones bamboo pieces and they run about chasing butterflies and dragonflies with other children of the family or perhaps of the village.

Great attention is given to the Tibetan or the Sherpa children and they are sometimes even over-indulged and made to feel special by the entire household as the birth of a child is welcomed by them. These children spend their time playing with wooden toys, rag dolls, bow and arrows, marbles, clay models, catapult, housekeeping, singing songs, playing group games and skipping till they are sent to schools or are big enough to learn household chores. Unlike them the Brahman and Chettri families among the Nepalese desire the first born to be a boy child who is treated as an adult from the age of ten and made to follow strict caste rules. The little sisters accompany their mothers to the kitchen and pick up culinary skills. A Nepalese girl child of any caste by the age of ten can perform all domestic chores of child rearing, housekeeping, grinding corn, hulling rice, milking cows even cleaning the cowshed and carrying water or wood to the house.⁵²

The Bhutia child enjoys a warm and informal relationship with their parents. They participate joyfully in all festivities and social gatherings in the villages no matter what religious background they may come from. While some of them both male or females help in the household chores, fetching water, tending the cattle, with the farm work or in the plantations, as porters depending upon the economic status of the families. Sherpa

children imitate their hardworking parents and contribute to the family income. The Lepcha, Nepalese and Tibetan children are courteous to their elders. The young girls are taught to serve food and drinks to the elders and visitors just like their mothers. A lot of social interaction takes place between both the sexes due to their participation in rituals, seasonal agricultural work, road construction works, festivities, in village fairs of in the group collection of fodder and fuel in the jungles. This free mixing of the youth helps them to choose their partners resulting in early marriages among them in the hills where the mean marriageable age is 16 years.⁵³

3.5. Attitude towards Sex, Menstrual cycle and Pollution amongst the Hill women of Darjeeling Hills:

There is a rather casual attitude towards sex in the hills of Darjeeling. The Lepcha children are aware of sex from a young age. The community does not forbid relationship between couples unless it should include nine generation of cousins on the father's side and four generations on the maternal side. Such forbidden relationships are considered as incest resulting in a family curse for generations. Should a Lepcha girl get pregnant out of wedlock and the child's father refuses to marry her then a religious ceremony frees the girl from all types of stigma and she can marry another man. Moreover chastity in adult girls previous to marriage is not very rigidly insisted upon.⁵⁴ With the growth of education such a trend is rapidly changing among the hill people.

The Brahmin, Chettri and the Indian Muslims of Nepalese and Tibetan origin are not allowed to intermingle with the male members outside the family in keeping with their religious traditions. On the other hand the tribal Bhutias, Sherpas or the Nepalese boys and girls freely mix and should a girl become pregnant the community puts pressure on them to define their union as a marriage after having adopted the girl as a member of their tribe or caste. Among them the Gurungs do not keep the girls and boys separate from each other. They regard the age of procreation for the boys to be fifteen/ sixteen years and for girls to be twelve/ thirteen years and sexual intercourse is permissible. In the hills of Darjeeling the debates in the form of singing songs and *dhan nach* performed during harvests provide an opportunity for the sexes to mix. Illegitimate

children among the Gurungs are not looked down upon but brought up by the child's father as his legal heir. Should a girl become pregnant then the man responsible must marry her or if either of the party refuses then compensation must be paid as in a divorce case. Among the Bhutia society the Sherpa parents do not treat the question of sex as a shameful act and the illegitimate child called the 'themba' child is taken care of by the girl's parents, until the child's father pays compensation or asks for the child at the age of four. The Sherpa woman can get a wealthy husband despite having a *themba* child who is very often adopted by the stepfather. Like the *themba* child the Tibetans treat the *chrubee* child affectionately.⁵⁵

The response towards the commencement and recurrence of the menstrual cycle is varied among the hill folks having different cultural background. The Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalese or Tibetan Muslims do not observe pollution during menstruation and go about their normal routine. Some Nepalese tribes and races having Mongoloid background like the Tamangs, Gurungs and Limbus do not regard this cycle as a period of pollution except from the point of hygiene i.e. the women is allowed to enter the kitchen and serve family meals which is unthinkable for the higher caste women but refrains from visiting the place of worship. Gurungs however abstain from sexual contact during this period.

The strict attitudes of Hindu Nepalese have influenced the Rais to a certain extent. Rais consider the period of pollution for five days in which the woman does not perform *pujas* or touch pickled food for fear of contaminating it. Gardening is avoided for the same reason and avoids taking a bath for fear of catching cold as is commonly believed by the locals. Unlike orthodox Nepali Hindu families the Magar girl's first menstruation is not marked ceremoniously. She faces a restriction for fifteen days remaining indoors without touching the food or water containers at home. On the 7th day she is allowed to do the farm work after a simple purification with water.

The Brahman and Chettri, Kami and Damais observe strict rules on the onset of the menstruation cycle. The girl attaining puberty has to stay with her relations for a period of fifteen days. No male member is allowed to speak to her. Similar abstinence is

observed for seven days during her second menstruation cycle at home. Thereafter a pollution period of four days is maintained till menopause. Likewise the Sunwars strongly influenced by the Brahman and Chettri keep their daughter in a neighbour's house for a week and can only be brought back after purification rites by the priest. A feast is given at home. The Sunwar ladies maintain a pollution period of seven days thereafter.⁵⁶ With regard to the Buddhist Newars like the Chyame and Duiya Newars the ritual of *Barha* that is performed just before the onset of the first menses by the Hindu Newars is not observed. There are two types of *Barha* ceremony that is the *barha tayege* that is performed before the onset of puberty and second is the *Barha-chore-gu* where physical puberty coincides with the ceremony both in Nepal as well as in the hills of Darjeeling. The girls are kept in darkened rooms for eleven days where no male member is allowed to see them. On the twelfth day at dawn they are made to take a bath blindfolded ready to greet the Sun God to whom flowers are offered. The removal of the blindfold completes the purification rites. If the *Barha* ceremony takes place after marriage then the girl is sent back at the onset of her first menses. For the Newari woman there are no strict rules during her menstruation cycle and is allowed to perform all household chores or look after the stalls in the market and after the fifth day there is no pollution of any kind.⁵⁷

3.6. Dowry and Inheritance:

Strangely enough the institution of marriage is not looked upon as a burden of settling the daughter by marriage through payment of heavy dowry as in the plains, rather for them it is a welcoming event bringing in temporary gains for the girl's family. Women are offered a bride price in various forms like ornaments, money, a new set of clothes and utensils. The bride price depends upon the wealth and status of the groom's family and whether it is the first or second marriage for the bride in question. With regard to inheritance in the Nepali society the Brahman and Chettri women do not have a share in the property of the family but daughters are entitled to gifts from the parents and later her brothers due to the sacred relationship between them. Among the Limbus, Tamangs and Rais the father's property can be inherited by the daughters. Magars ladies even enjoy the '*pewa*' or their share of the harvested crops, fruits or fowl given by their parents. The husband has no right over the woman's *pewa*, which is handed from

time to time by her parents. Once married the Magar woman acquires a share in her husband's property and looks after it, like the Lepcha widow, until her sons come of age. The widow however loses this right if she remarries. Among the hill Nepalese the Sunwar women receives dowry from her parents in the form of livestock, clothes and utensils depending upon the economic condition of the parents. While a Newari lady is entitled to her *stridhan* or the movable assets in case of a divorce. No bride price exists for the Kami or the Damai women, neither do they get a share of the property that is divided among the brothers.⁵⁸

Bride price is a must for the Lepcha bride and they enjoy co-equal right over property and authority. No dowry is given for the Tibetan women when they marry unlike the Sherpa women who receive a dowry in the form of land, house, cattle or household items, which is not compulsory. This dowry is the bride's personal property that she can take away in case of the marriage breaking down. Joint earnings of the couple are equally divided but if there are children from the union then the divorced Sherpa woman has no right over it. If the Sherpa, Lepcha, Drukpa or Tibetan woman happens to be only child and the husband cannot meet the demands of the girl's family, then the girl remains in her father's house and the husband lives with her family, till he can pay or earn the money which entitles him to take the bride.⁵⁹ Unlike them the Sikkimese Denzongpas of Darjeeling hand over the entire property to the eldest son and the wife has no right over it. The younger brother inherits the property if the deceased brother has no heir.⁶⁰

A bride price is paid by the groom of the Nepali/ Tibetan/ Indian Muslims of the hills called *mehr* in case of a divorce in future. The value of *mehr* depends upon the status of the contracting parties and is the exclusive property of the bride. Dowry is given by the bride's parents but is not regarded as compulsory in the hills. The husband is fully responsible for the maintenance of his family but the women's possession before marriage does not transfer to the husband and they even retain their maiden names. The wives have no obligation to spend on her family out of such properties or out of her income after marriage. Islamic law states that women is entitled to 1/3rd of the share of her father's property.⁶⁰

3.7. Marriage Customs in the Hills:

If we now consider the nature of marriage customs in the hills it is interesting to note that it is the women who have been responsible for the little traditions followed in organizing a marriage. These traditions were orally transmitted down generations, and have greatly contributed to the cultural symbiosis enjoyed by the hill people. Marriage customs in Darjeeling are of different kinds- by arrangement, elopement of partners called *bhagaunu*, absconding with another man's wife called *jari biwaha*, widow remarriage that is not looked down upon and *bel biwaha* or marriage with the *bel* fruit as performed by the Newar girls before actual marriage. The least expensive way of marriage is elopement and it is rather customary for the boy and girl to run away and hide in a neighbour's house for some days until the boy sends his representatives with silk scarves, sweetmeat and drinks to the girl's house to get their approval and pay a compensation. The acceptance of the gifts symbolizes the permission given by the parents. This is followed by a ceremony of '*dhog bhet*' or introduction of the family members of both parties and blessings conferred upon the couple. The ceremony of smearing *tika* on the forehead of the girl results in actual marriage. The father of the bride may also take away his daughter before this ceremony without any stigma in case of disapproval. If a man absconds with another man's wife compensation or *jarikal* has to be paid to the husband as directed by the village elders. Meat and drinks is given to the girl's parents. The most expensive type of marriage is that based upon arrangement, which differs from each other in Darjeeling. An ideal marriage in a Brahmin's family is between two previously unmarried couples not related to each other's clan in any manner. Through negotiations the horoscope of the couple is compared and the bride price is fixed. The groom's parents have to throw a feast before proceeding to bring the bride with all the fanfare including a procession and accompanied by the Damai musicians. The bride's parents receive the party warmly with refreshments. The *swyambar* ceremony or the garlanding of the couples follows this and the girl is given away by the parents in the ceremony called the '*kanyadan*' and the groom is presented with gifts. The next day the bride is taken to her new home and welcomed by the tika ceremony by the mother-in-law.

The Chettris of the hills have similar customs and the marriage alliance between the pure Chettris called '*jharra* Chettris' is a simple ceremony. If it is a case of elopement, the couple is required to worship the oil lamp and the brass pot or *kalash* in the presence of a priest. Should the woman be pregnant then even this ceremony is not performed. Widow remarriage is another simple affair in which the marriage takes place with the groom giving the bride a new set of clothes. The marriage of the Kamai, Damai and Sunwar are very much like a Chettri marriage conducted in the Hindu manner in the hills. The Kamis have hypogamous marriages but occasionally heterogamous marriages also take place. Unlike Gurungs the Sunwars do not allow cross-cousin marriages but one can marry his wife's younger sister or the daughter of his wife's brother. A man may marry his elder brother's wife too. After negotiations the parents of the boy send a representative along with gifts consisting of Rs 1, a goat, fowl, millet, salt, mustard oil and some turmeric to be offered to God and the parents of the girl. The married girl visits her natal home after two days and on the sixteenth day food and drinks is sent by her parents to her new home thus solemnizing the marriage.⁶²

Marriages among the Gurungs are basically *jat* endogamous but there does exist hypergamous unions too. They prefer to marry within their own tribes and favour monogamous marriages. However polygamy and inter-caste marriages are a common feature in Darjeeling hills. They allow matriarchal cross-cousin relations. After negotiations the matchmaker is sent with gifts by the parents of the boy and the horoscope is consulted for the marriage date. On the main day the groom's party is welcomed and the bride is handed some money called '*saipata*' after which the girl's father has to wash the feet of all the patriarchal kin. The girl is given gifts, money and tika is applied on her forehead. The next day the bride is taken to the groom's house where she has to hand over some money to his sister in order to open the main door leading to the room lit by oil lamps and containing rice filled brass containers. Once the bride crosses the threshold a virgin girl picks up the rice grains in a winnowing plate called '*nanglo*.' Tika is smeared on the bride's forehead and blessings are showered on her. She returns to her parents only on the third day after which the marriage rites are completed.⁶³

Magars are endogamous and they prefer to marry the daughter of their mother's brother. The matchmaker representing the boy's parents is sent with a wooden pot filled with curd and this is returned filled up with rice grains are the match has been approved. The meeting of the parents of the couple follows this and the boy's parents offer drinks, fowls, a goat, bread called *saleroti* and vermilion. Should the girl refuse to marry after this, the boy can demand compensation, or if she dies then the boy's family goes into mourning as if she were a part of the family. A day before the final event the '*bhatkurae*' is sent with the necessary requirements for a marriage feast by the boy's parents to the bride's house. On the marriage day the groom and his party are welcomed by the sprinkling of coloured rice, garlands and oil lamps. The couple garlands and applies tika on each other. The bride's father hands over the daughter to the groom who takes her to his place the following day. After a period of three days she is allowed to visit her parents. It is finally only during the *Dasai* festival that the elders bless the couple and the Magar wedding is completed.⁶⁴

Tamangs emphasize on cousin marriage either matriarchal or patriarchal in which negotiations and approval that is sealed with the sending of gifts take place like other marriages in Darjeeling hills. The Tamang marriage party is noted for the sound of the *damphu* and dances along the way. The groom is welcomed with a cup of milk as a token of good omen and is seated besides the bride. Both are given food and milk to drink. This is followed by the *damphu* competition among the Tamangs. The Lama officiates the marriage and a grand feast follows. The next day the bride leaves her natal home and food and drinks welcome her. The couple is made to bang their heads three times; offer food to each other and exchange their chairs.⁶⁵ A ceremony of applying tika and blessings seals the marriage.

For the Limbus of Darjeeling hills the rules of exogamy goes by the male side and is supplemented by forbidding inter-marriage between persons descended in a direct line from the same parents as long as any relationship can be traced. In practice however while the rule forbidding marriage within the *thar* (sept) is most strictly observed, there seems to be much uncertainty about prohibited degree. A further complication is the restriction in inter-marriage arising in the *mith* relations i.e. self-made relations.

Members of the Murmi, Lepchas and the Bhutia tribe may be admitted into the Limbu tribe after approval of the tribal council.⁶⁶ Some Limbu men select for themselves by employing friends to arrange the price and the preliminaries, sending offering to the girl's parents to gain consent. On the marriage day the bride and the groom is made to sit side by side and the priest called the *phedangko* slaughters a hen and a cock, mixes the blood and sprinkles it so that the couple are blessed with a happy married life.⁶⁷

While the Rais place great importance to marriages outside the family and also the custom of '*bagdaan*' whereby the girl's father or an agnatic kin must declare that the girl is going away thus breaking all ties with the agnatic lineage. The *bijawa* or the priest sanctions the marriage that begins with a feast at the bride's house. In the groom's place the couple have to walk over the freshly washed compound and blood is smeared over the threshold. Homage is paid to the spirits of the ancestors. Vermilion is applied on the bride's head and the *bijuwa* makes them eat fish and drink curd as it is considered auspicious.⁶⁸

The Newars of the Himalayan region have a unique form of marriage, which takes place with the *bel* fruit at a tender age symbolizing their marriage to the eternal Lord Narayana. Thus a Newar is not considered to be a widow when her husband dies but becomes one in case the fruit is damaged. In this ceremony the girl is decked up as a bride and all the agnatic relatives shower her with flowers and rice. She is measured 108 times from top to toe with a yellow thread and it is coiled on her lap. The child is made to eat five mouthfuls of food. The following morning her nails are clipped and vermilion is applied on her head. She is made to go three times around a booth made of banana. The ceremony of '*kanyadan*' and the worship of the paternal aunt end the ceremony. At the appropriate age the *lami* fixes the marriage with the approval of the parents. He is sent with a silver box containing ten betel nuts, vermilion and a new set of clothes to the girl's house. There the family deity is worshipped after which the gifts are accepted and vermilion is applied on the girl's head. The groom's parents sometimes offer cash and sweetmeat called '*lakhamani*'. The bride's father welcomes the party without the groom and the next morning the bride bids farewell to her family by placing betel nuts in their hands. The family deity is worshipped once again and the

eldest male member touches the bride's feet and ties the anklet with the '*bagi*.' The bride is carried away and made to worship the family deity of the groom and wash his feet. A bunch of keys are handed over by the mother-in-law symbolizing responsibility. Once again the family deity is worshipped before a feast is given. A visit to the local temple by the couple is a must to obtain blessing for their new life.⁶⁹

The followers of Islamic faith in Darjeeling leave it to the male members to make the first move of asking for the woman's hand in marriage. It is permissible to meet her but the woman takes the decision about the marriage. The age of marriage is eighteen for the boys and thirteen for the girls. A Muslim may not marry his father's wife, daughters, or sisters, nieces or the one who fostered him. Neither should they marry an idol-worshipper. There are two types of marriages- fixed term marriage and permanent marriage. The meeting of parents along with a witness signifies an engagement. The boy's side sends jewellery, sweetmeat, fruits and clothes for the bride. On the main day the two parties sit separated by a curtain and if the bride agrees in front of the *qazi* the *nikhanama* is pronounced and the *mehr* or the bride price is fixed. The groom's relatives welcome the marriage party and the couple pays respect to the elders. The next day the bride's brother pays her a visit with sweetmeat and fruits. On the fourth day the woman may visit her parents accompanied by her brothers. In a fixed marriage the couple may separate or extend the term. In such a case the husband may not wish to bear the daily expense and they do not have mutual rights of inheritance and the *mehr* is not specified.⁷⁰

Unlike an Islamic marriage contract the Lepcha marriages in Darjeeling is a sacred act, exogamous in nature. The marriageable age for them is between twenty-five to thirty years and women are often older than their partners. It is the mediation of the matchmaker called the *peebu* that settles the matter and this stage is known as '*nyombeth*.' The engagement ceremony also headed by the *peebu* is called *nyom chitaro thap* and is an interesting ceremony where the boy's party carrying gifts of *chang* or millet beer, a bag of coins and silk scarves asks for the girl using witty metaphors. The acceptance of the gifts seals the relationship. On the wedding day the groom and his men bring gifts of meat, millet beer and money for the girl's mother, grandmother, the

priest and the village headman. The path leading to the bride's house is stocked with a pile of wood symbolizing acceptance and water filled bamboo jars suggesting life and the medicinal herbs to ward off evil forces. The groom and the best men are offered food regarded as auspicious. The *peebu* bends over to sprinkle water over the pile of wood and is followed by a feast. The gifts brought by the groom are laid out on a table. The priest or the *boomthing* blesses the couple and they are made to sip *chang* and *tormas* or oat cakes. The couple repeats the marriage vows and the relatives of the bride depart carrying the gifts given to them.⁷¹

A Bhutia marriage is fixed with the help of the horoscope. Marriages between the Tibetans are of three types monogamy, polygamy and polyandry. The clan member cannot marry with his own clan nor can first cousins marry except on the mother's side. The marriageable age for them is usually eighteen to twenty five for the boys and sixteen to twenty five for girls.⁷² The negotiator or the '*barmi*' takes the gifts to the girl's house and if the match is approved a price has to be paid to the mother for the upbringing of her daughter. The bride's parents give a number of feasts and homage is paid to the Dragon King or the family deity. A man carrying the white flag or the *sipako* and throwing *tormas* to keep the evil forces away heads the bride's party. The escort is allowed to enter and after a while the bride and her people is welcomed. The bride is seated on the right side of the groom and the couple is blessed with silk scarves and gifts before the feast.

Similarly Sherpas cannot marry within their own clan or with Khambas or Yembas who are descendants of slaves from Tibet. The Sherpas propose in a formal manner and if accepted there is a ceremony of having *chang* together and should a child be born, the baby is regarded as legitimate. The final ceremony requires the exchange of silk scarves after which the bride is accompanied by her friends to her new home.

3.8. Childbirth and the Period of Pollution:

The rate of fertility among the hill women is high as children are wanted by the parents to help with the household chores and supplement the family income. A barren housewife has to face the tormenting comments of family members and is regarded as

a curse in Nepalese society. But if a woman never bore any children it is not considered harmful by the Lepchas. It must be said that compared with the other tribes and races in the hills the Lepchas have low fertility and infant mortality is excessively high.⁷³ For the poor and average hill pregnancy does not bring them respite from the work load at home or from plantation work and they work till the time of delivery.

Lepchas of Darjeeling believe that birth takes place a year or so after marriage and that intercourse immediately after menstruation cycle results in conception. The soul of the child enters from the time of conception. The child's bones are made from the father's body while the mother gives the child blood and flesh. The child is born on the tenth month. Precaution is taken by the parents before delivery of not leaving any work incomplete such as fencing, gardening or knitting. During a solar eclipse the mother is not to touch her womb or twist any articles in fear of giving birth to a deformed child or one who suffers from epilepsy.⁹⁴ Lepchas permit sexual contact till the sixth month of pregnancy. The woman fears eating any animal that has been killed by another animal or any deformed fruit. They avoid the jungle at night and any house where a death has occurred recently. The woman should always be in a happy frame of mind and generous in all their dealings. Lepchas have the misconception that pregnancy does not weaken the strength of the woman and a miscarriage is regarded as the work of evil forces for which an animal sacrifice is considered necessary. So in order to avoid miscarriage an offering is made in the seventh month of pregnancy just as the Newars have a pre-delivery ceremony called *bajee nake wanegu* in which the expectant mother is given a feast by her relatives.

Hill children are usually born at home and not in the cowshed as is the usual practice among the Thakuris of Nepal. The family members, the father and the midwife assist delivery. Childbirth is not considered as polluting as in northern India nor are the traditional birth attendants regarded as untouchables, forced to work out of economic necessity. The soles of the woman is rubbed with an iron comb and the water droplets from the winnowing plate is put into her mouth for an easy delivery. Sometimes herbal pills are given to her. The child and the mother are given an oil massage. A tight piece of cloth is tied at her waist to bring her back to shape and fed with soup, millet beer for

increasing breast milk. Sometimes wet nurses are provided if the mother is unable to feed the child. The news of the birth of a child is greeted with a feast among the middle class.

Childbirth is considered to be polluting for a short term of three days but for the Brahmans, Chettris, and Kamis it lasts for eleven days and for Damais it is a twenty-one day period. The Sunwars observe pollution for a period which ranges from three to seven days., Magars for ten days, Tamangs for three to seven days, Limbus for three to four days, Rais for four days, Gurungs for three days, Newars for four to six days and Muslims for seven to twenty six days. During the period of pollution the child's mother is not allowed to touch any water container at home or any utensils. In the naming ceremony that follows the mother's brother plays an important role in blessing the child and blessing the child and offering money. The priest blesses the child with the ceremonious use of an oil lamp to ward off evil. After purification the child is ready to receive the blessing of the God of destiny who is believed to visit the new born at night. The Limbus on the other hand believe that the ancestral *Hang* kings come to establish the destiny of the new born while the Lepchas believe that the visit of the fairy king *Chumdarmit* can change the destiny either in a favourable or unfavourable manner. The pillows of the newborn babies are filled with mustard seeds, which is believed to shape their heads. The Muslims of the hills clip the child's hair on the 21st day when the naming ceremony *Halika* takes place. After a month the child is taken to the mosque where prayers are offered and a feast follows at home. The Nepalese of Darjeeling have a 'rice feeding' ceremony called *pasni* held at five months for the girl child .

3.9. Impact of the Cultural Diversity:

So far we looked into all the possible culturally provided spaces and loci of power of the hill women. It should be kept in mind that it was inevitable that sometimes they underwent a change due to the intermingling of culture and reforms introduced by the British. The authorities viewed this cultural diversity in the hills as a disturbing element in the social fabric of the colony as the aborigines Lepchas faced a non-Lepcha society. They reported that in the hills the population consists of Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas with a few men from the plains. There were the Hindus, Muslims and some 300 Europeans and other Christians exclusive of the soldiers. Of them the Nepalese were

excellent cultivators and should the Bhutias and the Lepcha not learn the use of the plough, they would in time elbow the other races out of cultivable portions of the District. They were great gamblers and of them the Lepchas were good natured, softer and lazier race than the Bhutias. If not helped they were destined to be turned out of the district by the; most active counterparts.⁷⁵ The anxiety is also evident from a letter written by Mr. J. A. Graham. where he lamented and said, "....There are many influences around them these days to destroy their individuality and I am glad that my young friend and fellow worker Mr Gyan Tshering Sitling in through his interest in the language, trying to counteract them."⁷⁶ In fact the British authorities were aware of these changes and worried about the debasement of the Lepcha women as a result of immigration. They thought them to be 'naturally, exceedingly, gentle and modest who became the victims of the licentious – the fall of the Lepcha was complete'⁷⁷.

It is clearly seen here that the colonial response towards the debasement of the Lepcha, was one of guilt and the authorities forgot their role in opening the floodgates of Darjeeling, where no efficient provision was made, for the survey and demarcation of the leaseholders or for the protection of the native interest. These omissions was bound to have a grave result in Darjeeling as the interest of the cultivating occupants was sacrificed in many instance.⁷⁸ In order to create a facade the colonial discourse presented Darjeeling as a paradise and the natives as gentle savages who needed to be rescued by the colonial masters. Lepchas were termed 'a dying race' as these women intermarried outside of the Lepcha tribe and they readily and easily adopted themselves to the husbands lifestyle and mannerisms and their off springs followed their lineage and the customs of Tibetans or Nepalese. The Lepcha women used customs, traditions, furniture, salutation etc. that were foreign to their culture.⁷⁹ The Lepcha lady like the other hill women did not hesitate to imitate the various ornaments or dresses worn by the others. Gradually we find the predominance of the comfortable *lungi* and the blouse comfortable to wear while at work. Owing to the increasing influence on the bazaar where piece goods were sold and entire garments were made on the sewing machine the former type of clothes known since the days of Campbell and Hooker were fast disappearing and falling into disuse. Few Lepcha women knew how to make clothes for the members of the family as they used to do in the past. The art of dyes

made of bark, shoot, roots and leaves had disappeared due to chemical dye.⁸⁰ Moreover their children adopted the Nepali language as their mother tongue. The colonial observation of the state of the Lepchas as a dying race have been challenged by the Lepchas who are of the opinion that their population did increase although slowly compared to other tribes and races in the hills and cannot be termed as a dying race and they have preserved their traditions, culture and most of all the Ring Rong language in the rural areas.⁸¹

The Lepchas who were originally animist adopted Buddhism. Looked down by the Tibetans and Nepalese they began to feel more at home with the Christian Missionaries and openness of the Lepcha society paved the way to their quick conversion. The missionaries regarded them to be 'hopeful' people to be brought under their cultural fold and help them spread it.⁸² It has already been pointed out before that although the colonial construct emphasized on the difference it also showed the dimming of divisional lines as in this case where the local converts to Christianity were well received by the missionaries. Among the female missionaries it was Miss Golan who translated English fables into Nepali. Similarly the text book committee members namely Miss Gardner, Miss Barry and Rev. Duncan took great interest in education. While Miss Harrington and Mrs. Sutherland encouraged translation of the Bible and organised the Song Festivals of the Macfarlane Church where the natives participated with great enthusiasm.⁸³ The impact on the hill women was far reaching. There was a gradual awareness about health and hygiene with the spread of education by the Christian Missionaries. In fact all the races and tribes were in awe of the English masters. Leaving behind the women's social circle in their native villages in Nepal or Tibet where they had indulged in chatting, clearing the head of lice; singing folk songs; spinning yarns to their grandchildren or just relaxing to while away their time; they now had to quickly adjusted to the new circumstances, without completely surrendering their cultural values and imbibed new ways. The hill women noted the neatly kept lawns and pretty cottages. They adopted the English crockery instead of the traditional bamboo containers, chairs and table with laced cloth, curtains, better quality bedding and cots and leather shoes instead of going about 'stocking less and unshod'.⁸⁴ They found a change in their diet as they was increase in the intake of sugar, tea and vegetables

introduced by the British.⁸⁴ The local papers carried advertisement of dental care and optical health.⁸⁵ In this way the natives of Darjeeling hills were exposed to the modern changes. It is interesting to note that the majority of the hill women were not the 'Black Skin with White Mask' portrayed by Frantz Fanon or the 'hybrid and mimicry' variety as found in Bengal and expounded by H. Bhaba.⁸⁶

For although it was trendy being quasi European in the urban region for a handful of the population, not all hill women jumped into this bandwagon. The rural pockets were practically untouched by the English mannerisms and the society remained deeply rooted in tradition. This factor was pronounced among the Sikkimese Denzongpas, Tibetans, Drukpas and Sherpas. They not only maintained their cultural identity with regard to their dress, ornaments, language spoken at home, food habits and religion but also intensified it making the Tibetan lifestyle respectable among the Hindu population of the hills. At the same time the mixing of the tribal and Hindu societies resulted in the exchange of cultural forms and rituals e.g. The application of vermilion or the *sindoor ceremony* during marriages were adopted by the Rai and the Limbus, the idea of menstrual pollution was observed by the Rai and the idea of the caste became ingrained amongst them leading to preference for a Rai bride or of a higher caste. Another example is of the Tamangs who are Buddhist celebrating Losar or the New Year along with the Hindu festival of *Dussehra* and the Tamang ladies using the *sindur* and *potae* which has always been part of Tamang culture.⁸⁷ This aspect has been criticized by a section of the Tamangs who wish to remain strictly Buddhist in practise.⁸⁸ The exchange of culture was bound to take place with the rapid growth in the urban population as well as in the tea gardens. Table number VII and VIII in the Appendix give us an idea of the increase in population in Darjeeling District in the urban and rural areas from 1901-1961.

What is important is that rapid urbanization in the hills resulted in the break down of orthodox social values, norms, customs that hitherto affected the status of the hill women. The joint family system which was once predominant had to break down giving way to the nuclear family due to employment opportunities in the towns. For these women opting out of the joint family resulted in more stress as the work load increased.

They faced the triple burden of childcare, domestic chores and a demanding employment as ayahs. Mothers must have found it difficult to breast feed their babies relying on a bottle feed, reluctantly looked after by the older sibling. These women were kept busy all the time lacking the relief providing spaces given by the traditional village society. Such spaces for the native women were definitely not in the agenda of the British.

Another effect of urbanization was the disappearance of some feudal practices that existed in Tibet and Bhutan like polyandry and concubinage. A very interesting feature is to be noted in a few women's writings in the early twentieth century bearing testimony to their responses to the changing situation. They wrote on the deplorable condition of women and the breaking down of marriages in the urban centres among the rich or due to differences in educational qualification of the couples and differences of age. A great deal of emphasis was placed on female education by H. Pradhan of Darjeeling.⁸⁹ Another letter written from Mirik criticized the increasing practice of prostitution in the town proper. The plight of women domestic workers of Darjeeling who found employment in the plain areas was highlighted by a social worker from Kurseong. All these writings by women carried overtones of social awareness among the people. These changes were a definite response to the educational efforts of the colonizer.⁹⁰

From the above facts it can be summarized that there was a shifting of paradigms with regards to various aspects related to the socio-cultural life of both the migrant and the aborigines hill women in Darjeeling, which was on its way to modernization. No society whatever its historical background or social standing can escape modernization which is a universal process and Darjeeling hills was no exception. The rapid influx of varied migrants led to greater interactions between the various communities who came to settle in Darjeeling leading to the emergence of a new cosmopolitan socio-cultural pattern unique in many ways to the hills of Darjeeling. It can be said that the responses of the hill women to the new world amidst the colonial setting forged in them a new sense of identity and unity that would later make a definite mark in society. The emerging picture of the native women is astonishingly one of immense power for quick adjustment, resilience and strength. The traditional societies of the tribal ladies had

already invested in them a sense of social- economic liberty. Such power was unthinkable in western concepts for the eastern women. Their power was further strengthened by their work in the colonial enclave. Lagging back were the higher caste Nepalese women who had some traditional constraints. Yet such visibility of power for the majority of the hill women was evident only within the family structure. The same could not be said of them in the official normative structure prior to independence. The administration, political structure was still a male, colonial bastion. The colonist typified them as an ignorant, subservient and disciplined group completing choosing to ignore the emerging trends of the native seeking an identity.

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CHAPTER -4
RESPONSE OF THE HILL WOMEN TO THE POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC PRESSURE ALONG WITH EDUCATIONAL CHANGES IN
THE COLONIAL SOCIETY AMIDST THE ECHOES OF NATIONALISM.
(1900- 1947)

4.1. RESPONSE OF THE HILL WOMEN TO THE POLITICAL CHANGES:

The mainstream Indian nationalism had practically no affect on Darjeeling hills till the dawn of the twentieth century. For the British these allured people were to be kept in isolation and excitement of and kind was to be put down firmly.¹ The hill people in turn were steadfast in their loyalty and devotion. Such an emotional attitude can be traced to a variety of factors namely Darjeeling serving as the Eastern Zone for the recruitment of the 'brave' Gurkhas and the migrant families.² Here the political consciousness was low due to the absence of a middle class leadership. Education had not reached the entire society. Yet in spite of all these drawbacks the lacuna created by the colonial rule due to the construct of the superior self to the inferior other was fragile and created a lot of discomfort. It led to a gradual search for a retrospective view of the Raj among a few men and women. They blazed a trail for the others to follow on the eve of Indian independence by responding to the various forces of colonialism, nationalism, racism and the struggle for equality during the penultimate phase of British colonialism in India. An analysis of the changing identity of the natives, women in particular can be examined under three headings – the political, economic and educational changes during the period 1900-47 that resulted in the indigenisation of the national construct of the hill women.

In this period of study it can be clearly seen that some of the natives were deceived by the colonial façade of special interest shown by the authorities towards Darjeeling. They had very cleverly demarcated the district from the rest of the Bengal Province by placing it under a separate system of administration. Darjeeling hill areas including Kurseong and later Kalimpong Police Circle belonged to the non- regulation scheme before 1861 and it was the Governor-General who possessed legislative powers for areas under it. The Council Act of 1861 blurred the distinction between regulated and non- regulated provinces when the Governor- General ceased to exercise such powers. In 1870

Darjeeling was placed under direct responsibility of the Governor-General and the District Magistrate was given the jurisdiction. All less advanced districts of different Indian provinces, Darjeeling being one of them was placed under this system and also brought under the purview of the Laws Local Extent Act known as Scheduled District Act. The Act of 1935 declared Darjeeling as 'partially excluded area' kept in isolation from other parts of British India by having separate administrative arrangements. The British worked hard for the general improvement of Darjeeling compared to other regulated districts of Bengal and thus the hill people were impressed by all these new measures, which actually had imperial interest. The special treatment meted out to Darjeeling induced the people to think that their ultimate security rested in separate administrative arrangements made for them under colonial rule. The Hill men's Association led by men like Mr. A. Tshering was in favour of this policy of exclusion from Bengal. While another group led by Mr. Prem Singh and supported by the Kalimpong Samiti, the Gorkhas of Darjeeling and People's Association of Darjeeling demanded the inclusion of the District in Bengal. This was the beginning of a political movement in Darjeeling in 1920.³

In this nascent political development the role of women of the hills was very limited as there existed gender disparity in terms of literacy in the hills. They refused to be dragged into the politics of the province or the Indian freedom struggle with which they had little or no concern at all. Even against such social disapproval it is interesting to note that there were a few women bold enough to join politics. This was due to the wind of changes coming in such as the growth of the press and population. The population of females was 17,6478 and the male population was 199891 in 1941.⁴ The District Gazetteer records the ratio between the female and the male population as being more or less constant. It was 92 females: 100 males in Darjeeling Sadar; 93 females:100 males in Kurseong and 91 females: 100 males in Kalimpong in 1941. Among them a small section of the hill people were dissatisfied with the growing negligence of the colonial authorities. They decided to join the Nationalist call for freedom. They were inspired by some of the Indian leaders like C. R. Das, Subash Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi who visited Darjeeling. For the hill women their involvement in politics challenged the Indian and colonial stereotypes that identified

respectable women with privacy and domesticity. The British had hoped that the purdah related values would inhibit women from breaking colonial orders, but the Indian women joined the mainstream nationalism. The phenomenal contribution of charismatic leaders that included Mahatma Gandhi and Subash Chandra Bose in stimulating and motivating women's mobilization in political activities was a great factor which cut across barriers of class, caste, province and gender. In the hills the early Congress leaders like Dal Bahadur Giri, Pratiman Lama, Anjam Giri, Man Bahadur Giri, Shiva Mangal Sharma, Jagdish Sharma, Surya Poddar and Gaga Tshering vowed to fight for freedom and faced lathi charge, imprisonment and litigation of property. They organized hunger strikes and other non-cooperation activities against the British.⁵ Hill women also featured among the leaders and organizers in spite of ostracism in abortive attempts to reform society and to help the Congress party. Pioneers amongst them included Helen Lepcha or Savitridevi Lepcha, Putlidevi Poddar and Mayadevi Chettri. Women's participation in this political movement was viewed with disapproval as it was a complete contrast to the loyal docile placement given to the hill women within the colonial framework. As a result majority of the conservative families completely disassociated themselves from such political activities. On the other hand in other parts of Bengal, women's participation in the Gandhian movement was looked upon as antithetical to social responsibility or the Sanskritization process by the socially conservative nationalist families.⁶ In fact the deployment of women of certain categories of the nationalist agitation seemed to have been a deliberate part of the Congress strategy to minimize the intensity of police brutalities upon the respectable '*bhadramahilas*'.

Foremost among the women leaders was Savitridevi Lepcha called 'Helen' for her sacrificing spirit by Gandhiji. She was born in 1903 and educated at Kurseong Scottish Mission School. In 1916 she joined the freedom struggle at an early age sacrificing her academic pursuits. During the famine of 1920, in Bihar she worked in a relief camp and she was praised by the Mahatma himself. The young Congress leader from the hills worked shoulder to shoulder with Rajendra Prasad, Jagjivan Ram etc. in Bihar. Soon she became associated with national leaders and great personalities like Sauhat, Muhammad Ali, C.R.Das, Abdul Kalam Maulana Azad, Urmila Devi, Swarupa Rai,

Morajibhai Desai, Motilal Nehru amongst others. She went around giving speeches to awaken the local people to the call of freedom.⁷ Savitridevi was inspired by the nationalist discourse like the Bengali women who considered participation in politics as their religious duty. For nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the nationalist discourse of comparing the country to the Mother Goddess demanding sacrifice and the female participation as the release of shakti.

As a result when Mahatma Gandhi gave the call for nation wide Civil disobedience Savitridevi along with the others took part in the Gandhian movement in Darjeeling facing police atrocities and firing.⁸ She worked with the Congress leader in the hills like Dal Bahadur Giri, Anjam Giri, Man Bahadur Giri, Gaga Tshering and Pritam Singh Lama. For Savitridevi the Mahatma was a man of foresight and saw in women the great qualities of head and heart, patience endurance, capacity to sacrifice and suffer. He perceived the dormant potentialities of women and awakened them to rise up to the occasion. He made an impact in the hill politics for the confidential files of the authorities noted that there was a great deal of excitement among a section of the hill men and women. The British authorities alerted the local officers that any police action should be cautiously planned by getting in touch with the movement so as to contain the present assault and rioting. As the British were apprehensive of a serious danger they wanted to gag the situation.⁹ In view of such an official stand taken by the British, Savitridevi was arrested on the 30th of January 1922 in Siliguri in the house of Siva Mangal Subba. She spent her time in jail by carrying on political work along with the several duties of a prisoner. She was well informed about all political events in the district especially about the visit of Gandhiji to Darjeeling in 1925 and about his meeting with the great nationalist leader C.R. Das, helped to increase local participation in the Indian freedom movement. After Savitridevi's release from jail she worked fearlessly as an active member of the Congress party. In 1936, she became the first lady commissioner from Kurseong sub-division. In 1939 when Subash Chandra Bose was placed under house arrest at Giddhapahar it was Savitridevi who provided him with food and information.¹⁰ Her active role in the Congress party earned her the praise of hill leaders like the veteran Dambar Singh Gurung the founder of the Gorkha League. She worked without any selfish motive.¹¹

Similarly the visit of Gandhiji to Darjeeling served as a source of inspiration to Surya Prasad K.P.Poddar and his friends in 1925, in Kurseong. They became active in the anti-British movement. The Congress Party at Kurseong needed female members to hoodwink the police and carry secret messages. Surya's friend Harish introduced him to a fearless Tamang girl Putalidevi Lama, the daughter of Madan Lama. She joined the Congress in spite of the family disapproval and social criticism. Other ladies like Hira Pradhan and her niece Chandra Pradhan of Padma Lodge joined Putalidevi. Various social works were taken up to create social and political awareness among the people. A Harijan school was established in the Harijan barrack by Harish and Putalidevi. Night school was formed and they asked the people to give up drinking and bhajans were sung in this school.¹¹ Seven women members including Putalidevi opened up a *Mahila Sanstha, Kaliyan Samaj* for the social upliftment of women and the *Dhinhin Mazdoor Samaj* for the workers.¹²

On the 26th of January 1938 a Congress meeting was held presided by S.J.Mangal Singh Lama. The aims and objectives of the Congress were explained and it ended with the independence pledge.¹³ The entire country was engulfed by the freedom struggle with the Congress pressing for *Purna Swaraj*. With the call for Satyagraha the nationalist leaders like Jatin Das were jailed. In Kurseong the police arrested the Congress leaders including Surya Poddar. Putalidevi took up leadership and in 1938 the Congress spoke out against gambling and when a carnival was organized in a house that promoted gambling the Congress at Kurseong picketed the house.¹⁴ In 1939, when Subash Chandra Bose was kept under house arrest and allowed to come out only for an early morning walk Surya Poddar and his friends passed information to him. Subash Chandra Bose even gave the Congress members of the hills a letter of encouragement and a number of them attended the Ramgarh Congress meeting. Congress in Darjeeling hills opposed the War Fund which was collected by the British and distributed pamphlets criticizing it. Surja Poddar was arrested in a building at Burdawan Road belonging to Haiba Lama and taken to Siliguri. In 1942, the Quit India movement assumed an all India character. Congress leaders were arrested. In Darjeeling Putalidevi was put behind bars. When she was released in 1944, her family did not accept her. It was Surja Prasad Poddar who married her at the Gorkha Library.¹⁵

In Kalimpong David A. Babuni, the wife of Mr. Mohan David joined the Congress along with G.T.Sitling, Sapkota Bajay, Narbahadur Gurung, K.P Gurung and R.K.Sharma. From Kurseong the hills found a fearless leader in Smt. Maya Devi Chettri (born 1921) who was inspired by her husband Dal Bahadur Chettri to educate herself and join politics in spite of numerous family and economic obstacles. She joined the Gorkha League in 1943 and then the mainstream Congress in 1945. On May 12th 1947, during the 19th Conference against the partition of India, Maya Devi Chettri attended it along with Lampa Tshering, Taradevi, Kamal Sharma, M.N.Pradhan, Giv Namgal and D.B.Chettri. She urged the hill women to resist the colonial authorities and fight for freedom.¹⁶ The main Congress body urged the people of Darjeeling to resist the British and was hopeful about the role of the Congress in investigating the special problems of the hill people and seeking solutions for it in the future.¹⁷

By 1929, the hills were under control of the British and their reports mentioned of no mass movements. They however considered the activities of Mr Suraj Narayan Pradhan, Mrs Raj Kumari Pradhan, Swami Sachchiananda of the Arya Samaj as dangerous. The political move was closely watched together with the movement of strangers from Siliguri.¹⁸ While most of the hill people were not in favour of any political change and kept themselves aloof from the freedom struggle, which had reached its peak since the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942, nationwide, there was however concerns among them as to the future of the country once the Second World War was over. Those with good sense were already seeing the last days of the British Raj.¹⁹ Under the new environment the hill peoples' security needed to be ensured and the All India Nepali-Bhutia-Lepcha Association was created called NE-BU-LA. Its tricoloured flag with the Union Jack at the centre signified unity among the hill people and loyalty to the British Government.²⁰

In the uncertain period of 1943 the All India Gurkha League was born which was supported by a large number of men and women from the hills. The active members during its formation numbered 16 from Darjeeling, 19 from Kalimpong, one from Sukhia Pokhri and 18 from Kurseong all were male candidates²¹ as shown in the appendix

number IX. Its working soon had a great impact upon the women and the political development in the colonial and post-colonial period of the hills. Around 2,000 Gurkha men and women attended the inaugural meeting of the League on the 15th of May 1943, at the Rink Cinema Hall, Darjeeling that was presided over by Sardar Bahadur Hanjut Dewan Rai. ²¹ The President proclaimed the loyalty of the Gurkhas towards the British and that they must demand their just and legitimate rights firmly and fearlessly. The next speaker Mr. D.S.Gurung said that the aim of the League was to unite the Gorkhas as one organic whole, to preserve their culture and tradition and to establish the political rights of Gurkhas in India and help the Allies in winning the war. Among the women participants a lady speaker Miss Tshering Lhamo spoke on the responsibility of the Gurkha mothers in the upliftment of the Gurkha nation. ²² The hill people thus showed their loyalty to the British amidst all political disturbances in the country. The hill Gorkha women followed the developments closely and every political action in the country was discussed by them at social circles or at home. It was this feeling of ethnicity, a search for identity as Gurkhas that led to the gradual political awakening of the men and women in the hills. The resolution passed by the League in 1943, expressed its loyalty to the British once again but showed its insecurity regarding the future of the domiciled Gurkhas in India and this led to the placement of various demands by them in the coming years.²³ They made a demand for full autonomy and representation in their letters to Gandhiji and Jinnah.²⁴

By the year 1946 a clear change had emerged in the stand taken up by the League in supporting the Indian freedom struggle. This change was due to the gradual withdrawal of the British since the Second World War and the pressure of dominion status now becoming popular. The question of complete Indian independence loomed large and clear. So long the Gurkhas had loyally supported the British but now, they felt the need to assert their own identity in free India. As a result 5,000 Gurkha men and women attended a mass meeting on 19th April 1946 at Shillong travelling from various corners of the country including Darjeeling. By now the growing literacy among the hill women had made them conscious of the political changes taking place in India. At this juncture the League announced its recognition of the Indian National Congress and demanded immediate independence of the country from British rule, with the Indian Gurkhas to be

recognized as a minority community in India and disapproved the demand for Pakistan by the Muslim League.²⁵ Thus, political consciousness on constitutional lines was showed by the early Congress and the All India Gurkha League in the hills and both men and women now responded to their call.

The late 1940s was marked by the rise of another political party - the Communist Party of India, which found entry to the hills through the tea belts. A survey of the working class movement prior to the 1940s reveals the fact that the tea gardens workers were unorganized and backward. Women tea garden workers lacked political awareness and thus could not improve their situation through collective action. They bore the colonial burden with great stoicism. The undercurrents of seething dissent among the women workers remained a subverted discourse that was silent at first but eventually broke open in a violent form. They supported the men in organization of labour unions, mass agitation and hartals as the tea gardens became an important site for the interplay of the forces of colonialism versus nationalism with mass scale participation.

4.2. RESPONSE OF THE HILL WOMEN TO THE ECONOMIC CHANGES:

This brings us to the other aspect of our enquiry namely the economic changes in Darjeeling affecting women with special reference to the tea gardens that employed a major section of women workers. The available data of the colonial economy in the twentieth century shows the growth and expansion of the most important agro-industrial unit namely tea in the Darjeeling hills. It occupied a unique position as a major foreign exchange earner, as an enterprise providing employment to 71,070 labourers in 1939 which increased to 73,500 by 1942 in the entire district of which nearly half of the labour force were women in the hill areas.²⁶ Earlier to 1943 the working population consisted of 39% males, 43% females and 18% children. In 1943 the working population saw a decline in the male and increase in the women workers and thus the working population was now made up of 34% male, 49% female and 17% children of the total attendance. In the 142 tea gardens the output was 26,478,500 lbs of black tea and 12,42,000 lbs green tea in 1942 which increased to 25,559,300 lbs and 2,572,500 respectively in 1943.²⁷

The British justified tea production in Darjeeling as a colony supplying the mother country with raw materials as a result of which there would be a strong tie of common interest and mutual advantages. They calmly assured the world that the tea production would increase the 'wealth and intelligence' of the natives. Here the colonial response can be characterized as one of guilt but they justified their action and went about their task of settling the family in units with low payment. It is only natural that such a colonial policy which placed the burden of production on the shoulders of the unsuspecting workers would in course of time evoke a response just as in the urban areas of Darjeeling.²⁸ Time and again the government confessed that serious trouble was to be expected from the tea gardens as the Planters' Association was an antiquated body with no progressive nature giving low pay over the years and it would be a rue to the government's short sightedness if that continued.²⁹ The Political Department would do well to advise the District authorities to bring to the notice of the planters the need of being more in touch with the labourers and to see that opportunities are not given to them to be willing tools at the hands of the numerous agents of Mr. Gandhi and his followers. As a result the District Commissioner Mr. S. W. Goods went on tours to Nagari and Sukhia to meet the garden sardars to enlist their cooperation. The planters were to be informed to check the tea workers as they were willing and ready materials if not suppressed in time. They took the help of one Nepalese pleader Mr. Hari Prasad Pradhan to form an Association among the tea coolies in order to contain the Gandhian movement but the meeting at the Town Hall, Darjeeling was interrupted by a fire brand from Kalimpong, the Congress leader Mr. Dal Bahadur who shouted "Gandhi ki jai." A hartal took place on the 3rd of May 1921 in the hills. The authorities regarded such incidents as detrimental to the prestige of the Raj. Moreover, it would lead to the formation of leaders among the natives who would openly defy the British authority.³⁰

Until 1929 the British considered the tea workers as '*ignorant and content people*' who could be easily worked up given the slightest pretext. The government decided that as soon as they heard of any mischievous propaganda they would at once begin a counter-propaganda. The authorities however agreed that it was not possible to do anything until they were aware as to what line the other side was likely to follow in the gardens.³¹

There was an uneasy calm in the tea belt which formed the backdrop for the participation of the women workers in political movements. They were still at the receiving end with the unequal payment.³² The basis of wage payments was the *haziri* system for which the unequal rates were as follows.

TABLE 4.1. DAILY WAGE PAID TO THE WORKERS IN THE TEA PLANTATIONS 1943.

Region Of plantation	WAGE PAID TO THE WORKERS		
	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN
HILLS	5 Annas	4 Annas	3 Annas
TERAI	4 Annas	3 Annas	1.5 Annas

(Source: Dash, A.J.; *Ibid.* 1947, p. 119)

These basic rates had been prevalent for a long time and were really task rates. They were split up in some hill gardens so that a part was paid as bonus for attendance i.e. 5 days a week. In other gardens there was a sliding scale of bonus for upwards of 14 days attendance in the month. Cultivation or winter operations were paid in terms of piece rate system for sickling, pruning, hoeing and deep forking 5/6 hours on a *bigha*. Since 1939 this daily task was reduced. In the plucking season there were two modes of payment, the piece rate and the *bigha* or the task rate. Piece rates were 6 pies per seer of leaf plucked and the task rate was fixed that by doing it the workers got the basic wage. Tea workers and factory workers received Rs.9 and Rs.14 per month.³³

Work at the plantations began in the morning and a midday break for lunch was given after which it continued till evening. Women had to perform *thika* work or pruning of tea bushes and cleaning of tea leaves were carried out by the elderly and pregnant women. The afternoon shift had the advantage of topping up meagre wage but the women labourer had less time for her children or household chores. Women workers earned Rs. 10-5-8 (anna 5 and paise 8) per month in 1929 while the men in the fields or factories earned Rs 9 / Rs12 per month.³⁴ While the women were most vulnerable to the market slumps in the tea industry and sardar arbitrary powers they were in a better situation than in Assam. Dearness allowances were paid in almost every garden at rates that were usually Rs. 2 to Rs 3 – Rs 8 per month for factory labourers and half an anna for children. The average monthly earning in five gardens were as follows-

TABLE 4.2. AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS IN 5 SELECTED TEA GARDENS IN DARJEELING 1938 AND 1944

Tea Estate	1939									1944								
	Men			Women			Children			Men			Women			Children		
	Rup	Ann	Pais	Rup	Ann	Pais	Rup	Ann	Pais	Rup	Ann	Pais	Rup	Ann	Pais	Rup	Ann	Pais
A	8	5	1	6	1	0	4	5	0	10	9	5	7	6	1	5	4	4
B	8	2	1	6	8	0	3	4	0	9	12	0	8	2	1	4	1	0
C	8	1	5	6	9	3	3	5	9	13	6	1	11	8	0	6	8	0
D	8	7	0	6	12	0	2	12	10	13	8	0	10	2	1	5	1	0
E	8	13	9	6	7	6	3	5	9	8	12	0	6	14	7	3	13	

(Source: Report on an Enquiry into conditions of Labour in Plantations in India, Govt. of India, 1946.)

Of tea workers increased from 1939 to 1944 and was approximately Rs. 12 for men, Rs. 10 for women and Rs. 5 for children. The above table shows that such earnings in Darjeeling outstripped the wages, the average earnings of the labour increased from several decades even though there was no change in the wage rate for a particular job or in the volume of the work. While overtime earnings, incentive payments etc. raised tea plantation labourer's earnings above the wage rate absenteeism and short working depressed earnings to levels below the wage rate. In addition to granting dearness allowances all the gardens during the war period sold rice to the labourers at subsidized rates along with cheap cloth and gave cash in lieu and considerable expenses were often incurred by the gardens on the transactions as shown in the data given below in Table 4.3.³⁵

TABLE 4.3. RATION GIVEN TO THE VARIOUS GARDENS BY THE DARJEELING PLANTERS ASSOCIATION, 1946.

Category of worker	Rate	Rice or atta	Dal / mustard oil
Worker	Rs 8 per seer	3 seer, 8kg per week	Rs 6 to Rs 9 per Seer and Rs 50 to Rs 60 per maund
Dependants		2 seer, 10 kg "	
Children		1 seer, 5 kg '	

(Source - Labour Bureau Ministry of Labour Government of India. Report on an enquiry into the cost and standard of living of plantation workers in Assam and Bengal. S. R. Deshpande, Director, Labour Bureau. 1947. p. 44.)

TABLE 4.4. CONCESSIONS AVAILABLE TO THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS IN DARJEELING 1942-1950).

COMMODITY	CATEGORIES	QUANTITY	PRICE
RICE	MEN	6 SEER	RS. 8/- PER MAUND
RICE	WOMEN	4 SEER	
RICE	CHILDREN	3 SEER	

(SOURCE: Rege, D.V. Report on an Enquiry into conditions of Labour in Plantations in India, Govt. of India, 1946, p. 80.)

The tea industry was affected by both the World wars which caused serious depressions as there was a sharp rise in the value of the rupee that resulted in the increased cost in terms sterling and the over production of tea as compared to the world demand. This led to acute shortage of food grains which was rationed in the tea gardens and cash compensation of two pice per full *hazri* worked by an adult, and the management gave half that amount for a child worker. As the depression worsened by 1942 there was an increase in the cash allowance in form of a lump sum payment of Rs 3 for men, Rs 1/8 for women and children to meet the cost of cloth. Further cash subsistence allowance distinct from cloth allowance was given in 1943 by the end of which the cloth allowance had doubled. Rice was rationed with the weekly supply being 6 seers for men, 4seer for women and 3 seers for children in 1943. However further rationing of rice took place in 1944 and there was a reduction to 4 seer for an adult and 2 seer for a child with an increase in the cash allowance to 1 anna for adults and half the amount for a child per *hazri*.³⁶

Although cash compensation flowed, discontentment had set in amongst the workers in the hills of Darjeeling as rice became scarce. Moreover the exodus of the British planters to their country led to a feeling of insecurity and resulted in lax discipline in the gardens. The workers felt utilized and a feeling of class-consciousness emerged among them, which led to the establishment of the first union of the Dareeling Tea Garden Workers' Union by Sushil Chatterjee and Ratanlal Brahmin on 15th September 1945, which was affiliated to the Communist Party of India. By the late 1940s and 1950s the trade union played an important role in the worker's agitation in the tea gardens.³⁷ Women soon joined hands, which strengthened the movement as they faced greater problems compounded, as they happened to be women as compared to their male counterparts. The male dominated management deprived them of equal pay

for equal work. It was the Communist party that took up the women related issues like the demand for maternity benefits and equal payment. Such discussions among the members of the labour unions led to political consciousness amongst the women.

The more conscious counterparts from the plains gradually indoctrinated the political awakening of the hill women. They listened with curiosity to discussions related to their problems in secret meetings at Dhobi talau and other places in the tea belt.³⁸ Among the early women activist was Mailee Chettri from Danjuajhar tea estate who was an active member of the Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers' Union. She mobilized both men and women teas garden labourers playing a lead role in organizing demonstration and processions against the management in Darjeeling town.³⁹ In Darjeeling trouble began with the election of a Communist candidate to the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1946, and it immediately organized the Tea Garden Labour Union's strike in 17 tea gardens demanding uniformity in wages for male and female workers. The Darjeeling Planters Association tried to negotiate by trying to secure greater uniformity that led to a short period of uneasy calm. However, trouble broke out at Dhajia Tea Estate as 11 workers belonging to the Communist Party were dismissed in April 1946 for fermenting trouble. During troubled period and strikes the women workers showed great strength and resilience. They were strongly behind the male workers preferring to work as informal workers in road building or at construction sites rather than compromise with the management.⁴⁰ This matter was settled only after independence.

The role of the women in the tea garden trade union movement at such a large scale shows a significant perspective. Women were consciously or unconsciously becoming aware of their powers in collective forum and by participating in strikes and processions. The common subdued worker was becoming more vocal and politically aware of the changes taking place around them. The Communist Party then put forth a number of demands, which included, adult suffrage for tea gardens numbering 150, nationalization of tea gardens, declaration of Nepali language as the official language of the hills.⁴¹ Unequal payment was still a matter to be resolved by the government even as late as 1947, which was discussed by the tea workers. The dearness allowance in Darjeeling

hills, Dooars and the Terai differed for the male workers, female labourers and the children as revealed by table number X in the appendix.

This enquiry brings us to the conclusion that the native women were part of the national discourse although the hill experience was different from the rest of Bengal. In spite of the lack of popular support we find that women like Savitridevi Lepcha; Maya Devi Chettri believed in the nationalist cause and struggled to carve a niche for themselves in the direct action struggle, organizational set-ups and the election process to the local bodies. It gradually generated a sense of confidence to lead their own struggle against the colonial policies and patriarchal domination. It symbolized a significant breakthrough by finally producing social sanction for their new role on the eve of the Indian independence. The main reason for this change in the societal attitude was due to the fact that most of the hill men now discovered that although they tried to identify themselves with the colonizers, they in reality enjoyed only an oblique relation to it. This led to a quest for an identity as the sons and daughters of the soil and not just the 'other'. The Congress and the All India Gurkha League took up the demand for the recognition of the Gurkha identity in 1947. By now the mass of the women workers in the tea gardens had joined in the agitation thereby changing the political scenario of the hills in their demand for equality and an ethnic identity. This feeling was buttressed further by the educational developments in Darjeeling as seen below.

4.3. RESPONSE OF THE HILL WOMEN TO EDUCATION:

4.3.1. COLONIAL EFFORTS TO PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR THE WOMEN OF DARJEELING HILLS (1900-1947).

Amidst political and social upheaval the British Government made a desperate attempt to win public support by piecemeal reforms and policies. Against this backdrop education progress was gradual in the country and in the hill regions of Darjeeling district. It was the Education Act of 1904 that highlighted the defects in the colonial educational system, which provided education to just 2.38% of boys and 2.07% of the girls in the country. There was a clamour for free and compulsory education and such pressure led to the passing of the Resolution of Educational Policy in 1913, which promised mass education. In 1917 the Sadler's Commission recommended improved

secondary education. By 1919 Education was made a direct responsibility of Indian ministers under the principle of diarchy in Provinces but they were unable to change anything, as the finance that was needed was a reserved subject under the British. The system of education in the period of Civil Disobedience Movement was without aim or directives as pointed out by the Hartog Committee of 1929. Diarchy was lifted in 1937 and the Government made plans to introduce free and compulsory education for boys and girls in the age groups of 5-14 years under the Wardha Scheme in 1937-38. The Second World War put a stop to the educational efforts and the post war period was too short to implement any changes in mass education.

In Bengal there was the problem of mass education and illiteracy. The Government passed the Act of 1919, which made free primary education for boys the responsibility of the Municipalities. In Darjeeling hills there were two primary schools looked after by the Darjeeling Municipality and one at Kurseong managed by the Kurseong Municipality. The Girls' primary school at Darjeeling had 123 students on its rolls and all these schools were under the Biss Scheme of primary education.⁴² Beside these the primary schools there was only one Zilla High School for the boys in Darjeeling established by the Government. The main task of promoting education in the hills with particular reference to the education of the girls was through (a) the active role played by the missionaries in the urban and rural regions for providing general education; (c) as well as the interest taken by the private individuals in promoting it.

The work of the Scottish Mission Church continued unabated. They maintained the schools opened in the last century, increased the number of primary schools and even upgraded some to middle and High school for girls like Girls' High School of Kalimpong and Nepali Girls' School of Darjeeling. Education for the hill women was still in a backward condition compared to men as the percentage of literacy in 1901 was 11.1% for the males and 1.3 % for the female out of the total population of literates which was 6.6% in the entire Darjeeling District.⁴³

The Women's Guild decided to promote female education by sending Miss Lily Waugh as the first lady teacher in 1900 to help the Girls' School at Kalimpong. From her report

we get an insight into the working of the school in 1901. The number on the roll of the Girls' School had steadily increased and by the end of the year there were thirty one girls. The attendance was not so regular however as one would desire, such excuses as bustee work, bazaar day etc. being sufficient to keep some of the girls from the school. Often sickness among the scholars kept the average attendance low e.g. it was only 23 in the year 1901.⁴⁴ For five years the Girls' High School was housed in a building below the Mcfarlane Memorial Church and then shifted to its new site which was formerly the Training Institute for teachers.⁴⁵ The school was spacious enough to accommodate more students and in 1911 there were 78 pupils, which increased to 100 by 1914. Miss Edith Smith aided Miss Lily Waugh and gradually the standard of education was considerably raised with a view of preparing more capable pupils as teachers for the village schools. "To name a few, Toko and Mimi helped regularly in the Kalimpong Girls' School, while Yangzome, Shoshi, Dhanlachi and Daubre taught in alternative weeks in the school and the 11th mile school."⁴⁶ Hostel facilities were also provided for the girls attending the Girls School and for those in the Industrial Unit at Lal Kothi in 1913. It was the foresight and vision of Miss Edith Smith who that led to the starting of the vernacular teachers training school in 1913 and 16 girls were enrolled in November 6th 1913.⁴⁷

The government provided grants-in-aid of Rs 600 for 1916-17 for the training of 11 pupils as teachers.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in 1937-38 the government gave an approval for the continuance of the annual grant of Rs. 7992 to the training schools for training of primary school teachers for a period of five years.⁴⁹ The general department of the school was separated from the parent body in 1924 and the Kalimpong Girls' School was upgraded to a High School, with Nepali being the medium of instruction. Students were prepared for the School Leaving Examination under the University of Calcutta. In 1926 the first batch that included a single candidate appeared for her matriculation examination. By 1944 there were 594 girls in its rolls and 5 in the training class of which 65 were boarders. The staff of trained women teachers included two graduates in Science one a European and the other a Nepali lady.⁵⁰ Women candidates were also passing their Intermediate Examination along with the male candidates of the Scottish Mission Union Institution of Kalimpong. The school register of 1938 recorded the names

of Miss Dorothy Sitling, Miss Matilda Sitling, Miss Chandrakala Thapa, Miss Amritadevi Chettri, Miss Chandramaya Kumari and Miss Padmavati Thapa.⁵¹

The other Scottish Mission School in Darjeeling the Nepali Girls' School saw increasing number of pupils in its rolls. In the year 1905 there were 34 pupils of whom four were boys, in 1906 of the 34 pupils admitted eight were boys and in 1918, 75 pupils were enrolled. School records reveal that a few of those who were admitted had attended primary bazaar schools or missionary primary school at the elementary level. But most of the girls were not exposed to any form of formal education prior to being admitted as they represented the first generation to receive education in their families.⁵² The school made excellent progress under Miss Corbett. The visiting inspector of schools noted, 'The Church Mission was to be truly congratulated for having such an able and devoted coadjutor. She has done wonders in the way of introducing the new system of education among the students under her charge; all those who are interested in the education of the hill children cannot be sufficiently thankful to Miss Corbett.' The number of students increased to 44 in 1940.⁵³ The school was upgraded to a High School in 1942 and on 31st March 1944 the total number of pupils in the school was 444 of whom 27 were boys, 331 were hill girls and the remainder were Indian Christians.⁵⁴ At the dawn of independence the number of pupils admitted also increased to 500.⁵⁵ Besides the Nepali Girls' School the Mission in 1914 also opened new schools for girls at Kagjhora, Bhutia Basti and Tindhari in Darjeeling.⁵⁶

It was the tireless efforts of the Church of Scotland to educate the women of Darjeeling that increased the level of literacy to 2.2% in the year 1931 compared to the male literacy rate of 17.5% in the same years.⁵⁷ The Mission looked after 5 Upper Primary and 124 Lower Primary schools and the total number of boys were 2420 and girls was 300 and the average attendance was 1880 students.⁵⁸ By the year 1946 the Guild Mission in the District of Darjeeling had 322 primary schools under its charge.⁵⁹ The government encouraged the Church of Scotland in the hills by giving grants-in-aid for the primary schools. As early as 1906 a grant of Rs 1500 was given for the construction of school buildings.⁶⁰ In 1913 the government helped to construct Upper Primary Schools at Sukhiapokhari.⁶¹ Regular grants were given by the Darjeeling Municipality of

Rs 200 a month and the Kurseong Municipality gave Rs 400 in 1914.⁶² Financial aid was given to primary schools at the Teesta Bazaar and Dalapchin for the same purpose thus acknowledging the role of the Mission in educating the poor and the backward children especially the girls of the hills.⁶³

There are reliable information regarding the number of primary schools for the boys and girls in on near the tea plantations. According to Kilgour, a member of the Church of Scotland, out of the 69 tea plantations in the hills, 18 tea gardens had schools in them, 17 had schools within a radius of one mile and 11 gardens had schools within a radius of two miles in 1906.⁶⁴ The government supported the schools in the gardens for the children of the workers by the grants- in- aid.⁶⁴ Official reports accounted for 85 tea gardens in which 16 already had schools in the year 1907-08. The remaining 32 gardens were served by schools in the adjacent garden and 3 reported as not having any children labourers hence they did not think it viable to open up schools. The government listed 34 gardens against which action would be taken. The tea estates of Marianbari, Moharganj, Patinbari, Dootoria and Tiger Hill did provide educational facilities to the children of the coolies. The managers of Simrimpani and Tongsong showed their willingness to finance such schemes. It was Singell, Dilaram and Sepoydhara tea estate at Kurseong that cited financial constraint in opening schools for the workers. On the whole educational opportunities for the children, in the tea belts and in particular the girl child, made very slow progress. A result which appears to be due to a great extent to a want of practical sympathy on the part of the tea management.⁶⁵ Table number XI (a) and XI ((b) will help us to visualize the situation of schools in the tea gardens and the government grant given to such schools. Table 4.5. below gives the list of mission schools in the tea gardens.

TABLE 4.5. LIST OF MISSION SCHOOLS IN TEA ESTATES FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS 1910.

1. Mirik	3. Tukvar	5. Rishihat	7. Turzam
2. Tashok	4. Badamtam	6. Ging	8. Gielle. Teesta Valley
3. Rungli	6. Soom	9. Tukdah	

Source Extended Volume , Proceedings of the Hon. Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. August 1910. General Department. Education. No 24-28 File 1-E 1 No 360 T dated Darjeeling 30th June 1910. Report by the Deputy Commissioner to the Government.)

The number of schools increased from 1911 to 1917 as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. NUMBER OF TEA GARDEN SCHOOLS (1911-1917).

Year	No. of tea garden schools
1911-1912	53
1912-1913	57
1913-1914	63
1914-1915	66
1915-1916	66
1916-1917	69

Source: Proceedings of Lt. Governor of Bengal. General Proceedings Edn. File June 1918(extended volume) p. 144. [State Archives, Calcutta]

The government annual grant to the tea garden schools of Darjeeling was Rs. 1300 and a previously given grant of Rs 8352 per annum for teachers training. This grant was increased by Rs. 810 for teachers under training and Rs. 850 for school equipments in 1917.⁶⁶The total direct expenditure on the schools in the tea belts increased from Rs 5926 to Rs 8839 and the contribution from the Provincial revenue increase from Rs 3973 to Rs 5802.⁶⁷The government on its part proposed the deputation of a Deputy Inspector of Schools in Darjeeling for the collection of statistics for inducing garden managers to open schools in their estates.⁶⁸ In spite of all these efforts a decline was seen in the number of children going to school due to withdrawal of pupils by parents to make them whole-time labourers.⁶⁹ Another problem regarding these schools was the low salary of Rs 26- 8annas a month which did not attract many teachers.⁷⁰

Other than the Church of Scotland Mission, the Roman Catholic Mission reached out to the hill women in remote areas of Gorubathan, Gitgeong, Todey, Tanyang, Suruk, Pringtam and Kankiabong through church activities and primary schools run by the various missionaries. In the urban areas like Singamari in Darjeeling, St. Michael's School, a primary school was founded by Rev. Father McDonough. He was a Jesuit priest of St. Joseph's School Darjeeling and wanted to educate the children of those employed at North Point, children of tea workers, bearers, *chowkidars*, carpenters,

cooks, butlers, peons, *battiwallas* etc. The girls' section at first known as St. Teresa's Girls' School, Singamari was established in 1927 and both sections were later amalgamated. In 1937 the school had admitted 40 pupils of which 4 were boys and the rest were girls.⁷¹ The sisters of Loreto Convent, Darjeeling established St. Teresa's Girls' School in 1923 with only 13 natives as pupils; the number increased to 20 in 1938 and 38 in 1939 and 44 in 1943.⁷² In Kalimpong the Sisters of Cluny, belonging to St. Joseph's Convent established St. Philomena Girls' School for the local girls. Similarly St. Joseph's Girls' School, Kurseong started its mission of educating the native children in 1938 and this was upgraded to a High School in 1944. These schools emphasized on the use of the vernacular as the medium of instruction as this would be of practical value to the natives.⁷³

On the eve of Indian independence the level of literacy and the corresponding social awareness in the hills showed an increasing trend. This was possible due to the efforts of the missionaries. Girls were admitted by house visits and encouragement.⁷⁴ The main problem faced by the schools was the high number of school dropouts as most of the girls left school midway due to some reason or other like looking after the younger siblings, ill-health, death of parents, transfer to other schools, loss of interest in studies, early marriage, financial difficulties which tended to make them coolies or labourers and the failure of promotion at the end of the term made them discontinue study.⁷⁵ Yet despite all these problems literacy among the hill women was increasing with more people in the lower age group becoming literate and more persons in the upper age group retaining their literacy attainments.⁷⁶

Lastly mention must be made of the English schools solely meant for the British children and Eurasian children whose parents were Civil Servants or railway employees. There were Dow Hills Girls' School, St. Helen's School at Kurseong; Loreto Convent and Mount Hermon School at Darjeeling and St. Joseph's Convent, Kalimpong. Exclusively for Europeans, these schools were gradually opened in the twentieth century, to some wealthy native children and those belonging to aristocratic families of Lasha. Mount Hermon admitted Tibetan children of aristocratic families of Lasha as early as 1918.⁷⁷ Dowhills Girls' School gave admission to Indian students only in 1926.⁷⁸ In 1944 there

were 144 boarders; 50 day scholars at St. Joseph's Convent, Kalimpong and 25 of them were hill girls.⁷⁹ The curriculum of these schools which were beyond the reach of the general hill people included fine arts domestic science, Latin, Physical instruction and moral science to make the pupils efficient housewives, teachers or clerks.⁸⁰ With the Indian independence the question about the exclusiveness of these schools for the minority no longer applied and thus under the direction of the Indian constitution the schools were opened to the upper and middle class native girls without reservation.

4.3.2. SOCIAL EDUCATION:

Until independence of India nothing of any special significance took place with regard to social, vocational, technical, physical or aesthetic education of the natives of Darjeeling hills. Nevertheless certain efforts at social education although limited in nature had made its beginning for the women like the Kalimpong Industrial School under the Church of Scotland to which new departments were added. The Lace Department was started in 1905 under Miss Channer. The Central School had a staff consisting of a European lady teacher on a monthly salary of Rs 75, a European Assistant on Rs 35 a month, three native teachers to whom salaries of Rs 15, Rs 5 and Rs 2 were paid respectively. 35 pupils of the Mission Girl's Primary School attended the lace school for one and a half hours daily in addition to this there were 46 students who devoted their time to teach maths in the school. 69 ex-pupils of the school worked from their own homes. These women came to the school for a month or so each year to learn new designs. Each whole-time pupil lived in the hostel in a stipend of Rs 5 for the first month; this payment was reduced by 8 anna successively for 10 months. Of the 5 out-schools in the district a passed pupil received a salary of Rs 32 per annum plus 2 annas a month for each pupil imparted training. The attendance an average was about 8 pupils per school. Each school opened for 4½ hours daily of which 3 hours were given to the lace work, 1½ hour for reading, writing and arithmetic.⁸¹

The General Industries Department consisting of embroidery, knitting, crochet and tailoring had a European lady teacher on Rs 75, an honorary European lady, 2 teachers (native) on Rs 20, one part-timer for Rs 5 and a tracer of design for Rs 6. Stipends were given to pupils to encourage better learning. The government had aided the Industrial

school since March 1904 by granting Rs. 500.⁸² The weaving sector was further enlarged. The joint efforts of Miss E. Smith and Mrs Mackenjie did wonderful work helping the young women engaged in the Industrial school. 'For an hour and a half every morning, before beginning their work in the industrial School the women workers received in the Girls' School a Bible lesson and instruction in the ordinary branches of elementary education'. Since 1907 January about 65 girls and women passed from this school, many of them after learning on industry were later employed as teachers in the area outside the lace schools throughout the Eastern Himalayan Mission district.⁸³ The Lace School however did not function without its own problems. The net loss of receiving receipts and expenditure approximately was Rs 4000 a year, half of which was covered by the Government. For the year 1906-8 the total receiving expenditure amounted to Rs 5954, Rs 8059 and Rs 9852 respectively or in percentage of 71, 49, 48. It faced the difficulty in retaining the services of the workers who had already given their services to the institution but had hitherto worked without pay or with insufficient pay. The cost of opening up new branch schools in the hills was at the rate of Rs 20 to Rs100 a year. The teacher was either paid or worked without any payment. The central body had to send teachers for inspection and advice. As a result each affiliated branch added to the burden of the central School.

Great risk was also taken by this body regarding the marketing of the finished products.⁸⁴ The Director of the Scot Mission suggested that it would be advantageous to give scholarships to the girls who having been trained at Kalimpong was sent out to the affiliated schools and who would in course of time return to benefit further from the expertise given by the parent body. An estimate of Rs 720 a year and Rs 400 for travelling expenses was petitioned to the authorities.⁸⁵ In answer the government granted the renewal of Rs 2000 for a year plus a grant of Rs 1500 towards the expenses of the instructress for 1910. The number of pupils increased steadily from 1907-08, there were both regular type and the occasional worker type.⁸⁶

The statement of the Central Lace School during the period 1907-09 shown in Tables XII, XIII and XIV in the appendix clearly points out that there existed a wide gap in the payment of the British ladies and the native teachers who were considered novices.

Every local lace workers was given a sum of Rs 20, Rs 22, Rs 25 respectively. However special mention must be made of Mrs. Graham who contributed her earnings as Superintendent for the betterment of the Lace School.⁸⁷ For the hill women it supplemented the family income and by the year 1914 eight native pupils were employed by the lace school⁸⁸ and the enrolment of boys and girls in 1931-32 was 415 and 371 in the year 1936-37.⁸⁹ The Industrial School received encouragement in the form of grant-in-aid. Government records show that the grant to the Kalimpong Lace School of Rs.2, 000 was renewed for another two years.⁹⁰ A grant of Rs 500 was given in 1916.⁹¹ In 1924 the School was registered under the Companies Act and a capital of Rs 75,000 was raised and given back.⁹²

The value of work done in 1915-16 was about Rs 7,000 of which Rs 6,716 worth of goods were sold and the rest added to the stock. The value of work in the 1915-16 was about Rs. 9,600 in the General Industries of which goods worth Rs. 8,600 was sold. The whole income of the year was Rs 9208 including government's grant of Rs 220 and the expenditure was Rs. 10,697. From the weaving department the income recorded was Rs 375 in the year 1915-16, the total receipt of that year was Rs 4,661 including a government grant of Rs. 834 and expenditure was Rs 5,139. Net profit in 1916-17 from the lace department was Rs 476, from the General Department of embroidery and tailoring was Rs 1,513 and weaving Rs 1090. There were 25 part time girls, 37 whole-time girl pupils and 91 ex-pupils operating from their homes who made these products.
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In 1925 the General Superintendent Mr. And Mrs, A .N. Olding were given a honorarium and had 350 trainers both male and female specializing in certain crafts. The Government helped to sell blankets, woollen knitted articles, woven cloth, woollen fabrics, bamboo products, baskets and mats produced by the school. Official records show 50 families engaged in production of Bhutia *chadar*. They bought the wool themselves without the help of the middlemen and after dyeing it sold it for Rs 2/6.⁹⁴ Thus social education in the form of cottage industries like carpet weaving, dyeing, knitting, painting, fabric painting was given a boost by the government. Hill women were also

encouraged by the authorities to manage dairy farming, poultry, piggery and farming of superior variety of vegetables and flowers and fruits to supplement the family income.

Another aspect of social education for women was their involvement in sericulture although at a very small scale before independence. The knowledge of sericulture was at first introduced in the Scottish Universities Mission Institute, Kalimpong and further encouraged by the government in 1917. Nurseries were established at Timpani, Kalimpong, Relli and Bijanbari. Free mulberry saplings were distributed among the villagers who became trainees of this new agro industry.⁹⁵ It must be pointed out the Buddhist Association of Darjeeling also established a technical school with a curriculum which included weaving, knitting. In 1909 there were 16 native women on its rolls and the number increased to 37 in 1912. The school got a grant of Rs 45 a month from the government and Rs 20 from subscription fees.⁹⁶ Social education also included the curriculum for the children of the Blind School established by Mary Scott at Kalimpong in 1940, which included the Braille system, music, cane work, knitting and other productive arts and crafts.⁹⁷ Like the blind the deaf and dumb children were looked after by the sisters of Cluny, Kalimpong being trained in housekeeping, nursing and crafts enabling them to earn a livelihood by working as ayahs.⁹⁸

Other forms of social education to create cultural awareness was the formation of the *Gorkha Dukh Nivarak Sammelan* founded in 1932 in Darjeeling, the Ramkrishna Vedanta Ashrama's library, the Kurseong Amateur Club, the *Arya Samaj* with its night classes to promote adult literacy and the Indian Christian Association to encourage religious instruction. In this way education both formal and informal was imparted to the natives of the hills and these new trends and ideas introduced new dimension to the social outlook of the people.

4.3.3. SOCIAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH MATTERS:

Our discussion on the social education of the natives will remain incomplete if we do not include women and health matters. In the hills although western medical science had put its stamp of superiority by 1900 through western style health measures, vaccination programme, establishment of hospitals, dispensaries and welfare centres; it was

accepted by only a section of the hill population and health awareness was yet to be developed among them. Official reports from North Bengal lamented about the unwillingness of the people to use hospitals and dispensaries especially in the tea gardens where the workers 'preferred to use their own indigenous medicines.' It would only be through education that the people would accept western medicine and make them realize that it was more scientific than the indigenous system and on the whole better.⁹⁹

Few plantations of Darjeeling hills maintained their own dispensaries and medical staff as trained people were difficult to get; moreover the cost factor was kept in mind by the management. The doctors worked in deadening isolation.¹⁰⁰ While the Cinchona Plantations had dispensaries with 10 beds at Mungpo and Kumai.¹⁰¹ It was very difficult for the women labourers to get medical help even at the beginning of the twentieth century. The welfare of the tea labourers especially women was not taken into consideration by the colonial authorities. They had to face a number of problems like the risk to the health of the working women and the little children they carried with them to work.¹⁰² Common diseases among them were dysentery during the rainy season, the absence of latrines resulting in hookworm infection, anaemia and venereal diseases. Official investigation prior 1946 reports that the main problem from the health standpoint on Darjeeling plantations was tuberculosis causing great concern. The high incidence of tuberculosis may be gathered from the figures obtained from one garden in Darjeeling that had 54 tuberculosis cases of which 20 were due to pulmonary tuberculosis. Similar figures were observed from the other gardens too.¹⁰³ Cooking and living in a single room hut that was ill ventilated and malnutrition caused tuberculosis.

Women workers in the tea belts had no maternity leave, the only benefits they enjoyed was a payment of Rs 2/8 before and Rs 9/8 after delivery and a bonus of Rs 5 if the child survived the first year.¹⁰⁴ Therefore our attention is drawn to the fact that the garden owners paid maternity benefits not for the sake of the women but for the regular cheap labour supply. In 1939 the Maternity Benefit Act was passed and the rate of payment was passed and the rate of payment was 8 annas per day for 6 weeks but proper protection for the women worker through legislation was not forthcoming. Local journals

in the pre-independence era tried to raise consciousness among the women workers about the Labour laws with particular emphasis on maternity benefits.¹⁰⁵ It was precisely the combination of low wages, and the ambiguous medical policy of the government that resulted in malnutrition therefore high rate of infant mortality as recorded by the government. The Government reports of the medical benefits given to the women labourers of Darjeeling tea gardens is given below in Table 4.7.

TABLE 4.7. SHOWING THE MEDICAL BENEFITS PROVIDED TO THE WOMEN TEA GARDEN WORKERS DURING 1942-1944.

	Year		
	1942	1943	1944
No. of tea workers in Darjeeling	19,141	-	-
Medical Benefit	13,960	19,750	18,422
Maternity Benefit	2,454	1,965	1,316
Sickness Benefit	4,330	7,028	7,242

Source: Sarkar, R.L. and Lama, M.P. Ibid 1986 pg. 174.

TABLE 4.8. INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN BENGAL

	Calcutta Areas	Rural towns	Province mines	Mills	Asansol	Tea Gardens Darjeeling	England Wales
Birth Rate	18.4	29.3	28.	16.9	26.7	40.2	-
Infant mortality	318	182	193	173	146	96	117

(Source: Royal Commission of Labour in India, Report vol. V Part I, pg 342, Govt. of India Report of the Age of Consent Committee, 1928-29. Calcutta 1929 p.. 333.)

The sad plight of female health and childbirth was a common feature not only in the tea-dominated areas but also through the Bengal Province. The most important Victorian response to this alarming situation was the foundation of The National Association For Supplying Medical Fund to the women of India commonly known as the Lady Dufferine Fund. Helping the weak colonial sisters was appealing to the liberal Victorian feminists for it gave them the scope to act independently without threatening the ideologies of either domesticity or the British Raj.¹⁰⁶ Lady Dufferin's Fund helped to establish maternity hospitals and baby clinics in Bengal.

In Darjeeling the Municipality undertook the task of looking after the two Maternity and Child Welfare Centres one at Darjeeling and the other at Ghum, and also the Victorian hospital where 30 beds were allocated for the native females. Training of nurses was also undertaken by the hospitals and welfare centers at Darjeeling. The gazetteer of

Darjeeling District reported that Lady Carmichael had for sometime noticed that district hospitals in Bengal, as a whole showed a lamentable want of proper nursing owing to the fact that they can barely afford to pay for European nurses and therefore get no other medical personnel. She decided to provide training of Indian nurses whose service would be available throughout Bengal at salaries which district hospitals would be able to afford. Their training started mainly at Darjeeling and was completed at Calcutta.¹⁰⁷ In this connection mention must be made of the Charteris hospital of the Church of Scotland which gave classes in general nursing, anaesthetics and midwifery to the native women and prepared them for the examination of the Bengal Nursing Council. Some successful candidates mentioned are Sita, Sushila Sarkar and Dhankumari. The Charteris Hospital had 13 native nurses in training to look after infant welfare centers at Kalimpong and ante-natal clinics providing milk, cod-liver oil to the undernourished and tuberculosis infected children and instructions in hygiene to parents.¹⁰⁸ Likewise the Governmental welfare centers and the rural health treatment units at Sukhiapokhari, Singla, Bijanbari, Lodhama, Takdah, Mirik, Sukna, Algarah, Gorubathan and Samsing gave the hill women an experience in nursing, midwifery and childcare.¹⁰⁹ After completing their training they could work in dispensaries or the tea garden areas. They visited the houses of the poor and advised the expectant mothers on matters of hygiene, delivery and gave free supply of milk and medicine.¹¹⁰ Satellite hill stations of Darjeeling like Kurseong and Kalimpong also had their own hospitals. The Kurseong hospital allocated 28 beds for the male patients and 13 patients for the female patients. Dispensaries at Pedong were looked after by a female nurse and had 7 beds for the native male and 7 for the hill women. Besides the government there were many other agencies and missions looking after public health in the hills. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railways looked after hospitals at Tindharia and outdoor dispensaries at Kurseong, Darjeeling and Siliguri. The Communication and Works Department had dispensaries at Kalijhora and Tista Bazar for the informal workers both male and female engaged in road construction. The Roman Catholic Mission maintained two dispensaries near Kalimpong town. The Charteris hospital at Kalimpong and Dispensaries at Nimbong, Today and Tangta worked for the poor.¹¹¹

The medical statement of the British government classified the hospitals in the hills in the category of class III or class IV only. The data in table number XV and XVI in the appendix highlights the income and expenditure in the various medical centres in the hills for the period 1939. The medical treatment was sought by 4,162 males, 1,534 females and 585 children in Darjeeling District in the year 1929.¹¹² The figure increased to 8,200 males, 3,878 females as indoor patients and 120,274 males, 48,064 females as outdoor patients in the year 1939. Yet the number of patients in 1929-1939, remained low in the hills as indicated by the data in table number XVII in the appendix.

Although civic consciousness, ideas of health and sanitation gradually spread specially in urban centres with more and more people responding to vaccination drives between 1935-1943 the birth rate recorded by the Municipality showed a lowering from 12,819 in 1935 to 9,688 in 1943 and the death rate recorded an increase from 10,399 in 1935 to 11,253 in 1943.¹¹³ This may be due to the fact that though awareness was generated it was not at a desired pace. Moreover, this consciousness was mostly restricted to the urban areas with the rural areas lagging behind. The Darjeeling Municipality lamented on the insufficient facilities for coping with infectious disease and reported deaths due to various diseases like gonococcal infection, syphilis, influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis affecting the lungs and other forms of tuberculosis among the natives in 1941.¹¹⁴ The silent killer was T.B. of the lungs as the government officials recorded 452 affected cases in 1936 among the female population in Darjeeling District of which 64 died and in the year 1940, the number infected was 1079 of which 117 patients died.¹¹⁵ The Municipality paid Rs 1000 to the Eden hospital meant for the hill people since 1915 and Rs 1500 to Victoria hospital which had to cater to a smaller number of British patients.¹¹⁶ Till this time we still find the colonial discourse of the us and the other working in the health practices of the Raj in the hills. The health of the hill women was a matter of grave concern but the authorities did not regard it seriously. Maternity benefits was still denied to them and the medical facilities in the garden was not adequate.

4.4. PRIVATE EFFORTS AT PROVIDING EDUCATION AND RESPONSE OF THE HILL WOMEN (1900-1947):

There was an expansion of education in the twentieth century nurtured by the educational policies of the Government. It was formulated by the authorities, from time to time to fulfil the socio-economic and cultural urge of the Indians, on the one hand. On the other hand, the beginning of the national schools was a counter to the colonial claims of educating and emancipating the Indian women as has been argued before. Taking this backdrop, if we study the process of education in the hill during the period 1900-1947 we find a new trend here. For in addition to the contribution of the Government and foreign missionaries there was indigenous attempt to provide education in the hills for the development of society. These private initiatives were guided by factors like self-interest and also due to the political and educational policies of the government like transfer of the Department of Education to the control of Indian ministers in 1921. The educated Indian emphasized on private run schools, aided by government funds imparting traditional, national curriculum for girls that would make them better wives and mothers. The curriculum included domestic science, reading writing and fine arts. The All India Ladies Conference in 1910 founded the *Bharat Stree Mahamandal* for organizing private schools for *zenana* and national education.

It was precisely this idea of national education and the non admission of the native children to English schools in Darjeeling in the first decades of the twentieth century that led to the establishment of the first school founded by native effort, namely the Maharani Girls' High School. This school stands a mute witness to the missionary zeal of its sprightly architect and guide who less than a decade after the turn of the last century brought about revolutionary changes in the field of education in the then very British town of Darjeeling.¹¹⁷ It was established by Hemlata Debi daughter of the Sadharan Brahma leader Sibnath Sastri. She was inspired to establish a school in the hills when she found out that there was no standard schools for the children of the Indian clerks, postmasters and teachers. Hemlata faced serious problems in educating her three daughters in the English schools. However instead of being a 'nagging petitioner to the government complaining about lack of facilities she and her husband Dr. Sarkar took it upon themselves to create a national school for the native community

of Darjeeling.' Her friend Suniti Debi, the Maharani of Cooch Bihar, her sister Saucharau Debi the Maharani of Mayurbhanj who were seasonal sojourners to the hills joined hands. The Maharani of Burdawan also helped her to establish the school.

In the beginning of September 1908 the school was established in a house belonging to the Cooch Bihar estate near Capitol theatre. The number of students was just 7 including her children. Undaunted Hemlata Debi went on a house-to-house campaign coaxing the people of the hills to send their children to school. The rent for the school was Rs 150 and a year later the building at Oak Lodge was called Maharani Girl's School. Boys were admitted up till class around it. Boys were admitted up till class IV. Helmet Debi and the Maharani of Cooch Bihar also pulled strings in Calcutta to persuade influential socialites to send their children to school at Maharanis.¹¹⁸

The enrolment figure from 1908 to 1910 rose up to 77 pupils. By 1910 there was a high class Home School with 9 boarders and trained teachers. The daughters of native families like Smt. Reba Bose, Dr. S. Kazi, Smt. P. N. Tendupla and Smt. Passang Doma received education. The first matriculate of this school was Suniti Sarkar. Among the prominent student as of the school were Swapna Das and her two sisters, Kamala Sen, Anup Lal Goswami, Haran Chandra Bose, Jyoti Ghosal, Dr. Sailendra Nath Chatterjee (Kanti Babu), Madhuri Sarkar, Nivanani Bose, Rani Mahalanobis, Aditi Sen Roma Sarkar, Monorama Bose, Sabitri Mitra, Ila Hom, Tara Ghosh, and Meera Sanyal. The school offered a chance for the meeting of different cultures from the hills and the plains. The school was popular among Indians. It received support from the Maharani of Cooch Behar. Hon'ble Sir Bijoy Chand Mahatap, Maharajadhiraja of Burdwan and the donors were Excellencies Lord and Lady Carmichael, the Maharani of Mayurbhanjan, the Rani of Kakina, Sir S.P. Sinha and Hon'ble Mr. B.C. Mitra and Mr. P.N.Mukherjee.¹¹⁹ It used to get government grant-in-aid of Rs. 250 per mensem.¹²⁰The number of pupils steadily increased from 56 in 1911 to 40 in 1915.¹²¹

School education was free of cost; no uniform was enforced on the pupils. School started around ten thirty in the morning giving enough time for a ritual bath and puja at home by the students. They could come to class with un-plaited wet hair. All this was

done so that the orthodox families would not object to the schooling of their daughter. The aim and objectives of the school was to produce better wives and mothers and to help a widow earn a livelihood instead of facing a miserable life. The curriculum at Maharani Girls' School aimed at imparting 'traditional' and 'female' oriented education which included Bengali, mathematics, geography, Indian history, hygiene, everyday science, art and music, reading and writing from the epics, Hindu texts. Higher education was given to those children who did not marry at an early age. They learnt English, higher mathematics, world history, science, philosophy, Sanskrit, hygiene, nursing, needlework, cookery, domestic science, household management and child rearing.¹²² In short no girl could pass out of school unless she could 'cook a whole meal, make a complete set of garments, be qualified to manage a house and have some knowledge of sick-nursing'.¹²³

The school excelled over the years as is evident from letters written by government officials who commented. "It was a pioneer institution for girls' education in Darjeeling established through the effort and generosity of distinguished women who were highly respected for progressive ideas and who led the way for the spread of education among girls in the beginning of the century in a remote hill region of Bengal. I am happy to say that the school now fulfilled the founder's dream and many generations of students and girls as well as boys of tender age will remember this institution with affection and respect."¹²⁴ The government helped to encourage the educational efforts of the Maharani Girls' School by giving grants-in-aid for maintenance.¹²⁵ Special scholarship were also given by the government to outstanding students like Tenzing Wangdi and Miss Sangay Doma of Darjeeling in 1929.¹²⁶ The meritorious results in the school final examination showed the progress of the school among other hill schools.¹²⁷ Further grants were given in 1936 for extension of classes for the girls.¹²⁸

TABLE 4.8. THE MATRIC RESULTS OF 1932 AS PUBLISHED BY THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY.

Darjeeling Govt. High School	Kalimpong Scottish Mission	Kalimpong Univ. High School	Kalimpong Gir's High School	Maharani Girls' School.
13- 1st class.	Mission	1-3rd class.		2- 1st class.
12 -2nd class.	4-1st class.			(Nanibala Hor and Jeremit Siting)
4-3rd class.	2-2nd class.			

Source- Part 1 B Educational Notice, Orders of the Vice-Chancellor and Syndicate of Calcutta University. June 9th 1932. Calcutta Gazette.

The establishment of the Maharani Girls' School was indeed a pioneering work of Hemlata Sarkar who was a harbinger of a new outlook towards education. It was an alternative to the colonial pattern of education for the native girls. It can be termed as a radical attempt by Hemlata who stood against any kind of domination or discrimination. It was a struggle against the racial and gender bias colonial pattern and it a private attempt to establish modern education based upon Indian traditions. Interestingly enough it was only an isolated attempt at the beginning catering to the Bengali middle class and aristocrats as the school could not break out of its elitist Brahmo mould. It therefore did not reach out immediately to the marginalised sections of the hill girls in the seams of society in a large way.

Nevertheless the trend towards such forms of education gradually picked up as the foundation of a Coaching Centre for the Indian children at Kurseong, known as Pusparani Roy Memorial, unaided by the government, later it developed into an English High School. Likewise, in 1923 the Young Men's Buddhist Association working for the upliftment of Buddhist culture established the Ghum School for girls. In 1931 the Sardeswari Girls School and in 1934 the Himachal Hindi Bhawan for boys and girls were established with government aid and had provisions for a night school for the local students.¹²⁹ The Arya Samaj established a primary school in 1934 and later schools like the Pranami Vidya Mandir Girls' school was established in 1944, Saraswati School at Mangpoo in 1946, Pokhriabong School in 1947 and the Griffith Memorial School at Takdah in 1947 along the same lines.

The Muslim community of Darjeeling had a charitable institution registered in 1909 called Anjuman-e-Islamia for improving the moral, intellectual and social conditions of the Muslims in the hills. It established madrasas for boys and girls attached to the Jumma and Chhota Masjid. In 1922 the number of boys and girls on the roll was 44 and 34 respectively.¹³⁰ Girls in the hill madrasa were taught by female teachers and the medium of instruction was Hindi. Arabic and Persian languages were compulsory as they were required to read the Islamic texts. It encouraged the education of the hill Muslim girls.

In conclusion it can be said that the early decades of the twentieth century in the hills like the rest of Bengal saw the rise of native effort to provide education, for fear of cultural alienation, in the wake of western female education. Through private native initiative of Hemlata Sarkar the founder of Maharani Girls School, a number of schools were established in the hills of Darjeeling that brought about a gradual change in the education opportunities for the hill women. Female schooling became a means of improving the material and social conditions of women without coming into conflict with the Indian orthodoxy.

In other words the phase of Indian Nationalism did not involve the total reshaping of the hill society, as the transition from one phase to another was a gradual change. Signpost of the new age was visible in the twilight zone between the two periods. Nothing spectacular happened at a large scale at first but the small changes were crucial to understanding the waning of the old and the dawning of a new period. The subtle changes in the role transformation of those women passing out from native schools showed bhadramila-like qualities of thrift, cleanliness, some knowledge of the outside world, together with the traditional role of a good mothers and house wives and hostess. The identity of the women was to be nurtured by the mixing of the old tradition with the modern ways. Although it was not a cataclysm as the elements of continuity and change among the hill women were not dichotomous but stood juxtaposed often overlapping at times on the eve of Indian independence in 1947. Yet the majority of the rural hill women, in areas not covered by the tea gardens, continued to enjoy their status in the homestead unaffected by any changes.

With regard to politics very few women leaders came to the forefront and those like Helendidi and Putalidevi Poddar from Kurseong or David Azemee Babuni from Kalimpong were nationalist activists or supporters rather than a liberated western educated woman. They identified themselves with the Indian mass and the nationalist cause but it should be remembered that Gandhian politics in Darjeeling was just a 'flash in the pan.' The British kept a check on the political movement in the towns. At the beginning the people were unable to identify their cause of exploitation. Only a few educated people realized that the natives just enjoyed a subordinate relation to the

master race. The optical illusion that the colonial society was innocuous and for the good of the people was accepted by the public and majority of the women were not in a position to judge for themselves. It was definitely the spread of education that created awareness and the first generation of women found their voice and they articulated the needs of the women. It was the tea belts that saw a definite change in the role of the hill women as a result of the labour union movements. They presented a different picture of themselves far removed from a soft, non-aggressive, compliant and dependent female as conjured by the colonist. The native voice demanded their economic rights and even wanted a part to play in shaping the destiny and progress of the hills.

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CHAPTER -5
POST COLONIALISM AND THE RESPONSE OF THE HILL WOMEN TO THE
QUESTION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN
THE HILLS OF DARJEELING.(1947- 1985)

Dismantling of colonialism in the form of European overseas colonies was one of the most spectacular events of the twentieth century. This took place after a nationalist upsurge followed by freedom struggle in India, Africa and other parts of Asia. Various campaigns of anti-colonial resistance took forms ranging from legal and diplomatic high grounds of principle and procedure to wars of independence. The ending of colonial rule created high hopes for the newly independent countries and for the inauguration of a proper post colonial era.¹ The Indian independence ushered in post colonial changes in the colonial enclave of Darjeeling hills which had its impact on the changing identity of its natives and installed in them an awareness of their ethnic identity and this has been examined in two parts. The first deals with the rise of the ethnic factor and the role of the women. The second part is about the quest for their economic rights in the period 1947-85. The work at the same time also focuses on some colonial legacy that was apparent in the period of study.

To put it simply post colonial era implies the transition of a society predominantly white ethnic group to one that is multiracial.² While colonialism in Darjeeling hills indicated a system of domination between the ruler and the subjects, in the post colonial period the 'other' that is the native men and women of the hills are no longer geographically distanced but within and over time significantly shaping the landscape, culture, politics of the area. The study undertaken tries to examine the native hill women and their response to the new socio- historic pressure, political concepts that have shaped modern history- democracy, nationalism, citizenship, issues such as race, gender, ethnicity which have redrawn the limits of older conceptions of community, individual and nation.³ Profound changes like decolonization and the massive upheavals that followed such movement of the people has led to instabilities,⁴ changes which have made the old western narratives of progress and reason inadequate for addressing contemporary realities and problems. Post colonial writings have been a challenging response to these pressures even as it offers a means to the native men and women of

speaking of them. Therefore the term colonial and post colonial are key analytic categories, which are used for periodisation of history and the fundamental shift that takes place in stated relations, capital, classes, modes of governance when the voice of the 'other' is no longer silent. It is against this backdrop of changes in the power structure of the once colonized hills of Darjeeling after the official end of colonialism as well as colonialism's continuing effect,⁵ that the rise of the native women has to be studied. For post colonial studies of any kind does not enjoy a panoptic distance from colonial history but exists as an aftermath, as an after-after being worked over by colonialism. It is the image reflected by the east in the mirror the west holds for them. As a result post colonial criticism has forced a rethinking, reformulation of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and western domination.⁶

Critics regard post colonial studies to be a continuity of colonialism, a heritage of imperialism in a deconstructive case therefore even a 'bogus' as new field of studies to some scholars. They argue that for those of us from formerly colonised countries are able to communicate with each other, with other nationalities all over the world as we have access to the culture of imperialism.⁷ Some critics go further to regard the term post colonial to be a fiction, a cover-up of a dangerous period in our lives. For each region has its own peculiar features as the point of contact with imperialism differed hence generalization is difficult to apply for all colonized people. Nonetheless post colonialism is an umbrella term that covers critical approaches which deconstructs European thought in areas as wide –ranging as philosophy, history, literature, anthropology, sociology and political science. In this perspective the term post colonialism refers not to a simple periodization but rather to a methodological revision which enables a wholesale critique of western structure of knowledge and power, particularly those in the post-enlightenment period.⁸

The importance of post colonial studies is that it focuses especially on the psychological orientation of the people that are the products of those conditions.⁹ Post colonial studies have dealt most significantly with cultural contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalence in which women of the Third World have been placed. The use of western or 'white' concepts of gender to characterize the 'Third World Women' often resulted in

reproducing Orientals, racist and colonial discourse.¹⁰ Women of the developing countries have challenged the earlier feminist concepts and the manner the 'Third World Women' were labeled as a singular, monolithic, paradigmatically victimized subjects.¹¹ Therefore in the writings after 1960s the raced, sexed colonized women have begun to speak for the first time and they now claim an original authority to represent themselves.

They are emergent discourses about the break up of masterful subjectivity and the emergence of the inappropriate or "Other." Post colonialism thus emphasizes on the break up of the unitary subject be it man, woman, worker and argues for alternative notions of identity and power. Post colonial critiques have forced white feminist to re-examine the female subjects of their writings and to theories the complexities of gendered and race subjectivities.¹² The 'other' in the post- colonial studies is vocal and expresses strong views growing out of the Hegelian 'master-slave relationship.'¹³ Post colonial studies with regard to the hills of Darjeeling indicates that the question of Gorkha identity among its people was born out of colonial and later neo- colonial rule. It must be pointed out that both colonial and post colonial discourses refer to the dynamics of ethnic identity, race, gender or sexuality. For long ethnicity has been associated exclusively with people of colour, a property inherent in, conferred upon or claimed by people who have been subject to colonial diasporas as in the case of Darjeeling. The discussions of ethnicity is also associated with a discussion of women studies as they are the biological 'carriers of the race' and they occupy a primary and complex role in representing ethnicity.¹⁴ Therefore Post colonial movements of any kind involving ethnic issues cannot be disassociated from the response of the women as in the case of Darjeeling hills.

Looking back at the history of Darjeeling it is seen that the idea of having a separate state or 'Gorkhastan' began to haunt the people who were unsure of their future prior to independence. The legal status of the ceded land of Darjeeling hills remained ambiguous when India became independent. From the 14th to the 18th of August 1947, the Pakistan flag fluttered in the Town Hall of Darjeeling town. The confusion and speculation ended when it was replaced by the Indian tricolor flag.¹⁵ The major

political parties in the hills were the Congress, the Gorkha League and the Communist party of India. The Congress had a moderate following among its members. Among them were Mr. D. B. Pariyal, Mr. Gaga Tshering, Mr. Paras Mani Pradhan, Mr. Dambar Singh Hingman, Mrs Parvati Basnet, Mrs S. Chettrini, Mr. Bir Bahadur, Mrs Maya Devi Chettri, Mrs Putulidevi Poddar, Mrs Helen Ahmed, Mrs D. G. Darnal, Mr. Sarju Poddar, Mrs D. Babuni, Mr. Mangal Singh Prasad, Mr. Punya Prakash, Mr. Naukul Chettri, Mr. Yang Bhutia, Mr. Dawa Norbula, Mr. Madan Thapa, Mrs Usha Chettri, Mr. Prakash Sunam, Mr. Gopal Mothay, Me. Puran Karki, Mr. Narasingh Karki, Mr. Dorjay Tamang, Mrs D. Yonzone, Mr. Theodore Menon, Smt. B. Bahadur, Mr. And Mrs. Panchakothi, Mr. D. B. Ghatraj, Dr. (Mrs) S. Kazi, Mrs S. Sitling, Mrs D. Domala, Mrs. Narmaya Singh, Mrs Paru Rai (Pradhan) and Mrs Mariam Banu.¹⁶

Women members in the Congress party all over India and in Darjeeling expressed their dissatisfaction with the patriarchal attitude of the Congress and the secondary role that was accorded to them. They now wanted to play greater roles in the party functions, as they got involved like the male counterparts, even if their number was small compared to them. They realized just like the African women that they could not wait at the edges of political parties, hoping that some crumbs would fall into their outstretched hands, for which they should be grateful. For them the political platform was to be used to make demands and mobilize energies, to participate in the transformation processes in the post- colonial period, which were the windows of their future.¹⁷ Having participated in the anti- colonial struggle or maybe having associated with the ideals of that struggle these Congress women became candidates for a new and promising identity that of being a citizen of Darjeeling on the same footing with the men. For them joining politics was all about accessing power to secure rights and resources and defending their hard won gains and achievements. The Congress in the hills was active on the question of getting recognition for the Nepali language and demanding a Union Territory status for Darjeeling through speeches, party politics and taking active role in the election campaigns.¹⁸

A powerful wing of the Congress organized by the hill women was the All India Women's Conference established in 1947 at Maya Bose's house in Gandhi Road.

The key members who organized it were Mrs. J. B. Thapa, Mrs Ghatraj, Mrs. S. Sitling, Mrs. Parvati Basnet, Kharkani, Dr.(Mrs.) S. Kazi and Miss Tukku Bose all belonging to the Congress Party. ¹⁹The A. I. W. C. organization was a purely social body dealing with official works concerning charity and social drives. The first office was set up at the Red Cross building and then shifted to the Bhutia Association office at the old Hayden Hall site. Membership increased and a peculiar trend noticeable in the A. I. W. C. was that women of different political background joined the organization and worked as a team for social projects.²⁰

The office records show that the members were Mrs Lakpa Sherpa, Mrs Tendupla Bhutia, Smt. Tshering Sherpa, Mrs Nanda Kumari Singh, and Miss R. Bose, Mrs.L. B. Singh, Mrs D.K. Sinha, Mrs Asha Narwani, Mrs A. Dam, Mrs Darwani, Mrs Narayan Das, Mrs Bhaktasila Bomjan, Mrs L. P. Mrs Sharma Chatlani, Mrs Uma Sagariya, Mrs Gunkasari Pradhan, Mrs Jung, Mrs A. T. Edwards, Mrs Ganga Devi Sevakoti, Mrs Bina Nandani, Mrs Sunita Tamang, Mrs T. Menon, Mrs T. B. Singh, Mrs Hari Maya Thapa, Mrs. Wangdi, Mrs Khanti Chatterjee, Mrs Shoba Khatoon, Mrs Fatima Khatoon, Mrs Zubeda Khatoon, Mrs Radha Mukhia, Mrs Ganga Darnal, Mrs D. Yonzone, Mrs Panchakoti, Mrs Pemba Doma, Mrs Vishnu Maya Pradhan, Mrs R. Nissa Khatoon, Mrs Chandana Mitra, Mrs K. Kushery, Dr. (Mrs) P. Pradhan, Mrs Hira Narwani, Mrs Lobsang Choden, Mrs Durga Devi, Miss L. MacGillivary and Mrs Chitranath.²¹

The large number of women participants in the A. I. W. C. is a pointer to the fact that joining a political party had become quite popular. In this organization the ladies were taught jam making, first aid, rifle training cookery and spoken English. Charity shows were organized to build up the fund for a new office, which was bought during the governorship of Padmaji Naidu at the present site at N. P. road. The organization worked selflessly in helping the poorest of the poor women and children of the hills by holding knitting and tailoring classes, providing crèches for a batch of 20- 30 children aided by two helpers; a primary school and language classes.²²

Independence Day celebration was organized every year with the help of the A. I. W. C. Food was served at the T. B. Sanatorium. Its members formed part of the

Town's Citizen Committee for relief works and also took part in the Project Implementation Committee under Dr. Guha Majumdar of Victoria hospital. Members like Dr. Phulmani Pradhan, Dr. Kazi, Mrs. Prem, Mrs Khanti, Mrs S. Sitling and Mrs. P. Basnet visited rural health centers providing nurses and medicine, new rural centers were set up at Teesta and Pankhabari. Government's help to this organization had been in the nature of providing milk powder and oats for the poor children and sponsoring projects dealing with knitting classes or some educative workshops on the legal rights of women, health and nutrition. Sometimes the A.I.W.C. members of Darjeeling also joined in the seminars conducted by the Women's Co-coordinating Council of West Bengal.²³

Although the Congress was the largest political party in India it was the smallest in the hills of Darjeeling. Here the Communist Party (CPI) was able to organize themselves better than the Congress party. It had a very large membership in the 150 tea gardens of Darjeeling District under the leadership of Ratanlal Brahman.²⁴ The pampering of nationalist feelings in Darjeeling by demanding Gorkhastan was a game of expediency. The CPI leaders were aware of the reality of the ethnic nationalities in India and they knew that the only way to success was the road of ethnicity as language of 'class' was too high flown for the tea garden labourers. The CPI advocated regional autonomy for the ethnic groups in the 1950s and they continued to hold on to this concept even after the CPI and CPI(M) division occurred in the 1960s. It helped them to establish themselves in the hill areas and form a strong cadre.

The CPI(M) was well organized having a District Secretary, Treasurer and Council Secretary and local secretaries in charge of each hill town, having 46 branch committees. The Darjeeling tea gardens were under the Darjeeling District Kaman Mazdoor Union. Female membership was high in the Communist Party. In 1950s, 69% of the total women members were women in the tea belts. The women wing of the Communist Party known as Akhil Bharatiya Maila Samiti functions under its own President, Secretary and Working Committee of 7-11 members.²⁵ Under the Communist Party it was rather a matter of crucial importance that women by claiming for themselves a distinct identity demonstrated their ability to speak out, hold

meetings and carry out the party orders. The Communist Party had by this time bound them sufficiently close to its policies to ensure widespread support in the tea gardens. They struggled to win economic rights for medical, maternity leave and child welfare scheme made them all the more political conscious and they joined the trade union movement in the hills showing leadership qualities. The third largest party in Darjeeling was the All India Gorkha League with a number of women members like Mrs Sarkini Chettri, Mrs Prem, Mrs Ganu Giri, Mrs Kunti, Mrs Bela Tamang, Mrs Pampha Gurung, Mrs Lalita Chettri and Mrs Bhaktasila Bomjan who openly supported party policies. ²⁷ The aim of this political party was to give continuous hope to Nepalese for regional autonomy and recognition of the Nepali language in VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution as one of the national languages.

The year 1948 was a controversial year when the local unit of the Communist Party in Darjeeling advocated the creation of Greater Nepal comprising Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and Dooars but the vast majority of the Gorkha people did not understand this Pan-Gorkha concept or support the demand. In 1949 the Indo- Bhutan Treaty confirmed and ratified the past treaties including the Treaty of Sinchula of 1865 under which Kalimpong and Dooars had been ceded to British India. In the following year the Indo- Nepal Treaty however mentioned the word cancelled with regard to all previous treaties, agreements and engagements between the British Government and the Government of Nepal as noted down in the appendix number XVIII. The implication of this cancellation of earlier treaties including the Treaty of Sugauli amounted to a restoration of the status quo ante and virtually received the original ownership of Nepal over the areas ceded to the British prior to the Indo- Nepal Treaty of 1950. There was a rise in the feeling of a separate identity from Bengal, ethnicity among the majority of the people of Darjeeling, which had germinated during colonial rule itself. As a result in the post- colonial period the political parties in the hills clamoured for a separate identity. The Gorkha League submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister Sri. J. Nehru on the 29th of April 1952 during his visit to Kalimpong that the District should be administered directly by New Delhi as a separate unit together with Dooars and Assam. Similarly demands were made to the State Reorganization Committee when its delegates visited Darjeeling in 1955. The Communist Party of India echoed the same

sentiment and their memorandum declared that the change of 1947 hardly brought any difference in the lives of the Nepalese nationals or the hill people of the District in spheres of political, economic or social. It was just a show or an outer appearance of placing Darjeeling under West Bengal. No alteration was visible but the same old domination of the Nepalese nationals by the people of another nationality. The old suppression of the Nepali language still persisted. "There is a calculated and studied absence of any outlook in India and West Bengal's policy with regard to the Nepali speaking people to help them develop as a nationality so that they could ultimately govern themselves."²⁷

Besides the regional autonomy issues, the demand for a separate state, the question of Nepali language was very important in the post-independence era. Right from the beginning of the post-colonial period the hill people of Darjeeling were demanding Nepali language be accorded the status of an official language in the District. According to Parasmani Pradhan Nepali language was taught as an Indian language at Fort William before 1820. By 1918 Nepali was included in the list of vernacular and Sindhi language languages for the subject of composition in matriculation and B.A. exams. In 1956 when Nepali and Sindhi languages were recommended for inclusion in the VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution only Sindhi language was accepted. Politicians in Darjeeling voiced their dissatisfaction. A leading Congress member of the hills Smt. Maya Devi Chettri representative of the Akhil Bharatiya Mahila Sammelen from Darjeeling, elected from the Municipality in 1948, Governing Member of various schools and Chairperson of the Sandhani Mahila Samiti, twice elected as the M. L. A. as well as the member of the Working Committee of the Congress Party (1954- 1960), gave fiery speeches in support of Nepali bhasa ²⁸ and some of her letters and speeches have been given in appendix number XIX.

When The Prime Minister of India visited Darjeeling in 1961 Maya Devi Chettri led a twenty-three member delegation to place the demand before the government. At her instance Prime Minister Nehru sent a message to Dr. B. C. Roy to include Nepali along with Bengali language as the official language. The declaration of Bengali as the official language in West Bengal on 25th February 1961 sparked off a protest march led

by Shri Ganesh Lal Subba and Shri. Inder Bahadur Rai in support of Nepali bhasa and it was organized by the Bhasa Samiti. A large procession on 31st of March 1961 led by the above personalities including men women and school children, artists, academicians, businessmen, lawyers and others. Some of them were Major J. B. Limbu, Shri. J. B. Pradhan, late T. Gomba, late Buddhiman Moktan, Mr Siddhi Narayan Pradhan, Mrs Chandramit Lepcha, Mrs Lakshmi Lohar, Mr B. K. S. Ghatraj, Mr Punya Prakash Rai, Mr Chandra Kanta Ghissing, Mr Ambar Gurung, Advocate Niladri Sarkar, Mr Amir Lama, Mr Madan. K. Thapa, Mr Hari Prasad Sharma, Mr D. S. Agarwal, Mr T. S. Gurung, Mr Durga Prasad Sharma, Mr Prem Thapa among others.²⁹ On 13th of July 1961 on the occasion of Bhanu Jayanti a hartal was observed. Each political party used the platform of 'bhasa' and 'separate identity' for attracting more supporters. In 1961 by the Language Act, Nepali was declared official language in the three sub- divisions of Darjeeling District. Credit must be given to the leaders of the bhasa movement and both men and women played a joint role in the struggle.³⁰

The years 1962- 1965 were years of war with China and Pakistan. The elections of 1967 brought forward Mrs Maitri Devi of the Congress and the veteran leader Mr Deo Prakash Narayan of the League at the forefront. Once again the demand of giving recognition to the Nepali bhasa and its inclusion in the VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution was made vocal by the Bhasa Sangram Committee of Mr Guman Singh Chamling and Mr Samsher Basnet and the Congress representative Mrs. Maitri Devi. The government remained adamant. By the year 1972 the movement gathered support from the All India Bhasa Samiti and in the same year the Delhi Sahitya Academy gave recognition to Nepali bhasa. The years 1975- 1977 ushered in the period of political Emergency in the country as a result the question of 'bhasa' receded to the background.³¹

The change of government at the centre with the fall of the Congress Party in 1977 had great consequences in the hill politics. The Gorkha League member Mrs Renu Lina Subba from Kalimpong (MLA) together with other MLAs like Mr K. B. Chettri and Mr Deo Prakash Narayan demanded for the recognition of Nepali bhasa in the State Legislative Assembly. In the same year a delegation of the All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti

met the Prime Minister Moraji Desai on the 27th of September 1977 to put forward their petition. The Prime Minister told them that the inclusion of the Nepali language in the VIII schedule would open the doors to forty other tribal languages. The Nepalese should not compare themselves with the Sindhis as they were Indians who had come to India before the country's partition. While the Nepalese had come after the country's partition and had settled in different parts of the country by joining the army. His speech created an uproar in the hills and the people realized that the time had come when the issues of language and race mattered more than party loyalties. The Nepalese of the hills of Darjeeling felt insecure about the fact that their citizenship seemed to be at stake and questioned by the Indian Prime Minister. As a mark of protest Mr Inder Bahadur Rai and Mr Shiv Kumar Rai refused the Academy Puraskar given for their literary achievements.³²

The year 1980 can be termed as a watershed in the history of Darjeeling as the consciousness among the educated men and women for political issues gathered momentum. This period witnessed the entry of the women in political parties and samities with organizational and leadership skill. It was a prelude to events that followed soon changing the face of the silent, peaceful hills. The interest of the natives was aroused by the emergence of two new parties the Gorkha Liberation Front and the Pranta Parishad which ignited the Gorkhaland movement.³³ The movement definitely grew out of the search for identity which can be traced to the formation of the NEBULA during the colonial period.

Another vital aspect in the rise of socio-political awareness was the economic exploitation of West Bengal after 1947. This type of neo-colonialism in the form of exploitation of certain major resources like tea, cinchona, timber and the industry of tourism seemed to benefit the plains leaving a meager amount for the hills. Matters came to a head when the Nepalese were driven out from the North East in three waves subsequently in 1967, 1979 and 1980. As a result and the need of the hour was a suitable leader to help them search for their ethnic and cultural- linguistic identity in the future state of Gorkhaland. The Nepalese leaders voiced their need for a separate rule from Bengal, ethno- development and control of their own resources, economic and

cultural. These issues were widely debated at home and work place as a result both men and women were made aware of the gravity of the situation.

Among the hill political parties it was the GNLF (Gorkha Rashtriya Mukta Morcha) that enjoyed widespread support. It was established on the 5th of April 1980 by an ex-nayak who was an aspiring writer and politician, a member of the Akhil Bharatiya Bhasa Samiti since 1954. The green flag with the emblem of the rising sun symbolized confidence, freedom and defense later to be replaced with the khukuri. The G.N.L.F formulated its action plan in cultural, nationalist terms to secure widest possible participation. It took the form of a) abrogation of the Indo-Nepalese Treaty of 1950, b) Inclusion of the Nepali language in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution and c) a separate state. The GNLF demanded the boundaries of a separate state to run across the Sarkosh river in Assam Dooars, the Gagaliya river in the south, while retaining the old boundaries in the north and west. Fiery and inspiring messages of Shri Subash Ghising aroused political consciousness among the hill people and the green flag fluttered in almost every home.

The tea belts of Darjeeling hills changed colour from red to green in 1980 to 1984 as 50% of the women in the left the Communist Party and joined the GNLF.³⁴ This could be due to the new enthusiasm among the youth who hoped for a drastic change in the political scenario or due to a feeling of apprehension, insecurity among the older generation as a result of identity crisis. Undoubtedly the emotional scar caused by the loss of identity made the hill people react spontaneously. At this juncture it must be also be noted that the tea industry in Darjeeling in the post-independence period became crisis ridden with low productivity, financial bankruptcy and labour problem-leading to disgruntlement among the people. Both the young and old worked shoulder to shoulder in the party organization. A remarkable change seen at this juncture was the involvement of women in very large numbers along with men and this time they enjoyed societal approval. Among them was Mrs Gopi Maya Gurung, Mr B. B. Gurung, Mr C. K. Pradhan, Mr M. Moktan Smt. Hema Lama, Mrs Trilotava Rana, Mrs Mina Mukhia, Mrs Indrakala Pradhan, Mrs Bishnumati Sharma, Mr Churimani Kharka, Mr Keshab Lama, Mrs Ongmu Thapa, Mr Navin Tamang, Mr Benjamine Bhutia, Mr Tshering Sherpa, Mr Dawa Pakhrin, Mrs Durga K. Rai, Mrs Pushpa Subba. Mrs

Saraswati Tamang, Mrs Grija Lama, Mr I. N. Pradhan, Mrs Usha Nimcheki Pradhan, Mrs Ganita Waiba, Mrs Bimla Subba, Mrs Gunkesari Pradhan, and Mrs Usha Pradhan and others.³⁵ It is seen that the formation of the GNLF ushered in a new phase in the women's involvement in politics and sometimes the entire village supported its programme. It may be due to the feeling of frustration and the fear which women have for the unknown brought about by the party activities and the secret passing of speeches of the GNLF. They wanted to unite for a cause. These party members displayed considerable skill and dedication to emerge as the future leaders in society. The political forum gave them a chance to vent out their feelings and very soon both men and women party workers got recognition at all levels in the hill region of Darjeeling.³⁶

The other political parties were smaller in size compared to the GNLF and had less women members. Among them were the Pranta Parishad formed on the 8th of August 1980 led by Mr. Ramkrishna Sharma, Mr. Shyam Madan Thapa, Mr. I.B.Rai, Mr. Madan Tamang, Gajendra Gurung, Prem Thapa and Mr. Prem Thapa. They too demanded a separate state, a solution to the question of citizenship granted on the grounds of permanent residence in the hills before 1950 and stood for the cause of NEBULA in the hills. They asked Nepal, England and the United Nations for clarification and assistance.³⁷ All the parties became vocal in the eve of the Gorkhaland stir in 1981 which was triggered off when two boys were killed by the police dispersing a crowd at Chowkbazar on the 7th of September 1981 who had gathered to listen to political speeches. The two boys Krishna and Devraj Sharma were declared as martyrs for the cause of Gorkhaland. The Pranta Parishad and G.N.L.F. raised political slogans for Gorkhaland and criticized the police action at Mirik and Sukhiapokhri. The Gorkha League was much weakened after the death of its charismatic leader Mr Deoprakash Rai and the infighting within the party and remained aloof in the forthcoming elections. The Pranta Parishad boycotted election and through its mouthpiece 'Andolan' demanded Gorkhaland. The Gorkha League M.L.A. Mrs Renu Lina Subba in a dramatic manner, fired a toy pistol to draw the attention of the Vidhan Sabha of Bengal to the much neglected state of the hills and was asked to leave the State Assembly.

This event caught the headlines of the local newspapers and the Congress showed sympathy and some leaders of political parties even staged a hunger strike until the withdrawal of the suspension notice to Mrs Renu Lina Subba by the government of West Bengal. The death of the Prime Minister of India Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1984 brought a halt to all political activities for a short period of time. Satpal Maharaj revived the language issue by undertaking a procession from Gangtok to Darjeeling where he addressed a mammoth crowd that had gathered there. In 1985 leaving aside all political affiliations leaders including the fiery Mrs Renu Lina Subba (Gorkha League), Mr Ananda Patha (C.P.I.M), Mr. Dawa Norbula (Congress), Mr Shyam Thapa etc. staged a hunger strike at Calcutta demanding the Constitutional recognition of the Nepali bhasa.

The hill people heeded to the clarion call given by the G.N.L.F. leader Mr. Subash Ghising. They rallied behind him in his demand for more employment, halting of all activities associated with the transport of timber and tea to the plains. His speeches on the question of the identity of the Indian Nepalese and the need for the review of the Sugauli treaty that cast a big question on the identity of the people of the hill were acknowledged by most of the hill people. Then he raised the demand of Darjeeling being a 'no-mans' land as it was not formally incorporated constitutionally by the India were accepted by large sections of people who did not understand complicated legal matters. The Treaty of 1950 had not been explained in its correct historical perspective as the statement preceding the word cancelled was omitted as shown in the in appendix number XVIII.

The year 1985 marked a turning point in which the silent, peaceful hill station of Darjeeling suddenly changed its mood and turned violent. The aftermath of 1985 was marked by boycott of the Bhanu Puraska, fire light processions that cumulated in the publicly burning of Clause 5 of the Sugauli Treaty of 1950 between India and Nepal. The indiscriminate firing by the C.R.P.F. at the Mela ground killing bystanders and children gathered peacefully to burn the replicas of the clause led to the eruption of violence. A reign of terror was let loose, indiscriminate arrests in what was termed a 'jharoo raids' picking up even people walking on the roads, C.R.P.F. and police punishments and torture, maiming, loot and rape became the order of the day. Violence led to counter violence, that soon spread throughout the hills taking a violent turn

this led to burning down houses, social boycotts on political party lines and killing of opponents. Young and old, men and women fled their homes for fear of assault. Anyone suspected of being A G.N.L.F. supporter was picked up for questioning and many are reported to have disappeared in police custody like Barun Subba, Ajit Bharati, Kusum Pradhan to name a few.³⁸

It was at this critical juncture that the women members of the G.N.L.F. stepped forward helping the wounded and the homeless. Criticisms by other parties made the G.N.L.F. realize that besides political activities the party had to look into the of social and economic aspects. Thus, the Gorkha National Women's' Organisation (GNWO) was born as a sister organization taking over the task of looking after the wounded and their relatives. A 75-member committee for the three hill sub divisions was set up. It had a Central Committee with two branch secretaries, 2 secretaries, hospital-in-charge and convenors. The Office bearers of the Central Committee comprised of President Mrs Usha Roka, Secretary General Mrs .Indrakala Pradhan, Treasurer Mrs Sarswati Tamang' in addition the District Committee had Mrs Nim Chakey Pradhan and Mrs Meena Mukhia as Presidents of Kurseong and Kalimpong respectively and Mrs Gunkesari Pradhan the Secretary General of Darjeeling. Mrs Lakshami Rai, Mrs Kamal Rai as the secretary- in charge of the sub- divisions. Others like Mrs Gopi Maya Gurung was the Chief Convener of Darjeeling, Mrs Anurupa Lama of Kurseong and MrsLalita Shangden of Peshok.

As the atrocities of the administration became greater on the male members the voracious marches demanding release of innocent people taken into custody. Initially the activities were in the urban areas and the tea belts. The Communist Party (Marxist) tried to counter the growing influence and popularity of the G.N.L.F. which was making inroads into its strongholds in the tea gardens, by setting up its own Women's' Committee under the leadership of Mrs Aila Maya, Mrs Jus Kumari, Mrs Sushila Subba etc. They were to a certain extent successful in stalling the activities of the GNWO.³⁹The GNWO began collecting funds of Rs. 10/- from individuals in the hills, which they utilized in distributing rice and medicine. They secretly enlisted the help of the local doctors like Dr. Thaktar and his wife Dr(Mrs) Pakhrin to treated the wounded.

arrested during the agitation. Great courage were displayed by the hill women.⁴⁰ A letter by a schoolteacher of Kalimpong amply illustrates this courage, 'in Kalimpong no male member could be seen outside the house and those who were lucky had survived and fled. There was none to pick and bury the dead except women and young girls'.⁴¹ As the administration began to transfer the GNLFF activist to the plains of Siliguri the GNWO took upon itself the unpleasant tasks of searching and identifying dead bodies in the morgue or in the control room of the police department to be taken back to their relatives for their last rites. The more oppressive stand the administrative took the more determined the hill women became. Rallies of women headed by leaders like Mrs Gopimaya Gurung, Mrs Hema Lama and Mrs. Nimchaki Pradhan became more and more and more a common sight and they thundered political speeches and undertook the party's propaganda, organizing pickets during strikes thereby paralyzing the entire hills.⁴²

If we examine the mass participation of the women of Darjeeling hills on a wider perspective, it can be taken as a 'quest for their identity' and making their voices heard by the State Government. While a major part of the educated intellectuals fearful of the course the movement remained 'fence sitters' and silent spectators. Though the strikes affected the daily wage earners and working mothers who had to feed their families and under constant fears of the arrest of their male relatives sons, fathers, husbands, brothers at the slightest pretext, the faith of these women remained unshaken. It was a turning point in the lives of many widows as they now became the sole breadwinners for the family and many plain school teachers or rural cultivators became the leaders of local units. The phase of agitation led to dislocation of health services like the immunization drives for children and transport was hardly available to bring the pregnant mothers from the rural areas if an emergency arose especially at night. The social set-up in the hills witnessed a silent transformation as the experience of 'gun culture' and the atrocities on the people embittered the youth and destabilized the personal relation between generations. The adolescent boys and girls became defiant, teachers in local schools had difficulty in maintaining discipline especially during

examinations.

The participation of the hill women in the Gorkhaland movement is comparable to the post colonial women's uprising in the Tebhaga agrarian movement in Bengal. These women showed great awareness by their large-scale participation in demonstrations, rallies, facing police firing with meager household equipments. The economic deprivation, negligence, developing political scenario in neighbouring states fueled by the oppressive stance taken by the Government gave the women little choice but to rally behind the leadership although the political implications of the declaration of 'no-mans land', or the burning of the 'Treaty' could not have been comprehended by the majority of the rural women who turned out in such large numbers.

For the women who took the leading role in the political movement of Gorkhaland it was the culminating point in the growth of women's leadership, the dormancy of which had broken through their participation in the earlier ethnic movement in the post colonial period in search of their identity. The '*andolan*' period starting from 1980 was a precursor of new developments in the role of the hill women. One is astonished by the tremendous initiative that hill women took in the post colonial period phases of direct action as well as in organizational matters of the local bodies. Inclusion of women as party workers recognizing their inherent strength definitely brought about a change in the status of the women in Darjeeling. However, although the women had been recognized as a formidable force, and took frontal activity in the movement, yet very few direct benefit are in the offering for them in the aftermath of the movement. This has led to growing disillusionment and discontent leading to the resignation of several women leaders from their posts.

In conclusion it may be said that although the women's participation in hill politics have been guided more by general interests than by the 'primary concern for women's issues' except perhaps in the tea belts, the concept of a women as a docile silent onlooker during the colonial period has changed. The hill women has made it clear that they can now highlight issues that concerns them by themselves and can organize and take part in decisive roles as exhibited in the search for ethnic-identity and status in

hill society. It is but recently that young educated women aware with latest social and political trends have begun to spearhead a shift towards individualism, amongst a vast majority in rural areas who still finds difficulty to transcend traditional social barriers and conditioning of generations. Nevertheless, the forces working to alter this role of women in the hill society politics, economics and education are already evident.

Thus, the colonial discourse of ignoring the resistance power, thinking voice of the native people⁴³ needs to be reexamined. For if it be true, then the native has no history and cannot speak, the subalterns as females is even more deeply in shadows.⁴⁴ The Post colonial studies on the women of Darjeeling hills must take into account 'rethinking of values and knowledge generated by de-colonization⁴⁵ and the experience of the hill women in this regard to migration, suppression, resistance, differences, race, gender and conditions arising after the historical end of colonization⁴⁶ in the hills. Both native men and women were excluded in the politics of the colonial masters and it remained so for most of the hill women even in the postcolonial period. As a result they have less stake in the ideologies or political positions on which these conflicts thrive. At the same time it is precisely these political upheavals that brings about a dramatic shift in the traditional isolated role of women and their involvement, their relationship to the shifting terms of race, nation, and identity has produced positions from which the hill women can articulate alternative representation of radical thinking. This gradual social transformation is evident from women changing their identity gradually from the 'invisible' force to the 'visible performer' in search of their identity.

5.2. THE HILL ECONOMY AND THE RESPONSE OF WOMEN:

This quest for female identity in the hills, revolving around emancipation, which is equated with the absence of gender discrimination, equal pay and opportunity especially in the tea belts now becomes the subject for discussion. One important question that arises here is whether the postcolonial society in the hills of Darjeeling is still negotiating with the enduring legacies like the failure of tea management and the rise of unionism. The ideology of management itself faces a crisis and the roots of this is firmly embedded in the colonial management of the tea gardens and the

alienation of the workers especially the women who turned hostile. In fact like other movements involving female participation at a large scale for instance the jute mill worker's strikes of 1928 –1929 at Howrah, the Tebhaga or the poor peasant cultivator's uprising of 1946- 47, the Chipko movement of 1972. In Darjeeling too it is seen that when women workers are aroused to take militant actions they are tenacious in the pursuit of their goals. It is much harder to get the women to strike than men but once they are out it is much harder to get them back to normal life. It was their participation in strikes and lockouts in spite of extreme hardship that posed as a daunting task for the government.

Men and women workers in the tea plantations have the same problems but in the case of women they are compounded because they happen to be women. These women are doubly exploited not so much by the men folk as by a male management which takes advantages of their being a women to deprive them of what is legitimately their due whether in Assam or in Darjeeling hills. A study of the hill economy will reveal that the tea industry in West Bengal is an important part of state economy and of the Indian tea industry. While production of tea in West Bengal had increased from 78,158, 000 in 1951, to 129, 188, 000 kg in 1980 the labour force in this agro industry had decreased from 322, 679 in 1952, 266,753 in 1953, 236,674 in 1959 to 213, 000 in 1980.⁴⁷ In other words, while the production increased by 40% and the labour has decreased by about 35%..⁴⁸ Statistics provided by the Tea Board as shown in the table 5.1.below provides the number of employment in different part of West Bengal.

TABLE 5.1. NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN THE TEA GARDENS DURING 1976,1981 AND 1985

AREA	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT FIGURES		
	1976	1981	1985
DARJEELING	47,481	45,640	40,679
TERAI	18,304	18,605	25,185
DOOARS	1,38,192	1,41,770	1,50,375
WEST BENGAL	2,04,750	2,06,833	2,16,239
ALL INDIA	7,35,423	7,61,214	7,77,401

(SOURCE: Tea Board Statistics, 1976-1985).

In spite of inherent legacies a change was bound to come about in the post colonial era regarding the unequal payment between sexes in plantation work. The main reason was the new set of production relations that developed. It was political pressure that forced the government to provide protection and security of employment to the workers. Trade unions began to function among them enabling the workers to fight for their economic rights. Women worker felt stronger by joining the trade union activities of the Communist Party of India. The dearness allowance and ration given to workers in the year 1947 as stated by the official enquiry was as shown in table number XXIII in the appendix.⁵²The Darjeeling Planters Association issued ration at the rate to the workers in their member gardens in 1947 as given below in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2. RATION ISSUED BY THE DARJEELING PLANTERS ASSOCIATION TO THE MEMBER GARDENS IN 1947.

Workers	Rate	Rice /Atta/ Dal	Dal / Mustard
Men /Women	Rs 8 per	3 seer, 8 chtk	
Dependant	"	2 seer, 10 "	
Children	"	1 seer, 5 "	
	Rs 6/9		Per seer
	Rs 50/		Per maund

Source- The Darjeeling Planters Association. 1947.

In 1952 the dearness allowance was increased by 1½ annas for the adults and by 1954 it was raised to 2 annas and 1¾ annas for children.⁵³ Women members of the Darjeeling Chia Kaman Shramik Sangha affiliated to INTUC or the Mahila Samiti affiliated to the CPI(M) demanded equal wage payment, of bonus and gratuity, ration at concessional rates, provision for housing, recreational schooling , fuel and maternity benefits. However, as compared to the terai of West Bengal and Assam the pay was less in the hills of Darjeeling though the tea produced sold a very much higher rate.⁵⁴ The data for the comparative wages for the field and factory workers in Darjeeling hills and the comparison of this region to Assam and Terai has been made in tables number XXIV and XXV in the appendix.

Women earning came closely behind the male worker with 42.17% in the hill gardens as shown by the data given in Table 5.3.a & b.

TABLE 5.3 CONTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS GROUPS TOWARDS EARNING A LIVELIHOOD IN THE TEA GARDENS 1962 (a)

Group	Contribution in Rs	Cash income in comparison	Number of earnings	Cash income per earning
Male	9.96	51.16%	1.07	9.31
Women	8.21	42.16%	0.99	8.29
Adolescence	0.83	4.26%	0.15	5.53
Children	0.47	2.41%	0.12	3.92
Total	19.47	100	2.33	8.36

TABLE 5.3. CONTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS GROUPS TOWARDS EARNING A LIVELIHOOD IN THE TEA GARDENS 1962 (b)

Group	Basic	D.A.	Total
Male	1.05	0.40	1.45
Women	1.00	0.40	1.40
Children	0.50	0.30	0.80

(Source-Survey of the Living Condition of the Tea Plantation in Darjeeling Hills. Tea Board of India. 1962.Calcutta.)

Other than this benefit the trade unions still had to fight for the cause of equal remuneration of the garden workers. The records of the Ging factory shows that in the year 1972 men were paid Rs 2.62 as the basic, women received Rs 2.51 and children got Rs 1.38 and in 1975 it increased to Rs 2.82, Rs 2.72 and Rs 1.48 1/2 respectively.⁵⁵ The unequal wage structure in all tea plantations persisted in West Bengal, Tamilnadu, Assam and Kerala till 1976 as evident from the table (5.3 b) given above. The passing of the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 for plantations was a victory for the trade unionism of the tea garden workers in Darjeeling. The Labour Ministry clarified that Equal Remuneration Act applied to equal nature of work and not to the volume of work. Thus the factory records of Ging tea estate shows that in the year 1978 the basic payment for the men was Rs 5.92, women received Rs 5.81 and children were given Rs 3.04.⁵⁶

Wage payment still differed between the hills and the plains. In 1982 the workers in the Dooars got the following wages- the male workers received Rs 9, the Terai male worker received Rs 14 while the male worker from Darjeeling hills received only Rs 8.62. Women who formed half the labour force were paid Rs 17 paisa less in Dooars and

Terai and 11 paisa less in Darjeeling hills. Workers were also given subsidized ration and fuel as part of their wages and this worked out to Rs 1 per day, as average of Rs 260 in cash per month. But the female worker in the Terai and Darjeeling hills received less.⁵⁷ Therefore a female tea worker's pay was substantially lower than the workers in jute, textile and coal mining industries. The cinchona plantation paid Rs 27.88 to adults, Rs 24.22 to adolescence in 1982-83.⁵⁸ The tea Board Statistics of 1985-86 of the Tea Board India records the employment of 8330 men and 27008 women in the hill region of Darjeeling and the payment given to daily rated adults workers varied between Rs 10.87 to Rs 10.12 per day.⁵⁹

Other than wage payment the management is bound to spend on medical facilities, housing, food concessions, educational and recreational facilities for the workers. They had been lukewarm in their response to the concerns of women welfare. At the dawn of independence the tea gardens of Darjeeling having a large resident population remote from the towns and villages witnessed the absence of any medical statutory regulations. As a result the discharge of these obligations by different employers varied widely and in many cases conditions were not satisfactory according to official visits.⁶⁰ It was pointed out that although the West Bengal; Benefit (Tea Estate) Act of 1949 had fixed the rate at 12 annas a day, the period of benefit was extended to 12 weeks i.e. 6 weeks before confinement and six week after confinement. Although no samples were collected it was observed that neither the period of benefit nor the amount of allowance was rigidly followed in some gardens but left to the discretion of the managers.⁶¹ In 1953 special inspection carried out to investigate into a complaint regarding alleged non-granting of ante-natal maternity claims ascertained that the women worker did not submit the notice of confinement in proper time. In another case the non payment of maternity benefit was justified by the management on the third case was acknowledged by the authorities and the pretext was financial inability to pay the worker.⁶² These cases showed the weak position of women tea pluckers and the apathetic attitude of the management – a reminiscence of the colonial ethos.

Thus the unmistakable imprint of colonialism was evident in the early decades of the twentieth century. Their condition was vulnerable even under the new management.

The following year the party pressure of the trade unions forced the management to establish a maternity clinic at Badamtam tea estate at the cost of Rs 150,000 and a segregated female ward at Mohorgong tea estate at the cost of Rs 75,000.⁶³ New female wards were added to Rydak tea estate and the Good Hope tea estate plus 45 estates provided for pucca crèches near factory premises.⁶⁴

It was only through the labour movements that the women found a platform and the apparent tendency to deprive them of the antenatal period on the plea that the notice in writing or verbal communication not given disappeared to a large extent.⁶⁵ The claims made by women tea workers for the years 1953, 1955, 1956 and 1957 have been displayed in table number XXVI in the appendix. The total amount of maternity benefit paid during the year 1957 was Rs 789,110 against Rs 726,801 in the previous year.⁶⁶ New indoor hospitals were in operation in the tea gardens and provision for ante-natal and post-natal care for women was provided. Hospitals in some gardens provided free food, medicine free of cost. Arrangements were also made to send workers to the nearest local hospital. Mobile crèches were also provided in some cases. With the backing of the trade unions the number of claims entertained in some hill gardens in 1957 were as follows given in table number 5.4

TABLE 5.4 COMPLAINT FROM THE TRADE UNIONS ON BEHALF OF WOMEN WORKERS 1957.

Complains in respect of	Nature of Complaint	Action taken and result
1. Sepoydhara Tea Estate	Non payment of maternity benefit	Investigated and settled.
2. Moondakote Te Estate	Less payment of maternity benefit	"

Government of West Bengal Labour Department- Annual Report of the Administration of the Bengal Maternity Benefit Act, (Tea Estate) 1948, in the Tea Plantations in West Bengal for the year 1957.)

At this juncture it has been pointed out by official sources that it was through collective action of the workers forum that the female tea workers found a platform as a result the apparent tendency to deprive the entitled women the benefits especially in respect of the ante-natal period on the plea that the notice in writing or orally in person was not given, disappeared to a large extent. It had been earlier said that the vast bulk of mortality in the tea gardens was not caused by the lack of simple medical facilities but the result of conditions arising from poor diet, inefficient sanitation, contamination

and insufficient water supply and the general ignorance of the workers. The unbalanced diet of 90/94% cereals deficient in calcium, iron, vitamin A and C and tuberculosis causes ill health and high degree of mortality.⁶⁷ Medical benefits were given by the tea managements in the form of cash.⁶⁸

From 1960 certain incentives were offered to the females for example if they plucked leaves above the fixed sum, the extra pice of Rs 1 per kg was given to them and overtime payment if they worked for more than 8 hours. If they were engaged in factory work like sorting out leaves or in the cleaning of the factory then they were entitled to pay- of- post.⁶⁹ Yet modernization has put an additional burden on women by increasing the number of working hours leaving less time for childcare.⁷⁰

The work of the early trade union movements was carried forward by the G.N.W.O, the women's wing of the GNLFF which formed Sabha and Prasabha committee at different villages and they were the driving force behind the empowerment of women demanding economic rights for the females. The workers were provided with a house kutcha in nature with the G.I sheets planks, tarpaulin sheets during monsoons and off time to repair their houses. Essential items like umbrellas, chappals, doko, firewood and ration was given to the workers.⁷¹ Foodgrains included 1 kg rice per week and 3 kg 700 gms of wheat, coal weighing 4 maunds and 700 gm of tea leaves per year to all workers.⁷² Medicines were not supplied but workers get reimbursement for it if they produce the bills.⁷³

Neglect of women's issues like health and childcare have been highlighted by the women's group and have forced the management in the hill gardens to have crèches although the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 stated that any plantation having 50 women workers or 20 children below six years of age has to provide a crèche with trained attendants. It should be a pucca house with suitable furniture, cradles and a washroom.⁷⁴ Every child should be given 175ml of milk and refreshments. The tea gardens of Darjeeling provide only milk and sometimes sago, puffed rice or biscuits and money equivalent to ½ kg milk for each child.⁷⁵ Part of the factory building served as a crèche and some gardens like Happy Valley even provides for a mobile crèche.⁷⁶ The

provision of a regular supply of milk for the children by the management is important for the working mothers or they will have to leave their work to feed their children and this will hamper their productivity at work. In spite of difficulties of various kinds there is a process of change noticeable in the status of the hill women working in plantations. They are more aware of their economic independence and can voice their grievances to the management.

At present the women workers in the hill plantations are not only daily rated tea pluckers but are also employed as supervisors or Kamjaris in charge of a section of workers. The Makaibari tea gardens had 8 Kamjaris in their pay roll.⁷⁷ They are also employed as nurses, Lady Welfare Officers, crèche attendants, daffadars and head clerks like Mrs. Vishnu Sharma, Mrs Pawita, Mrs Manrupa Gurung, Mrs Bidya Rai, and Miss S. Choudhury. It is a welcoming change to see the young Assistant Manager Miss Laxmi Limbu taking up the management role with great enthusiasm.

It is seen that women workers enjoy equal status with the male counterparts but there is a need for more women to be engaged in the decision making process so that they can control the benefits derived from their work and also see what policies are needed to make the most effective use of new technologies from the point of view of women so as to narrow any gender disparities. Women workers of Darjeeling have been able to identify themselves to some extent in the closing decades of the twentieth century and they have independent income to spend on their families. A notable trend among them is the formation of the Ama Samaj or the Mother's society that allows saving in a group. Each individual in turn can use the money pooled for constructive purpose like buying fowls, piglet or a calf perhaps thus increasing their side income.

Besides plantation works hill women are engaged in increasing numbers in the agro based industry of sericulture, which the Government of India under the Research National Development support scheme encouraged in these areas since 1947. Training and research centers were opened up. Sericulture activities are confined to mulberry cultivation and rearing of silk worms up to the cocoon stage after which it is collected and taken to the centers across the State. In 1983 about 2700 rural people of the

hills had taken up sericulture, 30% belonging to the backward classes. Of the 336 total number of villages under 8 blocks of the hilly region, sericulture is practiced in 104 villages in 7 blocks except Gorubathan. Sericulture is an excellent subsidiary occupation and a family with $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre of mulberry cultivation can easily earn a minimum net profit of Rs 200 a year by putting idle labour apart from doing other domestic work. With very little capital cultivation can be undertaken.⁷⁸

Other than the cultivation of mulberry plants at home the women workers in the sericulture demonstration farms are engaged in various categories. The Bijanbari Sericulture Demonstration Farms registered 23 regularised daily rated female workers in 1976-77, and 10 in 1984-85.⁷⁹ The Deputy Director of Sericulture, Darjeeling reported 8 in the clerical category, like Miss Rita Bhowmik, Mrs Monika Moktan, 4 as field assistant like Mrs Dhan Kumari Singh, 4 as field operative as Mrs Dawamit Lepcha or Miss Sarita Tamang and 7 rearers like Mrs Deoki Bardewa, Mrs Jasodha Thapa and 2 as peon and darwan and 36 regularised daily rated workers.⁸⁰ Women are engaged as technical or administrative officers like Mrs Regina Bhutia a Senior Research Officer at Kalimpong. The work in the farms includes disinfection of the rooms where the egg trays are kept. The silkworms have to be fed at regular intervals and the trays cleaned. It is a cycle of 40 days from the eggs to the cocoon stage. There are no basic problems faced by women in this industry except for the dangers to health while disinfecting the room housing the worms with bleaching powder or formalin and some may suffer from moth allergy during the period of hatching. Otherwise it is a comfortable manner to earn income.⁸¹

Women of the hills participate in many kinds of economic activities other than plantations and sericulture farms. In fact female participation in economic activities highest in the hills compared to the all India figure reflects a low, declining rate. According to the Census of Bengal 1961 the female labour participation in Darjeeling District is much higher than the State average. In the State of West Bengal 94 females per 1000 persons are workers while in Darjeeling District 301 persons per 1000 females are workers. The highest number was recorded in Pulbazar in Darjeeling hills where 48.66% of the total female population were workers. For India women participation in

the economy was 12.13% and 14.44 % during 1971 and 1981 respectively whereas, for the Darjeeling hills it was 35.37% in 1961, 28.64% in 1971 and 22.63% in 1981.⁸²

Majority of women in India, work in the unorganized sector that implies without legal protection, job security, low wages and poor working conditions. In 1971 more than 80% of the women in India were engaged in agriculture, 10.5% in Industries and 9.4 % in services making up 11.86% of the total working women's population compared to 40 % working in Japan.⁸³ A large number of the hill women are engaged in agriculture specially in the rural belts. Agriculture involves the participation of the entire family. The women usually carry out the monotonous work of planting, harvesting, weeding, threshing etc. The percentage of women involved in agriculture in North Bengal District of Districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar is given in table number XXVII in the appendix.

The percentage of female main worker in female population is very high for Darjeeling district in North Bengal in comparison to the national average of 13.99%.⁸⁴ Much larger numbers of main workers are found in Darjeeling hills in the tea belts and Jalpaiguri terai plantations compared to other sub regions of North Bengal. These main workers are the landless female labourers working in the off farm sector.⁸⁵ The percentage of female main and marginal workers in female population is also very high for Darjeeling District that is 26.37% compared to 4.12% of Cooch Behar. The percentage of non-scheduled female workers in non-scheduled female population in rural areas is high in both the hills and the plains of Darjeeling with a figure of 25.26% compared to 2.79% in Cooch Behar and the national average of 13.40% in the year 1981.

The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe female agricultural labourer is higher in Jalpaiguri than Darjeeling, the highest in India being 96.55% in Chandigarh of scheduled caste female agricultural labourer and 100% in Lunglei and Chhimituipui in Mizoram in the year 1981.⁸⁶ Among the Damais (SC) of the hills of Darjeeling 31.3% are workers of which 42.90% males and 19.79% are females of which both sexes constitute 6.51% in the agricultural sector, 12.65% as cultivators according to the census of 1981. Among the hill Bhutias the census of 1981 records 32.82% as workers and 43.60%

as males, 21.58% as females and both sexes constitutes 41.55% of the cultivators, 5.67% as agricultural labourers and other services.⁸⁷

Another major area of study in the hill economy and its impact on women constitutes the uncontrolled rapid urbanization. The decline in employment in the tea gardens resulted in migration of the population to the three urban areas of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong towns from 32253 in 1911 to 82728 in 1971. The population increased from 19003 in 1911 to 33605 in 1951 to 42873 in

1971 in Darjeeling town, Kurseong recorded a growth of 5,574 in 1911 to 11,719 in 1951 to 16425 in 1971. While Kalimpong recorded a growth 7,880 in 1911 to 16,677 in 1951 to 23,430.⁸⁸ The male population increased from 18,414 in 1951 to 22,736 in 1961 and the female population showed an increase from 15,191 in 1951 to 17,915 in 1961 in Darjeeling. Kalimpong showed an increase in the male population from 16,677 in 1951 to 25,103 in 1961 and the female population from 7,469 in 1951 to 11,155 in 1961.

While Kurseong recorded an increase of 6,387 in 1951 to 6,208 and the female population showed an increase of 5,332 in 1951 to 6,208 in 1961. The number of workers among the male in Darjeeling urban centres numbered 12908 and females numbered 2699 in 1981 compared to 20002 males and 950 females in Jalpaiguri urban areas. The number of male non- worker in Darjeeling towns numbered 17792 and females numbered 23458 in 1981 in comparison to Jalpaiguri where the figures stood at 20562 males and 34221 females.⁸⁹ Women in Darjeeling have found employment in both household and non-household sectors, showing a preference for the latter as shown by the data given in table number XXVIII in the appendix.

The census of 1961 states that the women were employed in spinning, weaving, knitting, embroidery, carpet weaving, fruit processing and preservation, block printing, sericulture, candle making, basket weaving, bee keeping, making of hats, boots, coats, bamboo crafts, bristle dressing, dairy, poultry, floriculture and piggery. Some are engaged in the handloom weaving centres as mentioned in table 5.5

TABLE 5.5. HANDLOOM WEAVING CENTRES IN THE DARJEELING HILLS (1967-1968).

NAME OF CENTRE OR UNIT	NUMBER OF LOOMS	PERSONS EMPLOYED
TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF HELP CENTRE, DARJEELING	33	82
BHUTIA ASSOCIATION, DARJEELING	9	10 (TRAINEES)
TRAINING CUM PRODUCTION CENTRE	13	25
LEPCHA CULTURAL WELFARE CENTRE, KALIMPONG	5	12
KALIMPONG ARTS AND CRAFTS INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATION SOCIETY LTD., KALIMPONG	40	29

WEST BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETEER, DARJEELING 1980.P256.

Female workers in the handicraft centers numbered 26 in 1967.⁹⁰ The government has encouraged the mechanization of cottage industries like weaving and knitting. In 1977 the Comprehensive Area Development Corporation of West Bengal introduced new cooperative societies, which was created with the amalgamation of seven smaller societies in the project area of Kalimpong I with 2500 members of marginal, and subsistence farmers. Loans were given to alleviate the plight of women and to tap the considerable handicraft skills and resources. A two-ply knitting unit was established in 1984 with 6V-bed flat knitting machines at Pritam Road to give training and employment to a number of marginalized women hailing from the depressed classes. The finalized garments were sold at government outlets and this enabled women of the hills to earn substantial wages and support their families.⁹¹

Similar credit unions were started by the Hayden Hall of Darjeeling in 1970s and soon its membership of 5000 hill women spread out in Bijanbari, Kalimpong and Darjeeling. Loans are given to them without anyone standing as a guarantor and are utilized by the 'poorest of the poor' for poultry, bee-keeping, piggery, tea stall of selling garments by women. The Hayden Hall credit union of women has a saving deposit of 4 lakhs and all loans have been repaid. The Bikash Kendra Credit Union at Kaijal had 30 members in 1985 and each member was made to deposit Rs2 per day. These credit unions help to empower hill women by giving them a source of income and work. Mention can also be made of the organization providing soft loans to the displaced tea workers of Harsingh village, below Lebong, and thereby helping 67 families to take up dairy farming and floriculture. Hayden Hall has been successful in showing the way to alternative employment to these people facing garden lockout.⁹²

Critics like E. Boserup and Thinker point out that developments or change does not necessarily produce improvements in the status of women, rather it may foster deterioration and women in the traditional societies were better off.⁹³ Women in the informal sector as well as in their household duties have been traditionally assigned the heaviest of work like carrying water, grinding corn, heavy loads to be transported, stone breaking and quarrying. However if any of these operations are mechanized they are automatically taken over by men as women lack the training in the use of the machines. In the hills the work of dyeing, spinning and weaving, hauling of rice, corn, millet grinding, knitting have been taken over by rice mills, power driven looms where male workers are preferred. The plight of women workers in the informal sector in the hills is another cause of concern as they have no organized action. These would include the street vendors, hawkers of fruits and vegetables, coolies and domestic maids, construction workers who are paid Rs 15- 22 and work for more than eight hours a day to feed the family. The number of women in the informal sector numbered 35812 in 1961, 32776 in 1971 and 37416 in 1981 according to census reports.⁹⁴ For them the main aim is survival against starvation of the family and very often a drunkard husband.

On the other hand modernization and development in the post- colonial period have opened up new avenues of employment to women in services in the hills like civil services, banks and insurance companies, educational institutions, land reforms, judiciary, post and telecommunication, tourism, government co-operatives and hospitals. Although women's entry into the services sector is limited nevertheless a new chapter has begun in the advancement of hill women's career. One major problem faced by the youth in Darjeeling is the high level of unemployment as jobs in the service sector outnumber new jobs being created in the ratio of 5:1.⁹⁵ This factor requires proper planning and massive investment in basic infrastructure in the hills.

Rapid urbanization has led to overcrowding, squatter colonies, unstable employment, high cost of living and conditions. Women are tempted to sell liquor in large numbers to supplement family income.⁹⁶ Such are the evils of urbanization, together with the development activities taking place side by side. In view of the given backdrop on the economic developments of Darjeeling women, from colonial to post colonial times, it

can be clearly noted that the economic changes affecting them were limited in scope since 1835 but nonetheless these were processes quite distinct from anything that had gone before. The entry of the hill women into the economic field had a profound effect upon the old family structure and social well being of women.

Employment of women accelerates the process of synchronization for it converts the majority of male roles revolving around financial tasks into joint ones and it alters the autonomous patterns in feminine tasks centring around the household into one which has some degree of joint effort. In the hills of Darjeeling we find the male members sharing the household chores as couples have to work either in the fields, plantations or in urban centres. The agro-based industry of tea has made this adaption easier, the women can expand their interests beyond the home as a result of the sharing process. It is worth mentioning that the modernizing movements introduced by the white settlers in the hills, with regard to women and economy, which were carried on in the post colonial era, need not necessarily challenge patriarchy but may merely reconstitute it to align with the changing economic needs and social structure of the hills. Yet these ideological or behavioural changes cannot be compared with any western movement because in India power and authority remains with the husbands. Although women of the world are inseparable in their experience of subordination or various kinds of race, gender, class and sex domination theorists have argued that in the post- colonial period the concerns of the women of the developing countries are different from those of the western countries. For the modern white women issues that are important today are the right to employment outside their homes, the right to equal payment and the right to control fertility. The same applies for the educated middle class hill women in the urban areas today. But for the 'other' women who are poor, the issues that are uppermost in their minds are the right to have children, rather than to go for family planning⁹⁷ as more hands means more help and this is true regarding the mentality of the majority of the women in Darjeeling.

Summing up it can be said that when examined against the continuation of colonial legacies in the early decades of the post colonial period it is seen very clearly that women's economic issues were relegated to the background by the

management. Whether in the garb of colonialism or neo-colonialism the authorities showed no particular concern for the overall development of the hill women. The selfish capital accumulative nature of the owners took a slightly modified stance since 1955 in order to suit the changing political scenario and the mounting pressure by the trade unions. The granting of maternity benefit, equal remuneration by the authorities became the milestones in the road to progress and the establishment of the hill women's identity. In spite of all problems, Darjeeling witnessed the emergence and crystallization of the local women workers, voicing their concern over economic and political issues that were formally male dominated spheres. As the women workers constituted a very high percentage of the hill population, they presented a vital force in changing the colonial role assigned to them.

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CHAPTER -6

THE WINDS OF CHANGE: EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HILL WOMEN IN THE POST COLONIAL PERIOD.

6.1. INTRODUCTION:

Of all the changes brought about in social, economic, political and cultural life in the post colonial period, one of them is the change in the status of the women of Darjeeling, like other Indian women due to educational opportunities and the opening of various employment avenues for them. It is economic pressure that has forced women to seek employment and supplement the family income and through education both formal and social. Women have gained political, social consciousness and economic independence. Education of women is necessary for the development of the entire community or to have an 'enduring effect on the racial characteristics' of a nation.¹ Education enables women to function as a responsible citizen in a democratic set-up. The post- independence period in India witnessed tremendous expansion in the field of education at almost every level. The Constitution framers, the Education Commission, the Planning Forum, Parliamentary seminars and conferences of various kinds emphasized on the development of education. The Constitution of India under article 29(2) guarantees right to education irrespective of race, caste, or language in any educational institution wholly maintained by the state or aided by the state. Article 15, 15(3), 46 and 29(1) guarantees equality of educational opportunities. Furthermore Article 337, 17 and 31 guarantees protection of educational opportunities to minorities, Anglo-Indians, the untouchables, women and children.

In the post-colonial period in India there emerged two divergent views regarding women's education – on the one hand it was held that education should prepare women for home life, and for parenthood; thus women's education should be different from men's education. It should emphasis on home science. This view was a leftover of the colonial legacy, showing the acceptance of the cultural hegemony of the west. On the other hand it was opined that education should make a woman fit for public like, there should be no difference of sexes with regard to education. After independence the first Commission set up to enquire into education was the University Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishna which made recommendations on

university education for the present and future needs of the country and it also highlighted the importance of women's education. It declared that 'if general education be limited to men or women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then it would surely be passed on to the next generation.' But it did not state that men and women should receive the same type of education. The Commission recommended that women's education should include practical 'laboratory experience,' in the care of the family, a nursery, club for school children, adolescents, home for the sick and old home where the student could act as a hostess. The curriculum should include home economics, nursing, teaching and fine arts. At this juncture the planning was still under the pre-supposed colonial platform of domestic education for the females as separate from the education of the male students. However not everyone jumped into the bandwagon, for a different note was struck by the Secondary Education Commission under Dr. A. Lakshmanswami Mudaliar who remarked, 'At the present stage of our social evolution, there is no special justification to deal with women's education separately. Every type of education open to men should also be open to women.' The Planning Commission set up in March 1950 also fixed certain targets in each of its plan period for meeting the needs of women of different age groups married and unmarried girls, preparing them for a profession.

The National Committee on Women's Education which was set up by the Indian Government on 19th May 1958 under the chairmanship of Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh reported that women's education was backward compared to male education at all levels. It suggested special measures for advancing women's education by special programme for education, educating public opinion, popularizing mixed primary schools, providing free books etc to girls, expansion of secondary education among them, part-time and vocational education, scholarships and financial assistance and the setting up of special machinery at the central and state level to look after their education, the employment of women teachers etc. The Council appointed a Committee on Differentiation of Curriculum between Boys and Girls under Mrs. H. Mehta which reported that in a democratic and socialistic pattern of society visualized by the Constitution framers, education should be related to capacities, aptitudes and interest,

not strictly related to sex. There should be no differentiation of curriculum on the basis of sex.

The recommendations of the various Commissions were bound to have an impact on the education of women at the national level and state level. The hill areas of Darjeeling in West Bengal had seen the growth of educational opportunities under the colonial authorities, missionaries and the native enterprises. The pioneering efforts of these educational agents brought about a significant change in the outlook towards education in the post colonial period. Consciousness among the hill people had been aroused and they wanted education for their children. This trend is noticed in the Quinquennial Review on the process of education in West Bengal for Primary Schools in 1946-47 which shows 6 primary schools under the Municipal Board, 305 aided schools, 11 unaided schools with a total of 10,961 boys and 3317 girls enrolled in them. By 1951-52 there were 8 primary schools under the government, 5 under the Municipal Board, 317 aided and 12 unaided primary schools with 15, 122 boys and 6634 girls enrolled in the whole District. By 1960-61 there were 467 schools with 47913 students and 63 Junior Basic Schools with 6717 students.¹ The census reports of 1961 shows that the number of students attending various primary and junior basic schools in the entire district accounted for nearly 30.95% of the total population in the age group 5 to 14. The male students accounted for 38.89% and the female students 22.67% among male and female population of the district in the age group 5-14 years. There were 1277 primary school teachers of which 925 were male and 352 were female teachers in the district. In comparison the rural areas of Darjeeling hills had 420 primary and Junior Basic Schools and 78 in the urban areas under different management. It evidently shows that 67.85% of rural primary and basic schools of the district existed in the hill region of Darjeeling. The Darjeeling District Gazetteer, 1980, believes that in 1966, 85% of boys and girls of the age group 5-14 age group in the rural areas were attending these schools.²

An examination of the educational developments in the hills with special reference to the education of women can be made in five parts. They are (1) primary education and

the girl child; (2) secondary and higher secondary education; (3) college education; (4) social education and the level of literacy; (5) health education.

6.2.1. PRIMARY EDUCATION:

With regard to primary education prior to 1948 the Indian government had provided for equal educational opportunities in the hills and free education upto class VIII. Separate schools for girls were to be found only in the urban areas while the rest of the region had co-educational schools. Further encouragement was given by the West Bengal Urban Primary Education Act of 1963. Primary education in all municipal towns of West Bengal was made free, universal and compulsory. In the absence of the District School Board, the Darjeeling Municipality obtained governmental sanction to collect Educational cess of 2% to be spent on education.

TABLE 6.1. THANA- WISE DISTRIBUTION OF PRIMARY AND JUNIOR BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE RURAL HILL AREAS OF DARJEELING (1966).

NAME OF POLICE STATION	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS (PRIMARY AND JUNIOR BASIC) 1966				
	SCHOOL BOARD	PRIVATE GOVT. AIDED	PRIVATE GOVT. AIDED JUNIOR BASIC	PRIVATE UNAIDED JUNIOR BASIC	TOTAL
KURSEONG	29	16	7	1	53
JORE BUNGLOW	24	-	3	-	27
MIRIK	13	1	2	-	16
SUKHIA POKHRI	18	1	2	-	21
RUNGLI-RANGLOIT	39	1	7	-	47
PULBAZAT	49	-	6	-	55
DARJEEILING	22	39	3	1	65
KALIMPONG	69	13	25	1	108
GOURUBATHAN	25	1	2	-	28
TOTAL	288	72	57	3	420

SOURCE: BANERJI *et al* (1980) DARJEELING GAZEETEER

By 1966 the District School Board had been well established to implement the scheme of free and compulsory education in almost every ward. In Darjeeling hills there were 360 primary schools and 60 Basic Junior Schools in 1966 which were managed by the

Board or privately managed but aided by the government in the rural areas and 7 primary schools under the Municipality 60 private and government aided and 2 unaided primary schools together with 9 private junior basic schools that were government aided in urban areas.³

TABLE 6.2. THE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS PRIMARY AND JUNIOR BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE URBAN AREAS OF THE DARJEELING HILLS (1966)

MUNICIPAL TOWN	NUMBER OF PRIMARY AND JUNIOR BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE URBAN HILL AREAS OF DARJEELING.					
	MUNICIPAL PRIMARY SCHOOL	PRIVATE GOVT. AIDED	GOVT.SPONSORED FREE PRIMARY SCHOOL	PRIVATE RUN UNAIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL	PRIVATE GOVT. AIDED JUNIOR BASIC	TOTAL
DARJEELING	5	37	-	1	1	44
KURSEONG	2	10	-	1	3	16
KALIMPONG	-	13	-	-	5	18
TOTAL	7	60	-	2	9	78

SOURCE: BANERJI *et al* (1980) DARJEELING GAZETEER.P501

Further progress was seen in primary education from 1967 onwards due to the adoption of the National Policy on Education, which stressed on reduction of wastage and stagnation and the responsibility of the State in accordance to the Constitution to provide for free and compulsory education upto 14 years. The Panchayat system with the Zilla Parishad aimed at providing free education, free stationary, text books, uniforms, mid-day meals under CARE, nutrition programme, scholarships on attendance etc. As a result the number of schools arose and the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat Development and Planning Department reported that the number of primary schools had risen from 585 in 1972 to 732 in 1976. Rs. 60,600 was sanctioned in 1973-74 and 1974-75 for the purchase of school uniforms for the girl students. The state government also assisted by sanctioning Rs. 2 lakhs for the construction of five primary schools and for the infrastructure in the hills. The government sent Nepali textbooks to the District Inspector for distribution to students through the Text- book Distribution Committee with the Zilla Parishad as its chairman. The Hill Development Department gave grants for the construction and repair works. In the 4th Plan period the government allotted 30% for the expansion of education and in the 5th Plan Rs 743 was sanctioned

for the same. A contingency grant of Rs25 was given to all the Municipality and District Board Schools in West Bengal every month.⁴

The 20- Point Programme announced by the Prime Minister to the nation on 14th January 1982 emphasized upon the spread of universal elementary education for the age group of 6- 4 years with special emphasis on the education of the girl child. Another important step for the growth of hill education was the establishment of the Hill Development Council for looking after the problems of education, health, employment and municipal services for the scheduled castes and tribes. Schools were to be set up at different places and those schools that had very less student ratio were to be converted or amalgated.⁵The number of elementary schools expanded in the entire district from 846 in 1974-75 to 852 in 1978- 82 to 1135 in 1984- 85 as recorded by the District Inspector of Schools, Darjeeling. In 1984-85 there were 1003 primary and junior basic schools in the hills of Darjeeling alone.⁶Thus the growth of elementary education showed great progress in the hills from 1947 to 1985. Table 6.3. shows the number of urban Primary schools in the hills of Darjeeling in 1985.

TABLE 6.3. THE DISTRIBUTION OF URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE DARJEELING HILLS (1985).

MANAGEMENTS	NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN URBAN AREAS IN 1985			
	DARJEELING	KALIMPONG	KURSEONG	TOTAL
Municipality	52	1	2	55
Fully Government	-	2	-	2
Government sponsored	-	1	4	5
Government aided	1	15	11	27
TOTAL	53	19	17	89

SOURCE: OFFICE OF DISTRICT INSPECTOR FOR URBAN GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL BRANCH, P499.

By 1984-85 there were 52 schools under the Darjeeling Sadar Municipality and the pupils numbered 9114 and male teachers were 85 and female teachers numbered 170. Only two of these schools that is Ramkrishna Junior Basic and St. Michael's School Junior Basic School Singamari were running classes I to V, the rest were all primary schools with classes from I to IV. The students in these primary schools numbered 50 to 100 and the highest number of 706 students was in Nepali Girls' Primary School.⁷

Some of the primary schools had Balwadis or the pre- primary sections attached to it. Kalimpong Girls' High School enrolled 105 girls at the infant level.⁸ St. Teresa's Girls' High School admitted 115 pupils⁹ and Nepali Girls' High School, Darjeeling enrolled 100 girls at the K. G. level.¹⁰ By 1985 there were four Pre- Basic schools in the hills that were government aided.¹¹ The concept of Balwadis or kindergarten with sections ABC were popular in the tea belts.

An overall view of elementary education shows that the girl child has been encouraged to go to school both in urban and rural areas including the tea gardens. The social background of these children vary and they are the daughters of farmers, labourers, carpenters, tailors, domestic helpers, drivers, army men, government service holders a few teachers and doctors. The school admission records of St. Philomena's Girls' School from 1970-80 indicate that most of the mothers are plain housewives, around 15/20 mothers are cultivators, daily rated workers, domestic helpers, anganwadis, vendors and 2/4 are teachers or business women.¹² The admission records in other schools show similar pattern. It is seen that most of the mothers of the girl child are still illiterate or have elementary education before dropping out of schools for various reason but they want their children to receive education. For even an illiterate mother can bring up highly literate and empowered children who would have dominant economic roles within one generation thus completely changing the family's educational background for development of the hills. In this way social mobility in the urban areas of Darjeeling leads to development and lessens the gender disparities between males and females. There are major problems that act as deterrents for the education of the children for example lack of financial support for maintenance or improvement of buildings. The climatic factor of the hills especially during the monsoon season leads to low attendance of classes. However in spite of drawbacks serious attempts have been made in the post- colonial period to get the girl child educated free of cost with attractive incentives to enhance regular attendance.

6.2.2. SECONDARY AND HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION:

The colonial set up provided for elementary education followed by secondary education that was subdivided into middle school and high school leading to University

examinations. The age group of 11 to 14+ in the middle school is a very formative period in the life of an adolescent as educationist point out. Unfortunately secondary education for girls was not very popular at the beginning of the twentieth century as the Indians tolerated education of girls only upto the age and standard at which 'it can do little good or according to them little harm.'¹³ By and large those girls' secondary schools which did exist were good, almost all of them had a well-qualified headmistress, well staffed trained teachers and did not suffer from overcrowding and achieved reasonable academic standard.

The decades before independence saw the gradual growth of secondary education in British India. There were 1030 girls' middle school with 164,100 students in 1936-37 and the total number of girls under instruction in the middle school for boys and girls was 223,220 in 1936-37. From 1921-22 to 1936-37 the high school increased from 25 to 85 from 1921- 22 to 1936-37 respectively. In Darjeeling district there were 9 English middle schools for boys in 1943-44 and 4 middle English schools for girls in the main towns. In 1944 the number of boys in the middle schools was 1215 and girls numbered 317 of the natives of the hills. By 1947 there were 32 middle English schools with 4234 boys and 1577 girls in the district of Darjeeling. Of the students 733 were Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha girls. By 1951-52 there were 32 middle English schools in the District, one managed by the Municipality and 28 were private government aided and 3 were unaided institutions. The students numbered 4234 boys and 1577 girls.¹⁵

It was not only in the hills but also in the entire country that secondary education needed proper planning. Therefore the Central Advisory Board of Education appointed the Committee on Secondary Education in 1948 under Dr Tara Chand. It recommended a 5-year Junior Basic, 3 year Senior Basic and 4 years of secondary Education. The Secondary Education Commission of 1952-53 and the Education Commission of 1964-65 were in favour of 4/5 years of primary/junior basic education, 3 years of middle, senior basic education and 4 years of secondary education.

Therefore in 1950 the structure of secondary education underwent some basic changes of which the former Middle English schools established in the hills by the missionaries

and British Government were transferred into 4 class Junior High School. These Middle schools had classes V-VI known as 2 class Junior High schools those with classes V to VIII were called 4 class Junior High Schools.

**Table 6.4. JUNIOR SECONDARY INSTITUTION IN DARJEELING DISTRICT
(1960-61 – 1965-66)**

TYPE OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	
	1960-61	1965-1966
NUMBER OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS.	24	19
NUMBER OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.	7	5
TOTAL NUMBER OF BOY STUDENTS	1763	1716
TOTAL NUMBER OF GIRL STUDENTS	773	1162
NUMBER OF SENIOR BASIC SCHOOL FOR BOYS	5	6
TOTAL NUMBER OF BOY STUDENTS	187	256
TOTAL NUMBER OF GIRL STUDENTS	150	120

SOURCE: DARJEELING DISTRICT GAZEETEER 1980.P501

In the hills there were 20 Junior High Schools and 5 Senior Basic Schools during 1965-66 as they opted for the 4-class Junior High Schools in the rural areas specially rather than the Senior Basic schools located in the urban areas. In 1977 the number of Secondary Schools in the hills was 74 and by 1981, 15 more had were given recognition in the hills.¹⁶ For smooth functioning of the secondary education the state government set up a District Level Recognition Committee in each District with the Secondary Education. The Government gave incentives in the form of free books, tuition fees, mid-day meals, uniforms and scholarships as in the Primary Schools. The period 1980-85 was successful in imparting secondary education to 77.80% of the children in the district of Darjeeling.¹⁷

On the basis of the Dey's Committee, the Central government sanctioned grants to the State Government which led to the up gradation of a number of Girls' schools in the hills that included Ghoom Girls' High School (1963), Sri RamKrishna Girls' High School Kurseong (1965), Pranami Mandir Girls' High School, Kalimpong (1966), Sardasweri Girls' High School, Darjeeling (1965), Kalimpong Girls' Higher Secondary School

(1959), St. Teresa's Girls' Higher Secondary School, Darjeeling (1957), Maharani Girls' High School (1957), St. Philomena's Girls' High School, Kalimpong (1957), St. Joseph's Girls' School, Kurseong (1966). Following the pattern advocated by the Kothari Commission the government in 1974 introduced the 10+2+3 pattern of education with the inclusion of Sciences, liberal arts, technical education, commerce, agriculture, craft teaching, seminar, teachers training course etc. The Government introduced both general and vocational subjects to diversify and make secondary education more comprehensive. As the girls' education were found to be lagging behind more emphasis were laid down by the government with special encouragement like scholarships, teacher's training, remuneration, and up gradation of girls' schools and more grants to these schools.

Post independence progress in the Secondary Education show that a number of schools did take the guidelines of the different commissions seriously as can be seen from the school records of Kalimpong Girls' High School that states that Kalimpong Girls' High was grateful to Miss Patricia M. Davidson for the very great contribution she made for drawing up schemes for the teaching of English and showing how to carry out the scheme, for the revival of the House-system. The school roll stood over just 1000 students in 1964. ¹⁸Though much emphasis was being laid down on girls' education at the Secondary stage, it did not meet the expectation that was envisaged. This was very much due to the fact that there were a very large number of drop outs at various levels due to social and economic constraints. The number of drop outs were very high and less than 50 % of the students admitted appeared in the final examination. ¹⁹Random sampling of some schools in the Darjeeling hills is given in table number XXIX in the appendix to show the great problem related to such school drop outs.

Nevertheless, it is seen that the percentage of dropouts is gradually on the decline and moreover, there is steady improvement in over all results of the girls since independence. Most of the school principals are of the opinion that there is a general weakness amongst girls for science subjects specially mathematics and their command over the English language is rather weak which is a handicap for expressing themselves clearly. Special emphasis should be given to develop these subjects and strengthen the

foundations from an early age thus making learning a pleasant process and not a burden for the girl child.²⁰In view of the above developments there is a general feeling that the approach to education reconstruction in the post-independence era is rather a 'piece-meal' in the hills and qualitative improvements in unable to keep pace with quantitative expansion. When viewed on a broader perspective of women development a lopsided development is seen in the number of students admitted and the girls dropouts due to various reasons,

The high percentage of dropouts among the adolescence is a point worth of consideration even in the schools in the tea gardens in 1962. An overall percentage of literacy among a surveyed labour population was 21.43%. Should the age group of 7 to 11 years contain 45 literates then it would be 12.68% of the total number in this age group. Therefore the number of students in this age group was 82 or 23.10% of the total. In the next age group of 12 to 15 year, 31.75% were literates but the low figure of 26.98% shows that a number of students gave up studies even before attaining the age of 15. In the next age group of 16-18 years the percentage of literacy remains the same as in the preceding group i.e. 30.48% but the percentage of students falls still to 13.33%. Among the population aged above 18 the proportion of literates is still higher than in the preceding group of 32.05%. Therefore the literacy among the younger generation is no higher than among those children in the primary stage. The proportion of students among the section of population of school going children aged 7 to 18 years remained as low as 22.2% only. The main reason were due to general apathy among the labourers to send their children as the desire to earn was pressing in 1962.²¹

TABLE 6.5 OVERALL LITERACY RATE AMONG A SURVEYED LABOUR POPULATION 1962.

Age group in years	Total number	No. literates	of	No. of students	% of literates to total in each group	% of students to total in each group
0-6	373	-		5	-	1.34
7-11	355	45		82	12.68	23.10
12-15	126	40		34	31.75	26.98
16-18(M)	45	32		14	30.48	13.33
(F)	60	"		"	"	"
Men above 18	407	243		8	59.71	1.97
Females above 18	426	24		-	5.63	-
Total	1792	384		143	21.43	7.98

(Source Survey of the Living Condition of Tea Plantation Labour in Darjeeling Hills. Tea Board 1962.)

Another general defect noted in the educational structure in Darjeeling is that it is fairly satisfactory at the primary level but not at the secondary level and is felt in the interim areas of Kalimpong I and Kalimpong II, Gorbuthan Block which have a substantial tribal population.²² Although the improvement of education of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes boys and girls in particular have been given a boost by the State Government allocating funds for Block grants as seen in the table XXX (a) in the appendix.

The total allotments received for different educational schemes like tuition fees, books, examination fees, hostel charges and coaching arrangements was Rs 4,32,020 and Rs 6,74,500 for the year 1978-79 and 1980-81 respectively for the Scheduled tribes. While the amount allocated for the scheduled caste students was Rs 1,84,500 and Rs 5,94,000 for the year 1978-79 and 1980-81 in Darjeeling hills.²³ Hostels are provided for the scheduled tribal students but not for the scheduled caste as given in the data below.

² The hostel facilities for schedule tribe students are shown in the Table 6.6.

TABLE 6.6. HOSTEL PROVISIONS FOR THE SCHEDULED TRIBE STUDENTS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT 1980.

Sub-divisions	Boys	Girls	Total
Darjeeling	2	2	4
Kurseong	-	1	1
Kalimpong	-	1	1
Siliguri	1	1	2
Total	3	5	8

(Source- Government of West Bengal 1978-79-80. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department. Darjeeling.)

It is seen that in the post- independence period the Indian Government and its non-official agency has made sincere efforts for large-scale expansion of educational institutions, pupil enrolment of both male and female from school to college and by 1980 the total number of schools were as stated in the Table 6.7.

**TABLE 6.7. NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN THE SUB-DIVISIONS
OF DARJEELING IN 1980-81.**

Sub-division	Primary	Jr.Basic	Jr.High	High School
Darjeeling	178	63	8	21
Kurseong	64	12	7	13
Kaliômpong	125	38	9	16
Siliguri	168	60	11	23
Total	535	173	35	73

(Source-Government of West Bengal. 1978-79-80.Scheduled Caste and Tribes Welfare Department,Darjeeling)

The government was looking after the needs of not only school education but post-matric education as well. Wider scope for higher education was provided with the passing of the West Bengal I Council of Higher Secondary Act in 1975 by which the pattern of education was 10+ 2+ 3 in which the school stage for the students was 10+ 2 but due to the heavy expenses the hill schools opted for classes upto X only and it was the hill colleges which shouldered the burden of the +2 stage, preparing the young women of the hills for the degree course in sciences, commerce and humanities. The plus 2 stage was made free by the State Government and post-matric scholarship was offered to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes students through allocation of grants as shown in the data number XXX (c) given in the appendix.

6.2.3. DEGREE LEVEL EDUCATION FOR THE WOMEN:

Post- secondary education for the hill women began only after Indian independence. The first college in the hills to admit women candidates from 1948 was St. Joseph's College at Singamari run by the Jesuite fathers since 1927. Special permission had to be obtained from Rome for the admission of female students. The First lady candidate in the batch of 1948 was Tenki Tendupla (B.Sc) and she was given great care and importance thus setting a trend to encourage more female participation in college education among the natives of the hills.²⁴ Gradually the college increased the number of pupils both males and females as shown by the college records.

**TABLE 6.8. SHOWING THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED
IN ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE, DARJEELING (1927-1966)**

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS
1927-1928	4
1947-1948	53
1948-1949	45
1952-1953	212
1959-1960	536
1961-1962	362
1962-1963	426
1963-1964	463
1965-1966	526
1966-67	600

SOURCE: FROM THE COLLEGE RECORDS, ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE, DARJEELING

The number of girl students increased from the single student in 1948 to 6 in 1950 in a batch of 39 pupils. They were Miss N. Sinha, Miss S.K.Thapa, Miss R.Leopold, Miss P.Mukhia, Miss C.C. Gurung and Miss. D.Thami all from the hills of Darjeeling.²⁵

In terms of the overall enrollment it is observed that the girls who comprised only 14.14 % of the total strength in 1969 greatly increased and by 1985 they constituted 32.11 % of the total enrollment. Thus, their number rose by 3.87 times in a period of merely 16 years.²⁶ The college had only the Arts department at first including evening classes, the Science department was added in 1951 and the Commerce department in 1964, affiliated to the University of North Bengal. A twenty member staff prepared the students to face the Board exams and the college showed good Pre- university and degree results. In 1966, 39 pupils appeared for the Part III exams and 38 passed with the pupils bagging the first place in B.Sc Chemistry Honours, 2nd class in Economics and 3rd place in the pass course. The college girls Sr. Jacqueline and Sr. Berchmann topped in Chemistry and Physics with 63% and Miss Noreen Dunn got 2nd class 1st in the University results.I.²⁷

St. Joseph's College with its motto of Sursum Corda or 'lift up your hearts' to God intends to bring out the best in every individual. No Jesuit education is complete without the overall development of the personality. The Jesuit college presents academic subjects out of a human centeredness with stress on uncovering and exploring the patterns, relationship, facts, questions, insights, conclusion, problems, solutions and implication which a particular discipline brings to light about what it means to be a human being. Jesuit education as pointed out by Fr Arrupe aims at forming men and women for others or agents for bringing about a community change, to form leaders in service in imitation of Jesus - men and women of competence, conscience and compassionate commitment. Such a goal requires a full and deeper formation of the human person, an educational process of formation that calls for excellence- a striving to excel to achieve one's potential that encompasses the intellectual, the academic and more.²⁸ Thus importance was given to both studies as well as co- curricular activities for overall development like scout camps, relief camps and social work in the surrounding community, village, film festivals, mock Parliament sessions, charity matches at Lebong, retreats, College Day celebrations, talent nights, sports, debating and literary clubs, dramas like the 'Boy Comes Home', Oedipus, Rex and plays in the vernacular languages. The students participated in the various seminars conducted by various personalities like Miss Lucile Alcutt on the 1st of August 1956 and also in NSS activities.²⁹ The College offers library facilities and laboratories. As a result Jesuit education in the college seeks to transform how the youth look at themselves and the society. It tries to bring about a radical transformation in the men and women, help them seek the greater good and enhance the quality of people's lives particularly among the poor, oppressed and neglected. The college is fortunate to have some of its alumni as Mr Padam Chettri and Miss Sumita Rai of the Political Department, Mrs Anuradha Pradhan of the Zoology Department working in the same college. Another worthy example is Mrs Chokila Iyer the Foreign Minister to the Government of India (2003) she is a model to follow for the students.

The other college in Darjeeling hills is Government College on the Hill Cart Road established in 1948 affiliated to the University of Calcutta for intermediate classes in Arts and Sciences for men and women. It was only in 1950 that the college became a

degree college with some Honours subjects. It was affiliated to the University of North Bengal and offers post graduation course in Botany. Loreto College, Southfield, Darjeeling have done tremendous work for the upliftment of the women of the hills, which is the only women's college. It was founded in Darjeeling on the 1st of August 1961 at the insistent request of the Government of West Bengal who wished to have a women's college in the District of Darjeeling. Earlier in the year the Governor of the State Smt. Padmaji Naidu, Dr. B. C. Roy, Chief Minister of Bengal and Dr. D. M. Sen, the Secretary to the Education Minister and Director of Public Instruction at the Governor's House told the Loreto nuns that they would like Loreto College to be the first Women's College in the District, which would be one of the constituent colleges of the new North Bengal University. The property was owned by Maharaja of Darbanga and it was rented to the Government on behalf of Loreto College.³⁰The college was established as a result of the joint venture of the Government of West Bengal and Loreto Convent, Darjeeling Educational Society. In 1961 Mother Claude Malorez (M.A in Geography) headed the college, assisted by Mother John Francis Dooly (M. A in History). The staff consisted of 5 teachers who were permanent and two teachers on temporary basis namely Smt. Normala Dey (M.Ed- Eco, Edu, Psy), Smt. Namit Ghosal (M. A. in English, Shri. B. Narain (M. A. in History, Shri Shivakote (B. A. in Nepali, Sushil Dutt Roy (M. A. In Bengali) , Sushil Sikender Amolia (M. A. in English) and Shri S. Dangaich (M. A. in Eco- Pol).³¹There were 43 girls on the rolls with three from the hills namely Ethel Edwards, Indira Gomba and Shalla Akbar. The college offered Honours in English and History and Pass course in English, History, Education, Geography, Economics and Political Science. The Pre- University course offered Psychology, General and Alternative English, vernacular like Bengali, Hindi and Nepali. The students were asked to join and actively participate in the Debating, Social or Dramatic clubs or in Games. Senior Councillors among the students guided the students. In 1963 the college was fortunate to get Mother Damien O'Donohue as the Principal and she served from 1963 to 2000 thus laying down a solid foundation for the girl's education in the hills.³²Under the meticulous care of the staff the college grew in strength attracting more hill girls as the college register shows in the table below.

TABLE 6.9. TOTAL NUMBER OF THE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN LORETO COLLEGE, DARJEELING (1962-1985)

YEAR	NUMBER OF STUDENTS ADMITTED	
	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF LOCAL STUDENTS
1962	18	3
1964	22	12
1965	31	16
1967	31	18
1968	48	25
1970	56	32
1973	50	40
1975	69	53
1976	94	54
1977	97	58
1980	96	60
1985	120	74

SOURCE: COLLEGE RECORDS LORETO COLLEGE, DARJEELING.

Honours subjects in Education were offered by the college in 1970, Geography by 1975 and at the turn of the century Education and Political Science was offered to the students. To the existing clubs in the college Mother Damien introduced the Literary and the Current Affairs Club plus a Women's Cell. The college gave the hill students an opportunity to bring out the best potentialities in themselves by taking part in inter-college debates and dramas both in English and Indian languages. One Act Plays like *The Women of Troy*, Euripides, *Chitrangada*, *Quality Street*, *Hamro Nach*, *Mayar Khela*, *Upasaghar*, *Abhigyanam Sakuntalam*, *Arms and the Man* etc to name but a few. The inter-college dramas organized by the Orchid, a dramatic club formed by the teachers of the different colleges of the hills was a time of great excitement, stiff competition and fun. The girls of the college took part in debates, elocution in other colleges and at the University bagging the first prize many times. Loreto College distinguished itself too in sports and games in the district.³³

Mother Damien was very concerned about the isolation of the hills and little exposure and got the "outside Voice" to speak in seminars, and arranged film shows for the students and staff. For example the seminar by Mr. L. G. Goddard on the 1st of November 1964 on The Education of Women, Education in the 70s by the USIS in April 1873, The Planning Forum in 1975 and films by the British Council like the Teaching of Literature in 1984 and a workshop on Evaluation held by Sr. S. Maeve for the staff members were examples of the exposure.³⁴

The girls of the college collected the University awards for their outstanding results, For instance in 1975 the University of North Bengal declared Mathamguali 1st in B. A. Pass in 1972, Carmila Bara 1st in B. A. Pass in 1973 and Mridula Subba 1st in History Honours, Emille Das 1st in Education. In 1980 medals for English, Geography, History, Education and Pass Course was bagged by the college. Likewise in the Convocation of 1983 the college students received two medals in English, two in Geography and one each in History and Education. By 1976 the college had a staff of 12 teaching members and the college girls took part in social activities, eye operation camps, cleaning Darjeeling projects and education of the village students as part of the National Social Service Scheme. Loreto College became the pride of the District in women's education by the turn of the century. This is evident from the letter received by the Principal Mother Damien from Professor A. J. Dastur which stated, 'It was a pleasure to meet the staff and see students at serious work in the class rooms. If only half our colleges can bring to their environment the atmosphere, which prevails at Loreto, we would not have to moan over educational prospects.'³⁵ The college is proud to have alumini members like Emile Das, Rinchen Temp, Choten Lama and Zarina Gafour as I.A.S officers and Doma Sherpa, Passang Zimba, Dawa Bhutia and Doga Doma as W.B.C.s officers.

Other than Darjeeling the two subdivisions of Kalimpong and Kurseong have two co-educational colleges affiliated to the University of North Bengal. The Kalimpong College is a Government sponsored college with degree in Arts etc. It was shifted to its present site at the park with new Bio- Science and Commerce departments. In 1967 Kurseong boasted of an Arts and Commerce College with 14 staff members and 161 students on its rolls. The Science department was added in 1985. For the men and women who

are interested in teaching as a vocation the Ramkrishna B.Ed College was founded in Darjeeling in 1957 affiliated to University of North Bengal. The practice teaching for these students is conducted in the nearby government and missionary schools.

There are various problems faced by all the hill colleges mentioned above. The most common problems are the shortage of staff members due to 'ghost posts' kept by the College Service Commission that are rarely filled up in the absence of a scheduled caste or tribe member for a particular reserved post. All hill colleges make do with the temporary staff members in each faculty. Most lecturers from the plains often regard appointment in the hills as a punishment posting and look upon them as a stepping stone to find better appointment in the metropolis. The change of teachers affects the performance of the young students.

Another glaring problem faced by the students especially girls is the lack of sufficient hostel accommodation. Hostels like Heather Lodge, Loreto College Hostel or Bethany hostel are always full. Local authorities feel the need for more colleges and hostels in catchment areas like Mirik, Sonada, Bijanbari or remote areas like Gorbuthan in the year 1985. Both men and women in the hill colleges seem to be facing cultural conflicts between the traditional values and those presented by the mass media, audio visuals due to the rapid urbanization, search for ethnic identity or demand for a particular language. This results in a certain expression of defensiveness, addiction, selfishness or arrogance as during the agitation phase in the hills. The women are rather shy to answer questions in the class let alone ask one in a co-educational set up. Colleges will have to seek constructive ways to deal with these problems through proper counselling and follow up programmes. Parents of these youth worry about the drug abuse; alcoholism and sex as exhibited by the cable network that is a serious threat today.

In view of the above problems that have ensnared the youngsters, what is needed besides technological skills and academic records is the development of skills to understand, make decisions of personal, social, moral, professional, religious nature through value education which is not given so much of emphasis by most colleges. The young men and women will have to be alerted to the intricate network of values that are

often subtly disguised in modern life as in advertising, music or political propaganda. The students should be able to examine them and take decisions and communicate freely with real understanding.

6.2.4. SOCIAL EDUCATION AND LITERACY:

Other than formal education as discussed above there were other forms of informal educational schemes offered by the government for instance the Adult Literacy Programmes, correspondence courses, Indira Gandhi National Open University. Non-formal education Programmes for dropouts in the age groups 6-14 years through part time education by adopting multiple entry made it easier for the students. These programmes were mainly carried out by the adult educational centres night schools, community centres and cultural centres under the social education of the Department of Education. The Darjeeling Gazetteer enlisted 8 adult literacy centres and night schools in the hills of Darjeeling in 1950-1951, which increased to 40 by 1965-1966. The government expenditure was Rs. 17,942 in 1955-56 and the amount remained the same for the year 1965-1966. There were 78 Social Educational Centres in the various blocks in the hills in 1965-66 to which 35 libraries were attached.³⁶

The Social Education Scheme was managed by a Supervisor and Literacy teachers who received a monthly remuneration of Rs. 100 with an annual contingency of Rs. 500. In addition to reading and writing these centers also taught sewing, knitting, and organized debates and cultural programmes. To facilitate the working out of the National Educational Programme in October 1978, the Government divided Darjeeling into 10 blocks with the centres providing functional literacy course for the adults. As a result the teaching programmes were integrated with development activities like agriculture, nutrition, health and hygiene, reading and writing etc. Kalimpong was divided into Kalimpong I and Kalimpong II and the Adult Education Board sponsored by the State worked together with non- government centres to admit adults from 15 years of age. The course was of ten months. These co-educational centers had 8000 candidates in 1980. The medium of instruction was Nepali. The Block Education Officer supplied the textbooks. The aim of the Centres was to awaken social and

political awareness amongst men and women. A Project Officer and an Assistant Project Officer looked after the Adult Literacy project.³⁷

Amongst the non-government agencies the contribution of Hayden Hall stands out in the Darjeeling Hills towards the adult functional Literacy. The Jesuits initiated the programme with 85 adults in Darjeeling in 1978, by 1980 they had 61 centres, which increased to 64 by 1983. They took the help of the village samaj and they involved teachers who had at least passed the school final examinations. While the government gave Rs. 75 per mensem and Rs. 12 as contingency, Hayden Hall itself provided Rs. 25 as allowances. Weekly progress Report was presented to the Project Officer who in turn forwarded it to the District Officer.³⁸

The Rural Functional Literacy Project undertaken in the hills had had 300 centres in Kalimpong and 75 centres in Darjeeling in 1981-82. The government spent Rs. 46.60 lakhs by 1983-84. Targeting the age groups between 15-25 years the Adult Education Programme established 114 centres in the hills in 1985 and spent Rs. 36.63 lakhs on the project.³⁹ It was noticed that the women learners were more responsive and interested than their male counterpart. Literacy was a means to the world of information and communication and a means of application of knowledge acquired to solve day-to-day problems. This in turn was responsible for the upliftment of the status of women and improvement of their well-being. The non-formal education has been well accepted by the general mass of the hills and with the efforts of the governmental and non-governmental agencies it is hoped that the gap between the literates and the neo-literates will further narrow down.

Literacy is defined as an ability to read a letter and write a reply to it. The literacy percentage for the female in Darjeeling District shows a trend of steady growth. It was a mere 7.92% in 1951, which increased to 15.5% in 1961 as shown by the data taken from the Census of 1961, West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling and shown in the appendix number XXXI. The data given in table number XXXII in the appendix highlights the fact that education was more widely disseminated among the

urban than the rural population. 51.72% of the total population of those living in Darjeeling towns were literates

literacy increased from decade to decade. Among the males in the urban area the percentage of literacy was 51.27%. For every 1000 women in the town of Darjeeling, 415 had returned themselves literate in 1961. A decade before their proportion was only 276 for every 1000 females. Therefore the % of literacy of both males and females had increased in the hills. In the rural areas 218 persons were literate for every 1000 in 1961. In 1951 this proportion was only 147 per every 1000 persons. Among the males the literacy had gone up by 24% in 1951 and it was 33.8% in 1961. In 1951 only 4.4% of women living in villages of Darjeeling were literate. After one decade passed by it is seen that this percentage had almost doubled itself.

Among girls of rural areas maximum incidence of literacy was observed in the age group of 4-15. While the male population of all ages showed a steady rise as they advance in years. The explanation of that apparent anomaly was that the education among women being a development of comparative recent times, the number of those who have been noted down as receiving instruction would naturally be greater among the younger generation. A second factor was that the education of girls was rarely continued after they got married. In urban areas the literacy among the womenfolk was more pronounced in the school going age of 5-14 years than in the rural belts in 1961 as per the District Census Handbook, Darjeeling, given in number XXXIII and XXXIV in the appendix. Among the Scheduled tribe women the highest literacy was in the Darjeeling Sadar with 14.6% and Sukhiapokhari with 62% literacy, in the rural regions. The highest number of literacy among the schedule caste women was in Kurseong in both the urban and rural areas. With 11.8 and 1.16% respectively, as indicated by the datas in table number XXXV in the appendix. The literacy rate increased to 3.23% in 1971, and 33.87 % in 1981 as recorded in the District Handbook. And if one draws a comparison of the figures of female literacy in 1981, in different parts amongst the districts of West Bengal reveals that Darjeeling occupied the fifth position with 31.85 % being only lower than that of Calcutta, Howrah, Hoogli and Burdwan. It was the highest in the northern districts of West Bengal. Compared to the all India figures Kottayam of

Kerala stands out as the highest with 79.35%, with the lowest being Kameng in Arunachal Pradesh with 2.88% while the National average stood at 24.82%.⁴⁰ Non-scheduled female literacy in 1981 showed that it was 37.43% for Darjeeling as compared to the highest figure for Kottayam, Kerala and the lowest of 31.14 for Kargil, Jammu and Kashmir with the national average at 29.43%. With respect to the non-scheduled rural women literacy was 27.56% for Darjeeling, being the highest in North Bengal as compared to 80.16% in Kottayam, Kerala and the lowest in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan which was a mere 1.92% with the national average at 21.68%. The figures for the rural scheduled caste female literacy was the highest in Darjeeling for North Bengal at 15.17% compared to 100% at Anntag Badgam in Jammu and Kashmir and the lowest of 0.2% in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan with the national average at 8.45%. Similarly for the female scheduled tribe Darjeeling stands first in North Bengal with 13.68% compared to 100% in Darbhanga, Bihar and lowest of 0.04% in Jalor, Rajasthan and the national average at 6.18%.⁴¹

The male-female difference in literacy amounted to 20.04 for Darjeeling as compared to 20.54 in Cooch Bihar in West Bengal, 39.06% in Chamoli in Uttar Pradesh and a mere 0.25% in Jaiantia hills in Meghalaya with the national average standing at 22.07%.⁴² Thus, in all categories the % in Darjeeling is higher than those of the national average though there is still room for improvement. The scheduled caste and tribe in the hills have made progress in the literacy rates. According to the 1981 census the % of literacy of some of these groups have been given below in Table 6.10.

TABLE 6.10. PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY AMONGST SOME SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN THE HILLS OF DARJEELING 1981.

NAME OF THE SCHEDULED CASTE	PERCENTAGE LITERACY IN THE HILLS		
	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
DAMAI	37.46	48.09	26.74
KAMI	34.64	45.70	23.58
NAME OF THE SCHEDULED CASTE			
BHUTIA	41.62	49.12	33.81
LEPCHAS	41.47		

SOURCE: Hand book on the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes of West Bengal .The Cultural Research Institute .Government of West Bengal. 1990.

It been observed that the highest levels of female literacy rates in Darjeeling hills are found to occur in blocks in which the concentration of scheduled tribe communities remain medium to high.

TABLE 6.11. LITERACY RATES AMONGST MALE AND FEMALE POPULATION IN THE URBAN AND RURAL AREAS OF THE THREE HILL SUB-DIVISIONS OF DARJEELING (1961-1981).

Area	1961			1971			1981		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Darjeeling Sadar									
1) URBAN	44.6	14.5	30.0	45.2	23.1	34.4	55.1	33.9	44.8
2) RURAL	39.1	8.6	24.0	40.9	17.9	29.6	51.1	28.0	39.6
Kurseong									
1) URBAN	45.3	17.0	31.7	45.5	24.7	35.3	56.6	33.8	45.5
2) RURAL	48.3	12.2	41.3	30.8	19.9	29.6	48.6	24.8	37.0
Kalimpong									
1) URBAN	42.9	13.0	28.5	43.4	24.6	34.6	52.2	33.8	43.9
2) RURAL	34.9	8.6	22.6	39.4	19.3	29.9	48.3	27.9	30.4

SOURCE : CENSUS 1961,1971,1981, KEY STATISTICS IN DISTRICT HANDBOOK 1977-78,1985,BUREAU OF APPLIED ECONOMICS.

A steady increase in the literacy rate is observed in the different sub-division of the Darjeeling hills from 1961 to 1981. Although there is a difference in the male and female literacy rates the gap are gradually narrowing in both the urban and the rural belts. In 1961 Kurseong recorded the highest male and female literacy for both the urban and rural belts being 45.3, 48.3 and 17.0 and 12.2 respectively. In 1971 Kurseong with 24.7 and 19.9 % still showed the highest literacy rate amongst the urban and the rural women but the increase is much more marked in case of Kalimpong where the percentage shot up from 13.0 to 24.6 in the urban belt and doubled from 8.6 to 19.3. In 1981 the female literacy rate in all the sub-divisions was between 24.8 % being the lowest in rural Kurseong and 33.9 % the highest in urban Darjeeling. Thus, within a span of 20 years the percentage of women literacy has more or less doubled and nearly trebled in rural Kalimpong.⁴³

Literacy in the hills is far more universal and gender disparities are also correspondingly less than other districts of West Bengal in the north today. There is better coverage of rural schools. It is only through education that changes can be ushered in society as in

the southern districts of Hoogli and Howrah where the level of female literacy was 38.65% and 40.64% in 1981,⁴⁴ The hills will have to increase its literacy further through spread of medical knowledge, health and hygiene reforms, child welfare schemes, mass communication and self-employment generating schemes and also the empowerment of women at the grass root level. The standard of women in Darjeeling hills is high compared to the female literacy in surrounding countries like Nepal where the literacy rate in 1971 stood at 24.7% for males and 3.7% for females and in 1981 it was 34.0% for males and 12.0% for females.⁴⁵ Unlike the hill women of Darjeeling the women of Nepal have to face social prejudice against female education, restriction in mobility of females, low social status accorded to them and low participation in formal education as it is considered a luxury.⁴⁶ Women in Darjeeling have shown to be more receptive to education and literacy rates have doubled from 7.92% in 1951, 15.5% in 1961 to 32.38% in 1981.⁴⁷ There is still more room for improvement in the hill society as some of the sections of women are lagging behind. For example the girls belonging to the Muslim community have a literacy rate of just 2% due to economic constraints.⁴⁸ Another instance is the case of the Denzongpa Bhutias of Darjeeling that have many doctors, lecturers, civil servants like the female Labour Commissioner but the mass lags behind in progress due to backwardness, lack of serious survey and proper identification of the number of school dropouts due to economic factors.⁴⁹ It is only education and dissemination of knowledge that will lead to a change in the identity of all women in the hills. They are in a process of gradual transformation due to the pull and pressure brought about by post-colonial changes, rapid urbanization, the principle of democracy, educational and social legislation and through contact with the outside world due to globalization. Hope for the hill women's brighter future lies in their self-effort strengthened by administrative support and rightful attitude of the society.

It must be mentioned that the level of literacy does have a direct impact on the health consciousness of the people especially women and children. Increasing pressure of housework, childcare and earning a livelihood have its toll on the health and education of the hill women. The daily calorie intake of the low-income group women especially expectant mothers fall below 2500 calories required per day⁵⁰ leading to malnutrition, weight loss and under nourished children even in the post independence era. The

diseases that causes death among the women according to the local hospital records of 1968 to 1985 point out to cases of tuberculosis, bronchial pneumonia, malnutrition causing anemia, toxemia of pregnancy, incomplete abortion, obstetno shock, umbilical fistula or conditions of septic anemia.⁵¹ This has been shown in table number XXXVI in the appendix.

Thus women and children are the main targets of the governmental policies in the hills. The Indian government has recognized the need of having a Primary Health Centre with 10 beds at the headquarters of every Community Block along with 2/3 Subsidiary Health Centres in each Block.⁵² The number of medical centres and staff has been shown in appendix number XXXVII and XXXVIII for the year 1965. Generally speaking the government's first approach towards family planning in Darjeeling District was taken in a clinical manner in the First and Second Five Year Plan, which brought little success in bringing about birth control. The Third Five Year Plan was a comprehensive campaign and by 1968 family planning units came up at Pedong, Gorubathan, Mirik, Takdah, Sukhia pokhari, Bijanbari, Samthar Samalbong, Algarah, Kagay, Lingsay, Gitdubling, Tindharia, Pankhabari.⁵³ In this programme the women of remote regions were made aware of family planning. By 1970 there were 31 family planning centers, 68 by 1974 as shown in the data given in table number XXXIX in the appendix.⁵⁴ Women opting for I.U.D in the year 1984 numbered 200 and in the whole district and 1548 in the year 1985.⁵⁵

The records of Victoria Hospital shows an average of 25-30 females opting for family planning every month.⁵⁶ More emphasis on adult education is needed to keep the rural fertility rate low and make family planning more widely accepted by couples in the northern districts of West Bengal including Darjeeling where the mean marriage age is 16.⁵⁷ The Government has undertaken no large-scale nutritional programme up although the rate of underweight infants under four years of age is rather a disturbing picture in the hills. The Special Nutrition Programme has been sponsored by the department of Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal. This programme was introduced in this District from the year 1970-71.

The following year the Integrated Child Development Service Scheme ICDS formulated in 1972 provided for an integrated package of service for the pre-school children below six years of age like providing midday meal with a protein diet, immunization programme, health check up, referral service, nutrition and health education for the adults and children. The beneficiaries under the programme were fed with local items like milk, bread but with the introduction of the World Food Programme w.e.f 1st June, 1976, the local food was replaced by food articles like bulger (wheat) butter oil and pulses. This programme was extended to the children in the age group of 0-6 years, nursing and expectant mothers. Each beneficiary was served 80 grammes of bulger wheat, 10 grammes of butter oil and 10 grammes of pulses.⁵⁸ At present there are 136 feeding centers with 20950 number of beneficiaries in the tribal belt and the urban slum areas Darjeeling District as shown by the following table.

TABLE 6.12. SUB-DIVISION-WISE NUMBER OF FEEDING CENTERS, 1980

Sub-division	No. Feeding Centers	No. of Beneficiaries
Darjeeling Sadar	45	4450
Kurseong	9	900
Kalimpong	32	5200
Siliguri urban	26	5200
Siliguri tribal belt.	26	5200
Total	136	22,950

(Source- Government of West Bengal 1978-79-80. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department. Darjeeling.)

The Indian Red Cross Society of Darjeeling, Deshbandhu Memorial Society and others look after these programmes. The mothers are given informal classes and made aware of the need for BCG, DPT, vaccination for measles, polio drops and vitamin A as deficiency is wide spread in Bengal, South India among children of poor socio-economic groups, tribal and rural areas leading to blindness.⁵⁹

Besides the government remarkable work has also been done by the non-governmental agencies like Hayden Hall, Darjeeling in their support of women and child care especially the 'very poor' in both urban and rural blocks. Their programme of preventive

health care begins at the time of conception of the hill women who are given a card recording their visits to the centre. The weight is routinely checked, tetanus injections and iron tablets are given free of cost and a diet of vegetables and dal is provided for the very poor and weak. The children born under their care are vaccinated till the age of five and the mothers are educated in childcare. A health team headed by a doctor from the government hospital visits the centre once a week. The establishment also conducts seminars on issues relating to 'Mother and child', T.B. drugs and narcotics to create awareness in society. Barefoot doctors are trained from the villages of Gorba, Purbong and the follow-up work is done by the missionary nurses of Hayden Hall.⁶⁰ Medical books have been translated in Nepali dealing with child care and are distributed in villages when a programme is conducted. In their effort to bring about societal consciousness by holding open-air dramas dealing with health matters including abortion in villages as far as Simbuk, Purbong they have met with success.⁶¹

Similarly health and welfare measures have also been undertaken by the tea garden industry in North Bengal as in Assam to educate and empower women through the formation of the Mother's Club. They are trained on aspects of general health and hygiene, pre and postnatal care, childcare and other family related issues. The Mother's Club members are in turn conducting group meetings in labour lines to educate the women workers. The Welfare Officer of the Estate as well as resource persons drawn from different fields attends the meetings. A Steering Committee on every garden is represented by the management, medical officers as well as the Labour Union and the members of the Mother's Club to guide its activities. These Mother's Clubs have evolved as a force on the Tea Estates with regard to several issues like early marriage and parenthood, adult literacy and alcoholism that is part of the agenda discussed. Family Welfare activities have been institutionalized through Family Welfare Projects and perceptible improvements are visible in the areas of immunization, nutrition and contraception. Tea Management has introduced incentive schemes in line with UNFPA recommendations for birth control measures like spacing, Tubectomy/Vasectomy etc. The Indian Tea Association member Estates are all covered under a Family Welfare Education Project in collaboration with ILO since 1982 and later by a project in collaboration with UNFPA/UNICEF.⁶² The family planning unit

working at the Tukvar tea estate shows an increasing number for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.⁶³ This has been shown in a graph given in appendix number XXXX.

Summing up it is seen that in the post colonial period Darjeeling is struggling to shrug off the colonial mantle. Although societal, economic and political changes are gradual, they are nevertheless evident and gaining ground. These changes concerning the hill women are a response to the educational, economic and health opportunities offered to them. Earlier women issues were interfered with only to give justification for the British dominance. The whole plethora of knowledge concerning gender studies was used to control the natives of the colonies. There existed no dialogue between the actual needs of the native women and the authorities. They generally spoke from a pre-supposed bias platform. By harping on differences in every field the British created a distance between them and the 'other'. Such was the nature of colonial education or the health facilities provided for the natives.

There was no basic change at the dawn of Indian independence for the country as the colonial legacy of marginalizing the women issue continued. Till a spirit of inquiry led to a welcoming change on questions concerning women among the policy framers. This came in the form of equality of educational opportunities and better health facilities. The widespread network of hill education opened the floodgates for the natives. Although the educational development has multiple defects and beset with problems some inherent from colonial times nevertheless it has at least allowed the native women a key hole to the world of knowledge, employment, the knowledge of improving their functional capacity and health thereby raising the status of the family and the society at large. This entry point needs sharpening, refining and carrying forward those skills which would enable them to exercise their rights in governmental affairs and legal measures concerning them today.

Another vital aspect concerning the native women is the health safeguards provided to them by the concerted efforts of the Government to reduce the cases of crib death, provision of all round nutrition to mother and child, holding immunization and family planning drives. Although these efforts are just the tip of the ice-berg as grave

problems still exist due to financial paucity and vertical inaccessibility of the rural belts without medical facilities. These issues can only be solved through widespread education, poverty eradication measures like food for work programmes and employment opportunities to make them all economically independent. Instead of harping on the weakness of the women like the colonist did, it would be more positive if the government focused on their strength and their immediate needs. For the wind of change is blowing in every direction. Hill women are no longer silent reminders of the colonial post. They are no more the 'other or geographically distanced but are gradually being heard. The native women have trudged up the path of societal changes in Darjeeling with the help of education and employment thereby acquiring a new identity for themselves as distinct from any western interpretation. The ushering in of the post-colonial age has urged the women of Darjeeling hills to break with the past.

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CONCLUSION:

The preceding chapters of investigation and analysis have highlighted the fact that Darjeeling hills, a colonial creation had its own post colonial dilemmas and one of them centred around women studies. The research has tried its best to focus on the actual position on the hill women from 1835 to 1985 and the resulting images is no longer elusive or vague but clearly defined like the emerging patterns on a tapestry. Taking the British colonial policy as its backdrop, the work highlights at the very onset that the British created the hill station of Darjeeling, in 1835, as a place of escapism far from the maddening crowd, heat and dust of the Indian plains. As such Darjeeling had no pre-colonial history and was part of Sikkim, inhabited by a few Lepchas and Limbus. With the entry of the British the hill station came to life due to their imperial needs of a sanatorium, as a summer capital and with the introduction of the plantations. The wave of immigrants into Darjeeling consisted of job seekers from surrounding countries and the plains, traders, fugitives and dreamers, some bringing their families with them encouraged by the colonial authorities as they calculated in terms of cheap labour. Darjeeling hills must therefore be examined not only in terms of the British society and political set up but also of the natives as well, both the indigenous and the settlers, who were differentiated as the 'other' or the locals by the Raj.

Generally speaking the word colonial is the term used to designate the period before the colonised culture of a particular colony gained independence. This work has sought to show that during the colonial period, the view of the 'other' i.e. the native hill men and especially women reveals far more about the British colonial interest and policies than the British have recorded or the historians have suggested. It must be said that all natives of the British Empire have undergone similar experience with regard to cheap labour, enforced migration contractual plantation work, colonial health and educational policies to suit the imperialistic interest of the British; however the people of each region, has its own special characteristic as they emerge in their present form, out of the colonial experience

to assert their identity as in the case of Darjeeling hills. This research focuses on the natives of Darjeeling specially the women folk and the interplay of racism, colonialism and nationalism even as the British tried to fix the position of the hill people in their colonial creation. The government first introduced changes taking the people's mind to be a *tabula rasa*. The rulers even decided what constituted the native identity.

For the colonial authorities the Indian women, in general, were always passive objects of reform, as part of the white men's burden and the native women of Darjeeling were no exception to the rule. Despite the scarce, sketchy colonial writings that portray the hill women as silent spectators and docile workers, the study highlights the fact that they were as much influenced as their male counterparts. They reacted in their own way to the economic, medical and educational opportunities offered to them and to the political, social and cultural changes ushered by the colonial rule in the urban matrix and the tea belts in the nineteenth century. The work has stressed on the idea that the participation of the women in the colonial setting was destined to change their self perception and attitude towards society gradually but steadily.

As the British consolidated their rule in the hills, more and more natives came in some form of contact with the colonial rulers. The vertical inaccessibility was broken down with the development of roads and railways, clearance of the forest for more extensive tea plantations that had its deep impact on the hill women. Although they had their own traditional knowledge with respect to home management and childcare, they gained new ideas and experiences while working as domestic hands, shop keepers, traders or tea workers. Their participation in the colonial economy helped them to supplement the family income, which in turn had its impact on the decision-making and the sharing of household chores between the male and female.

Another factor that led to changes in the hill women was education. In the nineteenth century this region was educationally backward, intellectually barren and

socially ignored. There was neither the presence of the individual patronage or public liberality in fostering and encouraging education, nor was there the presence of a socially conscious middle class. In fact, the socio-economic set up of the hills precluded such a growth. The majority of the people here were without education or without any motivation or ambition for acquiring anything beyond the bare necessities of life. That itself explains their little access to liberal education or high cultural life. Gradually the scenario changed with the efforts of the Christian missionaries, the Government and in a limited way the private individuals to bring education to the doors of the ignorant mass. The Government efforts were small compared to that of the missionaries. In fact with full government support the Church of Scotland became the sole agent for spreading elementary education among the people. The mission in spite of the absence of social approval among the natives for female education and other hardships did the pioneering work in it. Although the colonial education was to help with proselytization, which the missionaries made no pretention about, it was also to maintain better discipline in the tea gardens.

The Church of Scotland diversified their activities like compilation of Nepali text and grammer books and as a result the printing press made books available to people hitherto unable to afford them. There were also teachers training schools for the natives. They introduced informal education in the Industrial Lace School at Kalimpong that provided useful vocational training for the hill women. Thus the means to reach the people at grassroot level, if not all, at least a considerable number was secured. As a result the backward hill women were gradually brought within the folds of elementary and technical education that prepared them for a social and economic footing.¹

Along with education, the natives of this favoured retreat were exposed to western medicine and vaccination programmes but these were actually measures to safeguard the health of the authorities. The health facilities for women tea workers was seen to be very limited, as the issues of infant mortality, venereal diseases, maternity benefits or equal payment were of no concern to the colonists who were

only interested in the tea production at the lowest cost. Another instance of colonial discourse affecting the native women was the practise of prostitution for mercenary sex as there was a military cantonment stationed at Darjeeling.

All these factors indicated that the colonial society did not give much importance to the issues regarding the hill women. They generalised all non-white women as the unfree, illiterate women but this colonial construct does not aptly describe the women of Darjeeling – it showed an ignorance of the social variation when the native women had no stereotype role to play. The native image projected by the west was that of dependant and complacent females, living in a separate universe and marginalized by society. The facts gathered however point out to a different conclusion altogether. The hill women were highly valued for their skill, strength and economic contribution. Men and women together formed the work unit at home and in the plantation. These tribal women enjoyed a great deal of power and status unthinkable in western concepts of the east. Yet the visibility of the power enjoyed by the local women was only within the traditional spaces, for the political and administrative spaces were still a bastion of male, colonial privilege.

The work also deals with the intermingling of the various tribes and races from the surrounding regions like the Nepalese, Lepchas, Tibetans and Indians from the plains in the melting pot of Darjeeling. These migrant women carried the picture of their own world with them. The mixture of various worlds in this enclave gave rise to a peculiar society that was identifiable with Darjeeling culture. It is observed that while some adopted foreign customs others intensified their culture. Although their cultural roots gave an unchanging appearance there was the shifting of paradigm with regard to the status of hill women and their position in the family as a result of amalgamation of culture in Darjeeling unlike that which existed in the countries of their birth. The colonial situation resulted in the breaking down of some feudal practise, orthodoxy and the joint family system and their position. Women showed their awareness and responded to the rapid forces of urbanization. The indigenous construct of the local women having great adaptability and social mobility, arose out of their tradition and the colonial experience.

Likewise another peculiar aspect of the hills was its loyalty to the British Raj from its interception to the phase of nationalism in the early twentieth century. They never questioned the British authority as the majority of them were as new, like the British themselves, to this colony. That accounted for the absence of the deep seated resentment which the people in the plains had for the colonial power. Moreover it was the British who provided them new jobs and opportunities that in itself was a lucrative alternative to their original socio-economic surrounding. The British on their part, placed Darjeeling under a separate political arrangement, from the rest of Bengal Province to create the feeling of difference from the Indian masses. Thus in the first memorandum presented by the citizens of Darjeeling to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal they pointed out the regional, racial, cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences with Bengal and how happy they were with the separate arrangement made for the hills by the authorities.² As a result only the echoes of nationalism was seen in the hills and dissatisfaction with the British government was voiced by just a handful of men and women.

In spite of the limited role of nationalism or flash point Gandhian politics a subtle change was seen in the role transformation of some hill women in the urban areas and the mass in the tea gardens. The reason for this drastic change was the colonist policy of putting the burden on the unsuspecting shoulders of the poor natives. The economic grievances served as the fuelling material for the women's participation in the worker's labour movements at a large scale even as the British remained watchful and on guard. It was here that the subversive discourse silent so far gave expression in the violent form of the female workers participating actively in the labour unrest. They set an example to the other women to follow them and very soon we find the hill women participating in politics, local bodies and the idea of collective action and unionism gained ground among them which symbolised the search of identity and the ushering in of a new age. Gradually it was seen that the younger generations born in Darjeeling naturally showed greater attachment for the place and began to question the British motives on the eve of the Indian independence.

This awakening and questioning among the native men and women is attributed to increasing educational activities of the missionaries and also due to the private efforts of the natives to promote education, which began as a reaction to western education for fear of cultural alienation. It was education that was modern in its outlook but had its traditional moorings. Pioneer among them was the Maharani Girls' School established by Hemlata Sarkar in 1908. It did not reach out to the women in the seams of society in a large way at first, but it threw a challenge to western education and paved the way for indigenous efforts to increase the level of urban education in the hills. These schools encouraged *bhadramahila* like qualities of an English educated lady not removed from traditions. Here it should be noted that the impact of education leading to the unfolding of the *bhadramahila* concept as found in the plains did not emerge in the hills, except in a very limited way. It was an altogether different story here due to the absence of the so called middle class intelligentsia of Bengal having social consciousness. Moreover the network of such schools in Calcutta was much larger than in this hill station. Nevertheless these changes in women were not sudden or drastic as modernism and continuity of tradition was well balanced. The nationalist indigenous construct thus emerging was that of educated women, proud of their traditional moorings and aware of the events happening around them. Significant among other changes associated with education was the importance given to the care of mother and child as a result of the dispensaries run by the missionaries in the rural areas in the early twentieth century. Their position was still appalling in the tea gardens as the women workers were denied maternity leave. The high number of tuberculosis cases in the gardens spoke volumes about the existing malnutrition and poverty among them.

It has been argued that the course taken by the hill women on the eve of independence shows that they had begun to be conscious of their identity. The research is part of the Third World writings which tries to show that male domination of women is not the only source of oppression that exists as labelled by the western feminist writers who ignore other factors like ethnicity, race, gender

issues, the work and struggle and the pain and sacrifice involved in the struggle of the natives. Women's decision to join politics or social work in the hills was indeed a significant

step as it slowly gave rise to a women's world and prepared them to work for the other women at grass- root level. The new family pattern demanded an appropriate social order that was not a western model but a gradual construct of the women themselves, the characteristic and identity nurtured by the hill women at large

Therefore the final part of the work dealing with post-colonialism and women studies in Darjeeling deals with the political, linguistic and cultural experience of the hill society gaining freedom in 1947 and the continuity, if any, of the colonial legacy in the field of politics, economy and education. It examines the issues of cultural, ethnic, racial diversity and the power relations within them and that gave birth to a newly articulate individual identity among the natives and the large scale participation of women in the Communist Party, The Congress, The All India Gorkha League and the Gorkha National Liberation Front over issue of Nepali *bhasa*, citizenship and finally the movement for Gorkhaland after which there was the economic achievement of equal pay, maternity benefits etc by the hill women through collective action.

An encouraging aspect with regard to women's education was that more avenues have been offered to the hill women by the Indian government with the widening of educational system up to college level. However it is seen that education lacks financial assistance, proper career planning and counselling and the rate of school dropouts is a problem to be tackled by the planners. Moreover there is the pressing problem of unemployment as the saturation point is seen in the job market for the youth of the hills. If real planning is to be done then the government must heed to the women's voice, their needs and then only will the economy be a participatory one.

The rapid development in the post colonial period, has to a great extent resulted in the breaking down of the colonial traditions by recognizing the political, ethnic rights and economic demands of women. They need to expose themselves to the changing world of today and literacy for the hill women today, is still only in its functional role which needs to be improved even further to enable them to exercise their rights and assert their identity, thus accelerating the winds of change blowing at all quarters of the hill society today. To sum up it is seen that the women situation in Darjeeling has undergone multiple phases of colonial, national and post-colonial construct and they have reacted in a non typical way as expressed in the indigenous national construct thus bringing about a changing identity to keep up with the times.

REFERENCE

- 1.Chakraborty.C, *Development of Education in Selected District of West Bengal With Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century*, Unpublished thesis of North Bengal University, 1988, p. 551
2. .Dasgupta M, *Gorkhaland Agitation in Darjeeling : Some political and Economic Dynamism*, In a special lecture at the IX Seminar conducted by the Centre of Himalayan Studies. Univ. of North Bengal. p 4

APPENDIX

TABLE I. NUMBER OF VACCINATION PERFORMED DURING 1873-74 & 1874-75.

Region	Total number vaccinated		Difference 1873-74	
	1874-75	1873-74	Increase	Decrease
Calcutta & Suburbs	41,300	38,796	2,504	—
Metropolis & suburbs	102,385	306,676	95,709	—
Darjeeling Circle	120,669	97,757	22,912	—
Ranchi	27,343	37,411	—	10,068
Sonthal Pergunnahs	22,867	15,039	7,828	—
Eastern Bengal	110,950	78,491	32,459	—
Dispensary Vaccination	234,159	217,4678	16,695	—
Total	959,673	791,634	178,107	10,068
Net increase	168,039			

(Source- Vaccination in the Province of Bengal for the Year ending 31st March 1875 by J. Fullarton Beatson, Esq, M.D. Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department.)

TABLE II. PERCENTAGE OF MALE AND FEMALE VACCINATED DURING 1873-74 & 1874-75

Region	1874-75		1873-74	
	male	Female	Male	Female
Calcutta & Suburbs	54.1	45.9	54.7	45.3
Metropolis & suburbs	52.2	47.8	53.4	46.6
Darjeeling Circle	54.5	45.5	53.6	46.4
Ranchi	53.4	46.6	53.4	46.6
Sonthal Pergunnahs	49.5	50.5	51.2	48.8
Eastern Bengal	50.9	49.1	51.4	48.6
Dispensary Vaccination	58.79	41.24	57.7	42.3

(Source- Vaccination in the Province of Bengal for the Year ending 31st March 1875 by J. Fullarton Beatson, Esq, M.D. Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department.)

TABLE III. ANNUAL STATEMENT NO. 1 OF LOCK HOSPITAL AT DARJEELING FOR THE YEAR 1874.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT	DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCK HOSPITAL	ACTS UNDER WHICH THE RULES ARE ENFORCED	ESTIMATED NATIVE POPULATION WITHIN THE AREA	DETAILS OF MONTHLY PAY	CLASS	REMARKS
BENGAL	1 ST NOV 1866 CLOSED ON 3 RD AUG. 1871, AND REOPENED ON 1 ST AUG. 1872	WEST AND SOUTH VICTORIA ROAD, ROSE BANK ROAD, CART ROAD AS FAR AS THE TADDLE. EAST AND WEST JULLAPAHAR ROAD FROM THE TADDLE CALCUTA ROAD AND THE BIRCH HILL ROAD AS FAR AS ITS JUNCTION WITH THE VICTORIA ROAD AT NORTH GATE. AREA IN SQ. MILE 1.97	2949	R. MEDICAL OFFICER 20 NATIVE DOCTOR 5 COOK 5 BHEESTEE 3 SWEEPER 3	3 RD	SOME TIME AGO THE LOCK HOSPITAL WAS TAKEN OUT OF THE CIVIL SURGEON'S HANDS, MAD OVER TO THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES AND PLACED IN CHARGE OF AN APOTHEARY ATTACHED TO JULLAPAHAR DEPARTMENT.

SOURCE: GENERAL P.V. JULY 1875 NO. 217 PROCEEDINGS OF THE LT. GOVERNOR OF BENGAL DURING 1875- GENERAL DEPARTMENT- MEDICAL BRANCH PG. 36

TABLE IV. ANNUAL STATEMENT No. 2 OF LOCK HOSPITAL AT DARJEELING FOR 1874

NO. OF REGISTERED PROSTITUTES	AVERAGE NUMBER ON REGISTER EACH MONTH	AVERAGE ATTENDANCE FOR EXAMINATION	NUMBER REPORTED TO DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR NON-ATTENDANC	NUMBER FOUND DISEASED	DISEASE
NO. REMAINING ON REGISTER AT THE END OF LAST YEAR = 6	January 7 February 6 March 6 April 6 May 7 June 8 July 12 August 15 September 17 October 17 November 18 December 19	7 6 6 6 7 8 12 15 15 17 17 19	- - - 1 - - - - - 1 2 5 10	1 - 1 - - - 2 4 5 1 2 7 23	GONORRHOEA SYPHILIS
TOTAL : 22	TOTAL 138	136			

SOURCE: GENERAL P.V. JULY 1875 NO. 217 PROCEEDINGS OF THE LT. GOVERNOR OF BENGAL DURING 1875- GENERAL DEPARTMENT- MEDICAL BRANCH PG. 36

TABLE V. ANNUAL STATEMENT NO. 3 OF THE LOCK HOSPITAL AT DARJEELING FOR THE YEAR 1874 -- RECORD OF DISEASES

DISEASE	REMAINED	ADMITTED	TOTAL	CURED	ABSENT	DIED	REMAINING	TOTAL	Avg. HOSPITAL
GONORRHOEA AND SYPHILIS	Jan.	8	-	8	-	-	-	-	16
	Feb.	15	15	11	-	-	4	-	-
	Mar.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
	Apr.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	May	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Jun.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Jul.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.7
	Aug.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.6
	Sep.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.1
	Oct.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Nov.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
	Dec.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3
TOTAL	-	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	16

SOURCE: GENERAL P.V. JULY 1875 NO. 217 PROCEEDINGS OF THE LT. GOVERNOR OF BENGAL DURING 1875- GENERAL DEPARTMENT- MEDICAL BRANCH PG. 36

TABLE VI. STATEMENT ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE STATE OF TEA CULTIVATION IN THE DISTRICT OF DARJEELING AND JALPAIGURI 1895 AND 1899.

Number of gardens	186	212	170	297
Number of permanent workers	33457	No permanent coolies	21,049	43,905
Average daily/number temporarily employed	8,529	39,145	17,127	26,566
Under mature plants	44,554	38,995	46,727	56,283
Under immature plants	4,318	8,672	3,946	17,484
Total area under cultivation	48,692	47,667	50,673	73,767
Taken up for planting yet not planted	16,259	68,328	33,774	165,39
Quantity in lbs of uncured leaf in each garden	31,366,634	79,720,130	52,138,429	109,380,950
Quantity in lbs of leaf manufactured	26,729,742	20,442,149	13,112,172	30,156,645

Source (1) Proceedings of the Lt. Governor of Bengal Revenue P.V. Sept 1896 No 523 No 4-5 File 1-T/1 6 No 123 Mct. No 329 G dated Darjeeling the 16th May 1896. From R.T. Greer Esq, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling to the Commissioner of the Rajshashi Division. Report for the year 1895.

(2) Proceedings of the Lt. Governor of Bengal Revenue P.V. August 1900 No 583 no 335 Mct. No 398 G dated Jalpaiguri the 12th May 1900. From H.T.S. Forrest, Esq, Deputy Commissioner, Jalgaiguri to the Commissioner of the Rajshashi Division. Report for the year 1899.

TABLE VII. INCREASE OF POPULATION IN THE PERCENTAGE OF MALES AND FEMALES IN THE DARJEELING DISTRICT.

Year	Persons	Male	Females
1901	6.56	11.13	1.33
1911	9.43	16.07	1.81
1921	10.51	18.04	2.12
1931	10.34	17.50	2.21

(Source Census of West Bengal 1961.Pg 52.)

TABLE VIII. NUMBER OF FEMALES PER 1000 MALES IN DARJEELING DISTRICT.

Year	Total	Rural	Urban
1901	876	894	690
1911	871	893	665
1921	898	912	677
1931	881	906	728
1941	884	912	736
1951	863	903	721
1961	10.34	17.50	2.21

(Source Census of West Bengal 1961.Pg 50)

**TABLE IX. FILE REPORT OF THE AKHIL BHARATIYA GORKHA LEAGUE
SHOWING THE MEMBERS IN 1943.**

LEAGUE MEMBERS FORM DARJEELING:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Rai Saheb H.P.Pradhan | 7. Mr. J. Wangdi | 13. Mr Rup Narayan Singh |
| 2. Rai Saheb C. Tendupha | 8. Mr. Barghavar Gurung | 14. Mr. Dhanu Sardar |
| 3. Mr. R.N.Sinha | 9. Mr. Bharat Singh Ghataraj | 15. Mr. Bridhman Lama |
| 4. Mr. J.B.Thapa | 10.Mr.Balbahadur Chettri | 16. Mr. Hasta Lal Giri |
| 5. Mr.Padam Prasad Pradhan | 11.Mr. Bar Bahadur Singh | 17. Mr. Mahardhawaj |
| 6. Dr. Yen Singh | 12. Mr. Nandal Thing | |

LEAGUE MEMBER FROM SUKHIA POKHRI:

1. Mr. Santabir Lama

LEAGUE MEMBERS FROM KALIMPONG:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Raja S.T.Dorji | 8. Mr. Krishna Bhadur Pradhan | 15. Mr. Mani Kumar Chettri |
| 2. Rai Bahadur Dondhup | 9. Mr. Dhurva Tara Thapa | 16. Mr. Harka Bahadur Lama |
| 3. Mr. R.D.Subba | 10. Mr. Mani Narayan Pradhan | 17. Mr. Nar Prasad Kumar |
| 4. Mr. T.N.Pradhan | 11. Mr. Tika Mani Pradhan | 18. Mr. Gyan Tshering Sitling |
| 5. Mr. A.B.Gurung (Bar-at-law) | 12. Mr. Randhir Subba | 19. Mr. Dambar Singh Gurung |
| 6. Mr. T.N.Pradhan | 13. Mr. Aribahadur Gurung | |
| 7. Mr. A. Foning | 14. Capt. Kamavir Zimba | |

LEAGUE MEMBERS FROM KURSEONG:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Sardar Bahadur H. Rai | 8. Sardar Bahadur Hanjit D.Rai | 15. Mr. Kumar Bahadur Gurung |
| 2. Capt. Kaziman Lama | 9. Sardar Bahadur Rai | 16. Mr. Malikchand Pradhan |
| 3. Mr. N.N.Prachan | 10. Bahadur Nirmal Rai | 17. Mr. Pumanaryan Pradhan |
| 4. Mr. D.B.Lama | 11. Mr. Mangal Narayan Pradhan | 18. Mr. Mangal Singh Lama |
| 5. Mr. S.K.Rai | 12. Mr. Harsha Singh Subba | 19. Subedar Puma Dhvaj Limbu |
| 6. Mr. D.B.Chettri | 13. Mr. Siv Kumar Rai | |
| 7. Dr Indraman Rai | 14. Mr. Dil Bahadur Chettri | |

(Source from the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League office in Darjeeling)

**TABLE X. DEARNESS ALLOWANCE IN DARJEELING HILLS,
DOOARS AND THE TERAI 1947.**

Dearness allowance Darjeeling	Rs	As	P	
Men	0	8	0	Per hazira of 6 hours
Women	0	7	0	
Children	0	2	6	
Dooars				Per hazira of 4 hours
Men	0	6	0	
Women	0	5	0	
Children	0	3	0	
Terai				
Men	0	6	0	Per hazira of 4 hours
Women	0	5	0	
Children	0	3	0	

(Source Labour Bureau Ministry of Labour, Government of India- Report on an enquiry into the cost and standard of living of plantation workers in Assam and Bengal. S. R. Deshpande, Director, Labour Bureau. 1947.)

**TABLE XL(a) EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF THE LABOURERS
IN TEA AND OTHER PLANTATIONS.**

1. Names of gardens in which schools have been started.

- | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|------------|--------------|
| 1. Goomti | 3. Kyle | 5. Dilaram | 7. Singtam | 9. Sidrabong |
| 2. Pussumbing | 4. Maribong | 6. Sipoydhura | 8. Poobong | |

2. Names of gardens that promised contribution but which have not started schools:

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. Tiger Hill | 3. Patimbari | 5. Tongsong | 7. Dooteriah |
| 2. Moharganj | 4. Marianbari | 6. Simripani | 8. Amalgated Tea Co. |

3. Names of gardens which are benefited by schools in the neighbourhood:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| 1. Phoobsering | 2. Goomba |
|----------------|-----------|

4. Names of gardens which have declined to pay any contribution towards school:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Gayabari | 3. Malootar | 5. Marma |
| 2. Atal salbari | 4. Lizzipore | 6. New Balason |

5. Names of gardens that promised to contribute site for construction of schools only:

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. Simalbari | 3. Kolhong | 5. Lahagar |
| 2. New Chunta | 4. Gangarami | 6. Deomani |

6. Names of gardens from which no reply was not received:

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|--------|
| Old Terai | 1. Rungmook | 2. Patargumia | Toonah |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|--------|

Total number of Gardens:	83
Gardens with schools:	16
Garden without schools :	69
Gardens without schools but boys attending adjacent schools :	32
Gardens without child labourers:	03
Action to be taken against	34

(Source Extended Volume , Proceedings of the Hon. Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. August 1910. General Department. Education. No 24-28 File 1-E 1 No 360 T dated Darjeeling 30th June 1910. Report by the Deputy Commissioner to the Government.)

**TABLE XI.(b). GRANTS SACNTIONED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE SOME
OF THE TEA GARDEN SCHOOLS 1910.**

Name	Lower/Primary/Night School	Amount of Grant
Sidrapong	Lower Primary School	Rs 12 a month
Kyel	Lower Primary School	-do-
Poosombing	Lower Primary School	-do-
Sepoydhara	Lower Primary School	-do-
Singtam	Lower Primary School	-do-
Seeyok	Lower Primary School	-do-
Goonti	Primary School	-do-
Mariambari	Primary School	-do-
Patinbari	Primary Night School	-do-
Moharjang	Primary Night School	-do-
Budhiman	Lower Primary Night School	-do-
Simulbari	Lower Primary Night School	Rs 8 a month
Murma	Lower Primary Night School	-do-
		Rs 12 a month

((Source Extended Volume , Proceedings of the Hon. Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. August 1910. General Department Education. No 24-28 File 1-E 1 No 360 T dated Darjeeling 30th June 1910. Report by the Deputy Commissioner to the Government.)

**TABLE XII. NUMBER OF PUPILS IN KALIMPONG LACE SCHOOL
AND ITS BRANCHES (1907-08)**

Name of the Institute	1907	1908	1909
Central School	90	88	76
Lolay	10	24	48
Chibbo	8	8	14
Sitong	8	10	14
Sindipong	6	11	14
Algarah	-	6	13
Bhalukhop	-	-	8
Ringkingpong	-	-	6
Vok	-	6	3
Phambong	-	6	6

(Source- Extended Volume, Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Feb 1910- General Department, Education. Proceedings 32-41; File 3-S. From G. W. Kuchler Esq, M.A. Director of Public Instruction, Bengal. To The Secretary of the Government of Bengal, General Department.)

TABLE XIII. SCHOLARSHIPS FOR PUPILS BY MISSIONS AND DISTRICT BOARDS FOR TRAINING IN 1907-08.

Mission/Dist. Board	Number of pupils 1907	1908	1909
1. Dublin Universities Mission, Ranchi	2	-	-
2. Dublin Universities Mission Hazaribagh	2	-	-
3. Methodist Episcopal, Pakur	2	-	-
5. Methodist Episcopal Muzaffarpur	2	-	-
6. Church Missionary Society, Nadia	1	-	-
7. U.F.C. Pokhuria	2	-	-
8. Baptist Mission Jessore	2	-	-
9. Baptist Mission Jessore	2	2	-
10. Dist. Board, Balasore	-	1	-
11. Baptist Mission, Calcutta	-	2	-
12. Baptist Mission Calcutta	-	1	-
13. Welsh Mission, Shillong	-	3	-
14. Welsh Mission, Silchar	-	1	-
15. Sikkim	-	3	1
Total	15	13	1

(Source- Extended Volume, Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Feb 1910- General Department, Education. Proceedings 32-41; File 3-S. From G. W. Kuchler Esq, M.A. Director of Public Instruction, Bengal. To The Secretary of the Government of Bengal, General Department.)Scholarship for pupils by Missions and District Boards for training in 1907-09.

TABLE XIV. STATEMENT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT DURING 1907 to 1909 AND ITS CHARGES.

(A) Designation	1907	1908	1909
Members occupied full-time, monthly salary and cost of maintenance	Rs AP	Rs AP	Rs Ap
Scott In-Charge of the Hostel			
1. Miss Channer	1850.00	1800.00	2040.00
2. Hony- Mary.H.	-	440.00	1800.00
3. Miss Gladys Korb, Assistant	-	440.00	720.00
4. Mr. Cuthbert Archibald [designer.]	-	-	1760.00
5. Miss Winifred Korb [Office]	-	60.00	240.00
6. Native Teacher	283.40	420.00	360.00
7. Clerk and servants	69.40	420.00	360.00
TOTAL	2202.80	2197.66	7280.00
(B) Part-time members			
1. Mrs. Crawford Deaconess for literacy learning	600.00	600.00	600.00
2. Native Teacher for literacy learning	-	-	120.00
3. Mrs. Graham, General Superintendent	11200.00	11200.00	11200.00
	*	*	*

(Source- Extended Volume, Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Feb 1910- General Department, Education. Proceedings 32-41; File 3-S. From G. W. Kuchler Esq, M.A. Director of Public Instruction, Bengal. To The Secretary of the Government of Bengal, General Department.)Scholarship for pupils by Missions and District Boards for training in 1907-08

TABLE XV. STATEMENT SHOWING THE ANNUAL INCOME OF THE HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES OF DARJEELING IN 1939.

Gen. Dispensaries	Darjeeling Victoria Hospital	Kurseong Hospital	Ghoom, Martin's Charitable Dispensary.	Darjeeling. T.B. Hospital	Pedong	Kalimpong Mission Charteris Hospital	Eden Sanitarium	Gourbathan	Mirik
Class	III	III	III	III	III	IV	IV	—	—
Year 1939							No separate account	-	-
Cash Balance	6,789	2,637	-	-	39	2,962		40	27
Govt. Aid	3,599	175	-	-	76	9,509		47	22
Local Municipality	20,750	8,075	1,436	9,359	6,360	1,807		1,732	1,620
Patient's fees	2,116	270	-	-	120	5,576		-	-
Donations and charity	778	1,316	-	598	200	591		-	154
Investments & securities	5,066	-	-	-	-	32,136		-	-
Total receipt	39,098	12,474	1,436	9,957	6,795	52,581		1,819	1,823

(Source Annual Report on the Working of the Hospitals and Dispensaries in Bengal. For the year 1936. Major-General P.S. Mills. C.I.E. M.B; BS, D.T.M. and H. M.R. CS, KHP, IMS, Surgeon General with the Government of Bengal. From the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling. No 10, Section 11 XVI.)

TABLE XVI. ANNUAL STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE INCURRED IN THE HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES OF DARJEELING, 1939.

Gen. Dispensaries	Darjeeling Victoria Hospital	Kurseong Hospital	Ghoom, Martin's Charitable Dispensary.	Darjeeling. T.B. Hospital	Pedong	Kalimpong Mission Charteris Hospital	Eden Sanitarium	Gourbathan	Mirik
Class	III	III	III	III	III	IV	IV	—	—
Year 1939							No separate account	-	-
Medical Officers	2159	1692	624	1395	1800	8300		617	634
Nurses	6921	1285	-	1283	391	11,175		-	-
Staff	5723	3324	180	1,439	1,363	4,227		142	144
Medicine	5,018	904	400	350	608	2,560		705	703
Diet	7,793	2,107	-	2,796	1,100	7,820		-	-
Total Expenditure	36,253	10,318	1,436	9,957	6,795	49,750		1,819	1,823

(Source Annual Report on the Working of the Hospitals and Dispensaries in Bengal. For the year 1936 Major-General P.S. Mills. C.I.E. M.B; BS, D.T.M. and H. M.R. CS, KHP, IMS, Surgeon General with the Government of Bengal. From the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling. No 10, Section 11 XVI.)

TABLE XVII. STATEMENT SHOWING THE NUMBER OF OUT DOOR PATIENTS AND INDOOR PATIENTS IN THE HILLS 1929 and 1939.

Year	Darjeeling Victoria Hospital	Kurseong Hospital	Pedong	Kalimpong Mission Charteris Hospital	Eden Sanitarium and Hospital	Martin Charitable Dispensary	Darjeeling Tuberculosis Hospital
1929							
Men	1,288	392	229	1823	30		
Women	551	129	83	686	41		
Children	380	22	32	213	26		
Total							
1939							
Men	2,692	630	207	2,266	62	630	54
Women	1,278	630	88	1,028	77	204	22
Children	353	63	21	463	35	63	
Total							

(Source Annual Report on the Working of the Hospitals and Dispensaries in Bengal. For the year 1929 and 1936 Major-General P.S. Mills. C.I.E. M.B; BS, D.T.M. and H. M.R. CS, KHP, IMS, Surgeon General with the Government of Bengal. From the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling. No 10, Section 11 XVI.)

XVIII. TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL, 1950.

The Government of India and the Government of Nepal, recognizing the ancient ties which have happily existed between the two countries for centuries; desiring still further to strengthen and develop these ties and to perpetuate peace between the two countries; have resolved therefore to enter into a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with each other and have, for this purpose, appointed as their plenipotentiaries the following person namely C.P. Narain Singh, Ambassador of India in Nepal and Maharaj M. Shamsheer Jung Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister and Supreme Commander in Chief of Nepal.

Article 1: speak of everlasting peace and friendship between the two countries - recognizing each others' sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of each other.

Article 2 : Any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring states likely to cause friction or misunderstanding between the two governments will be informed by the respective governments.

Article 3 : To establish and maintain the relations referred to in Article 1, the two governments agree to continue diplomatic relation with each other by means or representatives of respective governments who would enjoy diplomatic privileges and immunities customarily granted by international law.

Article 4: The Governments agreed to appoint Consuls General, Consuls, Vice-Consuls and other Consular agents. These may be withdrawn by the respective countries if considered necessary.

Article 5: Government of Nepal shall be free to import from or through the territory of India, arms, ammunitions or warlike materials and equipments necessary for the security of Nepal.

Article 6: Each government undertakes, in token of the neighbourly friendship between India and Nepal, to give to the nationals of the other, in its territory, national treatment with regard to participation in industrial and economic development of such territory and to grant concessions and contracts relating to such development.

Article 7 : Governments of India and Nepal agree to grant on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade, commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature.

Article 8 : So far as matters dealt with herein are concerned, this Treaty cancels all previous treaties, agreements and arrangements entered into on behalf of India between the British Government and the Government of Nepal.

Independent India inherited the British treaty position in Nepal;. Nepal wanted to establish relations with national India on the same basis as that with British India, Nepal and India first concluded a "standstill agreement" they signed a treaty of perpetual peace and friendship in Kathmandu on July 31, 1950. This treaty provided for cooperation and consultation between India and Nepal in matters of concern to them.

(Reference Ram Rahul, Munshi Ram, Monohar Lal Pub. Pvt Ltd. Nepal, 1985, pp. 92-95).

**XIX. (a) LETTER OF THE HON'BLE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
MR B. N. DATAR, NEW DELHI TO SMT. MAYA DEVI CHETTRY, MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT, WEST BENGAL DATED 21.8. 1952.**

New Delhi,
21st August 1952.

Respected Sister Maya Devi,

I have to thank you for your kind letter or congratulation on my appointment as Deputy Minister for Home Affairs in the Central Government. I had been watching your work as a member of the House of the People during the last session and wanted to express my appreciation of the way in which you were doing that great work on behalf of the people you represent. I was specially struck by the earnestness of purpose that activated you in pleading the cause of the down-trodden people. The good wishes, therefore, of such an earnest-minded public worker, therefore, have special significance and, therefore, it is my duty to thank you most sincerely for your congratulations. I shall try my best to be worthy of such good wishes from respected public workers like your worthy self.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(B. N. Datar)

**XIX. (b) LETTER OF SMT. MAYA DEVI CHETTRY, PRESIDENT OF THE DARJEELING
DISTRICT CONGRESS COMMITTEE TO THE
GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL.**

36 North Avenue,
New Delhi.
22nd Sept 1961

Hon'ble Dr. B.C. Roy,
Chief Minister,
Government of West Bengal,
Writers Building, Calcutta.

Dear Dr. Roy,

The exclusion of Nepali in the Language Bill which is being introduced in the Assembly within this week has created a great anxiety in the mind of the people of Darjeeling. Considering the above situation, I sent telegrams to you and had a telephonic talk with you this morning requesting you for the inclusion of Nepali in the Language Bill.

It was in my knowledge that after our discussion with you and our Hon'ble Minister at Raj Bhawan, the Nepali Language was recommended to the President by the Government of West Bengal and forwarded for his approval. I therefore contacted the Secretary to the President of India and learnt from him that the recommendation sent by the

Government of West Bengal has not reached the President till then.

I, then, along with my husband Shri D.B Chetty saw the Hon'ble Minister, Shri Lalbahadur Shastri at his residence on the 18th September. Shri Sastriji says that according to the recent conference of the Chief Ministers there is no need now for the State Governments to take permission or approval of the President under Article 347. In his opinion, the Chief Ministers or the State Government have the power to include the regional languages in their States. He further advised us to contact you and explain the position. He was also kind enough to say that he would look into the matter.

Now, I request you once again, to move an amendment from the Government side to include Nepali in the Language Bill. This will not give chance to the opposition members to move the amendment and take the whole credit. I hope, I am clear.

I, therefore, hope that you will kindly realize the position and save the prestige of the Congress in Darjeeling by arranging inclusion of Nepali in the Language Bill, failing which there may be great unpleasantness in the minds of the people of Darjeeling.

Thanking you.

With regards,
Yours sincerely,
Maya Devi Chetty,
President Congress, Darjeeling.

Copy forwarded to Hon'ble Shri Jawaharlal Nehru for favour of his kind information and necessary action.

XIX. (c) EXTRACT FROM THE SPEECH DELIVERED BY SMT. MAYA DEVI CHETTRY IN PARLIAMENT ON THE LANGUAGE BILL ON 6. 5. 1963.

Sir,

Our country is a multi lingual country and I think that three language formula, may not cover all the linguistic groups in the country. Language is the sign of life. It is the language which shows whether a nation or a community is a living nation or community or not, and if we do not recognize the language of the linguistic minorities, I am afraid; we may not fulfil our desire to make this country a democratic country. Sir, there are so many linguistic minority groups in the country whose language is neither Hindi nor English nor any of the Regional languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule; for instance, I come from the Hill Region of West Bengal. In that region Nepali is widely known. It is not only widely known there but it is

the *lingua franka* of that area including the whole of Sikkim and a part of Bhutan. The medium of instruction ther is Nepali. So this flourishing and living language, I think, should not be neglected by our democratic leaders and the Government.

We Nepali may be linguistic minority in the country but, after all, we are also family members of the nation and we should enjoy equal rights in every respect along with other communities. Likewise there may be other linguistic minorities in the country whose language is not recognized either by the State or the Centre and they are left out unnoticed. So for the proper safeguard for these linguistic minorities in future I have moved my amendment.

Sir, today we have very broad minded leaders in whom we have full faith. But tomorrow, who knows, we may not have similar leadership in the country. There should be some proper safeguards for such linguistic minorities in this language Bill. Therefore, I think, when a committee on official language, is consulted ten years hence, in this committee there should be two members from Parliament for linguistic minorities. I hope the Hon'ble Minister will consider the question of my amendment.

XIX. (d) LANGUAGE BILL 1. 5. 62.

Regarding language, the Government has not recognized the Nepali language so far though it is a rich language. As Dr. Sumiti Kumar Chatterji has written in his book, "Nepali should be in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, because it is a rich language; It is in Aryan language and so it should be in the Constitution." I would request the Government that Nepali should be treated as one of the country's languages and proper attention should be given. The Bengal Government has recognized the Nepali Language in the hill area (Darjeeling) only and for that I am very thankful to our Prime Minister, Home Minister and the Chief Minister, Dr. B. C. Roy. The language problem nowadays is a great problem and every community thinks, 'It is my language, it is my culture' and therefore the Government should give proper safeguards for the language. Personally I am very much grateful to our leaders. Though they are showing a little consideration, my community feels that they are always being neglected, while the country is going ahead and other communities are going ahead—the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have special facilities — leaving behind the Nepali community in India. So I hope in future we will get some recognition and will be shown some softness from the Centre.

XIX. (c) SPEECH TO THE JOINT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT. 1. 5. 62.

Madam, Deputy Chairman, we are grateful to your president for his nice speech delivered to the joint session of Parliament. It has been my grateful privilege to be member of this August House for ten years since 1952 and so far as my memory goes, our President has always referred to certain minority communities in his address, during the freedom struggle of our country, every part of the country and every community shared their responsibility to free the country from foreign hands. Madam, in this freedom struggle, the Nepali community took a great part along with their big brothers in India to free the country but they are now most neglected. These brave Gurkhas have been serving their motherland since generations and even recently many have laid down their lives fighting on the Kashmir border. I regret today that the Government has not given proper attention and recognition to these brave sons of India. Being a martial race, they prefer to join the armed forces or the police force but it is very difficult for them to enter even these services, I would therefore request the Government to give special facilities to this community to enter such services. They are brave and honest and their loyalty can be counted upon. We are not against communal bodies but if we Gurkhas remain silent the government would not give proper attention to our community and our community would continue to remain behind. This is a democratic country and we have a socialistic pattern of society and every community has full right to demand safeguard from the government.

In economic field also, Madam, it is a great pity that in the district of Darjeeling there is neither heavy industry nor small – scale industry to provide employment for these people. There is no proper field for even agriculture. Every year students, come out from the colleges and university and they have to go outside to find jobs in countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and outside countries. They go out of their country in search of employment and they settle down there too. There are few offices in the district of Darjeeling but even these areas are filled by outsiders neglecting the right of the local people. We are always talking about national integration, peace and harmony but by our actions we are disintegrating ourselves. In this matter, I think, the government should pay proper attention to the border areas because it is not proper that the people of border areas should remain unhappy and frustrated. I would request the government to pay more attention to this area and try to win the hearts of these people by love and affection. Every community expects love and affection from the Government.

**TABLE XX. NUMBER OF EMPLOYED PEOPLE IN THE
DARJEELING DISTRICT (1965-1985)**

Year	No of tea garden workers			
	Male	Female	Adolescent	Children
1965	15,568	23,606	1,532	2,530
1975	14,561	26,212	85	2,315
1985	17,885	27,008	590	138

(SOURCE: Tea Board Statistics, Calcutta)

**TABLE XXI. NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN THE TEA GARDENS OF THE
DARJEELING HILLS. (1971, 1976 and 1985)**

Year	FIELD WORKERS								FACTORY WORKERS							
	RESDIDENTIAL				OUTSIDERS				RESIDENTIAL				OUTSIDER			
	Male	Female	Adol.	Child	Male	Female	Adol.	Child	Male	Female	Adol.	Child	Male	Female	Adol.	Child
1971	11794	21416	1755	1944	335	1670	41	687	2343	676	4	7	58	31	-	-
1976	12209	24517	932	1520	465	2440	128	655	2085	743	12	25	50	3	-	6

(SOURCE: Tea Board Statistics, Calcutta)

**TABLE XXII. WORKERS EMPLOYED IN SOME OF THE TEA GARDENS OF
DARJEELING HILLS (Data collected during field study from factory sites).**

YEAR	NAME OF THE TEA GARDEN	NUMBER OF TEA GARDEN WORKERS		
		MALE	FEMALE	CHILDREN
1972	Ging	206	406	4
1977	Happy Valley	85	198	-
1978	Barnesbeg	128	228	-
1985	Batamtam	590	600	21
1985	Soom	333	408	3
1985	Makaibari	122	377	-
1985	Singtam	172	406	-
1985	Mim	247	350	3
1985	Tukvar	415	903	-
1985	Margeret's Hope	460	690	4
1985	Tukvar North	590	980	35
1985	Castelton	71	271	-

(SOURCE: Data from the Data Collected from the Factories. Factory Records)

TABLE XXIII. DEARNESS ALLOWANCES FOR THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS OF THE DARJEELING DOOARS AND TEARAL-1947

Dearness Allowance	Rs - As - P	
Darjeeling		Per hazira of 6 hours
Men	0 8-7	
Women	0 2-10	
Children	0 5	
Dooars		Per hazira of 4 hours
Men	0 6	
Women	0 5	
Children	0 3	
Terai		
Men	0 6-5	Per hazira of 4 hours
Women	0 6-5	
Children	0 3-4	

Source Labour Bureau Ministry of Labour Government of India. Report on a Enquiry into the cost and standard of living of Plantation workers in Assam and Bengal. S.R. Deshpande, Director, Labour Bureau. 1947. Pg 44.

TABLE XXIV. WAGE STRUCTURE OF THE WORKERS OF THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS IN THE DARJEELING HILLS (1961-'61)

YEAR	WAGES OF THE FIELD WORKERS IN RUPEES									WAGES OF THE FACTORY WORKERS IN RUPEES								
	MALE			FEMALE			CHILDREN			MALE			FEMALE			CHILDREN		
	Basic	D.A.	Total	Basic	D.A.	Total	Basic	D.A.	Total	Basic	D.A.	Total	Basic	D.A.	Total	Basic	D.A.	Total
1960	1.05	0.40	1.45	1.00	0.40	1.45	0.50	0.30	0.80	1.10	0.40	1.50	1.05	0.40	1.45	0.55	0.30	0.85
1961	1.05	0.40	1.45	1.00	0.40	1.40	0.50	0.30	0.80	1.10	0.40	1.50	1.05	0.40	1.45	0.55	0.30	0.85

Productivity per labourer in the Darjeeling hills was 240 kg.
 **Food grains were made available at subsidized rates of Rs. 17.50 / maund

(SOURCE: Tea Board Statistics, Calcutta Office)

TABLE XXV. COMPARATIVE WAGE STRUCTURE OF THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS (1960,1968)

	WAGES PAID TO THE FIELD TEA GARDEN WORKERS IN RUPEES							
	1960				1968			
	BASIC	D.A.	TOTAL	OTHER BENEFITS	BASIC	D.A.	TOTAL	OTHER BENEFITS
ASSAM								
MALE	1.52	0.37	1.89	Food grains are to be made available at concessional rate of Rs.20.00/maund	2.25	0.12	2.37	Food grains are to be made available at concessional rate of Rs.20.00/maund
FEMALE	1.45	0.31	1.76		2.07	0.12	2.19	
CHILDREN	0.75	0.16	0.91		1.09	0.6	1.15	
TERAI(W.B.)								
MALE	1.24	0.60	1.84	Food grains are to be made available at concessional rate of Rs. 15.00/maund	2.07	0.12	2.19	Food grains are to be made available at concessional rate of Rs. 15.00/maund
FEMALE	1.22	0.50	1.72		1.90	0.12	2.02	
CHILDREN	0.69	0.31	1.00		1.13	0.6	1.19	
DARJEELING HILLS								
MALE	1.05	0.40	1.45	Food grains are to be made available at concessional rate of Rs.17.50/maund	1.75	0.12	1.87	Food grains are to be made available at concessional rate of Rs.17.50/maund
FEMALE	1.00	0.40	1.40		1.64	0.12	1.76	
CHILDREN	0.50	0.30	0.80		0.95	0.6	1.01	

(SOURCE: Tea Board Statistics, Calcutta Office)

TABLE XXVI. NUMBER OF MATERNITY CLAIMS MADE BY THE WOMEN WORKERS IN THE TEA GARDENS.

1953

(1) Number of maternity claims made by the women workers in the tea gardens-1953						
1953	Tea gardens	No. Women	Claims	Claims accepted	Women Claimant	Rs
Jalpaiguri	152	29,679	7501	6514	6206	314,442.9.3
Darjeeling	127	9792	2367	2207	2203	113,146.5.6
Cooch Bihar	1	250	-	-	-	-
Total	280	39721	9868	8721	8409	427,588.14.9

1955

2) Number of maternity claims made by the women workers in the tea gardens-1955						
1955	Tea gardens	No. Women	Claims	Claims accepted	Women Claimant	Rs
Jalpaiguri	152	41,725	12161	11,240	10,727	6,21,967
Darjeeling	126	17,056	4520	4328	4,125	248,018
Cooch Bihar	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	279	58,781	16,681	15,568	14,852	869,986

1956

(3) Number of maternity claims made by the women workers in the tea gardens-1956						
1956	Tea gardens	No. Women	Claims	Claims accepted	Women Claimant	Rs
Jalpaiguri	152	30,759	8602	8037	7753	439,082
Darjeeling	126	19,268	4613	4483	4483	271,257
Cooch Bihar	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	279	50,027	13,215	12,520	12,203	7,10,340

1957

(4) Number of maternity claims made by the women workers in the tea gardens-1957						
1957	Tea gardens	No. Women	Claims	Claims accepted	Women Claimant	Rs
Jalpaiguri	151	39,064	10,356	9885	9612	519,923
Darjeeling	126	16,578	4,152	4049	4036	238,615
Cooch Bihar	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	278	45,624	14,508	13,934	13,648	758,538

(Source - Government of West Bengal Labour Department. Annual Report on the Administration of the Maternity Benefit Act (Tea Estate) of 1948 for the year 1953, 1955, 1956 and 1957. (WBG P 59/60 1164E-120 and WBG P 58/9-57 2E-100.)

**TABLE XXVII. PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WORKERS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS
IN NORTH BENGAL (1981)**

CATEGORY	DARJEELING	JALPAIGURI	COOCH BEHAR
% OF MAIN WOMEN WORKERS IN THE FEMALE POPULATION	19.64	11.0	3.36
% OF MARGINAL WOMEN WORKER IN THE FEMALE POPULATION	1.61	2.28	0.96
% OF (MAIN & MARGINAL) FEMALE WORKER IN FEMALE POPULATION (RURAL)	26.37	14.74	4.12
% OF NON-SCHEDULED WOMEN WORKER IN NON-SCHEDULED FEMALE POPULATION (RURAL)	25.16	9.12	2.79
% OF WOMEN CULTIVATORS IN FEMALE MAIN WORKER (RURAL)	33.69	8.39	15.26
% WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN FEMALE MAIN WORKERS (RURAL)	8.37	13.08	44.44
% OF NON-SCHEDULED AGRICULTURAL LABOURER IN NON-SCHEDULED FEMALE MAIN WORKER (RURAL)	5.75	10.54	36.35
% OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURER IN TOTAL FEMALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER (RURAL)	29.60	47.95	63.00
% OF SCHEDULED TRIBE WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURER IN TOTAL FEMALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER (RURAL)	23.73	29.89	2.51
% SCHEDULED FEMALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER IN FEMALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER (RURAL SC/ST)	53.33	77.84	65.54

SOURCE: NUNA SHEELC. WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT -NIEPA PUB.1990 (NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION, NEW DELHI ON THE CENSUS OF 1981.PG. 144.

**TABLE XXVIII HOUSEHOLD AND NON-HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYMENT IN
THE DARJEELING HILLS (1961-1981)**

SUB-DIVISION	1961				1971				1981			
	HOUSEHOLD		NON-HOUSEHOLD		HOUSEHOLD		NON-HOUSEHOLD		HOUSEHOLD		NON-HOUSEHOLD	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
DARJEELING SADAR	1106	112	99	-	1106	802	2099	313	1392	381	-	-
KALIMPONG	1204	345	159	14	751	187	847	89	783	254	-	-
KURSEONG	512	41	53	-	350	69	736	44	411	93	-	-
TOTAL	2822	498	311	14	2107	1058	3682	446	2586	728	-	-

SOURCE: DISTRICT CENSUS HANDBOOK, DARJEELING DISTRICT, 1961,1971,1981.

TABLE XXIX. NUMBER OF GIRLS ADMITTED AND DROP OUT FIGURES FROM DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS IN THE DARJEELING HILLS FOR DIFFERENT YEARS (1965-1985).

NAME OF THE SCHOOL	YEAR	Girls admitted	RESULT OF THE SCHOOL FINAL						Total appearing in the final exams	% Drop outs
			1 st div	2 nd div	3 rd div	Pas s	Compart	Fail		
ST. TERESA'S GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL DARJEELING	1965	60	-	13	4	-	4	-	21	65
	1969		-	17	18	-	-	3	38	63.8
	1971		-	18	11	-	2	-	31	70.5
	1973		-	13	19	10	-	-	42	60
	1975	100-115 each year	-	12	15	-	5	-	32	69.5
	1979		2	28	8	4	11	-	51	51.4
	1982		2	52	7	1	1	-	61	41.9
	1983		4	18	6	5	-	-	29	72.4
	1985		8	41	8	-	14	-	63	40
NEPALI GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, DARJEELING	1957		1	6	3	1	-	1	11	89
	1961		1	11	4	-	2	-	18	82
	1967		2	9	-	2	9	-	22	78
	1968		-	10	2	-	7	1	19	81
	1971	100	-	4	8	-	11	1	23	77
	1972		-	2	9	-	1	-	12	88
	1973		-	-	5	1	9	16	15	85
	1976		-	13	8	-	26	20	47	53
	1977		-	9	6	-	17	2	32	68
	1978		-	15	3	-	9	-	27	73
ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL DARJEELING	1984		-	6	4	-	6	-	16	78.7
	1985	75	-	15	1	-	2	-	18	78.0
ST. PHILOMENA'S GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL, KALIMPONG	1972		-	2	6	-	3	-	11	89
	1976		-	4	29	-	-	-	33	67
	1980		-	9	18	-	9	-	36	64
	1985		6	34	-	-	2	-	42	58
SARDASWARI GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL, DARJEELING	1966		-	-	3	-	-	-	3	92.5
	1967	40 admitted	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	96
	1968		-	-	1	2	-	-	3	92.5
	1969		-	-	6	16	-	-	22	5
	1970	50 admitted	-	-	2	6	10	-	18	64
	1971	100	-	-	16	18	3	-	37	63
	1972		-	4	41	23	1	-	69	31
NEPALI GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL KALIMPONG (CLASS XII RESULTS)	1978		2	13	6	-	5	1	25	76.19
	1979	105 admitted	-	9	17	-	10	-	36	65.71
	1980		-	15	22	-	9	3	49	53.33
	1981		1	28	26	-	3	-	57	45.71
	1982		2	14	27	-	17	10	68	36.24
	1983		-	17	44	-	38	-	99	6.714
	1984		-	77	18	-	2	-	97	7.819
	1985		-	34	2	-	8	4	55	47.62

SOURCE : RANDOM SAMPLING CARRIED OUT AND DATA OBTAINED FROM SCHOOL REGISTERS.

TABLE XXX. (a) BLOCK GRANT FACILITIES GIVEN TO THE SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBE STUDENTS 1978-1980.

<u>Class</u>	<u>Block Grant per year</u>	<u>Hostel charges</u>	<u>Examination fees reimbursed</u>
ClassV	Rs 10/- per year	Rs 75/-per month	Rs 30 per student
ClassVI	Rs 30/ per year	—	—
ClassVII	Rs 70/ per year	—	—
ClassVIII	Rs 70/ per year	—	—
ClassIX	Rs 90/ per year	—	—
ClassX	Rs 50/ per year	—	—

(Source Government of West Bengal 1978-79-80. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department. Darjeeling)

TABLE XXX. (b) ALLOCATION OF GRANTS TO THE SCHEDULED TRIBE AND SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS DURING THE PERIODS OF 1978-79 AND 1980-81

<u>REGION</u>	<u>SCHEDULED TRIBE 1978-79</u>	<u>SCHEDULED CASTE 1978-79</u>	<u>SCHEDULED TRIBE 1980-81</u>	<u>SCHEDULED CASTE 1980-81</u>
DARJEELING SADAR	1,50,000	75,000	2,50,000	1,25,000
KALIMPONG	-	25,000	1,00,000	-
SILIGURI	6,800	4,75,000	-	3,50,000

(Source- Government of West Bengal 1978-79-80. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department. Darjeeling.)

TABLE XXX. (c) TOTAL ALLOCATION RECEIVED BY SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHEDULED TRIBES 1978-79.

<u>The Total Allocation received by Schools for the scheduled tribes 1978-79.</u>			
	<u>Allotment received</u>	<u>Expenditure incurred</u>	<u>No. of students</u>
Tuition fees	1,80,000	1,00,977.50	3,880
Book grant and examination fees	69,000	68,075.00	2,490
hostel charges	1,70,000	1,67,010	294
Coaching arrangement.	13,020	9,710	120

TABLE XXX(d) THE TOTAL ALLOCATION RECEIVED BY SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHEDULED TRIBES 1979-80

<u>The Total Allocation received by Schools for the scheduled tribes 1979-80</u>			
	<u>Allotment received</u>	<u>Expenditure incurred</u>	<u>No. of students</u>
Tuition fees	1,81,000	1,20,981	3,578
Book grant and examination fees	2,30,000	1,45,875	2,959
hostel charges	2,79,00	2,29,200	292
Coaching arrangement.	10,000	7,612	195

TABLE XXX. (e) THE TOTAL ALLOCATION RECEIVED BY SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHEDULED CASTE 1978-79

The Total Allocation received by Schools for the scheduled caste 1978-79			
	Allotment received	Expenditure incurred	No. of students
Tuition fees	73,000	61,759	1,166
Book grant and examination fees	52,000	48,310	2,334
hostel charges	45,000	43,100	85
Coaching arrangement.	14,000	13,565.55	280

TABLE XXX. (f) THE TOTAL ALLOCATION RECEIVED BY SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHEDULED CASTE 1979-80

The Total Allocation received by Schools for the scheduled caste 1979-80			
	Allotment received	Expenditure incurred	No. of students
Tuition fees	61,000	33,403	489
Book grant and examination fees	1,53,000	1,35,840	2,736
hostel charges	1,88,000	48,090	74
Coaching arrangement.	85,000	83,600	290

TABLE XXX. (g) THE TOTAL ALLOCATION RECEIVED BY SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHEDULED CASTE 1980-81

The Total Allocation received by Schools for the scheduled caste 1980-81			
	Allotment received	Expenditure incurred	No. of students
Tuition fees	1,21,000	19,940	430
Book grant and examination fees	54,000	19,275	22
hostel charges	4,10,000	63,720	354
Coaching arrangement.	9,000	-	-

(Source- Government of West Bengal 1978-79-80-81. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department. Darjeeling.

TABLE XXXI. LITERACY OF MALES AND FEMALES IN WEST BENGAL AND DARJEELING 1961.

State/District/Subdivision	Total/Urban/Rural	Persons (Literates)	Males (Literates)	Females (Literates)
West Bengal	Total	29.28	40.08	16.98
	Rural	21.64	32.86	9.73
	Urban	52.89	59.59	43.33
Darjeeling District	Total	28.7	40.2	15.5
	Rural	28.	33.8	8.5
	Urban	51.7	59.2	41.5

Source Census of West Bengal 1961. West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling.

TABLE XXXII. LITERACY OF MALES AND FEMALES IN SUBDIVISIONS AND POLICE STATIONS OF DARJEELING HILLS 1961

REGION	Total Urban Rural	PERCENTAGE OF LITERATES		
		PERSONS	MALES	FEMALES
Darjeeling Subdivision				
Sadar	Total	30.0	44.6	14
	Rural	24.0	39.1	8.6
	Urban	54.7	64.4	41.0
Pulbazar	Rural	17.5	30.5	4.0
Darjeeling	Total	41.5	55.0	25.9
	Rural	26.3	42.5	9.9
	Urban	54.1	64.4	41.0
Sukhiapokri	Rural	26.6	42.0	11.0
Jorebungalow	Rural	23.1	37.9	8.2
Rangli Rangliot	Rural	26.8	43.1	10.4
Kalimpong Subdivision	Total	26.8	61.2	13.0
	Rural	22.6	34.9	8.6
	Urban	43.0	52.9	30.7
Garubathan	Rural	20.3	32.1	6.0
Kurseong Subdivision	Total	31.7	45.3	17.0
	Rural	27.3	58.3	12.2
	Urban	53.3	62.9	42.2
Mirik	Rural	30.2	47.5	12.3
Kurseong	Total	32.2	44.6	18.7
	Rural	26.0	39.0	12.1
	Urban	53.8	68.0	42.2

Source Census of West Bengal 1961. West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling.

TABLE XXXIII. COMPARATIVE INCIDENCE OF LITERACY AMONGST THE URBAN AND RURAL MALE AND FEMALE OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS IN WEST BENGAL.

Age Group in West Bengal	Rural		Urban	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Above 5 years	389	117	660	500
5-14	289	144	572	498
15-34	469	140	702	574
35-59	397	64	661	418
60+	390	36	689	308
Age not stated	197	37	302	145

Source Census of West Bengal 1961. West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling.

TABLE XXXIV. COMPARATIVE INCIDENCE OF LITERACY AMONGST THE URBAN AND RURAL MALE AND FEMALE OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS IN DARJEELING DISTRICT.

Age Group in Darjeeling District	Rural		Urban	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Above 5 years	396	102	627	489
5-14	343	133	623	557
15-34	423	114	711	547
35-59	409	42	659	324
60+	327	24	618	166
Age not stated	219	31	375	85

Source Census of West Bengal 1961. West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling.

TABLE XXXV (a) CLASSIFICATION OF LITERACY AND ILLITERACY AMONGST THE SCHEDULE TRIBES IN DARJEELING 1961

District/Subdivision/ Police Station	Rural Urban	Total			Illiterate		Literate and Educated	
		Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Darjeeling District	Total	96,444	50,685	45,759	38,824	42,840	11,861	2,919
	Rural	85,232	44,633	40,599	35,632	38,792	9,001	1,807
	Urban	11,212	6,052	5,160	3,192	4,048	2,860	1,112
Sadar Subdivision	Rural	9,953	4,611	5,342	2,991	4,850	1,620	492
	Urban	4,908	2,538	2,370	1,307	1,639	1,231	731
Pulbazar	Rural	3,036	1,176	1,860	848	1,779	328	81
Darjeeling	Rural	809	420	389	240	333	180	56
	Urban	4,908	2,538	2,370	1,307	1,639	1,231	731
Sukhiapokhri	Rural	1,340	665	675	450	586	215	839
Joc Bungalow	Rural	1,952	930	1,022	634	933	296	89
Rangli Rangliot	Rural	2,816	1,420	1,396	819	1,219	601	177
Kalmipong Subdivision	Rural	15,852	8,281	7,571	5,587	6,930	2,694	641
	Urban	5,048	2,814	2,234	1,432	1,99	1,382	243
Kalmipong	Rural	12,958	6,559	6,399	4,162	5,794	2,397	605
	Urban	5,048	2,814	2,234	1,432	1,991	1,382	243
Garubathan	Rural	2,864	1,722	1,172	1,425	1,136	297	36
Kurseong Subdivision	Rural	3,277	1,667	1,610	1,146	1,463	521	147
	Urban	895	430	465	246	343	184	122
Mink	Rural	573	300	273	158	241	142	32
Kurseong	Rural	2,704	1,367	1,837	988	1,222	379	115
	Urban	895	430	465	246	343	184	122

Source Census of West Bengal 1961. West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling.

**TABLE XXXV (b) CLASSIFICATION OF LITERACY AND ILLITERACY AMONGST
THE SCHEDULE CASTE IN DARJEELING 1961**

District/Subdivision/ Police Station	Rural Urban	Total			Illiterate		Literate and Educated	
		Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Darjeeling District	Total	82,381	43,241	39,140	28,924	35,137	14,317	4,003
	Rural	66,464	34,104	32,360	22,643	29,826	11,461	2,534
	Urban	15,917	9,137	6,780	6,281	5,311	2,856	1,469
Sadar Subdivision	Rural	12,402	6,039	6,363	4,326	6,045	1,713	318
	Urban	5,002	2,948	2,054	1,799	1,459	1,149	595
Pulbazar	Rural	1,897	935	962	812	914	123	48
Darjeeling	Rural	2,833	1,441	1,392	1,097	1,322	344	70
	Urban	5,002	2,948	2,054	1,799	1,459	1,149	595
Sukhiapokhri	Rural	2,265	1,104	1,161	681	1,087	423	74
Jore Bungalow	Rural	2,810	1,351	1,459	909	1,407	442	52
Rangli Rangliot	Rural	2,597	1,208	1,389	827	1,315	381	74
Kalmipong Subdivision	Rural	6,163	3,219	2,944	2,417	2,719	802	225
	Urban	3,422	1,846	1,476	1,156	1,259	690	317
Kalmipong	Rural	4,626	2,410	2,216	1,786	2,001	624	215
	Urban	3,422	1,846	1,576	1,156	1,259	690	317
Garubathan	Rural	1,537	809	728	631	718	178	10
Kurseong Subdivision	Rural	5,204	2,211	2,993	1,409	2,629	802	364
	Urban	1,758	901	857	512	648	389	209
Mirik	Rural	1,606	859	747	491	645	368	102
Kurseong	Rural	3,598	1,352	2,246	918	1,984	434	262
	Urban	1,758	901	857	512	648	389	209

Source Census of West Bengal 1961. West Bengal District Census Handbook, Darjeeling.

**TABLE XXXVI. DISEASES AND CAUSES OF DEATH AT THE VICTORIA HOSPITAL
IN DARJEELING SADAR (1968-1985)**

Disease	1968	1969	197	1971	1972	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Gastroent-ratism	2	10	2	5	-	10	2	2	5	5	11	5	-
Hepattists	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	9	9	1	3
Bronchitis	9	22	12	12	10	29	13	14	28	44	49	53	19
T.B.	16	-	14	11	6	8	2	1	2	3	8	8	2
Bums	4	2	3	5	-	4	-	-	2	5	5	6	4
Dysentry	1	-	3	3	-	3	-	-	2	2	3	4	1
Post-Partem	6	7	21	12	11	16	13	12	5	7	7	4	3
Anemia	5	14	15	15	8	17	3	4	9	19	15	21	5
Liver cirrhosis	2	4	3	1	1	4	1	2	6	7	2	12	-
Rheumatic heart	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Jaundice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	-
Koch abdomen	1	-	3	-	3	6	6	5	9	4	6	4	4
Sepsis	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	2	1
c.e.7	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	1	4	-	2	-
c.v.a	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	1	11	-	-	8	12
c.c.f	-	-	2	-	7	12	3	1	7	5	8	8	3
Other causes													
Male death	136	162	182	152	161	225	268	217	237	252	254	250	145
Female death	122	123	135	104	104	187	177	234	199	221	208	239	125
Total death	258	285	317	265	265	412	445	451	436	492	462	489	270

(Source- Registers of the Victoria Hospital, Darjeeling from 1968)

TABLE XXXVII MEDICAL FACILITIES IN THE DARJEELING HILL AREAS (1974)

Area	Medical Hospital	Health Centres	Clinics	Dispensaries	No. of Beds	Public	Private	Total
Darjeeling Sadar	4	6	7	5	363	19	3	22
Kalimpong	4	5	9	6	496	18	1	19
Kurseong	4	4	5	7	609	13	-	13

[SOURCE:]

- 1) Bannerji *et al* West Bengal District Gazetteers 1980, p 556
- 2) DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICE, WEST BENGAL
- 3) CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, HEALTH, DARJILING.

TABLE XXXVIII DISTRIBUTION OF DOCTORS AND NURSES IN DARJEELING DISTRICT, 1963-64

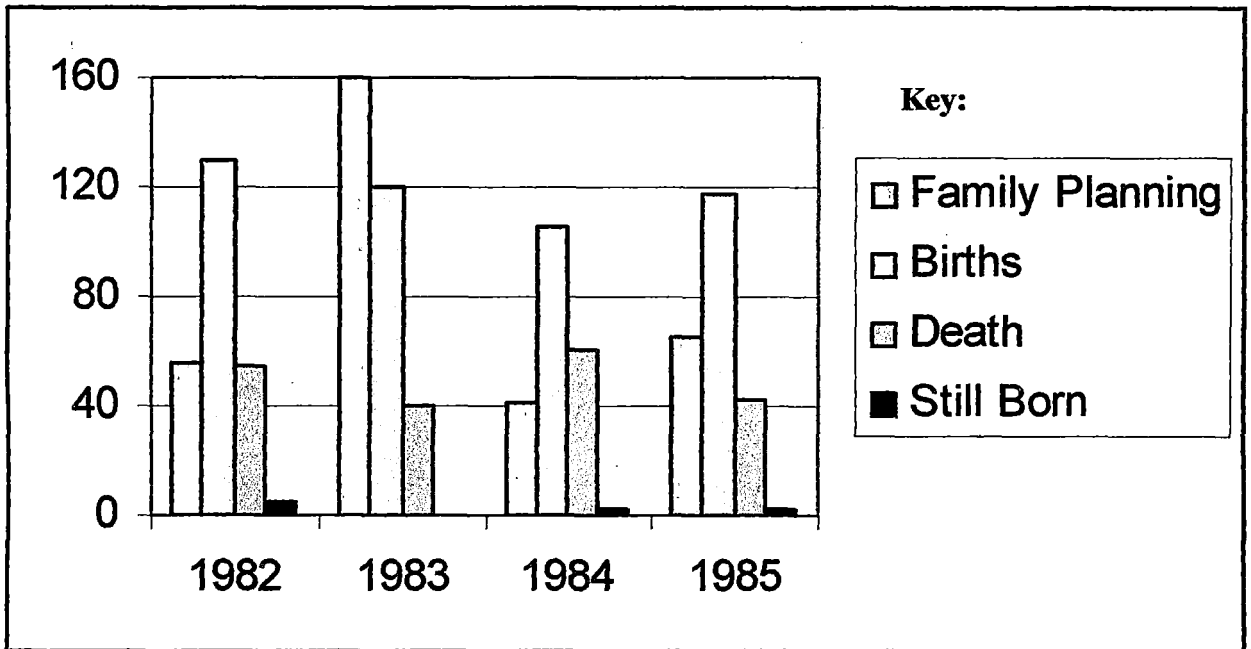
YEAR	MEDICAL GRADUATES	OFFICERS	TRAINED NURSES	UNTRAINED NURSES	DOCTORS	NURSES
1963	48	53	149	119	138	52
1964	45	53	119	153	145	52

Bannerji *et al* West Bengal District Gazetteers 1980, p 556.**TABLE XXXIX FAMILY PLANNING CENTRES IN DARJEELING HILLS 1973-1974.**

AREA	PUBLIC FAMILY PLANNING UNITS	PRIVATE FAMILY PLANNING UNITS	TOTAL
Darjiling Sadar	19	3	22
Kalimpong	18	1	19
Kurseong	13	-	13

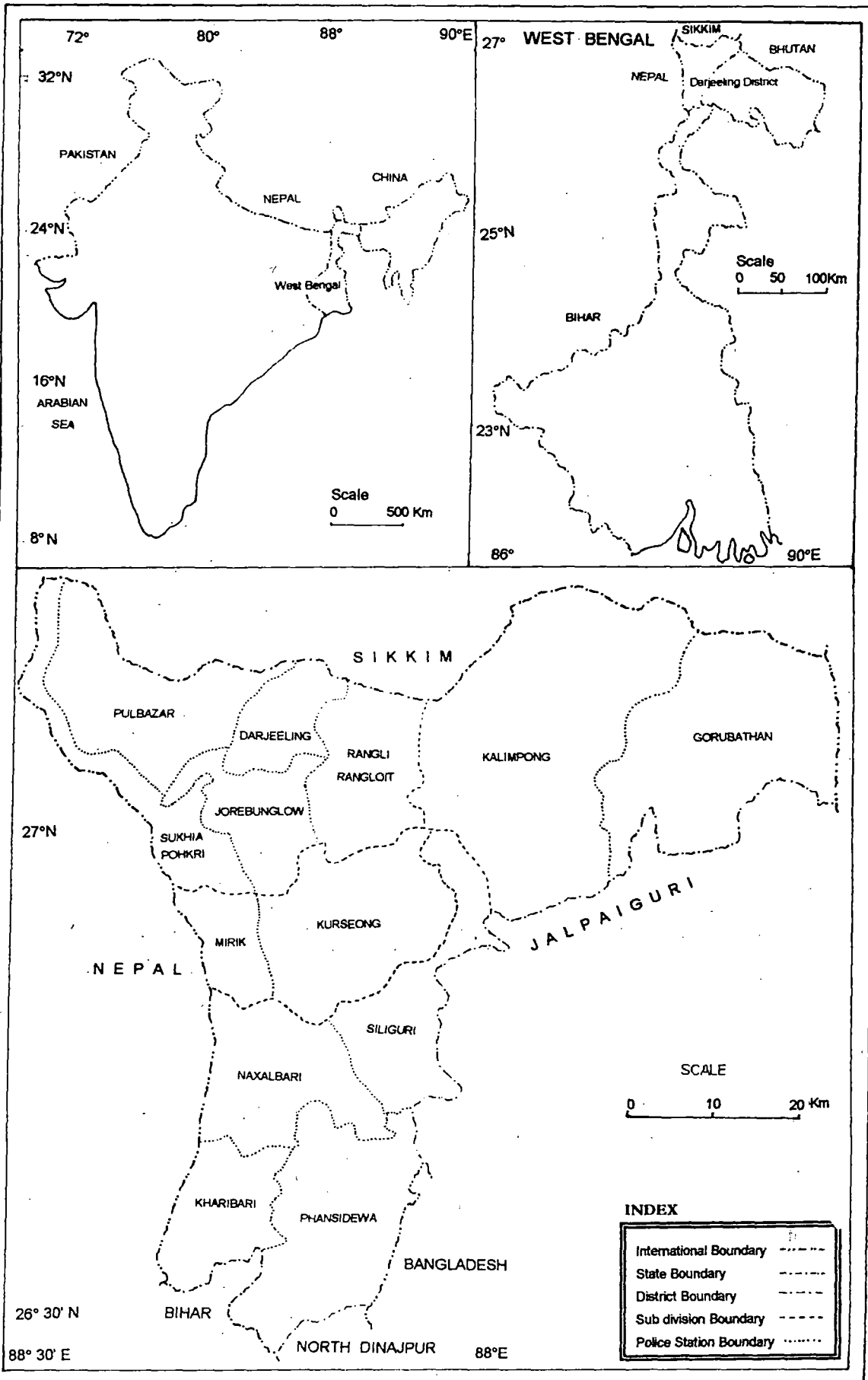
Bannerji *et al* West Bengal District Gazetteers 1980, p 556

MEDICAL RECORD OF THE FAMILY PLANNING, BIRTH AND DEATH RATES FROM 1982-1985 AT THE TUKVAR HOSPITAL DARJEELING.



Source Family Planning Welfare Department Darjeeling.

Fig. 1.1. LOCATION MAP OF THE STUDY AREA



Women of Darjeeling Hills – A Glimpse



Mrs N. Norbu the only Tibetan in the Class of 1944, St. Joseph's Convent



Fete at St. Joseph's Convent Kalimpong 1944



Members of the Mahila Congress of Darjeeling with Smt Indira Gandhi



The Congress Party meeting at Darjeeling 1972



Lepcha women of 1890s
(File photo Achulay magazine)



Smt. Gopimaya Gurung a leader of the G.N.W.O. addressing a rally



Child worker in the tea garden



Miss Lilly Waugh and the native teachers of the Industrial Lab school.
(File photo Girls' High School) Kalimpong



G.N.W.O party cadres in a rally demanding separate statehood for the Gorkhas



Women tea pluckers of 1904



Social Worker and Congress party functionary Smt. Mayadevi Chettri at a Social Function, Gymkhana (1966).
(File photo, Congress Party Office)



A Lepcha Congress party worker
Azem Rebaca Mohan (David Babuni) Kalimpong (The Statesman)

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7. February 1906.
8. June 1906.
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11. August 1918.
12. May 1929.
13. November 1936

ii. PROCEEDINGS (A) OF THE HON'BLE LT. GOVERNOR OF BENGAL, EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, EXTENDED VOLUME ENDING

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