

## 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 Sikkim<sup>1</sup> who lived in inaccessible tract of forest with very scanty population.<sup>2</sup> 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.'<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.'<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> The native and the masters were supplied with water from different tanks.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> Here the British attitude showed very clearly that as materials for study the natives acquired all the marks of an inherent

weakness.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>32</sup> They were afraid that mere scholastic element would breed political discontentment.<sup>33</sup>

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.<sup>34</sup> In spite of difficulties by the end of 1874 there were seventeen male and two female students.<sup>35</sup> From eleven students in 1876 the number increased to twenty-four in 1886.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> Statistical accounts of 1876 mentions 613 pupils – 557 boys and 56 girls in the district.<sup>38</sup>

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.<sup>39</sup>

**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 30<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup>

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.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup>

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.<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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.'<sup>53</sup>

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.<sup>54</sup> 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.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> A fall in attendance led to closure of garden schools.<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup>

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 <sup>st</sup> Census
1891	1,50,311	63.13	2 <sup>nd</sup> Census
1901	1,73,342	15.32	3 <sup>rd</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.'<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> The Municipality spent Rs 334 in 1889-90 and Rs 392 in 1890-91 on vaccination drives.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup> In 1897 a payment of Rs 1,200 was made from the Darjeeling Improvement Fund for the Kalimpong Mission.<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

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.<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> 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 mortality<sup>84</sup> and the ill health among the labourers.<sup>85</sup>

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.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup> The tables given in Appendix number III, IV and V shows the annual statement of the Lock Hospitals for the year 1874.<sup>89</sup>

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.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>93</sup>

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.<sup>94</sup> 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.<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup> 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 Doors, 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.<sup>97</sup> 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.<sup>98</sup>

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.<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup> 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.<sup>101</sup> 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.<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup>

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.<sup>104</sup> The people in Nepal were taking a liking to English piece goods and medicine.<sup>105</sup> 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, sukukur 2 seer, Chines 11/2 seer, chuna 8 seer, fowl, milk, eggs, sujee, butter sugar, candy not procurable at all...'<sup>106</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>107</sup>

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.<sup>108</sup> Side by side cultural transformation was attempted through education in order to reproduce and promote the culture of loyalty among the colonized people.<sup>109</sup>

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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