

## **Chapter- Six**

### **Role of the Business Communities in the Development of Darjeeling**

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## Introduction

Business Communities are the backbone of economy of all nations. They perform most important economic functions to improve the country. Providing daily goods, they keep life moving and prosperous. They play a crucial role in accumulating capital for the purpose of new enterprise or industry. At the same time businessmen play a vital role in the social, economic and cultural networks linking in a variety of interactions. Providing enterprise or industry they create many new facilities of employment. In most cases, the mercantile community of India believes in traditional religious values. Usually they try to maintain and strengthen joint-family system for the purpose of economic improvements.

Therefore, one does not need researches to appreciate that businessmen and business communities play a vital role in the society of which they are constituents. The same is true in case of Darjeeling. As the earlier chapters indicate the very growth and glamour of Darjeeling had taken place simultaneously with the growth of its businessmen and markets and vice versa. To meet the demand of the study some important activities of the business communities left by them in a particular areas (Darjeeling) are discussed. As an integral part of this society, the business community obviously played an important role in the nature and degree of economic growth, satisfaction of wants and creation of jobs. At the same time, they constituted a large part of the foundation for concentration of wealth in small segments of their community or the society at large. A simple functionalist view of Indian business communities would suggest that groups of businessmen arise and engage in social action to protect and promote their own collective socio-economic interests in relation to the wider society whose needs for products and material services are met by them. Therefore, business communities are regarded as social product generated by the existence of demand for various goods and services<sup>1</sup>. And they not only respond to existing demand but also create demand in the wider social life. We have seen that the business communities of Darjeeling also responded towards the changing pattern of demand and diversified into different types of enterprises. They also concentrated in accumulating capital for further development

of Darjeeling and commercial enterprises, while other groups of society showed hardly any interest in such economic growth.

The business communities of Darjeeling are not a homogenous group. They can be variously classified on the basis of caste, creed, religion, ethnicity and place of origin. They closely associated with each and every social action with their socio-religious and ethnic identity. It may be clarified in this way that a Muslim Bihari businessman may associate with a business organization to meet his commercial objectives along with other businessmen, but at the same time being a Muslim he may be the member of any Muslim religious organization and moreover, coming from a same region this Bihari merchant may associate with a regional Behari organization. In this way a particular business community intermingled with the other social groups. Hence, it is difficult to identify that distinctive socio-economic contribution of a particular business community in the growth of Darjeeling.

#### **6.1: Role of the European Business Communities:**

Even though Darjeeling was annexed for the purpose of sanatorium, in the long run it exceeded its basic function as a result of the successful expansion of plantations. The credit of creation of modern Darjeeling therefore, goes to the British entrepreneurs who took all the risk to launch their enterprises in Darjeeling. It was the British planters who raised the of Darjeeling as the world famous tea producing area. Not only that, they also made Darjeeling one of the important hill resorts in the landscape of a world. Some of them are also remembered for their contribution to the society as well. A few specific and important contributions of the business communities of Darjeeling may be cited here.

There were really some philanthropic men among the Europeans who appreciatively extended their helping hands for the development of Darjeeling. They not only made a significant contribution to the economic improvement of the town but also in the fields of socio-cultural life like establishment of different educational and academic institutions, cultural clubs, organization of different cultural programmes, launching of

literary search and many natural expeditions and many other philanthropic activities at the time of natural calamities.

The colonial investors in Darjeeling were basically business entrepreneurs who had to take many risks, seek out new markets, invent new techniques and skills (especially in tea plantation) oversee a large number of labourers moreover, adjust with the adverse condition of Darjeeling. This would not have been possible without an adventurous mind and risk taking capacity. According to O'Malley "While they had come in Darjeeling, it was completely under dense forests. The light of modern civilization was just sunshined. Early life in Darjeeling suffered from a lot of hardships. The planters had to be prepared to take all risks and responsibilities for the expansion of tea culture in Darjeeling. The great task was completed under the British. In the past the planters has been his own architect and clerk of works, planning, estimating, for, and vigilantly superintending every operation from the sawing of the timber in the forest, to making and burning of the bricks to the completion and full equipment of the edifice."<sup>2</sup>

It may be said about the planters as well as the entrepreneurs on whom laid the responsibility of management. Their duties were multi-faceted, including the supervision of the cultivation, the control of the manufacture, the management of the large labour force employed, the construction of roads in the estate, and often the erection of the buildings. They must therefore combine, as far as possible, the knowledge and skill of an agriculturist, engineer and architect, and even, to some extent, of a doctor, and above all, they must have firm control over labourers and know the art of management. The planters were, as a rule, considerate masters, anxious to promote the welfare of their employees; and in public life they formed communities prompt to devote their time and energies to the public service and to the development of Darjeeling.

O'Malley aptly said that "In the hills they constitute the agency for the construction and repair of roads, the establishment of schools and the improvement of sanitation; and, in the words of a former Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, they are the backbone of the British government in the district".<sup>3</sup> Without the adventurous efforts of the pioneer

planters, the tea industry of Darjeeling would not have seen the light of day. In this way the planter, capitalists directly involved themselves in the development of Darjeeling. They not only provided the job opportunity but also the shelter, and identity to the people those who engaged in tea industries.

According to Dozey - in these days of old times- "in which the planter was looked upon as the protector of the poor and a benefactor although justice was meted out in a rough and ready fashion; and so a community of interest bound the peasant and the planter in a friendly inter course".

"It, accordingly, followed that if a planter was popular he could wield enormous power for in his own person he combined the offices of judge, jury, law-giver and the dispenser of justice".<sup>4</sup>

In this way the first generation planters of Darjeeling established a smooth way of living for the next. While this above description was true for first generation planters it was not so for the next. Afterwards it may be said that "these old bloods have given place to a more sober and sedate generation for the qualities that ensured success in the pioneers are little needed by their successors, who now live under reign of law and order-conditions which 50 year ago would have been scouted both as impossible and improbable- for roads now intersect the District in all directions, schools have been established in every large village, while the education of the coolie has been rounded off by those harpies of society (the vakils), and so the garden coolie and factory (Indigo) had now fully know their legal rights and accordingly are far from disposed to yield these up readily as in the days of old; indeed, they are not slow to assert them under the guidance of their pseudo friends (the Vakil). Indeed all that he now accomplishes for the betterment of the labourers on his garden is no longer considered by them as benefits actuated by goodwill, but as those which from a part of their birthright. So much for making the illiterate, literate, and thus from a contented albeit poor ryot he has been converted into a most litigious individual ever ready to contest his rights, real or imaginary against all and sundry in the courts of law!".<sup>5</sup>

In 1878, the Lloyd Botanic Garden was laid out in the present site. The greater part of the present site was presented by Mr. W. Lloyd, the proprietor of the Lloyd Bank and also an owner of tea estates.. The first Botanic Garden during the time of Sir Ashley Eden's tenure as Lt. Governor of Bengal was laid out in 1876 at Rangiroon, (5,700) six miles away and to the east of Darjeeling. But it was eventually abandoned in favour of the present given by Lloyd, one below the Eden Sanitarium Owing to the frequent hailstorms which denuded that locality of all foliage.<sup>6</sup> Mr. W.Lloyd started the tonga service for the hills.

Another British hotel business magnet John White left a great contribution in the making of a few public institutions. In his lifetime he donated large sums of money to charities and public institutions such as the Eden Sanitarium and the Colonial Homes at Kalimpong was made by his financial help. At the time of the construction of Colonial Homes he donated Rs. 20,000.<sup>7</sup>

The British business community also patronized education. They gave their physical labour and provided funds for the development of education. In this regard, the name Capt. Sambler and Mr. William Moran are significant. Capt. Sambler played an important pioneering role by providing funds for the establishment of Loreto Convent. This convent was founded in 1846 by Mother T.Teresa Mons, one of the three Irish pioneer ladies who laboured for the spread of education in this distant place. The first home of these sisters was in a little cottage named 'snowy view' to the north of Birch Hill while the actual convent was being built by funds provided by Mr. William Moran, the tea broker Mr. R. J. Longhnan, J.C.S, the then district judge of Darjeeling and Capt. Sambler one of the pioneers of the tea industry. Their love for education did not only remain confined within the District of Darjeeling but it spread to Calcutta as well. The Calcutta Boys' School was founded by James Mills Thoburn, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was opened in 1877. The School was endowed by the late Sir Robert Laidlaw (M.P. for East Renfrewshire, UK in 1906-1910 & founder of the great business house Whiteaway, Laidlaw, and Co.) and others interested in the cause of education and philanthropy. Initially located at Motts' Lane, and then housed in a room in the Whiteaway Laidlaw building (presently the Life Insurance Building at

the crossing of the S. N. Bannerjee Road and the Jawaharlal Nehru Road.), the School shifted to its present site on S.N. Bannerjee Road (Corporation Street) in 1893.

The School, a Minority Christian, Anglo-Indian institution presently, is under the control of the Bengal Regional Conference of the Methodist Church in India, and is managed by the Calcutta Christian Schools Society. The Calcutta Girls' High School, The Mount Hermon School, Darjeeling and the Methodist School, Dankuni are also managed by the same Society.

There were some kind-hearted British planters who regarded India as their home. One such planter was Geoffrey Ower Johnston. Being a part of imperial authority Johnston contributed to many philanthropic activities. According to his servant Mahadev Sherpa, he was often seen distributing biscuits and cigarettes among his workers. He was extremely kind and polite to some 20 humble Nepalese who worked in his bungalows and treated them as his family members. HC Taylor and a gentleman called Dr Roberts founded Neej Kaman (re-named The Cedars since) and Rungmook Tea Estate at Sonada respectively. But the man, who devoted his life and energy to the growth of tea industry and the welfare of its workers, was Geoffrey Ower Johnston, who spent his whole life here. For his generosity Geoffrey sahib, as he was fondly called, is still remembered as a demi-god. Geoffrey started managing the factory when he was only 17 years old. As he grew in age and experience he became a role model for other managers. In 1947, the year India became free, most British planters left for their homeland. But Geoffrey sahib decided to stay on. He resolved to devote the rest of his life to Darjeeling, its world famous tea gardens and the people working in these. Geoffrey was as much known for his generosity as his somewhat eccentric ways. He considered gardens his home and workers his own children. Sometimes, he appeared obstinate, but he was an honest, responsible and kind-hearted master. He would go out of his ways to help his workers. He was a workaholic but never lost his sense of humour. Kishor Rawat, who worked for 35 years in Geoffrey's household, recalls "Often, he would return home late at night, but never go to sleep before he spent a couple of hours reading books. The sahib treated his factory as the most treasured place where he would be around working till midnight. He had in all 21 dogs and loved them very much. If any of them fell sick

he would ask me to take it to Dr Mukhia of Singamari for treatment. 'They can't speak, but have conscience, he'd say about his pets'<sup>8</sup>." Almost everyday many a stranger would come to his bungalow asking for aids, whether they were for building schools or temples or monasteries. The sahib never disappointed them. He used to help workers of other tea gardens as well. "I've nothing to take back to England. Whatever I earn here is for the people of Darjeeling. I was born here. Maybe, I'll go to England to meet my mother and sister. But when if I die, do bury me here,"<sup>9</sup> he once said. He was also the patron of education. In 1962, he donated a hefty sum for building a university perhaps University of North Bengal and also contributed Rs 4,000 to Shantirani High School in 1965. And at his own Rungmook, he founded Cedars Primary School and helped countless children. Geoffrey was among a few people in Darjeeling to plant new tea bushes in Rungmook-Cedars and set up a hydel power project near the Balasun River and bought modern equipment from Kolkata. He was extra careful that his garden had all the updated systems that included automatic spray machines, bulldozers, tractors, etc. He also bought a number of vehicles, including a Land Rover and a Mercedes Benz, from England. On March 1974 Geoffrey was elected president of the Darjeeling Branch Tea Indian Association. He also built a road that ran from Sonada to the Balasun River and made arrangements for its annual maintenance. In 1968, when a massive landslide near Gorabari rendered National Highway 55 absolutely inaccessible, the sahib led his selfless workforce to rebuilding it. He and his men worked tirelessly for three months before the highway was restored. Such a glorious initiative did not go unrewarded as he won the "Friend of Government" recognition. The sahib spoke Nepali fluently and respected the local cultural and its religious traditions<sup>10</sup>.

Throughout his life, Andrew Wernicke, (1841-1904) the German planter, maintained an unsectarian enthusiasm for church and chapel, and a keen interest and a warm enthusiasm for education. During his life, he was a handsome donor to St. Paul's School, Darjeeling.

Tea planting in those early days in the second half of the nineteenth century was a particularly arduous job, entailing long hours in the field beginning at dawn and ending with dusk. and during the hours of working all meals, whether in rainy or in fine

weather, were taken on the job. In those early days of Darjeeling planting, it was men like Andrew and Fred Wernicke and George Watt Christinson, who learnt the hard way, and later set the standard and the duties of future generations of Darjeeling Planters.

The local government officials were quick to appreciate Andrew Wernicke's calm, judicial mind and public spirit by making him an Honorary Magistrate, a position he held for nearly thirty-five years, much of the time with first-class powers, and at one time he was the sole Honorary Magistrate and Municipal authority at Kurseong, besides being a Municipal Commissioner of Darjeeling Town.

His interest in the communications of the District also received recognition, and for many years, and until his death in 1904, he was Vice-Chairman of the District Road Cess Committee. In fact he was responsible for the original survey and alignment of many of the existing District Board Roads. Andrew Wernicke, patiently supervised the alignment and construction of a District Board Road in the Kurseong Sub-Division. These public services were voluntary and unpaid.

There is no doubt that, through his free Public Service, he sought to make some return to the district and the people in gratitude for the opportunities they had allowed him to make good in his own private affairs. Yet he once generously offered Rs.50,000 to the Darjeeling Municipality on condition that the grand central location should be secured as a public park for the town, and had this offer been accepted and backed, the miniature park below St. Andrew's Church would have extended from Government House to the Chowrasta, and given Darjeeling a coronet more worthy of the "Queen of Hill Stations" than the present ugly conglomeration of roof tops.

His love for trees made Andrew Wernicke a lifelong enemy of deforestation. Their policy was "live and let live" and the extraction of forest produce was always on a selective basis. They were always drumming it into their Assistants and Staffs that one should copy Nature in dealing with Nature and that one could destroy in a few minutes what it took Nature ten, fifteen or twenty years to grow. The gaping scars and wastes of scrub land which now disfigure the mountain sides of Darjeeling are ample vindication of the soundness of forest treatment by men such as the Wernickes, G. W. Christison,

and J. G. D. Cruickshank, and bear silent though tortured witness to the folly of clear felling which so many planters have thoughtlessly followed through the years<sup>11</sup>.

Andrew Wernicke also worked hard to check the abuses of native cultivation on his properties, land he encouraged his workers to maintain the terraces and drains of their "khetland" in good order, and the strengthen them with fodder and fruit trees.

The merchant community of Darjeeling not only hankered after money but also many merchants devoted their life for preserving the fauna and flora of the District. One such business tycoon of this hill was Mr. Mandeli.

Mr. William Mandeli, the tea planter of a number of estates was the famous ornithologist. In his leisure time he devoted to preserve the specimen of fauna of the district "While superintendent of the Land Mortgage Bank's gardens, which on the one hand covered the whole of the east slope of the Lebong Spur and on the other extended up to Dewaipani (mineral springs) he found the time to devote to his pet hobby and established in a short time a museum containing specimens of the fauna of the district so unique that it attracted world -wide reputation; and after his demise drew purchasers from England and even Europe. Some of the specimens, notably a very rare snow-pheasant, named *ornithocus Mandeli* after him, were bought by the 'Crystal Palace' where they are to be seen to this day".<sup>12</sup>

## **6.2: Role of the Indian Business Communities:**

Community of Marwari businessmen has a great history of achievements and they too with the European planters contributed to the growth of Darjeeling in their own way. There would be no history of Darjeeling without mentioning the role of the Marwaris .All the business magnets among the Marwaris were grouped in terms of the quality and quantity of trade and their contribution in the growth of Darjeeling was variable on account of their socio-economic capabilities.

It is generally said that the Marwaris always hanker after wealth. Their philanthropic activities in Darjeeling do not support this age old concept. Their philanthropic activities were much more influential in Darjeeling. Here the social works included the

spread of education, town building, construction of Dahrmasala, donations to various social welfare institutions, formation of sporting and cultural clubs, organization of relief camps, publication of magazines, participation in literary activities, taking part in local and national politics and so on.

The role of the Marwari business community in the socio-economic life of Darjeeling would be explained in two ways; their role in the development of their own community and their role in the growth of Darjeeling District. Both contributions of the Marwaris were largely interrelated in relation to the wider society. Their contribution has been recognized by Dash in his Gazetteer - "it cannot be denied the Marwari has played an important part in the development of the District"<sup>13</sup>. The part they played in the development of the District can be understood from the following comment on their early activities in Kalimpong:- "With the advent of the Marwari traders who started large scale buying of cardamoms and the impetus derived from the larger demand for agricultural products, with increased pressure on land caused by an influx of Nepali cultivators after the tract became ceded to British India and with the introduction by the Nepalese of new methods of intensive cultivation by means of the plough, the need arose for agricultural capital and the Marwari was ready to provide it. In the beginning, this was more in kind than in cash, the loan in kind being invariably computed in money value to the advantage of lender. Gradually the system developed into regular money-lending in cash at definite rates of interest"<sup>14</sup>. The Marwari in the hills played a very useful and important part in the pioneering work of developing the district. They still play an important role in the economic life of Darjeeling and their dominant position is due to their efficiency, hardiness and assiduity.

It is argued that the 'merchant society' generally exists as a part of several family, caste, religion, language, region market and polity. The Marwaris are typically traditional in many respects; they were more keen to strengthen the traditional values like joint family bonds which helped them in retaining a tight control over their resources and management. It became almost common for Marwari business magnets to consolidate their family strength by matrimonial relation with other Marwari business houses. This inward-looking traditional character of the Marwaris made them a closed group in

relation to the wider aspects. According to the Marwari expert, Timberg this particularistic value of the Marwari led them to adopt several measures of mutual social help and economic support as well as educational, recreational and other facilities for their fellow-businessmen and community. These measures earned the Marwari houses considerable support and good will among their community members. We have already discussed in the previous chapters that how such community bonds of the Marwari helped them to emerge as dominant business group in Darjeeling. The fellow- feelings of the Marwari community encouraged them to migrate to an unknown distant place. In the initial days of Darjeeling, those Marwari families who migrated first to this hilly tract and settled here permanently, encouraged the migration of their fellow-businessmen by providing food, shelters and even funds and employments. Jhari Mall, an early Marwari migrant stated that a number of Marwari families migrated to Darjeeling with his direct assistance. He also said that they were not only provided with free food and lodging at his gaddis, but also with temporary employment and business- guidance in this distant place. In this way the Marwari business community in Darjeeling played an invaluable part to constitute a 'Marwari Empire'. They were not large in number but their community strength helped them to occupy a unique position in Darjeeling. On the other hand such community bond and particularistic value of the Marwari helped to honour the social value of the other hill people also and maintained a social harmony in Darjeeling. From the British period they lived side by side harmoniously with other communities and this naturally contributed to the promotion of a pluralistic socio-cultural environment in the district.

The Marwari businessmen also served their own community as well as those outside that through their associations. They constituted the 'Marwari Samaj' for their material progress in the second half of the twentieth century. Having migrated from Rajasthan, they united under the umbrella of this association in Darjeeling. They not only shared their day to day problems but also organized many socio- religious and cultural programmes. Different philanthropic activities were collectively undertaken through this association. It also organized donation camps to help the poor and sufferers. The Marwari Samaj played constructive role at the time of natural calamities. It provided financial assistance to construct roads, bridges which were damaged by land slide

almost every year. The sufferers were provided food and lodging in such situations. The Marwaris ran Dharmasala in Darjeeling to provide food and lodging facilities to the tourists. In the field of education also, the association helped the poor students and provided financial helps to construct schools, colleges etc.<sup>15</sup>

The Marwari business community conducted many philanthropic activities in Darjeeling. Medical camps were arranged by them for free treatment of the poor irrespective of caste and community. They also organized blood donation camp to collect blood. In this way the Marwari Samaj not only served their own community but also extended its social services to all the other communities in Darjeeling.

In politics they left an important contribution especially in the local level. In this context mention may be made of the Sharma family of the Pleasant Road. Jwala Prasad Sharma took part in Municipality election in the second half of the twentieth century. He became the commissioner of Darjeeling Municipal Corporation in 1964 (Sunchari 23 June 1996) and served as Commissioner for ten years. His son Jugal Kishor Sharma informed that his father launched many political reforms while he was the Commissioner of the Municipality.

The Darjeeling Municipal Corporation was divided into nine Wards during his commissionership for the purpose of good administration. Viz- (a) Ghoom, (b) Kalindon, (c) Club, (d) Panchmari, (e) Lower Beech wood, (f) Bazar, (g) Birch hill, (h) Bhutia Basti, (i) Cutchari. Among these nine Wards, Jwala Prasad was elected from the Bazar Ward. According to a local newspaper 'Sunchari' he devoted his life for the development of Darjeeling Municipality. During his time many roads, stairs cases (for shoot-cut route) drains etc. were constructed. Many were extended and repaired for public use. He was an important banker and played an important role in keeping the account fair. He prepared annual budget for the Municipality. He returned Rs 30,500 to Government of West Bengal with interest of its debts.

Jwala Prasad maintained an unsectarian enthusiasm for Church and Chapel and a keen interest in spread of education. A Resolution had been passed to establish a University in Darjeeling in the Annual session of the Municipality at his inspiration in 1960. They

also passed an alternative proposal "If the proposed University cannot be possible to establish at Darjeeling my alternative suggestion are as follows- (1) A Veterinary college (2) An Agricultural college (3) Commerce course in the Darjeeling, Government college up to B.Com, standard in addition to both (1) and (2) or at least one of them<sup>16</sup>. He was profoundly shocked when the University was established at Siliguri instead of Darjeeling.

He was not only a banker but also a social worker. He was the founding member of the Rotary Club of Darjeeling. He also closely associated with the Luwice Jubilee Sanatorium, Natural History Museum, Lloyd Botanic Garden, Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Desh Bandhu Maternity and Childcare Society, Gorkha Dukha Nibarak Sammelan, Nripendra Narayan Hindu Public Hall, Jubilee Muslim Institute, Manovinodh Pustakalaya, Kashashree Public Library, Himachal Hindi Bhawan, Hindi M.I School, Sikhsha Pracharini Samity etc. Donations were made by him to these institutions almost every year.

Another Marwari personality who is fondly remembered is Malchand Agarwal ran a Charity homeopathic Dispensary from the time of his fore-father. He freely donated medicine to the poor people for long time.

The Marwaris were also the patron of learning. Their love for education helped them to be active members of the many educational institutions in Darjeeling. Sawar Agarwal, a Marwari businessman associated with the advancement of education. Being Marwari, he patronized Nepali language and attempted to publish all important literary writings of Nepali language from his publishing house.

Sawar Agarwal was not only the patron of education but also a great social worker. Since his college life he got involved in many social welfare activities. He was also an active member of the Lions Club of Darjeeling branch. They organized Relief Committee to serve the poor in difficulties almost every year. They rendered assistance to the disaster victims. While a massive land slide rendered many roads, National Highway of Darjeeling in accessible, they led their workforce and financial assistance

to restore it. The Marwaris in the hills played a very useful and important part in the pioneer work of development of the District.

According to a businessman<sup>17</sup> almost everyday many strangers would come to their shops, stores, houses asking for aids, whether they were for building schools, temples or monasteries, or public functions. And they never disappointed them. They used to help their own kinsman or community. They contributed hefty sums of money for a number of occasions in each year for every festival, natural calamities, and national disastrous like earthquake, land slide and other social works, and helping poor people. In this way the business community as a whole left a multi-facet contribution in Darjeeling. They are still inheriting the tradition of their ancestors and programing an important role in many philanthropic activities.

The tradition is still continuing and even modern businessmen have contributed charity in their own way. Ragesh Garg, the owner of the Darjeeling Shopping Mall and store manager, Big Bazar, supported the MARG( Making in Action in Rural Growth), a N.G.O in igniting smiles of the underprivileged children by granting permission to place a Donation box next to the exit billing counter of Big Bazaar Darjeeling. Mr. Bony Edwards, the owner of the Glenery's and his family members allowed them to keep their donation box at Glenary's Confectionary Shop, Darjeeling. Mr. Rajan Takkar and Dr. Sudhanshu Kansal and Dr. Rupie Kansal supported to keep MARG donation box at their shop and clinic.

Some of the Bengalis too have left their impact in the district. The Pul Bazar- Bijanbari Suspension Bridge was made under guidance of Dr. Dhirendranath a Bengali doctor, while he served the post of engineer in the Darjeeling Municipality during swadeshi period. He was an important social worker. He never took any fees for medical consultation from the patients rather donated medicine to the poor people. He was a patriotic man. He never tolerated the arrogance of the British. He was one of the pioneers to establish Himalayan Nursery school. He donated handsomely to construct the railing of this school. He expended his sums for charitable works on several occasions.

Dr. Dhirendranath's friend Dr. Khanti was also a social worker. He was a close friend of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. Dr. Khanti studied in London and Vienna. Impressed by the cool climate of Darjeeling, he permanently settled down in the town. He was a versatile genius. Within a short time he learnt Nepali and Tibetan languages to directly deal with the patients. He used to treat the poor without any fees. Later on, he became interested in politics and involved in the Municipal activities. He became the Municipal Commissioner and devoted his life for the improvement of Darjeeling. Both of these doctors are fondly remembered by the people for their dutiful nature. They are said to have responded to the people even at the night during the coolest season.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Dhirendranath's daughter Smt Urmila Sinha has also continued philanthropic activities since the time of her father.

Diamond Oberoi, the owner of New Elgin Hotel, was philanthropist and loved to give donations to the poor. He was also a religious man and a regular visitor in the Mahakal Temple. When Mother Teresa came to Darjeeling he was the first man to go and meet her and help her in her work and function.

The owners of the tea estates in Darjeeling are said to have launched a number of social activities for the betterment of their employees. One such example of the social working of the tea companies may be given here; at Tukvar the garden employed 1476 workers who were provided with all the amenities such as health care, housing and social upliftment. In the last part of the twentieth century a Shiv Gouri temple was built for worship by the local people. In the garden hospital 2025 cases of tubal ligation had been performed. Every year blood donation camp, dental care camp, eye camp, routine immunization were organized. Besides, it also had facility for snake bite treatment.

Jayshree Tea Company's owner provided the following facilities for his workers. These included annual sports & organizing football tournaments, routine immunization programme, periodical laparoscopic camp, health and hygiene awareness programme, afforestation

Apart from their role in the economic growth of Darjeeling, business communities, as a whole evolved an exclusive culture in the hill society. This included their particular

style of speech and writing, styles of dealing with administration and the public and rituals and superstitions relating to business. Usually they acted as a collective body (under Association) to develop the issues like excise, taxation and government control in their own favour. They established their own clubs and hospitals. They are carrying on their community's religious practices and traditions. Usually they worship Ganesh and Laxmi as symbol of wealth and perform some rituals everyday before starting business transactions. They never lent money/ goods at the time of opening of their shop every morning. This system is generally known as '*Bohoni*'. Each businessman was well accounted with this system whether Hindu or Muslim. Good '*Bohoni*' meant to say good luck for whole day. This economic and cultural distinctiveness provided them the identity in the society as a social class whether or not they were bounded by caste, religion or regional background. In this way, the business community in Darjeeling became the champion of the social formation. Thus, while the business groups consistently maintained and strengthened their socio-religious values in this distant place from their native village, they also intermingled with the local society in such a way that helped them to give birth to a multi-cultural society in Darjeeling. They integrated their own native socio-religious values with that of the local traditions of the dominant Nepali community. This sense of conciliation and assimilation of the business communities might in some respects be instrumental in the integration of the hill society and on the other it also helped them considerably in establishing business enterprise. In this way the business communities became an important part of the formation of polity, economy, society, and culture.

### **Conclusion**

There were certainly some difference in the life style of the Indians and the Europeans while some European planters, as we have mentioned were looking after their subordinates and contributing to the development of the town like patriachs, the Europeans in general and invariably kept distance from the locals. They involved generally in large business whether in trade or commerce or plantation, tended to occupy an exclusive status in the social, political and economic hierarchy in Darjeeling. They carried several symbols of social exclusiveness such as luxurious houses in the

upper part of the town (around Mall) and preference for an exclusive elite residential area. They created their own clubs and maintained distinctive food and recreation habits; their dress code was also distinctive. As such in Sonada, at Cedars and Rungmook Tea Gardens had a great influence on the social lives of the British before India's Independence. Before 'The Darjeeling Club' or 'The Planters Club' came to exist, Rungmook was the only place for club activities. The gardens surrounding the place were Ringtong, Margaret's Hope, Balasun, Moondakote, Cedars, Oaks that served as wonderful backdrops to myriad of activities — partying, dancing, polo, tennis, horse riding, etc — a perfect canvas of British ways of life. After the establishment of the 'Planter's Club' and Gymkhana Resort the British made it their sole place of social gatherings where the natives were strictly restricted to enter.

In spite of this, their activities in Darjeeling left an immense influence on the migrants in relation to the socio-economic formation of Darjeeling. They played a pioneering role in the construction of Darjeeling. The socio-economic set up of Darjeeling had been constituted on their own European line. They deeply influenced the social traits of Darjeeling.

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