

CHAPTER III

SOCIO - HISTORICAL SITUATION OF NORTH BENGAL

History of North Bengal :

After getting a cursory view of the overall aspects of the problem, we may now throw our focus on changing context of geographical situation in North Bengal. There was no region or territory designated as North Bengal in pre-colonial Bengal.¹ The present area of North Bengal in ancient period was known by the name of *Pundravardhana*. Alexander Cunningham found the remains of the city of this name in *Mahasthangarh* in the district of Bogura (present Bangladesh).²

The exact area of North Bengal may be stated in the words of R. C. Majumdar - "North of the main branch of the Ganges presently known as the Padma and west of the Brahmaputra, lies the extensive region which embraces the modern Rajsahi division and the State of Cooch Behar."³ The most important part of this area constituted the ancient land of *Pundravardhana*⁴ of which *Varendri*⁵ was a well known district.

North Bengal has at present a distinct identity situated within Jalpaiguri Division of West Bengal. It has also a chequered characteristic feature which is anchoring people of different ethnic lineages in her fold. The emergence of modern North Bengal in 1869 was the stepping stone of the historical growth and development of the so-called North Bengal in the administrative collage of undivided Bengal. The term 'so-called' is used because the terminology 'North Bengal' was not officially used by the colonial government of Bengal. Only the nomenclature may be traced in colloquial use in different contexts.⁶

In the pre-1869 phase the inmates of this region glorified themselves as the inhabitant of the ancient *Pragjyotispur-Kamrupa-Kamtapura* Kingdom. This was specifically visible in the case of people of North Bengal i.e. of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and plains of Darjeeling district. On the other hand, the people of southern North Bengal i.e. Malda, two Dinajpur districts gave expression to their pride in their uttering the names of *Pundravardhana - varendra Gauro* - Kingdom. Two groups of people cherished the

different kind of identity, but after 1869, a new identity was required for their existence. This requirement psychologically first led to the birth of a new kind of identity i.e. 'North Bengal' or '*Uttar Banga*'. However it is already acknowledged that North Bengal has a distinct kind of identity. It does not mean that it is separated from the mainstream Bengali culture.

The Rajsahi division was created in 1832. The head quarter was located at Berhampur. After the Anglo - Bhutan war in 1865 the head quarter was shifted from Berhampur to Rajsahi. The regional historians opined that it was military necessity and security which had exerted pressure on the colonial government to shift the head quarter division from Berhampur to Rajsahi first and then Rajsahi to Jalpaiguri. However, it is that there was no sound reason behind the transfer of the headquarter from Rajsahi to Jalpaiguri in 1876.

The history and people of the plains of North Bengal was to some extent determined and shaped by the geography of the Sub-Himalayan region. We can not separate plain of North Bengal from the genesis and development of Sub-Himalayan region. It is difficult to trace any distinction on the basis of geography between the people residing in Sub-Himalayan region and the people of the plains of North Bengal including neighboring Assam. In fact, the Anthropologists like to delineate the region basically the region of the Indo-Mongoloids.

The Royal Bhutan Government passed a law against the Nepali settlers in southern-east Bhutan. The Bhutan government stated that henceforth the Nepalese of Bhutan will use the language of *Jankha*⁷ and Bhutanese dress. This proposal was rejected by the Nepali settlers in Bhutan. Consequently, lot of Nepali people had been forced to leave Bhutan and took shelter in different parts of North Bengal.

The late 19th and early 20th century saw a steady and systematic extension of British control in the region. For colonial penetration in North Bengal various measures were taken up by the British. The British launched different types of land revenue settlements in North Bengal. Another significant way of colonial penetration in this area was the commencement of plantation industry. The process of the commercialization of agriculture

was the greatest considered stimulus for disseminating colonial hues in North Bengal. Another remarkable channel of colonial penetration in this part of Bengal was undertaking of trade and commerce by the British. Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh are the bordering countries of North Bengal. Situated along the border areas North Bengal carved out a special place of interest in the minds of the British. Besides, Cooch Behar, being the princely state, attracted the special attention of the British. All these factors worked as a catalyst and formed a uniform and viable way for the dissemination of colonial culture and ideas in different parts of North Bengal.

The situation of North Bengal in post independent period has dramatically changed. In the post partition and post-independence era, the important segment of North Bengal was incorporated in East Pakistan. On territorial grounds, North Bengal was also divided into three districts on 17th August 1947. The group one comprised Dinajpur and Malda. The second group consisted of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. And the third group consisted of Native state of Cooch Behar.

Although North Bengal is rich in natural resources but five districts - Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Maldah or Malda, West Dinajpur are industrially backward. Here it is mentionable that West Dinajpur district was divided into North and South Dinajpur in the year of 1992. Other than tea there is no big industry. But the present scenario is entirely changed. At present tea industry of North Bengal is also facing severe crisis. In spite of implementation of land reforms the number of landless agricultural labourers has increased by 59.34%. In West Bengal average literacy rate is 70% whereas the literacy rate in North Bengal is only 59%. The drop-out rate in North Bengal is next to Rajasthan. Irrigation facility of North Bengal is very poor in comparison to South Bengal. The Teesta Project which started in the 70's has not yet been completed. On the other hand Teesta Project has created a large number of development ousters. WBIDC spends 87% for the growth of small scale sector in South Bengal. But North Bengal gets only 13% for the growth of small scale industries.⁸ Most of which are sick industries. As a result regional disparities are increasing day by day. Due to lack of job a large section of young people are migrating to different parts of North India. Above all it has been already mentioned that influx of refugees from East

Bengal has totally changed the demographic pattern of North Bengal. And different indigenous ethnic groups have been marginalized due to the huge refugee influx. Political and economic activities are guided by the immigrants. This marginalization had helped to create commotion among the indigenous people.

Along with the *Gorkha* land and *Kamtapuri* movements the tribals of North Bengal who belongs to Indo-Austic group are clamouring for the introduction of sixth schedule in the tribal dominated Terai - Dooars are under the banner of '*Akhil - Bharatiya - Adibasi - Bikash - Parishad*'. The counter *Gorkha - Janamukti - Morcha*'s claim over *Terai - Dooars Adibasi Bikash Parishad* was formed. The demand for the introduction of sixth schedule has given a new dimension to the on going separatist movement in North Bengal.

The Socio - Economic - Political Culture and Religious Traditions through the Ages :

Following Bipan Chandra we may state that - The construction of Railways had a revolutionary impact on the life, culture and economy of Indian people. North Bengal also was not exception in this respect. The labourers, specially the tribals, for the construction of railway were coming from different parts of Bengal and outside of Bengal.

North Bengal is the home of about 30 distinct tribal groups, which have a population of 14,54,330. This constitutes 33% of the total tribal population of West Bengal. In the second half of the 19th century, many of them have migrated from Chhotonagpur and North Eastern states of the country. The tribal families in North Bengal are traditionally landowning cultivators.⁹ Proper education and skill are lacking among them. Since mid - 1950s, after the abolition of *Zamindari* system, many of the tribal families have actually been becoming landless. A large contingent of tribal work force, comprising of men and women, was brought to construct rail lines in different parts of North Bengal and for tea plantation. The tribes of North Bengal belong to *bhitia*, *lepcha*, *medh*, *lodha*, *oraon*, *santal*, *bedia*, *munda*, *malpaharia*, *mahi* and *koras*. It is said that a group of brokers called *Aarkanthis*¹⁰ collected jobless tribal people from Chhotonagpur, Santal Pargana and Jangalmahal. To draw the attention of those jobless people, the *Arkathis* used to say :

'Daiyare daiya / Siliguri, Naxalbari, Bagdogra, Matigara /

*Bhaiya mora dekhe alobore rijuare sachche kahat.'*¹¹

It means, hello brothers, Siliguri, Naxalbari, Bagdogra, Matigara are very good place to live in. Believe me I myself have visited the places (free translation). The *arkanthis* tried to allure the innocent tribal people with false hope of prosperity and happy life in the tea producing places. Methods of recruitment of labour involved all sorts of unscrupulous practices, deceptions and not infrequently even outright violence to recruit men, women and children. The labours had to do the most back breaking work. Any indiscipline resulted in severe punishment. Coolie women fell victim to the lust of lascivious planters of the tea - garden.¹²

It seems that prostitution was not prevalent among the tribal tea workers in early phase. But gradually the scenario has been changed. Now a days the media reports have revealed that the tribal girls of garden areas of North Bengal are the targets of the traffickers. The ultimate destination of these trafficked women is the brothels shooting up in different parts of the country. There are several push factors behind the adoption of flesh trade by the tribal women of this area.

In the tribal societies women contributes to the work force in a more substantial way than the women in non-tribal societies. But the tribal women's contribution to work force has been confined largely to meeting the needs of their own subsistence agricultural economy and to some extent in the tea gardens of the plantation areas. They work in gardens as labour. The negligence in developing skill among this community through general and technical education has kept them as labour and has prevented their scope for white color jobs. Eventually their economic insufficiency and poverty have forced them to take entry into the world of crime and illegal activities.

The tribal families continue to lose control over land primarily due to land division through inheritance and all the family members take up manual labour mostly in the agriculture or in the plantations. In North Bengal tea estates except for the terai tea gardens, the number of permanent workers has declined considerably both in the hills and dooars. In dooars and hills the number of male workers has declined sharply partly

due to retrenchment and due to closure of some gardens. Closure and lock out of tea gardens have become everyday news. The plantation workers are deprived of their provident fund, gratuity benefit and medical facilities. Role of trade union leaders in the gardens are dubious. Often they positively helped the tea garden owners to declare lock out by their disunity or may be sometime in lieu of financial benefit.¹³ The developmental programmes of the government are not yielding the desired results and as a consequence the tribal men and women continue to be haunted by poverty and the related hazards. The percentage of people living below the poverty level is still very high among the schedule caste and schedule tribe categories.

There are several factors working against female education among tribal communities. From the long past, there is a high gender disparity among the tribal in India. Some psychological factors among the tribal society work against girls' education which is not dissimilar to that of the middle class section. Parents in rural areas in general perceive that education is not necessary for their daughters. It indicates the discrimination between the son and daughter. The tribal parents consider the sons as their old age support but any economic gain of an educated girl would go to her future husband and husband's family. So they think it is better to engage the girls in the domestic chores. The working mothers keep their small children under the supervision of the girl child.

Security is another big concern of parents. In rural areas the schools could be located in areas far from their home. Communication problem, absence of proper transport system, problem of sanitary facilities in schools are the major crisis for the grown up girls and stand like as tumbling block on the way of their development.

As an outcome the incidence of drop out is much higher among the girls, although the enrolment rate at the primary level is more or less same for the boys and girls. The missing link between education and job opportunity, alien medium of education, alien syllabus, high rate of failure in annual examination, parents' indifference, inability to avail the scope of private tuition, practice of early marriage, over dependence on garden for jobs are together responsible for the drop out of girls. The tribal girls are withdrawn early from schools to be engaged in domestic chores or married out early. Most of the parents are illiterate and unaware so they never motivate their girls for education. In the

lack of supportive culture and favourable atmosphere in the family the girls of the tribal community often drop out at primary or junior high school levels. Even to collect half the regular fees is not easy for the tribal families. In this condition they consider continuing with education is a luxury and the drop out girls readily take up the job as wage labourer in tea gardens. Thus the tradition of exploitation of the girls continues in the region unabated and functions as a push factor in adopting the primitive profession by the girls.

The tribal society is highly patriarchal. So gender disparity which is very common in this community, is clearly reflected in the economic right of the women. The girl has no property right. The patriarchal tribal society strongly denies the land right to girl. With their marriage the women lose all rights on the jobs or the retirement benefits of their parents.¹⁴

Since the last decade, both agriculture and industry have been facing some kind of stagnation and alienation, and fragmentation of tribal land continues to be a problem. It is creating unemployment among the tribal young generation. They are forced to leave their native place in search of job opportunities. For the girls their low access to higher education and technical education reduces their employability. The sudden closure of the tea gardens in this region has been leading to large scale exodus from the gardens to the far away places and to the metropolises even to the other states. Beside closure and lock out, tea garden workers are afraid of another danger. In 1997 West Bengal Government gave permission to establish housing complex ('*Uttarayan*', in Matigara, Siliguri) on the 406.64 acre plot of *Chandmoni* Tea Estate land. As a result plantation workers are evicted and they were employed under the construction company. It has been known from the former workers of the garden who are now working at '*Uttorayan*' as care takers. Sometimes the exodus are misguided by some people and push into the world of crime and darkness. The media reports show that most of the tribal girls are being lured away with the promise of job opportunity.

Collapse of the rural economic structures has left people with no employment options and that has increased rural-urban migration. In a subsistence economy it is always the choice between work and starvation. The women suffer the most as every bit of their

labour is put to use in order to make best use of whatever income opportunity come by their way.¹⁵ From the studies of some tribal communities in North Bengal it has been drawn that the social locale of the tribal women in their respective communities is largely determined by their value as labour, their ability to work and earn for their family even at the low wage and inspite of other exploitation at their place of work. Some women are predominantly involved in *hariya* (native rice liquor) making. They are seen to sell *hariya* in local *hat* or market. It has been seen that the tribal women are engaged in smuggling of poppy seed, betel nut, velvet from Nepal in guise of passengers in public buses in the route of Siliguri - Naxalbari - Panitanki. When they are caught by the custom, the officers bit them publicly.¹⁶

In the terai dooars region malnutrition, starvation deaths, diseases, joblessness, child trafficking dominate the life of tribal people. Modes of women subjugation in tribal society by way of over exploitation of women labour, feminization of low rank works with low pay and low status, treatment of women as objects of sex, commodification of women by the market forces, marginalization of women in decision making, disrespect and mal treatment meted out to women in everyday life in the family and social space are very common and clearly visible.

The misconceptions and frustrations of the parents, misunderstanding between mother and alcoholic father creep into the personality of the tribal daughter and thus ruin the possibility of blossoming woman self. The tribal women are not protected by their men like their upper caste sisters, and have been often forced into prostitution due to situational pressure.

Besides all these things the family indebtedness, marriage expenditure, dowry system, practice of witchcraft in tribal society push the girls into the life of darkness.

During the long past the foreigners specially the British showed interest to invest their capital to the tea gardens of this zone. They did not take their family with them. In such a lonely atmosphere of jungle, mosquito and malaria, they brought beautiful girls from the coolie line (quarter of workers in tea garden) for entertainment. They looked upon the male coolies as the instruments of labour, and upon the female coolies as

instruments for the gratification of their passions. Occasionally few of them married those women. We find such an reflection in the Bengali film ‘*Chameli Memsahab*’.

Like the tribals the *Rajbanshis* are also closely attached to the heart of North Bengal. They are the indigenous community of this area. The socio-economic as well as the cultural history of North Bengal can not be imagined without studying the *Rajbanshis*. Basically they are the man of cultivation. Through the ages they are giving their best to moulding North Bengal.

Lahankari song of *Rajbanshis* prevails in Terai, Dinajpur, Malda, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, the adjacent areas of Siliguri and bank of Tista river. This song is also called *paharia* as it is usually sung outside the house for its nature of illicit love. The word *lang* means *upapati* or paramour and *langli* is *upapatni* or concubine. The synonyms of *lang* are *soki*, *bondhuya*, *bondhu*, *kalar chaan*, *bapoi*, *dada* etc.

The *lahankari* song or *langla langlir gaan* is as follows :

‘Aaji chalot phole chalkumra ro he

maai jhikot phole kodu

aaji dekha dekhi maanchhi hon o ge

oho maai pore khabe modhu.’¹⁷

The song indicates the indecent gesture of *Chalkumra* or one kind of pumpkin on the roof as a young girl and *kodu* or gourd as a young boy which is condemned and prohibited to all (free translation). The above quoted song is called *pahariya*, which means song of outside the home. It is one category of *Lahankari* song.

The following proverb and songs of *Rajbanshi* society denote that the extra marital relation and adultery existed in this community.

‘Avagini addas kore

Jadumoni dhokloso na kore.’¹⁸

The meaning is that the fond mother advises the son, the spoilt son heeds them none (free translation).

'Pubiya poschiya bay nore bhatar hari

Ekta maiya pushir na pare

*Aaro chanday aari.'*¹⁹

It means, abject poverty is his lot, wind shakes the cooking pot, can not maintain the single wife, still runs after a widow to add to the vice (free translation).

In North Bengal, earlier the *Jotdars* and the *zamindars* had a strong hold. They belonged to an affluent class. Their oppression on the peasants had been narrated in several writings on *Tebhaga* movement in North Bengal. The movement burst out in the region in 1946. At the last phase of the second world war, peasants uprising namely *Tebhaga* and *Adhiyar*²⁰ had taken a dangerous shape in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Malda. The *jotdars* extracted a huge revenue from the poor farmers. In *haats* (local weekly markets) and fairs, they collected tax from the peasants and the traders. They appointed the prostitutes in those markets and fairs to plunder money from the people. The prostitutes used to live in the tent at the market place. There are references of such type of incident at the fairs of Patiram in Balurghat and Bonchaganj in Thakurganj sub-division.²¹ Besides this, the *Tolabati* movement extended to Kanthalbari haat, Uliipur haat (Kashimbazar), Lalmonir haat (Murshidabad), Mustafy haat (near Teesta area), Lohakunchi haat (near Setai area of Cooch Behar), Laalbag haat at Rangpur. The *zamindars* and *jotdars* of Dinajpur district sacked the women from the farmers' house.

When the movement had taken a vigorous form police started to arrest the people who participated in the movement. Even police did not escape the women. They raped women, destroyed crops, beat the peasants. The women were hidden by their men at the time of police raid. The *jotdars* and the police jointly started their tyranny upon the peasants. Somewhere people left their houses and land.

In 1943, black market and stock market swallowed the country. Famine spread out, people lost lives in starvation and epidemic. Debiganj, Boda, Panchagarh came under the grip of famine. Radhanath Das (the communist) had written :

‘Chhaoya poya morilo, bou beti ijor (Ijjat) dilo

Pora peter jalayre jwolo.’²²

It means, the children are dying, women are selling their chastity and they are suffering from starvation (free translation).

Not only the poor people but also few *jotdars* left their ancestral house. Some of them could not face the aggressiveness of the revolt and the others were in high indebtedness for their luxury, recreation and lawsuit.

There was prevalence of sexual abuses by the land holding *Jotdars* and *Zamindars* in this part of North Bengal. A report published in the ‘*Mihir O Sudhakar*’, Kolkata, dated 30th March, 1900 would corroborate the exact situation that prevailed. It was reported :

‘A *Raja* of North Bengal is in the habit of amusing himself in the company of wives of his *raiyats*. Every evening more than a hundred women of the village repair to the *Raja*’s palace with their beddings, after finishing their toilet. The conduct of the *Raja* has displeased the village people, but there seems to be known remedy for his vicious indulgence. Most of the women, who have been corrupted by the *Raja*, are *Musalmans*, and the temptation of money and ornaments has proved too much for them and their guardians. To tell the truth, the husbands and fathers of these women are encouraging them to gratify the *Raja*’s lust. Corruption has entered the *Raja*’s family, and while he passes the entire night in company of these women, one of his wives carries on an intrigue with one of his servants. The *Raja*’s son also is extravagant, and is wasting money. The estate has incurred a debt of about five or six lakhs of rupees.’²³

The song ‘*Ulto Bhutan Jatra*’ is very relevant in this context. The song is :

‘Bonuser haat dhorì Omesh Votanot jay

Gona Dhena ebar beti chhayoa pay.’²⁴

The story behind the song is, *jotdar Ramesh* started his journey for Bhutan with his wife (*bonus*) due to the horrible condition of the *tolabati* movement. Having seen this, the most eligible bachelor (*dhenā*) called *Gona* is very happy (free translation). Because as that only the rich people had the right to pay the dowry or *Kanyapon* and get marry.

Buying and selling of animals in the market is very common. Simultaneously the buying and selling of people was very primitive. There is a proverb :

‘*Chhele noshto haate, bou nostho ghate*’

It means, male are spoiled at local market as the *veshyas* are available there (free translation).

In the medieval period slaves were sold in the market. Prostitutes were also sold in the market or *haat* and in the fairs on any local festivals. Prostitutes were gathered in those places as a part of entertainment and amusement. This culture is not uncommon in North Bengal. We find the reference of such kind of amusement like singing, dancing which prevailed in the local *haat* in the Bengali novel ‘*Tistaparer Brittanto*’ by Debesh Roy. Here the novelist mentions about Kranti Haat, Changmari Haat, Madari Haat (Jalpaiguri). The term ‘*Heto Veshya*’ (prostitute of market) came from this concept. A group of women came in bullock carts, stood with peculiar make up in their face - in market, temple, fairs wherever their presence inevitable.²⁵ The *subochonir Brotokotha*, *Dayobayor kotha* also refers that girls were sold in the different market of North Bengal.

Prostitution in the name of religion or temple prostitution (*Devdasi* system) was existed in North Bengal in the past. *Bangarh Prasasti*, Deopara inscription, terracotta plaque, *kalhan’s Rajtarangini* are testimonies to the practice of temple prostitution in different parts of ancient *Pundravardhana*. Later it will be discussed in detail.

Dhritikanta Lahiri in his reminiscent work ‘*Haatir Boi*’, has furnished an information which is important for writing a social history. He remembers his days of childhood in Moymonsingh (Bangladesh). He observes - ‘..... each and every estates had their own man power, upper class employees, middle class employees, and the countless others, even far

from the house they had their own brothel. In local language it was called *Khandepara*.....²⁶

We find some references of outrage from several reliable evidence e.g. weekly. It was complained that a brisk traffic in immorality was going on in Calcutta and its neighbourhood. Young girls married and unmarried, were being bought and sold by the prostitutes.²⁷ Police also created problem. A *Gurkha* woman was kept locked up all night in the police station at Silchar as she refused to gratify the immoral desires of some *Babus* (police officers apparently).²⁸

Surprisingly an enquiry into the woman's complaint has been made by a sub-inspector, and the police defense is that the woman was locked up for being drunk. She is now threatened with a prosecution under section 211. '*Power and Guardian*', the weekly paper appeals to the Chief Commissioner, who alone can vindicate the cause of justice in a case like this.²⁹

The case of outrage on a girl by some police constables, which was reported by the '*Rangpur Varta*' on 1st June, 1901.³⁰

The '*Bikash*' (name of the news paper) says³¹ that "at the night of the 30th last a young widow, named *Chintamoni*, aged 15 or 16 years, was kidnapped from the house of her father's neighbor in village Chikanikandi under the Galachipa thana, in the Backerganj district. The next day, after a long search, she was found in the house of one Hazif Munshi in the neighbouring Kachua village. In their depositions before the sub-inspector of the Galachipa thana, Chintamoni and some witness charged Totamber Ali, the son of Mehar Ali Jamader, of village Chikanikandi and Altapaddin Ahmed, the son in law of the same, with having kidnapped and ravished her with the help of others. But for some unknown reason the sub-inspector reported the case in a C form. Against this an application was made to the Deputy Magistrate of Patnakhali, who ordered the sub-inspector to submit an A form. This enraged the ruffians, who, on the 28th *Jaistha* (Bengalee month) following forced themselves into the house of Chintamoni's father, severally beat him and went away with the girl. Some of the offenders have been challenged. Hafiz Ali and some others have absconded. Chintamoni is still missing."

Is not Eastern Bengal a part of the British empire? History says that in the days of the Muhammadan rule in India people having beautiful wives and sisters could not sleep quietly at night. But should such tales of outrage and oppression repeat themselves under the British rule? According to the *shastras*, the country and the empire in which the honour and purity of the sex do not remain inviolate should be far shaken. Week after week accounts of outrages of women are lacerating the hearts of the Indians live under the British Govt.? What can be more shameful than that in the enlightened twentieth century the subjects of the most civilized British Emperor can not live in security with their family.³² These incidences depicted the picture of the contemporary society where women security was a big question.

The polygamy of the *kulin brahmans* is one of the most opprobrious practices of the Hindu system. Certain individuals, as being the descendants of men who were eight centuries ago learned in the *Vedas*, and possessed other excellent qualities, are privileged to roam about the country and marry as many wives as they please, and then to abandon them, to the perils of society. Such a practice went on the pretext of religion.

According to the report of the '*Hindu Patriot*'³³ '..... the evils which arise from the subject (*kulinism* and polygamy), are various and countless. How many families of high reputation have been ruined and how many women of noble blood have gone beyond the *paths* (way) of virtue is beyond description.

Selling of daughters (*kanya bikroy or bacheya khaoya*³⁴) prevailed in this locality. Specially the *Brahmins* of less respected caste and the *Kayastha* of high caste sold their sisters and daughters to the aged, octogenarian persons for the sake of money.

Even women were lost in gambling by the men. This has been practiced from the time of *Manasamangal*³⁵:

'Kormophole harailam sobdhonjon

Jeï dekhe sei bole juyar teton

Emon darun khela eraite na pari

Kolyokar khelay harailam nijo naari.'

It means, for addiction in gambling he lost his all properties including his wife (free translation).

Locational Advantage for Prostitution :

A survey of the local literatures of the development of North Bengal makes it clear that this region in the past was nothing but a mofussil with a few population. Tea plantation, extension of railway and afforestation program brought vigorous changes in the society and economy of the region. Strategically this region was important from the beginning but the partition of India (1947) was a turning point in the History of North Bengal. The large number of countless refugee people migrated to this part of Bengal being uprooted from their original settlement in the Eastern part of erstwhile Bengal. Refugees and displaced women, uprooted from their homes and countries by war, internal strife, or natural catastrophe are vulnerable to violence both as a result of the surrounding problem and because of their dependency on outsiders for relief provisions. In addition to this a large number of evacuees from Assam and the neighboring states further enhanced the economic and social crisis in this zone. After the Chinese aggression (1962) great changes took place in this area. It is relevant to mention that the *Bangalee Khedao* movement (expel the Bengali people) is still going on in Assam.

The locality attracted the attention of outsiders as a business spot for its three T i.e. tea, timber and tourism. The military importance of this region can't be ignored. The introduction of market economy and globalization concept make a further change in the region. The existence of long international and inter-state borders within this region, the economically weaker sections within the community namely the SC, ST, Muslims and the other community groups living below the poverty line (B.P.L), presence of a large number of patron class, constant mobility of people due to trade, tourism, good transport system through National Highways, National Railway Network connecting different parts of India combined together are creating a peculiar suitable atmosphere for flourishing sex business in North Bengal. The factors of physical charms of the hill girls from different parts of Darjeeling and Nepal for the growing flesh business in this area can not be

ignored. From the long past Nepal and the hill region of North Bengal are playing the hinter land in this business. A very large proportion of a women eventually find themselves trapped in the sex trade within North Bengal or at distant cities. Certain parts of North Bengal that adjoin international borders have served as a conduit for the trans-border trafficking of women and children from Nepal and Bangladesh, particularly in order to feed the sex trade in India.³⁶ A large number among these victims belong to economically and socially depressed groups and communities, including various tribal groups residing in North Bengal. Women from this region are also trafficked as forced brides for marriage with the grooms of states like Rajasthan and Haryana, as they have not been able to find a nuptial partner because of disparity in male female ratio of the population in these states. Detail study of media reportage on trafficking of women and children covering the North Bengal region reveals that the maximum number of victims rescued is from the district of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur.³⁷

Trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a growing phenomenon all over the world. In Western Europe alone, the International Organization for Migration estimates that around 500,000 women per year are trafficked from poorer regions to the affluent part of the world. The present condition of tea industry in North Bengal leaves almost no doubt to see North Bengal as a poorer region. A very large portion of such women of the poverty stricken regions eventually find themselves trapped in the sex trade at distant cities. It also appears from the current media reports that certain parts of North Bengal have become an operational base for the brokers of prostitution and their agents. North Bengal is a region where they easily trap the victims. North Bengal is a region from where they traffic the girls for flesh trade to the other parts of the country. This region thus appears to have become a safe heaven for traffickers who can usually carry out their operations without the immediate fear of detection. Ms. Rangu Souria, secretary of *Kanchanjangha Uddhar Kendra*, an organization that works in Darjeeling districts against girls trafficking has considered North Bengal as the den of the traffickers. Ms. Ruchira Gupta, whose documentary film deals with the search of few girls trafficked from the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri district said that the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts are the most favourite destination for the traffickers.³⁸ Flesh trade run by women in broad daylight is rampant

in Islampur (North Dinajpur). With its 227 km. International border with Bangladesh and 206 km. inter-state border with Bihar, North Dinajpur has thus become a prime transit corridor, since it is well connected through roads by means of the arterial National Highway 34 and also offers easy access to the National Railway network through the adjacent city of Kishanganj on the Bengal-Bihar border (corroboration is given in Appendix E).

It appears that the following routes are followed by the traffickers in North Bengal - (a) Bangladesh to Cooch Behar, Cooch Behar to Jalpaiguri, Jalpaiguri to Siliguri, Siliguri to Kathmandu, Kathmandu to Dubai (b) Bindu to Jhalong, Jhalong to Chalsa, Chalsa to Siliguri and (c) Jaigaon to Lolegaon, Lolegaon to Kalchini, Kalchini to Alipurduar, Alipurduar to Siliguri, Siliguri to Kishanganj and Kishanganj to Bihar.

For the scenic beauty of North Bengal, tourism brings the foreign currency in every year. The tourist lodge, resorts, hotels are mushroomed in dooars and plain. The line hotel business beside the National High Way is equally profitable. And the business of prostitution is running in these places without any care.

Physical survey of the districts of North Bengal :

DARJEELING :

The district of Darjeeling consists of four sub-divisions, viz. Darjeeling Sadar, Kalimpong, Kurseong, and Siliguri. Geographically the first three sub-divisions are hill regions while Siliguri falls in the foothills. In the north of Darjeeling Sikkim is situated, in the south is North Dinajpur, in the east is Bhutan and Jalpaiguri and in the west Nepal is situated. Historically, the well known district of Darjeeling today was parts of two kingdoms during the British period - the kingdom of Sikkim and Bhutan. Following wars and treaties signed with these two kingdoms, this territory came under the control of the British Empire in India.

“When the East India Company in 1835 first acquired the nucleus of the Darjeeling district from the *Raja* of Sikkim, it was almost entirely under forest and practically uninhabited ... this hill tract of 138 square miles contained a population of 100.”³⁹

The present territory of Darjeeling came under British occupation during the nineteenth century in three stages, In 1835, by a deed of grant signed on 1st February, the *Raja* of Sikkim ceded a portion of the hills to the British to help them to set up a sanatorium. The second stage followed war with Sikkim, which resulted in the annexation of 'Sikkim Morang' or 'Terai' at the foot of the hills. The third stage was marked by a war between British India and Bhutan, which led to the annexation of the hill tract to the east of Tista, west of Ne-chu and De-chu rivers and south of Sikkim. Finally Anglo - Bhutanese war was ended by the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865. The victorious British power acquired Kalimpong which was transferred to Darjeeling in 1866.⁴⁰

The decision of the Company to develop Darjeeling as a hill resort gave the opportunity to neighbouring peoples to immigrate and take part in the development. The original inhabitants, probably Lepchas, were rapidly outnumbered by settlers from Nepal and Sikkim. By the year 1850, Dr. Campbell, the first superintendent reported that the number of inhabitants had risen to 10,000. The rapid influx was noted by Sir Joseph Hooker when he visited Darjeeling about the time. When in 1869 a rough census was taken of the inhabitants of this tract, the total was found to be over 22,000.

Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker appreciated the scenic beauty and healthy atmosphere in the following lines :

“I believe that children’s faces afford as good an index as any to the healthfulness of a climate, and in no part of the world is there a more active, rosy and bright young community than as Darjeeling. The most eloquent descriptions I have read fail to convey to my mind eye the forms and colours of snowy mountain, or to my imagination the sensations and impression that rivet my attention to these sublime phenomena when they are present in reality; and I shall not therefore obtrude any attempt of the kind upon my reader. The latter has probably seen the Swiss Alps, which, though barely possessing half the sublimity, extent of height of the Himalaya, are yet far more beautiful.’’⁴¹

The above portion proves that the foreigners including the British officials were attracted by Darjeeling and came here repeatedly.

Campbell had written in his diary that the settlement of Darjeeling advanced rapidly, its population having risen from not more than 100 souls in 1839 to about 1000 in 1849 chiefly by the emigration from the neighbouring state of Nepal in which slavery is still prevalent.

This increase of population in Darjeeling was mainly connected with the development of tea industry and the opportunities for wasteland cultivation. The tea plantation, beginning in 1850s, increased to 74 estates covering 14,000 acres in 1872, 153 estates and 30,000 acres in 1881, and 177 estates and 45,000 acres in 1891. While the labourers for the tea estates in the Terai plains were mostly tribal from Bihar, in the hills the great majority of the workers were from Nepal. Once the tea industry developed, this led to the further economic activities and created demand for more immigrants.⁴²

From the preceding account it will be observed that Darjeeling owes a large proportion of its population to the advent of immigrants. Barely half of the inhabitants have, in fact, been born in the district. In the Terai it received numerous settlers from the adjoining districts of Purnea and Jalpaiguri, who engaged in cultivation, and a large number of coolies from Chhotonagpur and the Santal Parganas, who were attracted by the wages given in the tea gardens. The migration from Nepal was still continued in subsequent years. Even in 1931, out of a total population of 3,19,635 fifty nine thousands sixteen had come from Nepal, in addition to the vast number of offspring from the earlier waves of migration from Nepal, who constituted the majority.⁴³

The peaceful Himalayan region of West Bengal, with a Nepalese majority, is largely known for its tea gardens and scenic beauty. It is a major tourist attraction in the country. Tea, Tourism and Timber, the three Ts form the backbone of the hill economy. Darjeeling's weak point is agriculture, as a comparatively much smaller proportion of the total area is available for cultivation. The topography in the hills does not favour the development of a highly productive agriculture, though the hardworking local farmers try

to make the most of the difficult terrain. Like the rest of West Bengal, or of India, the majority of the people in the hills of Darjeeling are poor, and their basic needs of food, shelter, clothing and jobs are far from satisfied.

The indebtedness of the people of Darjeeling is one of the most serious economic problems. This is due to the reckless manner in which they contract debts, owing to the customary obligation to bear heavy expenditure on various festivals like marriage, other ceremonies even at the time of funeral. They are very much fond of drinking probably for cold climate. They drink far more than the people of any other part of Bengal. They are also addicted to gambling and the other improvident habits. They turn for a loan to the money lenders, the Marwari, as they locally called *Kanya* or *Kaya*.⁴⁴ Where there is no house or other immovable property, they are to give money lenders their ornaments, jewelry and other valuable as a pledge.

There is a brewery at Sonada, called Victoria Brewery. There is also a small brewery attached to the St. Mary's Seminary at Kurseong, at which beer is brewed for the consumption of the inmates.

Until the recent happenings, the four major communities in the hills and plains of Darjeeling district - the Nepalis, the Tribals, the Bengalees and the original inhabitants (*Mech, Rajbanshi, Lepcha, Bhutia* etc.) lived peacefully and amicably. There had been no instance of any major communal tension between these communities. But unfortunately the scenario is being changed, which have a very obvious impact on society.

Siliguri is located in the Northern part of West Bengal with locational advantages and proximity to Countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, China and Bhutan and states like Bihar, Assam, Sikkim and other Northern Eastern States. The importance of Siliguri, located on the plains of Darjeeling, the largest urban centre in North Bengal, is largely derived from its proximity to Darjeeling hills, its trade in timber, tea and tourism and the transport needs. Siliguri is in the midst of region with strong agriculture, horticulture, floriculture base. A major railway junction, Siliguri provides the living link between the hills and the plains, and its university, medical institutions and other facilities cater to various needs of the common people of the locality as well as the large number of

people of the hill area. The International Air Port is situated at Bagdogra. With the opening up of Nathula Pass and Fulbari International Check Post trade to China, Bangladesh and Nepal can be increased the importance of this place many fold. The symbolic relationship between these two areas is emphasized by its timber industry, tea auction centre and road - rail linkage. These two economies are closely integrated also in terms of the provisions supplied through Siliguri to the hills.

After the introduction of market economy and globalization concept Siliguri is changing very fast. Simultaneously its culture is being also changed. It is one of the most important business marts all over India as well as the junction for communication. It will be not exaggerated if we take Siliguri informally as the capital of North Bengal. Not only that but Siliguri, the subdivision of Darjeeling district is also the second biggest metropolis (after Kolkata) in West Bengal. It is also the gateway to north eastern part of India.

The region shares international boundaries with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. This serves as a transit area for trafficking. And from the ancient period this hill zone is considered as the hinter land in the field of prostitution. Such charming women suggestively were from the mid Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan regions and mostly belonged to the *Gandharva* race.⁴⁵ From the *Brahmanic* period, some of the *Gandharva* women used to come down from their mountainous abode to the principal cities of northern India to seek amatory adventures often coupled with the material prospect. These girls belonging fair complexioned hill tribes were apt in the art of dancing and singing as they were trained in this trade from their childhood.⁴⁶ In India's red light districts, the demand is growing for Nepali women and girls as prostitutes, especially virgins with fair skin and Mongolian features. Nepali women and girls are largely segregated in brothels located in what are known to their Indian counterparts and their customers as '*Nepali Kothas*' or compounds. However, the border with Bhutan via Jaigaon and major entry points at Kakarvita, Pasupatinagar with Nepal had made it a vulnerable location. In the famous tourist spot Mirik, the trafficked women of Nepal are first brought via Pasupatinagar in Darjeeling and finally huddled out of Siliguri to other destinations.

In North Bengal, New-Jalpaiguri had the unique destination of having two international borders - Bhutan in the north and Bangladesh in the south west. Hidden Sex work is on the rise in this area, as a fast developing tourist centre. Resorts and hotels double up as centre for sex work. The presence of two BSF camps and high mobility from nearby villages adds to the traffic. The flats and rented houses are available in Siliguri town for sex business.⁴⁷

The British officials, tea planters, engineers, office workers and others who were sent to this part of the country by the British East India company or the government had set in a process of peoples' settlement of mixed culture and variant economic activities for livelihood. The new market economy now in fact is causing sport of sex business in the area. With the urbanization in this area the *jotdars*, doctors, lawyers, railway employees came to settle here. At the period of *Mukti Juddha* (liberation war) in Bangladesh the evacuees also started to come.

Earlier the affluent class of this region used to keep *upapatni* or kept. The *Babu* culture of Kolkata did not extend towards North Bengal. The *natchnewali* or dancers (prostitutes) gathered in Matigara, Fansidewa, Fulbari *haat* (local weekly market).

The coolies of the tea garden were given salary at the weekend. Having get the wages they rushed to the local market. Their main attraction was *hariya* (*chulai* or one kind of wine). In the *haats* of Lebongspar, Dhuturiya, Pandas, Singen *hariya* or *dhenomod* (one kind of wine) was very popular.

The British tea planters married the Nepali and tribal girls. The physical appearance of their children witnessed that. The British employees had given them their bungalows when they left.⁴⁸

The sex business or prostitution in any form in this part of Bengal flourished with its distinctive features. The women associated with so called immoral works of sex trade and living in the then capital of colonial India. The main centre of urban culture were depicted off and on in the Bengali literature, drama, *Jatra* etc. from which we can get some ideas about the contemporary society and its look out to those women. But the question of North Bengal women alike is enveloped in obscurity. The socio-economic

structure of North Bengal, planters seduced life in the tea gardens, surplus resources in the hands of the land owning *jotdar* class and *mahajans*,⁴⁹ chill penury of the tribal labours, it may be stated in no uncertain terms, that acted as a push behind the growth of such sex business here. The dynamics of the problem have a different characteristic in this semi-urban semi-rural settlement of North Bengal. Besides the single most native state of Bengal i.e. Cooch Behar existed in this northern part of Bengal.

Frequent external raids and capture of girls from the territory, practice of slavery or some other kind of traditional vestiges resembling feudal culture made the situation to a large extent different. All the districts situated within the jurisdiction of previously Rajsahi division and later within the Jalpaiguri division needs to be considered as separate area of study in a sequence.

JALPAIGURI :

According to the Jalpaiguri district gazetteers, jalpaiguri is said to have derived its name from the olive trees (*jalpai* in Bengal) which grows in the town and were seen even in 1900. The suffix *guri* means a place. The name might as well as be associated with *Jalpes*, the presiding deity (*siva*) of the entire region who had been in the minds of men there from time immemorial.

On March, 1894, Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker arrived Jalpaiguri and he described - 'Jeelpigoree, a large straggling village near the banks of Teesta, a good way south of the forest'.⁵⁰

David Field Rennie had narrated the Pre-Bhutan war condition of Jalpaiguri 'The station and village of Jalpaigorie are prettily situated, and straggle along the bank of the Teesta for some two miles. All the houses, European and Native, are built of the same material - namely mats supported on framework of bamboo'.⁵¹

Jalpaiguri district formally constituted in 1869, had two different arrangements for administration. There were several internal and external factors which made Jalpaiguri the head quarter of Rajsahi Division. The external factors was the presence of Bhutan in the northern frontier of Bengal. To keep watch upon Bhutan's movement, Jalpaiguri was the

best place. It was not possible on the part of the British Government to watch the movements of Bhutan from Berhampur or Rajsahi. Apart from this, Rajsahi was not well connected by the Railways. The second external factor was the growing interest of the colonial government towards the affairs of North East India. Jalpaiguri was on the way of Assam, the gateway of North East India. So the selection of Jalpaiguri as a headquarter of the Rajsahi division was strategically and commercially compulsive one.

The internal factor was also interesting one. The colonial government's policy was to set up a new class of people in the new centres who will not challenge their social and political legitimacy. In the traditional town or urban centres they found a kind of social challenge from the caste dominated elite. Naturally, we observe that in all places the East India Company or the colonial government had promoted the cause of the foundation of new towns in the early phases. For example, they had preferred new Darjeeling not traditional Kalimpong town, not traditional Malda but new Englishbazar, not Murshidabad but Berhampur. Another internal factor was the interests of the European planters and businessmen. All these factors led to the phenomenal growth of population in Jalpaiguri district. None of the districts of colonial India had experienced such rapid growth of her demographic atlas. What is more interesting that even after the passing of the one hundred thirty seven years, of North Bengal districts; Jalpaiguri has had highest influx of population as per the census 1991 from the other districts of West Bengal as well as from other states and countries.⁵²

In case of post colonial phase, we use the vocabulary 'influx', in the colonial period we use the vocabulary 'migration'. Whatever the difference in vocabulary, the basic issue remains same i.e. the unprecedented growth of population in Jalpaiguri district. The population consisted overwhelmingly of Hinduized and Islamized autochthons and immigrant tribals like Oraons, Mundas and Santals. They constituted the basic producers, while Bengali Hindus and Muslims immigrating from east Bengal dominated services and professional occupations and the Marwaris, wholesale and retail trade. Thus the society in Jalpaiguri was a plural society marked by considerable socio-cultural differentiations. The closing decades of the century saw a constant stream of immigration from the neighbouring Cooch Bihar State and Rangpur district. At the western Dooars end, pull

factors operated in the form of low rent, easy availability of land and fertility of soil. Those migrants who had necessary resources settled as *jotdars* and *chukanidars*. But most of the immigrants were impoverished and were absorbed as *adhiars*.

As a result of the hectic economic activities, Jalpaiguri had been emerging as a vibrant economic district in the impartitioned mofussil Bengal. The most distinguishing economic feature was the introduction and consolidation of the European owned and controlled tea plantation economy. Though the agrarian society of Jalpaiguri consisted of *zamindars*, big *jotdars*, small *jotdars* and *adhiars*. The combination of large landholding with money lending and grain dealing and also trading activities made the big *jotdars* a formidable power in the social and economic life in the country side of Jalpaiguri. D. H. E. Sunder mentioned - 'The Muhamadans of Duars, originally, belonged to the adjoining state of Wuch Bihar as also to Purnea, Rangpur, Dinajpur and regulation portion of Jalpaiguri'. That the outsiders exploited the honest local residents of Jalpaiguri is known the letter of lawyer Esarat Ali and book of Charu Chandra Sanyal referred.⁵³

The first penetration of capitalist enterprise in the Western Dooars in the form of tea plantation took place in 1874.⁵⁴ Subsequent years of the nineteenth century saw rapid expansions and large growth of the tea plantations and large growth of tea garden labour force from Chhotonagpur, Santal Parganas. Those years also witnessed the extension of roads, railways and communications. The Jalpaiguri town was linked to Calcutta and Siliguri by what was called in the 1870s the North Bengal State Railways (later known as the Eastern Bengal State Railways) as far back as 1878. All these helped to open up markets and *bandars* (port) for agricultural products - rice, jute, tobacco, mustard etc. Some of the important *bandars* and markets were - Jorpakri, Maynaguri, Falakata, Madarihat, Buxa, Tetulia, Rajnagar, Saldanga, Deviganj, Bhotpatti, Bakali, Belakoba and Jalpaiguri town. Domohani grew as a railway settlement with a small loco-shop of the Bengal Dooars railway. All these provided stimulus for commercialization of Jalpaiguri.

The present district of Jalpaiguri consists of the western dooars, annexed in 1865 after the war with Bhutan, and the *thanas* (police stations) of Jalpaiguri (formerly Fakirganj), Boda, Rajganj (formerly Sanyasikata or Siliguri) and Patgram, separated from the Rangpur district in 1869 and 1870. It is bounded on the north by the district of

Darjeeling and the independence state of Bhutan, on the south of the district of Rangpur and the state of Cooch Behar, on the west by the district of Darjeeling, Purnea and Dinajpur and on the east by the eastern dooars, which forms part of the district of Goalpara. Alipurduar the headquarters of the subdivision of the same name and the second large settlement, acquired the status of non-municipal town as late as 1951.

Jalpaiguri town deserves detailed consideration. The place had been the headquarters of the *Raikots* since the second decade of the eighteenth century. The Baikunthapur Estate of the *Raikots* consists with a few portion of Dooars, *sadar*, entire Rajganj block of present Jalpaiguri district, Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling district, Boda of Rangpur district, Patgram, Nababganj, Mortaganj, Jibanpur, Bhabanipur, chitli, Boldibathan, Dullapur, Pirganj, Kishoreganj, and Mahiganj. The entire Estate extended to nine hundred and half square mile. But it grew and gained importance during the period of British rule. At the southern part of the present town of Jalpaiguri, British government established cantonment. Another British cantonment was established at the irrigation banglow in Falakata. Jalpaiguri witnessed a lot of momentous incidents. Various socio-political activities and movements took place in the district. For example, the social mobility movement among the *Rajbansi* Hindus, short lived *Tana-Bhagat* movement, *Tebhaga* movement in Debiganj - Pachagar - Boda in 1946-47, Dooars Plantation Organization movement etc.

The records of Jalpaiguri Municipality state that after the partition of the country the countless evacuees crossed the border and took shelter into the refugee camps in Jalpaiguri. From 1946 onward murder, rape, religious conversion, kidnapping, plundering became the regular incidence of day to day life. In the Bengali novel titled 'Tistaparer Brittanta' the novelist had depicted the picture of a rape; how the distressed homeless girl from refugee camp became the victim of rape at the time of flood in Teesta.⁵⁵ The evacuees took shelter into the camp of Sonallah school, patgola at Kadamtola and Nawab palace in Jalpaiguri town. And the women of refugee colony were the target of sexual exploitation.⁵⁶

During the *Tebhaga* Movement famine swallowed Boda, Pochagar, Moynadighi, Sankoya, Panchpeer, Debiganj and several other places. The *jotdars* dominated the life of

poor peasant. The social and financial condition of the farmers were incredible. The women of the poor families were sent to the *jotdars* every night. It was published in the sub-division called Nilofmari (Rangpur) that within one month almost hundred peasants sold their family to the *jotdars*.⁵⁷ From Deshibai, fifty families out of hundred lost their everything. Basanta Chakraborty (the communist leader) had written at Kishoreganj Union, the secret group of women traffickers formed. This group bought ten to fifteen girls in Rs. 8 - 10 and sold them in Jalpaiguri. One girl was sold twice. Thus the traffickers earned money.⁵⁸ The picture has been drawn in the song of a woman :

'Jalpaia mui naari,

Ampure mor bari,

Swami bechaile dhonir ghore-

Khudar jwalay pranpotire,

*Mui naarir deho bechaye khaile.'*⁵⁹

It means, a woman of Jalpaiguri is telling that her ancestral home is in Ampur. As her family suffering from starvation, she has been sold to a rich man by her husband (free translation).

The persons who belonged to an affluent family could marry more than one. Mussabbar Basunia, Gayanath Das, Bholanath Mallick, Bhelbhela Mallick the *jotdars* of Jalpaiguri kept more than one wife.⁶⁰ They arranged all types of facilities like house, land, property for those ladies. But in several times they tortured on their wives in many ways. A person of Rajsahi shackled his wife in a locked room and gave the key to his *upapatni* (kept). His kept put fire to this closed room, the poor woman died.⁶¹

Sashi Kumar Niyogi, a social worker who came in Jalpaiguri from Dacca. By profession he was a lawyer. Having seen the youth of the society had been floating down to the darkness, he established '*Aryanatta Samaj*'⁶² and started to publish '*Trisrota*' magazine for their entertainment. This indicates again, there might be adultery in the contemporary society.

The growth of the population of the western dooars is due partly to the rise of the tea industry and partly to the influx of settlers from other district and from the Cooch Behar state. Many tea garden coolies after working for a time, saving a little money settled permanently in the district. Sunder had reported - 'the labourers (tea garden labourers) are comfortably housed, good drinking water is supplied to them they are regularly looked after by a native doctor, often by a qualified European doctor on a high pay... .' But official reports of as late as 1946 or 1948 admitted that the houses made of bamboos with thatched roofs and sides were nothing but hovels with insufficient light and air, and sanitations had no standard worth mentioning. Indian doctors were not qualified, and European doctors, Arbuthnot reported, were not available for treating the coolies and any regular hospital did not exist.⁶³

Because of meagre earnings, the *Paharia* (Nepalese) coolies became indebted to the *sardars* and in some cases to the garden management. Mr. H. Bold, Manager of the Chunabati tea estate, who came out to this country in January, 1882, and has most of his experience in Darjeeling district, came to western dooars about 1900. He writes - 'There is no doubt about it that the indebtedness of the *sardar* to the money lenders, and the indebtedness of the coolies to the *sardar* are the greatest evils retarding progress amongst the coolies. The debt hangs as a heavy weight round their necks and, and as a result, more drink is taken than otherwise would be taken, and this in time leads to gambling and a general want of thrift the indebtedness leading to increase drinking.'⁶⁴

The condition of tea garden coolies had been depicted as follow :

“Let the ordinary labour rules be enforced in the case of coolies, and we shall raise no objection, but we can not approve of the policy of keeping ignorant coolies bound by as contract under threats of imprisonment or other punishment. The relations between the coolie and his employer ought to be nothing more or less than the relations obtaining between master and servant. If the servant is not satisfied with his pay, or if he thinks that his work is too hard for him, he may leave the master. The servant should leave as much liberty to leave his master as the master has to dismiss the servant. We fail to understand why the relations between the tea garden coolie and his employer should be regulated by a different law or principle The

supply of labour in this country is plentiful, and labour is cheaper here than in any other country. The Indian labourer is satisfied with a small remuneration. He is very economical, very obedient, and very faithful. We do not know whether such good labourers can be had in any other country than India. Adequately remunerated, the Indian labourer does any amount of work. They never cease working so long as they are not completely tired. We, therefore, fail to understand why there should be a penal law to regulate the relations between the tea garden coolie and his employer. It can not be believed that the prospects of adequate remuneration are not enough to draw any number of coolie.

Those who employ coolies are capitalists, and they are guided only by considerations of profit and loss. Their sole care is to make the largest possible profit out of their business. They are Europeans who look upon natives as no better than cattle. They do not always remember that native life has some value, and that a native is capable of feeling pain and pleasure. They, therefore never hesitate to increase the work of a coolie and reduce his pay. This is the grievance of the coolie. This is why so much difficulty is experienced in recruiting a coolie, and coolie recruiters have to use so many devices to recruit a coolie for the tea garden.

The treatment of coolies is as hard and cruel as the manner in which they are recruited is objectionable and inhuman. The tea planters are generally unmarried Europeans living beyond the pale of European society and its laws. Their ideas about the purity of character are low. They look upon the male coolies as the instruments of labour, and upon the female coolies as instruments for the gratification of their passions. These are the reasons why it is so difficult to get coolies for tea gardens. It is hoped that the authorities will take these facts into consideration before passing the new Coolie Bill.’’⁶⁵

Coming to the present we may notice a new development in economic flow to this place. There are a lot of tourist spots surrounding this district like Gorumara, Jaldapara, Lataguri, Buxa fort. Throughout the whole year the tourists come to enjoy the scenic beauty of dooars, which developed the tourist industry of Jalpaiguri. Gradually hotel and

transport system progressed. Trafficking and prostitution, as inseparable part of such progress is flaring up in the district. (corroboration is given in Appendix B)

COOCH BEHAR :

Cooch Behar was the only native state of undivided Bengal as well as a part of greater Bengal. It occupied a place in the north-east corner of the province. The present district of Cooch Behar was extended from Jalpaiguri district in north to Rangpur in south and from Goalpara (in Assam) in east to Rangpur and Jalpaiguri in west.

It is quite impossible to give the exact boundary of Cooch Behar state as it was in the second half of the eighteenth century. The extension of the state during the reign of Naranarayan, the kingdom extended to the east to the wild tribes near the borders of Burma, to the north to Tibet, to the west to the borders of Mithila or Tirabhukti (Trihut) and to the south to Ghoraghat.

British expansion in the North-East Bengal was not so rapid as in other parts of the country. East India company's contact with Cooch Behar in 1772 was the stepping stone of the British in the northern frontiers of Bengal.

The appeal for military help by Cooch Behar at the period of Bhutan's aggression, offered the company not only a golden opportunity to fulfill their long cherished commercial interests, but also opened a new horizon to the company for political foothold in this region of Rangpur, the last frontier of the British. The system of political residencies - emerged from the sixteen of the eighteenth century as the character of the British presence changed from almost exclusively commercial to primarily political.⁶⁶ The geographical and strategical position of Cooch Behar attracted Warren Hastings and Charles Purling, the collector of Rangpur very much. The economic importance of Cooch Behar also provoked the company to response to the appeal of the Cooch Behar authorities. The company under the Governor Generalship of Warren Hastings agreed to help to Cooch Behar and a treaty was concluded in the year April 5th, 1773. The Anglo Cooch Behar treaty marked a turning point in the history of Cooch Behar. A new relationship with the British developed there from. The far reaching impact of that treaty was not confined to the Cooch Behar state only. In the long run, it

re-shaped the political boundaries of the entire north eastern part of India. Because Cooch Behar was the first native state of this part of India which come into contact with the company.

The expansion of the town including from the frontier road to Cooch Behar rail station completed within 1819, just one year ago of the starting of railway. When Maharaja Nripendra Narayan sat on the throne, the development became faster. Population also increased.

Besides all these, the immigration of the refugees from the different districts of eastern Pakistan to Cooch Behar did not stop; which helped in the demographical change of Cooch Behar.

Table No. 3:1

STATISTICS OF REFUGEE IMMIGRATION IN COOCH BEHAR FROM THE DISTRICTS OF EASTERN PAKISTAN, 1946 TO 1951, (UP TO FEBRUARY) :

District	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	Total
Kushtiya	121	13	10	06	24	03	177
Jashohor	95	80	48	34	41	41	339
Khulna	01	76	55	26	84	07	249
Rajsahi	46	250	139	319	210	99	1063
Dinajpur	113	256	248	317	895	63	1892
Rangpur	904	2458	2941	7071	29319	1181	43878
Bogra	30	357	199	564	1489	24	2663
Pabna	27	330	450	439	991	68	2405
Dhaka	125	1269	1394	1765	4605	236	9394

Maymonsingh	496	2528	2783	4459	19468	763	30497
Faridpur	19	590	369	523	913	54	2548
Bakharganj	12	176	155	113	229	19	704
Tippera	04	261	232	94	224	27	842
Noyakholi	22	72	108	84	219	16	521
Chattagram	03	191	52	169	74	06	495
Silet (Sylhet)	00	31	48	30	46	05	160
Total	2018	8938	9231	16013	58911	2612	97723

Source : Census Report of Cooch Behar, 1951

Bhutanese merchants carried their trade in Cooch Behar and through Cooch Behar into Rangpur. It is an admitted view that the East India Company originally settled down in this land with the explicit purpose of trade. It is true that their main occupation as traders out-weight any desire to make territorial acquisitions. As W. K. Firminger wrote ‘..... We find that the company was on the whole, averse to the acquisition of ‘territory’ or ‘possessions’ and that their servants in Bengal, unless actuated by some momentous emergency were unwilling to interfere in native politics or to depart from the position of traders.’⁶⁷

Cooch Behar state, during the second half of the 18th century, was suffering from the chaos and dissension of the ruling authorities which encouraged Bhutan to meddle in Cooch Behar’s affairs and make her own position secure in the state. The situation was aggravated by the accession of Dhurjendra Narayan who was a weak and suspicious king. Mutual animosity, internal disorder, unlimited powers in the hand of the ministers, incapacity and weakness of the ruler to maintain his position - formed the dismal features of the state during this period. The aggression of the Bhutias on Cooch Behar kingdom had been going on increasingly and Cooch Behar had to conclude a treaty with the East

India Company in 1773 whereby Cooch Behar became a subordinate ally of the English.⁶⁸

After the introduction of Permanent Settlement in 1793, the rate of agricultural production decreased and the peasants had fallen into the trouble of debt. The *ryots* (peasants) were oppressed severely, but there was no justice in the law court. The group of Imperial Historians opined, the peasants themselves were responsible for their indebtedness. Major Jack, the writer of '*Economic life of Bengal District*', had written - 'The great majority of agricultural debtors get into debt through in - provident expenditure upon marriages.'

The officers of the company also began a money lending business in Cooch Behar. In 1784 Captain Duncason lent Rs. 14,901 to the Maharaja and was apparently dissatisfied with a return of Rs. 21,000 after one year. The company's *sepoys* (soldiers) engaged themselves in the money lending business and lent money to the peasants and charged a monthly interest of two to three *anas* in the rupee. Even they used force to collect their dues. The tone of the society was that of medieval age. Usury was a thriving occupation and any one who could spare some money for investment had the chance of a lucrative return. As a result, on account of that undesirable conditions many people left the country.⁶⁹ The chief export from the state were tobacco, jute, mustard seed, rice and mustard oil. Gradually all the commerce of Cooch Behar gone into the hands of the foreign merchants, who were basically Marwaris from Bikanir. They had more energy and enterprise than the Koch Beharis. Famine and epidemic spread into the state which was referred by Maharani Brideswari Devi in '*Beharodanta*.'⁷⁰

W. W. Hunter had drawn a picture of general economic condition of Cooch Behar. Between the years 1797 to 1801, the price of paddy in Cooch Behar was 4.5 mds to the rupee. In the middle of the 19th century it was 2 mds to the rupee.

The economic degeneration of the Bengal *Subha* can be viewed not only by the oppressions of the company's servants and *gomosthas* but was a natural sequel to the general political disorders which had began many years before the plassey. In Cooch Behar, the weakness of royal authority, want of strong governance in the country,

conflicts amongst the elites for power, the oppression of the Revenue Collectors all these together led to its economic degradation very quickly. The material condition of the people was poor. Beveridge, the Deputy Commissioner, in his Report of 1865 - 67 points out that mal-administration and want of communication caused the degeneration in Cooch Behar.

Corruption was rampant amongst the police officers of the state. Their pay was poor and irregular. Naturally, they let loose upon the country, if not by express order of the ruling power, to earn their daily bread by plundering its inhabitants. Under a corrupt system of native administration and owing to the want of proper arrangement for the suppression of crimes and maintenance of peace, the prosperity of the people of Cooch Behar was at a low-ebb, notwithstanding its excellent natural resources. Such a deplorable economic and social situation can't be detached from the women's compulsion and degradation in the society. The hard economic realities often cause human action for survival in some way or other. Absence of suitable means of communication kept the farmer and his produce confined within a limited market, and the product of agriculture fetched a fabulously low price. For the deplorable state of road construction, the transport system was nothing worthy of mention.⁷¹ The existence of number of rivers along with innumerable streams used to make the state completely water-logged. As there was no embankments, the floods of *Torsha*, *Mansai* and *Sutunga* were frequent and devastating.

Slavery was practiced in the society and there was a regular slave trade. The trafficking of slaves started during the reign of Maharaja Laxminarayan (1857-1621). Poor people mortgaged or sold themselves as slaves. Every year, boys and girls from Cooch Behar and Assam were sent to various parts of Bengal for sale. About 100 of boys and girls were annually sold to Bengal. The price of a girl varied from Rs. 12 to Rs. 15. A Koch boy cost Rs. 25. Children of the lower castes were sold to *Garos*. Some of them were exported to Burma through Assam. People of the neighbouring *Bhot* or *Garo* tribe often abducted men and women from Mughal or Cooch Behar territory and made them slaves.⁷² On *Bhadra* 22, 1257 in Bengali calendar, Jhalu Das (40 years old) and Jentu Das (30 years old) sold themselves to Ishan Chandra Mustafi, the royal

employee of Dashgram Gobrachhora in Rs. 50 narayani and 25 narayani respectively. Vendri of Kulidanga, Sudharam Das of Balarampur, Fika Nasya of Singimari, Yatri Beyoa of Khagrabari sold their wives and daughters. Agni, a girl of seven years old, Futke, of five years old were sold by their fathers as the families suffering from starvation.⁷³

Unrestrained sexual enjoyment by the powerful and rich people or the royal personalities was a very common feature of the age. Women were made victim in every possible way when institution demanded so for political benefits. The victors were given gifts of girls even from the royal family by the vanquished after a defeat in the battle. The kings maintained many queens and concubines. As conventional practice, the royal people of Koch dynasty used to keep more than one wife; Maharaja Biswasingha brought a lots of women from Nepal, Gaur, Kamrup, Kashmir, Kashi, Shonitpur, Mithila and he married those women.⁷⁴

Like the *Roykots* of Baikunthapur Estate the Koch king used to marry more than one. The queens were called - *Dangar Aai*, *Boro Aai*, *Boro Aai Deboti*, *Chhoto Aai*, *Sejo Aai*. *Aai* denotes wife. '*Raj-Upakhyan*' (in Bengali) states Maharaj Harendra Narayan married more than once. According to the royal custom the relatives presented several ladies to the king. Finally the '*Patrani*', the principal queen was chosen from them by the king. The rest were also married to king and considered as '*Rajmohishi*'. Though they were comparatively degraded. This custom is referred in '*Nripendea Smriti*' (in Bengali) by Dindoyal Upadhyay (ed. by Nripendranath Paul).⁷⁵ Maharaj Birnarayan (1621-1626) had more than one queen who were called *upapatni*. He used to enjoy luxurious life. This evidence tells that polygamy was practiced in the society.

The kings had not even connection with their daughters and one information is furnished by Joynath Munshi in the '*Raj-Upakhyan*' that Birnarayan, the king of Cooch Behar, once he cast covetous eyes on a beautiful girl who actually was his own daughter by relation. He could not identify his own daughter. According to the writer, she drowned herself into river water out of mental agony.⁷⁶ Whether the information is exaggeration or not, it indicates the vulnerability of women in any way. keeping huge numbers of *dasdasi* (slaves) was a symbol of aristocracy. The prisoners of war,

criminals, mortgaged men women were sold in *Bhutiya's* market. In 1808, Dr. Buchanan Hamilton came to visit Ragnpur. He noticed slaves at Kapasgola, Alamganj near Dhubri. The rate of slaves was higher in Cooch Behar to Dinajpur according to him.

Ahomraj (Assam king) gave sixty beautiful women to Maharaj Naranarayan as gift.⁷⁷ Iban Batuta purchased a beautiful lady from Kamrup in Rs. 15.⁷⁸ The *Mogh* and Portuguse invaded upon Koch and took away the women forcefully. Moranga-raj send '*Morongiya Dasi*' to Maharaja Naranarayan in the time of marriage ceremony.

The official documents of Mathabhanga settlement in the year of 1876, referred some *jaigirdars* lived in Kodalkheti, Bhogmara taluk. Their ancestors were Morangi Das. Dewan Kalikadas reported : 'The system must have been introduced when land did not possess much value, and when the personal liberty of the subjects was not much respected. Some years ago the *Jaigirdars* were looked upon as slaves (*golams*). They could be imprisoned or made to suffer corporal punishment of any description by their superior'.⁷⁹

Captain R. B. Pemberton visited Bhutan in 1836 and recorded : 'In addition to these several tribes, all of whom are of pure or mixed Mongolian races, there are some thousands of Bengalees and Assamese, the Helots of the country, who have been carried off at various times from the plains by the Booteahs in their several incursions, and who led a life devoted to the most menial and degrading offices. Whenever men are seized and carried up into the Hills, they are forced into a connubial union with some Booteah women of the inferior grades of society, who are made responsible for their continuance in the country..... Captive women are in a similar manner united to low Booteah men, and with a similar result; whenever it may not be convenient to provide prisoners either with Booteah wives or husbands, orders are transmitted to the Dooars to capture a man or woman, as the case may be, to be sent into the Hills, and ultimately so disposed of.'⁸⁰ The Bhutiyas called the slaves as '*jou-mi-I*'. Those slaves were used in invading and plundering Cooch Behar kingdom.

Turner had written : 'In the district of Cooch Behar an usage of a very singular kind has prevailed from remote antiquity, and I was assured by many of the inhabitants of its

actual existence at this day. If a *Rayat*, or peasant, owes a sum of money, and has not the ability to satisfy his creditor, he is compelled to give up his wife as a pledge, and possession of her is kept until the debt is discharged. It sometimes happens, as they affirm, that the wife of a debtor is not redeemed for the space of one, two or three years; and then if during her residence and connection with the creditor, a family should have been the consequence, half of it is considered as the property of the person with whom she lived, and half of her real husband.

The country has a most wretched appearance, and its inhabitants are a miserable and puny race. The lower ranks without scruple dispose of their children for slaves, to any purchaser, and that too for a very trifling consideration; nor yet though in a traffic so unnatural, is the agency of a third person ever employed. Nothing is more common than to see a mother dress up her child, and bring it to market, with no other hope, no other view, than to enhance the price she may procure for it. Indeed the extreme poverty and wretchedness of these people will forcibly appear, when we re-collect how little is necessary for the subsistence of a peasant in these regions. The value of this can seldom amount to more than one penny per day, even allowing him to make his meal of two pounds of boiled rice, with a due proportion of salt, oil, vegetables, fish and chilli.’⁸¹

In 1843, British government legally ceased all those markets where human selling and buying was going on. Maharaj Shibendra Narayan, Maharaj Narendra Narayan tried to stop human selling. But they failed due to the self seeking efforts of a group. Finally Maharaj Nripendra Narayan stopped this inhuman practice with the help of Commissioner Cornel Haughton in 1864. Talboys Wheeler narrated in ‘*Summary of Affairs of the Government of India in the Foreign Department (1864-69)*’ : ‘.... the existence of actual slavery in Kuch Behar forced itself upon the attention of the Commissioner, and the matter was laid before the Governor General. On 7th September 1864, the abolition of slavery was formally proclaimed at a public Darbar; and a Regulation in Bengali language, embodying the provisions of the Penal Code respecting kidnapping and abductions, was declared to be in force as regards all future seizures, sales, or detention of persons, male or female.’⁸²

According to the crime reports, crimes or offences were categorized into the following three sections in Cooch Behar State, which are as follows⁸³ :

Class 1 - offences against the State, Public tranquility, safety and Justice. Such as - Offences Relating Army or Navy, Offences Relating to Coins, Stamps and Govt.

Class 2 - serious offences against the person. Such as - Murder by robbers, Rape, Kidnapping, **Prostitution**.

Class 3 - serious offences person and property or against property only. Such as - Dacoity, Robbery with hurt, preparation or assembly for dacoity etc.

On the basis of the above mentioned report we can say that prostitution was in practice at that time,

Some cases of kidnapping have come out through the research work for conducting the study of contemporary social situation of Cooch Behar State. Some references are given below :

One Gundari Dasya, a girl under 16 years of age was forcibly taken away from the custody of her legal guardian and adoptive mother (Bhurkughi Dasya of Kharimala Khagrabari) by Krishna Nath Das and Radha Nath Das and made over to one Magha Das. The first 2 defendants were sentenced to 4 months rigorous imprisonment each, and the last 2 to rigorous imprisonment for 3 months.⁸⁴

There were 10 cases of kidnapping reported during the year under report against 5 of the previous year. Of these 6 were false, 2 fell under section 498 Indian Penal Code and the remaining 2 are summarized below⁸⁵ -

1st case : One Batay Hari of Kheti lodged complain with the police that his minor wife Shito, about 10 or 11 years old had been kidnapped by Chemti Harni. The police sent up 2 persons for trial who have been committed by the Naib Adhikar of Mathabhanga to the court of sessions, where they are awaiting trial.

2nd case : One Ramanath Gope of Kheti complaint that his minor wife Shitol aged about 11 or 12 years had been kidnapped by Dulal Gopini, Daibiki Gopini and Santara

Gopini. The police sent up the accused who were awaiting trial before the Naib Ahilkar of Mathabhanga at the end of the year.

The *lahankari* song or '*langla-langlir gaan*' in some rustic words which one is already mentioned, indicates that adultery, extra marital relation was not uncommon amongst the *Rajbanshis*.

Selling of girls was a reality in the society. A few lines from a local poem may be quoted here to reflect the vile practice that prevailed in the society :

'Sedinto chhilo -

Kono ek utsab mukhorito din

Oi janoarera graas korlo,

Amar adorer Sonamonike -

Boner biye holo na,

Bikri holo sastadore -

Ek bridhha zamidarar kachhe

Tarpor

*Aar kono khonj millo na.'*⁸⁶

It means, that day was a festive day on that gay day, the furious wolf gang lacerated *Sonamoni* - my sister, marriage did not come to her life but was sold off cheap to a lord senile and then lost forever into oblivion (free translation). That lines reveal that the moneyed people could purchase a girl for enjoyment and these girls lost all their past.

MALDAH / MALDA :

The present Maldah district was a part of Gaur kingdom. *Kautilya* (in *Arthasastra*) and Panini mentioned the term Gaurpur to denote the area situated in Eastern India. It is assumed that, present Gaur and Gaurpur is the same place. In *Brihat Samhita*,

Barahmihir described Gaur as a part of Bengal. It was a territory of *Mauryan* empire. Historically, Gaur indicates the zone of Maldah and Murshidabad in West Bengal. After the downfall of the Gupta empire, Gaur emerged. Sasanka was the king of that kingdom and *Karnasubarna* was the capital. Cunningham states that the name of Gaur was derived from Guda or molasses i.e. raw sugar for which the province had much fame.⁸⁷

The district of Maldah is bounded on the north by the Purnea and Dinajpur districts, on the east by Dinajpur and Rajsahi, on the south by Murshidabad, and on the west by Murshidabad, the Santal Parganas and Purnea.

The district was formed of outlying portions of the Purnea and Dinajpur districts in 1813, though it did not formally become an independent administrative unit till 1859. It takes its name from the town of Malda, which is situated on the left bank of the Mahananda river at its junction with the Kalindi river, and is about four miles north of English Bazar (Engrezabad).

The district does not contain any outlying sub-division. The *sadar* sub-division is coterminous with the district. The district is divided into the police stations of - Englishbazar, Kaliachak, Malda, Habibpur, Ratua, Manikchak, Kharba, Harishchandrapur, Gajole, Bamangola.

There are a lot of myths behind the name of Maldah. A story is current of an old woman buying up the entire stock of mercury of a merchant who had come to the place to trade and who had been unable to dispose of his goods. Her wealth (*mal*) was such that she was able to devote all her purchase to cleaning one tank only, called the *parpukur* (mercury tank) to this day, and thus to give the place the name of Maldah or the place of wealth. Another fanciful derivation is from Maldah, a string of deep pools, a feature of the town being the deep depressions left by old water course.⁸⁸ Someone says '*Mal*' means wealth and '*Dah*' means sea. So Maldah is the sea of wealth.

Gaur produced huge amount of excellent molasses. That was why the place called Gaurpur. *Kautilya* referred '*Gaurik Swarna*' which means silk. From this concept the region is named Gaurpur.⁸⁹

The East India company early established a trade connection with the district, having its factory at old Malda, where also was a Dutch factory, of which there still remains vestiges. The British connection with the district of Malda began with the establishment of a factory there in 1680 AD. After the *dewani* or fiscal administration of Bengal had been granted to the company, a fortified commercial residency was built in 1771 at Englishbazar.

Alexdander Hamilton had written - 'Maldah was a large town, well inhabited and frequented by merchants of the different nations'. Renel said - 'Malda is a pretty, neat city. This as well as Cossimbazar is a place of trade'. Statistical Account of the District of Malda (1876) by W. W. Hunter stated - About three hundred years ago Shaikh Bhika who use to trade in *Maldahi* clothes such as *Katar* and *Musri*, set sail for Russia with three ships laden with silk clothes and that two of his ships were wrecked somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Persian gulf.'⁹⁰

From these above statements, we find that Maldah flourished as an important trade centre. Besides cotton and silk weaving, the other industries are - food processing, manufacturer of sundry hardwires, manufacture of gold and silver ornaments, pottery, *bidi* (smoking item) making, tailoring, wooden furniture and fixtures, bamboo and cane, bricks and tiles, leather foot-wears, brass and bell metal.

By the end of the 18th century there were a number of European indigo planters in the district, beside the commercial resident and his assistance. Amongst the planters may be mentioned Mr. Creighton of Goamalti, from whose drawings the ruins of Gaur have in recent years been restored. Singatala, was the most ancient '*kuthi*', (centre for indigo cultivation) which lasted long.

In 1905 the district was transferred from the Bhagalpur division to the Rajsahi division on the formation of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. It was formerly a part of the Rajsahi division, but was transferred from that division to Bhagalpur in 1876. The district from 1912 again became part of the Rajsahi division of Bengal till 1947.

There is practically no immigration from the district except into the neighbouring districts. If we leave out the women who marry across the border, the emigration is mainly attributable to the constant changes of jurisdiction caused by variation in the course of the Ganges and to the settlement of the surplus *diara*⁹¹ population in the vacant *chars* (a part of land in the river) of *Purnea*, west of Ratua and in the *doabs* (land of river side) of the *Tangan* and *Purnabhaha* in Dinajpur.

The first census was carried out in the district in 1872. The population composition of Maldah was influenced by the immigration of the Santals from Santal pargana. Santal immigration on large scale continued up to 1921 chiefly from the Santhal Parganas, into the high lands of *barind*⁹² and to some extent from Bihar, they came for service and settled down to cultivation very largely in the west of Ratua and Tulsihata, though they are to be found in every police station.

The towns are different from the villages by the presence of a comparatively large number of professional men and educated men in government services and others attracted by business, and in the case of Englishbazar and Nawabganj also by the judicial courts. This element is on the whole progressive and contributes largely to the working of local and municipal administration and to increasing the amenities of town life. An instance of this activity is the small agricultural and industrial exhibition founded in 1901 and held almost annually since then at Englishbazar.

The years of high flood in Malda were 1871, 1885 and 19806. The main loss to property, other than standing crops, was that in the *diara* tracts, the floods caused changes in the stream of the river, with the result that areas of cultivated and homestead lands were washed out by the river, and the inhabitants of entire village settlements were reduced in a night to the position of landless labourers.

The parts of the district which suffer from draught are the high winter rice lands of the *barind* and parts of the Sibganj, Kaliachak and Kharba thanas. No precise information is available of the extent to which the district has been affected by drought and famine before 1874. It is, however, mentioned in the life of Dr. Thomas, the first Bengal missionary, that, in 1787 he and the East India Company's officers at

Englishbazar brought children six *annas* each, to prevent their being sold into slavery by their famished parent.⁹³

During *Tebhagha* Movement, the greedy landlords and the black market holders captured the district. The following '*Tebhagar - Gaan*' (song) by Gobinda Seth describes the situation :

'Ore zamidarar char aiysachhe kaariya nite dhan

Chhairbana bhai ghorer laxmi

*Dehe thakite pran.*⁹⁴

The above mentioned song means, the employee of landlord is coming to snatch paddy. But they are determined not to give their resource until or unless they are alive (free translation).

The other side of the picture of both rural and urban life is, practice of gambling, drinking and looseness of moral characteristic. Women are generally economically dependent on the men. Women were tortured by the *Foujdar, Ijarader*⁹⁵ and also by the British. They harassed and molested the pilgrims of *Haz* (Macca and Modina). *Tabakat - I - Nasiri* described how the innocent people including women were persecuted by Bakhtiyar Khalji.

Tantrik shastra which was very popular in Bengal, giving importance to addiction of wine and women. '*Pavandut*', written by *Dhoyi*, the court poet of Laxman Sen, had narrated the presence of *Barbilasini* in the capital of Vijoypur.

In the last phase of 19th century, during *babu* culture, the feudal society of Maldah engaged into the world of obsession. *Jalsa* (programme of singing and dancing), *baiji-naach* (dance by professional dancers called '*baiji*'), playing cards, *pasa*, chess, carom or drinking, visiting prostitutes were the regular practice.

Some newly educated (specially in western education) young people could not get fun into *baiji-naach* or prostitution. They were not interested in cards or idle talks. Those young people started proscenium theatre in Maldah.

Rich people used to appoint *dasi* (maid), *nortoki* (dancer) in their house. They purchased them from market. The maid servants made unopposed sexual relation to the masters. The text '*Haatpattan*', which was composed in the reign of *Pathan*, giving description of those local market (*haat*). *Sura* (wine) and prostitutes were the common item there.⁹⁶

Not only in *haats* (weekly markets), but in *melas* (fair) the prostitutes find customers. They had their own stall which were called '*tonge*' (long in shape). They adorned themselves with *kasarmol*, *rupar kharu*, *bala*, *nolok* (ornaments) and other gilded jewelry. Prostitutes wore variety of *sarees* - *dhakai saree*, *bombai saree*, *gulbahar saree*, *baluchori*, *dhupchhaya cheli* etc.⁹⁷ Prostitutes of lower class came from Nabadwip, Katoya, Murshidabad.⁹⁸ The chap books published from *Bat-tala* were available in the fairs. Youth were quite interested to purchase those books like *Banbibir Jahuran or Sujju - Ujjwal Bibir Kechha*, these books are difficult to obtain now a days.⁹⁹ The landlords patronized prostitution in *melas* for earning money.¹⁰⁰

A group of people was working as pimp. They collected clients and also trapped the women who lost their relatives in the crowd. *Ramkeli Mela* and the assemblage of *vaishnavis*, is undoubtedly remarkable in this aspect. Let it be discussed detailed in next chapter.

The regional culture always reflected in festivals, customs, music, and songs. *Bolbahi* song or *Bolai*, *Bolbai*, *Bolahi* - other names, which varied region to region was very popular in Maldah. It is practiced in *barind* of Maldah. In some villages of Gajole, it is called '*Tamsa*' or '*Tamasa*'. Somewhere, it is popular as '*Kechha*' or '*Kuchha*' song. The theme of this *Bolbahi* song is immoral relation between man and woman.¹⁰¹

The festival of *holi* is considered a custom of agricultural society. For the prayer of eminent agricultural production, people used to immolate and involve into sexual dancing and singing. Similarly, on '*Bara Tamasa*', the third day of *Gambhira*,¹⁰² they celebrate the function called '*kisi*'.¹⁰³

From the above discussion, one thing is clear that, prostitution being existed in this society, both in rural Maldah and urban Maldah. It is carried on either openly or surreptitiously.

DINAJPUR :

In A.D. 1765, the British obtained the *Diwani*¹⁰⁴ of Bengal, with the right of collecting the revenues, and in A.D. 1772 or thereabouts an English Collector or chief of the revenue was appointed to the *zamindari* of Dinajpur. With the arrival of British revenue collector, British government had started their colonial experiment in Dinajpur. As a district, Dinajpur came into existence in 1786.

A group of historians said, the powerful landlord of North Bengal, *Danujmardan Deb* lived in this region. That is why, the region named Dinajpur. On the other hand, one British historian said, the people of this area were severely exploited by the lease holders and the landlords. Economically the people were very poor (*'Din'* in Bengali term). So the place is known as Dinajpur.

The district is notable for the very small number of its inhabitants who live it, while the number of immigrants it receives is very great. The large influx of immigrants from the Santal Parganas and the Chhotonagpur Plateau to the *Barind*, and other sparsely populated portions of the district, which has occurred in recent years, has already been described. Besides these aboriginal tribes we find a fair number of permanent settlers, who have come from Murshidabad, Nadia, Behar and the central provinces, servants, but the great majority of these foreigners are of the periodic type, and come in the cold weather in search of employment as agricultural labourers or earth workers, returning to their homes in the spring.

The district of Dinajpur lies in the Rajsahi commissionership of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The district is bounded on the north-east by Jalpaiguri; on the north-west and west by Purnea, on the east by Bogra; on the south by Rajsahi and the north west by Maldah.

Before 1947, there was no existence of West Dinajpur district. It was known as Dinajpur district. The headquarter was in Dinajpur. With the partition of India, it was also divided into East and West Dinajpur in 1947. After a long time gap, West Dinajpur was divided again into North and South Dinajpur, on 1st April in 1991.

The important cities of this district are - Raiganj, Islampur, Dalkhola, Chopra, Balurghat or previously called Balohorghatta, Itahar, Karandighi, Hemtabad, Kaliaganj, Gagarampur, Kumarganj, Tapan, Hili etc. The National Highway i.e. NH 34 and State Highway 10 is running through the district. The famous tourist spots are - Kulik, Durgapur, Rindal, Tanahari.

Having taken the advantage of nearest border facility, people from Bangladesh, trespassing into India through Hilly and other places. Now-a-days, the human traffickers are still carrying out their business through this route. The traffickers and the agents of human trade can manage to bribe the Border Security Force easily.

In 1873-74 the whole of North Bengal from Champaran to Rangpur was visited by a severe famine. In April, 1874, relief works were opened in Kaliyaganj, Raiganj, Hemtabad, Pirganj, Ranisankoil and Thakurgaon thanas, which were the most severely affected.

The first of these scarcities of which any record has been kept occurred in 1865-66, when the price of rice rose. In the years 1891 and 1897 partial failure of crops occurred and the scarcity in the latter year was aggravated by the high price prevailing elsewhere. In the autumn of 1908-1909 real scarcity again made its appearance in the district due to long drought in the area.

Tebhaga Movement left a crucial impact on the society and economy in Dinajpur district. Irrespective of men, women, children were tortured by the *jotdars*, *zamindars* as well as by police during the movements. *Tolabati* and *Adhiyar* movement collapsed the normal life of Thakurgaon, Bochaganj of Lahiri Estate, Patiram, Nawabganj, Parvatipur, Fulbari, Dhibir-bandar, and various other places.

Indigo planters carried on their tyrannical activities on the poor cultivators in between 1780 to 1800. They abused the poor peasants. The planters violated the chastity of the daughters, wives, sisters and widows from peasant family. They fired their (farmers) house, plundered crops, send them into lock up. Having lost everything, the peasants were begging. One of such oppressive indigo planter was Creigoton. He sent the peasants into jail within his indigo factory at Sadamahal under Birol police station in the last phase of 1789.

In this respect, it is undoubtedly relevant to utter the name of the most oppressive revenue collector of Dinajpur, Devi Sing. Devi Singh had to pay rupees three lakhs to Lord Hasting for obtaining the right of *Dewani*.¹⁰⁴ And that was why, it is said that, he collected this amount from the subjects. His employees such as *payik*, *borkandaj* forcefully realized the interest from the peasants. They used to destroy their houses, rape the women, even whip nude women in front of all. The peasants of Rangpur were in starvation. They left their wives forever, sold their children.

Sannyasi movement was a terror in the history of Dinajpur. The picture of women oppression in the hands of *Fakirs* and *Sannyasis* (monk) is depicted in ‘*Majnur Kabita*’ (poem)¹⁰⁵:

‘Bhalo manusher kulobodhu jungole palay

Lutura fakir joto pachhe pachhe dhay...

Basan kariya loy chahe alingan

Juboti kakuti kori ki bole bochon.’

It describes, in fear of *fakirs*, the women left homes, hidden into jungles. The *fakirs* chased them, snatched their clothes to embrace and the women entreating most earnestly (free translation).

Simultaneously the raped women cursing those fakirs :

‘Laaje nahi kotha rakhe guptavabe

Dharmasakshi kori tara mojnuke shope

Tara bole iswar ehi koruk

Mojnu Golamer beta shighra moruk.'

It means, the raped victims cursing those criminals. They are praying for the prompt death of Majnu Golam's (the rapist *fakir*) son (free translation).

Slave trade had been existed in the society. From the account of Masyemers and Chovet (1787), it is known that, the young boys and girls were sold in the local markets.¹⁰⁶ One girl was sold in Rs. 12 and a boy in Rs. 25 to 50 at Mogolhat, Debiganj, Ghoraghat. Poor people used to sell their children in scarcity of food. In this context, it is mentionable that, from the place of Ghoraghat, Mughal Badsah Akbar bought lots of *das - dasi* (slave), according to *Ayin - I - Akbari*.¹⁰⁷ The tribal people sold *hariya* in those markets. People were quite addicted in intoxicant.¹⁰⁸

With the abolition of *zamindari* system, Dinajpur district also had to face a lot of problems at the end of 18th century. The employees of previous landlords became jobless, started theft and robbery. Safety and security been arisen as a big problem.

Some mention has already been made of the fairs or *melas*, of which no less than 47 are held annually.¹⁰⁹ There is reason to believe that the older fairs were originally religious of some festival either Hindu or Muhammadan. Now-a-days they are held to all intents and purposes for commercial purposes only, though the worship of some god or Muhammadan saint may or may not be associated with the opening of the fair. On the occasion of the holding of the big *Alowa-khowa* (important cattle fair in the district, which held in October or November, at the time of *Raas purnima* i.e. lunar day, it is situated in the Thakurgaon sub-division, some 18 miles north west of Thakurgaon close to the main road running through Baliyadangi and Lahiri hat) and *Nekmarad* (in Thakurgaon sub-division, 16 miles south west of Thakurgaon and 37 miles north of west of Dinajpur, the cattle is famous here) fairs several police officers and a force of constables take up their barrack on the fair ground.¹¹⁰ *Sarala mela* and *jinpir mela* was also remarkable.

These gatherings i.e. fairs are sometimes attended by *nautch* (dancing) and singing parties. Either on their own account, or engaged by the proprietor for the amusement of the people.¹¹¹

Kalir Mela at Demdemi in Baliyadangi police station, was the holy place, where *Tolabati* Movement first started at the end of 1939.

Famine, oppression by landlords like *Devi Singh*, Indigo planters, stock market holders, and the *Sannyasi* Movement, *Tolabati* Movement, scarcity, starvation, price hiking - under all those eventful circumstances, Dinajpur turned into a crematorium in those days.

From the above discussion throughout this chapter, it is clear that the socio-economic culture as well as the traditional customs of North Bengal advocating the practice of prostitution both in colonial and post-colonial period.

NOTES & REFERENCES :

1. Ghosh, A. G., 'Historicity of the Name North Bengal or Uttarbanga : A Study on the Evolution of an Identity' in Bagchi, A., (ed.), *Omnibus of North Bengal - The History and Culture of the Hills and the Plains*, Volume 1, B. R. Publishing Co, Delhi, 2015, p. 9.
2. Imam, A., *Sir Alexander Cunningham and the Beginnings of Indian Archaeology*, Asiatic Society, Pakistan, 1966, pp. 123 - 124.
3. Majumdar, R. C. (ed.) *The History of Bengal*, Volume 1, Dacca University, 1943, p. 5.
4. *Pundravardhana* : In ancient period silk was cultivated in a part of North Bengal, and that was why the area was called *palu*; the cultivation of which led to the name of *palu bardhan*, which eventually became *pundravardhana*.
5. *Varendri* : *Varendri* roughly identical with present North Bengal as well as *Gauda* (Rajsahi, Pabna, Bogura, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Malda). *Varendri*, means *Bar* (gift) from *Indra*.
6. Ghosh, A. G., *op. cit.*, p. 9.
7. *Jhankha* : Official language of Bhutan. It is a south Tibetan language spoken in Bhutan by 130000 people.
8. Separism in North Bengal, *Frontier*, Volume 43, No. 40, April 17-23, 2011, <http://www.frontierweekly.com/> accessed on 23/06/13.
9. Roy, S. K., *Work Participation of Tribal Women and Marginalization - The Case of Tribes in North Bengal*, Centre for Women Studies, NBU, 2008, p. 43.
10. *Arkanthis* : In the colonies under the tea industries, a group of people worked as agents, called *Arkanthis* or *Sardars*.
11. Tirkey, M., 'Jalpaigurir Adibasi Samaj O Sanskriti' in *Paschimbanga - Jalpaiguri Sankhya*, Department of Information and Culture Affairs, West Bengal Government, 1408 BE, p. 135.
12. Dasgupta, R., *Economy Society and Politics in Bengal - Jalpaiguri 1869 - 1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992, p. 69.
13. Frontier, *op. cit.*, Volume 43.

14. Roy, S. K., 'Areas of Freedom and subjugation in the life of Tribal Women' in Bagchi, A., & Roy, S. K., (eds.), *Changing Faces of Indian Women*, Levant Books, Kolkata, 2009, p. 213.
15. Roy, S. K., (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 38.
16. Interview with Smt. Saswati Sarkar, Superintendent of Central Excise and Service Tax, Panitanki, Darjeeling, on 27/11/2015, at her office.
17. Interview with Sri Arabinda Singha, (*Bhaowayia* singer), on 07/11/2010, Medical More, Siliguri.
18. Barman, U. N., *Rajbanshi Bhashay Prabad Prabachan O Heyali*, published by A. K. Barman and S. N. Roy, Notunpara, Jalpaiguri, 1385 BE, p. 2.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Tebhaga* and *Adhiyar* : The Flood Commission recommended for 2/3 of the crop, instead of half for the share - croppers in 1946, is called *Tebhag* or *Tebhaga*. A share of half the profit or produce is called *Adhiyar*.
21. Roy, D., *Tebhaga Andolon*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2000, pp. 22 - 38.
22. Mukherjee, S., '*Rangpure Communist Party O Krishak Andolon*' in Roy, D., (ed.), *Tebhaga Andolon*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2000, p. 183.
23. Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the week ending 7th April, 1900, Home Administration, Police, p. 257.
24. Roy, D., (2000), *op. cit.*, p. 216.
25. Roy, K., '*Haater Kotha*' in *Lok Banglar Haat*, Lok Patrika, Kolkata, 2002, p. 123.
26. Lahiri, D., '*Haatir Sangye Bere Otha*' in *Haatir Boi*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2007, p. 5.
27. *Sulobh Dainik*, Kolkata, 14.02.1896, Report on Native Papers, 22/02/1896 cited in Basu, S., (ed.), *Sambad Samoyik Potre Unish Shatoker Bangalee Samaj*, Part II, Paschimbanga Bangla Academi, Kolkata, 2003, p. 142.
28. *Power and Guardian*, Sylhet Weekly Chronicle, 07/07/1901, ANP, p. 415.
29. Report on Native Papers - Owned English News Papers in Bengal for the week ending, 13th July, 1901, Home Administration, Police, p. 415.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
31. *Vikash*, Varishal, ANP, 2nd July, 1901, p. 541.

32. Report on Native Papers in Bengal for the week ending, 13th July, 1901.
33. *Hindu Patriot*, Kolkata, 19th June, 1856, cited in Basu S., *op. cit.*, p. 178.
34. *Kanya bikroy* or *Bacheya khaoya* : The practice known as 'bacheya khaoya' was prevalent among the people of *Rajbanshi* community. Started as *kanyapon* or bride price, it gradually took the form of selling the daughters in lieu of cash money to the bridegroom not even considering the age and suitability of the person. Often we notice such references in the 'Bhaowayia' i.e. the folk song of the *Rajbanshis*. In most cases, poverty was the reason. Selling of daughter is still in vogue and mention of such events in local publications.
35. Gupta, V, *Padmapuran*, p. 218, cited in Sengupta, J, *Manasamongol Kavye Samajik Potobhumika O Nari*, Camp Publishers, Kolkata, 2001, p. 86.
36. *Uttarbanga Sambad*, Siliguri Edition, 2nd October 2007, 26th November 2011, 28th November 2011.
37. Roy, Mukherjee S., (editorial guidance), 'Trafficking of Women and Children : A Social Evil' in *Documentation on Trafficking of Women and Children*, Centre for Women Studies, University of North Bengal, 2009, editorial column.
38. *The Statesman*, Siliguri Edition, 23rd September and 5th December, 2006.
39. Das, A. J., *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Published by the British Government of India, Darjeeling Part, 1947, Chapter 3.
40. Moktan, R., *Sikkim Darjeeling Compendium of Documents*, Kalimpong, 2004, pp. 22-24.
41. Dutta, P., 'Darjeeling Chaa O Nanan Kotha' in *Uttarbanger Sanskritik Uttaradhikar*, Sahazpath, Kolkata, 1999, p. 81.
42. Dutta, Majumdar N., *Gorkhaland Agitation - The Issues : An Information Document*, Govt. of West Bengal, p. 5.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Malley, L. S. S. O', *Bengal District Gazetteers - Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1907, p. 114.
45. *Gandharva Race* : The learned monographist postulates a theory on the strength of different *Pauranic* versions that both *Pururava* and *Urbasi* belonged to the *Gandharva* race; the rivers *Mandakini*, *Alaka*, the *Chaitraratha* and *Nandana*

forests, the *Gandhamadana* mountain all belong to the *Gandharva* region, the so called *Ilavritabarsha*, the integral part of the primitive abode of the *Aryans*, in other words sometimes their material *swarga*.

46. Sinha, S. N. and Basu, N. K., *History of Prostitution in India*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p. 127.
47. *Tistaparer Kotha*, Jalpaiguri, 16th March, 2008, p. 4.
48. Interview with Late Haren Ghosh, (Academician of Siliguri), on 13/04/2009 in Siliguri.
49. *Mahajans* : A *bania* subgroup of North India, meaning great people, are called *Mahajans*. It also means the Hindu chief *bania* or merchant, banker, money lender.
50. Dutta, P., *op. cit.*, p. 30.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 30 - 31.
52. Grunning, J. F., *Eastern Bengal and Assam, District Gazetteers Jalpaiguri*, The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1911, p. i.
53. Sharma, U., *Jalpaigurir Roybahadur Khanbahadur*, Kolkata, 1997, p. 167.
54. Dasgupta, R., *op. cit.*, p. 31.
55. Roy, D., *Tistaparer Brittanta*, Dey's Publishers, Kolkata, 1988, p. 267.
56. Sharma, U., '*Deshbhag O Jalpaiguri Pourasabha*' in *Jalpaiguri Pourasabha - 125 Bochhorer Itibritta (1885 - 2009)*, Published by Jalpaiguri Municipality, 2009, p. 579.
57. Mukherjee, K., *Narimukti Andolon O Amra*, Paschimbanga Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti, NBA, Kolkata, 1993, p. 69.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Chakrobarty, S., *Uttarbanga Kichhu Smriti Kichhu Anweshan*, NBA, Kolkata, 2001, p. 47.
60. Adhikari, N., '*Paschim Dooarser Jotdar Samajer Samajik Jibon*' in Chatterjee, M., (ed.) *Itihas Anusandhan - 24*, Paschimbanga Itihas Samsad, Kolkata, 2010, pp. 632 - 635.
61. *Anusandhan*, 31 *Aswin* (Bengalee Month), 1297 BE, cited in Basu, S., *op. cit.*, p. 140.

62. *Madhuparni, Jalpaiguri Zela Sankhya*, Balurghat, 1394 BE, p. 400.
63. Dasgupta, R., *op. cit.*, p. 70.
64. Grunning J. F., *op. cit.*, p. 129.
65. *Hitobadi*, Kolkata, 23rd March, 1900, ANP, for the week ending 31st March, 1900, p. 240.
66. Roy Sanyal, R., *The Raj and the Princely State of Coochbehar : A Study of Anglo - Coochbehar Relations 1772-1839*, Dipali Publishers, Malda, 2004, p. 88.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
68. Jalpaiguri Centenary, Volume 1, 1970, pp. 38 - 47.
69. Roy Sanyal, R., *op. cit.*, p. 94.
70. Sri Sri Brindesvari Devya Maharantikrito 'Beharodanta' incorporated in Shil Sharma, A. K., *Cooch Behar Rajbarir Andormaha*, Anima Prakashani, Kolkata, 2011, pp. 26 - 27.
71. The Annual Administrative Report of Cooch Behar, 1874 - 1875.
72. Khan Chowdhuri, A. A., *A History of Cooch Behar* (in Bengali), Part 1, printed at the State Press and published under authority of the Cooch Behar State, 1936, p. 226.
73. Roy, S. K., *Prachin Coochbeharer Artha Samajik Itihas*, Boiwala, Kolkata, 2008, p. 91.
74. Shil Sharma, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 12.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
76. Sen, D. C., *Brihatbanga*, Volume 2, Dey's Publishing (Reprinted) Kolkata, 2006, pp. 1072 - 1073.
77. Roy, S. K., *op. cit.*, p. 100.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
80. Pemberton, R. B. Report on Bootan, 1839, pp. 150 - 151.
81. Turner, S., *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of Teshoo Lama in Tibet*, London, 1800, pp. 10 - 11.
82. Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Volume X, 1876, p. 425.
83. The Annual Administrative Report of Cooch Behar, 1890 - 1891.

84. The Annual Administration Report of Cooch Behar, 1890 - 1891, p. 5.
85. The Annual Administration Report of Cooch Behar, 1888 - 1889, p. 4.
86. *Rasmela Smaranik, Pourosabha*, Cooch Behar, 1983.
87. Bhattacharjee, M. S., (ed.) *Cities of Medieval Bengal*, Indian Institute of Oxford Studies and Research, Kolkata, 2014, p. 82.
88. Lambourn, G. E., *Bengal Gazetteers - Malda*, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Kolkata, 1819, p. 2.
89. Shome, S., *Malda Zillar Itihas Charcha*, Dipali Publishers, Malda, 2006, p. 9.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
91. *Diara* : The southern part of *Kalindi* river is known as *diara*. It is formed by the Ganges alluvial soil.
92. *Barind* : Eastern part of *Mahananda* river is known as *Barind*, which is made of old red alluvial soil.
93. Lambourn, G. E., *op. cit.*, p. 56.
94. Roy, D., (2000), *op. cit.*, p. 214.
95. *Foujdar* and *Ijaradar* : An officer tasked with the administration of a government is called *Foujdar*. A petty officer as one in charge of police is also called *Foujdar*. *Ijaradar*, the person related to land in each *parganas*. *Ijara* constituted as a sort of contract and implied the forming out of the revenues of a *mahal* or more than one *mahal* and *Ijaradar* was required to pay the fixed amount as stipulated in the agreement.
96. Chakrobarty, R. K., *Gaurer Itihas*, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 1999, p. 309.
97. Chaki, L., 'Melar Mohila' in P. Sarkar (ed.) *Swadesh Charcha - Bangla Bhashay Samaj Sanskritir Mukhopatro*, Sarat Samkhya, October, Banglar Mela, Kolkata, 2007, p. 92.
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
101. Shome, S., *op. cit.*, p. 257.
102. *Gambhira* : *Gambhira* is a very famous festival in Malada. It is one kind of

song, which is performed with rhythm and dance with particularly distinctive performers. Various masks are carved out from wooden pieces and the dancers wear the mask while performing *gambhira* dance.

103. Shome, S., *op. cit.*, p. 191.

104. *Diwani* : It means the right to collect taxes on behalf of the emperor from the eastern province of Bengal.

105. Roy, D., *Dinajpur zillar Itihas*, K. P. Bagchi & Company, Kolkata, 2006, p. 18.

106. Roy, D., '*Ruper Haat Ruper Haat*' in *Lok Banglar Haat*, Lok Patrika, Kolkata, 2002, p. 85.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 423.

109. Strong, F. W., *Dinajpur Gazetteers*, The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1912, p. 102.

110. *Ibid.*

111. *Ibid.*, p. 108.