

## **Chapter -1**

### **A Brief History of the District Jalpaiguri on the eve of the Formation in 1869**

Jalpaiguri was a non-descript village before 1869. Joseph Dalton Hooker, the English East India Company's employee had visited this area in 1848 and described Jalpaiguri as a 'Straggling Village'.<sup>1</sup> This straggling village was tremendously changed after 1869. There were no concrete historical evidences regarding the name 'Jalpaiguri'. Mythology, History, Geography and Ethnographical study here suggested us that the early name of Jalpaiguri was Fakirganj in the revenue atlas as well as the atlas of James Renell, Fakirganj was mentioned. But when the name Fakirganj was transferred into Jalpaiguri is not known. Local historian used to say that the name Fakirganj was derived from Sanyasi and Fakir Raiders.<sup>2</sup> So, the name Fakirganj may come from the Sanyasi and Fakirs. On the other hand the word 'Gunjas' Bengali meaning is 'Bandar' or trade center. So, Jalpaiguri was a trade center or *Ganjas* before the advent of the English East India Company.<sup>3</sup> It is to be noted that before the advent of the East India Company as well as the British India Government, Jalpaiguri area was ruled by the Bhutanese. Originally the territory belonged to the Kamtapur kingdom before 1664. Taking the advantage of inter- struggle of the successors of the Prana Narayan, the rulers of Kamata- Koch kingdom, Bhutan occupied the eastern bank of Korotya, popularly known as Dooars. When did this area call Dooars? No acceptable answer is available to us. A good number of local researchers have tried to explain the origin of the word the Dooars. According to them Dooars means a Door to the entry of Bhutan. So, there were 18 Dooars of Bhutan. This answer is not wholly acceptable. In this regard, it would be worthwhile to mention that the door is an English word. Naturally, a pertinent question came to our mind what was the Indian name of

Dooars before the advent of the British. Even today, we could not get any scientific answer to this question. Another important question came to our mind that many of the local scholars used to say that the root from hill to plain vice versa plain to hill was known as the Dooars. If so, why it is not find the term the 'Dooars' in other hill towns of the country? For example neither in Nainital nor in Dehradun we do find such type of name. So, the nomenclature the Dooars is creating a problem to us.

Another serious question came to our mind. It appears from British Government's statistics as well as local hearsays, there were 18 Dooars. It is surprising that the colonial imperial Government instead of making of 18 Dooars a single administrative unit, they divided into two vies, Eastern Dooars and Western Dooars. The Eastern Dooars is consisted by 7 Dooars, was placed under 1 administrative unit whereas the Wastern Dooars consisted by 11 Dooars was placed under a separate administrative unit. Later on the 7 Dooars were marched with Goalpara district of Assam and the 11 Dooars were marched with the newly created Jalpaiguri district. It is not known for what reason the colonial imperial government had divided the Dooars into two units. They may create a single administrative unit or district called Dooars district. But they did not do it. Perhaps the geography and ethnography had influenced them to divided Dooars. However the issue requires an intensive study and research.

Though Bhutan was compelled to leave Dooars area but she continued her predatory activities into the foot hills adjacent to the Dooars areas. The geographical situation of Dooars was complicated one. It was surrounded by Bhutan, Tibet and Sikkim. Though there was no direct border between Dooars and Nepal, but the Darjeeling Terai was adjacent to Nepal. Naturally from the point of view of military security Dooars preoccupied an important place in the deface system of the British colonial imperial Government. The Dooars area again came into the lime light when the Sepoy Mutiny was occurred. The

rebellion native Sepoys of the British East India Company, the Raikots of the Jalpaiguri and the king of Bhutan was creating troubles in this area. It is true that before the Mutiny, the East India Company had set up a Cantonment in Jalpaiguri in 1854. This was the important cantonment of this region which closely wretched the movement of the Bhutanese, so Jalpaiguri was getting important to the English East India Company's authorities.

Though Jalpaiguri had a Cantonment, but there was no police station in Jalpaiguri. In fact today's Rajganj or Sanyasi kata was the important police station as well as the administrative unit of the English East India Company. The whole area was the part of Rangpur district, when Jalpaiguri emerged as a district in 1869; it was curved out Rangpur that is the west bank of the river Tista. This area and the Western Dooars was merged in 1869 as a separate district known as Jalpaiguri district.

The formation of the district, Jalpaiguri had a long history and it passed over a long period since the formation in 1869. At the outset, I want to mention one important thing that the writing of regional history, particularly the history of the district like Jalpaiguri is a critical and herculean task because of the relative paucity of source materials. In spite of that, I am eager to explore a new aspect of the history of Jalpaiguri in the colonial and post-colonial period with trying my best throwing a new light, as there is a new awakening in the mind of Indian historians for doing justice to local history as well as micro history which seems to be a more befitting process of historical research and writing to the diversity and plurality of Indian economy, society and culture.

Prior to the formation of the district in 1869, it can be discussed the history of the region dividing in pre-historic and historic period. In the pre-historic period this area was under Pragjyotishpur, a large tract bounded on the north by the kunjagiri, on the east by the hill, Himalaya and on the west by the Korotoya and it stretched southward as far as the junction of the Laksha with of

the Brahmaputra.<sup>4</sup>And consisting with present Assam, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Manipur, Jayantiya, Kachhar, Shreehatta and some part of Mymensing district. The inhabitants of this region were Indo- Mongoloid race, Known as Kirata and the tract was governed by Bhagadatta who took part in the battle of Kurukshetra is mentioned in the Mahabharata.<sup>5</sup>The character and the activities of the 'Kiratas' has also been mentioned in the 'Kiskindhya Kanda' of 'Ramayana'.

Later on, Bodos, the community originated from Indo-Mongoloid race settled and dominated in this area through long period and from then the historic period of this tract was started, though the details about them and their region has yet not been founded because of the paucity of the sources.

In the Historic period, the king Bhaskar Barman was one of the important and greatest kings of the North Eastern region of India in 7<sup>th</sup> century A. D. He was contemporary of Harshabardhana, a prominent king of Thanesar in North India and Shashanka of Gaur. Bhaskar Barman founded the empire in a larger area of North Eastern region of India consisting with Brahmaputra Valley, parts of Surma Valley and the Northern part of Bengal. Bhaskar Barman as a king from his reputation, activities can be placed in the history of all Indian contexts. He was able to make alliances with Harsh Bardhana, the famous king of North India, though the relation between Bhaskar Barman and Shashanka of Gouda was not favourable. After Bhaskar Barman, the history of this region is gloomy, as the history of this tract is not known till the foundation of the Koch dynasty.

It seems to all that the Aryan culture entered into this tract after so long period than the other parts of India. It is founded in Oitereya Brahman that kings of five dynasty of non- Aryan ruled this region approximately 1000 B. C, namely Pundra, Sabara, Pulinda, Andhra and Motiva's and they all were Dravidian race.

Baidyadeva, the army officer of Ram Pala invaded and occupied Kamrup approximately in 1127 A. D and ruled this area as feudal king. After the death of Ram Pala, Baidyadev declared freedom and ruled his empire as an Independent king.<sup>6</sup> The successor of Baidyadeva, Prithu ascended the throne of Kamrup in 1195 A.D. In imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol, XIV, it is mentioned “there are extensive remnants at Bhitargarh, which is said to have formed the capital of Shudra king named Prithu.”<sup>7</sup> Prithu protected this empire from the invasion of Bakhtiar Khalji. After the defeat of Prithu in the battle of Panchagar, his son Sandha Roy came into an alliance with Nasiruddin, promised to give tribute. But, after leaving the place Sandha became free and shifted his capital into Kamtapur in 1228 (A.D. approximate). After Sandha Roy his son, became the king of Kamtapur. During his reign Sukpha, the king of Ahom kingdom invaded Kamrup. After the death of Sindhu, Rupnarayan, the son of Sindhu ascended the throne and after his death his son Singhadhawaja became the king of Kamtapur in 1300 A. D. He was murdered by his minister Manik and Manik became the king taking title ‘Protapdhawaja’.

After the sudden death of Protapadhawaja , DharmaNarayan inherited from Baidya dynasty captured power and shifted the capital from Kamtapur to Dimla (modern Rangpur) and after Dharma Narayan the empire was occupied by Durlav Narayan, the successor of Protapdhawaja in 1330 A. D. After Durlav Narayan, Indra Narayan reined the empire.

After Indra Narayan, Arittam or Sashanka ascended the throne in 1335 A. D. According to Scholars Arittam was inherited from Baidyadev Dyanasty. After the death of Arittam, the empire was ruled by the kings namely Gajanka (1385- 1499), Sukranka (1400-1415) and Mriganka (1415-1440).

After Mriganka, Niladhawaja of Khen dynasty occupied Kamtapur kingdom. After the death of Niladhawaja, Kamtapur was ruled by Chakradhwaja

(1460- 1480) and Nilambar (1480- 1509). During the reign of Nilambar, Hussain Shah attacked the kamtapur and Kamtapur lost her independence for sudden period. Kamtapur was re-occupied by Nagadhakshya in about 1502 A.D. The successor of Nagadhaksha was Durlavendra. He was able to keep under control a part of Kamtapur. As a successor of Durlavendra Sucharu Chandra ruled the kingdom and he was defeated by Nara Narayan in 1555 A.D and lost the power.

During the last part of 15<sup>th</sup> century, Hariya Mandal, a '*Sardar*' or *Mandal* was a leader of the Meches and he was also a landlord situated around the Chikna hill. From the anthropological point of view Koches were a mixed community of the Dravidian and Bodos. In spite of being a non- Aryan community Koches accepted the Aryan language and culture in many respect. Haria Mandal in such a way founded the Koch kingdom 50 miles away from Dhubri in the middle of Sonkosh to Champa River. Haria Mandal had two wives namely Hira and Jira and four sons namely Chandan, Madan, Bishu and Sishu. After Haria Mandal, Chandan became the king and after Chandan, Bishu became the king of Koch kingdom taking the title 'Singha' and captured Kamtapur for the weakness and defeat of the Khen dynasty by Alauddin Hussain Shah. Dr. Subhajyoti Roy writes, "It can be assumed that the beginning of the Koch kingship in the ability of their ancestors to unite under some sort of a centralized leadership several small clan based units which had engaged in shifting cultivation under the Mandals."<sup>8</sup>

Biswa Singh as a king taking the recognition from his mother genealogy as a rule of tribal custom because the predecessors of Biswa Singha from his father side were Mech and from his mother side was Koch. Biswa Singha and his successors became gradually Hinduanised taking Hindu religion and culture. Even the title was not the original; he was denoted with the Kshatriya title. Dr. Subhojyoti Roy writes, "I shall argue that the origin of the Rajbanshi identity lay in the foundation of the Koch kingdom, Under the Haria Mandal

and the gradual process of 'Hinduanised' of the tribe under the more characteristic ruler Biswa Singha and Naranarayan.”<sup>9</sup>

Koch Kings were powerful in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mirzumla, the Subeder of Bengal under the Mughal invaded Cooch Behar in 1661. Taking shelter in Bhutan Koch kings fought against Mirzumla, as a result Mughal army had fully been broken off and a treaty was concluded between Koch king and Shayastha Khan in 1665. Atabat Khan again attacked Cooch Behar in 1687 and he entered four miles into Cooch Behar and occupied Kaikana Chakla of Cooch Behar. In these circumstances, Raikot king of Baikunthapur joined with Cooch Behar in spite of having clash between Cooch Behar and Baikunthapur and they made counter attack jointly against the Mughals, as a result of which a treaty was signed in 1699 between Alikuli Khan, the Mughal fauzder and Koch king Rupnarayan. In accordance with the treaty Fatehpur, Kazir hat, Kaikana Chakla (an area of land) came under Cooch Behar. Many Chits (enclaves) of Cooch Behar created later on in these three Chaklas. But Nawab Nazim of Bengal Suba denied the treaty and new fauzder Nizamatulla was appointed in place of Alikuli Khan and fight was started. Sheikh Yaar Mahammad occupied the three Chaklas and he started to dwell in the Cooch Behar frontier. The peasants of the area were exploited by the army of the Mughals and broke out into a rebellion. Realizing the situation, the Nawab of Bengal agreed to give these three Chaklas to Cooch Behar by agreement or lease. Chhetra Nazir Santanu of Koch king took three Chaklas by lease. By this time villages of this area were occupied by the Mughal army. These villages became Chits or enclaves of Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) later on.

In the settlement with the Mahamadans, the Koch kings took the Zamindar benami in the name of the 'Nazir Deo' but at the time of the Permanent Settlement the British Government settled the zamindari with the Raja in his own name. The zamindari is still compared of many patches, but it consists of three main chaklas- two are now in Jalpaiguri, namely Boda and Patgram and one is now in Rangpur namely Purba Bhag.<sup>10</sup> In such a way Baikunthapur was also invaded by the faujdar of Rangpur sometime between 1736-1739 and the Pargana was declared as a Mughal pargana under the Fauzdar of Rangpur.<sup>11</sup> After acquisition of Dewani in 1765 by the British East India Company entire area of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa came under the Company. So, the Parganas of Baikunthapur, Patgram automatically came under the English East India Company and then upon the collector of Rangpur. The decay of Cooch Behar State as a sovereign power was really started from the reign of Rupnarayan because he was not able to hold his power actively on his entire area of the State. The Bhutanese aggressively entered into the Cooch Behar State and occupied many places in Northern part of Cooch Behar during the reign of Upendra Narayan (1714-1763) and in such a way the Bhutanese dominated on Cooch Behar State on the entire area of Cooch Behar, during the reign of Devendra Narayan, a child king. Since then Cooch Behar was actually governed by a representative of Cooch Behar with a Bhutani troops. In 1765, Devendra Narayan was murdered by Ratisharma. Sri Abdul Bari wrote, ".....by 1765 Bhutan was supreme in Cooch Behar and nothing could be done without the sanction of her representative stationed in Cooch Behar. Unfortunately, the Raikot of the Baikunthapur Pargana did not stand by Cooch Behar Raj, rather the Raikot Darpadeo, having a powerful with the help of the Sanyasis concluded alliances with Dev Raja of Bhutan and a considerable portion of Baikunthapur was handed over to Bhutan on condition that they jointly over throw the Raja of Cooch Behar. So, within a short period Darpa Deo with the help of Bhutani troops invaded Cooch Behar."<sup>12</sup>

As there was no successor of Devendra Narayan, Dhairjendra Narayan (brother of Dewan Deo Rama Narayan) was selected unanimously, as a king. After ascended the throne, Dhairjendra Narayan deserted and murdered his elder brother Dewan Deo Rama Narayan and in place of Rama Narayan, Surendra Narayan, his younger brother was selected as a Dewan. As the Bhutan Raj was in favour of Rama Narayan, so a feast was arranged by Bhutan Raj at Checha Khata in presence of Bhutan Raj, Koch king and Dewan Deo and others. From the feast house, King Dhairjendra Narayan was arrested and sent to Bhutan.

In these circumstances, Bhutanese representative came to Cooch Behar and Rajendra Narayan was ascended to the throne by him. But the ministry and relatives could support Rajendra Narayan as a king as the coronation of Rajendra Narayan was illegal. Bhutias became powerfull in the State of Cooch Behar whereas the Koch king and Nazir Deo were powerless after two years Rajendra Narayan had died in 1772.

After the death of Rajendra Narayan, the conflicts started for the throne. In these circumstances, Darendra Narayan, the son of Dhairjendra had been ascended the throne. But Bhutan Raj could not agree with this coronation. So, the Bhutan Raj sent Jimpe with many Troops into Cooch Behar. He occupied Koch kingdom, Jimpe entered into the capital of Cooch Behar and Kumar Bijendra Narayan, son of Rama Narayan had been ascended the throne by him and the king was shifted to Chekakhata. But being intolerable with the climate of Chekakhata, the king had expired. Jimpe had kept troops in the fort of many places of Cooch Behar. In these circumstances, like 'fish without water' Nazir Deo and the Royals of Cooch Behar prayed for help to the British East India Company. As a result a treaty was concluded and Cooch Behar lost her sovereignty and became a tributary state of the British.

According to the provisions of the treaty British East India Company ejected the Bhutias from Cooch Behar. An intensive fight between Company and Bhutias was occurred at Dalimkot. Ultimately Bhutias were defeated and a treaty was concluded between the Company and Bhutias in 1774 by the arbitration of the Tibet Government.<sup>13</sup>

After concluding the treaty with the Bhutanese in 1774, the revenue of Baikunthapur pargana had been increased up to Rupees 32,000 as a punishment of the Darpadeo for concluding a treaty with Bhutan and Baikunthapur was recognized as *Batris Hazari*. The Raikot of Baikunthapur complained against the high revenue imposed of Baikunthapur, to the collector of Rangpur and in this complained he recognized himself as the *king of Batris Hazari*. Ultimately, the revenue was decreased and stood it Rupees 25,935.<sup>14</sup>

But Bhutan was not agreed to support this judgment between Company and Baikunthapur. So, Bhutan demanded Ambari Falakata. As there was an interest of the Company for trade and commerce in Tibet through Bhutan, so the Company took the policy of appeasement towards Bhutan. Jalpesh and Ambari Falakata were ceded to Bhutan by the Company without any hesitation, not only that many parts of the Dooars had yet been occupied by the Bhutias. In spite of that Bhutias had not been ejected from the Dooars by the Company. More over the Bhutias continued their oppression on the people of Dooars by threatening, dacoit, plundering and many other ways. Bhutias had no own system or rules for collecting revenue or administration.<sup>15</sup> The revenue and judicial system must necessarily be in a very imperfect condition.<sup>16</sup> It was supported by Sir Jenkin at the time of visiting in the North Eastern part of Cooch Behar State, Bhulka, he observed himself of the oppression of the Bhutias.

The oppression of the Bhutanese was continued in the Eastern Dooars as well. Amongst the seven Dooars in Assam five were in Kamrupa and two were in Darjeeling. The Bhutanese had dominated their right on the Dooars (Darrang) for the weakness and decline of the Ahom Raj.

Unable to deal with frontier outrages and incursions the latter was glad to purchase security by making over the seven Dooars to the Bhutanese for an annual payment of Yak –tails, ponies, musk, gold dust, blanket and knives of an estimated value of Narayani Rupees 4,785 and 4 Annas, an agreement which has been described as mutual compromise between conscious weakness and barbarian cunning.<sup>17</sup>

During the last days of the Ahom rulers a civil war started among the great powers, the Phukan, the Barbarua and the Bar Gohain. In this triangular contest the Burmese (1819-1824) who hunted down the Bar Barua and the Bar Gohain and inaugurated a period of anarchy. For the defeat of the Burmese in the First Anglo – Burmese War by the treaty of Yandaboin 1826, Assam formally passed the British hands. In spite of that the Bhutanese continued their oppression on the Dooars and they would not give regularly their tribute in kind to the king of the Dooars. So, the Company was bound to possess the Eastern Dooars taking the theory: the Bhutanese had taken possess of the Dooars “At no very distant time”. The Assam princes who confirmed it by a compromise, never renounced their “Sovereign rights over the people” whom they considered their subjects.<sup>18</sup> So, the sovereign rights on the Dooars automatically inherited on the British as they occupied the whole Assam in 1826 by the treaty of Yandabo. Later on, according to the Ashley Eden’s version and the instructions from the court of directors orders were issued for the resumption of the whole of the Assam Dooars and ultimately they agreed to pay the Bhutanese Government a sum of rupees 10000 per annum.<sup>19</sup> So, ultimately, the whole Assam Dooars was annexed to the British empire in 1841. By the treaty of peace in 1774 between Company and Bhutan, the southern boundary of Bhutan was settled. But Bhutan demanded several parts of Cooch Behar State and Baikunthapur Pargana from time to time. Cooch Behar State, the Company tolerated everything biased and did not take any action against the Bhutias. In 1783 Captain Turner was sent to Bhutan with purpose of promoting intercourse, but his mission failed.<sup>20</sup> Later on, Captain

Pamberton was sent to Bhutan, but his negotiations yielded no definite result and as all attempts to obtain redress and ensure security to the inhabitant's failed.<sup>21</sup>

In this way the Bhutias gradually became beyond the control of the Company and the mischief activities of the Bhutanese had been increase day by day, in which the inhabitants of the Dooars were plundered, killed or carried off as slaves, degradation and outrages and to demand reparation. In these circumstances Mr. Ashley Eden, (C. S.) was sent as envoy to Bhutan to put to these two papers agreeing to make over the Assam and Bengal Dooars to Bhutan and to surrender all run-away slaves and political offenders. But the mission had completely become failure. Eden returned from Bhutan with empty handed. Moreover, he had been subjected to gross indignities and obliged to sign forcefully and he had been insulted by the Bhutias. On Mr. Eden's return the Government at once disavowed the treaty which he had been forced to sign, suspended all communications with the Bhutan Government, and strengthen the police force on the frontier.<sup>22</sup>

The British Government sent a letter to Dev and Dharma Rajas announcing the permanent annexation of the Dooars including Ambari Falakata and to stop the annual payment to Bhutan Rs 2000 as rent for Ambari Falakata and Rs 10000 as revenue for the Assam Dooars. On November 12, 1864 British Government also decided to their expedition in several posts. Ultimately Bhutias could not be successful and Dev Raja and Dharma Raja concluded a treaty of peace at 'Sinchula' on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1865. According to the provision of the treaty "..... it is hereby agreed that the whole of the tract known as the eighteen Duars bordering in the districts of Rangpur, Cooch Behar and Assam, together with the taluk of Ambari Falakata and the hill territory on the left bank of Tista up to such points as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose is ceded bythe Bhutan Government to the British forever".<sup>23</sup>

After the annexation of the Dooars in November, 1864, it was divided into two parts - Eastern and Western Dooars. The Eastern Dooars by the notification dated December 3, 1866 attached to the Goalpara district of Assam. The district of Jalpaiguri as an administrative unit came into being on 1st January 1869 by the amalgamation of the Western Dooars district, which was formed in 1864 and consisted of that portions of the lands taken from Bhutan at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo Bhutanese war, with the Jalpaiguri subdivision of Rangpur.<sup>24</sup> There were 3 subdivisions at the inception of the district namely, Sadar with the headquarter of Mainaguri, Buxa with the headquarter of Alipurduar and Dalimkot which was transferred to Darjeeling district 3 years later.

### **Society of the district, Jalpaiguri on the eve of 1869:--**

It is relevant to mention here the socio- economic scenario of the society before the inception of the district. The British India-Government divided the district into two parts such as (i) Permanent settled portion or regulatory area situated in the Western part of Tista and (ii) Non-regulatory areas situated in the Eastern Bank of Tista. But before inception of the district the Western Dooars area was under the control of Bhutan and the Western part of Tista i.e. Baikunthapur Pargana was ruled by the Raikot kings of Jalpaiguri.

The society of the district on the eve of the formation can be discussed dividing into two parts mainly (i) **Society of the hilly areas** (ii) **Society of the plain areas of villages.**

The Western Dooars are a flat, alluvial strip of country, averaging about 22miles in width running along the foot of the Bhutan – Himalayas. The north edge of this narrow tract is however, hilly in certain places, specifically in the immediate neighborhood of the military outpost of Buxa. This portion of the subdivision is being gradually opened out by tea planters and has so far given a prominence to the Dooars. The hill tract is inhabited by the Bhutias and other non-Aryan tribes and is agriculturally very poor.<sup>25</sup>

In the pre-colonial period, the area of the district particularly the area of the Dooars was full of jungles, most of the area was without people because of the intolerable condition and the hard diseases namely Malaria, Kalazar etc., only the people of some tribes namely Mech, Garo, Toto, Rava, Dru CPA, lived there. Some tribes of Bhutanese lived there but before coming of rainy season, they left the place to save them. Surgeon Rennie wrote, "The inhabitants chiefly consist of a tribe called the Mechis who appears to be the only people so constituted as to be capable of permanently enduring the climate."<sup>26</sup>

The life of these tribes were very simple, kept themselves out of modern civilization and complexity. They had their own customs, laws and culture by which they were governed. Every tribe had separate septs or gotras. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal wrote, "Although the Bodos including the Meches become mixed with other people they have retained their distinctive septs or gotras."<sup>27</sup>

Immediately, after the occupation of the Dooars, the local commissioner J.C. Haughton drew up a list of the landlords in the Dooars in such a way - the land in the Western Dooars area was held in the following manner - Goomah, Raphoo and Bhalka were under small Zamindar or Tehshildars (Petty Revenue Collectors) wholly under the Bhutia rules, Buxa was under a Bhutia officer (Dooar Deo), the Northern parts of the Dooars were under Mech Sardars and the plain of Mainaguri was divided among the Zamindars - the family of Hargovinda Katham, one Khurgodher Karji, and the Raikot of Jalpaiguri. There was no mention of Jotdars as a class having permanent, heritable and alienable rights on land in any parts of the Dooars at this stage.<sup>28</sup>

In the Northern part of the Dooars, the Meches and the Garos lived there habituated with shifting cultivation. They settled in a place few years, cultivated in the land in their own way, after few years they shifted into another place and settled there and their life was cycling in such a way.<sup>29</sup> In the Southern part of the district there were settled cultivators most of whom were Rajbanshi community. In the pre-colonial period, particularly in the reign of

Bhutias, there were two parallel hierarchies of authorities in the Dooars who depended on land, collected Revenue and sent to the Bhutan Raj. Dr. Subhajyoti Roy shows that the following were the main characteristics of the pre-colonial system : **a)** the presence of two separate but overlapping hierarchies, the first consisting of Bhutanese officials and the second of the local agrarian society; **b)** existence of a degree of power struggle at two levels, between the central authority of the Bhutia state and its local officers on the one hand and on the other, between the latter officers and the local potentates of the Dooars; and **c)** the attempt of the Bhutia authorities to override the powers of the local officers and leading elements in order to encourage cultivation and maximize tribute.<sup>30</sup> Western Dooars was under Paro Penlop, the Governor of Western Division of Bhutan. J. C. Haughton showed the land tenures in different parts of the Dooars in such way Goomah, Raphoo and Bhalka were under small Zamindar or Teshildars (petty revenue collectors) wholly under Bhutia rules, Buxa was under a Bhutia officer (*Dooar Deo*), the Northern part of the Dooars were under Mech sardars and the plain of Mainaguri was divided among the Zamindars, the family of Hargobinda Katham ,khurgodher Karji and the Raikot of Jalpaiguri.<sup>31</sup> The officials under Bhutanese who were involved in collecting revenue and sending to Bhutan, the Royal power, can be furnished from the point of power and position in such way – Soobah at the highest level. The exact powers and functions of each of these officials cannot be ascertained with any degree of accuracy, but all of them were important links in the chain of tribute extraction; each was responsible for passing on the tribute to their immediate superiors.<sup>32</sup> The Kathams in the Dooars took a significant role in collecting revenue, though their position was under Subah. Arabinda Deb wrote, “...below the Subah there were a class of subordinate officials known as Kathams. They were resident in the plains and exercised immediate control in the management of the Dooars in the great majority of cases the kathams were directly appointed by the title “Deed” (Sanad) of the Deb Raja, though subordinate in rank of Bhutanese administration in the plains. It seems that the appellation ‘katham’ was

prevalent only to the west of the Gadadhar. Eastward it took the forms of 'Luskar Wuzder or Mundal.'<sup>33</sup>

Under the Bhutanese rule no revenue or tax was imposed on the peasants for five years in preparing the land for cultivation after clearing Jungles. But after five years revenue was imposed on them. Grunning pointed out that after forest had been cleared and was then assessed at area rates according to the Hal or plough, a local measure about 5 acres. There was a special cess on mustard seed and local rate of Rs1 a Hal and Rs. 2 a house was levied for religious festivals.<sup>34</sup> The Meches in the Dooars were habituated with shifting cultivation or Jhum cultivation; particularly they cultivated cotton – plant. After few years of cultivation, they shifted into another place, settled there and cultivated the same way in a traditional manner. After long discussion Col. Rowlat and Col. Haughton imposed tax on the Meches called 'capitation tax' (a) Rs.2 Per year. About the taxes on the Dooars Capt. Lance wrote, "Taxes were imposed on each ryots house on the estate. In addition they had to pay certain fixed tribute and presentation of *Nuzzars* (presents to officials)."<sup>35</sup> From the above discussions and various sources it can be said that during the period of Bhutanese rule no particular system was introduced for revenue or tax collection in addition with that there was no particular estimate of revenue or tax as most of the taxes were collected by kind instead of cash for which it was difficult to estimate the values of various things which were collected. Ashley Eden pointed out, "The Duars held by the Paro Penlop are a very small portion of the whole Bengal Duars and if he receives a lakh for his portion the total revenue of the Duars must be seven lakhs. I do not think however that any real estimate can be formed of the revenue derived from the Duars."<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that on the eve of the formation of the district, the Dooars area was mainly dominated by the tribal people on the hilly areas and the people of Rajbanshi community in the plain areas of the Dooars. The society of the tribal people was mainly ethnic- based. They were governed by themselves by their way of life following their ethnic culture keeping themselves out of the ambit of the so called civic society. They had their own

systems, customs and manner for conducting their society. They had *Moral* or *Mandal* (Leader of each group or sept) who led or conducted their society like a democratic manner. They never would go to the ruler or administration of the civic section. For any kind of problem or crisis they assembled in a particular place in presence of their moral or Mandal for discussions and solution. After discussions they would reach their way of solution declared by the moral or Mandal and as such everybody had to obey that decision, nobody could deny it. In this regard Dhaniram Toto of Totopara in the Jalpaiguri district informed that Totos never would go out of their society for any kind of problem. If any quarrel or clash occurs among the people in their society they do not go to the court or police Department for salvation even today.<sup>37</sup>

In the field of medical treatment also they were completely depended on their ethnic society i. e the procedure of the indigenous treatment led by local *Ojha* or *Kabiraj*. The medicines prepared completely by the indigenous manner from various plants and other indigenous things without any chemicals or things imported from outside were the backbone of their lives. Even today most of the tribal people of ordinary section depended on the indigenous systems of treatment. Biswaram Narjinary, a teacher of Alipurduar High School, a member of Mech community of Hemaguri in the district of Jalpaiguri told that still now in most of the cases of their diseases they followed the indigenous system of treatment. In case of critical condition or serious condition they consulted with the Doctor.<sup>38</sup> The people of Mech community of the Dooars followed the indigenous system of treatment for their diseases. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal took an interview with Ruda Suba, 77 years old of Mech community who informed that he never went to the Doctor and in his 77 years old he never used masari (mosquito-net), he slept in open sky at night using a cot in the courtyard or in front of the house.<sup>39</sup> In the areas of Baikunthapur Pargana and the Chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag permanent settlement was introduced since 1793. There were two large and small zamindari estates in this portion. Revenue payable by them was fixed except

for cess and other levies imposed on them. Zamindars enjoyed heritable rights in the land and parcel out land for rent. The Zamindars would give their estates to Jotdars on agreement. The Jotdars were intermediaries between Zamindars and cultivators. Jotdars like Talukdars elsewhere in Bengal were first degree Pattanidars who could give their land to the Chukanidars to get revenue, Chukanidars also sometimes give their land to Dar-dar-chukanidars to obtain revenue. Siswa Singha the step brother of Biswa Singha, the founder of Koch Dynasty got the Baikunthapur Pargana as a *Petbhata* (expenditure for livelihood ) which was revenue free holding umbrella on the head of Koch King taking the title 'Raikot' means head of the Fort, since then the landlord of Baikunthapur Pargana had been using the title 'Raikot'. At the initial stage the relation between Baikunthapur and Cooch Behar was good but the 12th 'Raikat' Darpadev retarded the relation with Cooch Behar and made an alliance with Bhutan and the relation between Cooch Behar and Bhutan became bitter. After acquisition of Diwani, the English East India Company obtained Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from Shaha Alam, the Mughal Emperor, since then Baikunthapur Pargana and Boda came under British East India Company by consisting with Rangpur district. The Northern portion of the Baikunthapur Estate contains 71 square miles of compact forest, which grows valuable sal timber. The reserved forest in the Dooars extended to 505 square miles, 45 square miles of which near Buxa stand on hilly ground.<sup>40</sup> The East India Company collected Rs. ten thousand from this pargana. There was no record by which it would be shown that the Mughals imposed any taxes or revenue on Baikunthapur Pargana. Grunning wrote, "It is not included in any Sarkar or Muhammadan division of the country, having only been added to Bengal since the British assumed the government of the country."<sup>41</sup> Raikots used to give revenue to Cooch Behar Raj for the jaigirs other than Baikunthapur.<sup>42</sup> The East India Company enhanced the revenue of Baikunthapur from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 25,000 and Rs 32,000, for which Baikunthapur was treated as "Batris hajari". In 1777 Raikat Darpadev complained to the collector of Rangpur against the heavy revenue imposed on them and in the complaint paper Darpadev

mentioned himself as the “King of Batris Hajari.”<sup>43</sup> In 1780 a deduction of Rs. 6,238 was allowed on account of lands made over to the Bhutias and the revenue paid in that year was Rs. 25,935. On the basis of it, the Permanent Settlement was made and a treaty was concluded between Raikot and East India Company. But the Bhutan did not accede with the treaty between Company and Raikat. He (Bhutan) demanded Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh situated to the east of Tista. As there was economic and commercial interest of the company in the Tibet through Bhutan, Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh were ceded to Bhutan by the company ignoring the consent of Baikunthapur and Cooch Behar.

The land of Baikunthapur was divided into five categories namely (1) Auwal (fertile), (2) Daiyam (down land or dohla), (3) Seyam (land under town), (4) Baharam (land laying in danga), (5) Mayaji (uncultivated or patit).<sup>44</sup>

The population in Baikunthapur pargana were meagre due to economically backwardness, communicational disadvantages, unhealthy environment as it was full of jungles with ferocious animals. There was huge uncultivated land for which many unsettled cultivators cultivated their land from one place to another. So, the land revenue in Baikunthapur was not fixed amount it was seen generally that the rent of land was 4 annas to one rupees per every don (86 Bighas of land).<sup>45</sup> The actual rent realised from the tenants is, I understand, about 41 annas per don of land, good and bad, containing 12,472 square feet or about 0.86 of Calcutta bigha. The maximum rent for a farm, 20 don in extent, is said to be as follows : House and garden land, Rs. 15; first quality land, Rs. 9; third quality land, Rs. 7; fourth quality land, Rs. 4; total Rs. 47. Originally the farms were let by guess measurement or by *Kaldara* or Ploughs.<sup>46</sup>

It seems that there was no uniform system in the land in pre-colonial period. Revenue was assessed by assumed basis or guess measurement. Grunning wrote, “..... a farm was estimated to contain as much as could be

cultivated by a certain number of ploughs, and paid a fixed sum for each, a custom which once probably extended all over Kamrup.”<sup>47</sup> There was no proper settlement in the pargana. Land was also assessed by guess measurement like jot, gaon, bish, don, kali. One don is equal to 20 kali or 86 bigha, bish is equal to 20 don, 1 gaon is equal to 16 bish, 1 hal is equal to 15 bigha.<sup>48</sup> About the year 1788 land measure was first introduced. The whole estate is divided into fifteen taluks, and the establishment is a very moderate one.<sup>49</sup> A record of right was prepared under chapter x of Bengal Tenancy Act. In the course of those proceedings, the area of each tenancy, the facts of its possession and the status of the tenant were determined. Jagadindra Dev Raikat in his article “Raikat Bangsha O Tahader Rajwer Sankhipta Parichay” divided the tenants in such a way (1) Zamindar, (2) Jotdar, (3) Mulander or Chukanidar and (4) Proja or Ryot.<sup>50</sup> But, Grunning divided the tenants in these estates into tenants in chief (Jotdars), sub-tenants (chukanidars, dar chukanidars and dar-a-dar chukanidars) and holders under the Metayer system (adihiars). The Jotdars are tenants holding immediately under the Zamindars; a large number of them rank as tenure holders and others as raiyots under the provisions of Bengal Tenancy Act.<sup>51</sup>

Chukanidars, Dar- chukanidars and Dar-a-Dar chukanidars all were middle ranking tenure holders in the agrarian economy in this tract. Chukanidars had a right of occupancy and could transfer their lands by sale or gift.<sup>52</sup> But here is a question avoided by Grunning that the Chukanidars or *Mulandars* were not proprietors of the land, they were under Jotdars, and Jotdars were under Zamindars, then how could they (Chukanidars or Mulanders) sell their land?

The Dar- chukanidars hold their land in the same way under the Chukanidars and the Dar-a-Dar chukanidars under the dar chukanidars. Most of these inferior tenants had acquired a right of occupancy under the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act. These intermediary classes of people played a significant role in the agrarian sector as well as in the society of the district like other parts of North Bengal. They collected revenue from the cultivators and paid to the higher authority. Not only that they had influence of various role in different sectors of the society. In the different types of social works or benevolent works these classes of people involved, particularly the indigenous people of intermediary classes had a benevolent mentality and creative attitude to the social activities. They were not only the oppressors, but also class of social workers. But it should be mentioned here that different types of intermediary classes which were originated in the colonial period, particularly of the other professions coming from only to obtain financial benefit were not benevolent minded. They only wanted to oppress the cultivators in different ways which is discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

The most victimised tenants in the agrarian economy were Adhiars or Projas who had no proprietorship or occupancy right on land. They only cultivated their lands, without any right under a Jotdar, Chukanidar or derivative Chukanidar, but whatever the designation or status of the adhiars immediate superior may be, he is known as '*Giri*'. The Adhiars had to pay half of the produce in the land to their '*Giris*', not only that they had to pay more from their share called '*Abwab*' and instead of advance of seed or cash supplied at the time of cultivation. The pauperise condition of the *Adhiars* or *Projas* will discuss later in the next chapter.

Like Baikunthapur, Boda and Patgram were also under Permanent Settlement since 1793 and settled permanently with the Zamindars regarding land revenue purposes. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton (1809) gave an account with regard to land revenue and agrarian systems of Baikunthapur, Boda and Patgram. Patgram estate, which comprises the police division of the same name, was the property of the Coochbehar Raja, and contains 62 mouzas or collections of villages. More than half the estate was left to large farmers, some of whom hold under leases called Upanchaki, which were granted for a certain specified farm and not according to a particular area, so that their rent cannot be increased nor their lands measured. There were 30 Jotdars who pay their rents directly into the office of the Raja's collector; these were called *Kharji Jotdars*. The others, who pay their rents to the village officers, were called *dihibandi*. The large farmers let out to under tenants as much land as suffices to pay their rent and cultivate the remainder through Projas, on the usual sharing of tenure.<sup>53</sup>

About the land and land revenue systems of Boda Dr. Hamilton pointed out that Boda was a very fine estate also belonging to the CoochBehar Raja. It contains 402 mouzas or dihis besides 27 large *kharij* farms, such as he had mentioned in the collector's papers; but it was said that a very large part has been granted rent free by the Raja, both to religious persons and to his servants. The whole estate was divided into *Taluks* and these again into *Mahals*, each of which was originally farm.<sup>54</sup> In every Taluk there two to five *Tahutdars*, who were wealthy farmers appointed by the Raja according to the wishes of the other tenants. The lands were not measured at the time of settlement of the Raja's estate, the tenants being very averse to such a course as might naturally be expected, for the rent which they paid very small. The leases specified neither the term of years for which the holdings were let nor the measurement of the farm, but only the rent stipulated to be paid for the farm. If any tenant would go away, the others paid the rent until they could procure a new tenant, or else they divided the land among themselves. In some Taluks no Talukdars could be found, and these were managed by *Gomastas*, or agents, each with a

large establishment. The Tahudars, who were men of property and who ought to pay their whole rent into the Raja's office, made delays, so that six Tahsildars or stewards are required to refresh their memories. The twenty seven original large farms, which were not dependent on the tahudars, but which, if undivided, would have paid their rents immediately into the Raja's office, have now subdivided into so many small shares, that a whole host of subordinate was required to manage them. In fact the Raja's interests in these estate seem to have been very much neglected.<sup>55</sup>

It can be said from the above information that the permanently settled areas of the district, Jalpaiguri, Baikunthapur pargana, parganas of Boda and Patgram formerly under Cooch Behar state and then Rangpur district, had no uniform system in the land, varying from different places, somewhere Zamindars were the proprietors of the land and paid revenue directly through the officers of the Raja, somewhere land was left to the tenants. Moreover there were large amount of land which were revenue free. According to the survey and settlement operations of 1906-16, there were 122 revenue paying estates and 212 revenue - free estates in the permanent- settled portions of Jalpaiguri district. So the state was deprived economically failing to have revenue from a large portion of revenue-free lands.

In the permanently settled portion of the district namely Baikunthapur, Boda and Patgram the zamindari system was there and there were two large and some small zamindari estates. Zamindars were the proprietors of the lands who enjoyed heritable rights and rights of transfer by gifts and sale including percelling out land for rent. Revenue payable by them was fixed except for cesses and other levies on them by executive orders and under the provisions of relevant acts.<sup>56</sup>

It is mentioned in the Government record, "In the permanently settled parganas the system of land tenure is in itself simple, but it does not adopt itself

very readily to the tenancy Act and difficult questions of status arose. There are few patni taluks and rent free tenures, but the great taluks and rent free tenures, but the great bulk of the land is held by Jotdars, most of whom have sublet to at least a part of their land to Chukanidars on exactly the same terms as those on which they themselves hold under the proprietor and the Zamaindar to produce paying tenants called in this district 'Adhiars' long course of custom had entirely ceased to differentiate between those jotes which had originally been taken up sometimes by non-residents with the idea of establishing tenants, and those held by the descendants of genuine cultivators."<sup>57</sup>

The Zamindars used to give land to the Jotdars on lease or agreement to obtain surplus of the production. The Jotdars were a class of intermediaries between the Zamindars and the cultivators as well as they were the first degree pattaniders who elsewhere in Bengal known as talukdars. While proceeding of settlement, the indifference to the existence of any legal distinction rapidly disappeared and the Jotdar as a class boldly demanded to be recorded them as raiyots. They all claimed mokorrari rights and section 50 of the tenancy act which was their main standby had been held not to apply to tenures partitioned subsequent to the permanent settlement.

Those Jotdars whose residence was within the tenancy and who had in their own possession at least one third of arable land and those Jotdars, whose homestead was outside the boundaries of the tenancy but who had at least half the arable land in their own possession were recorded as raiyots. Land held by adhiars was not considered to be in khas possession. The remaining jotes were either recorded as permanent tenures or as tenures for fixed number of year according to the terms of the documents creating them. The claims of transferability without the landlord's consent was decided against all classes of tenants except those recorded as permanent tenure holders.<sup>58</sup>

At the bottom of the agrarian structure in this tract and elsewhere in Bengal were 'Adhiars' or 'Projas' who were most sufferers and victimised. About the condition of Adhiars or Projas including new agrarian classes emerging the colonial period became aggravated gradually. We have been saying since the inception of Grambarta that the permanent settlement between Zamindars and raiyots should have been implemented like the permanent settlement between Government and the raiyots, and then all problems will be solved, the relation of hostility between Zamindars and raiyots will be left out. Without implementation of this system the trouble of the raiyots will not be removed whatever laws are to be implemented by the Government.<sup>59</sup>

In the permanently settled portion of the district situated in the Eastern part of the river Tista and the plain areas of the Western Dooars the most of the people were Rajbanshis and local Muslims on the eve of the formation of the district or in the pre- colonial period. There were many debates regarding the origin or ethnic identity of the Rajbanshi people. But most of the scholars have admitted that the Rajbanshi people and the indigenous Muslims locally known as Nasya Sheikh (indigenous Muslims of North Bengal who were converted from lower caste Hindus as well as lower grade people) of the district and the neighbouring areas of Cooch Behar originated from same group of human race i. e Indo- Mongoloid race. In the later period of historical evolution of human society Indo- Mongoloid people were divided into many branches or groups such as Koch, Mech, Garo, Rabha, Druckpa, Tharu, Jalda, Dobhasya etc. People who converted into Hinduism from Koches were called Rajbanshis and the people who converted into Islam from Koches were called *Nasya* Muslims.

All most all the English writers or scholars shown that the Rajbanshis were originated from the Koches; as such they wanted to say that the people of Rajbanshi community and the Koches were the same stock of the society. H. H Risley wrote, "Kochh, Kochh- Mandal, Rajbanshi, Paliya, Desi, a large Dravidian tribe of North- Eastern Bengal, among whom there are grounds for

suspecting some admixture of Mongolian blood.”<sup>60</sup> Dr. Franchis Buchanan Hamilton also showed the Rajbanshis and the Koches in the same stock of the society. He wrote, “I have no doubt, however that all the Koch are spring from the same stock and that most of the Rajbanshis are Koch”<sup>61</sup>. Mr. Hadson and Dr. Latham also showed the Koches, Meches and the Kachharies in the same group i. e. Indo- Mongoloid group. Mr. Hadson who is followed by Dr. Latham, identifies the Kochs, the Mechs and Kacharis etc. As all being members of one great Mongolian race of Tranian or non- Aryan origin; and both these writers express the opinion that the Koch or Rajbanshis are merely the most Hinduised form of the common stock.<sup>62</sup> But the above mentioned opinion denied by the Rajbanshi intellectuals such as thakur Panchanan Barma, Upendra Nath Barman and many others who wanted to say that Rajbanshi and Koches are not the same stock of social groups because Rajbanshis were Hindus belonged to the second position of the traditional Aryan group of Hinduism, on the other hand Koches were the tribal people. This debate was going on during the Kshatriya movement was going on since the census report was published in 1981 which is shown in the later chapter.

Other than the Rajbanshis and the tribal people, indigenous Muslims mainly living in the Sadar Sub- division of the district played a vital role in the society of the district. It is hard to say when the Muslims immigrated in the district as other parts of North Bengal, but it can be said that at the time of invasion of Iktiyar Uddin Baqtyar Khalji to Tibet through North Bengal one Tribal leader named Ali Mech was converted into Islam thereafter many Hindus particularly the lower caste people were converted into Islam. It should be mentioned here that in spite of conversion into Islam the Indigenous Muslims locally called Nasya seikh could not leave their previous culture, customs and lifestyle; they could not give out their food habit, their mother tongue and the social practices. So in this regard it is followed that there were many similarities in their social- economy and cultural practices between Rajbanshis and the indigenous Muslims.

There was no Caste system or Varna system among the Rajbanshis. Mentioned may be made that either in the land holder classes or intermediaries and the cultivators or sharecroppers there was no social restrictions or barricade among the people of Rajbanshi. There were huge instances of marriages was performed between the bride- grooms and bride of the landholder classes i.e. Jotdars intermediaries etc. and the sharecroppers who were belonged to the same stock of community. Not only that there was no untouchability or Jalachal system between landholders and sharecroppers of the Rajbanshis, rather they got together in different occasions where they took their meal sitting together and enjoyed themselves.

There are many instances in social and cultural practices and customs which prove the difference from the culture of the Aryans. It is historically true that the Rajbanshis were converted into Hinduism from the Indo- Mongolian group, naturally Hinduised culture entered in the society of the Rajbanshis gradually. There were so many instances of Mongolian culture in the Rajbanshi people which is going on still now. The culture of the Rajbanshis has been discussed in the later chapter, in a nutshell it can be said that the Rajbanshis were simple minded and completely agriculture oriented people. Like other Monglian people they loved the nature. They lived peacefully co- operating with other communities. The Rajbanshis and indigenous Muslims having many similarities lived closely extending their hands to each other communities.

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