

Chapter-2

Growth and Development of the society in the Colonial Period

The Jalpaiguri district was formed in 1869 with the amalgamation of the Western Dooars and Baikunthapur Parganá including the parganas of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag chaklas. A distinctive feature was followed in this district unlike the other parts of Bengal that in the same district two separate types of administration was introduced i.e. the Regulating system and non-regulating system. In the Western bank of the river Tista, the regulating system was introduced and in the Eastern bank of Tista there was non-regulating system.

Although some versions of Indian history ascribe to the early colonial administrators a penchant for social reform, it should be noted that the colonial "reformers" were at best aligning themselves with active indigenous reform currents. They were not usually the initiators or great crusaders for social reform as is frequently portrayed.

In any case, after 1857, the cynical strategy of divide and conquer not only impacted relations between Hindus and Muslims, but also aggravated caste tensions. But even independently of conscious attempts by some British administrators to inflame caste tensions, the ruination of the Indian economy alone led to a disastrous degradation in social relations.

The Zamindari system particularly disenfranchised the peasantry whose status dropped dramatically in comparison to those castes who were able to find a foothold in the new administration, or find some employment in the new colonial cities. The enormous burden of high taxes led to unprecedented levels of indebtedness and the privileging of the money-lending castes. The economic devastation caused by the Mahalwari system of taxation in the Awadh region

led to higher levels of gender discrimination, and an increase in coercion in matters related to dowry. Differential access to modern education and jobs in the colonial administration increased the distance between the favoured castes - and the Indian masses.

(The favoured castes naturally included Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Banias, but also other important administrative castes such as Kayasthas. Large land owning castes such as Mehtas and Reddis were also favoured, as were Marathas, Jatts and other castes who had risen during the decline of Mughal rule.)

It was also the British who resurrected the *Manusmriti* and used it to frame the "Hindu Civil Code". Prior to colonization, the *Manusmriti* was nothing more than an obscure text; long-forgotten and rarely used to determine what was acceptable social practice. The *Manusmriti* came in very handy in social control. Because the numerical presence of the Britishers in India was not substantial, the Britishers had to rule largely by proxy. It was important that their agents did not face resistance or rebellion, even in the social realm. Owing to its repressive and highly divisive character, the *Manusmriti* helped in preventing both individual and collective resistance to local authorities, who were typically upper caste and often Brahmin. That the *Manusmriti* represented an archaic and outdated social code didn't matter. It fit in very well with the British colonial project.

It was also convenient in providing ideological cover for repressive legal steps the British wanted to take anyway. For instance it didn't hurt that the *Manusmriti* advocated laws that legitimized gender discrimination or attacked same-gender relationships. Such attitudes were then equally prevalent in Europe and it made it easier to disenfranchise women in matters of inheritance or introduce legal injunctions against same-gender sexual relations (as was the case in Britain during the 18th C.).

Changes in Caste Equations

Historians who have attempted to draw a straight line between the *Manusmriti* and post-independence India are clearly unfamiliar with those patterns of Indian history that contradict such a linear view. While some of the social evils of modern India may have ancient roots, many others have a fairly recent history. And even those that may have ancient precedence were modulated and modified as a result of numerous struggles for social equality that have taken place throughout Indian history.

For example, after independence one could find temples built in the late 18th or 19th century that restricted entry to ‘*Dalits*’ and menstruating women. But it is not at all clear if such structures were widespread prior to colonization. Research indicates that during the Pratihara period, caste categories were relatively flexible and popular temples were constructed by those considered low-caste. Temple construction was often a way of gaining social respect and upward mobility.

Restrictions on temple entry most likely reached a peak during the British period partly because only the upper castes had the means to build temples and also because the control of existing temples passed into the hands of trusts who were hand-picked by the Britishers and were given free license (possibly even encouraged) to promote discriminatory practices. The iron hand of the colonial state made it much more difficult to challenge such reactionary tendencies. “Under colonialism, caste was appropriated, and in many respects reinvented by the British...”¹ Paradoxically, colonialism seems to have created much of what is now accepted as Indian 'tradition', including an autonomous caste structure with the Brahman clearly at the head.² Caste, as it is still portrayed in much current anthropological literature, is a colonial construction, reminiscent only in some ways of the social forms that preceded colonial intervention.³

Economic factors were also crucial in determining caste rank and caste relationships. In periods of intense economic exploitation, caste discrimination intensified, and the reverse took place in periods of economic expansion. For instance, most historians are in agreement that the Gupta period was a period of rising prosperity and also a period of increasing social mobility. Improvements in agricultural productivity led to concomitant improvements in the social rank of the cultivators.

Similarly, (though much later) there is evidence for the rise in status of the *Telis* - cooking oil manufacturers and traders whose earlier low caste status did not fit with their growing economic importance, and were thus granted a higher caste rank. Besides, all through Indian history, phony lineages for non-Kshatriya rulers were constructed to create the aura of continuity and legitimacy. Hence, the mere existence of a document like the Manusmriti should not cause serious social scientists to jump to broad conclusions without greater scrutiny and dispassionate analysis of the Indian historical record.

Social relations cannot be entirely separated from how productive activities are carried out and what the level of available technology makes socially possible. In today's world, the widespread availability of printed matter, of computers and other means to store and develop knowledge systems makes the older systems of learning and skill-preservation largely redundant. But in older times, the artisan's guild system helped in the development and preservation of specialized knowledge and perfection of important manufacturing skills. In India, artisan's guilds were closely correlated to *jati* or caste. It was not only the Brahmins and upper castes who favoured hereditary continuity, but skilled carpenters, weavers, metalworkers, painters and numerous categories of other artisans also saw certain benefits in maintaining their *jati* identities. While the artisan castes often fought for greater social

equality - the complete breakdown of caste identities was never a serious option except for those at the very bottom of the caste totem pole.

The caste system survived not just because it was enforced by the legal writ of an elite class, but as much because it served a social purpose in an era in which it was difficult if not impossible to organize the educational and productive activities of society in a more flexible and democratic way. In this social, ritual, canonical and historical setting, I will examine the colonial society of Jalpaiguri.

It is found in the Govt. report, "The district of Jalpaiguri formed part of the Rajshahi Division of the erstwhile united Bengal in pre-independence India. The general administration of the district was placed in charge of a Deputy Commissioner. Two separate reports on the condition of the depressed classes in the district were sent to the government in about three weeks' time. The first report submitted by H.P.V. Townsend, Deputy Commissioner, Jalpaiguri dated the 22nd December 1928 contained a detailed account of the district covering relevant information in all matters connected with the terms of reference communicated in the government order."⁴ The Second report was submitted on the 14th January 1929 by W.H. Wilson, officiating commissioner of the Rajshahi Division. This is a consolidated report containing information about all the districts (Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna and Malda) comprising the administrative Division. Naturally it was not as much elaborate and comprehensive as the preceding one. Nevertheless the report of the officiating commissioner provides useful data for filling up the gaps left in the information supplied by the Deputy Commissioner.⁵ The two reports read together may bring a comprehensive picture of the whole situation. The reports indicate that there were only six categories of the so-called` depressed classes in the district of Jalpaiguri. They were the Rajbanshi, Oraon, Santhal, Mech, Khen and Munda. The Deputy Commissioner expressed that these people should not be called 'Depressed classes' as they were shown to be in the

Bengal Census Report for 1921. “It is not correct to speak of depressed classes in this district. People belonging to the so-called depressed classes should be more properly termed as backward classes. Of these backward classes the Rajbanshis, Khens and Meches were permanent residents of the district. Number of Oraons, Santhals and Mundas, the report says, were to be found generally in the tea gardens where in most cases they used to serve as labourers. Some of them had even permanently settled outside the tea gardens in jote.”⁶

In addition, societies that may not have overtly practiced a caste system (such as Europe in the Christian era) may have yet prevented egalitarian social interaction and free social mobility through other means. The virtual annihilation and isolation of Native American communities by Christian invaders and immigrants is a striking and tragic example of systematic social exclusion.

While slavery in America was a thoroughly cruel and demeaning practice, the abolition of slavery did not end injustices against African Americans or other non-European immigrants. For instance, until the passing of the civil rights act - discrimination against African Americans and other nationalities such as Chinese, Indian and Mexican were enshrined in law. Inter-racial marriages were banned in many states and the mere charge of taking an interest in a Caucasian woman could lead to the lynching of Afro-American men in the South. Early Chinese and Indian immigrants were paid substantially less than the prevailing wages, were not allowed to bring wives and family members into the country, and prevented from owning property. Even workers guilds and trade unions discriminated against non-European immigrant workers.

The evidence from the richest of the world's capitalist countries suggests that a both overt and covert form of social inequality continues to this day. For instance, many elected Presidents in the US (including Clinton, Bush and

Reagan) can trace their lineage to the British royal family, implying that the old ruling classes continue to enjoy special access to power. In Britain, hereditary privileges are enshrined in the constitution for the monarchy, as well as other members of the nobility. The House of Lords is another vestige of the old system that privileges certain elites. The 'old-boys' network, exclusive college sororities and fraternities are another way in which the elite are usually able to arrange privileged and differential access to jobs and business opportunities.

At the other end of the social spectrum, African Americans in the US remain a highly discriminated group. Although comprising less than 10% of the US population, they make up almost 50% of prisoners on death row and a similarly high percentage of jail inmates. Numerous studies have pointed to highly discriminatory practices in how African Americans are arrested (much more frequently), charged (with much lower thresholds of incriminating evidence) and sentenced (too much longer prison terms) relative to Caucasian Americans. In California, there are more African Americans in jails than in universities. The unemployment rate amongst African Americans in some US cities is as high as 50% whereas the average rate of unemployment is less than 5% in the country as a whole.)

Why the British – India Government introduced such type of separate administration in the same district? Reason is clear to mention here ;As the western part of the district, Jalpaiguri Sadar, was the zamindari areas, permanent settlement was introduced there and proprietors of the land was Zamindars so the part was under the regulation system . But in the Western Dooars ,all most all of the lands were no-man's land with full of jungle and forest, only some tribal people namely Mech , Toto, Garo, Rabha , Druupa etc. lived there. Most of them were habituated with shifting cultivation treating the land of a wealth of God or nature. They were very simple in habit, out of the civic society, confined themselves ethnic culture.⁷

After occupation of the Dooars in 1865 and the formation of the district in 1869, the British Govt. cast their eyes commercially to be benefitted economically. They followed that some parts of the area were fertile for agricultural cultivation, some parts (the hilly areas) of the Western Dooars were appropriate for tea cultivation and huge areas were full of natural resources namely timber; animals etc. Considering the importance of these tracts (western duars) the govt. started survey and settlement works.⁸

On the basis of the information and necessity at micro level they started survey and settlement works gradually where in it is found that the first settlement took effect from April, 1871 by W.O.A. Backet, the 2nd settlement generally took effect from the 1st April, 1880 by Ulick Brown, the 3rd settlement was started from 1889 and ended in 1895 by D.H.E. Sunder and the 4th settlement was completed by J.A. Milligan during 1906-1916.⁹ To get a clear picture of the district it can be divided into three categories such as (1) **Agrarian society** (2) **Urban society** and (3) **The society of Tea-garden** which are discussed in details as follow—

Agrarian Society of the District:

As a part of their agrarian reforms the Britishers divided the lands into three categories in the Dooars according to the quality and necessity of the land—namely 1) Lands for Agricultural purposes 2) Lands for Tea Cultivation and 3) Lands for Reserve forest. In the field of agriculture, they introduced Jotdari system in a new form differing from other parts of North Bengal. After each settlement a large number of Jotes were created and these were given to the Jotedars by agreement or lease.

In the Western Dooars population was very scanty and huge number of lands was uncultivated. There were no sufficient people to cultivate the lands. Naturally, British Govt. would give offer to the people of outsider of the Dooars to come into the Dooars and obtain lands from the Govt. by lease or

agreement. A rumor was spread in the neighboring areas of the Dooars such as Cooch Behar, Dinajpur; Rangpur etc. that land were to be obtained easily in the Dooars. So the people from the neighbouring areas started to come and obtaining lands. But almost all the Jotdars, particularly the immigrated Jotdars would not cultivate land directly. After getting lands they would give it to the intermediaries by an agreement called 'Pattani', namely Chukanidars and Mulanders. Again Chukanidar or Mulandar would give lands to other intermediaries called Dar Chukanidars, Tasya Chukanidars etc. Beside this the Jotdars also cultivated lands by sharecroppers or Adhiars with 50% share of crops. The share croppers cultivated lands of the Jotdars as well as of the Chukanidars, called 'Giri'.

At the initial stage, the Jotdars obtain lands easily from Govt. They had not to pay any revenue to the Govt.¹⁰ B.C. Basu, Esq., assistant to Dept. of Land Record and Agriculture reported—

For the first two years the land pays no rent ,for the next two at 3 annas per acre; for the 5th and 6th years at 6 annas per acre ; and for the 7th and 8th year the land is measured again ; the portion which has been reclaimed in then assessed at the Pargunnah rates, which are Re.1-8 for upland and Re.1-4 for low land and the unclaimed position is made to pay at 3 annas per acre. The settlement is made for 30 years. The terms appear to be very fair and are reality acquired is by riots.¹¹As there were no sufficient people to cultivate lands; the Jotdars had to face different types of problems. So, they always tried to bring cultivators from outside the Dooars giving many facilities including 'Bhuta' (a kind of loan) to cultivate and dwell in the lands.¹²

For the above mention greediest facilities of the Jotdars, people were coming to have lands in the Dooars as Adhiars or Share croppers and intermediaries such as Chukanidars, Dar chukanidars etc. In this way people were increasing tremendously in the Dooars. Regarding the new form of

Maljotes lease L.Birely, Esq. C.I.E., I.C.S., wrote letter to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Bengal, "I am directed to forward a copy of letter no.262 V.,dated the 8th August 1918, from the commissioner of the Rajshahi Division,and of the letter from the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri enclosed therewith,together with a memorial in original from some jotedars in the Western Duars, Jalpaiguri,on the subject of the new form of maljote lease which was sanctioned in Govt. order No.9118, dated the 15th September, 1914....The object in view was to prevent these maljotes from falling in to the hands of money-lenders and foreigners .In accordance with the advice of the Board Of Revenue, the Governor in council approves of the following alternative clause 4 in the maljote lease:--a) During the term of your lease you are permitted to transfer your jotdari right or any share or interest there in by sale, gift or otherwise provided that-1)The transfer is domiciled in the district of Jalpaiguri and derives his income mainly from landed interests, and 2)The transfer is registered in the Deputy Commissioner's office within one month of the date of its being made and a registration fee at the rate of one anna for every acre of the jote or share there of transferred ,is paid....Rules of 1888 should be distinguished from those of the old-maljotdars who represent the original declaimers of the soil. The revenue of the first leases of the former was subject to such conditions as Govt. might determine and the grant of maljote leases was contrary to the intention of Govt."¹³

I am therefore to ask that the Board will be so good as to submit a report as to whether the new leases for those tenants should be in the form of the maljote lease sanctioned. In 1914 or in the form prescribed under the Arable Waste Lands Rules.¹⁴

Number of population in the Western Dooars increased gradually.¹⁵

Year	Population	Percentage of increasing
1872	90668	-
1881	1, 82,687	101.49%
1891	2, 96,348	62.21%
1901	4, 10,606	38.55%
1911	5, 19,372	26.49%
1921	5, 58,971	7.62%
1931	6, 61,068	18.26%

It is mentioned earlier that only the people of some tribal communities could live in the Dooars. From the above table it is found that only some tribal communities lived in the Dooars. From the above table it is also found that in 1872 the population was 90688. But within 1901 the number of population increased to 4, 10,606. So it is to be realized who were the people? The people belonged to different castes, communities, religion and classes.

The following table shows the jotes were passing into the hands of outsiders which was made in 1905 for the Falakata tahsil-¹⁶

Class of People	Number of Jotes	Area in acres
Rajbansi	1,638	58,665. 23
Muhamadan	1, 092	40,739. 47
Mech	381	7,599.52
Jalda	19	577.16
Garo	17	302.28
Santhal	2	24.52
Oraon	263	6,182.99
Nepali	140	4,990.49
Marwari	115	6,551.13

Up-country men	272	14 ,097.20
Kabuli	14	381.41
Asamese	18	1,132.65
European	7	1,036.19
All others	136	5,074.22
Total	4,114	173,523.46

From the above table it is found that about 15 % of the settled area in this tahsil was in the hands of Marwaris, up-country men, Kabulis and “other persons” many of whom are Bengali Babus. Here another table is given which shows the different castes to which the Jotdars of the Dooars belong, the number of jotes and area of land and revenue paid by them after the Sunder’s settlement (1889-95):- ¹⁷

Caste	Number of Jotes	Area		Revenue paid in Rupees
		Acres	Dec	
Paharia	147	6,064	06	6,815
Chatri	67	2,502	13	3,156
Oraon	116	2,899	99	3,225
European	57	3,940	00	4,361
Mech	764	20,593	64	18,523
Kapali	8	2,09	10	367
Muhammadans	2,692	121,583	20	1,11,967
Shaha	76	3,533	42	4,217
Tanti	24	7,94	09	816
Rajbanshi	5,264	130,910	52	1,83,089
Kyasth	192	3,503	17	7,813

Bhutia	2	16	66	39
Brahman	201	11,316	37	9,191
Gope	47	3074	53	2,594
Kyan	99	12,612	87	11,979
Napit(Barbar)	34	1090	03	2,212
Hari	6	143	27	142
Banik	13	314	55	353
Mahji	5	112	98	72
Bairagi	13	270	31	341
Teli	3	175	33	216
Garo	33	938	46	694
Byadh	1	116	12	132
Mali	2	56	13	61
Baidya	2	69	01	85
Kumar	6	379	40	471
Jugi	11	456	43	556
Dobasiya	54	901	19	764
Jalda	2	31	36	20
Sutar (carpenter)	14	239	54	241
Kamar	4	76	74	61
Kalwar	1	26	53	21
Nepalise	3	69	60	67
Munda	4	111	58	87
Sanyasi	2	43	43	32
Total-	9,971	3,34,995	91	3,74,901

From the above table it is seen that the different types of people immigrated into the district, Jalpaiguri and they settled after having land, even the tea-garden labourers immigrated from Chhotanagpur and Santalpargana, out of working in the tea garden used to have land and cultivated. Grunning

wrote, “The increase of population is the best example of the prosperity of the Western Dooars; between 1891 and 1901. The increase amounted to 38.5 percent. The rise of the tea industry has led to introduction of numbers of coolies from Chhotanagpur, the Santal Pargana and Nepal of whom, after working for some years on the tea gardens, take up land and settle in the district.”¹⁸

The village society of the Jalpaiguri district, as elsewhere in North Bengal, was completely agro- based. Almost all the indigenous people in the colonial period of the district would depend on agriculture¹⁹. Among the indigenous people the Rajbanshis, including local Muslim were majority in the village society. These indigenous people were not involved in other professions including trade and commerce, industrial sector etc. From different sources and field survey it is found that the Rajbanshi people neglected or insulted the works of trade and commerce. Not only that they insulted the inferiorities works, such as barber, washer man, fisherman, butcher man. The Rajbanshis of the rural areas in general and also most Hindus & Muslims-who have been living in the district for generations-speak a dialect of the colloquial Bengali which the educated people designate as ‘Bahe’.²⁰

It is also found from the sources of field survey that in the colonial period, even today the Rajbanshi people were not interested in any kind of economical work other than agriculture as because almost all the outsiders particularly, people coming from East Bengal and Bihar (called Paschima) were engaged in different professional works in the trade and commerce, shopping, small scale industries, manual labour etc. As for example it is found that the work of boating or ferry (majhi), hat tola (rent collection in the village market), were not done by the indigenous people. Besides, the work of catching fish in the river or bil (low lands), the work of dragging soil, the work of pottery, goldsmith, iron called *kamar* (blacksmith) etc. were not by the

indigenous people. All these works were done by the immigrated people coming from East Bengal, Bihar and other places of the country.

Rajbansi's including local Muslims were very simple in food habit, dresses, culture and entertainment. Particularly the Jotdars were economically solvent. Most of the Jotdars had thousands acres of land, naturally they had no want of food and wealth. Most of the Jotdars would not cultivate land by themselves. Lands were cultivated by sharecroppers or Adhiars and intermediaries. They had no heavy demand. They liked to live or survive simply in the nature. It is true that there was no scarce of food crops in the Jotdar family, no want of fishes. There was no scarce of milk, butter, ghee and honey.²¹ So they were very happy in life, in spite of having from the outside of civic society, so called educated "Babu" culture. As a part of their social life they were engaged in the amusements such as indigenous games and sports namely football, Ha- du- du, Dariabandha etc, entertainment of music and song, namely Palatia gan, Dotara or Kushan Pala, Bhaoaiya etc.²²

The Jotdars Funds-J.F.Grunning had given a description about, 'The Jotdar's Fund' was started by Mr.Sunder during the settlement of the Western Dooars in 1889-95, and "It is raised by voluntary subscriptions from the Jotdars, and is expended for their benefit. Those Jotdars who wish to subscribe to fund pay in their subscriptions along with the Government revenue, and the amounts which they pay are entered on the receipts which they get for their revenue. The fund is administered in each tahsil by a Committee of which the tahsildar is the Chairman, and which works under the supervision and control of the deputy Commissioner. Most of the money is devoted to aiding dispensaries and schools, and, without it, it would be difficult to keep up those institutions. The fund is also used for sinking wells, supplying fruit trees to the cultivators, opening village roads and any other useful works which may be necessary from the year to year."²³

Some negative aspects of the society-

Crime- It is mentioned in Government report, 'The returns for the calendar year 1876 show generally a satisfactory decrease in heinous crimes against person and property. This decrease is especially noticeable as regards dacoities, the number of cases reported and accepted as true being only 22, as compared with 52 in the preceding year . Dinajpore, Rungpore and Julpigoree districts, which have acquired an unenviable notoriety for offences of this nature, show a decrease of 12,5, and 7 dacoities respectively during the year of report.²⁴ House –breaking by night and cognate offences against property also show a marked falling off in most districts, Julpigoree being a notable exception, as there was an increase (more apparent than real) in this species of crime there, owing to the opening of new police –stations and the greater facilities there by afforded to the public to report crime. These creditable results were no doubt due principally to the vigorous measures, which had been adopted against bad characters during the year under review, where by many organizes gangs of ruffians who used to infest certain portions of the country have been broken up and dispersed. The fact that vagrancy and bad livelihood cases rose from 488 in 1875 to 842 in 1876 sufficiently speaks for itself.

The Jotdars were broad minded, their hospitality was heartiest. Any time or at any occasion guest could not leave the house without taking meal. Smt. Binapani Karji, W/O Late Harendra Bhushan Karji, (a wife of former Jotdar family) of Jalpaiguri mentioned, "Various types of festivals were held through the year in the house . House was filled up with various types of people and relatives. Buffalo was sacrificed to the God or Goddess. 5/6 Hal of land was given to the priest. We had 39 acre of Debottar land, the relation between Raiyot or Projas was good. The people were very simple. Many people would come at the time of festivals or worships; they stayed and took meal there was no account for this purpose. Even at the time of marriage

ceremony sugar was poured in the pond for drinking the elephants. Grandfather would sit down with moneybag and helped everybody.”²⁵

One point should be mentioned here that the relation between Jotdars and Projas or “Halua” (Sharecroppers or original cultivators) was sympathetic unlike other parts of Bengal.

In the Southern part or Eastern part of Bengal the relation was very inhuman like a slave because in most of the cases it was followed that the Zamindars or intermediaries belonged to higher castes and classes, and the sharecroppers or the cultivators belong to lower castes and categories, called Subaltern people. So the difference between the Zamindars and the cultivators were clear. But in the case of Jalpaiguri as in other district of North Bengal the Zamindars, Jotdars and Sharecroppers or Adhiars belong to the same castes and same culture.²⁶

The Jotdars of the district were involved in beneficial work. They always helped Adhiars or Projas. Even at the time of the crisis of Adhiars or Projas they would give loan or assistance to their Projas at free hand. Ramesh Chandra Suba, a former Jotdar of Hasimara, Jalpaiguri district stated, “The relation between Jotdars and Adhiars was cooperative. Adhiars were assisted in different ways at the time of their requirements, sometimes they had been given loan without any interest, sometimes it would be without any return.”²⁷

One former adhiar named Sri Bhado Adhikari, 90 years old of Chapani, Alipurduar Subdivision (now District) told, “Dolchand Das, a prominent Jotdar was my brother-in law. Amongst his 66 hal adhiars only I myself am alive. He could not go on without me. In every matter he called me. He loved me. He helped me in any kind of problem. At the time of crisis he opened up his gola of paddy/ store house of paddy and allowed to take at per requirement. The relation between Giri and Adhiars never became bitter at that time. After

cutting and threshing, paddy was divided. Feast was going on with meat, *Dai* (*curd*) and *chira* (*flattened rice*) in the house of Jotdar. We the Adhiars would give sweets to the Jotdars.”²⁸

The Jotdars were also involved in the social work. They formed Jotdary fund where money was collected and deposited and expended in the social work or beneficial work. Many times Jotdars donated their lands in the public works such as temple; playground, religious work (Harisabha). Many Jotdars donated their lands to establish new schools, not only that but also they assisted financially to build up educational institution.²⁹

Tobacco is the another cash crop which was grown in the Jalpaiguri District. The Faringhati Land near the homestead of the cultivator was always reserved for this crop.³⁰

There are 1,134 persons whom 50 are women employed as tobacco prepares and products makers.³¹ The crop required careful cultivation and much more labour and caution for its perfection. In February, 1905, three-quarter amount of the crop was devastated by two night's frosts.³²

It is to be noted that the other cash crop, sugarcane was grown mainly near Pochagar in the Boda pargana. Cotton used to be grown by Meches and Garos in high lands towards the foot of Bhutan hills by their primitive method of Jhum Cultivation.³³ Besides this J.F.Grunning again wrote “It is probable that the cultivation of cotton will die out entirely in a few years, as the opening up of the district in foreign the Mechs to abandon their migratory habits and to settle down to ordinary cultivation.”³⁴

Urban Society

The establishment of British rule in India brought about basic changes in the structure of urban society, in the form of subordinate of socio-economic activity in the South Asia to the capitalist economy of the metropolitan country. It is discussed earlier that the district Jalpaiguri was found in 1869, amalgamation with Western Dooars, situated in the Eastern part of Tista, Maynaguri as the head quarter and Baikunthapur pargana including Boda ,Patgram, Tentulia, Panchagar and Debiganj detached from Rangpur district, situated in the Western part of Tista. Jalpaiguri had been the head quarter of the district and there the administration of the district was conducted from Jalpaiguri. So, Jalpaiguri became one of the towns of the district. In the district, Alipurduar was another town which was named after Col. Hedayet Ali. It is said that under the leadership of Col. Hedayet Ali, the British troops won the battle of 2nd Anglo-Bhutanese war in 1865 as a result of which Col. Hedayet had been given uncountable amount of lands in Falakata Tahashil with revenue free. So to give honour, the Alipurduar was named after Col. Hedayet Ali other than two towns there was no town in the district, though Maynaguri was the headquarter of Western Dooars before inception of the district, but Maynaguri could not be town socially, economically or culturally in modern sense.

It is relevant to mention here that some differences were followed in the society of Jalpaiguri town and Alipurduar town. Comparatively Jalpaiguri was more developed than Alipurduar because Jalpaiguri had a noble character from socially, economically and culturally as the town was formed comprising Zamindars, Jotdars, Intermediaries, Traders ,Planters, Managers , Officials of Tea-Estates and ultimately Western educated intellectuals who came and settled in Jalpaiguri town in time to time for various purposes.³⁵ It is relevant to mention here that before formation of the district and growth of the Jalpaiguri town it was completely a village. Only the indigenous people namely

Rajbanshis, local Muslims would live and it was under the Raikot rulers of Baikunthapur Pargana. It is found from the descriptions of W.W.Hunter that before 1869-70, the society of Jalpaiguri was mined the Raikot Raj family and some Rajbanshi peasants.³⁶ Some Bengali people came from East Bengal who were related to supply various things to the army camp or Military barrack which were built by the British since 2nd half of the 20 th century, particularly during the 2nd Anglo-Bhutanese war was going on.³⁷

At the initial stage Jalpaiguri town was full of jungles. Raikotpara, Shilpasamitipara and the subsequent areas were full of jungles and danger. There was danger of tiger particularly the leopard and wolves. This town was also affected by various critical diseases like Malaria and Black Water. In spite of much natural impetus the number of population of this “Pandav Barjito Desh” increased day by day.³⁸ Bhuboneswar Mukherjee wrote in his remarkable book ‘Jogesh Jibon’, “.....the town was filled with small ponds, canals, paddy field, bushes and big trees, some places remained dark as night.”³⁹

In this context, eminent scholar Dr. Charu chandra Sanyal wrote, “In 1872, the population of this town was only 6, 500, in 1901 it was 10,000, the number stood 28000 in 1941 and after independence (1947) there hiked of population in the town.”⁴⁰The introduction of principles of municipal administration in Jalpaiguri town also bear long historical background. The Charter Act of 1893 emphasized the importance of municipal administration in British India and following this Act in different presidencies Municipal Corporations were established. Further, the Bengal Municipal Act of 1884 provided for slow introduction of elective principles in small towns and the practical realizations of such principles was materialized in the formation of Jalpaiguri Municipality on 1.4.1885. In the all India perspective in different district 742 municipalities were established within 1900.⁴¹ Grunning mentioned “The only municipality in the district is that of Jalpaiguri. It was constituted in

1885 under Bengal Act III of 1884, the union which preceded it forming the nucleus of the new administrative body. The principal requirements of the Municipality are the improvement of the system of drainage, and the filling up of the pits and hollows which form pools of the stagnant water during the rains and contribute largely to the unhealthiness of the town. The drainage of part of the town is towards the Karla River and of the other part towards the low-laying fields beyond the railway embankment. The Municipal Commissioners have done what they could with the limited funds at their disposal to improve the existing Katcha drains, but much still remains to be done and more masonry drains are needed in the Bazar.”⁴²

In 1887 Rajendra Lal Roy was appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Jalpaiguri Municipality who became the first non-official native entered in the municipality. In 1916 the famous lawyer Anukul Mukherjee was appointed as the first non-official chairman of the Municipality. After him Prasanna Dev Raikot, Purna Chandra Roy, Moulavi Abdus Sattar, Dr. Satish Chandra Das Gupta, Bipulendra Nath Banerjee, Moulavi Makhlechar Rehman, Bhabani Kumar Banerjee, Jibon Kanti Roy served as the chairman of the Municipality.⁴³ With the establishment of British rule in the Jalpaiguri district there was a simultaneous creation of plantation economy in the district. And such tendency created a conducive atmosphere for carrying out trading and professional activities in the Jalpaiguri town and the immigrant population particularly from East Bengal did not hesitate to seize the opportunities which the Colonial rule offered to them and they began to settle in the town and helped to acquire the epithet of settler’s town.⁴⁴

In this context a report on the Land Revenue Administration of the Bengal Presidency for the year 1917-18 is found, “The Collector of Mymensingh reports that large number of Mussalman cultivators migrated to Rangpur, Cooch Behar and Assam in quest of lands.....temporary emigration of labourers from Noakhali and immigration of the same to Tippera

in connection with harvesting, etc. took place. Four hundred and eighty nine families emigrated from the Chittagong Hill tracts and 431 families migrated in to that district. A number of men went abroad from Noakhali and Chittagong to serve as labourers in Persia and Mesopotemia and in France. As in the last year there was an influx of aboriginal tribes from the Santhal Parganas, and of Nepalese and Paharias and up-country labourers who came to work in tea gardens in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, and for employment transshipment work at Santahar and Lalmonirhat, as well as for construction work on the Santahar-Pabitrapur Board Gange Extension.....”⁴⁵

As in the Western Dooars new jotdari system was introduced by the British-India Government and there was no sufficient people to cultivate the lands, so huge number of people of different castes and classes came to have lands. Many of them obtaining lands, became jotdars and settled in the villages, different professions including servicemen, also obtained lands by lease or agreement and became Jotdars, Chukanidars or Darchukanidars. These landholder classes were not cultivators or they had no any experience for cultivation. So they were called ‘Absentee Jotdars’- They obtained lands and would give it to and intermediaries called Chukanidars, Darchukanidars etc for cultivation with another agreement. So these absentee Jotdars, as they had no experience in cultivation, would live in Jalpaiguri town. They would obtain land only to be economically benefitted. In the present society of Jalpaiguri many old house former Jotdar families are followed. Now, the successors of the Jotdar family had no large amount of Jotes in the villages, because of Land Reforms Act (Over ceiling lands had been acquired by the Govt.), but the house and the legacy of the jotdars still existed, In the colonial period these percentage of absentee Jotdars was 15%.⁴⁶

Apart from the absentee Jotdars, many indigenous Jotdars of villages who had became educated, later on, and started to live in the town.⁴⁷ Of these

Jotdar families many indigenous people who became educated and got service in different sectors, they also settled in the Jalpaiguri town in different times.

It should be mentioned here that the society and culture of the Jalpaiguri town the immigrated people, particularly the higher castes and higher classes called 'Barnahindus' played significant role in developing the society and culture of the town. In 1869-70, after the foundation of Jalpaiguri, few Marwari and Hindusthani families came to this town and there were a few number of timber merchants' also.⁴⁸ It is already discussed that many absentee Jotdars, tea planters and officials in the town. Most of them were 'Barna Hindus. Many of the settlers in the town were educated and intellectuals who came to service in various departments. Regarding the Communication system of the town, it is mentioned in the Government report, "The Commissioner notices the approaching completion of the Northern Bengal Railway, which is expected to be open as far as Julpigoree in the course of 1877-78. But as regards district roads, he is not satisfied that these have been everywhere pushed on so energetically as might have been desired. The Rungpore Cess Committee seems, however, to have done good work upon the southern emigration road to Assam. In Pabna, Julpigoree, and Dinajpore the road work requires more careful supervision and direction."⁴⁹ As regards to the condition & effect of Railways, & C., a letter from Colonel J.C. Houghton, C.S.I. wrote to the Junior Secretary, to the Govt. of Bengal, "The only public work of importance in the division is the construction of the North Bengal State Railway. Rapid progress has been made during the year towards its completion, and it is hoped that the main line will be opened for traffic as far as Julpigoree in the course of the current year. The friction which formally subsisted between the people and the railway authorities appears to have now almost entirely subsided...The roads in Julpigoree are mostly fair weather roads and it is said that the roads, and it is said that the road-cess funds are quite unable to cope with the requirements of the district.....Towards the end of the official year work was commenced on a large scale on the road from Julpigoree

to Shiligoree, in view of the opening of the Railway, and as I write this, the road is now a complete earth and bridged road, with the exception of four or five streams, which it would be too expensive to bridge...”⁵⁰

The chief trade centers were Jalpaiguri, Titalya on the Mahanadi river where the Ganges-Darjeeling road enters the district. Rajnagar, Saldanga was connected by road with the Chilahati station on the Eastern Bengal State railway. Debiganj was on the Korotoya river five miles from Domar Station. Baura the principal river mart of the district was situated on a small tributary of the Tista, Joropakri, Maynaguri, Falakata were on the Mujnai river and connected by road in Jalpaiguri, Madarihat, Alipurduar and Buxa through which most of the trade with Bhutan is transacted.⁵¹ Griffiths mentioned, “The inauguration of railways particularly in the Western Dooars region was an outcome of the pressure created by the Tea Planters of the Jalpaiguri district. The early Dooars planters were fortunate in that day started their enterprises at a phase when India was very much railway minded and the Jalpaiguri district was benefitted by this Progressive mood.”⁵²

The Northern Bengal State Railway was opened upto Jalpaiguri in 1878.⁵³ The Railway entered the district near Haldibari station and run in a northerly direction to Jalpaiguri where it curved to the North-West, on South of Haldibari, It run parallel to, and within a few miles of the district boundary so that it served the whole of the tract to the west of the Tista river.⁵⁴

In the context of road transport system D.H.E.Sunder mentioned that there was no metalled road in the district.⁵⁵

Roads found in the Jalpaiguri district before 1869:--

- 1) From Darjeeling to Tetuliya via Pankhabari and Phansidawa.
- 2) Siliguri to Jalpaiguri through Phoolbari and Baikunthapur.
- 3) Debgam to Sikkim via Sevoke and Kalimpong.
- 4) Rangpur to Jalpaiguri via Kargirhat.
- 5)

Phuntsholing to Mainaguri through Buxa.6) From Kalimpong to Dam Dim and Mougaong through Algara and Gorubathan route.7) Eastern Nepal to Panchanai through Rajarjhar and Nijamattara.8) There was a route from Mongpong through Ambari Falakata to Rangpore across Tista. The river communication through the Tista river after 1784,when Tista changed its course and started flowing through the present channel,started from Jalpaiguri to Rangpur and after 1869 from Rangpur through Brahmaputra and its tributaries to the Calcutta port.'The district is well served by railway, the Eastern Bengal State Railway, The Bengal Duars Railway, and the Cooch Behar State Railway all pass through it.The Jalpaiguri district Board maintains a total length of 24 miles of metalled and 778 unmettled road. The principal road under local management is that running from the east bank of the Tista river opposite the town of Jalpaiguri in an easterly direction through the Western Duars as per as the ferry on the Sankos river near Haldibari. Towards the end of the official year work was commenced on a large scale on the road from Julpigoree to Siligoree, in view of the opening of the Railway.⁵⁶ Before 1868 people came to Jalpaiguri from other parts of Bengal by boat. Businessman, carrying merchandise from Western part of individual Bengal came to Jalpaiguri by boat.Mukulesh Sanyal, a senior journalist –cum-politician and ex-vice-chairman of Jalpaiguri Municipality, recalls having seen such boats in his childhood days.⁵⁷

As most of the indigenous people in the district were uneducated, so the emigrates took these opportunities. Regarding the Education of the indigenous people of the town, Colonel J.C.Haughten, C.S.I., commissioner of the Coochbehar division, wrote to the Junior Secretary to the Govt.of Bengal, "...in this district (Julpigoree) the number of schools of all classes has decreased from 152 to 131,and of pupils from 3,263 to 3041 in consequences of the reduction of the Government Grant-in-aid. Education is generally very backward, scarcely more than one percent of the population ofthe regulation portion of the district attending school.The Zilla School has only recently been

opened, and it would therefore be premature to offer any opinion as regards its ultimate success. Middle class and Primary education are spreading slowly, and in process of time will, no doubt be more fully appreciated by the people.”⁵⁸ In Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling education is backward, owing to the character of the population.⁵⁹ The population was almost entirely agricultural and the boys were valuable at an early age for many purposes, they were, therefore, not sent to schools situated at a distance from their homes, and were taken away whenever there was much work to be done in the fields. Another cause operating against education the absence of an upper or wealthy class in the district, the population being mainly composed of Rajbanshis, lower- class Muhammadans and Meches, holding small jots, and of tea-garden cooli. Female education was in every backward state, the cultivators as a rule seeing no object in educating their girls. On the other hand, in the Santhal Colony, many of the girls attended school and the women show much anxiety to get their daughters educated. The number of girls’ schools in 1907-08 was 35 with 597 pupils, a considerable advance from the preceding year when there were only 26 schools and 376 pupils.....The most important of the private institutions were the Maktabas of which there were 31 in 1906-07. Muhammadans are beginning to realize that it is necessary to give their boys a secular education if they are to be in a position to compete with Hindus in afterlife, and the result was very marked in 1907-08.⁶⁰

It is found in the District Gazetteer, Jalpaiguri, “...The census of 1872, which is the earliest, recorded 19 primary schools having 283 students and 22 teachers. The first High English School of the district, namely, the Jalpaiguri Zilla School, was established in 1876.....There were 15 boy’s schools and 1 girls’ High School just before the Independence of India (1947).”⁶¹ The following table gives the names of schools with the dates of recognition as existing in the district prior to Independence.⁶²

Recognized High schools in Jalpaiguri District:1947

Name	Year of recognition	Type	Remarks
Jalpaiguri Zilla School	1876	Boys	Probable Date
AlipurDuar High English School	1919	Boys	
Fanindradeva Institution.Jalpaiguri	1920	Boys	
Jalpaiguri Sadar Girl's School	1927	Girls'	
Domohoni Polwhele High English School	1927	Co-education	
Sonaulla institution,Jalpaiguri	1929	Boys	
Bhelakoba(formerly Waliar Rahaman) High English School	1943	Boys	
(Bakali)Dharampur Abdul Karim High English school	1945	Boys	Abolished in 1951
Dhupguri High English School	1946	Boys	
Jorapakri Abdul Gani HighEnglish School	1947	Boys	
Mc William High English School	1947	Boys	
Mandalghat High English School	1947	Boys	Abolished in 1948

Primary Schools under the Bengal (village) Primary Education Act of 1930 came to be established in 1936 in the district. The District Board started free tuition facilities in the schools from 1933-34. There were two pre-primary

schools in Jalpaiguri town named Sisuniketan and Sisumahal managed by private agencies. The former was established on 6 January 1941. Sisumahal came into being on 3 January 1944. Jackson Medical School with roll strength for 40 students was established in Jalpaiguri in 1930. Hundreds of students became L.M.P. from this school, and in later in life they became physicians in the Duars.⁶³

The only municipality in the district was that of Jalpaiguri. It was constituted in 1885 under Bengal Act (iii) of 1884, the union which preceded it forming the nucleus of the new administrative body.⁶⁴ Though the Britishers originated the tea gardens, but the role of the enthusiastic and active Bengali was remarkable. They build up their career as a strong entrepreneur in the field of tea cultivation.⁶⁵ It is found in the Jalpaiguri District Gazetteer, after the formation of Jalpaiguri district with its headquarter at Jalpaiguri town and subdivisional headquarter at Alipurduar, the district began to attract educated Hindu gentry from various parts of East Bengal. The administration needed clerks and lawyers. Once the clerks and lawyers came and settled down there, their needs attracted doctors and teachers.....Thus a process of urbanization set in.⁶⁶

It is found in different sources that the employees in different sectors of the district were immigrants. The town was established, the govt. employee, lawyer, doctors, merchants besides many non govt. public came to this town, almost all of them came from outside.⁶⁷ Rahimbox of Noakhali came from Sukhani as a 'Peshkar'. The owner of the Nawab house was Rahim Box. Bhagaban Sanyal of Pabna came from Mainaguri as a lawyer, his grandson Gopal Sanyal have been living at Babupara.⁶⁸ Regarding to the development of society Colonel J.C. Haughton, C.S.I., wrote to the Officiating Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal, "I have the honour to submit herewith a proposition statement of the establishment of the Sudder moonsiff's court at Julpigoree for the sanction of Government."⁶⁹ In this connection Proposition

statement of Establishment of the Sudder Moonsiff's court at Julpigoree to take effect from 1st April 1870.⁷⁰

1	2	3	4
Office to which proposition Refers	Present scale	Nature of charge Proposed scale	Grounds of Proposition
Sudder Moonsiff, Julpigoree	None	<p>Amlahs Rs.</p> <p>..</p> <p>1 Sheristadar-40</p> <p>3 Muhuris, at Rs.20 each-60</p> <p>Contingencies - 8</p> <p>Total ---108</p> <p>Nazir & Peons</p> <p>1.Nazir--- 25</p> <p>2.Peons, at Rs.7-14</p> <p>Each</p> <p>6,,at ,,6,,---36</p> <p>Total---75</p>	Vide this office letter No.2200 of the 27 th July 1869, to Bengal Govt.

		Grand total—183	
Julpigoree The 2 nd May 1870			J.C.Haughton ,Commissioner&Judge. 43

In this context Eden, Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal in the judicial Department wrote to the Registrar of the High court, (No.3876,dated Fort William ,the 24 th August,1870) “I am directed to forward the accompanying copy of a letter No.697 dated 8th instant,from the commissioner and judge of the Coochbehar division relative to the dearth of pleaders in the district of Jalpaigoree, and to enquire whether the Hon’ble Judge of the High Court have any objection to the proposal made by Colonel Haughton for meeting the difficulty,by allowing pleaders from Rangpore to practice in the courts of the Julpigoree district and candidates for pleader-ships from Julpigoree to present themselves for examination at Rangpore.”⁷¹ The teachers and officials of the newly set-up schools were also immigrated and ‘Barnahindus’.

Other than the Employees, Planters, Jotdars and intermediaries, many traders and businessman came and settled in the town in time to time for commercial purposes. As the indigenous people of the district and adjacent areas were only depended on agriculture, not interested in trade and commerce or business, so the business class or trading class people came here to fulfill the demand of the trade and business of this district and regions. In this field the Marwari’s played an important role in the trade and commerce. The Marwari migration syndrome in both Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling reveals the same story. The potentially of the moneyed Marwari’s to invest capital for the expansion of the tea industry and other types of trade and commerce had helped to pave the way for Marwari settlement in the district. Thus the Marwari migration to the areas under study has been the result of an inherent tie between

the native bourgeoisie and the moneyed Marwaris.⁷² In the district of Jalpaiguri, money-lending business was more profitable in the tea garden in Dooars. Here also the pioneering money-lenders were the Marwaris, they sometimes advanced big loans to the tea garden owners. Some Kalu Kaiya (Marwari) lend Rs.15,000 to Gopal Chandra Ghosh of Mongolkanta Tea Estate in 1884 to save the garden from impending bankruptcy.⁷³ In the district of Jalpaiguri, the Marwari predominance over trade and commerce had been more prominent than in Cooch Behar as is evident from the fact that 82 percent of the total commercial organizations of the district have been in the grip of the Marwaris.⁷⁴ Almost all these shops were kept by foreigners from Bihar and north-western provinces. Some or 10 wealthy Marwari traders also reside in the town, and carry on extensive dealings in cloth and country produce.⁷⁵

The Marwari merchants had changed their business from time to time. Initially, most of them were engaged in the business of agricultural crops such as food grains, jute and tobacco etc. With the availability of scientific modern household equipment and the gradual change in consumer demand for those, they switched over to the business of such items like electrical goods, automobiles, motor parts, transport equipments, luxury goods & so on.⁷⁶ The most important and organized industry in the Rajshahi Division was tea, which was confined to Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. In Jalpaiguri the crop was good, but in Darjeeling the output was not satisfactory owing to the unfavourable weather. During the year under report, products of cottage industries throughout the Presidency, to the value of a quarter of a lakh of rupees were placed in the market by the Bengal Home Industries Association—the most notable developments being in coarse weaving, matka silks, buttons and basket-making.⁷⁷ It is mentioned in Archival record, “the opening of the new Thibet and the Nepal roads has already somewhat improved the trade between Darjeeling and those countries. A large number of Thibetan traders than usual visited Darjeeling during the Winter season, but when the Teesta bridge is opened the full effects of the road will not be felt; and when the railway is opened, it is

expected by some that the main part of the Thibetan trade will go direct to Julpigoree via Ambiokh. But the Thibetans themselves are much disinclined to go down to the plains and for some time to come I expect to see them come no further than Darjeeling. Owing to the shortness of the tea crop in Darjeeling little more than 4,000,000th were exported during the year of report, as against 4,600,000th in the season of 1875-76, but the tea was of better quality, and fetched higher prices than in previous years, though ,as regards this last point, the exchange rate had a powerful influence. Among other manufacturers deserving of mention there is a coarse kind of silk made in Bogra & Rangpore from the castor-oil worm. It is manufactured chiefly for private use among the higher classes, and not to sell. Molasses are also prepared to some extent in this district. Gunny is made from Jute in large quantities at the Serujgunge jute mills, and also to a lesser extent in Dinajpore, Rangpore and Julpigoree. Paper is manufactured in Pabna and Rangpore, but this industry is said to be dying out under the influence of European competition. Cloth is made from jute and cotton for home wear in Dinajpore, Rangpore & Julpigoree, brass and bell-metal utensils are made in large quantities in Rajshahye, pottery of the coarsest description in Dinajpore, and Carpets of fine texture and quality and quality in Rangpore...’’⁷⁸ Other than the Marwari’s, the Bengali Merchants and Businessman such as Sahas, Baniks, Kundus, Talukdars, Carpenters, Kamars, Telis etc. came and settled in the district for trade and commerce.⁷⁹

Beside these Indian immigrates there were also Europeans who came from England mainly they did not settle here permanently because they came here only administrative and commercial purposes. Many European Tea planters started tea cultivation in the Western Dooars they settled in the town. So, these European both of administrators, officials and planters stayed in the town formed European club from where European culture spread in the town. Other than these, many teachers and administrators of different schools of the town who served in the schools and extended their co- operation to the society of the town. Naturally the impact of the European culture or western

education fell upon the society of the town. Regarding close season for the pursuit of game birds and animals in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur, E.V. Levinge, Esq., wrote to the commissioner of Rajshahi Division, "With reference to your letter no. 283J., dated the 26th November 1895, I am directed to say that, in compliance with your request, the Lieutenant Governor declares, under rule 20 of the rules framed by the Government of India under the Indian Arms Act, xi of 1878, the period between the 1st April and the 30th September of each year, both days inclusive, to be a close season in the district of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur for the pursuit of game birds or animals that do not injure either men, cattle or crops. Licenses in forms viii and ix should in future be issued subject to the observance of this close season."⁸⁰ With regards P. Nolan, Esq., Commissioner of the Rajshahi division wrote letter to the Chief secretary to the Govt. of Bengal., "With reference to Mr. Levinge's letter no. 1228 J., dated The 6th March 1895, on the subject of the prohibition of the use by holders of licenses in Forms prescribed in the rules under the Indians Arms Act, of their weapons for the deduction of game birds during a certain season of the year in the district of Darjeeling, I have the honour to request that sanction be accorded to the close season from 1st April to 30th September of each year in the district, of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur."⁸¹

There were two wards Estates in Rangpore; one was which was taken enarge of during the year. One of these estates in an extremely embarrassed condition, and the sale of potrion of it was inevitable. The other was also in debt, but this was being reduced with regularity every year. The outstanding balances on account of rents and famine advances in the chucklajat estates belonging to the minor Rajah of Cooch Behar in Julpigoree were still very heavy.⁸²

The Tista river divides the Jalpaiguri district into a western or moderately malarious tract and an eastern or intensely malarious region. The later, known as the Western Dooars, had an evil reputation for malaria and

black-water fever comparable only to the deadliest regions of Central Africa. Jalpaiguri town, representing the Western region, was moderately malarious, but across the Tista in the Dooars, the index rapidly rises until it reached its maximum at Nagrakata. The greatest mortality was caused by fevers, the death rate from which was 31.94 per 1,000 in 1907 out of a total death rate of 34.33 per 1,000. Among Europeans of whom over 200 reside in the Dooars, the incidence of Malaria was very high. The European in the tropics invariably contracts Malaria from the natives who live in his immediate neighbourhood, and the closer this proximity, the larger their number and the more prevalent the disease among them Blackwater. Black water fever appeared to be mainly confined to Europeans, Bengali Babus and tradesmen, Chinamen, dhobis and servants had drawn from the town dwelling classes of Bengal. Odd cases of Cholera occurred throughout the year, Spleen and goiter were common diseases and the proportion of persons suffering from insanity and deafmutism was higher than in most parts of Bengal. ⁸³

Society in the Tea estates

Beside the agrarian society, there was tea-based society in the Dooars which was formed in the colonial period. It is mentioned earlier that the Britishers divided the lands of the Dooars in three categories after occupation of this tract in 1865 by the Treaty of Sinchula namely 1) Land for Agricultural Cultivation 2) Land for tea cultivation and lands for reserved forest. After agrarian economy, the second profitable business in the Dooars was tea cultivation. Why the Britishers chosen this area for tea cultivation? There were three reasons behind it-1) In the international market tea was a very demandable goods because everybody either poor or rich like to take tea as a drinking. 2) The soil and the relative matter such as climate, rainfall, temperature of the Dooars were favourable for the tea-cultivation, 3) The availability of lands easily as the Dooars were non-regulated area that means the proprietor of the lands was Government himself and there were huge

lands without any proprietors, so the Government easily could sanction lands for tea cultivation by lease and obtain rent from land.

It is discussed earlier that there were huge amount of lands in the agrarian sector or in the tea cultivation. At the initial stage, Govt. sanctioned land by lease for tea cultivation to the interested tea cultivators by easy terms and condition at the minimum rent. It is found in the Government report, "...Tea Cultivation is being rapidly extended in the Duars of Julpigoree. There are at the present moment 44 plantations in various stages of progress and several fresh applications for land have been received during the year of report. The soil appears well suited to produce teas of good quality. Labour is procurable in sufficient quantities and at tolerably moderate rates and if the unhealthiness of the climate can be successfully combated, there is every reason to believe that that the cultivation and manufacture of tea in this district will prove to be a very thriving and remunerative industry."⁸⁴ It was soon found that the soil and climate of the Western Dooars was suitable to the growth of tea, Government offered land to the investors on favourable terms and the industry developed rapidly.⁸⁵

The lands taken up for the cultivation of tea in the Western Dooars were held direct under the Government, a set of rules specially framed for the purpose. The latest edition of this rules published on page 539 of the Calcutta gazetteer of 2nd May 1894.

It is found from different sources (either Government or Private source) that better facilities were given to the European Tea cultivators for obtaining lands and other necessary requirements. This type of facilities would not give to the Indian tea cultivators or agrarian cultivators. At first, a lease under the tea lease rules is granted for a term of five years. On the expiration for this period, and on the lease fulfilling certain conditions, the lease was renewed for thirty years, and so on for similar period's perpetuity. No rent was charged for

the Year of entry and the next first full years, up to end of the fifth years; the rate of rents varies from 3annas to 12 annas per acre. On the expiration of the term of the first or preliminary lease, granted for five years, the lands were re-assessed according to the pargana rate. This rate remains unaltered for thirty years. By the terms of the first lease the lessees was bound to open out 15% of the total area by the end of the fifth years. If at the end of that year it was found that the required area of 15% had been opened out, the assessment was made at the rate for rupit land for only that area, and at the rate for homestead or Basti for the land occupied by houses, coolie lines and..... The remaining land is assessed as faringati or waste, as the case may be at rates considerable lower than rupit and basti.⁸⁶

At the first stage, tea cultivation in the Dooars and elsewhere in N.E. India was profitable because of the land availability easily, availability of labourers very chiefly and the demand of tea in Europe and many parts of the world. So, to be gained financially many Europeans obtained land by lease and started tea cultivation. In this way the number of tea gardens increased rapidly in the Jalpaiguri district. Grunning wrote, "By 1881 the number of gardens had increased to 55 and the acre age under tea to 6,230 or, in other words, the number of gardens had more than quadrupled and the area under tea cultivation had increased seven times in five years."⁸⁷ The cultivation was very rapidly extended during the nineties and in 1901 the number of grants had increased to 235 with a planted area of 119 square miles and a yield of over 31 million pounds.⁸⁸

Total Area under Plantations in different Police Stations in Jalpaiguri Districts (in Acres) in 1906-1907:⁸⁹

Sl.No	Name of The Police station	Total No oftea estates	Total area under plantations in acres
1	Jalpaiguri Sadar	3	3824.87
2	Rajganj	2	2188.46
3	Mal	43	45924.79
4	Matiali	16	24444.88
5	Nagrakata	21	27801.04
6	Dhupguri	26	44757.60
7	Mainaguri	3	3568.65
8	Falakata	6	9136.71
9	Madarihat	13	29187.55
10	Kaalchini	19	104368.61
11	Kumargram	1	20454.46
12	Birpara	1	2549.61
13	Alipurduar	5	6783.98

It has, already, been discussed about the introduction of the tea-cultivation in the district of Jalpaiguri, if it is found that the number of tea gardens increased rapidly from 1874 to 1901, a problem of the paucity of labourers would have been faced by the tea planters both of Europeans and Indians. At the first stage Nepali labourers were recruited in the garden which was not sufficient, the indigenous people were not interested to work in the gardens as a tea labourer. Among the indigenous people Meches, a tribal community of the district and only the people who could accommodate in the unhealthy and intolerable condition affected by Malaria, Kalazar and dysentery etc, were not interested to work as a labourer in the tea – garden, rather they preferred to live independently in the jungle depending on agriculture and hunting.

The Rajbanshi people and Mohammedans (Converted from Rajbanshi Hindus) were also not interested to work in the tea – gardens they also preferred to survive depending on agriculture. The residence of the tenant farmers surrounded by the homes of his relatives and farm labourers and perhaps a few under tenants. The result of this system in the absence of the functional castes; there were no village servants, barbers, washer men and sweepers who were imported from Behar or elsewhere; the washer men were nearly all Beharis and very few of the servants of the Europeans community were native of the district.

As the indigenous people were less interested to work in the tea garden, the tea planters looked for labourers from outside the Dooars and it was found in Santal Parganas of Bihar and Chhotonagpur where large number of tribal people namely Santals, Oraons lived and faced an identity crisis losing their independent life in the jungle called ‘Damin-i-koha’ this tribal people were laborious and daring who showed their efficiency at the time of clearing jungles and preparing land for agricultural cultivation, on the other hand they proved their labourious activities in the work of establishing Railway line in India by the Britishers. So the planters choose these laborious people for this hard task.

Other than these causes, the European planters were not interested to recruit local labourers inhabited in the neighbouring areas of tea gardens; rather they preferred to recruit labourers from outside because recruiting labourers from outside was more convenience than the local labourers. They could not create problem like local labourers, they had to completely depend on the planters like prisoners. This policy was called ‘Enclave Economy’ which was seen in the other empires of the British outside India.

But the planters did not recruit labourers from outside the district directly, rather to avoid the difficulties they preferred to recruit labourers

indirectly through the ‘Sardars’. A Sardar received a commission usually at the rate of one pice on each ‘haziri’ or task on the number of Coolies whom he sends to work daily.⁹⁰

To Nirmalendu Bhattacharjee, for the Terai and the Dooars the picture is however different. At the initial stage, the tea estates of the Western part of the Dooars employed Nepalese labour, but immediately it was realized that sufficient labour could not be obtained locally, or from the surrounding area. For this reason, the gardens situated in the Dooars and the Terai started from above 1880, recruiting from Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas of Bihar through ‘Sardar’ who received commissions usually at the rate of one pice on each ‘Haziri’ or task on the number of workers.⁹¹

If the recruiters are successful, the Sardar benefits by getting his daily commission on the Coolies earnings and he also received a commission of Rs 2 to Rs 5 a head. On the other hand if a recruiter selected by him fails to return, the Sardar had to refund the advances made to them.⁹²

So, tea labourers were brought from Chhotanagpur and Santal Pargana through the Sardars or their agents by provoking them many ways. Subhojyoti Roy in his book writes, under the system of recruitment in the Dooars a sardar or his deputy visited the recruiting district year after year and returned with new workers. The workers were recruited from the some group of villages with which the recruiter was familiar and with which he had some personal connection.⁹³ Regarding the recruitments of the labour and influx of population F. D. Ascoli, Esq. ICS wrote to the secretary to the Government of Bengal, “As in the last year there was an influx of aboriginal tribes from the Santal Parganas, and of Nepalese and Paharias and up country labours who came to work in tea gardens in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, and for employment transshipment work at Santahar and Lalmonirhat, as well as for construction work on the Santahar Parbotipur Board Gauge Extension.”⁹⁴

The labourers had come in the Dooars leaving their relatives in the houses taking advance from the Sardars which were given to cover road expenses, travel money and repayments of the worked existing debt. After recruiting the labourers, they had to depend on the Sardars which was the ultimate force that bound the workers to remain in the garden losing their legal freedom.

It is relevant to mention here that some differences are followed regarding recruitment of labours between Dooars and Assam. It has been discussed about the recruitment of labourers in the Dooars through the sardars, but in Assam labours were recruited through Arkatis and a intermediaries class was seen in this regard, these intermediaries obtained a lot of amount through recruiting labours. Subhajyoti Roy writes, “While the total expense incurred in recruiting an Assam worker amounted to between Rs. 80 and 120. The actual expense of transit of a worker was only Rs, 30. The profit margin which the recruitment in Assam offered led to the proliferation of several layers of intermediaries in the system. The system in the Duars was by and large free from the interference and the malpractices which their presence entailed.”⁹⁵

2ndly, the Dooars labourers were free in the sense that they were not indenture labourers subject to penal measure. ⁹⁶ Officially the Dooars labourers could move one garden to another garden though it was hard practically, but in the Assam the labourers were bounded with agreement so that the labourers had not right to move according to their choose apart from these, the missionaries took an important role to recruit labourers in the tea – garden of Assam from Chotangapur, Santal pargana and Orissa. Rama Krishna Chatterjee tried to show the role of Missionaries to recruit and migration of the labourers in Assam tea – gardens. He writes, “There are numerous instances to show that the Missionaries of Chotanagpur, Santal Parganas, Orissa and various other missions of India considered migration as one of the means to release the

tension of poverty – stricken rural India, arising out of the oppression of the land – lords and money – lenders in the given colonial frame work.”⁹⁷ In order to encourage migration of the labourers, the Missionaries propagated that those who would immigrated to Assam would have the opportunities to settle in Government waste lands. Besides, they would not have to pay bet begari or suffer harassment of law suits; nor would they have to face oppression for the Zamindars etc.⁹⁸ But there were no such evidences to show the role in recruiting the labourer in the Dooars.

Tea – garden to the labourers in the district and elsewhere in India was not bed of roses, as it has already been discussed that the labourers have been imported from outside the Dooars (Nepalese from Nepal and Darjeeling district and Oraons, Mundas and Santals from Santal Pargana and Chhotanagpur). So, labourers had to come leaving their own residence and relatives. They were suppressed and oppressed in different ways.

But on the other hand the view of Sir, P. Griffiths will be analyzed. The labourers in the Dooars were always free in the sense that they were not placed under any kind of contract and could live wherever it pleases.⁹⁹ But this facility could have not been by the labourers in practical as because it was difficult for the labourers to move one garden to another garden freely for working purposes. Tea labourers once came in the garden never returned their residence; they could not flee as they were always guarded by Chowkidars (Guard).¹⁰⁰ Ranjit Dasgupta wrote in this context “On their arrival at the gardens, the labourers were put in a concentration camp – like situation. The managers enjoying the explicit or implicit support of the colonial authority and the mystique of the Sahib were law unto themselves. Physical coercion beating, flogging – all these were quite common. Incidents of death from physical torture were not unknown. There are unrecorded accounts of troublesome workers being thrown into furnaces of garden factories.”¹⁰¹

It is true that in some cases labourers had been given lands for cultivation for their livelihood apart from the working in the tea – gardens and in this context it seems to be a beneficial step to the labourers. Actually it was the technique to keep the labourers in the garden as there was no lack of land and easily available it.

The census report of 1881 shows that there were 210 Oraons smaller numbers of other immigrant tribal groups but the number of the labourers in the tea – garden had been increasing rapidly. The statistics are given below:-¹⁰²

Number of labourer employed

Year	Permanent	Temporary	Total
1901	47,365	21,254	68,619
1911	56,693	18,622	75,315
1921	86,693	1871	88,564
1931	112,591	4,262	116,853
1941	136,491	4,896	141,387
1951	178,009

The life of the labourers always had on risk fighting against the ferocious animals on the other hand they had to suffer dangerous deceases Malaria, Kalazar, Dysentery etc, in addition with these they had to tolerate the intensive oppression of the Manager and the officials without any protest or objection. They had no way to flee from the confined life in the garden as they were always guarded by Chaukidar (Guard). If anybody tried to flee, he had been caught and given punishment. In this perspective Monahar Tirki writes, “The torture on the tribal people was increasing. Besides the mental and physical torture, the tendency among the sahib to sexual enjoyment with the tribal women had also been increasing.”¹⁰³

The tea labourers had been accommodated as serfs long before the independence. Only a small room was their dwelling place. There was no right of any trade union leaders or political leaders to enter into the line of labourers dwelling place. The manager of the tea garden was all in all.¹⁰⁴

There was no account, how many people were killed affected by Malaria, Kalazar etc. Physical torture and raped in the European tea garden of North Bengal was not rare though it was not regularize. In the Bengali tea garden physical torture, rape, conversion etc would not happen, though oppression was the same.¹⁰⁵

There was no legal time – table for working of the labourers. In the cold weather and rains plucking work was done from 7 am till about 6 pm with two hours leave.¹⁰⁶

The wages of the labourers were not satisfactory. Though Sunder pointed out that the wages of an ordinary labourer in the Dooars is not more than 4 annas a day or Rs 7 – 8 a month, the tea – garden coolies earn double this. In fact their earnings are so great that they often show a spirit of independence and insubordination which tries patience and good will of the managers of gardens very considerably.¹⁰⁷ But it was not the real picture of the labourers in the tea – garden. There are so many evidences of the oppressions of the labourer in the district and elsewhere in India which proves that the labourers in anywhere in the colonial period were not in comfortable condition. In the early 1890's on the tea – gardens the average wage rates were Rs. 6 a month for men, Rs. 4.8 to Rs. 5 for women and Rs. 2.8 to Rs. 3 for children.

Public health and education of the labourers were not satisfactory. At the first stage there were no responsibility of the planters about the health and education of the labourers. It was in 1912 the Dooars labour Act was passed

but it was concerned with government inspection only in the matters of sanitation and public health. The enactment was prompted by the high incidence of sickness resulting in absenteeism and heavy death toll among the workers due to various diseases, particularly malaria and black water fever. The sahibs too often felt prey to these scourges and actually felt the need for some measures to control these.¹⁰⁸ Even after the independence the labourers had not been provided modern facility of the treatment. In most of the diseases were concerned, they had to depend on the local process of treatment by ojha or kabiraj, apart from this they had to depend on charlatan or quack, as because there was no M.B.B.S or qualified Doctors, as a result, the patients had to expire for the wrong treatment. Most of the gardens in the Dooars had dispensaries and common medicines for treatment of their labourer.¹⁰⁹

Number of deaths from principal diseases in the tea – gardens during 1939 – 44 as follows¹¹⁰.

Year	Total population	Fever	Dysentery and Diarrhoea	Cholera	Phthisis	Chest compla in	Kala zar	Black water Fever
1938-39	2,85.789	1326	1175	20	477	1061	9	8
1939-40	2,90.174	1228	1024	41	490	802	9	8
1940-41	2,91.253	1314	950	5	541	736	10	9
1941-42	2,85.877	1142	1065	9	528	648	20	5
1942-43	2,89.239	1244	1104	8	517	765	48	8
1943-44	2,75.398	1256	1181	144	543	241	28	11

Though some schools were established in the garden area for the education of the children of labourers at the initial stage, but it was not satisfactory as because they were not conscious about the education other than these steps

were not taken actively or cordially to educate the children of the labourers. The statistics of school in the Dooars are given below:-¹¹¹

Year	Number of School	Number of pupils	Average daily attendance
1941	150	6,732	4,218
1942	146	6,723	4,569
1943	149	5,130	3,423

Beside these, the labourers were oppressed and cheated by the traders and shopkeepers. There were many Hats in the Dooars which held in one or two days in a week near the garden where no rules and regulations were practically, no price control policy, as a result the labourers were cheated by purchasing essential things by double or re-double rate than the original rate. They were also victimized by the political leaders. The local leaders among them took the role of agent for the oppression of the labourers, rather the emancipator of them. In spite of all these intensive life the labourers enjoy themselves with their folk songs, dances after taking ‘Haria’ (local wine) and ‘Cholai’ and observed different festivals forgetting the intensive life of sorrow and pain. Paritosh Dutta the leader of tea workers Association writes, really the tea labourers perform all the dances songs and music of their own community. The rhythm of this music sends them in the world of imagination. The tune of oppression and suppression make a new wave – the folk artists involving with their regular struggle become the artists of the masses.”¹¹²

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- 112) Paritosh Dutta, *Uttarbanger Sanskritik Uttaradhikar*, Kolkata, 2000, p.81.