

Chapter-4

Society of the District in the Post Colonial Period

The year 1947 (Independence of India) was the land mark for the changing scenario of the socio- cultural and demographic pattern of the district as elsewhere in other parts of Bengal and India as well. It is well known to all that the country became independent dividing into two parts, namely India and Pakistan with the interference of British India Government and the leaders of different political parties of India. Naturally Jalpaiguri district remained in West Bengal, a state of India. It also should mention here that Jalpaiguri lost her five Thanas (Police station) namely, Boda, Patgram, Tentulia, Panchagar and Debiganj for the partition of India.

Before partition of India (August 15, 1947) a devastating communal riots was started in whole over the country, particularly in the Punjab and undivided Bengal, between orthodox Hindus and Muslims. The reason of these hatred communal riots was completely orthodox mentality of both the communities and the conspiracy of the Britishers. We all know that after the completion of 2nd world war in 1945, the British govt. was eager to handover the independence of India. During that period the country was on hot-bed because of the political situation like Matsanyaya. Different political parties began to quarrel with each other to establish their interest and power. Particularly the orthodox leaders of Indian National Congress, Muslim Leagues, R.S.S., Hindu Mahasabha etc. were involved in the communal conflict and conspiracy. Nobody was interested to solve the communal problem sympathically. Every orthodox leader became ferocious and covetous. As a result of which, socio-political tension was going up. Men killed men being

heartless. The top-most leaders namely Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, Muhammad Ali Jinnah had no control on their subordinates or supporters. So, in these circumstances, a fatal communal riot was started from 1946. Thousands of people were killed by the communal criminals. Large number of people migrated and entered into different parts of Bengal from East Pakistan who were called 'refugees'. Ananda Gopal Ghosh writes, "15th August, 1947 was a birth that was also an abortion"¹. The condition of the refugees were very worst. They treated like animals. They had lost their shelter, no food were available. The Stateman revealed, The refugees only survived like animals.²

A great influx of Bengali Hindu refugees from East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) began which changed the demography, social, economic and Physical aspects of Jalpaiguri district.³ The people (refugees) lost everything and came to the district Jalpaiguri, as elsewhere in Bengal and other parts of India as well. After coming they had no shelter, no food, and no lands. Their shelter was in different colonies. Some of them took shelter in their relative's house. Ranjit Das Gupta wrote, "Another two results of migrating refugees was the cultivators belonged to Namasudra community .By their efforts and hard laboured not only changed the agricultural areas, but changed the manure of cultivation and nature of crops."⁴ Numerically Namasudra comes next to Rajbansi. In the villages of Jalpaiguri district, 10.24 percent of the total rural scheduled castes of the district belong to the Namasudra community.⁵

Namasudras were indigenous people of North Bengal. It is anthropologically proved that the Namasudras belonged to indigenous groups of people of ancient Bengal before coming of the Aryans, the people of this community was formed with the contribution of Proto-Austroloid, Drabida and later on the Alpines of the Aryan groups. In this context Nihar Ranjan Roy wrote, "Unfortunately, these Namasudra people were treated as "Chandal" or "Charal" earlier means inferior class or untouchable.⁶ By the initiative of Sri

Harichand Thakur and his son Sri Guruchand Thakur, *Chandal* or *Charals* were enlisted as Namasudras since the census report of 1911.

It can be said from the historic evidences that the predecessor of the Namasudras came under Buddhist religion in the region of the Palas as became most of the people under the rule of Palas were Buddhist, Pala rulers themselves were Buddhist. But it is well known to all that the people believing in Buddha religion fell on crisis during Sena period. They imposed Brahmana religion on the people creating castesism and Kulinism in the region by Ballal Sen. Since then people of Bengal categorized into different castes accordingly to the social framework of Barnahindus. Many people belonged to indigenous groups of different janapadas (villages) of the large areas of Bengal (Bengal was named in the colonial Bengal), were symbolized as *Abarnas* who were treated as untouchable or Jalachal during the period of Senas.

The Namasudras were mainly agriculturist in the undivided Bengal.⁷ In the district of Jalpaiguri Namasudras migrated from East Bengal at a large scale after independence. They had nothing at the time of migration but for only their physical structure. They had to fight after coming here; many times they had to spend their days with fasting. After doing strong life struggle they obtained little shelter some placed of the district like other parts of west Bengal. It is necessary to mention here that the Namasudra settled in the lands covered with forest and jungles called Patits or waste land. After doing intolerable hard work they made it a cultivable land and produced different types of crops.

The Namasudras also had their own culture though most of them were illiterate in the colonial and the first phase of Post-colonial period. In spite of being Hindus lateron, they had many cultural instances in their life such as songs and music, social and ritual customs and festivals, worships, linguistic forms, etc which were coming from pre-Aryan human races proving that they were the pre-Aryan groups of people in Bengali.

Naturally, it could be understood easily how pathetic and drastic condition was of these migrated people. Though it was the scenario of the all India level means a national problem was concerned, yet I shall only analyze the changing scenario of the society and culture of Bengal district Jalpaiguri. In this chapter it will be shown how the society was formed in a new structural pattern with amalgamation of various types or classes of immigrated people during the colonial period. Particularly, in the eastern part of Tista called Western Dooars, huge number of people immigrated and settled there since the inception of the district in 1869 and thence the introduction of the new economic policy in the soil of the Western Dooars by the British-India Government initiating new jotdary system in the agrarian field and tea cultivation. As a result of immigration socio- cultural demographic pattern of the district changed because before coming of the Britishers in the Western Dooars, most of the areas were no men's lands. Only some tribal communities and local Rajbanshi people in the plains area lived there.⁸

In the colonial period a mingled society was formed with the amalgamation of indigenous people and migrated people. Socially, 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' enter into the people of the district in a new motion though the Sanskritization or Aryanization entered in the district earlier. Western education, western culture also entered in the society of the district with the introduction of new school and curriculum by the Britishers. New religions namely Christianity, Hinduism entered in the society of the Dooars, though Rajbanshi people accepted Hinduism before that period. The different tribal communities accepted new religion either Hinduism or Christianity losing their own ethnic religion or culture. Economically they also lost their independence in lands. They had been settled from shifting cultivation to settled cultivation.

Now, I will turn my look to the society of post colonial period. What changes took place in the society and culture of the district during the post

colonial period. In the post colonial period also many changes took place in the society and culture of the district like the colonial period. For getting a clear picture and concept I will analyze the condition of the society dividing three parts such as **(1) The Society of the Villages, (2) The Society of the Urban areas and (3) The Society of Tea Estates.**

The Society of the Villages:-

The society of the villages was dominated by the landlords such as Zaminders, Jotdars, Chukanidars, Dar-chukanidars and Dar-dar-chukanidars during the colonial period and the early phase of the post colonial period. Either in the regulated parts that was the Sadar subdivision or in the non-regulated parts in the Western Dooars the land holding classes (Zamindars, Jotdars, and the intermediaries) were the dominators. They dominated and oppressed on their subordinates cultivators called *Adhiars* or Sharecroppers. These *Adhiars* or sharecroppers were original cultivators, but they had no rights on lands, they only cultivated in their lands only for the 50% share of the crops and they remained in the lowest position of ladder of the feudal system. They had nothing to do but for suffering.

Before independence, the agrarian problem or the problem of sharecroppers or original cultivators had not been solved, though the then British-Indian Government had tried to solve the problem in several times partially. But the problem remained in the dark room. In the report of Floud Commission some provisions were made to solve the problem of Sharecroppers, but the Sharecroppers or *Adhiars* had not been given any right on the land in accordance with the provisions of the Floud Commission.

After independence, the independence Government was eager to solve the agrarian problem, giving the rights to the sharecroppers or oppressed peasants, on the lands. Keeping in mind, the Indian Government passed the Land Reforms Act in 1950. The Government intended to abolish the zamindari system that was the feudal system in the lands, so that no intermediaries would

remain there. There would be direct relation between the peasants and the Government.

In considering the matter of the agrarian problem and the reformation of the agrarian structure and agrarian relation, West Bengal Government also passed the Land Acquisition Act in 1953 and the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955. The West Bengal Government had also the intention to abolish the zamindari, the jotdari and intermediary system in the land. By the provisions of the West Bengal Land Reform Act in 1955, Government wanted to demolish the feudal system abolishing all the intermediary classes in the agrarian field. There were many provisions in the land Reforms Act of 1955. In accordance with the provisions of the Act the ceiling of lands of the land holders were fixed up. Initially the ceiling was 25 acres that means a land holder could keep 25 acres of lands belong to him. Later on, the ceiling was fixed up by 7 standard hectares. According to the provision of the Act the excess land over ceiling would be acquired by the Government and distributed to landless people. Another important reformative work in the agrarian field was to give rights to the Sharecroppers or *Adhiars* or *Bargadars* on the lands, because they had no any right or record in the land. So, Government took the initiative to give rights on lands to the sharecroppers through preparing records their names in the record of rights of the Government.

Though the West Bengal Land Reforms Act was passed in 1955 and started its implementation by the Government, but the Land Reform programmes remained in the papers only because of the selfish mentality and unfairness of the officials and the class interest or economic interest of the Jotdars – Zamindars and the ministers under the Government. All most all the Jotdars- Zamindars, officials, ministers and the political leaders were under the banner of the Indian National Congress. Naturally the Jotdars-Zamindars and Landlords did not want to lose their lands. So, they kept their lands in their own possession by the names of every members of the house, name of the servants,

even the pet animals and last of all by the false names, with the support of the officials and officers. Practically Land Reform Programmes started in 1967 and 1969 during the period of two spells of United Front Government and after coming of the Left Front Government in 1977 Land Reforms Programmes started enthusiastically. Huge amount of ceiling surplus lands were acquired by the Government from Jotdars, Zamindars and landlords and distributed those lands to the landless people. Not only that, huge number of bargadars or sharecroppers were recorded in the record of rights of the Government. They had not been evicted from lands at any time in accordance with the will of Jotdars or Zamindars or landlords.⁹ To realize the socio – cultural pattern of the district as elsewhere in West Bengal it is relevant to comprehend the political situation of the district like the other parts of West Bengal.

It is well known to all that India got her independence in 1947 dividing into two parts – Union of India and Pakistan. In spite of getting independence the socio- political synthesis or integration or peace was withered away, particularly in Bengal and Punjab for devastating communal riots. Both the British Government and the Indian Government were responsible for the ongoing communal riots because they were failure to solve the communal problem peacefully.

For these devastating communal riots huge number of people left their motherland and settled in the different parts of West Bengal being refugee, to save their lives. These migrated refugees had no shelter, no food, no accommodation to survive except very few. Most of them had taken shelter in the various colonies of different parts of West Bengal where no healthy atmosphere, no sufficient food. The refugees only survived like animals. Government did not take proper measure to the refugees. In the context of North Bengal, the condition of the refugees was slightly different because comparatively the density of population was low than South Bengal. Secondly, there were huge amount of patit (wastage land) land particularly in the district

of Darjeeling and Western Dooars of Jalpaiguri district there were large amount of forest or jungles where no human being could live. Only few tribal community people could live there. Thirdly, in the different districts of North Bengal most of the Jotdars and Zamindars were Rajbanshi community who dominated on the land and agrarian economy. The majority of the Jotdars in Jalpaiguri was Rajbanshis, a scheduled caste and next to them, Muslims. The *chukani* holdings would be under them. For a caste- Hindu such a position was socially undesirable. As it happened most of the Muslims were converted.¹⁰ Particularly, in the district of Jalpaiguri there were giant-sized jotdars who possessed thousand acres of lands. They could not cultivate their lands directly, rather they cultivated lands by their *Adhiars* or *Projas* or sharecroppers. Sometimes they would give lands to the chukanidars, dar-chukanidars, etc. for cultivation.¹¹

Land Reform in West Bengal: Under the new land policy which the West Bengal Government announced in Calcutta on May14, it would not permit any person or group of persons to take forcible possession of any land.

The State Government said that in future any action whatever, whether for taking possession of vested lands and their distribution among landless people or for restoring them to the owner or the previous occupier, must be made under the due process of law. So far as lands forcibly occupied under the United Front Regime were concerned, the Government policy would be to take no steps to evict those who genuinely belong to the eligible categories and who are now in secure possession of Khas, vested or Benami lands without violation of the legitimate interests of any party other than the state.¹²

It is relevant to mention here that the local Jotdars of Rajbanshi community were simple and kind hearted. They were not oppressors like the Jotdars or Zamindars of south Bengal more or less. The Zamindars and intermediaries of south Bengal had alternative sources of income other than

their Zamindaries, such as business, industries and service. But in North Bengal all most all the cases except very few, the Zamindars, Jotdars and intermediaries were completely depended on land. Other than agricultural cultivation, they had no alternative sources of income. Most of the Zamindars and renters were upper caste Hindus and most of the peasants were Muslims in East Bengal, while in Jalpaiguri there was no such demarcation as the majority of the Jotdars as well as the sharecroppers were Rajbanshis. Even the Muslims had their representative in both classes. ¹³

So, the migrated people coming from East Pakistan (Present Bangladesh) settled in different parts of North Bengal who take shelter in the lands of local Jotdars. Particularly, in the district of Jalpaiguri huge number of refugees migrated and settled in the different parts of the district. If we go through the statistics of the demographic pattern of the district, it would be cleared how many people migrated in the district from 1920s to 1970s as elsewhere in different parts of West Bengal.

The following table shows the changing demographic pattern of the district-¹⁴

Population of Jalpaiguri with variations, 1931-1951

| | 1931 | Variations 1921- 1931 | 1941 | Variation 1931- 1941 | 1951 | Variation 1941- 1951 |
|---------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|----------------------------|---------|----------------------------|
| Jalpaiguri District | 739,160 | +45,104 | 845,702 | +106,542 | 914,538 | +68, 836 |
| Sadar Subdivision | 466,087 | +15,262 | 524,884 | +58,797 | 546,142 | +21,258 |
| Alipurduar Subdivision | 273,073 | +29,842 | 320,812 | +47,745 | 368,396 | +47,578 |

The above table shows that the population in the district increased gradually as elsewhere in other parts of West Bengal. One point is relevant to mention here in this regard that there were some differences in the changing of village society and the urban society for the inclusion of the migrated people. In the urban society most of the migrated people were more or less economically solvent. Many of them got services and involved with their works in different institution either in private sector or in Government sector. But huge number of people who had nothing came to this district and as elsewhere leaving all their property and wealth, could not settled permanently. Very few of them brought money along with them, purchased lands from local Jotdars and settled in different places. But the helpless people could not purchase lands or property. They had to fight in every moment for their livelihood.

It is mentioned earlier that both the then Government and State Government did not take sufficient measure for these refugees. So, they had to live as helpless people, they had no sufficient job. Day after day they had to remain fasting. It is also mentioned earlier that in spite of passing the Land Reforms Act in 1955, Land Reforms programmes were not started properly. During the period of two spells in 1967 and 1969 of United Front Government huge number of lands acquired and distributed to the landless people.¹⁵ In 1977 after coming of Left Front Government in West Bengal, Land Reforms Programmes started in a new motion, thousand acres of lands acquired and distributed among the landless people by the Government.¹⁶

Beside the land acquisition and distribution the work of recording *Bargadars* or sharecroppers started by the Government through Operation Barga that was recording of *Bargadars* in the record of right. In the continuation of Land acquisition and distribution among the landless people, they tried to change the agrarian economy of West Bengal.¹⁷ Other than the Government's initiatives for the land Reforms Programmes, the Left- wing political parties took initiative to occupy the ceiling surplus lands of the

Jotdars, which were possessed illegally by the Jotdars. Particularly, the Krishak Sabha took a leading role in this regard. The leaders of the Krishak Sabha identify the ceiling surplus lands of the Jotdars by going through record of the Government office and occupied lands by the assembling volunteers of Krishak Sabah and their supporters with their red-Flag.¹⁸ The Government declared that for a more equitable distribution of agricultural lands, it had decided to initiate as early as possible necessary legislation for imposing a ceiling on the aggregate holding of agricultural lands on a family basis instead of individual basis as at present. The land in excess of the new ceiling would be taken over on payment of compensation under the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act and would be distributed among the eligible landless people of the locality.¹⁹

It is relevant to point out here that both the immigrated people, particularly, the refugees from East Bengal became very much benefitted by this Land Reforms Programmes. From the contemporary different sources it is found that in the mission of land occupation led by Krishak Sabah these refugee people took a leading role. In many parts of the district as also other parts of West Bengal refugees went ahead and occupied lands of Jotdars under the banner of Krishak Sabha. Even today many colonies will be found out in many parts North Bengal where the majority persons of the people were refugees coming from East Pakistan.

From the discussion of the colonial society in the previous chapter it has been shown that huge number of people of different castes and classes were immigrated and settled in the district during the colonial period. But in the post colonial period more people were migrated and settled in this district. In the post colonial period, the society of the villages and urban areas changed gradually, in this period a basic change took place in the agrarian economy and the village society.

One of the basic changes of the village society during the post colonial period was the abolition of the jotdari and zamindari system which is mentioned earlier. Here it should be pointed out that what was the impact of this reformation- that was Land Reform Programmes. One thing is clear that it had both positive and negative effect. In positive side, the sharecroppers, landless people got their rights on lands. Sharecroppers or *bargadars* were not only oppressors of the Jotdars or landlords. They became free from the bondage of the Jotdars or landlords.²⁰

There were so many sources and instances which proves that the relation between the Jotdars and their *projas* was good, particularly the indigenous Jotdars. The Jotdars or *Giris* always helped their *projas* in crisis period. The Jotdars would give paddy, food, money and other essential on the required of the *Projas*.

At the time of harvesting both the Jotdars and their *projas* took meal together and enjoyed each other. In the period of different occasion, Fairs and Festivals they would take share with each other and enjoyed themselves.

The local Jotdars or *Giris* never thought their *Projas* as their inferior or lower categories or communities like other parts of West Bengal. In south Bengal and East Bengal (Now Bangladesh) most of the Zamindars or landlords were higher castes and classes and the sharecroppers or original cultivators were lower castes or communities. Naturally, the landlords or Zamindars treated their peasants as inferior. They never thought that the peasants were the same same community or they were like their sons and daughter.

This co-operative relation between Jotdars and their *projas* spoiled gradually. As the local Jotdars had no alternative sources of income like south Bengal and East Bengal (Present Bangladesh) and most of them were illiterate, so they became failure to possess their land. Since the lands Reforms

programmes were started, the jotdatri system or zamindari system demolished gradually. After one or two generation the rest of the lands were divided among their successors. For the want of job and different types of crisis the successors of Jotdars sold their lands. As a result of which most of the Jotdars and their successors became completely poor and helpless.²¹

Other social and demographic changes took place in the society of the district by the immigration of the Bengali people from Assam. In the several times different caste and classes of Bengali people immigrated into Assam. In the district of Goalpara of Assam majority percent of people were Bengalees who had been dwelling there generation after generation. In different parts of Upper Assam so many Bengali people entered and settled there. They also lived there peacefully, because the Assamese people were very simple and they did not interfere about the Bengali people. But in the question of socio-economic status Bengalis and Marwaris went ahead gradually. In many respect Assamese people were oppressed and deprived. Beside this, the Central Government did not cast their eyes properly on the Assam and Assamese people, as a result of which sufficient development could have not been take place in Assam, though there were huge number of natural resources and opportunities for taking place industrial development. All these facts led to Assamese people into grievances and discontents. Unfortunately, they targeted the Bengalis for their backwardness from all sphere of life. From 1970s this discontents and grievances increased and in 1980s it got a fatal form.

In these circumstances, the ULFA was formed. The ULFA demanded their own sovereign state. By this time AASU was formed. They also started movement. They raised the slogan 'Bongal Khedao' and started movement ferociously to live out Bengalis from Assam. J. P.Wade wrote, "Assam was inaccessible to the Europeans and the Bengalee alike".²² Thousand of Bengalis were killed and burnt by the Assamese. In these circumstances thousands of Bengali people left Assam and settled in different parts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch

Behar districts. Government also brought the Bengalis from Assam in this period of communal riots and settled them in different camps. These refugee people emigrated from Assam, also settled and mingled in the society of the district. Naturally the burden of increased people affected the socio- economic balance of the district of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. Dr.B.C.Roy laid stress on the need for effective steps so most Bengali refugee could quickly return to their homes and live with a full sense of security. If this was not done, there was a danger of repercussion which they were all anxious and determined to avoid.²³

‘Bongal Kheda’ movement was started in Assam at initial stage of 1960s.As a result of the ‘Bongal kheda’ movement of 1960s huge number of Bengali family left Assam and came to Bengal. Bongal Kheda movement created reaction in West Bengal in many respects. ²⁴

From the above discussion it can be said that the village society of Jalpaiguri and the adjacent areas in the post colonial period changed gradually. Beside the agrarian structural changes, new demographical society was formed. Rajbanshi and local Jotdars faced in different types of crisis. They fell into a competitive life. They realized that if they are to survive, they had to involve different types of jobs, they had to take education, and otherwise they could not survive. So, they started to learn different types of professions including business, once they were not interested to do it, rather they only involved in agricultural works which is discussed in the previous chapter. So facing on the struggle for livelihood, now-a-days Rajbanshi people have been taking education which led them place in higher position. Having been educated they obtained many services in different sectors and still now they are getting services and opportunities in different places and institutions of the state and country. At present it is followed that in different higher ranks such as Doctor, Engineer, Advocates, Professors, Teachers of schools, Official staff including Officers everywhere they hold the attractive posts. Needless to say, Rajbanshis

and other indigenous people have become advanced more or less. Side by side people coming from East Pakistan and then Bangladesh also became educated and got services in different sectors. But it should be mention that the percentage of educated people and servicemen both of the indigenous people and migrated people is very low. Still now most of the people of the villages of the district and elsewhere in North Bengal depend on agriculture.

Urban Society in the District

In the previous chapter I have shown how the urban society was formed in the colonial period. In this chapter I shall try to show how society was changed during the post colonial period in the distrit. In the first phase of the post colonial period urban society situated only in the Jalpaiguri town and Alipurduar town that means two towns only existed in the district. From the sociological point of view, these two towns had some distinctive characters. Basically Jalpaiguri was older than Alipurduar town. Jalpaiguri town was formed during colonial period mainly for economic and administrative purposes. As the Jalpaiguri town was the head quarter of the district, so various Government offices were laid in the town. Naturally many officials came and settled in the district as most of the indigenous were illiterate. On the other hand many people of different castes and classes immigrated in the district for economic purposes during colonial period, obtained lands and became Jotdars and intermediaries, most of them started to live in the town.

In the previous chapter, it has also been shown that how the different Tea- Estates were introduced and spread in the areas of Western Dooars. Many of the officials, managers and proprietors settled in the Jalpaiguri town during the colonial period. Apart from these, numerous people belonged to different castes and classes came to Jalpaiguri town for business purposes. Among them Marwaris occupied the vital role in the field of business. The role of Marwaris in the district of Jalpaiguri has been highlighted in a recent study which

mentions that the Marwaris came here as traders and merchants. While the *Soudagars* of Dhakka were mainly retail traders; Marwaris were engaged in both retail and wholesale business. However, both of the Hindu and the Muslim as well as the Marwari traders used to keep contact with their ancestral homeland and pay frequent visit.²⁵ The synthesis is still taking place. The process is on as is in evidence in different fields of social reforms and welfare, different philanthropic activities, different cultural programmes, establishment of academic institutions, cultural clubs, “Dharmashalas”, publication of magazines or patrikas, little magazines, even newspapers and participation in politics, both local and national.²⁶

At the time of migration, the Marwaris did not venture upon those types of business needing substantial capital. At this stage they mainly carried on hawker, broker or the retail business. But as years rolled on, they piled up capital and began to invest that in big business. Some of them have turned now into big business magnates of the district.

The contributions of Marwari in town building were very much significant. After the formation of the district in 1869, the importance of Jalpaiguri as a commercial centre grew largely. So the native and foreign merchants began to crowd in the district. They badly needed food and lodging and to fulfill this need, at least three Dharmashalas were constructed in the town by the Marwaris as they thought that this would increase business transactions in the district. The first one was established at the Sadagar Patty (Dinbazar) in 1907. In 1912, it was converted into a “Gosala.”²⁷

The Marwaris were like foreign immigrants in Jalpaiguri. Naturally they felt the necessity to live with a separate identity of their own community on a foreign land by forming associations or Pancheyets. In 1922, Marwari Seba Samity was born and in 1930 The Marwari Sangha was established in order to organize social reforms. Another landmark in the history of Marwari initiative

and enterprise was to establish the Marwari Relief Committee in 1947.²⁸ In the political field the marwaris had also played a great role. Many of them joined the national movement launched by the Indian national congress. A branch office of the Indian National Congress was opened for the first time in the town in 1893.²⁹

Marwaris role in the spread of education have had a definite impact on Socio-Economic and political fields. According to the statistics, on 30 June 1960, the total Marwari population in Jalpaiguri was 3,954 (male 2,233 and female 1,727), of which 34 were matriculates, 20 had passed the intermediate examination, 6 were graduates, 8 had studied up to the post graduate standard (without passing the final examination) and 2 were post graduates who had passed the final examination, total number being 70 on 1st August 1960.³⁰ Besides the Marwaris, Beharies from Bihar and Bengalis from East Bengal came to this town and settled there.

What changes took place in the society of the town during the post colonial period? In this chapter it has mentioned earlier after independence and partition of India in 1947 huge number of people migrated in the district from East Pakistan and settled there.

From the above statistics it is found that the population in the Jalpaiguri town increased rapidly after 1947, because it is known to all that before independence or partition of India communal riots were started all over India, particularly in Bengal and Punjab. Thousands of people were killed for fighting each other. So, to save their lives from communal riots large number of people left their motherlands (East Pakistan) and settled in the district. Ahsan Habib wrote, "In the month of April of 1947, a riot of one was held in Jalpaiguri town in which near about one hundred Muslims were murdered. Amarkhana was nearby Jalpaiguri Town. After Muslims were attacked, all the Hindus of Amarkhana went to Jalpaiguri leaving everything and never returned.....In this

way Amarkhana became without Hindus and the percentage of the Muslims became more than 85%.³¹ Tentuliya was Hindu area. Hindus were frightened for the riots of Jalpaiguri and they were ready to go India with exchange their property.³²

A communal riot broke out in 1946. On 15th August, 1947; Independence came with the Partition of the country, which affected Jalpaiguri district much. Under the Radcliffe Award the areas within the southern police stations of Tentulia, Pachagar, Boda, Debiganj and Patgram, comprising a total area of 672 square miles went to Pakistan. The Forward Block Workers of Boda, Dhondo Mohammad, who protested against this partition, became the first martyr of the district at the hands of the Ansars of Pakistan. A great influx of Bengali Hindu refugees from East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) began which changed the demographic, social, economic and physical aspects of Jalpaiguri district.³³ Though the partition of the country in 1947 gave rise to the problem of influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan, especially into the border districts, immigration of Hindu refugees in to Jalpaiguri more or less counterbalanced by the immigration of Muslim refugees. But after 1951, more Hindu Refugees from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) poured into Jalpaiguri than Muslim who for that country. The rate of growth of population in Jalpaiguri in the 1951-61 decade was double the growth in West Bengal as a whole in that decade. In the following decade, that is, in 1961-71, the rate of growth in Jalpaiguri declined.³⁴

The following statement shows the changes in the density of population in the district and its two Sub Divisions over the last seventy years.³⁵

VARIATION IN DENSITY (PERSONS PER SQ K.M.): 1901-71

| District / Subdivision | 1971 | 1961 | 1951 | 1941 | 1931 | 1921 | 1911 | 1901 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Jalpaiguri District | 280 | 220 | 149 | 138 | 120 | 113 | 108 | 88 |
| Sadar | 301 | 236 | 163 | 156 | 139 | 134 | 137 | 127 |
| Alipur duar | 264 | 202 | 132 | 115 | 98 | 87 | 73 | 43 |

The newly migrated people, who settled in the district town, had distinctive character. Some of them sheltered in the house of their relatives, after that they built their house in different corners of the town. The economically solvent people purchased lands and built their houses gradually increased their properties by purchasing lands outside the town. Many of them after settling involved in different types of business for their livelihood and gradually they increased their properties. Besides these, many people who had nothing, only came to this town along with their bodies settled in the road sides, river side's or foot paths, became labourers and involved in the inferior works of the society. Ahsan Habib explained, "A riot was took place on 1st Friday of February, 1949 by the Hindu refugees, goons and the students of Congress Party in the College. Communal tension was present here earlier. On that day fishes were imported from Khulna by train. At the time of unfolding the gut of fishes a head with "Tiki" (pieces of Hair) was found in the gut of fishes. After seeing it, the Hindus realized that the riots were took place in the Southern portion and the Hindus were Murdered ferociously. Naturally riot was started from fish market. The Hindus, wearing half Pant, Ganji and taking knife, axe, ballam (Javeline) and stick in their hands entered in to the house and shops of the Muslims, murdered and plundered, houses and building was burnt."³⁶

One point should be mentioned here that the growth and development of the township of the district as elsewhere in North Bengal was an outcome of the immigrating and increasing of the people of outside in the district. It is discussed in the previous chapter that in the colonial period large number of people immigrated in the district in time to time. It is also mentioned that after independence huge number of people migrated into the district as other parts of the country from East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh). Many of the migrated people settled in the villages which is discussed in this chapter earlier, a large portion of the immigrated people settled in the town though the towns in the

district were not big cities like other parts of Bengal, rather these were growing town which may be called village town in that since people of different classes and castes had been immigrating and settling in the town. Various things of Muslim families of Sadhupara, Congresspara and Adarpara nearby Railway station of Jalpaiguri were plundered (Gold, Silver, money, goat-cows, utensils etc) by Hindu volunteers and college's students under the leadership of Dhiren Bagchi.³⁷ In 1949 at the time of riots in Jalpaiguri huge number of migration took place. Muslims of Rajganj, Chopra of Jalpaiguri were being frightened, on the otherhand Hindus of Tentuliya, Ponchagar nearly Jalpaiguri Police Station were being frightened by same.³⁸

Diyabari Tea Estate was named after the village Diyabari of Dhaka, East Bengal or East Pakistan, by S. P. Roy, emminant Tea Planter and the Refugees, coming from East Bengal or East Pakistan, who were involved in trade and commerce, named their shops or institution with the name of districts or villages leaving by them, among of the most important institution or shops in Jalpaiguri were Pabna Jewellers, Tangail Band Party, Vikrampur Bhandar, Dhakamistanyo bhandar, Pabna Krishi Bhandar, East Bengal Brash Band Party, Sonar Gao Hotel and Resturant, Dhakeswari Digital studio, Sadhana Oushodhalay, Rangpur Stores, Dhaka Band Party etc.³⁹ Dipak Krishna Bhowmik, former councilor and Congress leader of Jalpaiguri told that in 1950 at the time of riots Panjab shoestores and Shahabad shoe stores were affected by the rioters. A group staff of Ananda Model High School was murdered. Rahim Khoda Box of Hakimpara was shooted and murdered by this rioters.⁴⁰ Section 144 was imposed at the time of riots. During that period many shops were plundered by the rioters. Muslims were affected by the rioters.⁴¹ Bhupesh Chandra Ghosh informed that Kamarpara was the Muslim band area. People coming outside sheltered in the Nawab bari, many of them took shelter in the house of Aliar Rahaman of D.B.C.Road.⁴²

It is relevant to mention here a portion of the migrated people who were educated and economically solvent were comparative better position, because

within short they got services in different sectors like schools, colleges and offices. It is historically proved that most of the schools, colleges and office in the district were built after independence. Statistics is given below:-

It can also be said that most of the employees including teachers, officers and official staff were migrated people; no doubt they were Bengalese coming from East Pakistan. On the other hand in the economic and commercial sectors also, the migrated people played a vital role which is mentioned earlier that the indigenous people were not interested in the trade and commerce. Among the migrated people who coming after independence were efficient in trade and commerce, handicraft craft production and artisans such as Masons, Carpenters, Goldsmith and Potter etc.

As the indigenous people such as Rajbanshis, local Muslims, Tribals were completely dependent on agriculture. They were not interested to do work, other than agriculture, so these migrated people played vital role in the small scale industries in the trade and commerce as well as handicraft and artisans sectors were also developed in the post colonial period. If we go through the evidences it will be find out that all most all the trading communities were migrated or immigrated people. Even today it will find out that very few indigenous people were involved in the field of trade and commerce, though recently some indigenous people are being engaged in different sectors of trade and commerce and industrial sectors for their livelihood facing the struggle for existence in the age of competitive global market and economy.

It is relevant to mention here that these migrated people of different trading community faced different types of crisis at the initial stage, because they could not established their business easily, many hindrances attacked them. But gradually, after facing many crisis and problems they could find out

their way of life, they could stand their business and got their position in the society.

Other than these business classes many people who migrated from East Pakistan only along with their physical structure, had no way of life. After coming here they had fight tremendously for their livelihood. They had no money, no property, no education, so they had live in devastating poverty. Many of them worked as labourers, but no sufficient work could found. Many times they had involved in unsocial work or anti-social works like other parts of the country. For their tremendous poverty and fasting many women and girls were engaged in the sexual business. They sold their body for money.

After independence and partition the educated persons who left their country (East Pakistan) in a critical condition, they also had to face different types of crisis and problems. At the initial stage, many of them had no property, no land or houses. They had to spent their days either in the relative's house, or in the colonies where no sufficient food, no prestige, no health.⁴³ But after passing some years they gradually sought their way by having services in different sectors of Govt. and Private. It is mentioned earlier that many schools and offices were established in the town in time to time. These educated persons joined these schools and offices as teachers and official staff.

If we go through the statistics, it will be found that most of the employees either in educational institutions or in offices or in private sectors were immigrated people at the initial stages of the independence period, because all most all the indigenious people were uneducated. So the towns of Jalpaiguri district such as Jalpaiguri Sadar and Alipurduar were dominated by the immigrated people who came to these places in time to time for different purposes for which these may be called as 'New Settlers town'. Naturally, in the urban society their growth and developed mingled society, where the

society was formed by the people of different castes, classes, religious and creeds.

Needless to say, that the Hindus were gradually becoming the majority in the urban society of the district, because after independence thousands of people who migrated and settled in the town most of them were Hindus. On the other hand many Muslims people who would live in Jalpaiguri, left the town and settled in East Pakistan because a communal riots took place in Jalpaiguri also in course of continuing communal riots in different parts of both the countries.⁴⁴

Other than the immigrated people who came to the district after independence, there were many other immigrated people who came in different phases in the colonial period for various purposes. Among them many were Jotdars, Tea-planters, Merchants and Businessman, Lawyers, officials' staff etc. They were economically prosperous and solvent many of whom were able to hold their position and status till after independence. Such type of families of the district who played significant role in different sphere of the society, economy and culture were Ghosh family, Rahut family, Sanyal family, Banerjee family, Mukherjee family etc.

Suren Das Maheswari a businessman of Jalpaiguri town told, "Their shop is near about 100 years old.They came from Rajasthan before approximately 100 years ago for their livelihood. At the initial stage his grandfather, Tikam Chand Maheswari, founder of the shop, served in a private company with monthly salary of Rs.5/- to 7/-, then he sold clothes to the Mahajans and then established this shop. He watched his own eyes the communal riots of Jalpaiguri.He saw to die 2-3 Muslim people in the riots. The Hindus broke the shoe shop of Muslims in front of Nawabbari. The Muslim gave shelter in their house to his elder uncle, Badrinath. Hem store, the shop of stationary goods was broken by the Hindus at the time of riots."⁴⁵ Tapesh

Sanyal one of the senior most lawyer of the town and their predecessor came from East Bengal 200 years ago i.e. before the inception of the district. He pointed out, “Since the 1947 many people started to come in the town. Beside these, there were indigenous people namely Rajbanshis, local Muslims and the immigrated Non-Bengali Muslims. There was cultural synthesis among these above-mentioned people. No riot was taken place before 1947. The riot was mainly started by the lower class Hindus. According to him, there was a bridge in the town situated in the opposite side of the house of J.I.C. It was the bridge which was used only for the Europeans. The system was broken at first by the Jyotish Chandra Sanyal. He started the bridge for going the Indians and the people of the town started to use it.”⁴⁶

It may be said after independence by the Land Reform Act, 1955 the work of Land acquisition over ceiling was going on gradually as a result of which the land lords or Jotdars lost their lands. So the influence of Jotdars or landlords started to decrease. On the other hand many tea planters, particularly the Europeans left the district and go back their home places. So radical changes took place in the society and culture of the town.

Society of the Tea Estates:-

In the previous chapter, discussion about the growth and development of tea-industries and the society of the tea-estates in the colonial period was done. It is found from their discussions that the business of tea-industries was very much profitable but the profit went to the planters, officials, managers and govt. The labourers who worked hard in the garden with no limitation of time could not have any profit; rather they were oppressed and deprived in the industries by their superiors. They dwelled in the tea-estates like prisoners at the initial stage of the establishment of the tea-estates.

One pertinent question may arise why the society of the tea-gardens have been discussed separately? The society of the tea-garden in the history of

Jalpaiguri played a significant role because it has a long history and it has some distinctive character unlike the rural society and urban society of the district. Besides a large number of populations were related to the society of the tea-estate. It may be added that the tea-garden population of the district accounts for approximately 25% of the population of the district. The number of workers in tea-estates is about 1, 90,000 and their annual wage bill in 1964-65 exceeded rupees eleven crores.⁴⁷

In this chapter, it will be discussed what changes took place in the society of the tea-estates in the post colonial period. It is found that after independence the European planters of the district started to leave the country for their motherland gradually. Naturally, the Indian planters dominated in the business of the tea industries, though the Indian planters and officials extended in this business in the colonial period since the initial stage which are discussed earlier.

At present there are 160 tea-gardens in the district of which 102 were originally non-Indian and 58 Indian. The area under tea of these gardens up to 31 March 1963 were 55950 hectares.⁴⁸

A number of estates which were non-Indian originally have in recent years changed hand and have come under Indian management. Some of these estates have become members of ITPA. At present about 27% of the area and production of Jalpaiguri district may be attributed to Indian gardens and 73% to their non Indian counterpart.⁴⁹

After independence the oppression and deprivation on the tea labourers was going on. In spite of having independence, the labourers could not obtain their liberty. The then planters had an unofficial tie up among the political leaders, planters and the Government for which they continued their oppression on the labourer. In the month of August 1946 a conference was held in

Malbazar with the representatives of the 30 tea-gardens. From their District Tea Garden Workers Union was formed of which president was Ratanlal Brahman and the secretary was Debo Prosad Ghosh. From thence labour union was formed in the tea estates of Pataipara, Lakshipara, Bagrakot, Dayna, Denguazar etc, as a result of formation tea labour unions, led by left parties labourer got strength to fight against the planters and the govt. In 1948 the tea labourers started continuous labour strike in Grassmore tea-garden and it was going on 11 days.⁵⁰ Moreover, incessant interceptions like protest, gheraos created by the tea-garden labourers in attaining their demands end of course the slogan 'Bilati Malik London Bhago' (White tea - planters go back London) given by the same group along with the railway workers union during the Tebhaga movement. In the Dooars region compelled the European planters to think whether they would retain their business in India or not?⁵¹

In the meantime All India Plantation Labour Federation was formed in Siliguri, President was Ratanlal Brahman and the Secretary was Satyen Majumder. It is found from the report, Plantation Enquiry Commission that 247 tea companies increased their capital into double during the period 1939-1953 and most increasing profit came after 1946. In spite of heavy profit in the business of tea estates the pathetic condition of the labourers were in the same. Besides, the curtailment of labourers was started after passing the minimum labour wage Act in 1950-1952. As a result the tea labour movement was going on intensively. The European tea companies were also affected by the Minimum Wages Act, 1947 and the Factory Act, 1948. The minimum Wages Act provided that wages in tea plantation industry were to be fixed and notified by the respective Governments from time to time. The Factory Act contained various provisions limiting the permissible hours to work of a factory labour. The foreign companies which mainly dominated the tea plantation industry thus feared the possibility of low production of tea under the implementation of these acts, and found unprofitable to run business in India after meeting all the expenditure.⁵²

The prices of essential commodities were going up, but the wages of the labourers remained same. It was followed that tea labourers would get fewer wages than agricultural labourer in 1953. So for the demand of increasing wages the labourers started continuous movements as a result the wages was increased slightly in 1951, 1955 and 1959, though it was not sufficient. B.C.Ghosh wrote, “Jalpaiguri was a poor town, but tea required a lot of capital. So what the pioneers did was to raise small capital and go on borrowing for the remaining needs and after the borrowings were repaid, good dividends could be paid because the subscribed capital was low...”⁵³ The contribution of Jalpaiguri Tea Industry in building educational institutions are stupendous. The Zilla School was no doubt a hundred percent Govt. institution and gave the Govt. Girl’s School, all other educational institutions of Jalpaiguri including the present Govt. Engineering College, Ananda Chandra Training College and Ananda Chandra Commerce College owe their existence to the Tea Industry of Jalpaiguri. Other institutions like Red Cross, T.B.Hospital, different schools in Mafussils, Chest Clinic etc. could only come because of the munificence of the Tea Industry.⁵⁴

The Bengali Tea Planters like Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Sashi Bhushan Neyogi, Tarini Prasad Roy had a major role in India’s Freedom Struggle by affording all sort of assistance to the freedom fighters or even with the participation in the Swadeshi Movement.⁵⁵

During the past few years labour unrest mainly originated from demand for better wages, bonus and amenities, retirement of workers and disciplinary action taken against employees. The following statement shows the number of disputes for the period from 1969-1972.⁵⁶

| Year | No. of disputes received | No. of disputes disposed of |
|------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1969 | 707 | 571 |
| 1970 | 603 | 504 |
| 1971 | 448 | 274 |
| 1972 | 556 | 412 |

The following table gives the number of strikes and lock-outs for the period referred to above. ⁵⁷

| Year | No. of Strikes and lockouts | No. of persons involved | No. of strikes and lockouts called off | continued | Men involved |
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------|--------------|
| 1969 | 25 | 15931 | 24 | 1 | 15 |
| 1970 | 29 | 21295 | 28 | 1 | 2500 |
| 1971 | 64 | 38095 | 63 | 1 | 2500 |
| 1972 | 34 | 23049 | 34 | ----- | ----- |

From the table it would be followed that the amount of wages was not changed heavily between pre independence and first stages of post independence period. ⁵⁸

In 1951 Plantation Labour Act was passed. In this act, it was mentioned that the health, drinking water, sanitation, canteen, education, rationing system for the labourers would have to be provided by the planters. After that planters started to give these facilities, though it was not satisfactory, because there was no sufficient schools, no sufficient hospital, no Doctors, it was wonder that highest degree of the Doctor of the tea garden up to the first decades of independence was L. M .F. there was no M.B.B.S Doctor ⁵⁹ . There was no

sufficient sanitation system as a result large number of labourer had died affecting from different diseases. The statistics of the dying of labourers is given below—.⁶⁰

| Year | Total Population | Fever | Dysentery&Diarrhea | Cholera |
|---------|------------------|-------|--------------------|---------|
| 1938-39 | 285789 | 1326 | 1175 | 26 |
| 1939-40 | 290174 | 1228 | 1024 | 41 |
| 1940-41 | 291253 | 1314 | 950 | 5 |
| 1941-42 | 285877 | 1142 | 1065 | 9 |
| 1942-43 | 289239 | 1244 | 1104 | 8 |
| 1943-44 | 275398 | 1256 | 1181 | 144 |

| Phthesis | Chest complaints | Kalazar | Black water fever |
|----------|------------------|---------|-------------------|
| 477 | 1061 | 9 | 8 |
| 490 | 802 | 9 | 8 |
| 541 | 736 | 10 | 9 |
| 528 | 646 | 20 | 50 |
| 517 | 765 | 48 | 8 |
| 543 | 241 | 28 | 11 |

Tebhaga Movement in the Dooars—The Tebhaga movement in Dooars had some specific features which set it apart from the movement in other parts of Bengal. Whereas, in other parts of the province, the movement started in September 1946 and it slackened by the beginning of 1947, in the Dooars the movement started in February 1947 and continued till April 1947. The Tebhaga movement here got support from mainly the Chotanagpur tribals (Known as Adivasis) who had settled as Adhiars (Sharecroppers) to the local Jotdars (landholders).⁶¹ Though this movement was based on the demands of

sharecroppers, irrespective of caste, religion or tribe, it had practically no impact on the other communities of Adhiars in the area, such as Rajbanshi and Muslim.

It has been transferred to big industrialists and monopoly bourgeois of the country, after losing the tea-garden worship of the English people of the Dooars who have only intention to gain money, they do not try to save the industry. As a result the teagarden have been locking out day by day, the death rate for fasting and half-fasting has been going up.⁶²

The distress condition of the devastating famine of 1950 fell down in Jalpaiguri town. The price of rice have not abated still after puja vacation, the prices of other essential things are very high, the price of ration also high, no baby food in the market. It is a very pathetic condition. Those who work in agriculture sector, work as day labour, they had no money. So the number of death spread over so. Suicides for want of food, selling of children etc are continuing easily. The selling of five children in the areas of Kharija Berubari and Mandalghat has been reported until now... The procession of devastating famine is continuing in the areas of Alipurduar. Local M.L.A. of Congress Party, Sri Narayan Bhattacharya stated as a complained that the people of Chaporer par, Boroshalkumar, East Kathalbari have been going to forest areas and searching for Mete alu. Their only food are now arrom and mete alu'.⁶³

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