

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF A
BENGAL DISTRICT, JALPAIGURI
(1869- 1994)**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**FOR THE AWARD OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY**

BY

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2016 FEBRUARY**

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled '**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF A BENGAL DISTRICT, JALPAIGURI (1869-1994)**' has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Retired Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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Abstract

Title:

Social and Cultural History of a Bengal District, Jalpaiguri (1869-1994)

The district Jalpaiguri, in the past, had a discriminative character unlike other parts of Bengal since its inception considering various aspects such as socio-economic-demographic pattern, ethnic societies, geographical location, land revenue purpose and lastly the characteristics of peasants and agrarian relations. Jalpaiguri district was formed in 1869 with the Western Dooars, situated in the Eastern part of Tista and the Sadar Sub-Division comprising with Baikunthapur Pargana, Chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag, situated in the Western Part of Tista. It should be noted that on the eve of the formation of the district, the Dooars area was mainly dominated by the tribal people on the hilly areas and the people of Rajbanshi community in the plain areas of the Dooars. The society of the tribal people was mainly ethnic based. They were governed by themselves by their way of life following their ethnic culture keeping themselves out of the ambit of the so called civic society.

In the permanently settled portion of the district situated in the Western part of the river Tista and the plain areas of the Western Dooars the most of the people were Rajbanshis and local Muslims in the pre-colonial and colonial period. There were many debates regarding the origin or ethnic identity of the Rajbanshi people. But most of the scholars have admitted that the Rajbanshi people and the indigenous Muslims locally known as *Nasya Sheikh* of the district and the neighbouring areas of Cooch Behar originated from same group of human race i.e. Indo-Mongoloid race. In the later period of historical evolution of human society Indo-Mongoloid people were divided into many branches or groups such as Koch, Mech, Garo, Rabha, Drucpa, Tharu, Jalda,

Toto etc. People who converted into Hinduism from Koches were called Rajbanshis and the people who converted into Islam from Koches were called Muslims.

There are many instances in social and cultural practices and customs which prove the difference from the culture of the Aryans. It is historically true that the Rajbanshis were converted into Hinduism from the Indo-Mongoloid group, naturally Hinduised culture entered in the society of the Rajbanshis gradually. The Rajbanshis and indigenous Muslims having many similarities lived closely extending their hands to each other communities.

Beside the indigenous society and culture of the district I have shown in the present thesis how the immigrated people of different castes, religions, creeds and classes formed the society and what was the condition and pattern of their culture. Among the immigrated people two main stream culture entered this region like other parts of Bengal and dominated the society that was Brahmanical culture and European culture.

Analysis of the main theme:-

The main theme of the present study has been analyzed by the Seven Chapters. It should be noted that on the eve of the formation of the district, the Dooars area was mainly dominated by the tribal people on the hilly areas and the people of Rajbanshi community in the plain areas of the Dooars. The society of the tribal people was mainly ethnic based. In spite of conversion into Islam the indigenous Muslims locally known as *Nasya Sheikh* could not leave their previous culture, customs and life style. So in this regard it is followed that there were many similarities in their socio-economic and cultural practices between Rajbanshis and the indigenous Muslims.

The 2nd chapter deals with the immigration and emigration of different communities and classes of people and the formation of a new demographic

pattern in the district. Before the coming of the Britishers, some tribal communities namely Mech, Toto, Garo, Rabha, Dru CPA lived in this area. But after the coming of the Britishers and introductions of their new economic policies in the field of the agriculture, trade and industry, different types and classes of people immigrated in the Dooars as a result of which population increased gradually and a new demographic structure was formed in the society and culture of the Jalpaiguri town.

In the 3rd chapter I have shown the cultural scenario of the district in the colonial period. The culture of Jalpaiguri district particularly in the Dooars had a distinctive character unlike other parts of Bengal. The culture of the people of Jalpaiguri can be divided into two categories namely 1) Indigenous culture and 2) Immigrated culture. The immigrated culture also can be divided into two categories namely the a) Aryan culture or Sanskritization and b) Western culture or European culture. The indigenous culture means the culture of the indigenous people, called 'the son of the soil', mainly the Rajbanshis, tribals and some local Muslims.

The 4th chapter deals with the changing scenario of the society in the post colonial period. It is well known that on the eve of the independence and partition of India a devastating communal riot was started in Bengal and Punjab between Hindus and Muslims. For these devastating communal riots huge number of people left their motherland and settled in the district like other parts of West Bengal being refugee, to save their lives. The condition of the migrated people coming from East Pakistan was very pathetic at the initial stage. But after few years the migrated people got shelter in different colonies in the towns and villages also. After facing many crisis and problems they could find their way of life, they could stand their business and got their position in the society. As a result of which discrimination between indigenous people and migrated people was created.

It is shown in the 5th chapter the emergence of the Middle class and their activities in the district, Jalpaiguri. I have shown the middle class people of the district into two categories who took a vital role in the development of the society and culture that was indigenous and immigrated. They had great role and contribution in every aspect of the society, economy, politics and culture.

In the 6th chapter I have shown how the immigrated people dominated on the indigenous people in every aspect of the district such as administration, politics, economy, education, culture etc. The cultural life of the people can be divided broadly into two categories namely the traditional culture of the indigenous people and the culture of the Barna Hindus migrated from outside the district. Other than these there are some cultural instances of the Muslims (outsiders) Christians and some Europeans. A new culture in the changing scenario emerged in the district in the post- colonial period.

The 7th chapter is an analysis of the conflict and confrontation in the society of Jalpaiguri. As a result of the social, economic and cultural crisis, many discontents and grievances have grown up in the minds of the indigenous people, particularly the people of Rajbanshi community and some tribes. They have been feeling crisis of losing their lands, ethnicity, cultural heritage and freedom of identity for which a socio-political tension is going on in different parts of the district, nay North Bengal.

Preface

The present study deals with the socio-cultural condition of the Jalpaiguri district in the colonial and post-colonial period. During this period, the socio-cultural condition of the district has been changed in different times by different rulers such as under the reign of Koch rulers, the Bhutani rulers, the British rulers and ultimately the post – independent governments. The present researcher shows the changing socio-cultural condition and its impact on the society of the district.

Jalpaiguri District witnesses a distinctive feature in many respects of society, economy, culture and demographic pattern unlike other parts of Bengal districts. Many ups and downs have taken place, many parts of the district such as Boda, Patgram, Pachagar, Debiganj and Tetulia had to cede to Pakistan at the time of partition of India. From anthropological point of view different types of tribal people have been living in this district, other than tribal, people of different castes and religion also living here which makes a mixed society. ‘Unity in Diversity’ is one of the characteristics of this district. But recently, a socio – political tension and militant activities are seen in the soil of North Bengal, particularly the district of Jalpaiguri. One of the most vital causes of these tensions and activities lies in the land – related issues which is shown in the present study.

In Jalpaiguri, unlike other parts of Bengal, British Government introduced two separate systems in the field of administration and land revenue. Regarding land revenue and agrarian economy, British government introduce permanent settlement in Baikunthapur pargana and chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag situated to the west of Tista river, on the other hand the Western Dooars situated to the east of Tista was declared as a non–regulated area where no permanent settlement was introduced, British Government

himself was the proprietor of land. Here lands were granted by lease or agreement to the Jotdars and the proprietors of the tea – gardens.

Regarding agrarian relations, the district particularly the Western Dooars witness a distinctive character unlike other parts of Bengal. Here, the relation between Sharecroppers and their *Giris* (Jotdars and Intermediaries) was co – operative more or less except few instances of indigenous Jotdars and absentee Jotdars coming from other professions were more oppressors than the indigenous Jotdars. The relation between sharecroppers and their *Giris* among the Rajbanshi community was paternal. The Jotdars or *Giris* treated their Sharecroppers or *Projas* like a sons or daughters, even at the time of marriage of the *Projas*, the Jotdars dropped water on the head of bride and bridegrooms called *Panichhita* and became parents of the bride and bridegrooms and performed all the duties from both sides as parents and their son until death.

In the post–colonial period the work of Land Reforms Programmes was started since 1950's, but practically the Programmes was started during the period of United Front Government in 1967 and 1969, as well as left Front Government since 1977. Land Reforms Programmes in the district as elsewhere in west Bengal became a boon to the landless people and sharecroppers, because they had their right on land, on the other hand, many indigenous Jotdars or Intermediaries, particularly of the Rajbanshi community had lost their land , many of them become destitute for their simplicity, illiteracy, and having no experience of other professions like southern and eastern parts of Bengal as a result of which many discontents and grievances have been growing up in the mind of Rajbanshi people which led to socio – political tensions in the district as elsewhere in North Bengal.

The researcher of the present study wants to acknowledge her gratitude and indebtedness to various persons and institutions by which she is benefited directly or indirectly to complete her research work. Firstly, the researcher is

deeply indebted to Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Professor of History, North Bengal University and he has always encouraged the researcher, given materials and valuable ideas which inspired and helped to develop the work.

The researcher earnestly mentions the names of Dr. Palash Ranjan Sengupta (Dean), Dr. Ichamuddin Sarkar, Dr. Anita Bagchi and Dr. Bijay Kr. Sarkar, Dr. Dalia Bhattacharya, Sri Sankar Das, Sri Sudas Lama, Sri Barun Roy of North Bengal University, for their critical comments and giving suggestions.

The researcher is deeply indebted to the staff of West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata; North Bengal University Library, Azad Hind Pathagar, Jalpaiguri, D.L. & L.R.O. Office, Jalpaiguri for their assistance to collect books and materials.

The researcher is very much grateful to the former Jotdars, political leaders, senior citizens, writers, social workers whom the researcher has met and taken interviews which enriched the researcher having new information and ideas.

I am grateful to my father, mother & husband who always encourage me for my research works and without their help I could not complete my works.

In spite of my best trying and hardworking there may be errors. I am completely responsible for that.

Abbreviations

AIKS	–	All India Kishan Sabha
ASSU	–	All Assam Student Union
AWL	–	Arable Waste Land
BPKS	–	Bangiya Pradeshik Krishak Sabha
CPI	–	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	–	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI (ML)	–	Communist Party of India (Marxist – Leninist)
DKS	–	District Krishak Sabha
DPA	–	Dooars Planters Association
DBITA	–	Dooars Branch Indian Tea Association
INC	–	Indian National Congress
ITPA	–	Indian Tea Planter’s Association
LRP	–	Land Reforms Programme
MLA	–	Member of Legislative Assembly.
MP	–	Member of Parliament.
KLO	–	Kamtapur Liberation Organization
KPP	–	Kamtapur Peoples Party
ULFA	–	United Liberation front of Assam
UKD	–	Uttar khanda Dal
GCPA	–	Greater Cooch Behar People’s Association

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Glossary

Abwab	Sub taxes (Taxes other than formal taxes)
Adibasis	Tribal people who were original inhabitants of the district, Jalpaiguri like other parts of the Country.
Adhi, Adhiari	Cultivation with 50% share (50% for Sharecroppers and another 50% for Landholders)
Adhiar	Sharecroppers
Amalnama	A written order given to a revenue collector.
Amin	Person who measures land
Anna	An old coin or paisa, one Anna is equivalent to $\frac{1}{16}$ rupee or 16 Anna is equal to one rupee
Basti	Homestead, Land for dwelling place
Bandar	Trade centre
Bata	Banyan tree
Bhatiali	A kind of folk song sung by the boatman.
Benami	Nameless, persons whose name was recorded falsely to hold land, practically they had no existence.
Batris Hazari	Baikunthapur Pargana was called 'Batris Hazari' for increasing revenue to Rs. 32,000/-
Bhaiphota	A kind of ceremony where a sister expresses well wish to her brother.
Bhuta	Paddy supplied as a loan by the Jotdar or Giri to the sharecroppers at the time of cultivation.
Bena	A musical instrument of the Rajbanshis
Bheri	Low land with full of water using for fishery and other purposes
Bigha	A measure of land, one bigha is equal to about $\frac{1}{3}$ of an acre.
Biye`	Marriage
Barga,Bargadari	Cultivation with an $\frac{1}{2}$ share ($\frac{1}{2}$ for Sharecroppers and $\frac{1}{2}$ for land holders)
Bodo	A tribal community of North – eastern region of India, originated from Indo – mongoloid race.
Bokhu	Over coat & Half Pant used by Drucpa
Bargadar	Sharecropper
Babu	Middle class Bengali gentleman
Baishakhi	Puja /Worship is performed in the month of Baishakha (April/May) among the Rajbanshis
Bishahari	Worship is performed by the local priest in left hand with uttering the mantras in local dialect /Rajbanshi language
Chakla	An area of land or estate for revenue collection
Chalta	An edible acid fruit
ChailonBati	Famous tradition followed by the Nasya Sheikh using a wicker-tray filled with banana,lamp in favour of groom
Chheka	Pieces of vegetables onion, garlic, chilly fried in a little oil, then some water with soda to prepare the food.
Chhukri	Dancer
Chira, Chura	One kind of food making of fried paddy, flatten rice
Chukani	Holding of a chukanidar (Middle ranking tenure holder)

Chukanidar	A middle ranking tenure holder, a class of under tenants of the Jotdars.
Coolie	Tea labourer
Dakhil Kharij	Recording of land in the record of right
Dar – Chukani	Holding of a dar chukanidar
Dar-Chukanidar	A class of under tenants of the Chukanidars.
Dar-a-dar Chukanidar	A class of under tenants of a dar – Chukanidar.
Dahi, Dai	Curd
Daggu	A piece of cloth cover the heads of Garo
Debraja	Head of the secular administration in Bhutan.
Debdi	Metal Bell
Derabari	Interest of the loan given by sharecroppers to the Jotdars or giri generally in crops
Dewniya	Headmen of different villages of North Bengal many of whom became jotdars
Dewan Deo / Dewan Deb	Important designation of the Koch administration who took a vital role in economic issues of the State.
Dharmaraja	A spiritual head in the administration and religion of Bhutan.
Diwani	A right or deed to collect revenue
Dihi	A unit or areas of revenue collection in Cooch Behar State
Duar or Dooar	Door or gate way to enter into Bhutan from plain.
Don	Measuring land, 86 Bigha
Dosti	Friendship
Dotora	A musical instrument of the Rajbanshis
Durbar	A royal place or Court of a king
Dravida	A human race
Duardar	A title or rank in the Western Dooars given by the king of Coochbehar who played a role to protect the boundary area of the State.
Dzonkha	Dialect of Dru CPA
Eu	Drink of Toto
Gabar	A title of the tribal people in the Western Dooars who were headmen of the villages
Gangi	Guersey
Garo	A tribal community originated from Indo – Mongoloid race
Gamchha	A cotton Dhoti wear by the Garos
Garom Puja	A Celebration of Toto
Ghi	Clarified butter
Ghat	Landing stage (On the bank of a river)
Giri	Land owner or intermediaries of the land the term used in North Bengal particularly.
Gochhum	Like a Semij of Dru CPA Women
Gochubona	This worship is observed before growing plants of paddy in the land among the Rajbanshis
Gur	Molasses
Harisabha	A religious gathering of Hindus particularly by the name of lord Hari or Krishna.

Haria	A kind of local Wine
Hathi bandha	Levy collected from sharecroppers by Jotdars for the maintenance of elephant of the Jotdars.
Hat	Weekly rural market which assembled in a week or twice in a week.
Hal	Plough. A measure of land one hal means about 15 bighas of land.
Halua	Sharecropper
Halud Makha	Occasion observed by the Rajbanshis & Muslims with using Turmeric, cotton sari& napkin in the Marriage
Haziri	Daily wages
Huji	Priest of Garo
Ijaradar	A class of lease holder who obtained land by lease or agreement to collect revenue.
Jagir	A specific area of land granted to the mansabdar during the Mughal period instead of their salary
Jatra Puja	In the day of Vijoya Dashami it is observed among the Rajbanshis
Jharphuk	Exorcise
Jotdar	A class of tenant or intermediaries or land holder particularly it was used in North Bengal.
Jote	Holding of a land owner, one jote formed with some areas of land particularly the term jote was used in North Bengal.
Jotdari, Jotdary	Tenure of a Jotdar.
Jhum cultivation	Shifting cultivation done by tribal people in the hilly areas or forest.
Jumma	Payment of a fixed deposit particularly for revenue purposes
Kabuliyat	A written agreement of the tenants by which they were bound to give revenue to their superior
Kalabou	Actually a plant mythically described as the wife of Lord Ganesha.
Kalazar	A disease
Karja	A kind of loan, particularly given by Jotdar to the sharecropper.
Karojan	Bhutani officials in the Western Dooars, particularly they were appointed to collect revenue
Katham	A class of revenue collector appointed by the Bhutan Government in the Western Dooars who played a significant role in collecting revenue during Bhutanese rule
Kabiraj	A village doctor who treats the patients in a indigenous manner.
Kabulis	A money – lending business class migrated from Kabul.
Kainagata	This worship Observing by Rajbanshis with the help of Adhikary / Brahmana
Kharif	Crops harvested in winter season
Khatriya	A social group of India divided in accordance with their professions (warrior) in the Rig – vedie Age, Later on it turned into a casteism.
Khasland	land of Government
Khatian	A map where preserve the record of land
Khasmahal	Crown lands where Government was the owner of lands directly.
Khalisa Land	Government's land during the Mughal period.
Khatian	Map or record of land in micro level
Kira	A Cloth of Drucpa women
Kirata	Non – Aryan indigenous people of North East India was called kirata by the

	Aryans.
Kist	Installment
Kistabundi	Record of revenue collection.
Lathi	A stick
Lungi	A kind of male dress of the Mahammadan
Mahajan	A money lender
Maisal	A buffalo keeper
Madesia	Tribal people of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling disatricts immigrated from Chhotanagpur.
Mahal	Unit of revenue collection in Coochbehar State.
Mantra	Words recited in prayer to God
Mankachu	The arum
Magon	Begging
Manod	Voluntary promise
Maund	A measure of weight, one mound is equal to 80 pounds.
Mandal	A village headman, particularly in the tribals.
Masdal	A kind of Pulse
Marwari	A merchant class came from Rajasthan
Mech	A tribal community of Jalpaiguri district
Mittar	Friend
Mouza	A unit or specific area of revenue collection.
Munda	A tribal community
Mulandar	A class of under tenants of Jotdar.
Nabanna	This worship is observed at the time of collecting new crops among the Rajbanshis
Narayani rupee	Currency of the Coochbehar State under Koch kingdom
Nazir Deo or Deb	Important designation of Koch Kingdom who took a vital role in the administrative issues of the State.
Nengti	A piece of cloth used by a very poor Rajbanshi
Nij kholan	One's own threshing ground
Operation Barga	An act or method introduced by the Left Front Government by which sharecroppers were recorded in the record of rights of land
Oraon	A tribal community emigrated from Chhotanagpur into Dooars as a tea labourer.
Ol	Kohlrabi (loose) turnip
Pargana	A unit or specific area of revenue collection.
Pagga	Turban of Garo
Palatiya	A kind of dramatic presentation using of folk song of north bengal
Patta	A lease or right granted by the Government to the cultivators
Pana	A kind of loan that was cattle supplied by the Jotdar to the sharecropper for cultivation
Panchayet	Administrative system of the villages for developmental perspectives comprising with people of the villages by election
Pattan, pattani	Sharecropper or under tenants of a Jotdar.

Pelka	Spinach, Chilli, Garlic, Onion with soda& water & boil it to make the soup.
Petbhata	Land granted to the relatives by the king of Coochbehar as a rent free
Plantain Dahi	Banana and curd
Proja	An agreement on land given to the intermediaries by Jotdars
Pushna	The Hindus & Muslims observed this occassion by eating the cakes in the Day of Poush Sankranti
Raikot	Title of the Royal king of Baikunthapur, means head of the fort.
Ryot	A class of tenant who had customary right in the land.
Rishi	Chief deity of Garo
Rupit	low land
Sadar	District head quarter.
Sadh	A ceremony for giving desired articles of food to a pregnant woman.
Sardar	Leaders or intermediaries who supplied labourer from Chhotanagpur and Santal pargana in the tea – gardens and obtained commission.
Sal	A tree botanical name shorea Robasta
Santal	A tribal community
Sanad	Deed or charter
Sannasi	Wandering mendicants in Hindu sects.
Shak	Spinage
Shoera	A wild tree
Shradhya	Funeral
Sidal – sutki	Sutka means dry fishes & sidal is made by crushing of small dry fishes, mixed with spices, turmeric & chilly to cook the food.
Suba	Province, Divided the Mughal State into different provinces or subas.
Subah	A class of Bhutanese officer who were at the highest level of Bhutanese administration in the Western Dooars for revenue collection and other purpose
Tarpan	Offering of water to the God
Tahsil	A Specific area of land the term used for the collection of revenue
Tahsildar	A class of revenue collector.
Taluk	A unit for revenue collection consisting of a number of mauzas
Thana	A police station.
Tahutdar	Revenue collector of Coochbehar State appointed by the king into taluk
Terai	Foothill areas of the Himalaya
Tolagandi	A kind of tax or cess were taken by the agents of Jotdar or Zamindar for selling goods in the hat (weekly market)
Toto	A tribal community of Toto para in Jalpaiguri District.
Tulsi	Holy basil
Tuktak	A method of Charming
Varna	Caste
Zamindar	Landlord or proprietor of land in a large scale

Introduction

I

The present study will explore many critical aspects of the socio-cultural condition of the people of Jalpaiguri district in a new dimension at the micro-level-study. At the outset, it can be said that the district, Jalpaiguri as a part of North – Eastern region of India through the ages from pre – historic period to the post- modern age has a socio- cultural and historical importance and legacy. In spite of that the main-stream historians or intellectuals had not given attention to this region or the people, as a result of which many aspects of different fields of the said region have not been evolved.

It should be mentioned here that the writing of local history as that of Jalpaiguri district is not so easy because of the paucity of source materials and situating far away from metropolitan city like Calcutta or Delhi wherefrom unpublished archival sources can be used easily. Despite that, I have tried my best to explore many un-discussed and unexplored matter including archival sources, Government and private report different types of writing – materials such as district gazetteers, census reports, journals, periodicals, monographs, books, dissertations and most reliable and authentic sources that is oral sources collected from interview with various community's, political leaders, peasants, Jotdars, chukanidars and adhiars of the time.

The district Jalpaiguri, in the past, had a discriminative character unlike other parts of Bengal since its inception considering various aspects such as socio–economic– demographic pattern, ethnic societies, geographical location, land revenue purpose and lastly the characteristics of peasants and agrarian relations.¹The discrimination was also followed in the different districts of North Bengal. This region, roughly from Karotoya to Brahmaputra was a part of Pragjyotishpur, Kamrup, Kamtapur and Koch kingdom. Many ups and downs have taken place in this region. In this region unlike other parts of

Bengal the influence of Indo-Mongoloid race was followed in the society and culture.

II

It is relevant to discuss the background of the district, Jalpaiguri. Before the inception of the district in 1869, it was a part of Koch Kingdom comprising large areas of North Bengal and Assam, founded by Haria Mandal, a Mech leader in Chikna hill. Haria Mandal had two wives namely Hira and Jira and four sons namely Bisu, Sishu, Chandan and Madan. It is debateable that who ascended the throne in the Koch kingdom after the death of Haria Mandal. It is assumed from different sources that Chandan became the King but he was not powerful, the real power was in the hands of Bisu. After Chandan, Bishu became the King taking the title 'Singha'. Biswa Singha as a Koch King took recognition from his mother's genealogy as a custom of the tribes; because the predecessors of Biswa Singha from his father side were Mech and from his mother side were Koch. Biswa Singha and his successors became gradually hinduised by adopting religion and culture. Since 1773 the kingdom went under British Dominion, however, twelve kings ruled the kingdom near about four hundred years which was a glorious sign in the history of North Bengal and Bengal as a whole.²

The Koch kingdom was gradually being weaker since the reign of Upendra Narayan (1714–1763) because of weakness and conflicts of the Koch kings as a result of which the Bhutanese occupied the border areas of Bhutan and Koch Behar, namely the areas of Dooars. After the death of King Upendra Narayan, Debendra Narayan only a child of 4 years ascended the throne; the administrative work actually was conducted by the ministers advised by royal mother of the king. But after two years, at the age of six years, the king was murdered by a Brahman named Rati Sharma due to a conspiracy of Rajguru Ramananda Goswami. The security forces killed Rati Sharma on the spot and Ramananda Goswami was sentenced to death by Bhutan Raj.

Dhairjendra Narayan, the third son of Kharga Narayan became the King in 1765. Immediately after ascending the throne, King Dhairjendra Narayan killed Dewan Rama Narayan for the evil counsel of the royal administrators and for this action Dhairjendra Narayan was arrested and kept under Bhutanese control, and Rajendra Narayan, the elder brother of Dhairjendra Narayan ascended the throne. After his death in 1772 Dharendra Narayan, the son of Dhairjendra Narayan became the king. But Bhutia king was not satisfied with this coronation, so the Bhutanese invaded Koch Behar. In this critical situation and helplessness, the Nazir Deo prayed for help to the British and ultimately a treaty was signed between Col. Warren Hastings and the King on the 5th April, 1773. By the provisions of the treaty Koch Behar became a part of Bengal Presidency and turned into a tributary state, they occupied the areas from the Bhutanese and the arrested King Dhairjendra Narayan was rescued by the English.³

The aggressive activities on the people of Koch Behar by the Bhutias was going by plundering various things, wealth and oppressing the people of Koch Behar. The Britishers were not willing to excite the Bhutia Kings because of their commercial interest with Tibet through Bhutan. For their increasing aggressive attitude to Koch Behar particularly over the Dooars, the Britishers could not be silent; they sent a mission under Esley Eden in 1863. But the Bhutia royal power insulted Eden tremendously in the palace of Bhutan and he had been compelled to sign a treaty which was derogatory to the Britishers. So they invaded Bhutan and started second Anglo – Bhutan war which ended with the treaty of Sinchula in 1865.⁴

After occupation of the Dooars, the present district was formed with the Western Dooars since 1865 and the Jalpaiguri and Rajganj Thanas of Rangpur district since 1869. The district so, formed in 1869, bounded in the North by the Darjeeling district and Bhutan, in the East by Assam in the South by

Rangpur district in Bangladesh and Koch Behar district and in the West by Darjeeling district and part of Bangladesh. The respective areas of the two subdivisions of the district Sadar and Alipurduar have varied from decade to decade.⁵

III

One important question is why have I chosen such type of topic and the area of research like Jalpaiguri district? Firstly it is relevant to mention here that the research work on social and cultural level either in national level or in regional level is neglected still now. Most of the renowned scholars and historians are eager to involve themselves in the writing of national and international history, though very recently some scholars are coming to explore various aspects of society and culture at micro-level. But it is also true that the mainstream historians or scholars have not come forward to explore the history of society and culture of the district, Jalpaiguri, though it is historically very much enriched. Secondly, there is no district possible in the state as well as in the country like Jalpaiguri where many multi-dimensional demographic pattern and culture is existed for which the district may be called “Mini India”.

So explore the neglected and undiscussed aspects of the social and cultural history of the district Jalpaiguri, I have chosen the present topic.

We have no book or exhaustive work about this topic of historical importance, though we got only a few writings in several papers and journals. A research exploration, therefore on “The Social and Cultural history, of a Bengal district, Jalpaiguri: 1869-1994” is utmost necessary.

As to do this work, further more can be said this will contribute to strengthening a new chapter of the local history of North Bengal and more

assuredly it is one of the socio-cultural history. Now there is a new awakening in the mind of Indian historians for doing justice to local history as well as micro-history, which seems to be a more befitting process of historical research and writing owing to the diversity and plurality of Indian economy, society and culture. Despite the relative paucity of source materials research investigation leading to Ph.D. work on “The Socio-Cultural History of a Bengal District: Jalpaiguri 1869-1994” appears nearly unavoidable for the purpose of increasing our historical knowledge.

In the present dissertation, an attempt has been made to prepare an analytical as well as comprehensive study on the social and cultural history of Bengal district- Jalpaiguri, during the colonial and post colonial period. The history of the district is connected with the colonial rule. Naturally any kind of discussion on Jalpaiguri will not be completed unless we understand the pattern of colonial rule as well as the response of the indigenous people and the settlers. If anyone carefully observes the growth and development of a colonial district like Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, he or she will find certain kind of distinctive feature in these two colonial districts of the Northern part of Bengal. The creation of Jalpaiguri district was an administrative necessary. So the district was organized on the basis of administrative conveniences rather than the historical or past experiences. The administrative conveniences had finally given the birth of district whose demography, ethnography, geography and culture is like India in miniature form. We will not find any kind of homogeneity in respect of population, language and cultural structure of the colonial Jalpaiguri district was sharply differed from rest of Bengal. Let us examine first the demographic condition on the region on the eve of the creation of a new district.

In order to prepare the study of the proposed field different types of methodology, I have followed. I have collected data from two major sources namely (a) Primary sources as well as (b) Secondary sources. The primary

sources will include census reports, survey and settlement reports, case studies, government records, gazetteers, reports and minutes, memories, autobiographies, interviews, discussions and observations. Myth and oral tradition of the society will be also one major primary source since it has been the main tool of recounting and recording its history from generation to generation.

The secondary sources have included the published and unpublished materials such as dissertations (Ph.D. & M.Phil.), books, monographs, journals and periodicals on the subject of research. To get more informations and real picture of the Agrarian society I shall have to do some field work selecting some villages taking interview with the oldest and experienced people of various communities in the District. Various conventional historical methods, tools and techniques have used as well as consultancy with the scholars, writers and intellectuals of the field to explore the truth without any bias and prejudice.

Only a few research works have so far been completed touching the thematic margin of the present topic of research. Any completed research work has not yet been published on the proposed topic. The existing research work referred to here as follows:-

1. Ranjit Dasgupta in his book “Economy, Society and Politics of Bengal: Jalpaiguri (1869 – 1947)”, Oxford University Press, 1992, analyzed nicely about the Society, Economy and Politics of Jalpaiguri district of the colonial period. It is an authentic and valuable book to know the history of Jalpaiguri. He shows the growth and development of the Society and Economy including agrarian structure, agrarian relation, Tea-cultivation, the condition and the reaction of the tea-labourers in the colonial period. The author also critically analyzed the growth and development of the politics including different political parties and organization which organized and carried on different political

movements in time to time during the colonial period in the district. The author confined his work in the colonial period, but the work of the present proposed topic will explore the Socio-Cultural transition of the district up to 1994. An attempt has been made in the present study of the research work to explore the Socio-Cultural evolution of the district with special reference to the conflict and confrontation between the indigenous culture and the immigrated culture which led the present socio-political tension in North Bengal differing the study of Ranjit Dasgupta.

2. Subhajyoti Roy in his book “Transformation on the Bengal Frontier, Jalpaiguri 1765-1948”, London, 2002, shows the evolution of Socio-Economic, Cultural and Political condition of the Jalpaiguri District in the pre-colonial and colonial period. It is also an authentic and valuable book for knowing the history of Jalpaiguri. Many un-discussed and unknown history and information have been evolved in this book. Here also the author confined his discussion and analysis in the colonial period. Moreover, the author wanted to show different aspects of the society, economy, politics and culture of the district, not a specific topic like the present proposed topic.
3. Dr. Charuchandra Sanyal in his two books – “The Meches and Totos – Two sub-Himalayan Tribes of North Bengal,” The University of North Bengal, 1973 and “The Rajbanshis of North Bengal”, Calcutta, 1965, shows different aspects of the Totos, Meches and the Rajbanshis with valuable information. The analysis on the Meches, Totos and the Rajbanshis has touched the margin of the present proposed topic. The author in his works of these three books does not cover all the aspects of the present proposed topic.

4. Upendranath Barman in his book “Uttarbanglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti” Jalpaiguri, 1392 B.S.-shows the evolution of the district in the colonial period. His work of the book also has touched the thematic margin of the proposed topic. Needless to say, this is not a research work but memoirs of a leading personality of the region. Obviously it provides us a lot of information of the post colonial history of Jalpaiguri.
5. Kanak Kanti Bagchi in his book “Land Tanures and Agricultural Development,”Delhi,2003, explained on the evolution of the Land Revenue System, Agrarian Economy and Agrarian relations in the Dooars from colonial to post colonial period. The author of this book mainly shows the land-based economy including the agrarian structure, agrarian relations and its evolution of the Dooars which is a distinctive study from the present proposed topic.
6. Satyabrata Bhattacharya in his Ph.D. thesis explained on the “Financial Management in Tea Industry” which touched slightly the thematic margin of the present proposed topic.
7. Shibsankar Mukherjee in his work “Emergence of Bengali Entrepreneurship in Tea Plantation in Jalpaiguri Duars (1879-1933),” shows nicely about the Bengali Tea Planters, how they entered in the tea cultivation and their contribution in the society and economy of the district. The work of the book has also touched the margin of the present topic.
8. Dr. Reboti Mohan Lahiri (Jalpaiguri District Centinary Vol), Dr. Arun Bhusan Majumdar (Protyus O Prodoshkaler Coochbehar), Hillol Chakraborty, Nirmal Chowdhuri, Sarit Bhowmik, Birendra Chandra Ghosh in their works show the evolution of the district, socio-economic pattern of this district with valuable information collected from different

sources as well as field survey but all the works of these books are not an exhaustive work of the present proposed topic.

So, from the above discussion on the overview of literature relating to the proposed topic, it can be said that for the want of exhaustive work of the present proposed topic, it has created a vacuum. So to fill-up this gap a research exploration of the present proposed topic is utmost required and expected.

The investigation is proposed to be conducted on the basis of the following key questions:

1. Why and in what circumstances did the British Occupy the Dooars?
2. Why did the British-India Government introduce separate administrative policies in the district?
3. How did the British-India Government introduce the economic policies in the district and what was the impact of it on the indigenous economy, society and culture.
4. When and how did the Government introduce Tea-cultivation in the Dooars and what role played by the Bengali entrepreneurship?
5. Why did the number of indigenous people decrease at par the census report in the colonial period and how the number of immigrated people increases tremendously?
6. What were the economic, cultural and language problems faced by the indigenous people in the colonial and post colonial period?
7. What are the root causes of the present socio-political condition of the district as elsewhere in North Bengal?

The district can be divided into two tracts in accordance with land revenue systems and agrarian relations namely permanent settled portion, mostly situated to the West of the Tista comprising Baikunthapur pargana and the chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purba bhag where the Zamindari system was

introduced, the 2nd portion of the district was Western Dooars, declared non – regulated area mostly situated between the Tista and Sankosh. No permanent settlement was introduced in the Western Dooars and as it was the non– regulated area, Government was the proprietor of the land. (The spelling of Dooars and Tista are written by different scholar and different administrators in different ways. But in all occasion I have use the spelling Dooars and Tista while I quote the researcher or administrator I use the spelling as they wrote it.)

In the permanently settled portion of the district land revenue was settled with the Zamindars in accordance with permanent settlement which was introduced since 1793 by the British. The Zamindars would not cultivate land directly; they gave land to the Jotdars. Deunia, Basunia, Tahutdar etc who were involved with land became Jotdars and they were powerful during the colonial period. The small Jotdars cultivated land directly but the big Jotdars who had giant size jotes did not cultivate land directly. They would give land to the Chukanidars, sometimes the Chukanidars cultivated land directly sometimes they would give land to the Dar – Chukanidars by Pattani or agreement. In this agrarian structure there were also Dar – dar – Chukanidar though they were very few and they had no right like that of Jotdars or Chukanidars.

In the part of Western Dooars, unlike permanent settled portion of the district, no uniform system or law was introduced for land revenue purposes by the British as they had no sufficient experience and ideas about the system and the agrarian relation of this tract. All most all the areas excluding South Maynaguri and some plain areas of the Western Dooars were full of jungles and natural resources. Only the people of some tribes namely Mech, Toto, Rabha, Garo lived in this tract other than these tribal people no one could live in this part because of the intolerable condition and unhealthy atmosphere.

In the Western Dooars settlement were made under the provision of Act XVI of 1869 and the Waste land rules of 1875 until 1895. In that year Act XVI

was repealed and (x) of 1859 and Act (VI) B.C of 1862 were substituted for it. In 1898 the tenancy Act was extended to the temporarily settled area but provision III of Notification the 964 T – R excluding from its application all lands previously or subsequently granted under written lease for the cultivation of tea or for reclamation under the arable Waste lands rule.⁶

IV

As the large areas of Western Dooars were without people or proprietorship, the Britishers easily occupied the tract and became the proprietors of the land and tried to introduce their economic policy in the land. They started survey and settlement works from 1871 gradually, dividing the tract into three parts – (a) Land for agriculture (b) Land for tea – cultivation and (c) Land for reserve forest. The land of the hills and foot-hills of this tract was suitable for tea cultivation. So the tea cultivation was initiated in the Dooars in 1874 at Gajoldoba and since then the number of tea - estates increased gradually.

There were no sufficient labourers to work in the tea – gardens, because population were very meagre and the local people were not interested to work as labourers, only the few people of Nepali Communities immigrated in the Dooars and worked in the tea – gardens as labourers. So the planters would bring labourers of Oraon and Santal communities from Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas through Sardars. After coming and joining in the tea –gardens as labourers they could not return to their houses as and when necessary. They became like slaves and they had to tolerate different types of oppressions by the authorities of tea – gardens, money lenders, traders etc.

Beside tea –cultivation, Britishers introduced Jotdari system creating jotes and giving it to the Jotdars. At the initial stage the Jotdars need not have to give any kind of revenue or tax to the Government. But subsequently

revenue was imposed on them and the revenue increased gradually after every settlement. Like the permanently settled portion of the district most of the Jotdars would not cultivate land directly; they would give lands to the Chukanidars by lease or agreement, again Chukanidars also gave land to the Dar – Chukanidars. In some places Jotdars cultivated their lands by share croppers or Adhiars locally known as Halua with 50% share of crops. The Jotdars or intermediaries whose land was cultivated by the Adhiars were called ‘Giri’. As there were huge amount of land and population were very meagre, so the people of different Communities and classes immigrated in the Dooars from neighbouring Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Dinajpur and elsewhere of Bengal, they obtained lands by lease and became Jotdars. The Jotdars also would bring Adhiars from outside the Dooars giving them many facilities to cultivate their lands.

V

In the pre-colonial period, the area of the district particularly the area of the Dooars was full of jungles, most of the area was without people because of the intolerable condition and the hard diseases namely Malaria, Kalaazar etc, only the people of some tribes namely Mech, Garo, Toto, Rava, Drucpa, lived there. Some tribes of Bhutanese lived there but before coming of rainy season, they left the place to save them. Surgeon Rennie wrote, “The inhabitants chiefly consist of a tribe called the Mechis who appears to be the only people so constituted as to be capable of permanently enduring the climate.”⁷ The life of these tribes were very simple, kept themselves out of modern civilization and complexity. They had their own customs, laws and culture by which they were governed. Every tribe had separate septs or ‘Gotras’. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal writes, “Although the Bodos including the Meches become mixed with other people they have retained their distinctive septs or *Gotras*.”⁸

In the Northern part of the Dooars, the Meches and the Garos lived there habituated with shifting cultivation. They settled in a place few years,

cultivated in the land in their own way, after few years they shifted into another place and settled there and their life was cycling in such a way.⁹ In the Southern part of the district there were settled cultivators most of whom were Rajbanshi community.

Western Dooars was under Paro Penlop, the Governor of Western Division of Bhutan. J. C. Haughton showed the land tenures in different parts of the Dooars in such way Goomah, Raphoo and Bhalka were under small Zamindar or tehshildars (petty revenue collectors) wholly under Bhutia rules, Buxa was under a Bhutia officer (Dooar Deo), the Northern part of the Dooars were under Mech sardars and the plain of Mainaguri was divided among the Zamindars the family of Hargobinda Katham one khurgodher Karji and the Raikot of Jalpaiguri.¹⁰ The officials under Bhutanese who were involved in collecting revenue and sending to Bhutan, the Royal power, can be furnished from the point of power and position in such way – Soobah at the highest level. The exact powers and functions of each of these officials cannot be ascertained with any degree of accuracy, but all of them were important links in the chain of tribute extraction; each was responsible for passing on the tribute to their immediate superiors.¹¹ The Kathams in the Dooars took a significant role in collecting revenue, though their position was under Subah. Below the Subah there were a class of subordinate officials known as Kathams. They were resident in the plains and exercised immediate control in the management of the Dooars in the great majority of cases the kathams were directly appointed by the title – *Deed (sanad)* of the Deb Raja, though subordinate in rank of Bhutanese administration in the plains. It seems that the appellation ‘Katham’ was prevalent only to the west of the Gadadhar. Eastward it took the forms of ‘Luskar Wuzder or Mundal.’¹²

It should be noted that on the eve of the formation of the district, the Dooars area was mainly dominated by the tribal people on the hilly areas and the people of Rajbanshi community in the plain areas of the Dooars. The

society of the tribal people was mainly ethnic- based. They were governed by themselves by their way of life following their ethnic culture keeping themselves out of the ambit of the so called civic society. They had their own systems, customs and manner for conducting their society. They had *Moral* or *Mandal* (Leader of each group or sept) who lead or conducted their society like a democratic manner. They never would go to the ruler or administration of the civic section. For any kind of problem or crisis they assembled in a particular place in presence of their *Moral* or *Mandal* for discussions and solution. After discussions they would reach their way of solution declared by the *Moral* or *Mandal* and as such everybody had to obey that decision, nobody could deny it. In this regard Dhaniram Toto of Totopara in the Jalpaiguri district informed that Totos never would go out of their society for any kind of problem. If any quarrel or clash occurs among the people in their society they do not go to the court or police Department for salvation even today.¹³

In the field of medical treatment also they were completely depended on their ethnic society i. e the procedure of the indigenous treatment led by local *Ojha* or *Kabiraj*. The medicines prepared completely by the indigenous manner from various plants and other indigenous things without any chemicals or things imported from outside were the backbone of their lives. Even today most of the tribal people of ordinary section depended on the indigenous systems of treatment. Biswaram Narjinary, a teacher of Alipurduar High School, a member of Mech community of Hemaguri in the district of Alipurduar told that still now in most of the cases of their diseases they followed the indigenous system of treatment. In case of critical condition or serious condition they consulted with the Doctor.¹⁴ Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal stated in his book that the people of Mech community of the Dooars followed the indigenous system of treatment for their diseases. He took an interview with Ruda Suba, 77 years old of Mech community who informed that he never went to the Doctor and in his 77 years old he never used *Masari* (mosquito net), he slept in open sky at night using a *khatiya* (*Kot*) on the courtyard or in front of the house.¹⁵

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

All most all the English writers or scholars shown that the Rajbanshis were originated from the Koches; as such they wanted to say that the people of Rajbanshi community and the Koches were the same stock of the society. H. H. Risley writes, 'Kochh, Kochh- Mandal, Rajbanshi, Paliya, Desi, a large Dravidian tribe of North- Eastern Bengal, among whom there are grounds for suspecting some admixture of Mongolian blood.'¹⁶ Dr. Franchis Buchanan Hamilton also showed the Rajbanshis and the Koches in the same stock of the society. He wrote, 'I have no doubt, however that all the Koch are spring from the same stock and that most of the Rajbanshis are Koch'.¹⁷ Mr. Hodson and Dr. Latham also showed the Koches, Meches and the Kachharies in the same group i. e. Indo- Mongoloid group. Mr. Hadson who is followed by Dr. Latham, identifies the Kochs, the Mechs and Kacharis etc. As all being members of one great Mongolian race of Tranian or non- Aryan origin; and both these writers express the opinion that the Koch or Rajbanshis are merely the most Hinduised form of the common stock.¹⁸ But the above mentioned opinion denied by the Rajbanshi intellectuals such as Thakur Panchanan

Barma, Upendra Nath Barman and many others who wanted to say that Rajbanshi and Koches are not the same stock of social groups because Rajbanshis were Hindus belonged to the second position of the traditional Aryan group of Hinduism, on the other hand Koches were the tribal people. This debate was going on during the Kshatriya movement was going on since the census report was published in 1881.

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

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

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

Beside the indigenous society and culture of the district I have shown in the present thesis how the immigrated people of different castes, religions, creeds and classes formed the society and what was the condition and pattern of their culture. Among the immigrated people two main stream culture entered this region like other parts of Bengal and dominated the society that was the Brahmanical culture and European culture. It is discussed that the people of higher castes such as Brahman and Kayasthas immigrated in the different parts of Bengal in the different phases from ancient to colonial period and extended their culture on the indigenous people as a result of which many indigenous people became Hindus and led their lives in accordance with the Hindu shastras and culture and gradually many indigenous customs and culture of different communities had been abolished. On the other hand by the penetration of European culture and Christianity many people converted into Christian and accepted the Christian culture hampering the indigenous culture.

VI

Another aspect I have shown in my thesis which was a question of identity crisis faced by different tribal communities in the district. Once, before

the coming of the Britishers, some tribal communities namely Mech, Toto, Garo, Rabha and Drucpa lived in this area. But after the coming of the Britishers and introductions of their new economic policies in the field of agriculture, trade and industry, different types and classes of people immigrated in the Dooars as a result of which population increased gradually and a new demographic structure was formed. For introducing the new economic policy and systems in the land and immigration, the tribal people lost their ethnicity or ethnic life where they habituated with shifting cultivation and Governed by themselves out of so called civic society.

Following the above situation at the time of survey and settlement works by Mr. D. H. E. Sunder, separate colonies were established for Mech, Garo, and Santal communities (Sunder Report). After few years it was found that different castes and classes of people entered into the colony as a result of which number of Mech people was going down and it was more wonderful that after few years it was followed that there was not a single Garo in the colony and that more than half of the Jotdars were outsiders mainly Oraons.¹⁹ Why the number of Mech people was going down and the Garos left the place? From the report of Mr. Milligan and the writing of Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal it is found that the Meches and Garos left the district and moved towards East. Without any hesitation it can be said that they left the place due to losing their ethnicity and facing an identity crisis.

VII

Another aspect which I have shown in my present thesis is the changing scenario of the society and culture in the post-colonial period. It is well known that on the eve of the independence and partition of India a devastating communal riot was started in Bengal and Punjab between Hindus and Muslims. Lacs of people were murdered for the ferocious communal riots.

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 refugee 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.²⁰

The condition of the migrated people coming from East Pakistan was very pathetic at the initial stage. But after few years the migrated people got shelter in different colonies in the towns and villages also. Later on, during the period of United Front Government and Left Front Government huge number of lands had been acquired by the government by the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955 and distributed to the landless people. Many refugees got their shelter in these lands. In the town people coming from East Pakistan suffered at the initial stage. But they also gradually settled in the different parts of the town. Not only that these migrated people dominated the society and culture of the town in the later phase having obtained different jobs of the government and being solvent economically occupying the position in trade

and commerce as a result of which a discrimination between indigenous people and migrated people was created.

To summarise the introduction, it can be said that the present study deals with many un-discussed, unexplored and unknown aspects and problems of the society and culture of the district. As a result of the social economic and cultural crisis many discontents and grievances have grown up in the minds of the indigenous people, particularly the people of Rajbanshi community and some tribes. They have been feeling crises of losing their lands, ethnicity, cultural heritage and freedom of identity for which many Sub- Regional movements namely Uttarkhanda Movement, Kamtapur Movement, Gorkhaland Movement and Greater Cooch Behar Movement held in different phases since independence in different parts of North Bengal. Beside these movements terrorist activities are also going on in the soil of North Bengal which created a dreadful and panic atmosphere in the society. It may be said that all the movements and activities, particularly the terrorist one cannot be supported from the point of national integration and maintaining peaceful environment in the society; on the other hand these movements should not be neglected or restrained by force. Everybody should realize the causes and roots of the discontent and grievances of the depressed people. It may be concluded with the remark of Sailen Debnath, “The people in power of the government, in different political parties in Delhi and Kolkata, in the southern delta of West Bengal, in the bureaucracy of the Central and the State Government as well as in the powerful groups of Delhi and Kolkata based intellectuals, must come forward to build up an atmosphere of sincere efforts in redressing the problems and deprivations of the aggrieved people of the most neglected areas of North Bengal in general and of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and of the Dooars in particular so as not to see more trouble to brew up from the dens of sufferings, agitations and tensions.”²¹

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Chapter -1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After concluding the treaty with the Bhutanese in 1774, the revenue of Baikunthapur pargana had been increased up to Rupees 32,000 as a punishment of the Darpadeo for concluding a treaty with Bhutan and Baikunthapur was recognized as *Batris Hazari*. The Raikot of Baikunthapur complained against the high revenue imposed of Baikunthapur, to the collector of Rangpur and in this complained he recognized himself as the *king of Batris Hazari*. Ultimately, the revenue was decreased and stood it Rupees 25,935.¹⁴

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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- 40) West Bengal State Archives, Revenue Department, 1920, Prog.No.29-35, Government of Bengal.
- 41) J.F.Grunning ,p.cit, p. 81
- 42) Todarmal, *Bhumi Rajaswa O Jarip, Anima Prokashani*, op.cit, p. 63
- 43) Ibid., p.63
- 44) Umesh Sharma, *Raikot Bansher Rajarshi in Grontho tirtha*, Kolkata, 2003, p.102

- 45) Ananda Gopal Ghosh, *Duarser Samaj O Dharmiyo Jibone Bhutaner Probbab in Saptahik Uttarbanga Patrika*, Sharadiya Sankha , 1391 B.S. Siliguri.
- 46) J.F.Grunning, op.cit, p.82
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- 48) Umesh Sharma, op.cit, p.102
- 49) Grunning, op.cit, p.82
- 50) Ananda Gopal Ghosh (Ed), *Uttar Banger Puratatta: Sankshipta Itihas*, North Bengal University, Siliguri, p. 142
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- 53) Buchanan Hamilton's report quoted from *Abani Mohan Kusari, & et.al.*, *West Bengal District Gazetteer*, Jalpaiguri, 1981, p. 201
- 54) Abani Mohan Kusari, et.al. *West Bengal District Gazetteer, Jalpaiguri, July, 1981*, p.202-203.
- 55) Ibid., p.207
- 56) 1920, Progs, Nos.29-35, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, Govt. of Bengal, Revenue Department, Land Revenue.
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- 60) H.H.Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, P.Mukherjee, Calcutta, 1st edition, 1891, Reprint, 1998, p, XVII
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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. Haughton, 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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Chapter- 3

Cultural Scenario of Jalpaiguri District in the Colonial Period

The society of Jalpaiguri was formed during the colonial period. Here it is found that a multi-dimensional society was formed comprising indigenous people and immigrated people of various castes, religions and classes. These people immigrated in the district, Jalpaiguri, particularly in Western Dooars for various purposes of whom a large number of people came here for obtaining lands and became Jotdars or intermediaries. Secondly, a large number of people entered into this tract for tea cultivation of whom many were proprietors, managers and officials of tea-estates and a major portion were immigrated as a labourer mainly Santals, Oraons, Madesias etc. from Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas. Other than these, a large number of people of Nepali community also immigrated in this area time to time.

In this chapter a picture of the cultural scenario of the district will be presented. At the outset, I would like to mention here that the cultural history of Jalpaiguri particularly in the Dooars had a distinctive character unlike other parts of Bengal, broadly speaking of India for which the Jalpaiguri district is called a “Mini India” still today, Sailen Debnath, in his book pointed out, ‘North Bengal is the best example of pluralistic culture representing the cultural diversity of the whole of India in the form of a many India. The Bengalis of southern delta often ignorant of the pluralistic nature of North Bengal invariably commit mistakes emphasizing much on so called ‘Bengali culture’ even in case of North Bengal.’¹

Many of the scholars, writers and historians have an idea of cultural history indicating only the cultural attainments such as education, entertainment, mainly dance, songs, music, arts etc. But it is not the cultural scenario as a whole of a nation or community means a characteristics or

ideology of the people as a whole. In this context we mention that stone- age culture where culture means an over- all livelihoods of the people during that age or period, such as Paleolithic culture, Mesolithic and Neolithic culture. In this way, we may mention the society of Indus Valley Civilization where it is told that over all livelihoods of the people of Indus called 'Harappan Culture'. In the above mentioned cultural society, culture does not mean only the education, dance, music, arts etc. Here culture stands the meaning of the characteristics of the people of that age. Whether one is an avowed Hindu or not, the Indian way of life has touched communities all over the country. Infact there has been a cultural synthesis, as evidenced in the observance of rites & ceremonies & in the possession of beliefs & tales & songs & sayings. Indian folklore is as much the Hindu's as it is the tribal's. There are differences, but there is a large common ground where the Brahmin & the so-called tribal meet at their mutual case.²

Before going through the details of the cultural history of Jalpaiguri, it should be mentioned here specifically that it can be divided into two categories namely (1) Indigenous culture and (2) Immigrated culture. I shall mean the indigenous culture as the culture of their own of the indigenous people that is non- Aryan culture and non- western culture. So the immigrated culture also can be divided into two categories namely the A) Aryan Culture or Sanskritization and B) Western Culture or European Culture. Beside these the culture of the society of Jalpaiguri can be divided on the religious basis. Such as the 1) Tribal culture or primitive culture 2) Buddhist culture then 3) Brahmonical culture 4) Hindu culture 5) Islamic culture, lastly the Christian culture.

Culture of indigenous people

The formation of the society of Jalpaiguri is discussed and analyzed earlier. Here the people of different communities who formed the society time

to time is mentioned and here also referred about the indigenous group of people. Firstly it is to be mentioned here that who were the people of indigenous? Or what does it mean by indigenous people? Here indigenous people means people belonged to different tribal community or ethnic groups or original shelters in the districts as elsewhere in India who entered in this tract time to time before the penetration of Aryans and Europeans.³

Among the indigenous groups of the people of the district like other parts of North Bengal the Bodos originated from Indo-Mongoloid race, had a significant role in all sphere of the society and culture of the district. There were other tribal communities who originated from the Bodos namely Koch, Mech, Rabha, Garo, Toto etc. and who were originated from the same human race, Mongoloid. Ramesh Suba, an oldest person of Mech community pointed out that the word “Boro” came from “Bod” namely Harbod, Karbod and Bodfisa. After the natural calamity occurred, the people came from Tibet into India through Nathula. This people were called Bodo. He also pointed out that the Bodos had 5 brothers namely Meche, Koche, Lapche, Limbu and Rai. People who came with Lapche called Lepcha, people who came with Limbu and Rai are called Limbus and Rais and people who came with Meche would call Meches and people who immigrated with Koche would call Koch.⁴

Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal wrote, “Such was the history of a Tebeto-Burman speaking Indo-Mongoloid tribe, the Bodos who migrated into India through Patkoi Hills between India and Burma and gradually spread themselves into the whole of modern Assam, North Bengal and parts of East Bengal.”⁵

As the Meches were aboriginal tribes of the whole north eastern region. They habituated with shifting cultivation which means they did not dwell in a particular place permanently. After leaving in a place for few years, they shifted into another place and they cultivated in the same manner and hunted in

the jungle. They lived independently and governed by them led by *Morols* or *Mondals* (leader of the community) of their same community. They were simple and worshiper of nature. They believed in "Bathaou" religion. Amarendra Nath Suba, the oldest person of the Mech community told, "The Meches originated from Mongoloid race. They believed in Bathaou religion. The existence of the God Bathaos is in the Sij plant which is fixed up in the north eastern side of the house. They worship Bathaou in every year in the month of Baishakha (Bengali year). They worshiped nature including trees, leaves and all the mysterious things of nature. Still now many of them did the same. Later on many of them converted into another religion. Some of them became Christian; some of them became Buddhist and Muslim also. Those who did not accept other religion and maintain their oldest traditional systems are treated 'Hindus'.⁶

Those who became Hindus, they carried on their life by the customs and manner of Hindu religion; that means Sanskritization also entered into their traditional culture. Those who became Christian they conducted their life by the custom and manner of Christian ideology. In such a way Muslim and other religion - based Meches turned themselves from their own traditional culture. This was a kind of cultural identity crisis which will be discussed later on in this thesis.

Like the Meches, Rabhas were the aboriginal community originated from Indo - Mongoloid race. Rabhas were also non- Aryan, believe in natural power, simple in habit. They would also live in the forest adjacent areas. They had their own culture and conducted their life by their own customs and rules, lead by their own leaders, that mean they also had their separate septs or gotras. But this septs or *Gotras* would not mean any cast because there was no any casticism or colour (varna) in the society of Rabha . This division was formed on the basis of their profession. ⁷

Reboti Mohon Saha wrote “ We have collected near about the names of 350 separate Gotras and their prohibited foods and the customs of utilizing of prohibited things . The marriage in the same sept or Gotras was completely prohibited.”⁸

Like the other tribal communities of the North Eastern region of the Indo- Mongoloid race the Rabha’s society was maternal, that means females took the responsibility of the whole family. Sunil Pal writes in his article, According to the anthropologist Rabhas belong to the matriarchal society. The characteristic is followed slightly still now. The children of the Rabha were recognized by the mothergenealogy instead of their father genealogy. In the early days bridegrooms had to live in the house of bride before marriage. After marriage bridegroom could live in the house of father in law instead of returned his own house or he could settled near the house of father in law. But now a day this customs is not followed .⁹

The Meches

The Meches of the Sub-Himalayan region of West Bengal are known in some part of the country as Bodos. But actually they are a branch of the Bodos and the Kacharies. The River Mechi in the border area of Nepal is named after the Meches as per the opinions of some scholars. Meches and Kiratas belong to the Asura dynasty. They were Mlechhas and so abbreviated into Mech.¹⁰

Grierson also mentioned that Mech is a corruption of Mlechhas. They ruled Pragjyotishpur for 400 years and began to decline from the 11th century.¹¹ Hooker in 1854 reports that the Koch replaced the Meches of the Tarai Forest.¹²

Dalton opined that the Meches are found in the recently annexed Bhutan Duars. They extended from there in a westerly direction into Nepal Tarai, foot of the Himalayas.¹³ Sunder pointed out that the Mech and the

Kachhari are the same people. In the Duars they call themselves Bodo.¹⁴ H.H. Risley mentioned that the Meches of the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district are divided into two sub-tribes- Agnia Mech and Jat Mech.¹⁵ The Meches are a numerically small tribe; actually they are a branch of the Bodos and Kachharies. The river Mechi in the border area of Nepal is named after the Meches as per the opinions of some scholars. In general they are frank and courteous, friendly among themselves and hospitable to strangers. They follow the patrilineal system of family structure. Most of them have joint or extended family. Marriage can take place between a boy & a girl belonging to the same class.¹⁶ Gait pointed out that in the past the Meches and the Koches intermarried freely, but the conversion of the Koches to Hinduism had led to discontinuance of this practice.¹⁷ The impact of new civilization from time to time not only alters the way of life but also many of the racial customs. Widow Remarriage is prevalent among them. Mech community was a part of Phoenician/ Sumerians, whose name was Penis. Perhaps they were called as Panikoch.¹⁸ They came to Assam before 4000 years and they were called Mlechha by the Aryan.¹⁹ Grunning pointed out that the Meches are of Mongolian origin and are believed to the Western Branch of the Kachari or Bodo tribe.²⁰

The following statement shows the number and distribution of the Mech tribe in 1872 and 1881 in North Bengal:--²¹

District	1872	1881
Bogra	--	31
Rangpur	--	6835
Darjeeling	893	1063
Jalpaiguri	40	8760
Coochbehar	--	224

The Meches have different *Gotras* like Koch and Rava. These are as follows-

1. Narjinaree- They would live in high level in the society. Once, their occupation was to fight for their community.
2. Basumatari: -They would work in the agrarian sector and produce crops.
3. Sampramari:-Their occupation was to worship and pacify the planets and stars. According to the Brahmanism they are Brahmanas.
4. Hajoari:-The people belonged to Hajoari gotras were in lower position like sudras.
5. Mochari---Those Meches who flew away from the invasion of enemy and sheltered in jungle where tiger would live. They fought against tiger or *Bagh*, so they were treated as *Bagh* gotra.
6. Iswarari--- Those Meches who were silent and remained depending on the God or Iswar not to fight against the enemy. Out of these there were more gotras or septs namely Bargonari, Doimari, and Khatluari etc.

‘The Meches are rich in their cultural heritage .Their string instrument drums and other leather instruments have a distinguish rhythm.Their community dance is very attractive. The women can dance for a longtime at a stretch. Their physical- stature and smiling gesture while dancing is highly appealing’.²²

Religion

The Meches believed in Bathou religion at the initial stage in their ethnic lives. In the later period they had been converted into Hindu religion, Christian religion and many of the Meches became Rajbanshis. It is mentioned in the archival report, “The Meches of Duars, who are generally averse to sending their children to school, are gradually beginning to understand the advantages of even elementary instruction. There are at present several of them undergoing a course of training in the Julpigoree normal school for the post of Guru in primary schools. The girls’ school at Boda is flourishing, and that at the sudder station is making their progress.”²³

Mahakal, the deity who governs wild animals and is supposed to reside here. Much of this taluk was first cultivated by Meches and lately by the Santals who have a colony here.²⁴ Chepani village named after the Chapa or Champ tree (*Michelia hampaka*) which used to grow here. The Taluk is a well cultivated one. The cultivators were Rajbansis and Muhammadans. Much injury is done to crops by pig.²⁵ About 'Taleswarguri' is named after the deity, Taleswar who is believed to remain here. The Taluk is full of jungle.²⁶

The Rabhas

The Rabhas belong to Mongoloid race having similarity with other members of blood group such as Garo, Kachari, Mech, Koch, Hajong and others. According to Buchanon Hamilton the Rabhas have a good deal of similarities in socio-religious and material life with those of the Pani Koch. According to Hodgson, they belong to the great Bodo or Mech family.

Reboti Mohan Saha wrote, "It is known from various sources that their predecessors came to the North- Eastern part of India from Siberia through Mongolia, Chin, Tibet and Brahmadesh before near about 3000 B. C."²⁷

Like all the other societies the Rabha society also bears various types of bonds and one of such bonds is kinship or relationship bond in which the members of a particular group are related with one another either consanguineally or officially.²⁸

To the Rabhas marriage is one of the most important events of life. Marriage among the Rabhas is known as Biye. According to Friend-Peneira, the Rabha society sanctions three types of marriage-by purchase, by gift and by servitude.²⁹ Among the Rabhas their clothing vary little from person to person though economic condition, enlightenedness, social or political status etc.create some difference in quality and also in quantity. They had their own culture that was tribal culture, earlier marriage, worships everything was held in accordance with the customs of the tribals. Earlier marriage was held by killing

the cocks. Marriage was performed in case of the absence of the bridegroom when killing the hen by his name. Betel leaf, betle nut was kept as witnessed; they worshiped to the Shiva and Parboti. Dinonath Rava told, “We had our own clothes making with endi- cotton called *maflar* (scarf), *gamchha* (towel) and *chadar* (swal). Women had two parts of clothes namely lafun and kamrang. The male wear dhoti, shirt and chadar and women wear ‘Shari’. Seasonal variation of clothing is also seen. Sometimes they also wear coat, sweater and chadar. Different types of ornaments are used by the Rabha women.”³⁰

To the Rabhas marriage is one of the most important events of life. The most important type of marriage which covered the major cases is by negotiations. There are three types of marriage take place in the society, by purchases, by gift and by servitude.

Food

Now- a- days Rabhas eat everything like other Bengali people use as their food. However their traditional or favourite food was *haria* (a kind of local wine) chicken and pork. In every occasion they use *haria* and meat as their food and honour to their guest by giving *haria* and meat, even they give the pork to the Siva and Parvati in their house. They believe that if they do not do it, then they will face in danger.

Religion or culture

The religious life of the Ravas includes the basic animistic concepts and faiths of other Mongoloid groups akin to them namely the Mech and the Kachari, but there are some significant differences too. The Supreme God of the Ravas is called Rishi. Besides Rishi the Ravas worship two female goddess named Rungtuk and Basek who are actually the two daughters of Rishi. There are people among the Ravas who consider Rungtuk and Basek as Lakshi or Laksmi and Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of wealth and learning respectively.³¹

Dinonath Rava had given a description about the village deities “Rishi is their chief and most powerful deity, and he is considered as very old, and has a wife named Charipak. The persons among them, who have committed to memory the prayers, which are offered to Rishi, are called Roja, the appellation given by the Bengalese to all those who pretend to cure diseases by incantation.”³²

Toto

Totos were also a tribal community originated from, Indo- Mongoloid of the Jalpaiguri district. They are considered as the smallest tribe not only of the Dooars but also of the whole of India.

Toto, a small Tibeto Barman speaking autochthones tribe lives in Toto para bounded on the north by Bhutan, on the east by the Torsha River and on the south by the Titi forest.³³ It can be said that the Totos were the community of the non- Aryan. They were simple in habit and out of the civic society. Toto although demographically a small language spoken as mother tongue by only 376 ethnic Totos, deserves special mention, because tolos are an autochthons tribe of the district. Toto is a language of the non- pronominalised Himalayan groups of the Tibeto Burman family of language, like the Burung, Manger and Lepcha.³⁴

Food:-

The food of the Totos consists of rice, Chura (parched rice), milk and dahi (curd). Pork, cow, dear, fowl, duck, pigeon, goat, peacock, fish of all kinds and rhinoceros are eaten. Blood of Pigs and Cows is cooked as vegetable curry. When Toto have no rice they eat marua and khoni, which are cooked in water and are said to be nourishing.³⁵

Clothes:-

The dresses of the Toto like the Bhutias the male people wear a cloth measuring 6 foot in length and 3 foot in width from solder to knee call edundung. This cloth was set up in the shoulder by the clip making of bamboo and wood. Another piece of long cloth called godo set up in the wrist like a belt. There was a pocket of the cloth on the abdomen like bag in which they put various things like pan and supari. The dresses of women are made with four pieces of clothes, one piece of cloth wear from waist to knee. One piece of cloth is covered up the upper portion of the body. Third piece of cloth is used in waist like a belt. Another fourth piece of cloth is wear around the head. They have also a pocket like a bag in the dress outing various things.

Religion:-

The Totos are very superstitious and have two Gods or *Debotas*, to whom they make offerings of meat and other articles.

Ishpa is supposed to be in the Badoo hill and to cause sleekness whenever he is displaced. In view of satisfying and pleasing him, offering of pigs, cows cocks are made to him ; goats, fowls and pigeons displeasing. Drink (Eu) is regularly given to him. The deity was so much wakeful that later on she was placed in the great temple of Totopara. The temple look like a toto house, though it's size was large than that.

In order to satisfy Chima and to pursue her to keep the village in safety from sleekness and other troubles, offerings of alua rice, fowls and Eu have to be made to her. ³⁶

The Toto organized another celebration for the betterment of them. It was called "Garom Puja" or prayer for the wellbeing of the whole village. For their veneration they brought a priest crossing the boundaries of their villages. Sometime the priest belonged to the Garo class. Women were not permitted to

be present at the puja..... For the puja fifteen pigeons, two pigs ,one duck, three goats (One white, one black, and one reddish), cocks and hens as many as possible and also eggs of hens were sacrificed.³⁷ They believe that they may be recovered from diseases if they gratify their Gods and Goddesses by sacrificing ox or pigs and cows. They satisfy Ispa with the Eu their intoxicating liquor.³⁸ “They also believe that ‘Oda’ and ‘Pishu’ are their ancestral deity, live at ‘Ziri’. They keep a wooden seat and equipment for brewing of home beer (EU) therefore their deity. Most of the Totos suffered from a skin disease called ‘Yaws’ in the past and considered as a blessing of God Ishpa. According to them their women would have been elope away by members of their communities if they had no ‘Yaws’ in their community.”³⁹The Totos do not have any idol but there is a community puja house called ‘Dem-sha’. Their chief God is ‘Ishpa’and Goddess is ‘Chima’. Their chief fests are Omchu and Mayu puja, the former held in July-August and the later in the month of Bhadra (Aug-Sept).They keep two drum like instrument hanging along the roof of the community puja house which they play during Mayu puja. The Toto New Year is started in the Bengali Month of Shraavan; they celebrate New Year with Mahakal Puja. ⁴⁰

Garos

Garos were the Indo-mongoloid tribe of the Jalpaiguri district and elsewhere in North east India. The Garos had believed to have come into the Dooars from the Khashia and Jayantia hills, but no correct information is available regarding them. They are divided into 26 clans or sub- castes. ⁴¹

Like the other Indo Mongoloid tribal people Garo society was also matriarchal. The children of the Garos were recognized by their mother genealogy. Their society and culture was ruled by their own customs, laws and rituals. They governed themselves by their own *Moral* or *Mandal*. They were also habituated with shifting cultivation and hunting. They were simple and

kept themselves out of modern society that was the Aryan culture and western culture. Still now uneducated Garos who lived in Meghalaya and other parts of North East India do not like the modern culture or urbanization or modernization. They like to live happily in the nature holding their own culture.

Food:-

Rice is the main food of the Garos. Beside this flesh of pig, goat, deer, duck, fowl and pigeon are eaten by them. All kind of vegetables are eaten by them. Milk is drunk by Garos. They also drink *haria* made by the blood of pigs with vegetables. They eat all kind of fruits, sugar and sweet meats.

Marriage was not allowed between a man and the women between the same castes among the Garos. One caste must marry into another caste. Polygamy and divorce was not forbidden among them. But widows are allowed to marry.

“Gamchha”, a cotton *Dhoti* wear by the Garos and “Bukhechili” a coat cover their bodies. “Daggu” a piece of cloth cover their heads. The male Garos put on their traditional loin cloth called “Gamcha”.they wind a cloth as turban on their heads. Turban is called ‘Pagga’ in Garo. The female Garos wear a particular garment called ‘Lufun and kambang’.

“Rishi” is their chief deity, in the month of Chaitra and Baishak a new bamboo is cut and planted in the courtyard to represent Rishi. They believed that Rishi would be protecting them from enemies, fire, sickness and troubles. They also worship Mahakal, Tacur and Lamengju.

Drums, Bangsi, Debdi, and Kala are used by the Garos as instrument. At first the Garos had no drums; under instruction of the ‘Huji’ (priest) the Garos had a drum among their musical instruments.⁴² Bangshi is a flute made

of bamboo, Debdi is a metal bell and 'kala' is a pipe about 7 feet long, made from the stem of null grass. In the month of Baishak they observe "Subachini" festival for the purpose of remove evil power.

Drucpa

Drucpas were mainly permanent inhabitant of Bhutan during pre-colonial and colonial period. They would temporarily live in the Dooars but before coming the rainy season they left the places because they could not accommodate with the intolerable climate of the duars. It is found from different sources that before coming of the Britishers the duars were completely unhealthy condition for the people. No people other than the Meches could tolerate the climate of dooars. The name of their dialect is 'Dzonkha'. They lived mainly in the Buxa hill, Sikim and Darjeeling. Drucpas were very simple in nature and hospitable. They were broad minded. If anybody comes in their house they honoured their guest by giving red- tea with jar.

Food:-Rice and meat was their main food. They always use red chilly with their meal, salt and tomatoes are added with food. Pan- Supari is very famous among them. They are mainly Buddhist. So they never kill animal.

They wear Bokhu like over coat and half pant; it may be used as a bed-cover. The Drucpa women wear *Gochhum* and *kira*. *Gochhum* is like a semij used as a under wear. *Kira* is cloth was about 10.5 feet long and 6 feet width and it is closed near solder with pin. They used a cloth as belt.

There is no occasion among the Druckpas during the time of marriage. When a boy or girl loves or choose each other they live in the girl's house as husband and wife with the permission of their guardian. But in the case of misunderstanding they have the right to leave each other by mutual divorce on

condition of compensation to the women at time of second marriage. But in the case of divorce the children may live in his or her mother.

Rajbanshi

The Rajbanshis were the indigenous people of the district and as elsewhere in the greater North Bengal during the pre- colonial and colonial period. The Rajbanshis were the majority people of North Bengal, particularly in the district of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Dinajpur and the plain areas of Darjeeling district. In the plain areas of the Duars and the Sadar subdivision of the Jalpaiguri district Rajbanshis were the majority. They had been in the areas through long past. Other than North Bengal, Rajbanshis had been living in the other parts of Bengal and Assam. The Rajbanshis constituted the most predominant section of the local Hindu population in the northern districts of Bengal. Numerically they were the third largest Hindu caste in Bengal as a whole. The origin of this caste is shrouded in mystery & the basic debate is around the question of their association with the Koches. Whatever might have been their actual origin; there is no dispute about the fact that the Rajbanshis were the early settlers in North Bengal. They were a socially homogenous community; in the sense that there was no sub-caste among them.⁴³ Dr. Charu Chandra sanyal stated that the above observations point to the fact that the Koches are non-Aryan in origin. Some of them adopted Hinduism and became Rajbanshis. These Rajbanshis later on claimed to be Kshatriya.⁴⁴ There are many debates among the origin or ethnological identity of the Rajbanshis. The main debate was whether Rajbanshis were originated from Mongoloid race or Aryan race. This debate was initiated from the starting of the census work from 1870 onwards by the British- India Government. In the census report Government has shown the Rajbanshis and the Koches in the same group. Here one point should be mentioned that the Koch was originated from the Indo- Mongoloid and they were treated as tribal community. In accordance with the Aryan culture, the non- Aryan people treated as Dasa,

Dasyu, Kirata, and Nisada which means the lower graded people in the society. The non- Aryan people had not their position in the society.

So, when Rajbanshis were shown as a non-aryan people that were Koches, they protested against the census report. This protest turned into a social movement called “Kshatriyo Movement”. They demanded that Koches and Rajbanshis were not originated in the same human race. Koches were the tribal people and the Rajbanshi originated from Aryan race. In accordance with the social status of the Aryans, Rajbanshis held the 2nd position that was “Kshatriyos” after the Brahmanas. They gave the description from different sources of the Hindu Shastras or mythologies, that after defeating in the battle to the Porshurama they came in the Ratnapith that was the place beside the Trishrota or Jalpes, settled there and they were called “Bratyo Kshatriyos”. This Kshatriya movement got a new motion under the leadership of Thakur Panchanan Barma who led the movement throughout the North Bengal and Assam. Ultimately their demand became success and in the census report of 1911 Rajbanshis and Koches were shown separately. In spite of that this debate had not been closed. Because almost all the historians and scholars and the British officials showed that the Rajbanshis originated from the Mongoloid race. Swaraj Basu writes, “In case of the Rajbanshi caste movement, we find that one of the main thrusts of their movement was to distance themselves from the Koches and to establish their superior social rank. The local situation also provided a sufficient ground for the Rajbanshis’ assertion of a Kshatriya identity and their endeavour to build up caste solidarity.”⁴⁵

The specific movements for social mobility also achieved very little success. In a secular context, in the case of chasi Kaibarttas their new designation, Mahishya won general recognition, both social and official. Also successful were the Rajbanshis and the Namasudras.⁴⁶ The most numerous race in Jalpaiguri was the Rajbanshi or Koch. The Koches first appeared in Bengal about the close of the 15th or beginning of the 16th century, when Hajo founded

the Koch kingdom on the downfall of the ancient Empire of Kamrup. During the reign of his grandson Visu, the people became semi-Hinduised and adopted the name of Rajbanshi, i.e., of the royal race.⁴⁷ Hunter showed in his reports that the Koches and the Rajbanshis were the same communities and the Koches or the Rajbanshis as they are now called, may be briefly mentioned among the semi-aboriginal tribes, although they are now recognized as a distinct caste of Hindus. The Koch not separately returned in the Census Report, but manifestly included among the Rajbansis.⁴⁸

It is historically true that the Rajbanshis were converted into Hinduism from the Indo-Mongolian group, naturally Hinduised culture entered in the society of the Rajbanshis gradually.⁴⁹

It is stated that among the Koches who converted into Hindu religion called the Rajbanshis and who converted into Islam called Muslim or Mahameddan. Hunter here pointed out that the name of Koch was abandoned by the converts who assumed that of Rajbanshis literally of the Royal Kindred. The Koches or the Rajbanshis form by far the majority of the Hindu population of Jalpaiguri district.⁵⁰ Whatever the identity of the Rajbanshis they were the people like semi-tribes, simple in habit. Swaraj Basu pointed out, "...As they were guided by the traditional Brahmonical cultural values, the Rajbansis, with a tradition and culture of their own, failed to get a respectable position in the status estimation of these immigrant upper caste gentry."⁵¹ There were sharp dissimilarities between the cultural practices of these two groups and the upper caste gentry treated the Rajbansis as 'backward, uncultured and even *antyaaj*'.⁵² They were mainly habituated with agrarian cultivation. Almost all the people of Rajbanshis were uneducated in the colonial period. They would live in the villages. Their house was made mainly with the Bamboos and thrash and the economically solvent Jotdars made their house with ironsheet and wood. Generally in the house of the Rajbanshis four huts were seen. Sunder stated in his report, Among the Rajbanshis as well as Mahamedan there four huts in every homestead. These face north, southeast and west. Sometimes an extra hut

called Darigharis also built and is used by friends who may be staying for a night. So in building a homestead care is taken to have it bounded as follows whenever possible.⁵³

North----- Betel nut trees

South ----- compound

East ----- Water

West ----- Bamboos

In making the homestead of the Rajbanshis a proverb is prevailing in the Rajbanshi society which is followed by the Rajbanshis people at the time of making their house like this –

Uttare gua,

Dakshine Dhua,

Purbe Hans,

Pashime Bansh.

Uttare gua means in the North of the homestead there would be a betel nut garden, *Dakshine dhua* means in the South of the homestead there would be blank field or farm house that means no trees would remain in the South. *Purbe Hans* means in the East portion of the house there would be a pond and in the pond ducks would swim, *Pashime Bansh* means in the Western portion of the house a garden of bamboos would remain. ⁵⁴

Food:-

As the Rajbanshis people became Hindus, so they eat everything in accordance with the Hindu religion, but some special food or items are eaten by the Rajbanshis of which *Chheka* is one of the delicious food of the Rajbanshis which is cooked by different types of vegetables specially mixing with one kind of soda. Another delicious vegetable of the Rajbanshis is Lapha Shak (spinach). Another delicious food is eaten by the Rajbanshis people locally known as Sutka and Sidal. Sutka means dry fishes and sidal is made by crushing of small dry fishes, spices, turmeric and chilly, all these are crushed in a husk locally called chham and Gain. The habit of eating sidal is got not only

in North Bengal but also in whole North- East India and even in Burma, Malaysia etc.⁵⁵

Rajbanshis like to eat very much pan and supari locally known *Gua pan*. Gua means raw betel nut. They honoured their guest by offering gua pan at the initial stage of receiving. Many of them always keep this gua pan in their pocket or small container, and gradually they eat this after some duration.

Dress

Upendra Nath Barman wrote, 'It is known that the women of Rajbanshi community wore a dress called Buki (Bukali) and it was prevailing since ancient time. Apart from this the two parts of dress named Riya and Mekhla were used by the women. Men wore dhoti. It should be mentioned here that the men of poor family wore small dhoti from the upper side of knee and the very poor men wore a piece of cloth called 'Nengti'. At the time of continuing social reforms movement Thakur Panchanan Barma propagated to wear dhoti instead of 'Nengti' and sari of women instead of 'Buki'.⁵⁶ Advance group among the Rajbanshis whom we may refer to in the absence of a better term as the Rajbanshi 'elites', followed the upper caste Hindus of the region in dress, lifestyle, marriage customs, and religious practices.⁵⁷ Discarding their traditional clothes, both men and women dressed in the fashion of the upper castes in society.⁵⁸

Marriage

As the Rajbanshis belonged to Hindu community, so the marriage ceremony was performed according to the Hindu religion or Brahmanical references. Despite that many customs or rituals were to be followed at the time of marriage. A middle man locally known as 'Ghatak' or 'Ghatki' communicated between the guardians of bride and bride- grooms and information was sent time to time to both of the parties. If both sides were

satisfied and chosen each other the wedding was confirmed and fixed up the date of marriage.

The marriage ceremony of the Rajbanshis of the district was completed by three stages, namely pan tola, adhibas and marriage. The guests of bride were gone to the house of bride groom and the new clothes and ornaments were worn to the bride groom and blessed her. This occasion is called Pan Tola. In the second stage the following occasions are performed --- turmeric was touched to the body of the bride groom called *adhibas* and in the occasion called Naua kamani was performed. Then the Hargouri puja, *Nandi mukhi shradhya* and the last stage the main marriage ceremony was performed. Among the local customs or rituals of the marriage ceremony among the Rajbanshis a 'Mittar' or friend was to be selected at the time of marriage who remained as a friend or a relative of the bride in the whole life. Another custom was- a person who dropped water in the head of the bride and bride- groom at the time of marriage and related with them as their parents called 'Pani chhita Baap and Pani chhita Mao'. They also related with the bride and bride- groom in the whole life as their parents. Another custom in the marriage of the Rajbanshis which is not seen in the marriage of Aryan culture a Bairati played a vital role in the whole marriage ceremony. Polygamy was seen in the society of the Rajbanshis meaning of which that a Rajbanshi man could marry more than one. Widow Remarriage was also a common practice in the society of the Rajbanshis where in the society of higher caste widow remarriage was a hard task. In this point of view Rajbanshis were more liberal than the higher caste people.

Religion---At present the Rajbanshis are Hindus. But originally they were Koches, an Indo- Mongoloid tribes believing in tribal culture, though it is debatable. It is assumed by most of the historians and social scientists that the Rajbanshis were converted to Hinduism from Koches. There were many Gods, Goddesses and deities who were worshiped by the Rajbanshis. It should be

mentioned here that there were many non- Aryan God and Goddess worshiped by the Rajbanshis as they were basically non- Aryan. After converted into Hinduism they worshiped Hindu God and Goddess. Among the non- Aryan deities there were Bisto Thakur, he was worshiped by the name of Jalthakur also. This worship was held in the month of Bhadra. He is a deity of water. The BrahmoThakur is a deity of Agni or fire. Besides, there were Paban thakur or deity of air, Basumati thakur, Bisha hari thakurani, Mahakal thakur, the oldest Deity, Gramthakur, Shib thakur, or Maheswar, Lakshi thakurani, Dharma thakur etc.⁵⁹ The worship of Banadurga is held in every year at the time of Ekadashi of Durga worship at Bhandani in the village of Barnish near Maynaguri. This worship is performed in accordance with the Rajbanshi Mythology. The Devi is immersioned at the midnight of ekadashi according to the Vedicliterature. There was a custom to sacrifice of goat and dove to the Goddes.⁶⁰

The worship of Ban Durga is held at the time of Ekadashi in every year at the Barnish village of Maynaguri in accordance with the Rajbanshi customs.⁶¹

Harihar Adhikary informed me, “Late Hariprosad Basuniya was a zamindar. He introduced Kalipuja at first. The worship of Kali of the house of Hariprosad Basuniya was known as ‘Hariprosad Basuniya Barir Puja’ and later on it was known as ‘Kal Singh Basuniya Barir Kalipuja’”.⁶² The Basuniyas then had a total land of (80) eighty Hals (an unit of fifteen bighas), comprising of the jotes Betgara, Khagrabari, Naktabari (near Baksirdanga) and “Dhanda Simla” (near Nathula). It is also learnt that the former title of the Basuniyas was “Das’. They came from the Gaibandha thana of Rangpur District (Now in Bangladesh). The title Basuniya” was probably given by the British.”⁶³ The marriage of Rajbanshi society was like a social festival. Before performing the marriage ceremony the worship of *Kuloguru*, placed the east of the house is given and thereafter the worship of *Bishahari* is given.⁶⁴

Various worships and occasions of the Rajbanshis:-

Kainagata—this worship Kainagata is started from the previous Purnima. In this worship their forefathers are respected by sacrificing water oblation to their forefather by the Brahmana or Adhikary. **Nabanna**—this worship is observed at the time of collecting new crops. There is a custom prevailing among many of the Bengali Hindu families that they gave worship before eating new crops. Binapani Adhikari told, “Baishakhipuja or worship is performed in the month of Baishakha (April-May). Different types of fruits and flowers are given in this worship. Out of these dahi (curd) and chira are also given. Nor Brahmana or priest is necessary to perform this worship; rather the priest of Rajbanshi community called Adhikary performed this worship.”⁶⁵ Kali/Bishahari worship is performed by local priest known as *Mareya* or *Ojha*. It is significant that no Sanskrit mantra is uttered in this worship, rather the mantras are pronounced in local dialect or Rajbanshi language. This puja is sacrificed by the left hand. Different types of customs and usages were performed at the time of marriage which were enjoyed by the relative’s invitees and the villagers.⁶⁶ **Gochubona**- this worship is observed before growing plants of paddy in the land. At first land is prepared for growing plants of paddy. Thereafter a worship called gochubona is performed in the lands. Few plants of paddy are poured these worships performed to their deity with rice, banana and other fruits. Masdal, black arum and raw milk is given to the worship. **Jatrapuja**—this worship is performed in the day of Nabami of the month of Aswin (October) by giving sugarcane, lemon and other fruits and the next day, in the day of Vijoya Dasami the Jatrapuja is observed in the house. In this worship the essential instruments of the house including books have been worshiped’ **Laxmi puja**—Laxmi puja is popular festivals of the Hindu Bengali. In every houses of the Hindu Bengali the Goddess mother Laxmi is observed. Like other Hindu Bengali people in the house of Rajbanshi community mother Laxmi is observed. The Rajbanshis worship with *dai, chira, Kala* and other fruits. The plant of paddy is cut at the bottom, covered with banana leaves and kept in the kitchen”.⁶⁷

W.W.Hunter wrote, “A singular relic of old superstition is the worship of the God Hudum Deo. The women of a village assemble together in some distant and solitary place, no male being allowed to be present at the rites which is always performed at night, young bamboo is stuck in the ground, and the women throwing off their garments, dance round the mystic tree, singing old songs and charms. The rite is more especially performed when there is no rain and the crops are suffering from drough.”⁶⁸

Literature- George Abraham Greerson published his research report in Linguistic Survey of India in 1927 where he mentioned “When we cross the river (Brahmaputra) coming from Dacca, we meet a well-marked form of speech in Rangpur and the districts to its north and east. It is called Rajbansi and while undoubtedly belonging to the eastern branch has still points of difference which lead us to class it as a separate dialect.”⁶⁹ He also wrote, “The dialect is usually known as Rajbansi, from the tribe of that name already alluded to. It is also frequently called Rangpuri from one of the districts in which it is spoken. In the Darjeeling Terai the dialect is influenced by the neighbouring northern Bengali and has a special name, as a sub-dialect viz Bahe.”⁷⁰

The issue of Kamtapuri language has not yet been solved, it is going on as there is no inscription or grammar of Kamtapuri language or Rajbanshi language.⁷¹ Provat Ranjan sarkar mentioned the language of Rajbansis of North Bengal as ‘Rangpuri Bangla’.⁷² Upendranath Barman stated that the Rajbanshi language is a pure Aryan language which was supported by different scholars like Hodson etc.⁷³ Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal pointed out that the Rajbansis speak Bengali but it is a local dialect sometimes widely away from standard Bengali.⁷⁴

Entertainments:-

There are many dramas, songs, palatia songs which are written and performed by the Rajbanshi language. In Dinajpur district one of the ancient dramas “Monai Yatra”. The original writer of Monai yatra was Telenga Fakir, inhabitant of another writer was Najir Mahmud Sarkar.

In Malda, Dinajpur, Bagura, Murshidabad district one kind of drama named Alkap was performed where evolved the various incidents of society and the story of the poor and distressed people. Another type of drama of Malda and Dinajpur district was Gambhira remaining the history of various people and comedy.⁷⁵ Rangpur Bartaboho Patrika introduced a valuable literature and culture. Many informations and writings were published in this Patrika. It was patronized by the Zamindar of Kunder of Rangpur district.⁷⁶

As the Rajbanshis were converted into Hindus which is referred earlier, they performed all the worship, festivals, occasions in accordance with the Hindu customs and mythology. But many of the customs, festivals and worships and rituals were found which was out of the Aryan culture. These cultures have been going on through the ancient period to the present day.

Muslim culture

The Muslims of North Bengal can be divided into two categories in terms of ethnological point of view, (1) Local Muslim, (2) the Immigrated Muslim. One point is to be noted here that the local Muslim originated from Koches, a tribes of North- eastern region of India. Though there are many debates in this regard, but it is reasonable to admit that the Koches who converted into Islam called Muslim, from the physical or biological point of view assimilation are found among the indigenous Muslim, Koch and Rajbanshis. It is mentioned in the imperial Gazetteer of India ‘the proposition of Mahamadan has declined since 1872 when they formed 34.6 percent of the population. They are chiefly

Sheikhs and *Nasyas*, and are for the most part, converts from the aboriginal Koch and Mech races.⁷⁷ The Shaikhs and the Nasyas, who compose the majority of the Muslims of the district, were in the main, natives of the district and in their appearances dress and their customs differed very little from the Rajbanshis. They were very much “the sons of the soils.”⁷⁸ Upendra Nath Barman stated that all Muslims inhabitants of Rajbanshi areas converted from Hindus. Their title was ‘Nasya’.⁷⁹ It can be said easily that the Muslims of North Bengal were converted and they were indigenous Muslims.⁸⁰

Hunter wrote in this regard “The Musalman and Rajbansi population live on good terms in the same tracts side by side, and intermix socially with each other. It is not unusual to find Muammadan and Rajbansi families dwelling together in the same homestead, although in separate houses.”⁸¹ So, from the cultural point of view many of usages are followed among the Koches, Rajbanshis and indigenous Muslims. In regard to social customs, dress and food, (except the eating of pork) the Mahamadams resembles the Rajbanshis.⁸²

But as the indigenous Muslims converted into Islam, so they followed some Islamic culture. Sunder also showed the similarities regarding social and cultural point of view between Rajbanshis and local Muslims. In the pattern of the homestead the same category and design was followed both in the homestead of Rajbanshis and local Muslims. Among the Mahamadans the chief occupation of the women was the husking of paddy, preparing the husband’s food, fetching water, looking after the children etc. Sunder wrote, “On rising in the morning, Rajbanshis go out without eating anything. After this they proceed to the field and plough up to about mid-day, when they return home. This is called ‘Dupar Samay’; children have their meals whenever hungry. Women eat with the children and always after the male. Mahamadan generally eat *panta bhat* (stale rice) in the morning before going to the field for ploughing.”⁸³

Rajbanshis and Mahamadan women wear a Shari or wrapper called *phota- kapor* round them. Men wear a jacket called *piran*. Girls wear a Shari from waist to ankles up to the 5th or 6th year. Among Mahamadans this is called 'Hetpatani'.

Rajbanshis women wore various types of ornaments such as:-⁸⁴

- (1) Ear- *angti* (silver ear ring), *machipath*, *ditto*, *guji*.
- (2) Nose—*Noth* (gold ring), *phul*, *guji*.
- (3) Neck—*Chandra har*(silver neckless), *siklihar*, *mala*, *kuchia- mor-har*, *hasila*, *poalmala*, *kati kala -mala*
- (4) Feet—*Tongkaru* (silver ancklets)
- (5) Wrists—*Gotadu*, or *gokul kharu*, *mutakharu*, *sakado*.
- (6) Finger—*Angti* (silver ring).

During the colonial period Muslims and Rajbanshis enjoyed in the cultural entertainments. In the folk songs and folk dance the difference between Rajbanshis and Muslims is not followed. Bajle Rahaman writes, "Before 1940s the impact of the hadis, sariyat could not be accumulated actively in the society of North Bengal. They took embraced Islam from the Sufi Darbesh, but religion preachers were interfered to the indigenous language- culture- folklore as a result the indigenous Muslims conveyed and maintained their folkloristic tradition through the ages or for hundreds of years".⁸⁵

Other than Bhaoyaiya songs there were so many folksongs which were sang and enjoyed by the Hindu and Muslim artists namely – Gorakhnather gan , Akoali gan, Panchali songs of Sattapir , Jari gan , Murshedi songs, Saital Senol songs and Gambhira songs of Malda. Kushan and dotaradanga gan was performed on the stages. In these gan a plot of different facts, social, historical and mythological may be, was performed. At the gap of the plot or drama, dance and songs were performed in which Hindu and Muslim youths danced on the stage being make-up of the girls locally called "Chhukri" (dancer). One Gidal and one Doyari joined and danced with them. In the Kushan Palatiya songs Gidal took the *Bena* (a musical instrument) and in

the Dotorā Danga Gan (song), Gidal used dotara (a musical instrument). Gidal sang at first and then Chhukri and Doyari song followed by Gidal.

There is a little different between the kushan gan and the Dotara Danga Gan. In the kushan gan Gidal uses “Bena” as a musical instrument instead of Dotorā. Indigenous people both of Hindus and Muslims participated and enjoyed the Kushan and Dotorā Danga Gan. These songs including different plots of socio-religious and mythological facts were performed in different stages of North Bengal and Assam.

Besides these songs the Muslim youths collected paddy from house to house with singing the ‘Akoali Song’. This was an old and traditional system. Some *Bairagis* (like Baul) sing their songs from house to house with Dotorā and Khanjani. Abdul Bairagi lived in Sitalkuchi Block, Baramarichha village of Dinhatā Subdivision in Cooch Behar district.

There were some occasions or rituals or festivals where both the Rajbanshis and indigenous Muslims participated and performed as follows.⁸⁶

Gochar Pana: -In this ceremony before the transplanting of cold weather paddy (locally known as Hemti Dhan) a young plantaintree, a kewa (Kostas specious) flower, a bunch of jute, a bunch of munj grass, and a black arum are planted in a corner of the paddy field. Some *sindur* (vermillion) and *kajal* (antimony) are then put on the plantain tree and on the ground together with some *dhup* (incense). After this, some milk is poured at the base of the tree. After this ceremony, which is performed to satisfy the Goddess Laksmi, Planting operation begins. It is usually performed by the Nasya Sheiekh.

Naban Khawa: - It is a ceremony carries into effect when the Haimonti paddy was first cut. Before eating the new paddy, the Rajbanshis used to take a small quantity of new rice together with some sugar, plantains, dahi(curd),

ghi(clarified butter), gur(molasses) and alua rice and made a puja in the name of their deceased parents and relatives. This was called 'tarpan' after that they had to bath and purified themselves. At first Brahmanas had to take their meals, after Brahmanas other people would take the meal of new rice.

Pushna:- Like the Hindus the Mahamadans also observed the *pushna occasion* (the day of Paush Sankranti) by eating the *cakes* (Pitha), making of the dust of rice. They distributed cakes or pitha and halwa (sweets) to their neighbours and enjoyed the day by wishing their cow and cowshed.

Baraghar:- At the time of constructing their houses like the Rajbanshis the local Nasya Sheikh Muslims to pay heed to the North sided room as the most important place. They had to take their valuable things in this room, even the new bride first enter in this room, because of its holiness.

Holud Makha--- Like the local Rajbanshis, the Muslim observed holud makha occasion. In this occasion, turmeric and white cotton shari and a napkin had been sent to the bride's house from groom' side.

Chailon Bati--- It was a famous tradition followed by the Nasya Sheikh. In this social practice holding a wicker- tray filled with banana, lamp and other things in favour of groom, a Bairati received the Bride grooms with dancing mode.

Sindur Khela-Sindur Tola--- This was the famous social practice followed by indigenous Muslims, mostly among the Nasya Sheikh. They would enjoy the occasion with smearing vermilion on the forehead of the women. They also enjoyed in 'Firani or Sindur Tola' occasion when bride groom came in the house of father in law after 7 days or one week.

Beside these there were so many festivals and social practices performed by the Rajbanshis and Mahamadans and in this respect there was assimilation in the Rajbanshis and other lower castes Hindus and the indigenous Muslims of North Bengal. Mahanta Debata, Basuli Debi, Burima Ma also worshiped by the Muslims like the Hindus as evils spirit or demon in Dinajpur District. They worshiped and satisfied the evils spirit for their protection from deceases, premature death and erosion. Manta Bajikars Muslims worshiped Manasa in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri district. 'Bapday Deoya,' *Jharphuk, Magon, Dosti, Manod, Sadh* were also the social practices performed by the local Muslims and the Rajbanshis. Other than these local Muslims and Rajbanshis there were so many lower castes Hindu performed such types of folkloristic occasion or worship for their protection, living peacefully, and to save them from the different types of natural calamities and evil spirit or demons.

Apart from this cultural assimilation there were some dissimilation in culture of Indigenous Hindus and Muslims of North Bengal. As the local Muslims converted into Islam, so they had to obey all the terms and condition of the religion and rituals laws and practices guided by the Maulavi or Mollah. These compulsory duties were Namaj, wearing Kalma, Zakat, and Haj etc.

At the age of six or seven years a Muhammadan boy is circumcised. This is called Sonait, and is performed by the Ostath with little ceremony. The Ostath is paid from four anna to one rupee as a free.⁸⁷

Faiz Mahal Palace, popularly known as Nawab Palace or Nawab Bari, was built by the late Nawab Musharruf Hussain, Khan Bahadur, over an area more than 18 bighas in the heart of Jalpaiguri town, as a residence for himself and members of his family. Austrian and Turkish artists painted the wall frescoes. The flooring of the entire palace, including a grand staircase, is made of the finest Italian marble. There are Venetian stained glass windows and massive sliding Burma teak doors in the main drawing and dining rooms. The extensive grounds of the palace accomodated houses, garrages, tennis, courts,

cricket and football fields and offices of numerous tea estates, owned or controlled by the family. The complex was acquired by an order of the West Bengal Government in July 1972. But, in spite of all endeavours by the heirs, who live in Calcutta, no compensation has yet been paid.⁸⁸

Immigrated Culture

From the above discussion it is found the cultural scenario and practices of the different indigenous communities or people of the district Jalpaiguri as elsewhere in North Bengal. Now I will try to throw a new light on the immigrated culture. In the previous chapter it is discussed the formation of the district and society of Jalpaiguri and there we have found a large number of people immigrated in the district of different communities, castes religion and classes in the colonial period. So a multi-cultural scenario was seen in the district. In the cultural point of view the immigrated culture may be categorized into two broad culture namely Sanskrit culture and Western culture which was a turning point for changing the society and culture of the district as elsewhere in Bengal, nay India.

By the entering of Sanskritization and Westernization society stepped into a new world. A so called 'Renaissance' was taken place in the district, nay Bengal. Sanskritization was started long before in the ancient period; but it got a new shape and life in the colonial period. Sanskrit culture means the culture of higher castes strata originated from traditional Hindunization or Aryanization. In the colonial period by the formation of the district in 1869 and initiation of new commercial enterprise following new economic policy many opportunities came to the business classes and the people seeking for job for their livelihood. It is relevant to mention here that in this field the people belonged to higher strata took a significant role because it is followed that almost all the people involved in different commercial sectors and service sectors were coming from

higher castes and higher class in the colonial period. Mukulesh Sanyal wrote ‘At time of festival, theater were held in every locality. Aged persons performed theaters which were enjoyed by the older persons and youths. The females of the houses supervise the pandel of worship. It was charming and dream atmosphere.’⁸⁹ The most significant thing of Durga festival was Bijoya Dashami, at the time of Bijoya Dashami everyone congratulate each other persons used to give their regard or *pronam* to the honorable persons. The society of Jalpaiguri town was a homogenous. Bijoya Sammiloni was held in both the places of Aryanatya Samaj and Bandhab Natyo Samaj. In spite of having competition between them, they forgot that. Emergence come across among each other, performed songs, drama and lastly sweets were distributed.⁹⁰ Started organizing the corporate life of different classes of people by establishing a club, where in the evening, met many middle-aged man and youths of different vocations. This club helped to foster a fellow feeling and also to mean away men from wasteful practices including excessive drinking etc. This club later on developed into Arya Natya Samaj. The life of Jalpaiguri public was fully expressed in colourful activities in which prominent were men like Chintaharan Chakraborty, Satish Master, Jogen Nag, Suren Sen, Sarat Chaterjee etc.⁹¹

Samir Chakraborty wrote, “It seems to me that the Durga puja in Tea Garden was started 50 to 70 years ago from today. Earlier Bengali Babu and officials of tea garden formed club like the Europeans. Tea Company built the club-building. In every club there performed drama at the time of Durga puja. Nepali or Non Bengali Babus, Sahib, Manager everybody would join these festival.”⁹²

Mukulesh Sanyal again pointed out that the Jalpaiguri town was not big. It was nice town; there was good relation among each other. There was a cultural life which was evolved through these enjoying festivals. There was no huge

number of Durga worships, some family worship and some public worship were seen.⁹³

Role of different educational institutions of the town—

Jalpaiguri Zilla School was one of the important institutions in the social and cultural canvas of Jalpaiguri. Many scholars and eminent persons had come out from this school that was scattered in different parts of the country and abroad also. Durga Prosad Ghatak wrote, Surendra Prosad Roy studied in the upper class to us. He was the elder son of Tarini prosad Roy. He passed the Matrick examination, and then he admitted in Presidency College. There after he was sent to England for studying I.C.S. But he suffered on head problem there. He was the classmate of Dr.Meghnath Saha. Dr. Saha met with Surendra Prosad Roy when he came to Jalpaiguri. Dr. Sir I. Rahaman M.A. (Oxon) was a meritorious student of this school. He was senior to us. Later he became Vice – Chancellor of Dhaka University, The library of Zilla School was one of the largest and greatest in North Bengal.⁹⁴

Sri B.N.Dasgupta, Ex Vice-Chancellor, North Bengal University, wrote, “....In my days of childhood, in our mohalla I knew two eminent elders who used to live for some time in their early years in Jalpaiguri who became important industrialists later: Khirod Chakraborty, the founder of the “Calcutta Fan”, and Dinesh Chandra Majumdar, the founder of ‘Gwalior potteries’ in Gwalior state and later in Delhi.”⁹⁵

Religion of the Jalpaiguri district in the colonial period

Religiously Jalpaiguri district was a multidimensional character. Like India people belonged multi-religion had been living in this district, for that the district, Jalpaiguri may be called “Mini India’. Through ancient period to modern period it had a glorious past , because the legacy of the ancient

religion such as Pre-Vedic-Religion, Vedic Religion, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism, Ajibikism, Saivism, Baisnavism and Tantrikism fell upon the society of the district like all over the North Bengal. Religion which was originated in the medieval age such as Nathism, Sufism, Islam and Christianize of early modern period had entered in the society of the district. It should be mentioned here that the Vedic religion or Brahmanism had entered in this area being so delay unlike other parts of India. In the district as elsewhere of Bengal people maintained the Pre-Vedic Religion that was the nature oriented religion till the penetration of the Vedic religion.

As the district had a long history and legacy in the religion is concerned so to have a clear picture of the religion I have to go back in the page of history, without which religion of the colonial period cannot be realized. In a broad sense, the religious structure can be divided into two main categories—1) Indigenous religion, meaning of which religion of the people of their own, out of the immigrated religion. 2) Immigrated religion that were immigrated in the society of the district as elsewhere of Bengal from outside of Bengal amongst which Sanskrit based religion, such as vedic religion, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism etc. There is no way to know the religious beliefs of the indigenous people of North Bengal before the penetration of the Aryan civilization and culture. Whatever types of the indigenous religions, these gradually turned their characters and mixed up with the traditional Hindu religion after coming of the Aryans gradually. This Vedic religion had two ways—the first one was Brahmanism based on Vedas and the second were anti-Vedas Jainism, Buddhism and Ajibikism.

It can be said on the basis of the historical evidences that the Aryan culture or religion had entered in Bengal in delaying. So, one question is raised specifically—who were the indigenous people before entering the Aryan people or culture or who formed the society before penetration of the Aryans? In the previous chapter I have discussed about the formation of the society or social

structure of the district like other parts of North Bengal. Naturally here I will discuss the religion of the indigenous people before coming of the Aryans. It can be said reaching on the debates that the society before coming of the Aryans was ethnic based or 'Totem' or 'Kouma'- based. The people of different 'Totem' or 'Kouma' had separate culture, customs, rituals, usages in their daily life. This people had been dwelling for their livelihood with their culture and religion. They had their own rules and regulations in their socio-economic status. In the religion is concerned they had no specific traditional religion like Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Islamism and Shikhism. Their men were dependent on the nature, they had no formed education or scientific mentality is and every power of nature was treated as god or goddess by them and they worshiped or respected every power as their god or goddess as their deity.

In their everyday life of the indigenous people of the district as elsewhere in Bengal, they worshiped or prayed different powers or deities to protect themselves from different diseases and natural calamities. Different worships or occasions were held or performed in their socio-economic life, at the time of sowing of different agricultural crops, collected the crops stored in the house and eating new crops.

It should be mentioned here that there are many customs, worship and usages are followed in the Bengali society till now which is completely different from the Vedic religion or Brahmanism or traditional Hinduism. It is hard to say that from whence this customs or usages were introduced or who introduced this. Nihar Ranjan Roy wrote, "Indian people, like many people of other countries worshiped stones, mountain, flowers and fruits, animals, birds and specific places etc. believing them as deity. Till now indigenous people of Khasi, Munda, Santals, Rajbanshis, Sabars, communities do the same. Among the girls of Hindus Brahmins society in Bangladesh particularly in the villages, the worships of the trees are prevailing particularly the Tulsi, Sheora, Bata on

every holly occasion of our society. Besides in these occasions mango leaves are used, kalabau is worshipped, powder of rice etc. is required in many rituals – all these were coming from the culture or rituals of non- Aryan people or Adibasis.”⁹⁶ It is mentioned earlier that the indigenous people of the Jalpaiguri, as happened in elsewhere of North Bengal before coming of the Aryan culture of the Vedic religion, believed in nature based religion. There is difference in terms of culture and religion among the indigenous people of North Bengal, but more or less there were some similarities in the culture and religion among the all indigenous communities. These similarities were all the customs, culture, or usages were pre- Vedic or pre- Brahmanas. The indigenous people of the district of Jalpaiguri such as Koch, Mech, Garo, Toto, Druckpa Jalda, Rajbanshis, and Paliya etc. had been carrying out their tradition and culture of the pre- Vedic society.

Though the communication with the Aryan culture was made during the period of king Bhagadatta, the ruler of Pragjyotishpur, there was no influence of Aryanization in the society of North Bengal. The Aryan or Brahmin culture or religion was gradually entering since the reign of Guptas. As the North Bengal was included with the Gupta empire and the Gupta rulers were Aryans, so they tried to spread the Brahmanization in North Bengal as elsewhere in India. After that, different rulers of this region, such as rulers of the Kamtapur kingdom, rulers of the Koch kingdom, were patronized by the Brahmanism. The rulers of the Koch- Kamta kingdom converted into traditional Hinduism. They imported Brahmans from Kanouj, Mithila, and Benaras etc. They granted lands to the Brahmanas for their livelihood and religious performances. The traditional Hindu culture or Brahmin culture entered in the palace of the Koch – Kamta kingdom and from thence it was spread among the ordinary people of the society.

Beside the Vedic- Brahmana religion the Buddhism and Jainism we also extended in the society of North Bengal. Mentioned may be made here that by

the penetration of Buddhism, Jainism and Azibikism, the Aryan culture and religion were introduced spread over the ancient. Because the progenitor and patronize of these religion belong to Aryan community. However the philosophy of three religions was anti - Vedic and unbelievable in super human of Vedas. The Chinese pilgrim Yuan- Chuang confessed that Lord Buddha came to Pundrabardhana, Samatata and Karnasubarna where he spread the Buddhism. Buddhism was also spread and extended having a new motion in the reign of Palas, patronized by the Pala kings as they were Buddhist.

Beside the Buddhism, Jainism and Ajibikism, the Vaishnavism was also influenced in the society of Bengal including the district of Jalpaiguri in the ancient period. The Vaishnaism emerged as a new shaped and philosophy with the emergence of Sree Chaitanya Deb of Nadia district. The influence of Vaishnabism was spread over all the parts of Bengal including eastern and north eastern part of India. It started its journey as social reforms. Another Saints of Vaishnabism was Sankar Dev in Assam. He came to Koch kingdom at the time of Nara Narayan and the permission of Nara Narayan he spread the Vaishnabism in Koch kingdom.

Beside these religions the Saiva religion, the Sakta religion and Nathism also originated in the district of Jalpaiguri as elsewhere in North Bengal. The people believing in Nathism were called 'Jugi'. The Nath People practices different type of Jogas. The Jugis of Nath people fought against the Brahmanism or Brahmin based casteism. Jalpesh—A village in pargana South Maynaguri, it contains a temple of Shiva, which was built on the site of an earlier temple by Pran Narain, one of the CoochBehar Rajas about three centuries ago. The temple is a massive white washed building, surmounted by a large dome, with an outer diameter of 34 feet, round the base and top of which run galleries. A flight of steps leads down to the basement which is sunk some depth in the mound and which contains a very ancient Siva linga. An old established fair is held at Jalpesh in February at the time of the Sivaratri

festival; at lasts for about three weeks and is attended by people from all parts of the district as well as from Rangpur, Dinajpur, and other parts of Northern Bengal.⁹⁷ The Jalpesh temple is four miles from Moynaguri. Regarding the maintenance of the Jalpesh temple E.M.Konstam, Esq., Under Secy.to the Govt.of Bengal, Revenue Dept., wrote a letter to the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division, “I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No.1973 Rct., dated the 25th February 1896.You observe that it has been found impossible, by the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri to select jots which would yield exactly Rs. 1,720 assigned to the Jalpesh Temple for its maintenance. In the circumstances the Lieutenant. Governor sanctions the arrangement under which it is proposed to make are grant of three jotes, yielding an income of Rs.1, 726, for the maintenance of the temple and its Pujaris.I am to add that the lands are liable to be resumed if the temple is allowed to fall into disrepair.”⁹⁸ It is mentioned in Jalpaiguri district Gazetteer, “Jalpesh is a village in Maynaguri police station, situated on the bank of the Jhora River the main temple here combines the Hindu and Muslim architectures. The temple has to look of a mosque of North India.....A big fair called “Jalpesh Mela” on the occasion of Shivaratri festival is held here every year in February which is attended by a large number of persons coming from different parts of North Bengal. The temple committee organizes the fair since 1955.”⁹⁹

Sannyasir Hat also called Sannyasi Kata in Rajganj Police Station, is a famous spot in Sikarpur Tea Garden area and is said to be so named after a Sannyasi, i.e. a Sage .According to the legend he was Bhabani Pathak, a character in Bankim Chandra’s novel, “Devi Choudhurani”.The temple here looks like a Buddhist pagoda. Local people say it was constructed by one Scott is not very distant past.

A major portion of the population of the district as elsewhere in Bengal was Muslims. It is hard to say that when Islamization was entered in the society

of North Bengal. It is assumed that the Islamization or Islamic culture entered in the society of North Bengal by the invasion of Md. Bakhtiar Khalji to Tibet through North Bengal. In the reign of Hussain Sahi and Ilias Sahi, Islamization got a new motion and since then Islamization extended over the different parts of Bengal, It is a vital question how and why the large number of people became Muslim. There are so many historical evidences and on the basis of these evidences it can be said that the maximum portion of the Muslim people are converted from Hindus and Buddhist particularly the lower caste people. As the people of lower caste and lower class had no dignity to the upper caste people in the caste based society of Hinduism, so the socially and economically depressed class people were converted gradually into Muslim? In the process of Islamization Sufi saints, pirs, fakirs and Muslim rulers took a significant role.

At the initial stage the relation between Hindu and Muslim was bitter. But after dwelling or living together in the society years after years the relations became softness and communal synthesis was built among them. In the medieval period by the emergence of Bhaktism and Sufism the communal harmony and integrity among the Hindus and Muslims got a new shape. Ranjit Dasgupta wrote, "In spite of converting into Hinduism and Islamism gradually a major portion of original inhabitants of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Dinajpur and Rangpur, religion cannot change their folkloristic culture, believes, customs and usages in their day to day lives."¹⁰⁰ As a consequences of the weakness and the disintegration of the Muslim rule reign of English East India Company was started through the battle of Plassey and Buxer held in Bengal and it was extended to whole over India gradually. By the coming of Britishers a new era was began in Bengal, nay India. As the medieval age was going on in allover India until starting of the British rule or English culture, feudalism and religious based society- different types of superstitions both in Hindus and Muslims were the main characteristic of the society of Bengal like India. There was no logic or scientific mentality, no modernity. In every sphere of life in

this society of the Hindus and Muslims was carried on by the orthodox mentality. So by the starting of the British rule the western education Western culture was started gradually. By the Western education or culture the process of modernization was started in the society and culture. A new intelligentsia or middle class was emerged who were Western educated. Western educated intellectuals studied western Philosophy that was materialistic, the history of the world, history of the logic and science, history of renaissance held in Europe, history of Industrial revolution, history of new economy, history of French and American Revolution. As a result of these studying they realized the necessity of modernization and the abolition of religious based society of the country. To save the society they tried to initiate western education and abolished the bad materials of the indigenous society like superstition and orthodox mentality. In this tasks Ram Mohan, Vidyasgar, Vibekananda took significant role in the process social reforms. Among the Western educated intellectuals Ram Mohan was one of the greatest reformist of the Indian Society who actually realized the necessity of social reforms without which India's emancipation could not be possible for which he was called "Father of Modern India". In this way the renaissance was started in Bengal nay India.

In the process of modernization or changing of the age, the missionaries of western countries came to India with the imperialist's powers. They insulted the people and civilization of India for their superior mentality. They evangelical group among the Missionaries treated the Indians as barbarians. Pointing out that the Indian had no civilization, no religion, no culture, just they were uncivilized. Indians had been converted to Christianity giving western education. With the intention of spreading Christianity they started their journey by establishing Christian church, Missionary school, particularly in the remote areas of the countries. It is found in the District Gazetteer of 1981 that the first Church of Christians was established in 1882 in front of old court and it was used only by the Western people. In 1896 another Church was established for the Indian people. Both the Churches were for the

Protestants. In the Western Dooars areas of the Jalpaiguri district the Missionaries entered to spread the Christian religion by establishing various churches. Missionaries established churches at Mahakalguri and Khoardanga in Alipurduar Subdivision of the district.

By establishing all these churches Missionaries spread Christian religion among the indigenous people, particularly the tribal people. It is relevant to mention here that many of the tribal tea- labourers living in different tea- estate were converted to Christianity. Beside this many tribal people belonged to Mech community were also converted to Christianity. Missionaries choose these tribal people to be converted as because these people were simple in habit and nature oriented. They were uneducated. They had been encouraged and also provoked to be converted. Missionaries also established many school in different parts of the district, particularly in the Dooars to give education to the converted people. Their intention was to spread Christianity and the ethics, ideologies and activities of the great Lord Jesus Christ, besides giving education though the Missionaries were biased and orthodox to their racial identity and their so called greatest culture and education for which they insulted and neglected the Indian culture, religion and the people, which led them to spread Christianity. But it became a boon to the people of Bengal, India as because the social revolution or renaissance was started by initiating the western education and culture. So it was positive side of the Missionaries initiatives to take place a social revolution among the Indians and Indian society.

But it had many negative sides also. For the conversion of the tribal into Christianity, the culture of their own or ethnicity had been going to be demolished. The casteless and classless ethnic based society was felt into a crisis; their unity was wasted because they were divided into separate groups accordingly the various groups of Christianity.

Another devastating religious policy of the British was initiating of communal policy by introducing 'Divide and Rule policy'. We are all well acquainted with the policy of 'Divide and Rule'. Britishers introduced different policies in different sector or areas or communities in India. The system of separate administration 'Quota System', 'Regulatory and non- Regulatory System, 6th scheduled etc. were byproduct of the Govt. It is relevant to mention here that the Government regulatory system in the Sadar Sub Division of the district, Jalpaiguri, and no regulatory system in the Western Doars of the district. It was wondered that in the same district the Government introduced separate policies. The intention behind the introduction of these policies was to give people disunited so that they could not fight united against the Government.

There is an instant about the attitude towards the Hindus for the Britishers. There is a letter written by Deputy Commissioner, Jalpaiguri to the Secretary, Ramjhora Tea Co.Ltd. Dated Jalpaiguri, the 25th July 1930.¹⁰¹

Sir,

I have honour to state that it has come to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner that a Kali Mandir has been established in the Hat compound of your Tea Estate. It should be stopped and a report to that effect be sent to this office at an early date.

In response to this letter the Secretary of Ramjhora Tea Estate wrote to The Deputy Commissioner, Jalpaiguri,

Sir,

In reply to your letter No.1372 k.M.dated the 25th July 1930, I beg to submit that we have not constructed any Kali Mandir in our Hat compound nor have we allowed any person to construct any Kali Mandir there. The Coolies and the shopkeepers of the Ramjhora Tea Estate are mostly,

if not all Hindus. Some years ago when the Hat was first started, the coolies and the shopkeepers created a temporary shed to worship the Goddess Kali on that occasion. The Goddess Kali has since then had remained there. We have given direction to our garden Manager to submerge the idol in the water. But as it is known to your honour that the Coolies are a very susceptible people, it shall have to be managed very tactfully so that their feelings may not be wounded. I pray therefore that six months time may be given to submerge the idol in water. As directed by your honour we will report when the idol has been submerged.

Secretary, Ramjhora Tea Co.Ltd.

Devastating communal politics which was stated by the interest by the British Govt. and which got a distressing condition just after concluding the Second World War though it got a new character since 1937. Since 1946 on the eve of the transformation of power a devastating communal riots was going on by which Hindus and Muslims started to kill each other in all over the countries. In the Jalpaiguri district also a communal riot was started. Ranjit Dasgupta stated that the liberal atmosphere was going to be destroyed by the immigration of Hindus from East Bengal now in Bangladesh and the Muslims from Nowakhali- Kumilla of Bangladesh locally known as 'Bhatia'.¹⁰²

On the eve of the independence there raised the demand by Muslim League led by Nawab Musharaff Hussain of Jalpaiguri and the minister of Bengal that Jalpaiguri would be merged with Pakistan. But ultimately it remained in India though the five thanas of Jalpaiguri district namely Boda, Patgram, Panchagar, Debiganj and Tentuliya were merged to Pakistan. So it was a great impetus to people of Jalpaiguri by which a large value had to be given by the people of North Bengal because by losing their areas of the district the socio-economic condition of the people of the district was hampered. So, all these incidents were by product of communal politics of the British.

Medical Treatment---In this context J.E.Cooke, ESQ., Deputy Accountant General, Bengal, wrote letter to the secretary to the Government of Bengal, “With reference to the Notification, dated 8th instant, constituting a new District, called the Julpigoree District, with its Head Quarters at Mynagooree, I request the favour of being informed whether the allowances of Rupees 100 per meusem, sanctioned in Financial order No.3506, dated 2nd December 1867, for the Regimental surgeon for performing the duties of Superintendent of the Julpigoree Dispensary should cease from the 1st proxim,.....”¹⁰³. B.N.Dasgupta pointed out, “For the first time, Dr.Satish Chandra Gupta drew the attention of the thinking public to the needs of health of Jalpaiguri people. It was a Malarious district-apart from its specific medicine for cure, clean water was a paramount need at any time and uncontaminated drinking water was essential in all circumstances....”¹⁰⁴

Annual return of Patients treated in Eden Sanitarium during the year 1890 as follows.¹⁰⁵

Names of the disease	Male	Female	Children	Total	Cured	Reliever	Died
Disentry	2	1	3	6	4	--	2
Malarial fever	55	11	9	75	72	2	1
Debility	21	23	8	52	48	4	--
Syphilis	8	--	--	8	5	3	--
Gonorrhoeaetc.	7	--	--	7	5	2	1
others				190			

Death from fever in Ratio per 1000 of population

Circle	1888	1887	1883to1887	1878 to 1887	1888	1887	1883-1887	1878to1887
Urban	24836	25195	30669	35266	10.40	110.45	12.72	14.63
Rural	1067266	1062573	982772	864015	16.76	16.66	15.44	13.57

The establishment of a pumping station in connection with the scheme of water supply within the Jalpaiguri Municipality and Resolved that the Municipality shall not spend on any account or on any reason the said sums already paid by Babu Krishna Sundar Sen until and unless the entire Government Grant and loan as well as the contribution of the Jalpaiguri District board are fully released and that and if the Municipality spends the amount of Rs.6003/- and Rs.257/-(Already paid) before the receipt of the Government grant and the District Board contribution in full, Babu Krishna Sundar Sen or his executor will be at liberty to demand or get back the said money with interest.¹⁰⁶

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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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Chapter -5

Emergence of the Middle Class and Their Activities in the District, Jalpaiguri

It has been shown how the society was formed and developed in the colonial and post- colonial period in the previous chapter. It is also shown the changing scenario of the cultural pattern in the colonial and post- colonial period. In these analyses, it is found that the society and culture was an amalgamation of the indigenous and immigrated people. In this chapter I shall try to explore the emergence and activities of a new class that was middle class in the district as elsewhere in Bengal.

First of all we have to realize the meaning of the term ‘middle class’ or what do we mean by the term ‘middle class’? When and how did the middle class people originate or in what circumstances, the middle class originated in the district, broadly in the whole part of North Bengal. Simply, it may be said that the people who were western educated intellectuals, intermediaries in the agrarian cultivation, merchant and trading class, teachers, Professors, official staff and Amlas etc. are called middle class.

There are many debates about the origin of the middle class among the scholars. It is needless to say that after creation of the feudalism in the agrarian system there emerged a intermediary landholding classes who played a role of middle ranking tenure holder in the land between the Government and the peasants. These classes were treated as *Ekta Land Ijaradar* in the Sultanate period. They were called Zamindars, Jotdars, Talukdars etc. in the history of Bengal, there also many intermediary classes in the agrarian land system since the early medieval period.

In the colonial period these intermediary classes got a new shape. There are many debates regarding the nature and power of the intermediary class. But it can be said avoiding all the debates that the intermediaries both in the colonial and pre-colonial period were oppressors. The original cultivators or peasants were oppressed and deprived by these classes. In spite of having covetous and oppressions attitude of the intermediaries, it can be stated that the intermediaries in the colonial period had a distinctive character. Unlike pre-colonial period they had no limitations of oppressions to the peasants or cultivators. Prof. Benoy Bhushan Choudhury showed that there emerged so many new intermediary classes with new power and character in the colonial period.¹ It is relevant to mention here that all the intermediaries did not belong to the middle classes. Many Zamindars, Jotdars and intermediaries having thousand acres of land belonged to the elite classes. But other than these elite intermediaries there were many intermediaries directly not the proprietors of lands, rather obtained lands by the agreement or lease were treated as middle classes. Beside these classes, there were many small Zamindars, Jotdars and other intermediaries who were called middle class. Moreover there were many rich peasants (original cultivators) who had lands and cultivated directly were also called middle classes.

Other than these middle class people, there were many small merchant class and trading people had no sufficient capital, rather they had small industry or shop who would carry on their business locally were also treated as middle classes. Suppose a shop keeper namely grocery, cloth seller, stationer etc. were not the proprietor of heavy capitals, they were not treated as poor people also, so these classes were called the middle class people.

Mention may be made in this regard that the indigenous people namely Rajbanshis, local Muslims and the tribals were not interested in the field of industry, trade and commerce. These indigenous people were mainly involved in the agrarian cultivation and hunting.² Most of the people of trade and

commerce were immigrated people who came into this district in different phases.³ It would be proved early, going through the towns of the district, namely Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar town, nay Maynaguri, Dhupguri, Kamakhyaguri, Birpara. It would be followed that almost all the merchant class and trading class people or shop keepers were immigrated people, who immigrated in the district in different phases before independence and post independence period.⁴ In the field of Industry, tea industry was the main stream in the district. In 1874 the first tea Industry was established at Gajoldoba. From thence number of teagarden was increased and it reached more than 200 in the first half of 20th century. These tea estates were established both by the European and Indian proprietorship. Many eminent Bengalis came to this district for business of tea estate. They obtained lands from Government and started the cultivation. Many of them would live in the Jalpaiguri town.

Other than these proprietors of tea-estates, there were many immigrated people who came to this district for doing job as a manager, clerks and other officials in the tea estates. Some of them lived in the Jalpaiguri town and some of them lived nearby the tea-estates. These official classes also treated as middle class.

During the colonial rule no major industries except tea industry has grown in North Bengal for which the socio-economic condition hitherto has not been developed in this region. The major causes of this backwardness in the industrial point of view was less interest among the indigenious people as the greater section of the people were independent on agriculture. The political factors were also responsible for this drawback. The outsiders and the non-Bengali merchants played the greater role in the field of trade and commerce .The owners of the trade, industries during the colonial rule were conspicuously absent among the indigenious population. They did not even have interest to work in the Tea Estate. These tea industries were grown by the Bengali middle class as well as the Europeans. Binayak Sen has shown that of the 11 tea companies in Jalpaiguri district were owned by the Bengalis mostly. The

Bengali entrepreneurs were urban middle class Bengalis. As for example the legal practitioner, Joychandra Sanyal was the Managing Director of Jalpaiguri Tea Company in 1878. Among other enterprising tea planters who were involved in the cultivation came from other profession. Gopal Ghosh who started life as a clerk in a Govt. office and founded six companies and of Tarini Prosad Roy who founded the Anjuman tea company in 1889 and in course of time became the Managing Director of Sixteen tea companies and Prosonna Deb Raykot, the famous Zamindar and founder of seven tea companies.⁵

On 2nd June 1879 the first meeting of Jalpaiguri Tea Company was held with Joy Chandra Sanyal on the chair. The following members attending the meeting.⁶

- 1) Srijukta Babu Mahim Chandra Ghosh.
- 2) „ Gopal Chandra Ghosh.
- 3) „ Joy Chandra Sanyal.
- 4) „ Keshab Chandra Ghatak
- 5) „ Ram Chandra Sen.
- 6) „ Harish Chandra Adhikari
- 7) „ Yadav Chandra Chakroborty
- 8) „ Madan Mohan Bhowmik
- 9) „ Munshi Achhiruddin Majumdar.

It is pertinent to mention that the Bengali middle class played a vital role in the field of Tea plantation in Darjeeling & Jalpaiguri. Compared to them the European planters were favoured with many facilities.

Despite this discriminating treatment the Bengali tea planters made headway in expanding their business which was for them a challenge to overcome. The tea planters set up several organization and societies. These activities were confined not only in the tea industry; it was an attempt to foster national spirit in the society. Ranjit Das Gupta wrote, “Those among the

Jalpaiguri's middle class who had saving adequate enough to start a tea garden did not hesitate to entire into the hitherto untried and unexplored area of tea enterprise & take risk.”⁷

Though there was no other major industry was established except the tea industry, many small scale and mediocre industries build up in Jalpaiguri. It is however to be admitted that the owners of these industries were outsiders. Not only in the field of industry but also in trade and commerce had the Non-Bengalis played the major part. In this field also the middle class Bengalis made notable contributions. Among this middle class there were both Bengalis and non-Bengalis; among non-Bengalis the Marwaris & Persians had a major share. Not only in North Bengal but all over India the Marwaris set their footsteps in the field of business. In the British rule in India it was quite impossible for the Bengalis to establish themselves in trade. In this adverse circumstances the Bengalis to somehow asserted their existence. In 1905 by way of movement against the partition of Bengal the Bengalis were developed to bring about the economic well being of Bengal and on the other hand foster unity and the spirit of nationalism through economic self-reliance. This movement influenced different parts of North Bengal. In this context Mukulesh Sanyal wrote, “Durgadas Chakroborty, Adinath Moitra & Ananda Biswas were sanctioned for two weeks on the charge of burning down foreign clothes. On the dates of their release Jogesh Chandra Ghosh organized the youth to welcome them at the jail gate. This was indeed a courageous move against police mission.”⁸

The Bengali middle class those belonging to the legal profession took the most active part in the process of socio-economic changes. They followed by the service-holders, not only provided the social leadership, but also acted as pioneers in the economic field and launched the Indian sector of the plantation industry. This leadership was provided by both Hindu and Muslim families.⁹

Let us now throw some light on the personalities who earned reputation in cultural and literary spheres among the Bengali Middleclass. It is to be noted that North Bengal lagged far behind East and South Bengal in the changes in cultural and literary sphere because of the delayed beginning in educational sphere and among the indigenous communities. The educational and cultural aspects of North Bengal were enriched by those who hailed from East Bengal and South Bengal. We can divide middle class people of North Bengal culturally or intellectually into two categories who took a vital role in the development of the society and culture that was indigenous and emigrated. They had great role and contribution in every aspect of the society, economy, politics and culture. Among the famous indigenous intellectuals and social reformers of North Bengal Thakur Panchanan Barma, was the “son of the soil” of North Bengal. He is called by the local people “Ram Mohan of North Bengal”. He is honoured as the deity by the Rajbanshi of North Bengal. There are many debates and controversies on the anthropological identities of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and other parts of India. In the eyes of the upper castes Bengalis the Rajbanshis have non-Aryan origins and hence they belonged to lower castes. In the writings of the British authors the Rajbanshi and the Koch originated from the same human race and they belonged to the Non-Aryan aborigine. Since the publication of the census report of 1872 the Rajbanshi & the Koch were shown as the same social strata by the British officials and authors on it triggered the discontent among the Rajbanshis, who claimed that they were ‘Kshatriyas’ belonging to the Aryan race. The Kshatriya movement initiated by Thakur Panchanan Barma is all over the undivided North Bengal. He cited reforming various scriptures to establish the point that the Rajbanshis are not Non-Aryans. Some Brahmins accepted the views of Rai Sahib. The Rajbanshis observed several rituals for purification and put on sacred thread. They assumed the title “Barman”, ‘Singha’, ‘Roy’, ‘Dev Singha’ etc in place of Das. In consequence of the movement and in the light of the census report of 1911 Mr. Mally indicated the Rajbanshi as separate from the Koch. In this way Thakur Panchanan Barma acquired the honour and status

of the Rajbanshi. It is however to be pointed out that the Rajbanshi of Assam did not support the Kshatriya movement of Panchanan Barma. The Rajbanshis of Bengal had been struggling for Kshatriya status and also advocated that the Koches were different from the Rajbanshis.¹⁰ The Rajbanshis of Assam on the otherhand believed that the Koches and the Rajbanshis were same. Apart from this, the Assamese Rajbanshis did not welcome the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Movement of Raisaheb Panchanan Barma.¹¹

Like Raisaheb Panchanan Barma there was a thinker of the Rajbanshi community, named Upendra Nath Barman. He hailed from a village, named Gopalpur near Mathabhanga. He was highly intelligent and lived at hostel, while studying at Mathabhanga High School he joined the Anushilan Samiti in fighting to free the country from foreign rule. In the princely state of Koch Behar freedom movement was prohibited. During the ban he dedicated himself to the freedom movement. He has written "In my student life at school I encountered a novel situation. The native king of Koch Behar was against Swadeshi movement. But the secret organization of Anushilan Samiti spread in Mathabhangain my fifth standard of joined the samity".¹² He had joined the movement led by Panchanan Barma for social reformation of the Kshatriya community. Thakur Panchana Barma also directed the Rajbanshi Youth to join the First World War to demonstrate that they were of the Warrior race, called 'Kshatriya'. Upendra Nath Barman also extended his cooperation to this mission. Subsequently he took part in the activities of the Kshatriya community in different parts of North Bengal and Goalpara spontaneously.

Upendra Nath Barman was elected commissioner & vice chairman of Jalpaiguri Municipality in 1931. He was elected as M.L.A in 1937. He became the minister of undivided Bengal from 18th December 1941 to 31st March 1943. In the Assembly election of 1947 he was elected member of the council. Mr. Barman visited foreign countries in several times and acquired immense experience. He visited England, Scotland, Switzerland & Burma. Besides he

toured over different parts of the country which enriched his knowledge and experience.

Upendranath Barman associated himself with many philanthropic activities. He set up school and looked after their management. He was associated with the setting up and management of Jalpesh Laksmikanta High School, Dhupguri High English School, and Fanindradeb High English School.¹³

He was a famous writer too. His book ‘Uttarbanger Sekal O Amar Jivan Smriti’ is a valuable document of the history of North Bengal and its’ society. To be enlightened about the Rajbanshi and Kshatriyo community ‘Rajbanshi Kshatriyo Jatir Itihas’ is well documented handbook. Besides these he wrote the biography of Thakur Panchanan. He also wrote numerous articles in different periodicals which all bear testimony to his literary skill. ‘The Rajbanshi Probochan and Heyali’ and ‘Jalpesh Mahapith’, by him are valuable guide for the history of North Bengal. Apart from literary activities Sri Barman was associated with a number of social organizations. After retirement from politics he actively involved himself at Laxminarayan Mandir of Jalpaiguri, Jalpesh Mandir of Maynaguri, Uttarbanga Lok Sanskriti Parishad, Panchanan Smarak Samiti and the management of Kshatriyo Samaj.¹⁴

Another son of the soil of eminence Rajbanshi community was Madhusudhan Roy. He was like Panchanan Barma a student in law. Madhusudan Roy was born at Gourigram of Nilphamari in the district of Rangpur in 1869. He started practicing law in Jalpaiguri town in 1899. Besides the legal practice he made notable contribution in social reforms. He was the president for two successive years of the Kshatriya Congress in its first and second session. As a legal practitioner his fame spread all round.

As a challenge of Bengali Tea Planters he established a number of Tea Estates. He was the lifelong Managing director of Saraswatipur Tea Garden. He was the member of Jalpaiguri Municipality and Jalpaiguri Zilla Parishad.

Madhusudan Roy fascinated the public by his ornamental speeches in meetings & gatherings and in the sittings presided over by him. He could explain in single language the stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata scriptural like “Batrish Singhasan’.¹⁵

Jaggeswar Roy, a prominent intellectual of Jalpaiguri District was talented personality and a social reformer. His father Mohan Singh Prodhan was born at the neighbouring Marichbari of Domohani. His forefather was the Dewan. His ancestral home and land were destroyed by the devastating flood in the river Tista. Subsequently his family migrated and settled at Rangalibajna in the Madarihat P. S. in 1320 B.S. In 1322 B.S. following the demise of his mother his education career almost came to an end. His education restarted with the assistance of one Indubhushan Chakroborty.

He took part in the freedom movement of India. When the Quit India Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was on the peak, the Kumargram police station was attacked with the joint affords of Jaggeswar Roy and Nalini Pakrashi. They were joined by Boibyanath Das of Haldibari, Abinas Das of Chengmari, Jogen Sarker of Barobhisa and Deben Das of Kamakshyaguri. He was elected as an M.L.A. three times from 1962.

Jogyeswar Roy, famous as a social reformer founded the Mohan Singh High School at Rangalibajna in memory of his father. He founded a children home, called “Darikanath Shishu Sadan” for the young children where they were provided with free food and lodging. He dedicated himself to the cause of education. Mohan Singh High School of Kumargram, Joteswar High School, Laksmi Kanta Sen High School, Amguri High School, Helapakri High School,

and Kaliagaunje Uttameswar High School were building up with the patronage of Jagyeswar Roy. Another eminent folk singer of Jalpaiguri was Satyen Roy. His father Nityananda Roy was a middle class landlord. His fame as exponent of folk dance spread all over Bengal. He was a singer, poet and writer. His poems & writings were published in the “Desh’ magazine quite sometimes.

The name Sonallah Mohammad as a social reformer is well known to the citizens of Jalpaiguri even today. Being an indigenous Muslim he reached out his helping hands to the poor and deserving irrespective of their caste and creed. To come to the poor, setting up schools for learning aid the students & teacher and involve in social services were in the list of his reformation zeal. Added to these, he built mosques, drug tanks and gave away blankets to the distressed. He is also respected and remembered for his contributions in the field of sports, arts, literature & culture. He immensely contributed to the Arya Natyasamaj, Sonalla shield Tournament organized by Town club was the first and foremost sporting event in the town. He also contributed to set up the Fanindra Dev Institution. The Sonalla High School in the heart of Jalpaiguri town bears testimony to the greatness of this great soul.¹⁶

The rulers of the Raikot Family and the intellectuals had a great role in the social and cultural awakening in the nineteenth century. Their contribution and role extended far and wide in the country and outside. The cultural sphere of Jalpaiguri owes a great deal to the Raikots. Sarojendra Deb Raikot, the son of Jogendra Deb Raikot was born in 1898. Though descending in the Royal Family he was free from the princely pride. He was a famous artist. He had a contact with famous artists and politicians of the country and abroad. Sarojendra Deb entertained with his songs to Gandhiji, Rabindranath Tagore. He was associated with congress politics true to the family tradition. He had intimate relation with Desbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das, Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose; he was more famous as a singer than a man of politics. Sarojendra Art Gallery bears testimony of this great man of art and culture.

Jagadindra Deb was famous by his own right. He was the adopted son of Jagendra Deb Raikot. He was a celebrated name in the social and cultural spheres of Jalpaiguri. He founded a middle school in the name of Raikot Raj, Fanindra Deb's wife Rani Amriteswari in 1917. Later it became famous as Sonaula Institution. He wrote a book titled "A brief History of Raikot dynasty and its Kingdom"-in 1885. The book provides valuable data of the history of Jalpaiguri. He was the first president of Jalpaiguri District Congress. In 1939 the conference of the Bengal provincial congress was held in Jalpaiguri, which was adorned by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose by his presence. Jagadindra Deb Raikot adorned as the guest in chief. He was uncommon in charity, and Scholarship. His contribution to the field of social and cultural uplift of Jalpaiguri was memorable.

Another celebrated personality of the Raikot dynasty of Jalpaiguri was Fanindra Dev Raikot. His name has been immortal in the cultural sphere of Jalpaiguri. The Fanindra Dev Institution of Jalpaiguri retains his memory.

Prosonna Dev Raikot the son of Fanindra Dev is another worthy of the Raikot dynasty. After the demise of Fanindra Dev, Prosonna Dev was coronate as the king of Jalpaiguri as decreed in his will in 1893, when Prosonna Dev was only a child of two years. As a child rather his mother, Amriteswari Debi carried out the royal administration as his guardian. He was famous for his social service & charitable activities. He was the 2nd President of Jalpaiguri Municipality, a member of the provincial council and a provincial minister. He was the founder of Jotdar association of Jalpaiguri, the pioneer of the Khsatriya community, the founder of Fanindra Dev institution, Jackson Medical School and Prosonna Dev Womens College. He had set up Palli Mongal Samity at Belakoba which was name after him. Near Hasimara in the district of Jalpaiguri the Subba family is the repository of remarkable heritage since the rule of Bhutan Raj. Seventy eight years old Ramesh Subba has recounted many

facts about his family and its past glory. They belong to the Mech community. In the past they practiced shifting cultivation and in later years they permanently settled down. He informed that the title Suba was conferred by Koch kings. In later years during the Bhutanese rule they were retained as revenue collector. Subordinate to the Suba the tax collectors were called Katham and in the Eastern part they were known as *Gabur*. The Subadar did not know away from their homestead and the Bhutanese came on horseback to collect the revenue. Jaigaon, Dalsingpara, fell under this jurisdiction. They owned six or seven hundred acres of land. After the British came a large section of land was acquired for tea cultivation, some land was cultivated by “Chukani” system. After independence a great extent of land was vested. At present they own 15 bighas of land.¹⁷

The Kathams of Kathambari in the district of Jalpaiguri were eminent in many respects. At present the Kathams have lost their past glory. But during the Bhutanese and British period they won glory in different fields. Tapan Katham told that the title “Katham” was conferred by Bhutan. Formerly they were “Deo”, as they were called to God a deity. Najir Deo, Laxman Singh Deo, Prabhusing Deo, Lt. Brajanath Katham, Lt. Asura Katham, Lt. Dhardharia Katham, Lt. Ramsing Katham and his father Birendranath Katham were important figure in the region.¹⁸ Tapan Katham continued that his father collected revenue from Rangpur and the Bhutan king vested them four Taluks Maynaguri, Bhothat, Gopal Gang and Chengmari. Their Taluks were gifted to his forefathers as the Zamindar of Bhutan. The land was cultivated in two ways through tenants or sharecroppers and secondly, through Chukanidars. His grandfather enlisted in the Bhutan Army and fought against the British. Besides revenue collection his father owned food processing business & timber business. Wood was transported to different parts of the land.¹⁹

The indigenous landlords of Jalpaiguri and North Bengal were involved in various social activities. It cannot be denied that the land lords exploited the

sharecroppers. Nevertheless the landlords made notable contributions to social reforms. One of the reasons being that there was no class division between the landlords and ordinary peasants for their sharecroppers. Hence they developed a familiar relationship. It was followed on many occasions that at the time of marriage in the house of a sharecropper that landlord sprinkled water on the head of the groom and the bride, the ritual known as 'PaniChhita'. As a result the landlord and the sharecropper made the father-son relationship called "Panichhita Bap' and 'PaniChhita Mao'. If one of them died, other had to observe the ritual usages like their relatives in accordance with the Hindu religion.²⁰

Example of such an emotional bonding was revealed by elderly women of Parotpar, in a family of a former landlord. She recounted 'All round the year several celebrations took place in our house. The house was filled with guests and visitors. A male cow was offered in honour of the God. The priest was donated land measure 5-6 acres. We possessed 39 acres of "Debottor"land. The relation between the Raikot and tenants' was cordial. People were simple minded. The feasts during occasions were unrestricted. During marriage ceremonies huge amount of sugar were poured into pond for the elephants to drink. The grandfather distributed money to the poor from his moneybag.²¹

It is now important to focus on the intellectuals middle class who came from different parts of Bengal in different times and settled here permanently. The inflow began from the nineteenth century in course of their service, some others from commerce, some others the doctors and lawyers for their professional purpose. This inflow was remarkably high in the Northern part of North Bengal. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal wrote, "With the foundation of the town there came the Government employers, Lawyers, Doctors, Businessman and many private individuals all from outside. Rahimbox of Noakhali came from Sukhani as the law-trader. The Nawab Bari (house) of Jalpaiguri town was built up by him. Bhagban Sanyal of Pabna came from Maynaguri for legal

practice. His grandson Gopal Sanyal settled in Babupara of the town. Srinath Chakroborty of Pabna came from Rangpur as the record keeper. He has no discontent in the town at present. Bhabani Ghatak of Pabna came from Calcutta as the Govt. officer. His son Lalit Ghatak is settled at Raikotpara. Chandrakanta Sen and Ramchandra Sen of Faridpur came from Rangpur on official business. Their grandson, Paritosh Sen is settled at D.B.C. Road of the town. Srinath Roy of Dhaka joined as Nazrat. Parbati Charan Neogi of Pabna came as supply contractor in the Bhutan war. Lala Ladly Prosad from Punjab has left no descendent in the town. Tapeswar Lahiri from Pabna came for business, his great grandson Jiban Lahiri is at Ukilpara.”²²

In connection with tea trade many Bengali entrepreneurs came to Jalpaiguri. They exercised great influence in social-economic and cultural spheres of Jalpaiguri. In his book late Kamakshya Prasad Chakrobarty has mentioned the names of the industrial magnates. The Bengali entrepreneurs were all immigrants. They became rich and prosperous within a short time after they came. Some of the Bengali entrepreneurs deserve to be mentioned. They were Md. Rahimbox, Biharilal Ganguli, Joychandra Sanyal, Gopal Chandra Ghosh, Jadav Chakrobarty, Bhabani Charan Ghatak, Hridaynath Bagchi, Mahin Chandra Ghosh, Harish Chandra Adhikari, Srinath Chakroborty, Srinath Roy, Keshab Chandra Ghatak, Aswini Prosad Roy, Shashi Kumar Banerjee, Shashi Kumar Neogi, Sureswar Sanyal, Trailakya Maulik, Munshi Achhiruddin and many others.²³

There were some families in the town that made notable contributions in the society and culture of the district & the town. The Chatterjee family is one such family. Late Durga Prosad Chatterjee came to the town more than 125 years ago. It is said that Durga Prosad Chatterjee had uncommon scholarship in Sanskrit and left Burdwan to reach Jalpaiguri on foot, being deconstructed over a competition in Sanskrit scripture. His two sons namely Lt. Madhab Chandra

Chattopadhyaya and Lt. Jadunath Chattopadhyaya became the landlords of Jalpaiguri more than 125 years ago. They dealt in coal and text books.²⁴

The Roy family made unlimited contributions to the welfare of Jalpaiguri. Tarini Prosad Roy of this family came to Jalpaiguri in the 9th decade of the last century and in course of a few years he established himself as a legal practitioner. He owned a large number of tea gardens. His son Satyendra Prosad Roy popularly known as S. P. Roy joined the industry established by his father. He became the chairman of the I.T.P.A. in 1952. Since 1952 he was elected to the Rajya Sabha for their terms. He was the member of the Senate of North Bengal University. He was associated with a number of schools in North Bengal and helped them with financial donations. He also played leading roles in the development of games and sports. His greatest contributions were the foundation of Town Club and Arya Natya Samaj.²⁵

Prof. Manas Das Gupta wrote, “Perhaps, he (Satyendra Prosad Roy) realized that imperialism of England was initiated in the cricket playground of Iton and Jaro, that means discipline of English character came in the play ground. So, Satyendra Prosad involved himself to the different organization of games and sports. Nobody knows the history to harmony organization from district level to National level he assisted by giving his advice and money. He was founder chairman of sports Board since the establishment of North Bengal University”.²⁶ Ananda Gopal Ghosh writes, “We can’t forget the memorable contribution of Mr.Roy in the field of Education, Literature, Culture, Sportsactivities. If Jalpaiguri had little more contribution in the field of Education, literature and cultural activity in the atlas of West Bengal it is only for S.P.Roy.”²⁷

Like the Roys, the Ghosh family also exercised great influence in different fields of the society in Jalpaiguri. Born in this family in 1879 Jogesh Chandra Ghosh joined the bar at Jalpaiguri court in 1909 as the lawyer. He had

established five tea estates from 1923 to 1928. He was associated with the Aryanatya Samaj and was elected vice president of Jalpaiguri District Congress. His son Birendra Chandra Ghosh earned fame and recognition in various fields. He was appointed the secretary of the I.T.P.A. Senior Vice Chairman and chairman. He contributed to the setting up of the Polytechnic Institute and Engineering College in Jalpaiguri. His famous book in the development of Tea industry in the district of Jalpaiguri from 1865 to 1968 is a useful historical document.

The Sanyal family of Jalpaiguri has been enjoying great reputation in the political cultural as well as intellectual life of the district. Lt. Bhagaban Chandra Sanyal of the family came from Pabna to Maynaguri at the age of 22 years in the middle of the nineteenth century and began to practice law from there. His third brother Durga Charan Sanyal was an established lawyer, poet and litterateur. He wrote a book titled 'The Social History of Bengal'. His son, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal was the founder & editor of the magazine 'Janamat'. His son, Mukulesh Sanyal edited the magazine for a long period. He wrote numerous articles and was a man of politics. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal, the only son of Joy Chandra Sanyal was the erudite scholar of North Bengal. He was a medical practitioner. He had joined the freedom movement. His fame as a writer spread far and wide. His famous books are 1) The Rajbanshis of North Bengal 2) Totos & Meches Sub Himalayan tribes of North Bengal. The Limbus, he edited souvenir of the centenary of Jalpaiguri. He was conferred the D. Litt. for his book "The Rajbanshis of North Bengal" by the North Bengal University. He was also awarded the Rabindra Puraskar. He was the lifelong member of the senate of North Bengal University.

The famous Ghatak family and his son, Bhabani Chandra Ghatak and Lalit Chandra Ghatak brought glory in the social sphere of Jalpaiguri. Biharilal Ganguli of the Ganguli family is equally eminent. Tarapada Biswas of the Biswas family was the first secretary of Arya Natya Samaj and the worthy

challenge of Shashi Kumar Neogi. After the passing away of his son, Satyendra Prosad Biswas donated 17 bighas of land to Mohit Nagar School which was named as Mohitnagar Tarapada High School. Dr. Sukumar Biswas, the son of late Satyendra Prosad Biswas was the first nuclear space scientist of India. It was he, who master minded the launching of the first satellite to the space from India.²⁸

Priyonath Bandopadhyay of the Banerjee family was the first Government pleader of Jalpaiguri. He began the legal practice in Jalpaiguri court in 1871 .By virtue of his talent he was appointed as Government pleader in Darjeeling and CoochBehar districts. He was the secretary of the School committee where the first Government school was set up in Jalpaiguri. It was designated as Zilla School. His contribution to the development of the town was immense.

It has been mentioned at the outset that expansion of education was started in Bengal and India during the company rule of the British East India Company. In course of time it was found accessory to create clerks and official worker in the administration, of course educational activities were started by the Missionaries and Private organizations much before the Governmental endeavour. In 1813 by a Charter Act a sum of Rupees one lakhs was granted for education. In the following two years no such grant was contemplated. In 1823 ‘The General Committee of Public Instruction’ was set up. As consequences on 2nd February 1830 Macaulay in his minutes recommended the spread of European Science and Literature through English. This was a start to the European Education. In the first half of the nineteenth century Hindu College, Sri Rampur College, Hooghly Mahasin College, Krishnanagar College & Krishnanath College of Baharampur was set up. During this period people evinced a great deal of interest in English education. Dr. Subodh Kumar Mukhopadhaya has written “In Bengal English education was started since the beginning of the 19th century, so that everyone was eager to learn English. This

flood got a shape when in 1837 the Govt. declared that vernacular language will be the medium in higher court. In 1844 Lord Harding directed the appointment of the English educated young people in Government jobs. English became the official language and the language of administration. With the spread of English education an English educated class was created, known as middle class. This class of people soon after govt. jobs to spread a life of ease and comfort. English education also followed a section professional middle class. This new class did not respect the distinctions based on caste & class divisions.²⁹

It is pertinent to point out that though the educational endeavors began earlier in South Bengal; in North Bengal it started quite late. It began in North Bengal from the second half of the nineteenth century. In Cooch Behar State the first English school was set up in this period. In recognition of the services rendered to the state during his minority. Maharaja Narendra Narayan presented a purse to Colonel Jenkins, The Governor General's Agent in the North-East Frontier. The worthy colonel however, advised the Maharaja to found an English school with the money thus offered to him and accordingly an English school was established in 1861 which was named 'Jenkins school' after colonel Jenkins.³⁰

In Cooch Behar State Victoria College was set up in 1888. With the setting up of this college an avenue to higher education was opened. It has been said in respect of the establishment of the college, "The departmental works proceeded thus till June 1888, when to commemorate the jubilee of her majesty of Queen Empress, the Victoria College was established in CoochBehar."³¹

In Jalpaiguri district the first English school was established in 1876 which came to be known as Jalpaiguri Zilla School. Next in 1916, Alipurduar High school in 1920, Fanindra Deb Institution, in 1927. The scholars who came out from these schools are spread in different places of the country and abroad

taking up responsible job and earned fame and recognition. These achievers came to be known as middleclass. Ranjit Dasgupta mentioned, “It was still in 1931, after six decades of the inception of the district whom only 4.8% people of total population was literate. The number of people studied in Primary school and equivalent institution was only 11 thousand. The Number of High English School was only 10 in the 1947 the year of getting independence.”³² It is to be admitted that college was established in Jalpaiguri district much later. Before 1942 the students of Jalpaiguri had to go for higher education to CoochBehar or Rangpur. About the establishment of college, A son of Ananda Chandra Rahut of Jalpaiguri made a gift of the bighas of land and Rs.25,000.00 in cash for a college in memory of his late father the college named Ananda Chandra College started functioning from 1942 with role strength of 91 which figure rose to 211 next year and to 582 in 1947.³³

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Chapter- 6

Post Colonial Culture of Jalpaiguri District

The cultural scenario of the people of the Jalpaiguri district in the post colonial period changed a lot dramatically. The district of Jalpaiguri was dominated by the indigenous people in the pre-colonial period; in the colonial period the influence of the indigenous people was going to decrease because of the immigration of the outsiders from the neighbouring areas of different classes, religions and castes. So, in every aspect of the district such as administration, politics, economy, education, culture, etc. the immigrated people dominated on the indigenous people. Sitangshu Prosad Chakraborty writes in this context, “Rajbanshis had their own tradition in every sphere of their lives. But coming of the BarnaHindus, Europeans and other communities, Rajbanshis also were going to accept the culture of the Barna Hindus in the colonial and post colonial period adjusting with the modern culture in the wave of time.”¹ The immigration of huge number of people of different castes and classes the indigenous people and their culture facing in crises. Amarendra Nath Suba pointed out, the people of Mech community who were majority and ‘son of the soil’ in the Dooars in the pre- colonial period were facing in identity crises in the colonial period and in the post colonial period they lost their cultural heritage and ethnicity.² Among the immigrated people, particularly two categories of them such as higher castes of the Hindus & the Western people occupied the position of the society. Naturally in the cultural life the Westernization & the Sanskritization entered and extended into the society & culture of the people of the district.

To explore the cultural history of the post colonial period it can be divided into three categories namely-1) **Village culture**, 2) **Urban culture** and 3) **the culture of the Tribal people**. Let us examine the Village culture.

1) **Village Culture:** - It should be mentioned here that acculturation between indigenous people and immigrated people was took place as a result of which a cultural synthesis was grown in the society of the district like other parts of North Bengal. After living year to year together in the same villages the indigenous people and the immigrated people accepted the culture of each other as their neighbours. Though it was started in the colonial period, in the post colonial period it became more effective because of the influx of the refugees coming from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after 1947.

In terms of food habit many indigenous foods were taken as the food of the immigrated people, on the other hand the immigrated people were habituated with the food habit of the indigenous people. Not only that the indigenous people accepted the process of cooking and spices from the immigrated people. Beside these, after independence and partition, the spread of education accelerated, many school, colleges, institution were established, as a result of which many indigenous people came under the education. They became educated and many of them got services, the number of employee increased day after day. These educated people went out of the house, settled into different places, started to live different places of the country, as a result of which they gradually became habituated with the food habit of multi character dishes. The food habit of the educated people automatically influenced the other people of the villages. For example many people of Rajbanshi Community used burning fishes as their food, but the new generation people including educated people do not use various types of spices, simply they used turmeric, cumin, coriander etc. dusting in the traditional husking machine, but now a days they used various types of spices purchasing from market. In this regard Sitangshu Prosad Chakraborty stated, Relating food habit they also habituated with modern food habit at present, particularly, the educated Rajbanshis and the Rajbanshis of urban areas use modern food instead of taking their traditional food habit such as *pelka*, *chheka*, *sidal- sutki*.³

It is found in the field survey that all most all of the indigenous people use modern type's food accordingly the global culture of food habit. Jagat Singh Barman an inhabitant of Takomari, in the district of Cooch Behar adjacent to Jalpaiguri district pointed out that, they eat everything in accordance with the Hindu food habit. Both of the veg and non- veg they take as their food which are available in the market and they purchased accordingly their financial capacity. They sometimes eat their traditional food like *pelka*, *sutkasidal*, *chheka* etc. But usually they use all the food which is eaten by other Bengali people. There are no vast differences between our food habit and the food habit of other Bengali people.⁴ In this context Kaitalu Barman another inhabitant of Cooch Behar of the same village expressed his view that they rarely use traditional food, generally they are habituated with the food habit like the other Bengali people. He also added that their children preferred the modern food than the traditional food.⁵I have also collected information from many educated Rajbanshis who serve in various departments and dowelled in the town and my colleagues of Rajbanshi community talking with them directly where no differences have been found in their food habit between the Rajbanshis and other Bengali people.

Besides Rajbanshi people, the other indigenous people of the district such as Mech, Toto, Garo, Rabha, Santal, Oraon, Munda, Nepalese and Bhutias also more or less are habituated with modern food habit though they occasionally use their traditional food. It is relevant to mention here that due to increase the activities and propagation of various types of media reaching in the remote areas of the rural and urban areas as a result of the global revolution every sphere of the society, economy, politics and culture have been changed rapidly. Naturally, people of different communities already have become habituated with the modern food habit, particularly the young generation are not much interested to their traditional food habit, rather they are interested and preferred to the modern food habit like Chinese, Western, South Indian, Panjabi, Rajasthani and Kashmiri dishes. Kailash Tirky of Hashimara informed

me that they use both the traditional food and modern food in their food habit. He also added that presently the hunting in the forest areas is strictly prohibited; as a result they cannot hunt in the forest and jungle. Naturally, they cannot afford meat of various types of animals which were their traditional food. Apart from these the youths of present generation are interested to take modern food.⁶Ramesh Suba of Satali Basti pointed out that they use traditional food occasionally, but generally they use modern food.⁷

Dress: - In the post colonial period through the line of modernization and industrialization reached in the village society. The indigenous people of the district have their separate traditional dresses of each community including tribal people. Every tribal community had their traditional dress both of men and women. As for example the Rajbansi people other than the Jotdar family wear generally *Lungi*, *Gamchha*, *Shirt* etc. and the poor old women wear unstitched *Lungi* called *Fota* or *Tapan* covering from upper portion of the chest to the lower portion of the knee, young girl and women wearied Sharee. D.H.E. Sunder mentioned in his report, “Rajbanshi women wear a ‘sari’ or wrapper called *Fota-Kapor* round them, from over their breasts up to their ankles. Men wear a Jacket, called “*Piran*”, round their necks and a *Dhoti* round their loins. Men also carry a small round bag in which they keep betel nut, lime etc.⁸Regarding dresses Sitangshu Prosad Chakraborty writes, “The Rajbanshis use also modern dresses instead of traditional dresses like *Fota* or *Tapan*.”⁹It is called “*botus*”.¹⁰ The Muslim people generally wear *Lungi* and *Punjabi* or *Shirt*. But in the post colonial phase for increasing education and changing socio-economic status the dress habit of the indigenous people gradually was being changed. The educated people, particularly among whose were involved in service in different sectors in different parts of the country accepted modern dresses. They became less interested to wear traditional dresses.

All the indigenous people started slowly to wear modern dress like other people of main stream. The young generation both male and female is

habituated with the modern dresses they started to wear Pant, Shirt, Shoe, etc. The girls and female wear Churidar or salwar kamij, Frok, Sarees etc, not only that presently the female also wear the dresses of the male such as pant, shirt etc. The old men wear Dhoti, Punjabi also Pant, Shirts etc. Now a day's almost all the indigenous people have been wearing modern dress, no differences are followed in terms of dresses between the indigenous people and the immigrated people. For the emergence of global culture no man can deny to accept the global culture. So, now a day's no man can be identified of which community they belong with their dresses because of the abolition of traditional dresses except few instances and increasing the modern dress-habit. Tapan Katham of Katham Bari near Maynaguri pointed out that once they had traditional dress, but now it is not prevailing sufficiently, in most of the cases both male and female use modern dresses as their dress habit. However, in the season of various occasions they use their traditional dress. ¹¹

Food Habit—A feast is arranged where 5 or 7 or 9 persons were invited and feed them with *Dai* (curd), *Chira* (flattend rice) and *Kala* (*banana*) in the month of Baishakha (April) which was called *Baishakhi Seba*.

Kailash Roy informed me about the food habit of the people of Rajbanshi community. He told that they used some traditional food beside their modern food such as *Chheka* (*dry dish of vegetable*) which is cooked by using pieces of vegetables, particularly different types of Shak (spinage) with *Khar* (*paddy straw*) produced in a traditional way from ashes or soda purchased from market, *Phoktai* which is cooked by *Takoa*, a kind of snail. Further more they have to eat *mankachu* (the arum) in the month of Bhadra, *olkachu* (a kind of arum) in the month of Aswin, Pachkol or *Chalta* (an edible acid fruit) in the month of Kartik. Besides food habit he had told about their customs which are as follows:-

During the time of Chaitra Sankranti a bough of *Guja* tree, betel leaf and betel nut with garlic and onion, these are all together and hanged on the top of the door. *Akash Prodip*—(*Sky lamp*)-This lamp is lighted in the house in the month of Kartik. A little lamp covering with cloth is placed in a top of a bamboo stick in the house. *Vela Bhasa*- A raft making with banana leaf is flown in the river or pond in any Thursday of the month of Bhadra.¹²

Social Work of the Jotdar Family— It is true that the Jotdars, belonged to indigenous community, particularly the Rajbanshis had done many benevolent works or social works. In the colonial period many benevolent Jotdars of Jalpaiguri district like other parts of North Bengal would look after developmental work of the villages. They would build new roads. They would help their *Proja* or sharecroppers by giving crops, materials for making house and various instruments for cultivation. They organized many social institutions of which various occasions or festivals were performed where all the people assembled, enjoyed and joined in feast together. Upendra Nath Barman wrote in his book, “There were huge amount of milk, curd and ghee, even in the poorest family there were 2/1 cows. Children, young men, old men everybody would eat milk, curd and become healthy and diseaseless....”¹³

Sunder mentioned in his report of a ‘Jotdar’s Fund’. The grants of ‘Jotdari Fund’ used in many developmental works. There were many Jotdars who were involved in social works and would try to maintain good relation with adhiars or projas. The Jotdar played a significant role in developing the education in the rural and urban areas also. Many Jotdars donated land for establishment of school. Not only donated lands, they would give money, built houses recruited teachers for the schools. Nani Mohon Sen, a resident of Basusuba near Maynaguri pointed out, “The Land of Basusuba High School and Basusuba *Hat* (weekly market) was donated by Binay Kumar Roy and Nirmal Chandra Roy. And Nagendra Nath Roy donated 6 acres of lands for

establishment of Betgara Charerbari Nagendranath High School (1971). He also donated 1 acre of land to Hari Mandir.”¹⁴

Role of Education: In the colonial period the education did not enter among the mass people. Unlike the East Bengal and South Bengal the spread of Western education started slowly in the district. Like other parts of Bengal indigenous education system was introduced led by Jotdars and Zamindars, emphasizing on Sanskrit –based education in the different parts of the district. But it is true that only the people of Jotdars, Zamindars and economically solvent families could take education. The poor people or ordinary people never enter into the door of education. But in the post-colonial period, the independent govt. tried to increase the speed of education. Govt. accepted various policies both from the central and state govt. as a result of which many schools, colleges and universities were established in different parts of the district as elsewhere of the country. For accepting the democratic policy and method in the field of education, besides the rich people, the ordinary people or poor people also started to send their children in the premises of the schools and colleges as a result within few decades the percentage of education was going up.

The education penetrates slowly like other parts of North Bengal in the district of Jalpaiguri. There were few indigenous primary schools established by the Jotdars in the pre- colonial and colonial period. It should be mentioned here that the English schools were set up by the British in different phases of colonial period in the district. The following table shows the growth of different schools in the district during the post-colonial period.¹⁵

Name of Schools	Year of recognition	Type	Remarks
Jorpakri Abdul Gani High English School	1947	Boys	
Mcwilliam High English School	1947	Boys	
Mandalghat High English School	1947	Boys	Abolished in 1948
Jalpaiguri Govt. Girl's High School	1948	Girls	
Begum Foisonna Girls School	1950	Girls	
Mohitnagar Tara prosad High School	1953	Co-educational	
Arabinda Madhyamik School	1960	Boys	
Kumudini High School	1961	Girls	

On the educational side, the total numbers of teachers are 3,699 as per 1961 Census, of whom only 497 are women. There are only 77 university teachers who generally teach in colleges. There are 20 such teachers amongst the women of Jalpaiguri. There are 785 teachers of Secondary Schools of whom 219 are women. There are as many as 1,976 primary school teachers in the district, 209 of them is being females. 720 persons have returned their

occupation as teaching, but they could not be classified in any one of the above categories.

The statement below will show the percentage of literates amongst persons, males and females in the rural and urban areas separately for the district as well as for the state.¹⁶

State/District	Percentage of Literates			
		Persons	Males	Females
West Bengal	Rural	21.64	32.86	9.73
	Urban	52.89	59.59	43.33
Jalpaiguri	Rural	16.20	24.03	7.12
	Urban	49.31	55.86	40.78

As a result of increasing education the cultural scenario both of the towns and villages was going to be changed rapidly, For coming under education, people accepted slowly modern culture such as national and international in every sphere of life, educated people became rational and scientific mentality and abolishing superstition , irrational customs and usages.

It is found in Janamat, the Bengali periodicals; today, after congress regime, all most all the colleges and universities are under the banner of Chhatraparishad by giving excuse of protecting from Naxalite attack. But they are unwilling to examination. They had only intention to occupy union; they had no initiative to conduct examination and teaching learning smoothly. Ananda Chandra College of Jalpaiguri had tried many times to take examination, Professors were sitting with question papers and answer scripts but the students did not come .¹⁷

There has been an all round quantitative development in education since 1947. The number of Primary Schools has doubled; while the number of students in those schools has increased by four times during the two decades beginning from 1947....High Schools have increased six times during these years with an increase of eight and a half in the number of students. The number of colleges has tripled, and students there have increased by eight times. Jalpaiguri Ananda Chandra College was established in 1942, Alipurduar College was established in 1957, the Prosanna Deba Womens College was set up in 1950 and the Jalpaiguri Ananda Chandra College of Commerce was established in 1962. By the establishment of this College the educational scenario of the district has been changed rapidly. The students passing from these colleges got the chances in the different sectors of the society in the district and abroad. Many reputed persons and intellectuals, who became famous in the different field of the country and abroad and who brightened the name of the district as well as of the colleges, were the glory of the colleges. Still now, this college has been carrying on this legacy and heritage.

Jalpaiguri Polytechnic Institute established on 15th August 1950 had 35 boys on its roll as on 30th September 1971. Jalpaiguri Engineering College, a Government-aided institution functioning from 1961, had 401 students in 1963-64. This institution had 603 boys on its roll as on 30th September 1971. Large sums are being spent by Government for the education of the backward classes. In 1965, there were 2,586 Scheduled Tribes and 6,435 Scheduled castes students in the secondary schools of the district, forming respectively 12.03 per cent of the total scheduled Tribes students and 5.28 per cent of the total scheduled Castes student of the state.¹⁸

The Social Welfare Board has been communicating education among aged women and children in the village of the district since 1955. Old women are also given education through story-telling, songs etc. The schemes for Social Education in the state started in 1948-49 but the work in this district

started later. Steps are taken to establish literacy centers, Night Schools, etc. There are Complete Centers, with two teachers, one for give a share in training social education and another for literacy. During the year 1973-74 there were 35 Night Schools, 24 Literacy Centres, 30 complete Social Education centres,³⁷ Social Cum Company centers and 70 one-teacher *Pathsalas*.¹⁹

In the district the educational and cultural sector of the society, the libraries both in rural and urban areas had an important role. Library Association started functioning through an ad hoc committee on and from 16th December 1954. The foundation stone of the building of the association was laid towards the beginning of 1956 on a piece of Khasmahal Land. In 1961, there were 12 government sponsored rural libraries. The District Library Association distributes lump grants to deserving public libraries managed by voluntary workers.²⁰

The District Sports Association which was established in 1956 organizes competitions in different games and sports amongst the clubs affiliated to it and hold coaching camps for the training of young athletics. In 1961, there were 29 clubs affiliated to the Association, which in turn is affiliated to the State Association. Institute for physical culture named Adarsa Bymagar was established in 1952 at Jalpaiguri town. Stadium having capacity for 1,400 onlookers was set up in 1957 on 0.99 acres of land donated by the State Government. It was inaugurated in 15th April, 1961.²¹

Medical treatment-

The indigenous people always depend on indigenous treatment of medicinal plants and *Ojha* or *Kabiraj*. Different types of plants were used as medicine, *mantra* and *tuk-tak* etc. The indigenous people including tribal people did not believe in allopathic treatment or medicine. But in the post colonial period people becoming educated, started to accept slowly the allopathic treatment. Various dispensaries, hospitals and health centers were

being established in different parts of the district as other parts of the country, people have been coming under modern medical and surgical treatment.

The people of the villages had believed that a good number of causes like impurities, bad weather, disappointment or anger of God; evil spirits were the root causes of various diseases. For treatments of various diseases local *Ojhas* were called. The *Ojhas* (village exorcists) by chanting mantras tried to satisfy the disappointed Gods. In most of the cases the deities were the Goddess. For the treatment of the village community herbs and shrubs were utilized immensely as raw materials for preparing medicines. The *Ojhas* collected liquor or black goat or a red cock & rupees 1.50 from the patient as fees.

Sometimes the tribal people considered certain evil souls or sinister spirits responsible for different diseases. In Tribal society the tribal people were influenced by the impact of magic especially black or harmful magic. The magician after creating an image of the specific person by mud or sand pierced an Incanted iron Skewer on it. The person began to ill within a few days.

On first Baisak of every year the Bisua festival was celebrated with the object of uprooting unhealthiness in the family and also removing the existence of evil spirit.....*Garam Thakur* was another deity who was very much popular in the villages....brought sickness among children and was very much active during outbreak of Cholera.²²

The data of Hospitals also an important source for collection of health statistics. The Hospitals send in-patient records, monthly returns of patients treated in the outdoor and annual administrative reports. The receipt position of these reports is not, however, always bright as will appear from the table below.²³

Receipt Position of Hospital Returns for Jalpaiguri district: 1967					
Total No of Medical Institutions			No. Of Medical Institutions Which Submitted Returns		
Hospitals & Health Centers	Dispensaries	Clinics	Hospitals and Health Centers	Dispensaries	Clinics
40	14	23	32(80.0)	10(71.4)	1(4.0)

The sampling technique has also been resorted to for want of a system of full coverage of vital registration. The scheme opened up with a pilot study in July 1966 to be followed by sample surveys in full scale in January 1968. The State was divided into two natural or geographical divisions namely The Himalayan, consisting of the three contiguous districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and the plains consisting of the remaining districts. The vital rates obtained under the scheme have been found to be fairly reasonable and accurate. Half-yearly censuses of births and deaths are also undertaken to improve the system of registration. The estimated mid-year population in 1967 in the district was as follows.²⁴

	Urban	Rural	Total
Male	46,848	7, 82,282	8, 29,130
Female	38,113	6, 78,140	7, 16,253
Total	84,961	14, 60,422	15, 45,383

There is no infrastructure or proper system of medical treatment for the suffering patients who have been suffering from various diseases; there is distress condition in the medical ward. There is no place to display bed.

Doctors cannot treat their patient smoothly for want of places. The system of the Government is responsible for that. It spent many days to finish the work of a block bearing 100 beds. But there is no sufficient bed, net or blanket according to requirements. There is no medicine, no glycerin, no Cathedra which is very essential for hospital.²⁵

Over the census decade of 1951-61 the composition of Jalpaiguri's population by different religious communities has not altered to any appreciable extent. In 1951 the Hindus comprised 84.14 percent and the Muslim formed about one tenth of the district's total population. The Christian community was only 2.79 percent in 1951 against their present strength of 3.75 percent among the district's population. The proportion of Buddhist in the district's population structure has nearly doubled itself within the last ten years. They are now 1.34 percent against the 1951 percentage of only 0.72. There is a statement given below shows the percentage distribution of Hindus and Muslims in the district and its different police stations. The Hindus are almost evenly distributed all over the district. The maximum concentration is found in the police stations of Alipurduar and the least in the police station of Rajganj.²⁶

{ Percentage of Religions to Total Population }

District/Subdivision/Police Station	Religion	
	Hindu	Muslim
Jalpaiguri District	85.41	9.55
Sadar Subdivision	83.28	13.56
Jalpaiguri	81.55	17.33
Rajganj	75.28	23.75
Maynaguri	86.37	13.38
Nagrakata	89.99	4.21

Mention may be made that the Rajbanshis were originated from Indo-Mongoloid race so the influence and social customs and usages were seen in the life of the Rajbanshis unlike the Aryan culture or Aryan customs or religion, though there are so many debates in this regard.

After immigration of the Aryanization or Sanskritization Rajbanshis like other indigenous people of Bengal influenced by the Sanskritization. They converted in to Hinduisation accepting the culture of Aryans led by Brahmanas. Rajbanshi people like other indigenous people of Bengal influenced by the Sanskritization. They converted into Hinduisation accepting the culture of Aryans led by the Brahmanas. Rajbanshi people like other indigenous people including different tribes after becoming Hinduanised culture. They performed various worships, festivals, customs, marriage, *shradhya* (funeral) etc. in accordance with the guidance of the Brahmanas. In such a way different types of worships such as Durga puja, Rash puja etc were performed guided by Brahmanas according to 'Purana' (Hindu shastra).

After independence for heavy influx of population of different castes and tribes the indigenous people accepted the religious customs, usages and festivals from different castes people of Hinduised family. They also participated and enjoyed the various programmes and festivals of the Hindus, suppose the festivals like Jamaishasti, Bhaiphota, etc. Was not prevailing in the Rajbanshis, but now a day's many Rajbanshi families observed such type of occasions or festivals. Dipen Roy of Rajbanshi community of Ukilpara, Jalpaiguri told that they observed the day of Bhaiphota. His daughter Priyanka Roy gives the *bhaiphota* (a Hindu ritual wishing long life for the brother by the sister) to her elder brother. Beside this, they worshipped different Hindu God and Goddess such as Lakshipuja, Saraswatipuja, Kali puja, Manashapuja, Bishwakarmapuja, and Janmastami etc. in accordance with the Hindu mythology.²⁷

Entertainments: -Rajbanshi people, local Muslims including other indigenous people had various types of songs, dances, Rajbanshis and local Muslims had their Bhawaiya *gan* (songs), Kushan *gan*, Palatiya *gan*, Dotara *gan* etc which were there traditional culture. But in the post colonial period for entering the modern culture indigenous people gradually accepted it. They accepted Baul, Bhatiali, Rabindra Sangit, Nazrulgiti, Adhunik songs etc. Not only that now a days the young generation people like Hindi songs, Adhunik songs, Hindi cinema instead of their traditional culture.

It should be mentioned here that in spite of all these changes many indigenous people still now do not forget their traditional culture. They observed and preserved their traditional culture as their wealth and heritage.

Urban Culture

As the society of the towns of Jalpaiguri district was formed in the colonial period, particularly comprising immigrated people of different castes, religion and culture which is discussed earlier in the colonial society. From the discussion it is found that the society of the towns dominated by the immigrated people particularly the people coming from East Bengal (Now Bangladesh), nature of the indigenous people was nominal.

Among the immigrated people there were Bengali Hindus, Biharies, Marwari including traders, businessmen, servicemen, Jotders, intermediaries, landholders, owners and officials of teagarden labourers comprised the society of Jalpaiguri. Kumudini Kanta Chakraborty mentioned regarding the immigration of different types of people, "In Jalpaiguri town a number of 'Paschima Coolee', Rikshwawala, Mason, Carpenters is near about 2000 and their daily income is at least Rs 5 as such they daily earned Rs 10000, monthly Rs 3 lakhs and early Rs 36 lakhs and the said amount was sent their own countries."²⁸ On the other hand the society of Alipurduar town mainly comprised the people coming from East Bengal, Biharies and Marwaris. It is

relevant to mention here that the hinduised culture dominated in the society of the towns.

It should be also mentioned here that a cultural assimilation or synthesis was followed in the society. No rigidity of casteism or untouchability was followed in the society. Different types of worship and festivals such as Durgapuja, Kalipuja, and Laxmipuja were held where people from different castes and classes were participated and enjoyed among each other.

On the other hand in the various festivals of Muslims and Christian people of different communities and religions assembled in various occasions and festivals, feast jointly; get together shared their enjoyment among each other. Since the independence the people of Jalpaiguri enjoyed the 'Christmas Day' on every year. People of different communities other than the Christian assembled in the Church at ShirishTala, Jalpaiguri and enjoyed the Day. Besides this Church there were many Churches namely Baptist Church at Nayabasti, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar Junction, Dhupguri, Malbazar and many other places of the Jalpaiguri district. In these all the Christians assembled in specific times for observing their religious activities and performances. People other than the Christians also visits and assembled in different times in these holy religious places. They prayed in the Churches to the God.

One of the cultural characteristics of the Jalpaiguri town was peace and hospitability which has been continuing till today. At time of festivals and worships people went to the house of their relatives and friends where they would get heartiest hospitality, getting food, gifts etc. It is found in different sources that S. P. Roy, the Jotdar and social workers had a great role in different sphere of the society and culture of Jalpaiguri town. It is found in District Gazetteer. A son of the late Ananda Chandra Rahut of Jalpaiguri made a gift of 4 bighas of Land and Rs. 25,000 in case for a college in memory of his late father. The college named Ananda Chandra College started functioning

from 1942 with roll strength of 91 which figure rose to 211 next year and to 582 in 1947. B.A. Classes were opened in 1948. With the munificence of Asrumati Devi, wife of Raja Prasannadeva, The Prasannadeva Girls' College came into existence in 1950, with a gift of 50 bighas of land from the local people, the Alipurduar college came into existence in 1957. In 1955 the social Welfare Board established welfare Centers for women and children in different areas. These centers imparted social education among women.²⁹

In 1954, a juvenile organization named "Danpiteder Asar" started working for the physical and mental growth of children. This organization tried to develop the mind of the children through book banks, exhibitions, nutrition's programmes etc. The Jalpaiguri Youngmen's Association, have also started a centre for physical and mental culture of the children named 'Sisu Udyan'. Some other organizations also worked from time to time for children welfare only. 'Mile -Mise' of Desbandhu para, the juvenile section of the Cultural Association at Deshbandhunagar etc.³⁰

Rahut family also had played a positive role in the cultural canvas of the Jalpaiguri society. The Ananda Chandra College was named after Ananda Chandra Rahut, his son Kamini Kanta Rahut donated land for establishment of college to memoir his father A. C. Rahut. The owner of land of Netaji Subhas Mahavidyalaya, Haldibari, Coochbehar was Kamini kanta Rahut which donated by the authority of Haldibari Girl's High School.

Regarding games and sports Jalpaiguri played a significant role in the history of North Bengal since the inception of the district. Not only the games & sports but also in the field of arts, literature & culture it had a remarkable position.

It should be mentioned here regarding the cultural life of the people such as games & sports, art, literature, music & songs, it can be divided broadly into

two categories namely the traditional culture of the indigenous people & the culture of the Barnahindus migrated from outside the district. Other than these there are some cultural instances of the Muslims (outsiders) Christians and some Europeans. In the colonial and post colonial period these differences are followed clearly but in the wave of time their differences were going to decrease. Particularly in the post independent period all the cultures of traditional migrated Hindu, Muslims were assimilated, in spite of having few instances of different culture.

Ashok Prosad Roy writes “Jalpaiguri Town Club was formed in 1898 by the inspiration and attempt of the English people and the honourable persons of that time. In 1951 and onwards the status of football playing of the youth Jalpaiguri town was admirable. In 1951 under the leadership of Low men ‘Liz Cup’ tournament was held.”³¹

Each English officer of the town had a Tennis court in their Bungalow compound where Sahib and Mem Sahib would play in the Tennis court. The Mem Sahib of the tea gardens of the Dooars and the Jute Company would play tennis. Later on, the European club was formed in the town for them where they would play tennis regularly. This Club was handed over to the people of the town after leaving the English people after independence. Since 1960s’ Tennis playing was held, but at present it is not held in this Club.³² There are a few cultural Societies in the district town of which Arya Natya Samaj and Bandhab Natya Samaj are connected with dramatic performances. ³³Tennis playing was also held in the Arya Natya Samaj and it was started since 1930s. In every year the Tennis player would come from Dinajpur, Rangpur, Sodpur, Gaibanda and they participated in the Friendly Match in this town organized by the Samaj.³⁴

Badminton match was started in this town in 1930s. At the initial stage this playing was held in localities of the town such as Kadamtala, Raikot Para,

Babupara and Ukilpara. In 1940s and 1950s many boys and girls practice Badminton. In various Club and Mahallas of the town many boys practiced for the Badminton in the night. Various tournaments were also organized in the town. The players of the town attained the top position in North Bengal.

The centre of wrestling (Kusti) was formed in the different places of the town. Boys would learn Kusti. Later on, some Yoga centre (byamagar) was established in the town namely Adarsha Byamagar, Vibekananda Byamagar, Shanti Byamagar, Progati Byamagar etc. Many boys and girls would come and learn Yoga in these centres.³⁵

Malay Mukhopadhyay writes, “I had close connection with some body builders (byambid) many of whom were freedom fighters who joined the independence movement for the country in the colonial period. Among these body builders there were late Sarat Das Majumdar, Bhola Paul (Kustigir), and Dinesh Roy, Lakshan Moulick (Freedom fighter), Ajit Chakraborty (Freedom fighter) and Dindayal babu.”³⁶

The role of Adarsha Bymagar in the field of exercise and yoga was remarkable. The member of this institution Sri Surojit Das obtained the first position in the competition of ‘Mr. Hercules of India.’ Sri Basudev Das, the member of Adarsha Bymagar became the champion in the rise in the power lifting competition. Three times he represented in the international competition. He won the award of ‘Bangashree’ in Body building competition. He became ‘Junior Mr. India’. He became group champion in the senior national competition. Sri. Amal Das became ‘Bangashree’ in the Body building competition and became champion in the ‘Bharatshree’ Competition.³⁷ Other than these; there were so many competitors in the town who won the national and state level award in different competition of the body exercise, body building and kustigiri(wrestling). Birendra Prosad Basu, a retired teacher, lawyer and reporter of Hakimpara, Jalpaiguri argued “I came from East

Pakistan in 1955 and joined in service in Jalpaiguri School Board. He pointed out that most of the land owners of mosque were Hindus. A cultural synthesis and communal harmony was followed among the people of Jalpaiguri which was the main characteristic of the town”.³⁸ Prosadiram Prabhu Dayal, a reputed businessman of Dinbazar, Jalpaiguri informed me, “..... I am the founder of the ‘Prabhudayal Utensils’ Shop. Most of the houses of the town were made of thirst (Khar) when he came to this town,..... the Raikots of Baikunthapur would buried in the ground to the victims or criminals.”³⁹ Dipak Krishna Bhowmik a lawyer, ex-congress leader of Kamarpara, Jalpaiguri pointed out, “Once Sonaula Sahib borrowed Rs.400000 to the Raikot of Baikunthapur when the Raikot was failure to pay the revenue to the British Govt. After that when Raikot wanted to repay the said amount to Sonaula Sahib, he denied to receive the money. It traced the liberal and heartiest mentality of Sonaula.”⁴⁰

Tapesh Sanyal a lawyer of Nayabasti, Jalpaiguri informed, “Our family was a cultured one in the society of the town. His grandfather Durga Charan Sanyal and his father Jyotish Chandra Sanyal both edited a famous Bengali periodicals named ‘Janamat’ where many scholars and intellectuals had contributed by giving their valuable writing of different aspects from different angles. There was a good relation between the Hindu and Muslims. His father Jyotish Chandra Sanyal was famous lawyer as well as he was the first secretary of Indian national Congress. He was also founder of Indian Tea Planters Association. Bengal Club was established before 1947 by the inspiration of his father Jyotish Chandra Sanyal. This club was a cultural centre in the town. Inside thisclub there was a library and Tenish Court.”⁴¹ The greatest inconvenience in North Bengal was communication system. North Bengal has been scattered from other parts of West Bengal due to natural causes. Since the long days Jyam Air Company which minimum communication system maintained through their irregular Air communication system, that was stopped since December 21 for which North Bengal has

nearly been scattered the communication system by Bus and Train led North Bengal behind 48 hours. For that disadvantage of communication, news papers and letter by posting system are not coming regularly; on the other hand people had to wait for baby food and emergency medicine. It has become difficult to send serious patient to Calcutta.⁴²

It cannot be denied today that the production had not been increased in accordance with the mission of four plans. Some projects cannot be started for want of money. The high prices of essential things of the 1960's became the root cause of endless sufferings of the people. In the 1970's the rate of high prices increased in the compound rate. The distribution system has become weaker. The number of jobless persons has been going up rapidly.

Karala River—Karala, once a glorious river, is fast drying up and losing its depth. The water has become almost still. Garbage and effluents are continuously being dumped into the river. Dirty waters from burning Ghats (landing stage) and hospitals find their way into it on a regular basis. Given the amount of stagnant and polluted water in the river, an epidemic is not unlikely. The Karala River, which runs through Jalpaiguri apparently a calm river, becomes quite dangerous during the rainy season. Low-lying areas on either sides of the riverbank are flooded every year. Some time ago, Karala merges into the river Tista just outside Jalpaiguri town. The area was known as King Saheber Ghat. But Tista's river-bed gradually rose above Ghat of Karala. An expedition team, lead by Prabir Dutta, went to examine the situation in 1964. They found that the waters were coming from a well. The river entered Jalpaiguri town after crossing the Baikunthapur forest several times.

Karala used to be famous for the *Dusserah* (festival on the occasion of the immersion of Goddess Durga). Decorated boats carrying idols of Goddess Durga would cruise along the river from evening till late at night before the ceremonial immersion of all the Idols.⁴³

Literature-Jalpaiguri district can demand an admirable and remarkable position in the field of Philanthropic and writings on various subjects through the publication and editing of books, journals, periodicals, little magazines and newspapers. Many writers, literates and poets have been produced and born out in the district. Till now Jalpaiguri has been bearing a remarkable position in the canvas of cultural world in North Bengal. Since the first half of the 20th century a wave of writing and studying literature and other subjects relating to social science had been flowing over and which is continuing till now. Sailendra Nath Mukhopadhyay pointed out, “Narayan Gangopadhyay wrote page after page of Upanibesh sitting in the room in Natun para of Jalpaiguri town, he collected sources of the stories of ‘Swarnasita’ and top while dwelling in Jalpaiguri town. Bhujangadhar Roy, secretary of weekly periodicals ‘Trishrota’ wrote poems-once he attained popularity as a poet of the circle of Rabindranath Tagore.”⁴⁴

The author of ‘Anya Nagar’, Sudhir Ranjan Mukhopadhyay stayed some days in Jalpaiguri, Asim Roy and Shirsendu Mukhopadhyay studied in Fanindra Dev Institution. They memorized the experience of Jalpaiguri in their writings again and again. Bashir Al Hellel of Dhaka was a student of A.C. College of Jalpaiguri. Samir Rakshit and Samaresh Majumdar spent their student life in Jalpaiguri. Kartik Lahiri, the resident of Kolkata, once stayed in Jalpaiguri and started his writings. Jibon Sarkar of Dhupguri, now resident of Kolkata did not forget dhupguri and Jalpaiguri. The main theme of this writings is to memorise world of Dhupguri and East Bengal. Ashru Kumar Sikdar, famous literent was a student of A. C. College. Amitava Dasgupta, poet was teaching someday in Maynaguris and A.C. College of Jalpaiguri. Debesh Roy spent his school life and college life in Jalpaiguri and teaching in A.C. College. He never forgets his district. ⁴⁵

After independence, a weekly named 'Barta' began publication. The Jalpaiguri Cha Karmachari Samiti began publication of its weekly named Ahvan, Nisan were another Bengali weekly which continued for a few years. Danpiteder Asar, Amader Kotha, Uttarpath, Nirapeksha were published for sometime from the District Headquarters.⁴⁶

Samaresh Majumdar mentioned, "I was born in Goyerkata near Jalpaiguri.....my earliest memories are therefore replete with forest's deep stillness and unending natural beauty. My first love was a beautiful spring called Angra Bhasha (meaning that which wets the angra or cloth worn by local women round their waists.)...I knew every stone, every pebble in that spring. .Often we used to come across naked tribal women wading for into the current to collect the logs.... By morning they were all gone. That used to make me very sad....At Jalpaiguri town where I went to school new vistas opened up for me. Tista with its broad, curving sweeps confronted me instead of the wispy, playful Angra Bhasha. Just the size of it was overwhelming. The sand embankments stretched for miles into the forests. The town itself was then a fascinating cross between the urban and the rural."⁴⁷

Religious practices

There are many archeological instances in the district of Jalpaiguri which proves that the Jalpaiguri as a part of ancient Kamrupa or Pragjyotishpur was historically enriched since the ancient period. Among the archeological instances the name of many fort or Garh can be referred. Garh of King Nal was famous in North Bengal, which is situated in the Chilapata forest of Jalpaiguri district. It is assumed by different researchers that this fort was established by the Koch king Nara Narayana.

The second important fort was situated in Garalbariof Chaulhati Thana of Jalpaiguri district locally known as “Prithu Rajar Garh”, it is also known as Bhitargarh. The major portions of this Garh are laid in present Bangladesh.

The Buxa fort situated on the Buxa hill of Jalpaiguri district is the famous archeological instances of the district. There is a debate about the builder of the fort. In the colonial period Britishers used it as prison of Indian victims or freedom fighters.

Among temples of the Jalpaiguri district Jalpesh temple is one of the greatest temples in the district, nay NorthBengal or North East India. It is a temple of God Shiba. It is also debatable that who was the creator of this temple is. Many local scholars argue that, this temple was established by the king Jalpesh. But for the natural calamity this temple was destroyed. The work was started by Koch King Prana Narayana (1632-65) and the work of the temple was finished by Koch king Moda Narayan. Again the temple was destroyed. In 1927 this temple was rebuilt.

One of the famous ancient temples of Jalpaiguri was Baikuntha Nath Mandir of Royal family. Some scholars argue that it was built by Raikot Sarpadeb. It was destroyed by earthquake in 1897 and it was rebuilt in 1898. Besides, there are more important temples such as Kali Mandir (temple) of Rajbari, Swasan Kali Mandir of Mashkalaibari, Kalibari of Jogomaya and Dinbazar. The kali temple of Pandapara was built by Koch king Rup Narayan (1693-1714). It is assumed that the temple of Dhapchandi of Dhapganj was established prior to the reign of Hussain Shahi. The temple of Madanmohan of Keranipara was built in 1923. Besides, the temple of Sanyasi Thakur is one of the important temples of Jalpaiguri district. The temple is like Pagoda to see.

The mosque situated in the Ghoomti no.4 of Jalpaiguri is old one. It was refounded by a Muslim saint named Dinu..... About 148 years ago. Later

his son-in law Danbir Munshi Mahammad Sonaulla finished the innovation work of the mosque. The mosque is known as “Puratan Masjid”. Sonaulla built a mosque in 1902 in Dinbazar of Jalpaiguri. The mosque of Nawab house is situated beside this said mosque. Khan Bahadur Rahim Box built it in 1885. Further prove that mosque of Nayabasti was established by the joint endeavour of Khan Bahadur Tasuddak Ahmed, the Inspector of School and Mahammad Ismail Gani Sardar.

The Church of this district was established in 1882 nearby oldcourt in 1896 for the Indian Christians in Race course para. Both the churches were built for the Protestants. Besides, more churches were established in Santal colony, South Latabari, Chila para corner of Hasimara, Joygaon etc.⁴⁸ Ananda Gopal Ghosh pointed out that the stepping of Christian Missionaries was started since the time of Waren Hastings in North Bengal. There witnessed the name of Christian Sahib in the several places of the Dooars such as Sahebpotia, Hamiltonganj, Barnesh Bazar, Barnesh Ghat. The King’s Sahib’s Ghat of Jalpaiguri also bears the past memory. The birthday of Jesus Christ, Christmasday, Good Friday etc are observed till today.⁴⁹

Sonaulla established another mosque in Dinbazar of the town. It is known that some lands were acquired from Fanindra Dev Raikot as a pirottor. This mosque, was established in 1902 is known as Sonaulla mosque.⁵⁰

The Jalpesh Mela of this year like previous year has been started in Shib Chaturdashi. In Saturday, first day of the fair more than lakhs of people have been assembled. But the fair of the year is lifeless because people do not have money, yet shops are displayed. Many people have assembled to offer puja.⁵¹

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Chapter 7

Conflict and Confrontation in the Society of Jalpaiguri

In the previous Chapters, the formation of society of the district Jalpaiguri, condition and status of the people had been discussed. The cultural condition of the people of Jalpaiguri in the colonial and post- colonial period in the context of changing scenario has also been discussed. It is found in the aforementioned discussion that after formation of the district in 1869 the British – India Government had taken initiative to reforms in the district introducing new jotdari system, tea- estates specially in the Dooars areas and other economic measures and administrative reforms. As a result of these reformative measures the socio- economic and cultural pattern of the district were being changed rapidly. Huge number of people of different castes, religion and classes immigrated in the district. These immigrated people including the English people dominated on the illiterate and simple minded indigenous people capturing the economy of this region. Culturally the immigrated people, particularly the ‘Varna Hindus’ or the people of ‘Sanskritic Culture’ and the people belonged to Western culture dominated and extended their culture on the indigenous people. Needless to say, as a result of the immigration and their activities the indigenous people of the district were deprived and oppressed in different ways. It is relevant to mention here that in spite of attaining the independence on the 15th August, 1947 after age- long struggle by the Indians, the oppressions and repressions on the peasants, workers and depressed class people have been continuing.

Since the attainment of independence of India in 1947, lot of discontents and grievances were being accumulated among the indigenous people of North

Bengal, particularly, the people of Northern portion of North Bengal. They were affected socially, economically and culturally as a result they protested against all sorts of deprivations and negligence in time to time organizing and conducting socio-political movements such as Uttarakhand- Utjas, Kamtapur Movement and Greater Cooch Behar movement etc. Many reasons were behind this Movement which is classified in the following way:--

At the time of attainment of independence and partition of India, Bengal was divided namely West Bengal and East Pakistan as a result of which North Bengal lost her major portions of valuable and developed areas such as Rajshahi, Bagura, Pabna and Rangpur districts and partly some portions of Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri district, once these areas were under Rajshahi division and then Jalpaiguri division, known as undivided North Bengal. The regions which handed over to Pakistan were more developed and socio- culturally enriched; land was very fertile for agrarian cultivation. So, post- independent North Bengal became economically weak for losing this valuable tract.¹

It is remarkable that the five Thanas (Police station) of Jalpaiguri district had been handed over to Pakistan at the time of partition on the basis of the demarcation line- up of Radcliff. It was a tremendous affect to the people of Northern portion of North Bengal, because this portion of North Bengal had been split out from the Southern part of West Bengal; for this unavoidable and unfortunate political game played by the British Government and the Indian political leaders, the people of Northern portion of North Bengal had to communicate with the Southern part of West Bengal, particularly the Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal where all the head- official works and passing law through various bill by Legislative Assembly were held and the people of this split portion of West Bengal were bound to go by facing various troubles and expensive load. If the said Thanas remained in the Jalpaiguri district as earlier the people of this region could have communicate with Calcutta, nay West Bengal in short time saving seven to eight hours and of course less fare. It is

unfortunate that these five Thanas had been ceded to Pakistan illegally, because we are well known that the country was divided in accordance with religion and as such these Thanas also handed over to Pakistan showing the majority of Muslims in these areas wrongly on the basis of census report. But originally in these areas Hindus were majority in such a way that the Hindus were shown separately i.e. caste Hindus, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes etc. in the census report. Among the scheduled caste people major portions were Rajbanshis who were Hindus. If all the Hindus were shown including SC & ST altogether they would become majority, naturally these Thanas could have not been handed over to Pakistan. So, it is a tremendous grievance of the people of North Bengal till now.

Major portion of North Bengal was under Kamata- Koch kingdom and earlier it was a part of Pragjyotishpur and Kamrup kingdom which had a historical legacy and pride ruled by various rulers in time to time with separate geographical locations. It is true historically that this portion of North Bengal was never included with other parts of Bengal before penetration of colonial power, even in the age of Sultanate and Mughals this tract was excluded from their rule. In the colonial period it was joined with Bengal Presidency for convenience of their empire and in the post- colonial period the Koch kingdom became only a district of West Bengal losing her entity and legacy. Socially and culturally it had a distinctive character unlike other parts of undivided Bengal. Till now, some of these distinctive characters are found in the society of North Bengal, particularly in the society of the northern portion of North Bengal. It can be said that in the society and culture of this region the Mongoloid tradition, customs and usages are laying much more unlike other parts of North Bengal, nay Bengal. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee writes, “The Bodo tribes are linguistically connected with the Nagas but where as the Nagas have till recently remained isolated and primitive, one may say that the Bodos, who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming a solid bloc in North – Eastern India, were the most

important Indo-Mongoloid people in Eastern India, and they formed one of the main bases of the present- day population of these tracts.”²

The Northern portion of North Bengal had much more distinctive character unlike other parts of Bengal. In the epic age it was under Pragjyotishpura, then Kamrup, after that the history of Kamtapura and Cooch Behar was well known to all. The Pragjyotishpura- Kamrup Empire was bounded by Karotoya to Brahmaputra River comprising the triangular shape. Needless to say, this tract was separate from other parts of Bengal in terms of geopolitics, society, economy and culture. The people of Indo-Mongaloid groups played a significant role in the society, economy, culture and polity of this region. Anthropologically, linguistically and culturally there are so many evidences and instances till now which prove that a distinctive society and culture was formed flowing over the tide of history unlike other parts of Bengal, nay India. There were so many rulers who ruled Kamrup with their pride and prestige; I have no intention to discuss in details unnecessarily. For the weakness of the Pala Empire, Baidyadeb, the minister of Ram Pal became the king of Kamrup taking the title ‘Maharajadhiraj Parameshwar Parambhatarack’ and he shifted his capital from Kamrup to Kamtapur. But it is debateable, many scholars denied this view. They opined that after Baidyadeb the rulers of Kamrup did not last long, the rulers lost their positions shortly. In these circumstances, Prithu became the king of Kamrup in 1195 and he extended his empire from Brahmaputra to Karotoya. In his old age he selected his son Sandhya Roy to be ascended the throne and ultimately Sandhya Roy became the King of Kamrup. After the death of Prithu, Sandhya Roy shifted his capital from Gauhati to Kamatapur to protect his empire from the Muslim invasion. Whoever the founder of the capital of the kingdom of Kamtapur, it had a glorious history. The three rulers namely Niladhwaj, Chakradhwaj and Nilambar of Khen dynasty ruled Kamtapur from the capital founded in Gosanimari, near Dinahata. The Kamtapur kingdom was destroyed by the invasion of Alauddin Hussain Shaha in 1498. After the downfall of Kamtapur

kingdom a period of short breaking was going on. But within short period Biswa Singha, the son of Haria Mandal or Haridas Mandal, a Koch leader who ruled as a tribal chieftain in Chikna hill near Dhubri of Assam, occupied the Kamtapur kingdom and established his empire called Koch kingdom. Koch kingdom was ruled by the Koch rulers independently up to 1772 and from 1772 to 1947 it was ruled under British dominion as a tributary state. After independence King Jagaddipendra Narayan signed an agreement with Central Government on 28 August, 1949 and thereafter Cooch Behar became a district of the state of West Bengal on and from 1st January, 1950. Haripada Roy writes, “North Bengal has its own tradition, history, language and culture. The ancient tradition bound glorious history of North Bengal is completely different from Bengal. This region was famous under different names from ancient to the historical period – e.g. Paundra Desh, Pragjyotishpur, Virat, Kamrup and Kamtapur. It has maintained its separate identity till today.”³

The said region is a full of natural resources having fertile lands for agricultural cultivation, huge amount of various types of agricultural crops are produced since past to present, suitable lands and favourable climate, temperature and rainfall for tea- cultivation; needless to say that high quality of tea had been produced in North Bengal, particularly in the Dooars and Darjeeling district; the quality of Darjeeling tea is world famous; there are huge areas covered with forest and hill wherefrom valuable natural resources are found. Apart from these there are so many rivers, sufficient rainfall and natural beauties. By utilising all these natural resources many developmental works could have been done through which the socio- economic uplift would be possible. But unfortunately, all these possibilities had been ignored and proper initiative had not yet been taken both from the Central Government and State Government. Since the colonial period the Government used North Bengal as their source of income and as such the colonial imperialist power collected resources and revenues from different sources only for their own interest depriving the people of North Bengal. Unfortunately, after independence no

change has been taken place in the question of the proper development of the people of North Bengal. Since independence both the Central Government and State Government used North Bengal as their colony and source of revenue neglecting the people of North Bengal.

In terms of large scale industries North Bengal is laying behind still now for which it is said to have been North Bengal is neglected. It is unfortunate that after so long period of attaining independence not a single large scale industry have been established. Only the tea industry is laying in North Bengal though it was established in the colonial period and the profit of tea industries goes to planters. The local people are less benefited from these tea industries. It can be said neutrally that there are favourable condition and atmosphere including market and natural resources for establishing large scale industries. If both the Central Government and the State Government would take initiate or measures to establish industries in North Bengal utilising natural resources and raw materials of North Bengal many industries could have been built up in the soil of North Bengal. Agro- based industries; Food processing industries, Tourism industries could have been developed. Unfortunately, nothing has been done for the negligence and ignorance of the Government and dominating tendency of the Delhi and Kolkata oriented political leaders. Sukhbilas Barma pointed out, “Since the employment market is not growing as fast as the number of entrants, local middle class aspirants have started viewing migrants as blocks to their mobility and development.”⁴This negligence and biasness has given birth different types of crisis and problems which led the people of North Bengal to various movements created socio- political tensions.

The indigenous leaders of Jalpaiguri like other parts of North Bengal speaking in Kamtapuri language or Rajbanshi language as their mother tongue demanded that their language is not originated from Bengali language and added that Kamtapuri language is completely separate from Bengali language. They objected that their mother tongue has been neglected and dominated by

the Bengali language and Bengali culture. They expressed grievance that in spite of having their separate language and culture Bengali people including elites and Government imposed the Bengali language forcefully on them in their every sphere of life such as taking education, studying, writing and official works. There is no Kamtapuri or Rajbanshi medium of language for giving education in school, college or university level; no official works held by this language. Girindra Narayan Roy writes, “This led to vigorous attempt on the part of the Kamtapuri leaders as well as some intellectuals of the community to establish their identity in terms of a politics of cultural difference that took all pains to prove that their language was a different language from Bengali, not a distortion of it.”⁵It is true that many of the elite people or educated intellectuals belong to Bengali language; particularly living in the town insulted the Rajbanshi language. So it has become an issue of discontent of the Kamtapuri people.

There are many debates on the language issue of Kamtapuri whether it is separate from Bengali language or not. Their demand of language could not establish because of their weak instances and proofs in separating the language. There are many similarities in terms of morphology which proved that the Bengali language including all the dialects related to Bengali language, Assamese, Maitheli, Hindi, Oriya etc. are originated from same source of language; as a result of evolution of language there created many separate language in India. Moreover they had no grammar or no scripts which is a problem to justify a separate Kamtapuri language.

Before occupation of the Dooars area by the British in 1865, it was ruled by Koch Kings and Bhutias gradually. This area was full of jungles and ferocious animals. In the hilly areas and forest areas only the people of Indo-Mongoloid Tribes namely Mech, Garo, Rabha and Toto etc. could live there. In the plain areas of the Western Dooars the indigenous people of Rajbanshi community and local Muslims called Nasya Sheikh lived there. No human

being other than the Indo-Mongoloid tribes could live in the hilly and forest areas of the Western Dooars.⁶

There are many debates on the origin and ethnic identity of the indigenous communities namely Rajbanshi, Mech, Garo, Rabha, Toto etc. It can be said that these communities in spite of having separate identities they originated from Indo-Mongoloid race. They were simple in habit, habituated with shifting cultivation (except Rajbanshis) treating the lands and natural resources as the property of God which was not saleable or transferable. After living in a particular place some years, they shifted into another place and started to live there. The main occupation of these tribes was shifting cultivation and hunting. These communities lived out of the ambit of civic society, governed by their own leaders called *Moral* or *Mondals*. Though they had separate groups or *gotras* among themselves, they had no castes or classes. They would never go out of their own ethnic society for any kind of necessity. They had their own culture, own system for treatment; own system for judgment or solution any kind of problem or crisis among them. It was the ethnic culture.⁷

After the second Anglo-Bhutanese war in 1865, the British-India Government occupied the Western Dooars and they cast their commercial eyes on the area because it was full of natural resources and the soil was favourable for cultivation. As a part of their agrarian reforms the Britishers divided the lands into three categories 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 new forms like other parts of Bengal. After each settlement a large number of jotes were created and these were given to the Jotdars by agreement or lease. Most of the Jotdars did not cultivate lands directly; therefore, further devolution of land was necessary on the basis of an agreement of revenue named pattani to the intermediaries called Chukanidars, Dar-chukanidars, Tasya chukanidars, Dar-Dar-chukanidars.

Moreover, there were *Bargadars* or share croppers who had no right on lands. They cultivated lands as well as of the intermediaries called 'Giri' only for 50% share of crops.

In the Western Dooars, Britishers introduced tea cultivation since 1874. As the local people or indigenous tribes of the Western Dooars and the neighbouring areas were less interested to work in the tea-garden, so the Planters imported labourers from Santal Parganas and Rajmahal areas of Bihar through 'Sardar' by commission. Not only labourers, but also planters of different communities and castes, officials immigrated in the Dooars for earning.

On the other hand in the agrarian field also many people of different communities, castes and classes immigrated into the Dooars. They obtained lands from the Govt. by lease or agreement and became Jotdars. In such a way population in the Western Dooars increased rapidly, for example population in the Western Dooars in 1872 was 90,668 in 1901 it increased to 4, 10,606 and in 1931 it became 6,61,068.

As a result of the increasing population in the Western Dooars and initiation of the economic reforms by establishing tea industries, jotdari system etc. by the Britishers the indigenous tribes faced an identity crisis because they had been losing their rights and liberty in the Western Dooars. They had been transferred to settled cultivation from shifting cultivation. They had to pay revenue to the Government which was not earlier.

Apart from this socio-economic crisis, they also faced a cultural crisis because of losing their ethnicity for entering into the civic society. Many of them had been converted into Hindus, some converted into Islam and many tribes had been converted into Christian. So, facing such type of crisis many tribal people left the place towards East and settled different places of N.E.

India. Even after independence the Indo-Mongoloid tribal people have been facing different types of crisis and problems. Proper development has not been taken place in their localities. They are lying behind educationally from the other sections of the society. Few among them have obtained Government job.

Besides, these tribal communities having their ethno-cultural identity crisis because of their conversion into other religions, now-a -days, many of them are going to forget their mother tongue and their traditional customs, usages etc. By entering into global world and global culture the young generations are going to forget many things of their own traditional culture. Sukh Bilas Barma writes, “The dominance of migrants in the world of economic, social and political fields has led the local youth to emulate their dress, their style of living, even their language. But they have now grown with a feeling that the migrants have forced them to lose their own cultural identity.”⁸ So, lot of discontents and grievances have been accumulated in the minds of the tribal people in the Western Dooars as elsewhere in North Bengal as a result of which socio-political tensions are going on in the soil of North Bengal, sometime it has been bringing violence and destroying the environment of peace and integrity of North Bengal.

Since independence the politics of North Bengal, nay West Bengal was controlled by the leaders of the elite class oriented higher caste people. Most of the top- rank leaders including Ministers, Bureaucrats, higher class officers belonged to higher caste and higher class. The main remote control was in the hands of these classes of people, particularly the people of Kolkata oriented Babus. Though after few decades of independence, particularly after coming of Left Front Government in power the indigenous people got chance to participate in politics, not only that a good number of ministers were selected from indigenous people. Moreover a large number of indigenous people getting education and joined in services in different sectors of the Government and Private Companies also. In spite of that the functions of decision and policy

making were in the hands of the Kolkata oriented Babus. Haripada Roy writes, “We are helpless and directionless in the whirlwind of Calcutta based economic, industrial, educational politics, misleading politics, nepotism and corrupt policies of the one eyed partial leadership and administration.”⁹ Unfortunately, it is followed that there are few indigenous people who have become the district secretary or president of all political parties though they are ‘son of the soil’. Is it not surprising? Even it is unfortunate that there is no Vice Chancellor or Registrar or Controller belongs to indigenous people. All are placed from Kolkata oriented intellectuals. In such a way there are so many higher posts where indigenous people are not getting chance due to obscure reasons in spite of having their qualities and efficiencies. So, all these instances are giving birth lot of discontents and grievances among the indigenous intellectual classes.

The heavy influx of population in North Bengal in time to time, particularly since independence is one of the reasons of discontents and tensions of present North Bengal. It is well known to all that on the eve of the independence communal riots was started between Hindus and Muslims and we obtained our freedom on the 15th of August, 1947 by dividing the country in two parts namely, India and Pakistan on the basis of religion. Since independence devastating communal riots was started in all over the country, particularly the riots got its intensive character in Pakistan thousands of Hindu people left Pakistan losing everything and came to India to save their lives. These migrated people were called ‘Refugee’; they kept shelter in different parts of North Bengal like other parts of the country. As a result of the migration the demographic pattern of North Bengal, nay West Bengal changed rapidly. This process of migration was going on since long time of the independence for communal torture of the Muslims of Pakistan on the Hindus. Naren Das pointed out, “As a result (of migration) the safety and security of indigenous people were at stake. Thousands of indigenous people left their mother land on constant torture of the government machinery and so called

political and social leaders.”¹⁰ Not only the Bengali Hindus migrated from East Pakistan, many people came and settled in different parts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts from Assam at the time of riots in 1960s and first half of the 1980s led by ASSU and the extremist movement for their sovereignty led by ULFA. Other than these many people of different professions and classes namely Beharies, Marwaries, Nepalties came and settled in North Bengal for their livelihood in time to time. In this way due to heavy burden of population influx various types of socio- economic crisis and problems have been created as a result discontents have been growing up among the indigenous people.

Indian independent Government wanted to abolish all the intermediary systems in the agrarian field. In view of the abolition of the zamindari system West Bengal Government passed the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act in 1953 and West Bengal Land Reforms Act in 1955. There were many big Zamindars and Jotdars who possessed thousand acres of lands till after the independence. So, the ceiling of lands possessed by any land holders was fixed up to 25 acres. The lands over ceiling under any land holders would be illegal which handed over to the Government and distributed to the landless people. But, unfortunately it was followed that the Zamindars, Jotdars and land holders yet occupied the ceiling surplus lands illegally. During the period of two spells of United Front Government in 1967 and 1969 and the Left Front Government since 1977 Land Reforms Programmes got a new motion. Thousand acres of lands were acquired and distributed to the landless people by the Government. Ceiling- surplus lands were also occupied forcefully by the different left Parties and distributed to the landless peasants.

It is true that the Land Reforms Programmes had a positive role because by this programmes many landless people including sharecroppers got their right on lands. The slogan ‘Land to the tillers’ became successful. But in the case of the district, nay North Bengal unlike other parts of West Bengal the picture was slightly different. In this region the indigenous people namely

Rajbanshis, Tribals and local Muslims were completely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and all most all of them were illiterate. So, while going on Land Reforms Programmes many of the Jotdars or landholders were failure to hold their lands for not to furnish their proper documents of lands to the authority of land department of the Government in time. The ceiling of lands possessed by the zamindars- Jotdars was fixed to 75 acres and later on 7 standard hectares in all over West Bengal. But it was not scientific because there were lot of differences in land in accordance with fertility and value in different region of West Bengal. Production of crops was not same in all parts of West Bengal. So, the ceiling of lands measuring on quantity was a blunder, it should be fixed up in accordance with quality and value of land.

There were many differences between the landlords of Northern North Bengal and South Bengal. The Zamindars and intermediaries of South Bengal had alternative sources of income other than their zamindaries such as business, industries and service but in this region almost all the cases except few, the Zamindars- Jotdars and intermediaries were completely depended on land. They had no alternative sources of income other than agricultural cultivation, particularly the Jotdars of Rajbanshi, tribal and local Muslims were uneducated, simple and unconscious. It is common knowledge that in East Bengal most of the Zamindars and renters were upper caste Hindus and the majority of the peasants were Muslims, while in Jalpaiguri there was no such demarcation as the majorities of the Jotdars as well as the sharecroppers were Rajbanshis. Even the Muslims had their representatives in both classes.¹¹ In the tribal communities, the Jotdars and sharecroppers or *projas* belong to same community. As almost all the cases the Jotdars had no alternative sources of income, they had been gradually demolishing after losing their lands by the Land Reforms Programmes. In most of the cases, the lands, remaining after vesting were divided among their sons & daughters. Naturally, after one or two generation the lands gradually decreased. Not only that they became like a fish without water because they were not laborious, not efficient in other technical

works, naturally to maintain their families they sold their lands. There were so many instances in North Bengal that the then Jotdars sold their lands and became later on agricultural labourers or day labourers in the different sectors in different parts of India. Some instances of such condition are given which is collected from field work by the author.

Khagendra Nath Das, S/O Late Nara Nath Das, 77 years old of Chaparerpar, P.S Alipurduar Dist- Jalpaiguri, was a member of Jotdar family and they had 18 *hal* (land 270 bigha) which was cultivated by their *Raiyots* or Chukanidars. Now he has only 6 *bighas* of land and he has six sons and one daughter of whom only his elder son is doing service in Calcutta, rest of his five sons are jobless. His brother, Khajen Das and Brojen Das are completely poor, Khajen Das (Roy) is a day labourer and Brojen Das (Roy) is also a day labourer works on Road. ¹²

Ramesh Roy, S/O Late Santeswar Roy (Dhangu Roy), 48 years of Chapani, P.S Samuktala, and Dist. Jalpaiguri stated that his grandfather late Bankanath Roy (then Jotdar) had 300 *hal* lands (4500 bigha) and four sons – (1) Kalicharan Roy, (2) Ramdayal Roy (3) Brojen Roy and (4) Santeswar Roy. After vesting and division of land his father Santeswar Roy obtained 5 *hal* (75 *bigha*) land and now he (Ramesh Roy) obtained only 15 *bigha* lands and his each cousin (5 brothers) obtained 4 *bighas* of land and they are living very ordinarily. ¹³

Noni Mohan Sen of Basusuba near Maynaguri informed me of his tragic situation. His grandfather was a *Jotdar* having 85 bighas of lands; the *jotdari* was still existed up to the period of his father. A large portion of land went under the river Tista at the time of flood in 1968. At present he had approximately 40 *bighas* of land with proper necessary documents. But, for a wonder that no land have in his possession; all the lands were occupied un officially by the cultivators or sharecroppers who cultivated lands but no share

is given to the land holder. He surprisingly expressed that he tried to obtain his share but he became failure. Now he does not go to the cultivators for either having his share or reoccupy his possession on the land.¹⁴

Other than these few instances there are many indigenous families in the district once who were Jotdars or Zamindars, now their successors have become agricultural labourers, industrial labourers, servants or doing many of them inferior works or illegal works which is a tragic situation. Now many questions arise about the success of the Land Reforms. Should it not remain any laws or systems to protect such types of Jotdars or intermediaries only depending on agriculture? Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh pointed out that a proposal was taken in the conference of Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti in Jateshar in 1957 to recruit a representative of Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti in the committee of distribution of surplus lands as they were only agricultural-based people unlike the Zamindars of other parts of West Bengal. But the Government did not accept the proposal of the Samiti as a result of which many problems & crisis raises in the socio-economic and political situation of North Bengal.¹⁵

One of the causes of demolition of the local Jotdars was heavy immigration in the district from outside. As a result of immigration and changing economic policies local Jotdar faced in unequal competition with the immigrants which was a question of struggle for existence and in this life – struggle they lost their lands except few instances.

The following table shows the population increasing and their variations in the district, Jalpaiguri:¹⁶

1872	1951	Variations 1872- 1951	1961	Variations 1951- 1961	1971	Variations 1961- 1971	1981	Variations 1971- 1981
201,659	914538	712879	1359292	444754	1750159	390867	2214871	464712

It can be said easily that huge number of people immigrated in the district from 1872 to 1981; accordingly the lands for cultivation were not increased. Maximum number of people of total population lived in villages, because percentage of urban population in 1951 was 7.22, in 1961 was 9.11, in 1971 was 9.60 and in 1981 was 14.05. As there were no large industries except tea – industries, major portion of population had to depend on agricultural land for their livelihood. Naturally, land crisis was seen for which local people particularly the local Jotdars were affected gradually.

Land reforms mean not only acquisition and distribution of land to the landless people. Land reform is not only a means of securing better distributive justice but also one of improving the social status and dignity of the poor cultivator as well as his political influence.¹⁷ Besides land acquisition and distribution, technological systems and instruments for agricultural purposes including irrigation systems, soil conservation, seeds, and manure should have been improved to increase production. Because, day to day population has been increasing, lands are being divided among the members of the families after each generation; as a result of which amount of land per family have been decreasing. In such a situation production should have been increased from insufficient land, side by side lands are to be conserved from soil pollution. Manjula Bose writes in her editorial address, “Since the pressure of excess population on land will continue for some time to come in the near future, technological and organizational development should proceed, as far as

practicable under this constraint. Technological development are however easier to achieve than organizational restricting.¹⁸

It is found in the field survey in the different villages of Jalpaiguri district that most of the villages are out of irrigation facility, electric facility. The peasants in these villages are not aware of the modern technological improvement in agriculture; they depend on the traditional method of cultivation.

The following table shows total number of villages, total area and irrigated area in different P.S. of the district, Jalpaiguri –¹⁹

Sl. No.	Name of P.S.	No. of inhabited villages	Total area (in hectare)	Percentage of Cultivation	Percentage of irrigated area to total cultivation
1.	Rajganj	28	38497.41	26.02	5.49
2.	Jalpaiguri	29	44262.07	79.17	1.12
3.	Mal	101	51859.38	45.68	9.86
4.	Metiali	30	20489.39	39.84	40.10
5.	Maynaguri	77	49304.60	68.52	2.49
6.	Nagrakata	23	34073.76	83.94	1.42
7.	Banarhat	50	28391.93	47.89	8.29
8.	Dhupguri	62	25325.61	75.99	3.49
9.	Birpara	21	18717.88	71.18	9.25
10.	Falakata	63	34911.28	64.22	15.95
11.	Madarihat	28	15835.36	57.75	6.42
12.	Alipurduar	129	68472.20	67.11	2.84
13.	Kalchini	43	69512.82	29.16	10.90
14.	Kumargram	52	86984.17	19.83	11.89
Total		736	586637.86	50.67	6.82

Upendra Nath Barman wrote, “The ceiling of Khas land has been fixed up, but no sufficient measure has been taken up for increasing productions in

the land in North Bengal as a result, most of the people once depended only on land have been destroyed in the end of destiny and living completely in a impoverish condition.”²⁰

The difference between urban life and rural life is one of the causes of the discontents of the indigenous people. It is followed that the condition of the urban people is comparatively better than the rural people. Most of the rich and well established people including industrialists, trading communities, service men of higher income, elite and intellectual classes live in the urban areas; as such these people of urban areas obtain different types of facilities. It is also true that most of the elite people of urban areas belong to higher caste and higher classes. Few indigenous people belong to elite classes or economically solvent or established living in the town. So it can be said impartially that the society, economy, politics and culture are dominated by the people of higher caste and higher classes where no position is remained for the indigenous people. Not only that, sometimes village people are insulted and culturally neglected by the urban elites or *Babus* by throwing different derogatory comments to the village people. Such type of attitude of the urban people affected the minds of the village people as a result they bear a discontent and pain in their heart to the urban people.

The imbalance development and the question of getting facilities between urban life and rural life is one of the causes of the discontents of the indigenous people. It is followed that the condition of the urban people is comparatively better than the rural people. Most of the rich and well established people including industrialists, trading communities, service men of higher income, elite and intellectual classes live in the urban areas; as such these people of urban areas obtain different types of facilities. It is also true that most of the elite people of urban areas belong to higher caste and higher classes. Few indigenous people belong to elite classes or economically solvent or established living in the town. So it can be said impartially that the society,

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Deprivation, poverty and depression of the indigenous people are one of the causes of discontents. In the previous chapter it is shown how the indigenous Jotdars and Zamindars lost their lands and became landless and helpless. The successors of the said Jotdars and Zamindars became very poor; many of them have become labour and works different sectors. They have no permanent job or service. Many of them stepped into separate state for their livelihood. In these circumstances these indigenous people, particularly the younger generations are becoming angry; considering and remembering their glorious past of their predecessors that once they were Jotdars- Zamindars and they had many things, did not know what poverty was, they are involving in the different sub- regional movements.²¹ Amarendra Nath Narjeenari pointed out that for imbalance attitude and negligence of the Government and the people of elite class led the indigenous people to face in deprivation and helpless.²² Whether there are logics or not behind their grievances, it is their psychological discontents which cannot be denied.

It can be said that there are many reasons behind the discontents and grievances of the indigenous people of this region and these roots of discontents were grown since the attainment of the independence in 1947, as a result of which many socio-political movements such as Uttarkhanda-UTJAS movement, Kamtapur movement started in the district and it extended in different parts of North Bengal for the demand of separate state in North

Bengal. Though these movements turned into a political shape, but the roots of the movements lies in the society and minds of the indigenous people.

Apart from the indigenous people, discontents are also cropping up amongst the settlers' tribes i.e. Tea-tribes who raised various demands on several issues in the district, particularly in Dooars. Interestingly, it is found that since the attainment of independence the settlers, in the political canvas played significant role in the district joining different socio-political movements, such as trade Union Movements, Labour Movements, Peasant movements etc where as the indigenous tribe remained silence comparatively. If we analyse the nature and pattern of the electoral representatives from the Panchayet to the Parliamentary Constituencies it will found that most of the winning reserved seats (ST) or representative belonged to the settlers' tribes. In the surface we will find that there is no conflict between the settlers and the indigenous tribes like the conflict between the settlers' and refugees of East Bengal, East Pakistan or Bangladesh and the Rajbanshi groups in then on-teagarden area, we found the similar kind of discontents among the tribal areas of the district.

Again we found another kind of conflict between the Rajbanshi ethnic groups and the "Bhatia" scheduled caste group. For example we can specifically mention the conflict of the emerging Rajbanshi educated class and the migrant Namasudra class. The number 1) the reserved quota for the scheduled caste group is fixed i.e. 22%. Before the coming of the migrant Namasudras the reserved seats for employment in the Government section was also enjoyed by the Rajbanshi ethnic groups. But now it is showed by the Bhatia Namasudra scheduled caste educated class.As a result a strong kind of resentment rapidly escalating among the educated Rajbanshi ethnic groups. In fact, the conflict is multifaceted, not one faced one.

In corporation of the O.B.C. groups like the North India is also creating conflict. Because the O.B.C. system was not earlier accepted by the Govt. of West Bengal. Again the discontent of O.B.C. between 'A' & 'B' has extended the conflict.

Reserved for other backward class was included in 13.07.94, since then many debates were going on the issue of including O.B.C. in the constitution of India. In West Bengal 166 communities were included in the list of O.B.C. then more sub castes were included in list of O.B.C. and it was divided in two categories O.B.C.-A and O.B.C.-B. The number of O.B.C. –A category is 78 and O.B.C.-B is 88.

It is followed that indigenous Muslims are included in the O.B.C. –A category (Abdal, Muslim Molla, Khotta Muslim, Muslim Rajmistri) and most of the immigrant sub castes belonged to O.B.C.-B category such as Baisya Kapali, Barui, Bansi-Barman, Dewan, Malakar, Sutradhar etc. Here also a conflict between migrant communities is followed in the district like other parts of North Bengal.

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Conclusion

The present thesis has analyzed many critical and undiscussed aspects of the socio - cultural condition of the people of the district Jalpaiguri. A lot of changes had been taken place during the colonial period in the field of society, economy and culture of the district. The district was mainly divided into two tracts in accordance with land revenue systems and agrarian economy namely permanent settled portion mostly situated to the Western part of Tista and non-regulated areas mostly situated in the eastern part of Tista called Western Dooars.

In the village society of the district the agrarian relation between Zamindars-Jotdars and sharecroppers played a significant role. In the Western Dooars, Government was the proprietor of lands that means all the lands of the Western Dooars were under control of the Government. As most of the lands were forlorn with full of jungles, somewhere population were meager, so the Britishers captured all the lands, started survey and settlement works since 1871 and after survey and settlement works they used the lands in three ways – firstly they gave lands by lease to the planters for tea-cultivation, the first tea-garden was established in 1874 at Gajaldoba and since then the number of tea-garden increased gradually as the tea-cultivation was huge profitable. Secondly land was granted by lease for agricultural purposes, at the initial stage of creating Jotes after clearing jungles, no tax or revenue was imposed, but after few years revenue was imposed and the revenue increased one after settlement. But there was no sufficient people to cultivate the land, so cultivators or Jotdars had been encouraged to come and obtain land with minimum cost of revenue or rent as a result of which population had been going up for the

immigration of different types of people from neighboring state Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Nepal.

^ In the perspectives of Jalpaiguri district, particularly in the region of Western Dooars, agrarian structure, agrarian relations, nature and characteristics of the Jotdars had some discrepancy unlike other parts of Bengal. In this region for having huge number of lands easily available and shortage of actual peasants to cultivate the lands and insalubrious atmosphere for dwelling, there was a demand for actual cultivators, naturally the Jotdars would always try to hold their cultivators locally known as *halua* giving them many facilities so that the *haluas* would not leave the Jotdars and settle in another Jotdars. Other than these, most of the Jotdars belong to Rajbanshi and tribal communities who were very simple in habit and broad minded and there was no caste rigidity with their cultivators (*halua*). So it has shown in the present study that the relation between Jotdars and *adhiars* or *halua* (Sharecroppers) was cooperative like a 'father and son' but for few instances of absentee Jotdars of other professions who obtained jotes only for commercial purposes.

In the previous chapters I have discussed the formation and features of the society and cultural scenario of the colonial and post-colonial period. It is known to all that the society and cultural scenario of the people of the Jalpaiguri district in the colonial and post-colonial period changed a lot dramatically. The district of Jalpaiguri was dominated by the indigenous people in the pre-colonial period; in the colonial period the influence of the indigenous people was going to decrease because of the immigration of the outsiders from the neighboring areas of different classes, religions and castes. So, in every aspect of the district such as administration, politics, economy, education, culture, etc., the immigrated people dominated on the indigenous people. The indigenous people had their own tradition in every sphere of lives. But after coming of the Barnahindus, Europeans and other communities the indigenous

people bound to accept the culture of the Barnahindus in the colonial and post colonial period adjusting with the modern culture in the wave of time. Amrendra Nath Suba, a member of Mech community and teacher pointed out that by the immigration of huge number of people of different castes and classes the indigenous people and their culture facing in crises. The people of Mech community who were majority and 'son of the soil' in the Dooars in the pre- colonial period were facing in identity crisis in the colonial period and in the post colonial period they lost their cultural heritage and ethnicity . Among the immigrated people, particularly two categories of them such as higher castes of the Hindus & the western people occupied the position of the society. Naturally in the cultural life the westernization & the Sanskritization entered and extended into the society & culture of the people of the district.

It should be mentioned here that acculturation between indigenous people and immigrated people was took place as a result of which a cultural synthesis was grown in the society of the district like other parts of North Bengal. After living year to year together in the same villages and town the indigenous people and the immigrated people accepted the culture of each other as their neighbours. Though it was started in the colonial period, in the post colonial period it became more effective because of the influx of the refugees coming from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after 1947.

In this study, the present scholar has shown important and debatable aspect of the roots of present socio-political tension in the district, in a broad sense in the North Bengal. It is found from different sources that before coming of the Britishers only some tribal groups namely Mech, Toto, Garo, Rava Drucpa etc. lived in the Western Dooars, in the plain areas of the district and the permanent settled portion most of the people were Rajbanshi and Muslim communities. But after coming of the Britishers and introduction of new economic policy population increased for immigration of different types of people. It is found from the report of, D.H.E. Sunder, J.A. Milligan, J.F.

Grunning and the writing of Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal that the number of Totos, Garos and the Meches decreased for facing an identity crisis. Moreover, it is found from the field survey that many successors of the contemporary Jotdar families now living in a distress condition losing their everything many of them became labourer working in different places for which a lot of discontent and psychic grievances have been growing up amongst these people locally known as “Son of the soil” many of whom are being involved in a militant activities as a result of which the socio – economic and cultural synthesis of this region is going to be demolished. So the present scholar of this study has an intension to show that the root of the present burning problem of socio – political tensions of this region was originated long ago for losing lands and cultural identity.

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- 20) *Bhowmik Krishna Dipak, 80 years, Kamarpara, Jalpaiguri*
- 21) *Toto Dhaniram, Totopara, Madarihat, 70 years, Alipurduar District, 10.12.14*

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Appendix – i

To

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE VICEROY,

Delhi.

The Rajbansya-Kshatriyas assembled at Debiganj, District Jalpaiguri, telegraph office Domar, for the institution of important social and religious reform; express their great indignation at the most heinous bomb-outrage upon Viceroy at Delhi and express their heartfelt sympathy with the Viceroy and pray God for his speedy and complete recovery.

PANCHANAN BARMA

Secretary, Kshatriya Samity.

(Proceedings of the Kshatriya Samity - 3rd Year)

Appendix – ii

The Statesman

100 YEARS AGO

AUGUST 11, 1899

(News Items)

The Jalpaigorie Murder Case. — Yesterday at the High Court Criminal Jurisdiction, Justice Sir Henry Prinsep delivered judgment in the case which was heard sometime ago by Justice Prinsep and Justice Hill on a reference by the Sessions Judge of Jalpaigorie, and also on the appeal of the prisoners Debendro Nath Dutt and Gopal Chunder Bose, who were convicted of murder and sentenced to death. The prisoners, who were the doctor and the head clerk, respectively, of the Sone tea garden in the Jalpaigorie district near the Bhootan frontier, were convicted of having murdered one Rai Churn Nundi who came from his native village in Jessore, of which place Gopal Chunder Bose was also a resident. The case for the prosecution was that the two prisoners, along with another person who could not be found, stabbed Rai Churn Nundi, who went to the Chamurchi frontier guard and reported the

matter. The man could not at first speak, and wrote the names of the prisoners, who were then arrested the same evening. Rai Churn made several statements in writing which were the principal evidence in support of the case for the prosecution. Their Lordships, after considering the whole of the evidence and the arguments of counsel for the prisoners affirmed the conviction, but commuted the sentence of death to one of transportation for life. Mr Garth appeared for the prisoners, and Mr Abdur Rahim, Officiating Deputy Legal Remembrancer, for the Crown.

(Incidents published in The Statesman of 11.08.1899)

Appendix – iii

পরিশিষ্ট -৩

৩।১।১৯৩০

প্রকৃত সমাজ দরদী এবং কংগ্রেসের তপনীলকে মনোনয়ন দেওয়া হোক।

৩। সরকার জমিদারী প্রথা লোপ করিয়াছেন। উত্তর বাংলার জাদি কৃষক রাজবংশী চাষী মাঠান্তে এই কৃষি বন্টন ব্যবস্থার প্রথম প্রয়োগ সুবিধা পায় তাহার জন্য এই সভা কৃষিমন্ত্রীকে অগ্রবেশ জানাইতেছে।

৪। উত্তর বঙ্গে রাজবংশী জাতি একটি অহরত সম্প্রদায়; শিক্ষায় দীক্ষায় জনগ্রন্থ। এই জাতির উন্নতি করিতে হইলে সরকারে একতাবদ্ধভাবে সংগঠনের মাধ্যমে সকল প্রকার প্রয়োগ সুবিধা গ্রহণ করিতে হইবে। জামাদের কেন্দ্রীয় সমিতির প্রধান শাখা সমিতি স্থাপন করিবার জন্য বঙ্গ কামারী ইউনিয়নে একটি শাখা সমিতি স্থাপন করা হউক।

৫। বহুদিন যাবৎ রাজবংশী জাতি একটি তপনীলত্ব জাতি বলিয়া প্রকৃত আশ্রয় এবং অপ্রাকৃত তপনীল জাতির সর্বপ্রকার উন্নতিকল্পে ভারত সরকার যে সংরক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা করিয়াছেন তাহার পূর্ণ সুযোগ গ্রহণ করার জন্য কেন্দ্রীয় সমিতির অধানে একটি উন্নয়ন কমিটি গঠন করা হউক এবং তপনীল জাতির সংরক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা আরো ১- (দেশ) বঙ্গবরের কণ বন্ধিত করা হউক।

৬। তপনীল উপজাতিদের জাতি তপনীলত্ব, জাতিভঙ্গির কণ অবৈতনিক মাধ্যমিক শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করা হউক।

৭। বঙ্গকামারী ইউনিয়নে অবিলম্বে একটি বাতাকেন্দ্র এবং ইউনিয়নের সর্বত্র বঙ্গ শিক্ষাকেন্দ্র স্থাপন করা হউক।

৮। জাতীয় সরকারের ১য় পঞ্চবার্ষিকী পরিকল্পনাকে সাফল্যমণ্ডিত করার জন্য সর্বপ্রকার সহযোগিতা করা হউক।

৯। নুতন শিক্ষা ব্যবস্থা চালু হওয়ার ফলে সহরে মুষ্টিমেয় কয়েকটি কুল একাদশ শ্রেণিতে উন্নীত হইবে এবং গ্রামের অধিকাংশ ছোট কুল অষ্টম শ্রেণিতে পারিত হইবে। ইহার ফলে গ্রামের মাধ্যমিক শিক্ষা ব্যাহত হইবে। তাই এই সভা প্রস্তাব করিতেছে যে বর্তমান সমস্ত ছোট কুলগুলিকে একাদশ শ্রেণিতে উন্নীত করার সমস্ত দায়িত্ব সরকার গ্রহণ করুক।

হরেন্দ্র নাথ রায়
সম্পাদক,
অভ্যর্থনা সমিতি।

ক্ষত্রিয় সম্মেলন

গত ২৮।১২।৩৯ তারিখে আলিপুর-জয়ার কংগ্রেসের নিকটবর্তী চেচাখাজ গ্রামে একটি বিরাট ক্ষত্রিয় সম্মেলন হয়। সভার সভাপতিত্ব করেন জীউপেন্দ্র নাথ বসু, এম.পি. এবং প্রধান অতিথির আসন গ্রহণ করেন মাননীয় উপমন্ত্রী জীউসতীশ চন্দ্র সিংহ রায়।

সভায় নিম্নলিখিত সমস্ত প্রস্তাব গৃহীত হয়।

১। সর্বভারতীয় তপনীল নেতা ডাঃ বি. আশেদকর এবং বাংলার জাগী ও দানীল রাজাপাল ডাঃ হরেন্দ্র কুমার মুখার্জির মুকুতে এই সভা সভার শোক প্রকাশ করিতেছে।

২। আলিপুরজয়ার মহকুমায় তিনটি সামারন সিন্টের মধ্যে একটিতেও তপনীলত্ব প্রার্থীকে কংগ্রেস মনোনয়ন দেন নাই। অথচ এই মহকুমায় তপনীলী ভোটারের সংখ্যা মোটেই উপেক্ষণীয় নহে; এবং উত্তরবঙ্গের মধ্যে এই অঞ্চলটি সর্বাপেক্ষা সর্ববিধে গণতান্ত্রিক সুতরাং এই সভা দাবী করিতেছে যে আসন্ন সাধারণ নির্বাচনে কংগ্রেস মনোনয়ন সংগ্রহের জন্য কমপক্ষে একটি আসনে প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা করিবার জন্য একজন

মনীষী পঞ্চানন বর্মা ও তাঁর আন্দোলনের উত্তরাধিকার/ ২৩৫

(Collected from the Janamat Weekly Office, Jalpaiguri)

(Translation into English)

Kshatriya Conference

Resolutions

A great Kshatriya Conference was held at Chechakhata, a village near Alipurduar Junction on Dec 12, 1959. The program was presided over by Mr. Upendra Nath Barman, M.P. and the Hon'ble Minister. Mr. Satish Chandra Sinha Roy graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The following resolutions were unanimously adopted in that meeting:

- i) This house is expressing its heart-felt grief at the demises of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the All India leader of Scheduled Caste and Tribe and Dr. Harendra Kumar Mukherjee, the munificent and generous Governor of West Bengal.
- ii) The State Congress Committee has approved nomination to not a single SC candidate residing in the sheets of Alipurduar Sub-division though the number of SC voters in this region is not negligible. Besides, this region, among the other regions of North Bengal is the most backward in consideration with other parameters. Hence, this house is hereby raising the demand that nomination be given in at least one seat to a committed social worker belonging to SC category and having faith in the policies and principles of the Congress Party making the necessary corrections in the nomination list before the ensuing election.
- iii) The system of Zamindars is a long past history. This House is therefore likes to uphold the demand to the Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture that the native Rajbanshi peasants may get the privileges of the land reforms in Bengal.
- iv) The Rajbanshis are people of a backward community. They are equally backward in Education. To bring this community into the main stream what is mostly needed is to create some opportunities for them by setting up an organization. It is, therefore our earnest request that a unit be set up under the sole guidance and direct control of the Central committee.
- v) The people belonging to Rajbanshi Community has, since a long time been recognized as the people of Scheduled Caste community and so a sub-committee be set up under the direct control of the Central Committee to enjoy the facilities of the reservation, promoted by the Govt. of India for the all round progress of this community along with other backward classes of this country. It is

being proposed from this house that this reservation for this community be extended for another 10 years in future.

- vi) Let free education up to Madhyamik level for people belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe be introduced.
- vii) A Health Centre and an Adult Education Centre be set up in Banchu Kamari Union
- viii) Arrangements be made to promote the policies embedded in the 2nd Five Years Plan of the Govt. of India and to make it a success.
- ix) As per newly introduced Education Policy adopted by the Government, certain schools in urban areas will be elevated to the level equipped with the infrastructure to teach class XI. Consequently, most of the rural schools will be diminished to the standard to teach only up to class VIII. So, it is the proposal of this committee to the Government to undertake the total responsibility of raising all the High Schools to the level so that they may be equipped with the infrastructure to teach Class XI.

Sd/

Barendra Nath Roy
Secretary
Reception Committee

[Indebted to: 'Panchanan Barma, the Great Sagacious Leader and the Inheritance of his Agitation']

Appendix – iv

Leaflet – i

এদিকে প্রতিবেশী জলপাইগুড়ি জেলার ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চলের অধিবাসীদের একাংশ ডুয়ার্সকে কোচবিহারের সঙ্গে যুক্ত করে বৃহত্তর কোচবিহার রাজ্য গঠনের জন্য আন্দোলন শুরুর করেছিলেন। এরা মূলতঃ রাজবংশী ও মুসলমান অধিবাসীদের একাংশকে নিয়ে আন্দোলনে নেমেছিলেন।

এই আন্দোলনকারীদের দুটো প্রচার পত্র সংগ্রহ করেছিলাম। এই প্রচারপত্রদ্বয়ের কিছুর অংশ তুলে দিচ্ছি :

“আমাদের পশ্চিম দুয়ারবাসী ভাইগন,

..... সম্প্রতি ইংরেজ রাজ ভারতবর্ষের শাসনভার ছাড়িয়া দিয়া যাইতেছেন। এমতাবস্থায় আমাদের বাপপিতামহগণের সুখ শান্তিপূর্ণ পূর্ব কোচবিহার রাজ্য আমাদের এখন বল ও ভরসাম্বল। যাহাতে আমাদের সুখ শান্তি রক্ষা পায় এবং যাহাতে আমাদের পূর্ব সংস্কার ও সভ্যতা বজায় থাকে তজ্জন্য আমরা পুনরায় কোচবিহার রাজ্যভুক্ত হওয়া সংগত মনে করি। আশ্বন আমরা সকলে মহারাজ সদনে উপস্থিত হইয়া আমাদের আবেদন জ্ঞাপন করি। আশা করি তিনি আমাদের অভিলাষ পূর্ণ করিয়া আমাদের দুয়ার অঞ্চল কোচবিহার রাজ্যে সংযুক্ত করিবার ব্যবস্থা করিবেন। নিবেদন ইতি—সন ১৩৬৪ সন, ১২ই শ্রাবণ।

নিবেদক—

শ্রীবিধুভূষণ কাষ্যী শ্রীতারণী কান্ত রায়

সাং—পরোর পার সাং—রায় চেঙ্গ

(Collected from the personal Library of Professor
Ananda Gopal Ghosh)

(Translation in to English)

Leaflet –i

Meanwhile, a section of the dwellers of the Dooars region of the neighbouring district Jalpaiguri initiated a massive agitation to form ‘The Greater Cooch Behar’ by adding the Dooars region to Cooch Behar. These agitators primarily began their agitation by assembling a part of the people of Rajbanshi Community and the Muslims residing in this region.

I, however, could somehow collect two of the leaflets of these agitators. Some parts of these two leaflets are given as under:

Of late the British Rulers of India have decided to abdicate the governance of this country and leave India for ever. In this circumstance, we want to merge with the land of our ancestors to appease our forefathers and to retain the culture and customs that we have observed previously. Please come, let’s meet with the Maharaja and place our earnest appeal before his honour. We hope, he will initiate the process of annexing our land with Koch Behar to satisfy the desire of our heart.

1354 B.S. the 12th Shraban

Yours,

i) Sree Bidhu Bhusan Karjee ii) Tarani Kanta Roy

Vill: Paror Par

Vill: Raichenga

(A collection from the personal Library of Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh)

Appendix – v

Leaflet – ii

শ্রীগোপাল চন্দ্র রায়

সাং— সিলবাড়ী

শ্রীতারকেশ্বর বসুনায়া

সাং— ক্ষেতি ফুলবাড়ী

মহম্মদ আবদুশ্শেখাবহান

সাং— ফালাকাটা

দ্বিতীয় প্রচার পত্রটির আবেদন আরো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। এর অংশ বিশেষ
তুলে দিচ্ছি :

“রাজবংশী ও মুসলমান আদিম অধিবাসী ভ্রাতৃগণের প্রতি— ভ্রাতৃগণ !

আজ রাজবংশী ও মুসলমান আদিম অধিবাসীগণের ঘুমাইবার দিন নয়। মহান
জাগরণের দিন। আপনারা জানেন অত্র জলপাইগুড়ি জেলার পশ্চিম ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চল
ব্রিটিশ আমলের পূর্বে আমাদেরই রাজবংশী রাজ কুর্চবিহার রাজ্যের অধীনে ছিল।
ব্রিটিশ রাজের শাসনের আমলে আমরা জাতীয় সাম্রাজ্য কুর্চবিহার রাজ্য হইতে
বিচ্ছিন্ন হইয়া পড়িয়াছি। ব্রিটিশ রাজ্য চলিয়া যাইতেছে এবং আমাদেরই পূর্ব
পুরুষের সাম্রাজ্য ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চলকে পুনঃপ্রাপ্তির জন্য মহারাজ (কোচবিহারাধিপতি)
দাবী করিয়াছেন। অত্র দাবীকে সাফল্যমণ্ডিত করবার জন্য এতদেশীয় রাজবংশী
ও মুসলমান অধিবাসী প্রত্যেক ব্যক্তিকে সংঘবদ্ধ হইয়া জাতীয় আন্দোলনকে জয়যুক্ত
করিতে হইবে।...”

...

...

...

এই আন্দোলন যদিও ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চলে শুরু হইয়াছিল, তথাপি এর প্রভাব
কোচবিহারে পড়েছিল। এই আন্দোলন হিতসাধনী সভার আন্দোলনকে শক্তিশালী
করেছিল। এখানে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে মহারাজা ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চল ফিরে পাওয়ার জন্য
দাবী জানিয়েছিল। তাহলে মহারাজার সঙ্গে এই আন্দোলনের যোগাযোগ ছিল বলা
যেতে পারে।

(Collected from the personal Library of Professor
Ananda Gopal Ghosh)

(Translation in to English)

Leaflet –ii

The appeal of the 2nd leaflet is even more important. A part of it is extracted below:

To,

The Rajbanshi and Muslim aboriginal dwellers of this region,

Dear brothers,

Today is not the day of sleeping for the Rajbanshi and Muslim aboriginal inhabitants. Today is the day of great awakening. You all know that the Western Dooars of Jalpaiguri Zilla was a part of the Koch Behar Kingdom before the coming of the British. During the British Rule it had been alienated from the national kingdom of Kooch Behar. The British Raj is quitting from power to abandon this country for ever and the Maharaja has placed the demand to regain the Dooars region, the land of our ancestors. To make his demand a success, we want the re-amalgamation of Dooars with the princely state of Koch Behar. To fulfill our demand we have no way except to be united.

This movement, although initiated in Dooars region, still had a great impact on Cooch Behar. This movement again strengthened the agitation of 'Hitosadhani Sabha'. It has been mentioned here that the Maharaja of Koch Behar also demanded to get back the Dooars region, which evidently endorses the view that the King too had a direct contact with this movement.

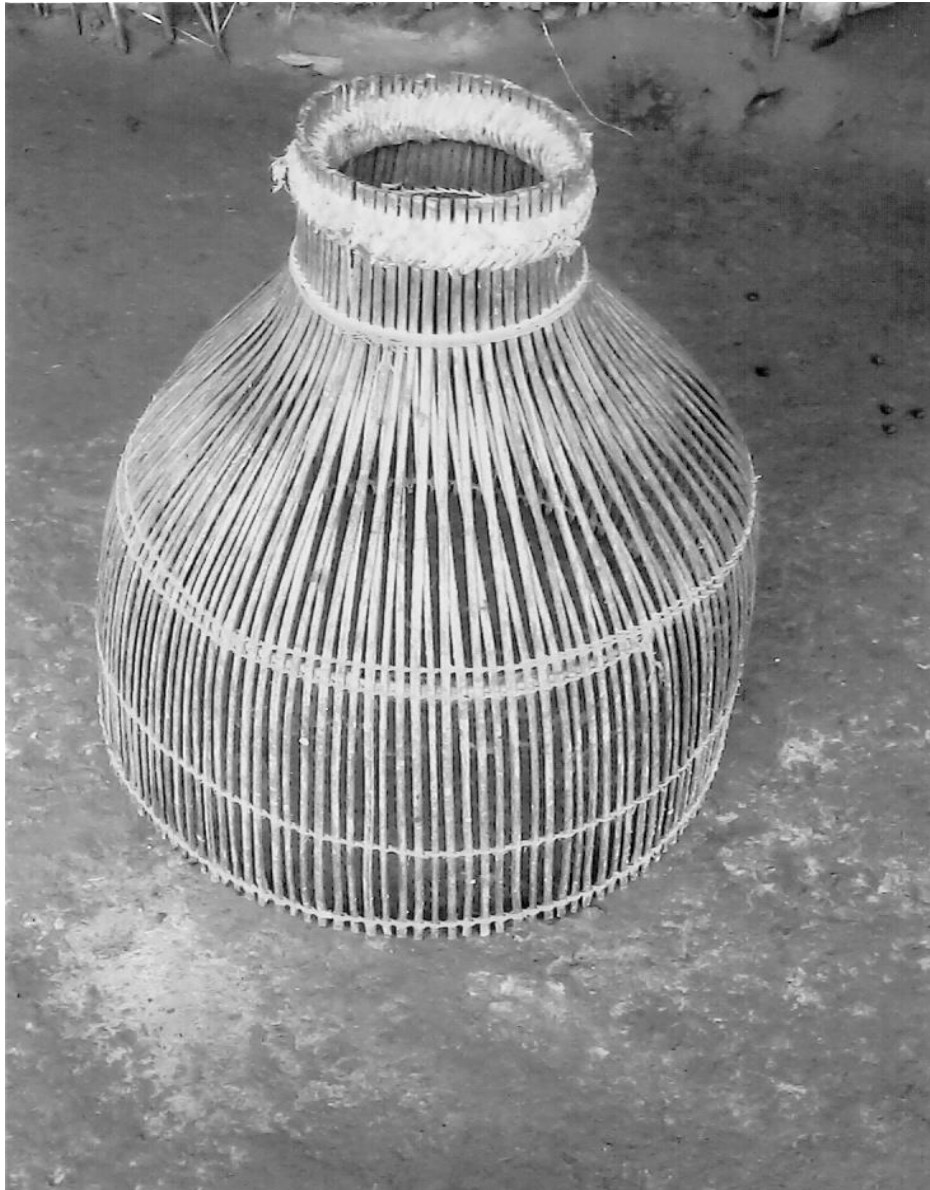
(A collection from the personal Library of Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh)

Illustration – i



A two stringed musical instrument of the indigenous people.

Illustration – ii



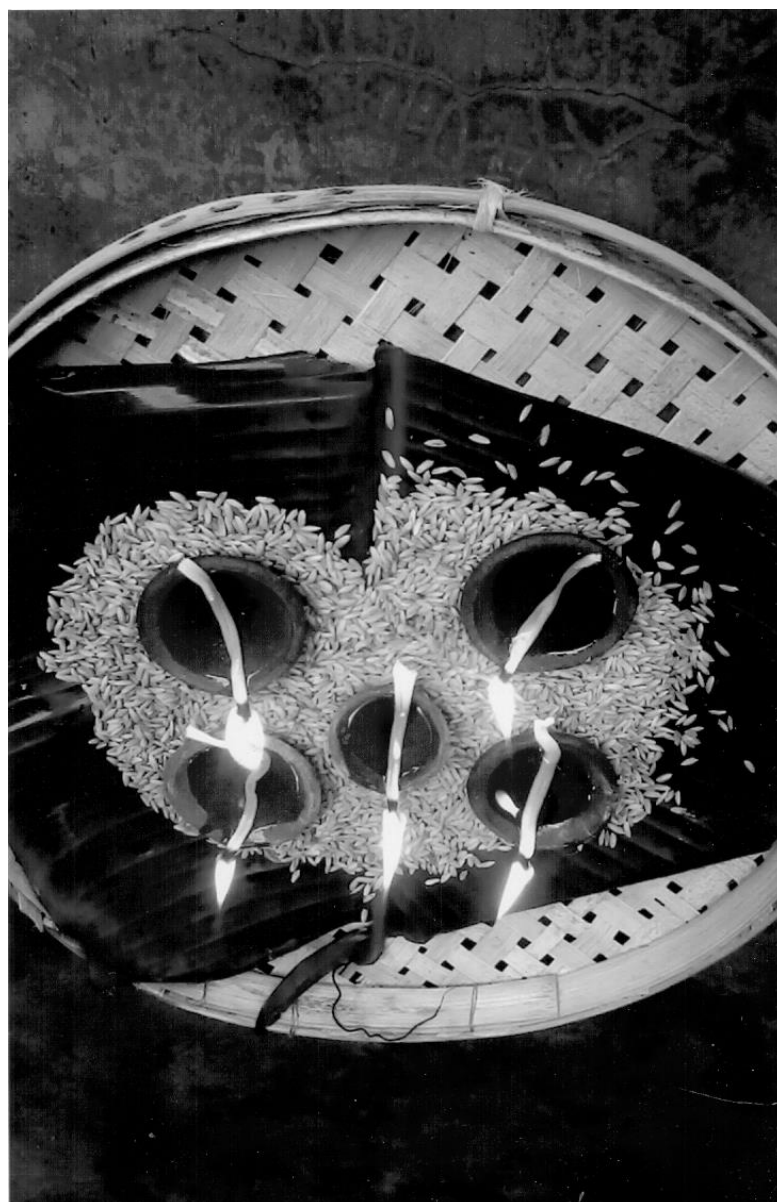
‘Polo’ – An instrument used by the Rajbanshis for catching fish.

Illustration – iii



‘Chhamgan’ – using for husking by the Rajbanshis.

Illustration – iv



‘Chailonbati’ – used by the Rajbanshis in the marriage ceremony.

Illustration – v



“Siju tree” – It is situated in the courtyard of the Mech Community.

Illustration – vi



‘Kochha’ – instrument for catching fish by the Rajbanshis.

Illustration – vii



Baikunthapur Royal Palace at Jalpaiguri



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e-ISSN : 2279-0837

Volume : 20 Issue : 10 (Version - I)

p-ISSN : 2279-0845

IOSR-JHSS

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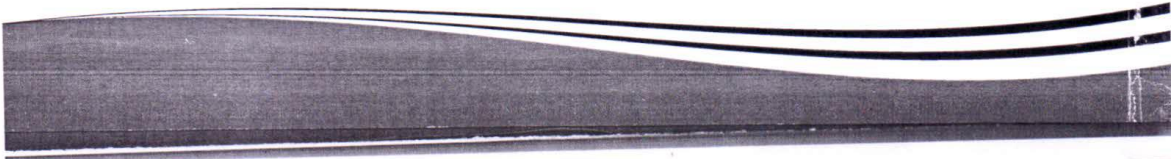
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Evolution of Rajbanshi Society: A Historical Assessment

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Abstract: *Rajbanshis, an indigenous community of northern portion West Bengal, in the past they were the majority people of North Bengal, particularly in the districts of Jhalpaiguri, Rangpur, Dinajpur and the plain areas of Darjeeling district and the Cooch Behar state. Other than North Bengal, Rajbanshis had been living in the other parts of Bengal and Assam. There are many debates on the origin and ethnic identity of the Rajbanshis, in spite of that it is agreed by most of the scholars and historians that the Rajbanshis originated from Koch, a tribal community belonged to Indo- Mongoloid race. Since the colonial period huge number of people of different castes, classes and religions immigrated in this region, particularly in the post colonial period more uncountable people migrated from East Bengal, as a result they became minority in North Bengal and became helpless losing their lands and property. Now-a-days they have faced different types of crises and problems.*
Keywords: *Koch, Indigenous People, panichhita, Non-Aryan, Kshatriya Identity etc.*

At the outset, it can be said that many writings, articles and books have been published on the different issues and aspects of the Rajbanshi people both in the educational and non- educational institutions. Beside these, many articles, write-ups and books are being published by the initiative of different authors individually or jointly out of any institution. In the University level some research works including Ph. D and M. Phil are also being done. In spite of that there are many undiscussed and unknown aspects of the Rajbanshis which has not been explored by the researchers and authors till now, in this context it can be said that more research works are expected on the various issues and aspects of the Rajbanshis; it is also true that there are many issues on the Rajbanshis which is debateable and no unanimous decision can be taken.

The Rajbanshis were the indigenous people of the greater part of North Bengal and lower Assam in the pre- colonial and colonial period. The Rajbanshis were the majority people of North Bengal, particularly in the districts of Jhalpaiguri, Rangpur, Dinajpur and the plain areas of Darjeeling district and the Cooch Behar state. Other than North Bengal, Rajbanshis had been living in the other parts of Bengal and Assam. According to Swaraj Basu, "...The Rajbanshis constituted the most predominant section of the local Hindu population in the northern districts of Bengal. Numerically they were the third largest Hindu caste in Bengal as a whole. The origin of this caste is shrouded in mystery & the basic debate is around the question of their association with the Koches. Whatever might have been their actual origin; there is no dispute about the fact that the Rajbanshis were the early settlers in North Bengal. They were a socially homogenous community, in the sense that there was no sub-caste among them."¹ Dr. Charu Chandra sanyal stated, "The above observations point to the fact that the Koches are non-Aryan in origin. Some of them adopted Hinduism and became Rajbanshis. These Rajbanshis later on claimed to be Kshatriya."² According to Swaraj Basu, "The local situation also provided a sufficient ground for the Rajbanshis' assertion of a Kshatriya identity and their endeavour to build up caste solidarity."³

There are many debates among the origin or ethnological identity of the Rajbanshis. The main debate was whether Rajbanshis were originated from Mongoloid race or Aryan race. This debate was initiated from the starting of the census work from 1870 onwards by the British- India Government. In the census report Government has shown the Rajbanshis and the Koches in the same group. Here, one point should be mentioned that the Koches were originated from the Indo- Mongoloid race and they were treated as tribal community. In accordance with the Aryan culture, the non- Aryan people treated as 'Dasa', 'Dasyu', 'Kirata', and 'Nisada' which means the lower graded people in the society. The non- Aryan people had no prestigious or honourable position in the eyes of upper strata of the society of so called traditional Hindus or Aryan people.

So, when Rajbanshis were shown as a non-Aryan people that were Koches, they protested against the census report. This protest turned into a social movement called "Kshatriya Movement". They demanded that Koches and Rajbanshis were not originated in the same human race. Koches were the tribal people and the Rajbanshis originated from Aryan race. In accordance with the social status of the Aryans, Rajbanshis held the 2nd position that was "Kshatriyas" after the Brahmanas. They gave the description from different sources of the Hindu Shastras or mythologies that after defeating in the battle to the Porshurama they came in the Ratnapith that was the place beside the Trishrota or Jalpes, settled there and they were called "Bratyo Kshatriyas". This Kshatra movement got a new motion under the leadership of Thakur Panchanan Barma who led the movement throughout the North Bengal and Assam. Ultimately their demand became success and in the census report of 1911 Rajbanshis and Koches were shown separately. In spite of that debate it is not proved

anthropologically that the Rajbanshis were originated from the Aryan race because their physical structure or biological features of their bodies are assimilated with the Mongolian stock of people. Naturally, almost all the historians and scholars and the British officials showed that the Rajbanshis originated from the Mongoloid race.

Swaraj Basu pointed out ".... In case of the Rajbanshi caste movement, we find that one of the main thrusts of their movement was to distance themselves from the Koches and to establish their superior social rank.⁴ He also added that when the Rabhas in north Bengal tried to move upward in social hierarchy the Rajbanshi leaders did not support their movement".⁵ Sunder showed in his report, "The Rajbanshis or Koches predominate in the Duars. The last census returns shows their number as 123,439. They are now recognized as a distinct caste of Hindus, but generally the Rajbanshis of the Duars is a Hindu when suits him to be one and a Mech when he obtains pork and wishes to eat it."⁶ Hunter also showed in his reports that the Koches and the Rajbanshis were the same communities. He wrote, "The Koches, or the Rajbanshis as they are now called, may be briefly mentioned among the semi-aboriginal tribes, although they are now recognized as a distinct caste of Hindus. The Koch race first came prominently into notice about the close of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Hajo established the Koch Kingdom upon the downfall of the more ancient Hindu Kingdom of Kamrup."⁷

It is stated that among the Koches who were converted into Hindu religion called the Rajbanshis and who were converted into Islam called Muslim or Mahameddan. Hunter here pointed out that the name of Koch was abandoned by the converts who assumed that of Rajbanshis literally of the Royal Kindred. The Koch or the Rajbanshis form by far the majority of the Hindu population of Jalpaiguri district.⁸ Whatever the identity of the Rajbanshis they were the people like semi-tribes, simple in habit. Swaraj Basu again writes, "As they were guided by the traditional Brahmonical cultural values, the Rajbanshis, with a tradition and culture of their own, failed to get a respectable position in the status estimation of these immigrant upper caste gentry."⁹ It is true that the people of higher caste Hindus coming from East Bengal and South Bengal treated the Rajbanshis as inferior caste, many times called them 'Bahe' or 'Banku'; on the contrary the Rajbanshi people called the Bengali people coming from East Bengal or South Bengal as 'Bhatia'.¹⁰ They were mainly habituated with agrarian cultivation.

Almost all the people of Rajbanshis were uneducated in the colonial period. They would live in the villages. Their house was made mainly with the Bamboos and thrash and the economically solvent jotdars made their house with tin and wood. Generally in the house of the Rajbanshis four huts were seen. Sunder stated in his report "Among the Rajbanshis as well as Mahamedan there four huts in every homestead. These face North, South, East and West. Sometimes an extra hut called Darighar is also built and is used by friends who may be staying for a night so. In building a homestead care is taken to have it bounded as follows whenever possible."¹¹

North----- Betel nut trees
South ----- compound
East ----- Water
West ----- Bamboos

In making the homestead of the Rajbanshis a proverb is prevailing in the Rajbanshi society which is followed by the Rajbanshis people at the time of making their house like this –

Uttare gua,
Dakshine Dhua,
Purbe Hans,
Pashime Bansh.

'Uttare gua' means in the north of the homestead there would be a betel nut garden, 'Dakshine 'dhua' means in the south of the homestead there would be blank field or farm house that means no trees would remain in the south. 'Purbe Hans' means in the east portion of the house there would be a pond and in the pond ducks would swim, 'Pashime Bansh' means in the western portion of the house a garden of Bamboos would remain.¹²

L. Food habit

As the Rajbanshis people became Hindus, so they eat everything in accordance with the Hindu religion, but some special food or items are eaten by the Rajbanshis of which 'Chheka Shak' is one of the delicious food of the Rajbanshis which is cooked by different types of vegetables specially mixing with one kind of soda.

Another delicious vegetable of the Rajbanshis is 'Lapha Shak'. Another delicious food is eaten by the Rajbanshis people locally known as Sutka and Sidal. Sutka means dry fishes and sidal is made by crashing of small dry fishes, spices, turmeric and chilly, all these are crushed in a husk locally called chham and Gain.¹³ 'Pelka', one kind of delicious vegetable item to the Rajbanshis is one kind of traditional food which is mainly cooked by vegetables specially 'Lapha shak'. Dai and Chira is favourite to the Rajabanshi people. Rajbanshis like to eat very much pan and supari locally known 'Gua pan', 'gua' means raw betel nut. They honoured their

guest by offering gua pan at the initial stage of receiving. Many of them always keep this gua pan in their pocket or small container, and gradually they eat this after some duration.

Later on, after huge number of people migrated in North Bengal, many indigenous foods were taken as the food of the migrated people; on the other hand the indigenous people were habituated with the food habit of the migrated people. Not only that, the indigenous people accepted the process of cooking and spices from the migrated people. Beside these, after independence and partition, the spread of education accelerated, many school, colleges, institution were established, as a result of which many indigenous people came under the education. They became educated and many of them got services, the number of employee increased day after day. These educated people went out of the house, settled into different places, started to live different places of the country, as a result of which they gradually became habituated with the food habit of multi- characterized dishes. The food habit of the educated people automatically influenced the other people of the villages. For example many people of Rajbanshi Community used burning fishes as their food, but the new generation people including educated people do not use various types of spices, simply they used turmeric, cumin, coriander etc. dusting in the traditional husking machine, now a days they use various types of spices purchasing from market. In this regard Sitangshu Prosad chakraborty stated, "Relating food habit they also habituated with modern food habit at present, particularly, the educated Rajbanshis and the Rajbanshis of urban areas use modern food instead of taking their traditional food habit such as pelka, chheka, sidal- sutki."¹⁴

It is found in the field survey that all most all of the indigenous people use modern type's food accordingly the global culture of food habit. Jagat Singh Barman stated that they eat everything in accordance with the Hindu food habit. Both of the veg and non- veg they take as their food which are available in the market and they purchased accordingly their financial capacity. They sometimes eat their traditional food like pelka, sutka sidal, chheka etc. But usually they use all the food which is eaten by other Bengali people. There are no vast differences between our food habit and the food habit of other Bengali people.¹⁵ Kaitalu Barman of the same village told that they rarely use traditional food, generally they are habituated with the food habit like the other Bengali people. He also added that their children preferred the modern food than the traditional food.¹⁶ I have also collect informations from many educated Rajbanshis who serve in various departments and dowed in the town and my colleagues of Rajbanshi community talking with them directly where no differences have been found in their food habit between the Rajbanshis and other Bengali people.

II. Dress

Upendra Nath Barman stated, "It is known that the women of Rajbanshi community wore a dress called Buki (Bukali) and it was prevailing since ancient time. Apart from this the two parts of dress named Riya and Mekhla were used by the women. It should be mentioned here that the men of poor family wore small dhoti from the upper side of knee and the very poor men wore a piece of cloth called 'Nengti'. At the time of continuing social reforms movement Thakur Panchanan Barma propagated to wear dhoti in stead of 'Nengti' and sari of women in stead of 'Buki'.¹⁷ Advance group among the Rajbanshis whom we may refer to in the absence of a better term as the Rajbanshi 'elites', followed the upper caste Hindus of the region in dress, lifestyle, marriage customs, and religious practices."¹⁸ According to C.C. Sanyal, "Discarding the ir traditional clothes, both men and women dressed in the fashion of the upper castes in society."¹⁹

All the indigenous people started slowly to wear modern dress like other people of main stream. The young generation both male and female is habituated with the modern dresses they started to wear pant, shirt, shoe, etc. The girls and female wear churidar or salwar kamij, frok, sarees etc. not only that, presently, the female also wear the dresses of the male such as pant, shirt etc. The old men wear Dhoti, Punjabi also pant, shirts etc. Now a day's almost all the indigenous people have been wearing modern dress, no differences are followed in terms of dresses between the indigenous people and the immigrated people. For the emergence of global culture no man can deny to accept the global culture. So, now a day's no man can be identified of which community they belong with their dresses because of the abolition of traditional dresses except few instances and increasing the modern dress-habit.

III. Marriage

As the Rajbanshis belonged to Hindu community, so the marriage ceremony is performed according to the Hindu religion or Brahmanical references. Despite of that many traditional customs or rituals were to be followed at the time of marriage. A middle man locally known as 'ghatak' or 'ghatki' communicated between the guardians of bride and bride- grooms and information is sent time to time to both of the parties. If both sides are satisfied and chosen each other the wedding is confirmed and fixed up the date of marriage.

The marriage ceremony of the Rajbanshis of the district is completed by three stages, namely pan tola, adhibas and marriage. The guests of bride are gone to the house of bride groom and the new clothes and ornaments are wore to the bride groom and blessed her. This occasion is called Pan Tola. In the second stage the following occasion are performed --- turmeric was touched to the body of the bride groom called adhibas

and in the occasion called Naua kamani was performed. Then the Hargouri puja, Nandi mukhi shradhya and the last stage the main marriage ceremony is performed. Among the local customs or rituals of the marriage ceremony among the Rajbanshis a 'Mittar' or friend is to be selected at the time of marriage who remain as a friend or a relative of the bride in the whole life. Another custom is seen, a person who dropped water in the head of the bride and bride- groom at the time of marriage and related with them as their parents called 'Pani chhita Baap' and 'Pani chhita Mao'. They are also related with the bride and bride- groom in the whole life as their parents. Another custom in the marriage of the Rajbanshis which is not seen in the marriage of Aryan culture a Bairati played a vital role in the whole marriage ceremony. Polygamy was seen in the society of the Rajbanshis meaning of which that a Rajbanshi man could marry more than one. Widow Remarriage was also a common practice in the society of the Rajbanshis in the pre-colonial and colonial period where in the society of higher caste widow remarriage was a hard task. In this point of view Rajbanshis were more liberal than the higher caste people.

IV. Worships, Customs and Festivals

At present the Rajbanshis are Hindus. But originally they were Koches, an Indo- Mongoloid tribes believing in tribal culture, though it is debateable. It is assumed by most of the historians and social scientist that the Rajbanshis were converted to Hinduism from Koches. There were many God, Goddess and Deities who were worshiped by the Rajbanshis. It should be mentioned here that there were many non- Aryan God and Goddess worshiped by the Rajbanshis as they were basically non- Aryan. After converted into Hinduism they worshiped Hindu God and Goddess. Among the non- Aryan deities there were Bisto Thakur, he was worshiped by the name of Jalthakur also. This worship was held in the month of Bhadra. He is a deity of water. The Brohma thakur is a deity of Agni or fire. Besides, there were Paban thakur or deity of air, Basumati thakur, Bisha hari thakurani, Mahakal thakur, the oldest Deity, Gramthakur, Shib thakur, or Maheswar, Lakshi thakurani, Dharmathakur etc.^{19,20} The worship of Banadurga is held in every year at the time of ekadashi of Durga worship at Bhandani in the village of Barnish near Maynaguri. This worship is performed in accordance with the Rajbanshi Mythology. The Devi is immersioned at the midnight of ekadashi according to the Vedic literature. There was a custom to sacrifice of goat and dove to the Goddess.²¹ The worship of Ban Durgar is held at the time of Ekadashi in every year at the Barnish village of Maynaguri in accordance with the Rajbanshi customs.²²

Harihar Adhikary informed me, 'Late Hariprosad Basuniya was a zamindar. He introduced Kalipujar at first. The worship of Kali of the house of Hariprosad Basuniya was known as 'Hariprosad Basuniya Barir Puja' and later on it was known as 'Kal Singh Basuniya Barir Kalipuja'.²³ According to him, "The Basuniyas then had a total land of (80) eighty" Hals (an unit of fifteen bighas), comprising of the jotes of Betgara, Khagrabari, Naktabari (near Baksirdanga) and "Dhanda Simla" (near Nathula). It is also learnt that the former title of the Basuniyas was "Das". They came from the Gaibandha thana of Rangpur District (Now in Bangladesh). The title Basuniya" was probably given by the British.²⁴ The marriage of Rajbangsi society was like a social festival. Different types of customs and usages were performed at the time of marriage which were enjoyed by the relatives, invitees and the villagers.²⁵

Kainagata—This worship Kainagata is started from the previous Purnima. In this worship their forefathers are respected by sacrificing water oblation to their forefather by the Brahmana or Adhikary. Nabanna—This worship is observed at the time of collecting new crops. There is a custom prevailing among many of the Bengali Hindu families that they worship 'Nabanna' before eating new crops. Binapani Adhikari pointed out, "Baishakhi puza or worship is performed in the month of Baishakha (April-May) Bananas, Kandali etc. different types of fruits and flowers are given in this worship. Out of these, dahi (curd) and chira are also given. Nor Brahmana or priest is necessary to perform this worship; rather the priest of Rajbanshi community called Adhikary performed this worship.²⁶ Kali/Bishahari worship is performed by local priest known as Mareya or Ojha. It is significant that no Sanskrit mantra is uttered in this worship, rather the mantras are pronounced in local dialect or Rajbanshi language. This puza is sacrificed by the left hand.²⁷ Before performing the marriage ceremony the worship of Kulaguru, placed the east corner of the house is given and thereafter the worship of Bishahari is given. Gochubona—This worship is observed before growing plants of paddy in the land. At first land is prepared for growing plants of paddy, thereafter a worship called guchubona is performed in the lands. Few plants of paddy is poured these worships performed to their deity with rice, banana and other fruits. Masdal (one kind of beans), black arum and raw milk is given to the worship. Jatrapuja—this worship is performed in the day of Nabami of the month of Aswin (October) by giving sugarcane, lemon and other fruits and the next day, in the day of Vijoya Dasami the Jatrapuja is observed in the house. In this worship the essential instruments of the house including books have been worshiped". Laxmi puja—Laxmi puja is popular festivals of the Hindu Bengali. In every houses of the Hindu Bengali the Goddess mother Laxmi is observed. Like other Hindu Bengali people in the house of Rajbanshi community mother Laxmi is observed. The

Rajbanshis worship with dai, chira, banana and other fruits. The trees of paddy is cut at the bottom, covered with banana leaves and kept in the kitchen".²⁸

Different kinds of religious occasions are seen to be performed in the Rajbanshi society through the ancient period when rain is not seen in the rainy season as a result of which agricultural cultivation is affected. One of these festivals is 'Benger Biyo' (marriage of frog). This occasion is performed by women. A proverb is prevailing in the society of North Bengal that when frogs croak rain is falling. So for falling of rain Rajbanshi women perform the occasion of frog's marriage. Another occasion was held in the Rajbanshi society though it is not seen in the present day society that was 'Hudum Khela'. In this occasion women would go house to house in the dark of night being naked unfolding hair warning the male members of the house either they would leave the house or they would remain in the room shutting the door. The naked women in such a way entered the house and dance together in the curtiard and sang songs for falling rain.²⁹ According to W.W.Hunter, "A singular relic of old superstition is the worship of the God Hudum Deo. The women of a village assemble together in some distant and solitary place, no male being allowed to be present at the rites which is always performed at night, a plantain or young bamboo is stuck in the ground, and the women throwing off their garments, dance round the mystic tree, singing old songs and charms. The rite is more especially performed when there is no rain and the crops are suffering from drought."³⁰

As the Rajbanshis were converted into Hindus which is referred earlier, they perform all the worship, festivals, occasions in accordance with the Hindu customs and mythology. But many of the customs, festivals and worships and rituals are found which is out of the Aryan culture. These cultures have been going on through the ancient period to the present day.

V. Language

George Abraham Greearson published his research report in "Linguistic Survey of India" in 1927 where he mentioned, "when we cross the river (Brahmaputra) coming from Dacca, we meet a well marked form of speech in Rangpur and the districts to its north and east. It is called Rajbansi and while undoubtedly belonging to the eastern branch has still points of difference which lead us to class it as a separate dialect."³¹ He also wrote "The dialect is usually known as Rajbansi, from the tribe of that name already alluded to. It is also frequently called Rangpuri from one of the districts in which it is spoken. In the Darjeeling Terai the dialect is influenced by the neighbouring Northern Bengali and has a special name, as a sub-dialect viz Bahe."³²

The Rajbanshi language is a dialect of main Bengali language.³³ Provat Ranjan sarkar stated the language of Rajbanshis of North Bengal as 'Rangpuri Bangla'.³⁴ Upendranath Barman stated that the Rajbanshi language is a pure Aryan language which was supported by different scholars like Hodson etc.³⁵ Dr. Charu ch.sanyal wrote, "The Rajbanshis speak Bengali but it is a local dialect sometimes widely away from standard Bengali."³⁶

VI. Amusements

There are many dramas, songs, palatiya songs which were written and performed by the Rajbanshi language. The famous song of the Rajbanshi as well as of the indigenous Muslims of North Bengal and lower Assam is 'Bhwaoiaya' which is written and sung in Rajbanshi language. The 'Bhwaoiaya' songs are the themes of every aspect of the lives and hearts of Rajbanshi people. This song is divided into two categories namely 'Chatka' and 'Dariya'. These songs are composed on the basis of every aspect of the society, economy, culture, custom, religion, love, joy and pain taking place in everyday life of the Rajbanshis. Other famous songs of the Rajbanshis are 'Dotaradanga Gaan' and 'Kushan Gaan'. These songs are performed in different villages of North Bengal and lower Assam; these are performed particularly in the season of different occasions and festivals. These songs are composed on the basis of different Hindu Sastras such as Ramayana, Mahabharata and Purana. In the song, different 'Pala' or Play is performed on the basis of various aspects of the society, economy, religion and politics etc. In these songs the 'Gidal' plays the significant role. Beside the 'Gidal', the 'Dohari' and 'Chhokris' sing and dance jointly. The Gidal sings first, Dohari and Chhokris follow the song; after singing the Gidal explain the meaning of the song, The Dohari also explain it. Now-a-days, these songs and play are not seen sufficiently to perform. The people present generation are interested to modern songs, Jattras, theaters and cinemas. In Dinajpur district one of the ancient dramas "Monai Yatra". The original writer of Monai yatra was Telenga Fakir, inhabitant of another writer was Najir Mahmud Sarkar. In Malda, Dinajpur, Bagura, Murshidabad district one kind of drama named Alkap was performed where evolved the various incidents of society and the story of the poor and distressed people. Another type of drama of Malda and Dinajpur district was Gambhira remaining the story of various people and comedy.³⁷ Rangpur Bartaboho Patrika introduced a valuable literature and culture. Many informations and writings were published in this Patrika. It was patronized by the zamindar of Kunderi of Rangpur district.³⁸

In the post colonial period for entering the modern culture indigenous people gradually accepted it. They accepted Baul, Bhatiali, Rabindra Sangit, Nazrul giti, adhunik songs etc. Not only that now a days the

young generation people like Hindi songs, Adhunik songs, Hindi cinema instead of their traditional culture. It should be mentioned here that in spite of all these changes many indigenous people still now do not forget their traditional culture. They observed and preserved their traditional culture as their wealth and heritage.

VII. Conclusion

Many changes have been taken place in the Rajbanshi society balancing with the multi-dimensional culture of the world. It is true that a large number of people of Rajbanshi community have taken education and become educated and serving in different places of the country positively. But, it is also true that many of the Rajbanshi people having no way for their livelihood or source of income they have been working as agricultural labourer, industrial labourer, house servant in the town. Practically, it is the present scenario of the town of North Bengal, particularly of the northern portion of North Bengal that most of the labourers including men and women working on the road, house servants, helper of mason are Rajbanshis. As a result of these incidents, many discontents and grievances have been accumulated in the mind of Rajbanshi people.

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