

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DARJEELING

The whole of the district of Darjeeling was part of the dominions of Raja of Sikkim upto the beginning of the 18th century. The Gorkhalis invaded Sikkim in 1788. (1) However it was not really 'nine years after the first rupture' as claimed. This mistake was probably due to a wrong calculation of date in the twelve-year cyclical method of Tibetan reckoning. A conquest of hilly Sikkim was not for the sake of conquest per se. It was to be a corollary to Nepal's rupture with Tibet in 1788. The date of 'the last rupture' given in the Sikkim chronicle is 'the tenth day of the first month of the chag-ji (that is Iron hen year) or 1780. It was in all probability the misrepresentation of Sa-ji (Earth hen year) or 1789. The latter would then mean either late February or March 1789, which, as will be seen, is fully confirmed by Hamilton. The confusion in the Sikkim chronicle is removed when we recognized the total resemblance of the descriptions of the events both of 1779-80 and 1789. (2) Sikkim was attacked from two points, namely from Ilam and Vijaypur, Purna Ale, a Magar commander of the Gorkhalis force crossed Choyabhanjyang and advanced up to Reling and karmi, now in Darjeeling, and Chyakhung in Sikkim. Another Gorkha force led by Jahar Singh, son of renowned Gorkhali commander, Kehar Singh Basnet moved from Vijaypur (3) Jahar Singh crossed the Khatetchu, an affluent of the Great Rangit to the north of Darjeeling. He made a surprise attack on the palace of Rabdantse (capital) and captured it. When the war broke out between Nepal and the company, Sikkim a sufferer at Nepalese hands and sided with the British. This diplomacy proved a very good result for Sikkim for the war ended in

favour of the British. The Sikkim ruler requested that the boundary between Sikkim and the Gorkha territory be laid at Timer chorten (the Tamar river) if possible, but the best would be the 'Arun river' and the least of all Milighu, Dhankote as middle, shadijong down to the Kannika Tarai... All the country east of these is Sikkim territory, and I pray: he implored, that these might be restored to Sikkim. In other words, Sikkim claimed not only the territory east of the Singalila range but also a large part of Eastern Nepal. The Sikkimese are said to have even crossed the Mechi and 'occupied the abandoned Gorkha posts at Ilam and Phae'. (4)

'The territory lying between Mechi and Teesta was restored to Sikkim by a separate treaty signed at Titalia between Sikkim and the Company on February 10, 1817. Under this treaty the Raja was bound to refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes between his subjects and those of neighbouring states. The treaty thus established a complete British influence in Sikkim. In the year 1827, a border dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal, and Sikkim referred the matter, in accordance with the treaty of Titaliya, to the Company. Two officers Captain Lloyd and the then Commercial Resident G.W. Grant were deputed in 1828 to deal with the disputes and they penetrated into the hills as far north as Rinchingpong. Lloyd spent six days in February 1829 in 'the old Gorkha station of Darjeeling and was deeply attracted by its advantages as a site for a sanatorium. (5) Not only this, he went on further to write that this would be important from the military viewpoint because of its location., Darjeeling was at the time a large village and the residence of one of the Principal Kazis. Approximately, two thirds of Sikkim's population, mainly the Lepchas fled the area and migrated to Nepal because of the tyranny of the Raja of Sikkim. The Governor General deputed Captain Herbert; the Deputy Surveyor General to examine the area with Mr. Grant and in due course the

project was approved by the court of Directors. The East India Company thus became confident of acquiring Darjeeling in 1833. It was this year when the trade monopoly licence of the company with China was abolished. General Lloyd was directed to open negotiation with the Raja, and this transferred when Lloyd was deputed to enquire into the causes of an incursion from Nepal of Lepchas who had taken refuge there from Sikkim. He succeeded in obtaining the execution of a deed of grant by the Raja of Sikkim on the 1st Feb 1835. The deed ran as follows:

“The Governor General, having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government I the Sikkim putte Rajah, out of friendship for the said Governor - General hereby present Darjeeling to East India Company, that is, all the land south of the Great Rangit river, East of the Balasun, Kahail and little Rangit rivers and west of Rungno and Mahanadi rivers.”

This was an unconditional cession of what was then an uninhabited mountain. After the cession, General Lloyd and Dr. Chapman were sent in 1836 to explore and investigate the climate and capabilities of the place. They spent the winter of 1836 and part of 1837, exploring and investigating the possibilities for developing the site as a sanatorium. General Lloyd was appointed a local agent to deal with applications for land, which began to pour in from residents of Calcutta. Progress was rapid, whereas in 1836 General Lloyd and Chapman found only a few huts erected by the Rajah of Sikkim, by 1840, a road had been made from Pankhabari, there was a staging bungalow there and at Mahaldiram, a hotel had been started at Kurseong and another at Darjeeling, and at Darjeeling 30 private houses had been erected and nearly as many ‘locations’ or buildings sites had been taken up at Lebong.

In 1839, Dr. Campbell of the Indian Medical service, British Resident in Nepal, was transferred to Darjeeling as Superintendent. In this capacity he was in charge not only of the civil, criminal and fiscal administration of the District but also of Political relations with Sikkim. Dr. Campbell gave much encouragement to immigrant cultivators and population rose from about 100 in 1839 to about 10,000 in 1849. "Whatever has been done here" wrote N.B. Jackson, and Inspecting Officer in 1852, has been done by Dr. Campbell alone. He found Darjeeling an inaccessible tract of forest, with a very scanty population, by his exertions an excellent sanatorium has been established for troops and others, a Hill Corps has been established for the maintenance of order and improvement of communications, no less than 70 European houses have been built, with a bazar, jail and buildings for the accommodation of the sick in the depot, a revenue of Rs. 50,000 has been raised and is collected punctually and without balance, a simple system of administration of Justice has been introduced, the system of forced labour formerly in use has been abolished and labour with all other valuables has been left to find its own price in an open market, roads have been made, experimental cultivation of tea and coffee has been introduced and various European fruits and grapes, and this has been effected at the same time that the various tribes of inhabitants have been conciliated and their habits and prejudices treated with a caution and forbearance which will render further progress in the same direction an easy task. (6)

In the meantime relations with Sikkim deteriorated. The increasing importance of Darjeeling under free institutions was a source of loss and frustration to the Lamas and leading men of Sikkim, headed by the Dewan Namguay, who were sharers in a monopoly of all trade in Sikkim and lost their rights over those slaves who settled as free men and British subjects in the Darjeeling territory. Frequent kidnapping and demands for return

of slaves took place and the climax was reached when in 1848 Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell were made prisoners, while traveling in Sikkim with the permission of the Raja and the British Government by Pagla Dewan. (7) To punish Sikkim after Hooker Campbell incident, a small punitive force entered Sikkim in 1850 and the portion of the Sikkim hills bounded by the Rammam and the Great Rangit on the North, by the Teesta on the East and by the Nepal frontier on the West, including Terai was annexed. The area annexed was 640 sq miles in extent. Immediately after annexation of the Terai in 1850, the Southern portion was placed under the Purnea district, but later had to be tagged with Darjeeling owing to the resentments of the inhabitants. At the time of annexation there were Bangalee officers in the Terai, called Chaudharis who exercised civil and criminal powers.

The Superintendent who was later called the Deputy Commissioner managed the Terai and the hill territory annexed from Sikkim. The inhabitants welcomed the change, as they had to pay only small fixed sums into the Treasury in Darjeeling instead of having to meet certain amounts and demands in kind for personal service made by the Raja and Dewan.

The annexation brought about a remarkable change in the relations between Sikkim and the British. After the annexation British territory in Darjeeling was continuously with the British districts of Purnea and Rangpur in the plains and the Sikkim Raja was cut off from access to the plains except through British territory.

For some years after the annexations relations with Sikkim were not disturbed but periodical raids on British territory had taken place later on by Sikkimese for carrying off slaves for trade. Negotiations proved fruitless and it was thereafter decided by the British to take possession of the portion of Sikkim north of Rammam and west of the great

Rangit until British subjects were released. Offenders handed over and security obtained against recurrence of similar offences.

Dr. Campbell with a small force of 160 rank and files crossed the Rammam in November 1860 and advanced as far as Rinchingpong. He was attacked and forced to fall back on Darjeeling. Late. Col. Gawler with Sir Ashley Eden as Envoy and special commissioner moved with artillery and a force of 2600 men entered Tumlong, the capital of Sikkim, in March 1861. The Raja abdicated in favour of his son after the Dewan had fled and a treaty was made on the 28th March. It finally put to an end to frontier troubles with Sikkim and secured full freedom for commerce across the Sikkim border. (8)

The Bhutanese were responsible for a series of incursions and properties were plundered along the long frontier with India. In 1862 news came that the Bhutanese were preparing to make an attack on Darjeeling and troops were sent from Dinajpur to restore confidence.

Subsequently Sir. A. Eden led a special mission to Bhutan to settle difference and to restore the plundered property, but he failed as he was compelled by threats to sign a document giving up all claims to the Bhutan duars on the Assam frontier. He was treated with indignity and with much difficulty left Punakha by night and reached Darjeeling.

In order to prevent Bhutanese incursions in Darjeeling District or the plains south of Bhutan, the Government of India decided to annex the Bengal duars and such hill territories. Small expeditions were sent into Bhutan in 1864. These expeditions met with very oppositions and the operations terminated when, in November 1865, the treaty extorted from Sir. A. Eden was replaced by a fresh one by which what is now the Kalimpong sub-division as well as the Bhutan. Duars and passes leading into the Bhutan

hills were ceded to the British in return for an annual subsidy. The Kalimpong area was first notified as a sub-division under the Deputy Commissioner of the Western Duars District but in 1866 it was transferred to the District of Darjeeling.

The district was divided into two sub-divisions after Kalimpong had been brought under British Administration, i.e, the Headquarters sub-division and Terai sub-division. The Headquarter sub-division covered an area of 960 sq. miles including all the hills on both the side of the Teesta and the Terai sub-division covered an area of 274 sq. miles which included the whole of the country at the foot of hills. The Headquarter of the Terai sub-division was at Hanskhawa near Phansidewa from 1864 to 1880 when they were transferred to Siliguri. Then the metre gange railway of the North Bengal State Railway had been extended to Siliguri, which was then part of Jalpaiguri district and was now transferred to Darjeeling district with a small surrounding area and made the headquarters of the Terai sub- division.

In the meantime, Kurseong had begun to develop and in 1891 was made the Headquarters of a new sub-division, which included both the Terai and the lower hills west of the Teesta. Later in 1907, Siliguri was made a Sub-division, which in 1891 had been absorbed into the Kurseong sub-division. Up to 1907, there had been a Deputy Magistrate at Siliguri working under the sub-divisional officers Kurseong and managing the Terai Government Estate under the Deputy Commissioner. Kalimpong in the meantime had been in the sadar sub-division with a Manager of the Khas Mahals working at Kalimpong under the Deputy Commissioner. In 1916, the Kalimpong sub-division was created as a preliminary to working out development schemes in Kalimpong.

The district was included in the Rajshahi Division until October 1905 when it was transferred to the Bhagalpur Division with the re-arrangement of the provinces it was re-transferred to the Rajshahi Division in March 1912 (9).

1.1 STATUS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT

The district being non-regulated district, the land laws of Bengal were not applicable here. The tenancy system was governed by the waste land Rules 1859, Most of the gardens held the land for tea under two tenures (1) Hold in grant under Old Rules (2) Hold in Fee – simple under New Rules Land given for tea in the former case was about 18,89,88 acres and about 12308 acres in the latter case (in between 1866 and 1874).

Dr. Campbell reserved the right to use discretion under Old Rule. Dr. Campbell himself asserted that lands given to Nepali farmers were purchased by the Europeans for conversion of tea gardens. There was a heavy demand for land to start tea gardens in Darjeeling. Even the lands given for exclusive purpose of agriculture was converted to tea. The Act passed in 1859 replaced the ‘discretionary grant’ by Campbell. The most important provisions were, the grants of waste land should be put upto auction at an ‘upset price’ of Rs. 10(£1) per acre, that the sale at such auction should convey a free hold title, that existing lease hold grants might be commuted to freehold under the rules at the option of the grantee and that building locations might be commuted at the rate of twenty years purchase of the annual rent. About 9172 acres of land were sold by public auction at an average rate of Rs. 12. These lands were mainly for tea cultivation in the area.

The provisions under which the lands were put up to auction created much resentments and attempts were constantly made to evade them. Many European

speculators took land and sold it to the planters, Later on amendments were made to the original waste land Rule of 1859 in order to stop the anomalies. There was a Fee Simple Rule of 1862, which allowed commutation of all farming leases given previous to the introduction of the Free Simple Rules in August 1862. The area of the lands commuted under the orders of 1862 is 1342 acres, which together with the area by commutation under the Rules of 1859 makes a total of 21,287 acres in the old hill territory commuted to freehold without being put up to auction. These rules were changed in 1864.

The demand for land was confined only to the west of Teesta of Darjeeling and Kurseong area. Kalimpong area came under the British very late and was inhabited by Bhutias and Lepchas, who were mostly farmers.

The British Policy regarding the administration of territories of India did not provide a uniform system of administration. The District was made a scheduled District by the Act of 1874(10). The scheduled Districts were not placed within the ambit of the general laws and were applied only with modification or in part. The Indian Council Act 1909 also did not bring about any change in the district.

The Government of India Act 1919, brought all the scheduled districts under the Backward tract, and as such, Darjeeling district was declared a partially excluded area till the end of British rule in India.

The Government of India Act 1935 made provisions for an Elected Tea Garden Labour Seat in the Legislative Assembly and was allowed to form constituencies in rotation. The first opportunity of making such a representation went to the Bengal Dooars (west) constituency. The Darjeeling Sardar Division, the Bengal Dooars (eastern) constituency and the Kurseong sub-division were to make the representation second, third and fourth respectively. (11) The 1937 election saw three independent candidates in the

fray (Sri S.W.S.Laden La, Sri J.Sitling and Sri Damber Singh Gurung) and returned Sri Gurung to represent the three subdivisions.

1.2. AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The passing of the constitution of 1950 brought to an end the administrative segregation of the district. This abolished all the privileges of the Deputy Commissioner. A uniform administrative pattern was established in the hill areas of the district as in the rest of Bengal.

The treatment of the District in a special way under a separate administrative arrangements like Non Regulated Area, Scheduled District, 'Backward Tract', Partially Excluded Area' gave rise to serious doubts in some quarters as to the genuineness of the grounds of separation in view of the equally backwardness of the people of the rest of the areas general or regulation system of administration. (12)

The non-regulation system first of all emphasised that the people living in territories under it were comparatively backward and mostly ignorant tribal population. 'The separation of the district from the rest of Bengal either as a backward tract under the government of India Act, 1919 or as a partially excluded Area under the Act of 1935 may be properly understood as a sequel to the British imperial Policy'. (13) It was this imperial policy, which compelled the farmers to sell their plots at an average rate of Rs. 12 per acre through public auctions in the year 1859. Majority of the investors were from the European Countries. The Britishers and other citizens from European countries acquired about 9172 acres, of such lands by 1872. (14)

The Administrative history of the district reveals that the rulers never allowed the district to come within the national mainstream and within the purview of general

administration. It becomes quite evident that the British government followed a policy of segregating the district from the administrative, legislative and Judicial system of Bengal.

Economic and social insecurity were the two strong factors, which induced the people of the district to have a separate administrative arrangement specially made for them. The European Association, the Planter's Association and the Hillman's Association, which stood for exclusion of the district. They opened that the real welfare of the district rested on its exclusion from Bengal. Doubts were raised that the exclusion was not actually done for developing the areas declared as non-regulator scheduled Districts but for placing the border areas on the north under direct management of the rulers of the north.

The British government failed to fulfil the aspirations of the hill people and remove economic difficulties. This made the Hillmen quite averse to any political reforms and stressed upon economic upliftment rather than on political of the province with which they had little or no concern at all.

1.3. TEA IN INDIA

Sir P.Griffith in the history of the Indian Tea industry observes: -

Amongst much that is confused in the history of tea in China, three color facts have emerged- it was indigenious to the country, it was discovered and used at a very early date, and the simplicity of the technique required for its manufacture led to the establishment of the almost universal habit of tea-drinking in China many centuries before the British thought of growing tea in India. (15)

Tea was used as a luxury drink by the rich British at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which became the worlds cheapest and most widely, used drink

among the common people by 1880. (16) The soil and climatic conditions in the U.K. were quite unfavorable for tea cultivation. Since Tea formed such an important item in the British consumption, the British Government and traders took more direct interest than in the case of most other products. (17) Tea played an important role in the British balance of payments; the government of Great Britain and British India rendered all sorts of direct help for the promotion of tea industry in India. The court of directors of the East India Company made all efforts to develop tea industry in India. (19) The first consignments of 488 lbs. of Indian Tea to the U.K. was highly praised and received much attention. (20) The number of gardens and land under cultivation began to increase only after 1854, when the existing restrictions on leasing out of land to European planters were relaxed by the promulgation of the Wasteland Rule 1854. This attracted many big sterling and rupee companies, and during the following five years the tea industry in India made a steady progress. (21) The success and the nominal rents charged for the wastelands gave rise to speculation. The speculation and the rapid extension of cultivation between 1863 and 1865 led to a depression during 1865-75. (22)

Thereafter the industry took a favourable turn and by the 1880s the drinking of Indian black tea was firmly established in the UK and displaced Chinese black tea and became a leading exporter and producer in the world market. (23) A high level of demand for tea, a very low price of land for gardens, low initial capital requirement, cheap labour and public patronage were the important factors which favoured the development and prosperity of tea industry in India. (24)

1.4. DARJEELING TEA INDUSTRY- AN EARLY HISTORY

Beginning of the Tea Gardens in Darjeeling Hills: - The early history

The Darjeeling Tea Industry has a pride of place in West Bengal in view of its contribution to building state economy. Employing over two and half lakhs workers it has earned a niche in generating employment opportunities and lessening unemployment problems. The Darjeeling Tea is famous throughout the world for its fine flavour and aroma. There are 45 countries in the world, which are producing tea, but apart from China no other country in the world has been able to produce the delicately flavored teas except Darjeeling. This is mainly due to its geographical location (between 20 31' and 27 13' North latitude and between 87 59' and 88 53' East longitude), proximately to Himalayas, China Jat (25) (variety) of plants, elevations, soil, rainfall etc. Besides, the flavors produced by different tea gardens, numbering 72 vary from garden to garden. This is owing to the Jat of the bushes, elevation, the aspects of the tea bearing hills, rainfall and also the field practices coupled with the special techniques adopted in manufacturing the teas.

The majority of the population is Gorkha/Nepali. The backbone of the economy of the hills is the famous three, Tea, Timber, and Tourism. The discovery of tea in Bengal dates from 1826, when Major Bruce brought some plants and seeds from Assam. In the British Administrative circles, a serious attention was given to the possibility of starting and developing the cultivation and manufacturing of tea in Darjeeling and else where in the territories under the East India Company. O'Malley has correctly remarked that 'the establishment of the tea industry in Darjeeling is due to the enterprise of Dr. Campbell'. (26) The trade monopoly license of East India Company with China was abolished in 1833, and then Governor General of British India, Lord William Bentinck, supported the

proposal of Dr, Campbell to introduce tea in India. He appointed a committee in 1834 to formulate a plan for the introduction of tea plantations. Mr. Garden a botanist was sent to China to procure seeds and seedlings. He returned in 1835 with the tea seedlings and were distributed in the hilly region of the Country including Darjeeling. The original experiment of planting tea in Darjeeling was carried out by Dr. Campbell who planted tea seeds in 1841 at his residence at an elevation of 7,000 ft near Jalpahar and Alooari areas, but the seeds and plants were continually injured by hail, fog, frost, but the experimental nursery raised by Major Cronemelin at Lebong proved a great success. Hence immediate steps were undertaken to shift the plantations at lower elevation. Major Crommelin was entrusted with the task of shifting plantations. After 17 years of hard work, the first successful nursery was started at Aleboong. Thus by 1856, tea industry was firmly established in the district as a commercial enterprise.

The Alubari Tea garden was opened by the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company in 1856, the Dhotre garden was started by Dr. Brougham in 1859 and four gardens namely, Ging, Ambote, Takdawh and Phubsering were established by the Darjeeling tea Company, and the gardens at Takvar and Badamtam by the Lebong Tea Company. Other gardens, which were started at this early period, were Makaibari, Pandam, and steinthal tea estates. By the end of 1866, there were no less than 39 gardens with 10,000 acres under cultivation, and an outturn of over 433000 lbs of tea. In 1870, there were 56 gardens with 11,000 acres under cultivation employing 8000 labourers and yielding nearly 1700,000 lbs. and in 1874 the number of gardens had increased to 113, the area under cultivation to 18,888 acres the outturn to 3928000 lbs. Between 1866 and 1874 the number of gardens under tea almost trebled, the area under cultivation increased by 82% while the production multiplied nearly ten times. (27)

Table I. 01: The development of tea industry since 1874

Year	No. of garden	Area under Tea (in Acres)	Outturn of Tea in lbs	No, of labourers employed
1874	113	18,888	3927,911	19424.
1885	175	38,499	9090,298	N.A.
1895	186	48,692	1,1714,500	N.A.
1905	148	50,618	1,2447,500	N.A.
1935	148	59,356	2,1026,000	N.A.
1940	142	63,059	2,3721,500	N.A.
1950	N.A.	N.A.	7838000	N.A.
1960	99	40925.43	10107000	N.A.
1971	97	45954.35	10293000	42763
1980	103	45065.15	1268900	45987
1990	102	47525.27	1449900	48116
1994	N.A.	49560.56	N.A.	N.A.

From the above table it will be seen that there has been but little extension of cultivation owing to the fact that all the land available and suitable for tea within the area reserved for it had been taken up, while the number of gardens were reduced in consequence of the amalgamation of several estates. (28)

The development of tea after 1907 is available in the District Gazetteer published by A.J.Dash CIE in 1947.

Table I.02: The distribution of tea gardens under the different thana area

Thane	No.of Tea Gardens
Darjeeling	19
Jorebunglow	16
Sukhia Pokhari	09
Pulbazar	02
Rangli Rangliot	09
Kurseong	25
Mirik	05
Siliguri	27
Kharibari	11
Phansidewa	13
Kalimpong	00
Gorubathan	06
Total	142

Mr. Dash points out that the total area under tea leases was 1, 23,853 acres of which 51,281 acres were under tea. In 1920, these areas had increased to 142152 and 59356 and in 1940 to 167972 and 63059. The area under tea rose to a maximum in 1943 when it was 63,227 acres, in that year the total area under lease was 165680 acres. (29)

Table I. 03: A summary of position of the tea gardens in the District of Darjeeling as per district census handbook, 1951

Total area of the district	1192 sq.miles
Area under lease	259 sq.miles
Ordinary cultivated area in tea garden	80 sq.miles
Hill east of Teesta Area under Tea	21 sq.miles
Hill west of Teesta under Tea	35 sq.miles
Tarai	66 sq.miles

Availability of Cheap labour and relatively easy access of land for cultivation have contributed largely to the phenomenal growth of tea industry in Darjeeling.

The Large-scale migration of workers from eastern Nepal provided cheap labour and in the absence of any organization and leaders, the labourers depended completely on the mercy of the garden managers.

The liberal land policy also favoured the tea industry to settle and develop.

European settlers like Dr. Grant, the Barnes Brothers, Capt. Mason, Capt. Samler, Mr. Smith, Dr. Brougham, Mr. Martin, Mr. James White, Mr. George Watt Christison, Mr. W.O. Brien Ansell were instrumental in enhancing the growth of Darjeeling tea industry.

Between 1870-1890, the pattern of garden management began changing, which affected the production to a large extent. From the pioneer planters the garden came under the hands of well-organised limited companies or tea "managing agents". This severely affected the management as the gardens changed hands from one set of speculative owners to another set of owners. M.Dasgupta's remarks on garden

managements and its impact on the health of tea industry is worth adding. He has noted thus, After the British left most of the new planters came to business by accumulation of profit either in wholesale trade or in speculative business. An analysis of 27 elected joint stock companies of Darjeeling reveals that between 1940 to 1970 while the number of non-Indian directors decline from 112 to only 11, the number Indian directors showed a corresponding increase from 5 to 85 in the period. However, of these Indian directors with a merchant background shot up from 2 in 1940 to 53 in 1965. In any case the directors with this background completely changed the nature of management.

Apart from quick profit tendency there had been a new phenomenon in the area. Very often there is a quick change of gardens from one set of directors to another set of directors. The frequency of change of ownership in Darjeeling hill area is much higher than in dooars, or in terai. For example, in between 1965, 55, 67% of Darjeeling tea gardens were affected by this change of owners, whereas in Doors it is 36.54% and in Terai 22.72%. Gardens have changed hands from one set of speculative owners to another set of owners. In the meantime the odd owners have stripped the gardens of leaves and vitality. It is very often stated that Governments, both Central and State, are more interested to take the surplus of the gardens in the form of various taxes. Governments never cared to look to the health of the gardens. Some half hearted measures were taken by the Government for replantation of tea bushes through different schemes of the tea Board. But according to its own admission money given to the planters was not used in the gardens and were siphoned off to other speculative industries. The money or subsidies given to the fertilizers were either misused or sold in open markets or not utilised at all. In fact Tea Board is mainly a lobby of the big planters.' (30)

The Darjeeling tea industry suffered two major setbacks during and after the two World wars. Most of the experienced British planters enrolled to fight for the crown. The planters from Assam, who were unaware of the peculiar characteristics of the Darjeeling plantations, filled in the void. The Assam planters found the China Jat plantation too congested and planted out vast areas at all elevations with Assam seeds like Betjan, Khoribari, and Dangri Manipuri. Even in some cases, alternate lines of bushes in the China tea sections were uprooted for easy movement of the pluckers and supervisors. Thus, the Darjeeling Tea plantations suffered considerably at the hands of inexperienced Assam planters.

After the Second World War, the British Ministry of Food Purchases, stopped buying tea, leading to a major marketing problems and barring Calcutta/London auctions, there was no other outlet for Darjeeling tea. The Darjeeling tea industry suffered its second set back with the slump of 1952 when the prices knocked at the London Auctions and could not even cover the chipping costs. In the Calcutta auctions teas were withdrawn, without any bids, resulting in heavy financial losses. Subsequently with the independence of the country, the Parliament and State Legislature passed a number of Labour Welfare Measures, such as Minimum Wages Act, Plantation Labour Act that escalated costs making the condition worst. This had an adverse effect as because a Large section of the British owners felt that their properties were no longer economically viable and by 1956, a large number of gardens changed hands to local Indian entrepreneurs who were inexperienced and had never seen tea bushes previously. They were in dilemma and faced an uphill task in running gardens.

Table I.04: Prof. M DasGupta of North Bengal University in his article on ownership changes has given good picture for period from 1947 to 1970 (31)

Ownership Categories	Ownership in 1947		Ownership in 1970	
	Indian	Non –Indian	Indian	Non-Indian
Proprietary	31	08	32	-
Private Limited	01	-	12	-
Public Limited	21	10	41	-
Sterling	-	30	-	16
	53	48	85	16

The Proprietary estates have declined giving place to private and public limited companies. The British Proprietary estates virtually disappeared and Indian proprietors occupy the position. Thus the environment was complete for the transfer of ownership along with independence. Initially, Indianisation took place in agency, brokering and legal aspects of the tea industry. The decision of the Government of India to fill top and middle position of management by Indians made it possible to complete the process.

Dr. B.Bhattacharya has stated that altogether 122 gardens were put on sale between 1947 and 1976 for all the North Bengal gardens, which in effect means that over 41% of the total number of tea gardens of this particular region have changed hands during this period. The position of Darjeeling hill is as follows. (32)

No. of Tea Gardens	97
No. of Tea Gardens affected by change of ownership	54
Percentage of total number	55.67 %(years 1976).

It is revealed that in barely 30 years the ownership of more than half of the tea gardens in the district has changed. This reflects the unrest of the industry. The frequency of changes brought in instability in tea industry resulting in the neglect of tea bushes. As per CMPO study in 1972-73, 73% of the total hectareage was with bushes over 50 years. Another 15% was in the category of 31 years or 50 years. Thus of late, more than 88% of the total bushes have crossed their economic life.

The history of Darjeeling tea garden is conspicuous of adventurism of the British planters who braved the natural odds and started the industry in a forlorn place. The European settlers were the torchbearers of the industry followed by few Indian entrepreneurs. The depression had its immediate impact on pattern of ownership management. After independence, the local traders took keen interest and this in effect started Indianisation of tea industry. The long-term concept of Tea Industry was eclipsed by quick- profit tendency. The ownership also changed at a quick rate which severely affected the stability of the industry. Tea is a long-term solution. It involves a long chain of activity and any dislocation at any of the joints in the chain is bound to throw the whole operation out of gear. At present the situation of Darjeeling tea industry is indeed very grave and solely dependent on the high sale prices-which is beyond the industry's control and solely dependent on the buyers. Since 80% of Darjeeling teas are exported and if the foreign buyers decide to pay less than Rs. 100.00 per kgs then the whole Darjeeling tea industry will collapse. Priority is to be given to rehabilitate the tea bushes. This can be tackled by two methods viz (1) Short term and (2) Long term.

Short term- each tea estate should undertake rejuvenation pruning with interplanting at the rate of approximately 3 to 5 % of their tea bearing area. This will enable the tea estates to get the return much earlier than uprooting and replanting. Under

the Long-term method, each tea estate should uproot and replant at the rate of approximately 2.5 % of their total area under tea annually so that by about 40 years all their tea areas will be completely renovated. There is no short cut to revive this vital industry of the Darjeeling Hill area and the government, state well as the centre, must take immediate action before it is too late.

1.5. SUMMARY

The district of Darjeeling lies in the northernmost part of West Bengal. The district came to be what it is from a very obscure origin Prior to the year 1816 the whole of the territory known as British Sikkim belonged to Nepal, which had won it by conquest from the Sikkimese. By a treaty signed between Nepal and the British at Sugauli at the end of 1816 Nepal ceded the 4,000 square miles of territory to the British, which in turn by a treaty signed at Titaliya in 1817, was handed over to the Raja of Sikkim.

Later, in 1828, when G.A. Lloyd and J.W. Grant found their way into the west of Darjeeling they were very much impressed with the possibilities of the station as a sanatorium. Grant and J.D. Herbert visited shortly after who reported favourably on the situation of the hill of Darjeeling. Lloyd was deputed to start negotiations with the Sikkim Raja for a cession of the hill either for an equivalent money or land. The Sikkim Raja unconditionally handed over a strip of hill territory, 24 miles long and about 5 to 6 miles wide, covering approximately 138 sq.miles in area, which included the villages of Darjeeling and Kurseong, for the establishment of a sanatorium.

About fifteen years after this the relations between Sikkim and the British Government had been far from satisfactory. The Raja had allowed his Prime Minister

Diwan Namguay, to administer the state. He became jealous and annoyed at the increasing importance of Darjeeling under the British. He was joined by the Lamas and other notabilities for a rebellion as they lost their rights over slaves settling as British subjects in Darjeeling. The climax was reached in 1849, when Hooker and Campbell were seized and made prisoners while travelling in Sikkim. A punitive expedition was sent by the British in 1850, which resulted in the annexation of the Terai and the portion of Sikkim Hills bounded by the Rammam and the Great Rangit rivers on the north, by the Tista on the east and by Nepal frontier on the west, covering an area of 640 sq.miles. The Terai and hill territory thus annexed were managed by the Superintendent.

The year 1866 may be taken as marking an epoch in the history of Darjeeling. After Kalimpong had been brought under British administration the district was divided into two sub-divisions: the headquarters sub-division with an area of 960 sq.miles including all the hills on both sides of the Tista river and the Terai sub-division with an area of 274 sq.miles which included the whole of the country at the foot of the hills. In 1891, the sub-division of Kurseong was formed and in 1907, the sub-division of Siliguri, Kalimpong had been in the Sadar division then: and only in 1916, the Kalimpong sub-division was created as a preliminary to working and development schemes.

The district was formerly a Non-Regulation district, and it had no representative in the Legislative Council constituted under the Government of India Act, 1919. It was excluded and declared a backward tract. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the district was made a partially excluded area till the end of British rule in India. The passing of the constitution of 1950 brought to an end the administrative segregation of the district. This abolished all the privileges of the Deputy Commissioner. A uniform

administrative pattern was established in the hill areas of the district as in the rest of Bengal.

The treatment of the District in a special way under a separate administrative arrangements like Non Regulated Area, Scheduled District, 'Backward Tract', Partially Excluded Area' gave rise to serious doubts in some quarters as to the genuineness of the grounds of separation in view of the equally backwardness of the people of the rest of the areas general or regulation system of administration.

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