

## CHAPTER – 2

### LIFE AND TIMES OF WOMEN IN DARJEELING

#### 2.1. Introduction

Below we have tried to situate the life and times of the women in Darjeeling by undertaking a study of the socio-economic and political environment that had a major influence on the women living in Darjeeling. In the process we have tried to focus on the counter influences that the enlightened women of Darjeeling cast on the socio-economic and political environment in Darjeeling. The following chapter is segmented into eight segments.

#### 2.2. Introduction to the Region in Focus: Society, Economy and the Political Environment.

##### Racial Character of the Region in Focus

It is interesting to study the racial composition of the population of the region because of the number of races and tribes found and is also of significance for those who wish to understand its history and forecast its future. Terai in early times was sparsely populated by aboriginal Koches and Meches and the hills by aboriginal Lepchas. They all had animistic religions and practiced primitive methods of agriculture. The racial composition of the population was radically altered due to the exploitation. First in Terai some Mussalman conversion of Koches probably occurred and an increase of Tibetan (including Bhutanese) influence from the north which began a process of domination over the Lepchas. However, the warfare between the Nepalese and Tibetans and Chinese resulted in a position to exploit when the British politically intervened. The exploitation of the British was mainly in the development of tea, engineering, trade and education and did not result in any appreciable permanent British population. Two large immigrations was brought in its train i.e. in the hills the Nepalese who were more useful as laborers on tea gardens and more efficient as cultivators than the aboriginal Lepchas, whereas, in Terai the tribes from Chota Nagpur. As a consequence the influence of Lepchas and Tibetans in the hills declined.

The development of communication and trade brought in Marwari, Bihari and Bengali traders and professionals men to the region.

Hence, this resulted in a very mixed population of Nepalese, Lepchas, Bhutias, Tibetans, Bengalis, Marwaris, Beharis, Rajbanshis, Santals, Oraons and Mundas in the plains with a sprinkling of British, Anglo-Indians, Chinese, Uriyas and Punjabis.

### **2.3. Social Composition and Structure of the Region**

#### **Social Stratification: Caste, Tribe Composition**

The ethnic complexities in the Darjeeling district resulted in a composite culture which started taking shape in the three hill sub-divisions from the beginning of the present century. The bond of unity was provided by the Nepali language which in Nepal used to be known as 'Khaskura' or 'Gorkha' by the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, in Nepal 'Khaskura' language remained mostly confined to the upper caste of Brahmin-Chettris even after the Gorkha ascendancy under Prithvinarayan Shah and a link could not easily form for linguistic or cultural affinity with the various low caste ethnic groups of Nepal who spoke Tibeto-Burman languages. Where as, in Darjeeling the situation was altogether different. This 'Khaskura' of the upper caste was picked up as a second language by the low caste Nepali immigrants like the Rais, the Limbus, the Pradhans, the Gurungs, the Tamangs and the Kirats, who spoke Tibeto-Burman dialects. Hence, in India in general and in Darjeeling in particular, gradually Nepali language forged a bond of cultural unity and ethnic link among various groups who had migrated from Nepal. The Lepchas and the Bhutias too, in spite of their religious and linguistic differences with the Nepalese, slowly but ultimately accepted Nepali as the lingua franca in the hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling. Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century it became a hard reality due to overwhelming demographic predominance of the Nepalese which contributed to the acceptability of Nepali language as the lingua franca. Beside this, another major contributing factor was the steady permeation of the process of Sanskritisation of the low caste Nepali migrants. From the beginning of the present century there was a gradual increase in the number of upper caste Chettris and Brahmins migrants from Nepal which contributed to the growth of Hindu places of worship in Darjeeling and subsequently outnumbered the Buddhist Monasteries. However, in course of time, there started an influence of Buddhism on the low caste Nepalese like the Tamangs, the Rais and the Limbus started decreasing and most of them gradually embraced Hinduism. The Lepchas even could not avoid the process of Sanskritisation. In Darjeeling, the ethnic unity was further reinforced by the settlement of large number of retired Nepali officers of the British Indian Army as well as Nepali

Police Personnel, who were regarded as a “Loyal” immigrant by the British in the hill sub-divisions of the district.

A composite Nepali culture was striking its early roots in Darjeeling but the Nepali communities remain stratified along the economic lines. The land holding class, the retired army and police officials represented the aristocratic elements, while the other major strata were formed by the middle class service holders, small traders and by the working class consisting of plantation and construction workers as well as small peasants and agricultural laborers. Thus, the ethnic identity of the Nepalese made a great effort to cut across these major economic strata and sought to express itself in two distinct streams which sometimes flowed together. The first one was to spread Nepali language and literature regarded as the focal point for the composite ethnic culture of the hill sub-divisions of the district. The second one was the ethnic identity of the Nepalese which was expressed in terms of an exclusiveness gradually took in shape through demands for various forms of autonomy for Darjeeling.

Therefore, in the hills the great majority of population speaks Nepali and in the Terai speaks Bengali or Hindi. However, in addition, there are various Nepali Tribes dialects which are still in use in the region. Among these are the Gurungs, Limbus, Khambus, Sunawars, Yakha, Mangari and Murmi dialects. Since, it appears that the use of Nepali language was spreading and the people of the district rely more and more upon it for use outside the family.

The 1931 census classified the 3,19,635 persons then enumerated in the District as having a mother-tongue. **See Annexure-1.**

On the other hand the Lepcha have a language of their own called by them Rong-ring. Tibetan is spoken by the Bhutias domiciled in the region. Other immigrants have brought with them their own languages as Marwaris, Punjabis, Santals, Oraons and Mundas. Whereas, the primitive race of Dhimal aborigines who lived in the Terai seem to have disappeared from census records.

The first regular census took place in 1872 after the annexations were over and the region had reached its present area. However, the total number of persons in the region at each of the census is shown. **See Annexure 2, 3, 4 & 5.**

In the Hill Subdivisions the preponderance of Nepalese over the other hill men was very noticeable and the fact that in this area the two combined were nearly 94 per

cent of the whole population was concealed in the 1941 census method which presented the relative importance of communities. However, it was interesting to compare percentages with those for the Sikkim State. In Sikkim State the Nepali population was 77 per cent of the total population. The Nepali colonization there also have been overwhelming, in spite of attempts to protect and maintain, in certain areas, the indigenous populations against the encroachment of Nepalese.

As elsewhere stated, such an administrative policy has been in operation in the Kalimpong Subdivision of the Darjeeling District and does not appear to have achieved any very positive success.

Muslims and Plains Hindus are few in the hill area and mainly found in the towns with a relatively small number in semi-urban areas. In tea and rural areas in the hills a few Bengali Hindus, Beharis and Marwaris are scattered. In urban areas more than half of the Scheduled Caste populations of hill areas are menials employed. At the base of the hills practically all the rest are aboriginal immigrants of tea gardens. In the Kurseong Subdivision other hill men are very meagerly represented and this must be due to the position of this Subdivision- close to Nepal and cut off from Sikkim and Bhutan.

On the other hand in the Siliguri Subdivision, while the percentage of Nepalese is 6.2 per cent as against nearly 87 per cent in the hills, the percentage of Scheduled Castes and Plains Hindus is 85.5 percent. In the town of Siliguri there is also an appreciable Muslim rural population in addition to a strongest Muslim element.

In these areas Nepalese are remarkably numerous (83 per cent). Plains Hindus of 1,221 are mostly Marwari and Behari merchants with a sprinkling of Bengalis.

In tea areas distribution of races shows that of the District tea area population, the Nepalese predominate heavily being 78 per cent and 96 per cent of the tea population in the hill subdivisions. Only 7 per cent in the Terai are of the tea area population while Scheduled Castes and Plains Hindus makeup 91 per cent.

Percentages of Nepalese are high (93 per cent in Cinchona and 86 per cent in Forest) in these plantation areas and there is a not insignificant number of other hill men (7 per cent and over 8 percent).

Thus, here Nepalese forms nearly 84 percent of the population of Hill Khas Mahals and Other hill men nearly 16 percent.

The numbers of the various races and tribes found in the region has been compiled with more detailed information. Tribal distinctions and dialects may not be as strong as in Nepal and Chota Nagpur although and they may not have great political significance, in the social life of the individual they are still very important and are of interest historically. Detailed figures are presented for these reasons and discussed somewhat fully. **See Annexure 6**

In a certain list any caste or race named prepared by the census authorities was classed as a tribe. These castes so classed were Scheduled Castes. The Scheduled Castes who did not disclose themselves as of castes classed as tribes had been placed under three categories, viz., (1) Menials, (2) Rajbanshis and (3) Others. The menials were mainly sweepers, dhobis and mochis. Plain Hindus of Hindi speaking groups was mainly composed of Beharis. The Punjabis included Sikhs and Jains and 'Others' included Oriyas, Assamese and Madrasis.

Certain castes under Nepalese whose names were included in the census list of Tribes had been marked accordingly. In the census all 'Other Hillmen' were classed as Tribes. Those Christians who were Indian Christians had not been classed as Scheduled Caste, Nepali, Bhutia or Lepcha Christians or who were not British, Anglo-Indian or European. They included Goanese Christians.

However, the class British included those of British, Scotch, Irish, American, Canadian or Australian nationality. Those who described themselves as Jews included European but happened also to be a European origin. Whereas, Asiatic includes Chinese, Armenians and Parses'.

However, the majority of populations in the region were the Nepalese having a features ranging from Mongoloid Rais and Limbus to the more Aryan looking Bauns and Chhetrys. Although most of them were Hindu having an Animist tradition and their practice were different from that of the Indian Hindu.

On the other hand, in the Darjeeling District the Rais were the most numerous tribes and had their original home in Eastern Nepal. Since, their religious practices included both Hindu and Buddhist rites: they have many customs in common with the Limbus and intermarriage tends to draw them closer together. Although Rais and Limbus are not considered to be of warrior classes but they offered a gallant resistance

to the invading Gurkhas and they are recruited to combatant rank being considered equal in every respect to other fighting tribes.

The following table shows the number of Rais recorded as residing in the Darjeeling District:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Rais	33,133	40,409	41,236	47,431	56,794

(Dash 1947: 72)

About 39,448 residents of the region in 1911 were recorded as speaking the Khambu dialect. In the region the Rais has always been numerous and numbers have steadily increased. Wherever Nepalese are found, they are distributed throughout the region.

Sherpa's come originally from the north-east of Nepal and were of Tibetans descent. However, they seemed to be more definitely Buddhist in religion than any of the other Nepalese. They are found mostly in the Sadar Subdivision and in Kalimpong Khas Mahal, Forest and Cinchona areas. In the region, in 1901 there were 3,450 Sherpa in 1931, their numbers had increased to 5,295 and in 1941 to 6,929. Sherpa have been recruited to combatant rank in Gurkha battalions during the war. This tribe also supplies for climbing expeditions throughout the Himalayas, most of the famous high altitude porters.

In 1769 the *Khas* tribe, which had adopted the surname of Chettri, was one of the three dominant tribes of Nepal which overthrew the Newar dynasty. In Gurkha regiments the Chettris of Nepal were recruited to combatant rank. In the Darjeeling District they were reported to be careful and successful cultivators. In 1941 in the region there were 25,941 Chettris resident which gave a considerable increase over recorded figures for 1901 (11,597) and 1911 (12,599). Throughout the district they were widely distributed. This tribe probably has a large admixture of Aryan blood and it is the form of Hindi acquired by this tribe from Brahman and Rajput refugees in Nepal that has now become the Nepali of current use.

In the Darjeeling District there were 1,335 *Sanyasis*. In the district this tribe whose surname was Giri, was never numerous: 1,151 were recorded in 1901 and 1,060 in 1911. Sanyasis of Nepal were enlisted in small numbers in combatant rank during the war.

In the region Nepali Brahmans were fairly numerous. In the 1941 census there being 8,999 recorded. Brahmans recorded, most of them were Nepali Brahmans were as follows:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Brahmans	6,470 (Dash 1947: 73)	6,195	8,174	8,791	8,999

However, Nepali Brahmans were mentioned with Chettris as careful and successful cultivators. In the Kalimpong Subdivision of the Khas Mahals a large number of Brahmans of the District were residents (4,106). Thus, no Nepali Brahmans were recruited to Gurkha regiments.

In Nepal, Bhujels were originally the slaves. Their status has improved and some have been recruited to the combatant rank during the war. In the Darjeeling District they number 5,816. At tea gardens of the Kurseong Subdivision six hundred and ten are found and 2,308 in the Khas Mahal of Kalimpong.

But *Yogis* were not strictly a tribe or caste but only a group, who have taken a religious life. In 1931 seven hundred and fifty-two were recorded and in 1941 454 were recorded.

Out of this, four thousand three hundred and four persons declared themselves to be Nepalese but gave no indication of the tribe to which they belong.

One of the three dominant tribes of Nepal were *Mangars* who overthrew the Newar dynasty and were now chiefly occupied in agriculture, trade and soldiering, but like Nepali Brahmans they take readily to almost any occupation. In the Gurkha regiments Mangars of Nepal are recruited to combatant rank. The figures below show how the population of Mangars in the region has increased:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Mangars	11,912 (Dash 1947: 73)	12,451	14,934	16,299	17,262

Throughout the region Mangars were found wherever there are Nepalese.

The *Newars* tribe ruled in Nepal until 1769 when it was overthrown by the Chettris, Mangars and Gurungs. They were traders and artisans, agriculturists and domestic servants now and in Gurkha regiments during the war Newars of Nepal were recruited to combatant rank. They have Pradhan surname and a dialect of their spoken

by 5,150 residents in 1911 in the Darjeeling District. In the District the population of Newars has varied as follows:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Newars	5,770 (Dash 1947: 73)	6,927	8,751	10,235	12,242

In the Darjeeling District Newars have ceased to use the Newar dialect and they have become completely Hinduist.

In tea areas of the Sadar and Kurseong Subdivisions and in the Kalimpong Khas Mahal areas Newars were numerous. It is also considered that Nepal and Newar are really two forms of the same word and Newar merely means an inhabitant of Nepal proper before the Gurkha conquest. On the other hand, *Tamangs* are a Mongolian or Semi-Mongolian tribe who claim to be among the earliest settlers of Nepal. They are descended probably from a Tibetan stock modified by intermixture with Nepali races. Generally they bear the title of Lama and follow Buddhist practices although they still follow Hindu customs at death and on certain festivals. However, at their wedding Lamas serve as priest and prayer flags fly over their homesteads and also known as Murmis. In Gurkha regiments Tamangs of Nepal are recruited to combatant rank and they are very numerous in the Darjeeling District where they are good cultivators and were found in large numbers in tea gardens. In 1911 about 26,963 persons were recorded in the region as speaking the Murmi dialect. In the region their numbers have varied as follows:-

	1872	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Tamangs	6,557	24,465	27,226	30,450	33,481	43,114
	(Dash 1947: 74)					

In Nepal, Gurungs were a nomadic pastoral race subsisting by rearing and grazing cattle. They have their own dialect. In 1769, they helped to over throw the Newar dynasty and Gurungs of Nepal were recruited to combatant rank in Gurkha battalions. In district their numbers have been as follows:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Gurungs ..	8,738	9,628	9,575	11,154	15,455
	(Dash 1947: 74)				

Throughout the region they were well distributed and numerous in tea gardens in the hills.

In the district the Limbus who bear the title of Subba were also numerous. They were originally from east Nepal but from their flat features, oblique eyes, yellow complexion and beardless faces, it can be surmised that they have descended from early Tibetan settlers in Nepal. In Darjeeling District they have intermarried a great deal with Lepcha. Most Gurkha regiments prior to 1887 enlisted Limbus but after the formation of two Eastern Nepal Gurkha Regiments, they together with Rais, were enlisted exclusively in the Eastern Nepal Regiments of Gurkha Brigade. In Nepal they offered a most gallant resistance to the invading Gurkhas. Now they were engaged chiefly in agriculture, grazing, trade and porter age. They have their own dialect. In 1911 about 11,489 and in 1931 about 14,706 residents of the region were recorded as speaking the dialect. The population of Limbu in the District has varied as follows:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Limbus .	14,305	13,804	14,191	16,288	17803

(Dash 1947: 74)

In the hills they are quite numerous in tea areas and in the Khas Mahals of the Sadar and Kalimpong Subdivisions.

The cultivating tribes known as Sunuwars were originally hunters and are recruited from Nepal to combatant rank in Gurkha regiments. In the Darjeeling District they are fairly numerous as the following figures show:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Sunuwars ..	4,428	3,820	3,691	4,055	4,822

(Dash 1947: 74)

Sunuwars have their own dialect which was in 1911 spoken by 3,511 residents of the District.

An agricultural caste known as Yakhas calling themselves Diwan have come from the same areas in Nepal as the Rais and Limbus, those who have come from the west of the Arun considering themselves Rais and those from the east of the Arun, Limbus. They have their own dialect and are recruited to combatant rank in Gurkha regiments. In Darjeeling District they are not numerous the following only being recorded:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Yakhas ..	1,143	1,119	..	850	824
	(Dash 1947: 75)				

The tailor castes were the Damais and are recruited to Gurkha battalions only as darzis. They are as follows in the Darjeeling District:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Damais ..	4,643	4,453	5,781	5,551	8,162
	(Dash 1947: 75)				

In the hills Damais were found in most areas but were more numerous in towns and tea gardens.

In Gurkha regiments Kamis or blacksmiths were only recruited as armourers. In the Darjeeling District they were quite numerous as follows:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Kamis ..	9,826	10,939	11,779	11,331	16,272
	(Dash 1947: 75)				

In the hills they were found in all areas but are particularly numerous in towns, on tea estates and in Kalimpong Khas Mahals.

Sarkis in Gurkha regiments were recruited only as leather workers. In the District they have never been very numerous. The recorded figures are:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Sarkis ..	1,823	1,992	2,036	2,432	2,778
	(Dash 1947: 75)				

In the hills they were more numerous in towns and tea gardens and in the Kalimpong Khas Mahals.

In Darjeeling Districts Gharti is the term applied to descendants of freed slaves, there were only a few recorded now but in former censuses they seem to have been more numerous:-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Gharti ..	3,448	3,584	..	2,053	496
	(Dash 1947: 75)				

In the region there was 2,393 persons residents recorded as *Nepali Christians*. In the Darjeeling Town they were found mostly, in the Kurseong and Kalimpong towns and special areas in the Kalimpong Khas Mahals.

Hillmen other than Nepalese were *Bhutia* and *Tibetans* who have been classed together and *Lepchas*. *Bhutia* and *Tibetans* have been classed as follow:-

(1)Sikkimese Bhutia, a mixed race descended from Tibetans who settled in Sikkim some centuries ago and intermarried with Lepchas,

(2)Sherpa Bhutias or Bhutias of Nepal who came from the East or North -East of Nepal,

(3)Durkpa Bhutias or Bhutias of Bhutan proper and

(4)Bhutias of Tibet or Tibetans. (Dash 1947: 75-76)

In the 1931 census the numbers of these classes were given as:-

Bhutias of Bhutan	..	..	..	..	2,124
Bhutias of Nepal	..	..	..	..	5,295
Bhutias of Sikkim	..	..	..	..	896
Bhutias of Tibet	..	..	..	..	2,314 (Dash 1947: 76)

This gives a total of 5,334 Bhutias who were not Sherpa. It is not clear whether the census figures below for 1901, 1911, and 1921 included Sherpa or not-

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Bhutias and Tibetans	9,315 (7,271 + 341)	10,768 (Dash 1947: 76)	10,710	5,334	7,612

In 1931 if Sherpa were included there would be 10,629 Bhutias and in 1941, 14,541 Bhutias resident in the District. About 5,866 persons in 1891 were recorded as speaking Bhutia and 1,526 as speaking Tibetan. Where as, in 1911, 10,775 persons were recorded as speaking Bhutia and in 1931 this has increased to 11,761. Hence, it is difficult from this material to come to a satisfactory decision about an increase or decrease of the Bhutia population of the District.

However, the Bhutias and Tibetans are people of considerable physical strength and capable of enduring exposure and carrying heavy burdens. This people were fond of Gambling and displays and though somewhat quarrelsome were cheerful and willing workers.

The original inhabitants of the country were the Lepchas. They call themselves Rong, i.e., the squatters, and their country, the land of caves. The term Lepcha or Lepcha was an appellation given them by the Nepalese and means the people of vile speech. Originally the Lepchas possessed all the hill country of Darjeeling and Sikkim and when the British first acquired Darjeeling it was then reported that they form two-third of population of Sikkim. About 300 years ago the Tibetans invaded their country and drove them into the lower valleys and gorges: in 1706 the tract east of the Tista, now Kalimpong, was conquered and taken from them by the Bhutanese. The forests reservation by government has further cramped their means of livelihood and natural environment and they are far less efficient as cultivators than the Nepalese who seem also to be more prolific. It is not possible to accurately estimate how far they are able to maintain themselves under modern conditions as they perpetuate their families by adoption, intermarry freely with other races, notably Limbus and Sikkim Bhutias, and have immigrated to Bhutan in some numbers. In the District they do not seem to have been ever very numerous.

*Jhuming* was their traditional method of cultivation by which they burn down a patch of jungle and cultivate it for a year or two before moving on to some other jungle area. Since, it was a wasteful and inefficient system but it no doubt account for their dislike of fixed employment and their interest in jungle life. They have rather a timid, placid and indolent temperament.

In District the history of the Bhutia and Lepcha population was given below in detail because since the annexation in 1868 of the Kalimpong Subdivision from Bhutan, the revenue authorities of the District have been concerned with preserving the Lepcha and Bhutia population in Khas Mahals of Kalimpong. The following discussion will show how far they have been successful.

Records of the Lepcha population of the District are as follows:-

	1872	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Lepchas ..	3,952	9,972	9,706	9,669	12,101	12,470*

(Dash 1947: 77)

Note.-Figure 12,470 for 1941 is made up of 9,911 Lepchas classed as Buddhist and 2,559 classed as Christians. In 1891, 9,894 persons were recorded as speaking Lepcha. In 1911 this had increased to 11,275.

The distribution of the Bhutia and Lepcha population of the Districts is seen from table. See **Annexure 7**

In urban areas Bhutias and Tibetans were found in appreciable numbers. Many were employed as laborers in Darjeeling and in Kalimpong town a number were also concerned with the trade to and from Tibet. Bhutias were found mainly in the Khas Mahal outside the towns particularly those of the Kalimpong Subdivision which was formerly part of Bhutan. In the town area there were Lepchas but most Lepcha were found in the Khas Mahals notably Kalimpong and a few on Cinchona Plantations.

The 1941 census show the population of the Kalimpong Khas Mahal to be:-

				Per cent.	
Nepalese	..	..	..	40,280	81.0
Lepchas	..	..	..	6,987	14.1
Bhutia Tibetans	..	..	..	2,429	4.9
				.....	.....
Total	..			49,696	100.0

(Dash 1947: 78)

It is not easy to calculate corresponding figures from previous censuses. Philpot's Settlements Report of 1919-21 gives holdings of Nepalese, Lepchas and Bhutias as follows:-

Nepali holdings	..	..	..	4,847	71.3
Lepcha Holdings	..	..	..	1,409	20.7
Bhutia Holdings	..	..	..	539	8.0
				.....	.....
Total	..			6,795	100.0

(Dash 1947: 78)

For the three communities the size of holdings was then estimated to be the same so that population could roughly be estimated in the above proportions. The total population of the Khas Mahal and forest (which can be deemed to include the present cinchona areas) in the above Settlements Report taken was 41,203. At that time therefore population would have been:-

Nepalese	..	..	..	..	29,377
Lepchas	..	..	..	..	8,529
Bhutias	..	..	..	..	3,296
					.....
Total	..				41,202

(Dash 1947: 78)

The Total of the 1941 census for Khas Mahal, Forest and cinchona areas in the Subdivision are:-

Nepalese	..	..	..	..	47,516
Lepchas	..	..	..	..	7,269
Bhutias	..	..	..	..	2,624 (Dash 1947: 78)

However, these calculations show an absolute diminution in the numbers of both Lepchas and Bhutias and indicate that the policy of conserving Lepchas and Bhutia is failing. Though, even if the Lepcha and Bhutia population of the semi-urban areas were added (105 and 326) still failure was apparent.

The Rais, Limbus, Tamangs, Newars etc who migrated from the Limbouan territory to Darjeeling were generally Buddhists and each of these groups had a separate language. Initially in Darjeeling Hindi and then Nepali became the lingua franca. However, only a few Bengalese and Biharis from the plain settled in Darjeeling hills for the job opportunities.

Though there was no appreciable impact of the culture of the plains people on the people of the hills. The gradual increase in the number of Chettri and Brahmin migrants from Nepal, Hindu places of worship started coming up in the larger number in Darjeeling than the number of monasteries and churches. Thus, in course of time the influence of Buddhism on the communities like Tamangs, the Rais and the Limbus waned and they changed over to Hinduism retaining some of the Buddhist customs.

In the Kalimpong Khas Mahal Blocks where either Lepcha or Buddhist population exceed 50 were as follows. **See Annexure 8**

In the census about seven hundred and thirty Indian Christians have been recorded. In the Siliguri tea areas most have been recorded. In Kalimpong Subdivisions, they were probably Scheduled Castes tea garden coolies converted to Christianity. In the districts the total number of Christians far exceeds this figure of 730.

However, to sum up, a comparative figure were given showing the population by community and religion from 1921. **See Annexure 9**

A definite deduction was difficult to make about the changes from such rather incongruous figures.

Hence, this chapter attempts an exposition of population changes which have occurred during the century of exploitation, colonization and development. Though now these processes have slowed down but leave future population trends difficult to forecast. In the region some of the communities settled were more numerous than influential. On the contrary, others have a grip on the political or economic life of the district was quite out of proportion to their numbers. In the district future political changes may affect the population in new ways and give rise to unforeseen instabilities in relations between various communities residing and also between the people of the district and those of neighbouring area outside it.

#### **2.4. Religious Composition**

However, regarding religion or religious practices an accurate classification was not easy to accomplish. There was no difficulty in dealing with Muslims or Christians. But uncertainty enters when it had to be decided which tribes or groups ought to be classed as Hindus, Buddhist or Animists. The term “Animist” and “Animism” are conveniently applied to the religious beliefs and practices of the backward communities among which no intensive anthropological study has been conducted (census-1931: 57). Since, no scientific anthropological studies are known to have been carried out in the Darjeeling District. Thus, it is not possible to write very accurately on the tribal religions. Therefore, for want of a better term the words “Animist” and “Animism” are used in the following paragraph.

Hence, due to lack of knowledge, there was a vagueness and casual adaptability about the practice of many hill men which confuses the task of classifying. In Terai, there has been a large immigration of animistic tribes from Chota Nagpur whose adoption of Hindu practices is slight. The difficulty is to decide with the above whether the individual or tribes can be termed Hindu or ought to be described as animist. With the Nepalese on one hand the dilemma is between the terms Hindu and Buddhist. While with the Lepcha it is between the terms Animist and Buddhist for these people, formerly Animists, have adopted many Buddhists beliefs and practices.

Since, 1907 some changes of course have taken place but no investigation seems to have been attempted which would justify defining with precision what are now the dividing lines between religious practices. In the hills the Mongolian tribes still retain animistic practices which are only gradually giving way to the spread of education and powerful influence of Hinduism. For instance, Rais go to Hindu temples

and have Brahman Priest, but they have their own taboos, viz; some will not eat goat meat and others the flesh of some other animals. This acceptance of the Brahman as a priest is very common: the priest tells the Hill men of the Hindu fasts and festivals, performs the naming ceremony of new born children, reads horoscopes, helps in selection of brides and in marriages and takes some part in their death ceremonies. Beside this, the veneration of cows is accepted practically by all Nepali tribes except Tamangs. But the marriage ceremonial is very simple.

However, the religious ceremonial of Brahmans and Chettris of the region was much more lax than in Nepal or the Plains and the ritual followed much simpler and more perfunctory. The lower caste i.e. Kamis and Damais are fond of elaborate rituals in marriage and funeral ceremonies and with their own Priests who officiates all the rigidity prescribed by the Hindus Shastras. These lower castes are looked down upon by the higher caste and the inter marriage was not permitted but they are allowed to eat at the same table and there was nothing like untouchability in their inferior position.

In the district there was a common practice to worship some favorite god such as Satya Narayan, Mahakal or some tribal god like Budhini. This practice of worshipping the deities to get something in return is called Bhakal. Such practices were done in times of severe illness or difficulties. When such illness or difficulties have passed the worship was invariably performed either with or without the sacrifice of some animals or birds.

The Sadhus follows certain forms of Hinduism or mendicants of the Das Nam sects which are prohibited in Nepal because they are anti-vedic. Such prohibition also applies to the Arya Samaj which was professed by a few followers in the Darjeeling District.

In the Nepalese annual calendar the longest and the most auspicious festival was Dashain or Dasami and Tihar or Tiwar (diwali) which is celebrated even today. It was the longest festival and the most anticipated. The festival falls in the month of September or October, right after the end of the monsoon season. It starts from the Shukla Paksha (bright lunar fortnight) and ending on purnima, the full moon. The most important days are the first, seventh, eight, ninth and the tenth. Throughout the region Shakti (power or empowerment) is worshipped in all her manifestations. Shakti is the concept or personification of divine feminine creative power, sometimes referred to as

‘The Great Divine Mother’ in Hinduism. Beside, the festival is also known for its emphasis on the family gathering, as well as on a renewal of community ties.

However, most festival includes dancing and music, as well as all kinds of local delicacies. A variety of foods are consumed during festivals and on special occasions.

The indefiniteness which seems to pervade the religious practices in the district can perhaps best be appreciated by perusal of the following quotations from the edition of the District Gazetteer published in 1907:-

“Broadly speaking, the Hinduism professed in the District is nothing more than a thin veneer over animistic beliefs. Beneath this veneer the real popular religion can be seen in the worship paid to a host of spiritual beings whose attributes are ill-defined, but whose chief power is to cause evil to their votaries. The religion prevalent is in fact demonolatry, of which exorcism and bloody sacrifices are the most prominent feature. Through out the hills there are signs of the prevailing fear of demons, such as “the little offering in the middle of the path to bar the progress of an evil spirit or the living sacrifice being offered to propitiate another, or the flattering rice image of a demon supposed to be causing sickness or the burning of a rag before the door, over which the friends step when they return from burying a relative, to prevent any accompanying spirits from entering with them”.

“In the Terai the same fear and worship of evil spirits prevails. The Rajbhanshi, whose greatest enemy is the deadly Terai fever, has three chief deities whom he appeases by offerings of goats, ducks, etc., viz., Kali Thakurani, ‘the mother of sickness’; the Gram Devata, ‘the goddess who prowls round village sites to cause illness among children’; and Bishhaari Thakurani, ‘the source of all pains’ a trinity which would scarcely be selected by a happy and contented race. Should drought last long, the Rajbhanshi women make two images of mud or cow dung, which are suppose to represent a god called Hudum Deo. This they carry away into the fields at night and dance and sing round the images in the belief that this will cause rain to fall. The household god is represented by a round lump of clay made smooth by smearing it with cow dung. This is set up before a bamboo and offering are made to it of rice, which is afterwards eaten by the worshippers. If this duty is neglected, disease or some other calamity is sure to visit the family”.

“The form of Buddhism prevalent is not of a much higher type. The craving for protection against malignant gods and demons causes the people to pin their faith on charms and amulets and to erect tall prayer-flags, with string of flag lets, which flutter from house-tops, bridges, passes and other places believed to be infested by evil spirits. Prayers hang upon the people’s lips. The prayers are chiefly directed to the devils, imploring them for freedom or release from their inflictions, or they are plain naïve requests for aid towards obtaining the good things of this life, the loaves and the fishes. At all spare times, day and night, the people ply their prayer-wheels, tell their beads and mutter the mystic six syllables- *Om mani padme Hum!* Om! The jewel in the lotus, Hum! ‘the sentence which gains them their great goal, the glorious heaven of eternal bliss’. This demonolatry has been aptly described by the late Doctor Graham in his book ‘On the Threshold of Three Closed Lands’. ‘To the aboriginal Lepcha’ he says, ‘the rites of religion are chiefly valuable in averting the anger or malice of an evil spirit and all sickness is caused by such possession. The *Bongting* or sacrificial priest is the cunning expert who indicates the offended demon and prescribes the proper sacrifice of cow or pig or goat or fowl needed to appease him. As a perpetual offering to ward off danger, each household keeps in one corner a little basket, containing rice and a small silver coin” (Dash 1947: 58-59).

## **2.5. Social structure and the Life of the people**

The Nepalese people were very famous for its bravery and loyalty. Thus, the British were very much impressed with the bravery of the Nepalese in the battlefield. During the war in 1815, the British formed a Gorkha battalion from the prisoners of war and clandestinely recruited more even after they won the war but Nepal didn’t allow its citizens to freely join the British Indian Army.

In 1858 there was an Agreement of Mutual Concessions whereby the British were allowed to recruit Gorkhas in exchange for arms to the Nepalese. Hence, the British already started recruiting Gorkhas in Assam much before they opened a depot in Darjeeling. The British also realized that if they allow the Gorkhas to bring their families and stay in India instead of going back on retirement then they wouldn’t have to rely on Nepal for soldiers as their children of these Gorkhas could be enlisted later on.

In 1881 the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway was built due to the establishment of tea industry. Thus, there was a great demand for a train service. It helped and provided

a faster way to the people to transport goods like tea, potatoes and fresh vegetables from the hills to the plain and rice, flour, oil, coal, etc in the opposite direction.

People started pouring in from Nepal, Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan to work and settle here. In 1839 there were about 100 people which increased to 10,000 in 1849. Thus the population of the region consisted mainly of the Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese. The Bhutias or Tibetans were tall and sturdy. They wore their traditional Bakku or tunic over trousers which they tucked into long fur boots. Their fur lined hats covered their plated braids and their ear lobes stretched from their heavy earrings. They were strong and worked mostly as porters. They pulled rickshaws and carried dun dies – a wooden chair hoisted on both ends by the porters. Therefore, people transported in this way (Giri 2010:6).

In the region the growth has been rapid, haphazard and without proper direction. The result is such that there is an unhealthy urban area with deplorable drainage and inadequate water supply. Yet no adequate remedies for these defects have been devised. The Siliguri is the only transshipment point for those who wished to visit the hill. Here the visitor usually starts either with car, bus or hill train to reach his destination.

The Nepalese people were plain and simple. Men wore loose overlapping shirts, 'Daura' over tight trousers, 'surwal' with a waist band into which they tucked their khukuri. Either they wore a plain black or colorfully woven hat that sat snugly on their cropped head. The women wore mostly gold jewelers on top of their guniu – cholo, which they draped with a shawl. The men worked in various fields and a large number enlisted as soldiers as they were known for their bravery and loyalty (Giri 2010:6)

The women of the region seem strong and broad built. They wore heavy jewelers of gold or silver studded with corals and turquoise on top of their bakku. They made beautiful carpets and woolen garments from yak wool.

The caste system that we may note in Darjeeling was the emergence of various groups who migrated from Nepal during the colonial period. This was due to the several reasons as mentioned in the above paragraph. This migration greatly influenced the basic caste structure of the region because of the fact that the Lepchas and Bhutias were considered to be the original settlers in compared to the other caste. Thus, the colonial regime played a vital role or rather political role in the creation of new caste structure in the region by providing people with variety of opportunities to migrate in

the region for maintaining their livelihood. Therefore this was in reality a way of reiterating the entire structure of the region which reproduced the variety of caste with its attended implications.

The Nepalese caste system was complex and continued the traditional system of social stratification. The caste system defined social classes by a number of hierarchical groups. In those days the Nepalese Society was marked by an existence of hierarchical caste structure which is still prevalent. The caste structure was generally divided into higher level and lower level. There were four broad social classes or Varna: Brahmins, Kshetriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. The Brahmins consisted of Upadhyay, Sharma, Dahal, Upreeti etc. the Kshetriyas consisted of Chettri, Newar etc. In Vaisyas there are Gurung, Mangar, Tamang, Subba, Rai etc. In Sudras there are Kami, Damai and Sunar.

There was a separate community within the society which was known as Tribal. The Tribal community consisted of Sherpa, Bhutia, Lepcha and Yolmo. The Lepchas being the indigenous people dressed and looked similar but were fairer and gentler than the Bhutias. Sherpas have been dealt with under Nepalese and the other three classes have been grouped together.

On the other hand the upper caste such as Brahmins and Chettris tried to maintain its honor and it till date it is prevalent. They maintained tight marriage system which did not permitted the inter caste marriage because of the rigidities of endogamous marriages. Perhaps love between communities, or between castes doomed to failure since any exercise of choice or agency or rather any relationship based on genuine consent of the partners was interpreted as a defiance of caste hierarchy and a threat to endogamy. Thus it was passed off as tradition, or culture and most of all as honor of the families of the upper caste. The caste system is still intact today but the rules are not as rigid as they were in the past.

However, the majority of population in the region was the Nepalese having a features ranging from Mongoloid Rais and Limbus to the more Aryan looking Bauns and Chettri. Although most of them were Hindu having an Animist tradition and their practice were different from that of the Indian Hindu.

## **2.6. Position of Women in Society**

Traditionally, the Nepalese society was a patriarchal society and the positions of women were of subordinate one. Society was or is composed of men and the way

which they behaved was the culture- the whole social tradition. The society was son preferring. The birth of a daughter was neither celebrated nor was her death lamented much. There was a lack of value for a girl child. In those days marriage was considered to be the most important part of social life. The marriages existed only within the same caste and if there was any inter caste marriage than the person was not only boycotted from the family but also from the society as a whole. This was the fact as the caste hierarchy was too rigid and any transformation in this was strictly prohibited by the social system of Nepali Society.

The marriage of a girl at a very early age was one of the important customs of Nepalese society. This was due to the absence of female education that the early marriage was the only vocation left. Such custom of early or infant marriage arose due to caste restrictions which made the parents anxious to marry their daughters at the earliest opportunity. Thus, the girls were married between the ages of 10 and 15 years. This practice of child marriage had seeped so deep down into the society that it could be seen in the year 1931. Although a galaxy of socio – religious rebels raised voice against this custom.

Marriage was early and universal. A girl was married off at an early age. In such patriarchal system of marriage, daughter were not considered the full fledged member of the family they born into. Even in the family she was married to, she does not have any dignity if she does not enter into the family with adequate wealth in the form of dowry. Marriage was the destiny in women's life but the choice was not theirs. After marriage it was viewed as disgrace for a couple, particularly for the wife, not to have any children. High fertility was desired because by producing children, preferably sons, a woman raises her status in the family. The practice of Purdah seclusion of women and sexual purity for newly married women among relatively high castes Nepalese was highly valued. The social myth also indicates that women were basically inferior to and their labor, efforts, social right, role in decision making were less valuable than men. A strong son preference for socio-economic and religious reasons such as economic gain and old age security has been uniformed in almost all the Nepalese. These resulted in the decline of economic condition of a family and therefore, the female children were deprived of any form of education, food and freedom. The only work given to the women were to reproduce a child and to raise them and look after the domestic household. The gender inequality begins at home, a

mother usually prefers a son to a daughter because sons can be especially important for old age security. This was one of the important issues of declining women status in Nepalese society. The Nepalese women of the region were deprived of basic health services. A number of Nepali women gave birth to a child while working in the household or pains of delivery starts while she was working in an agricultural field.

In regard to the culture, the Nepali society in those days had a culture of Guniu – Cholo ceremony when a girl child turns five. Thus, on this day a girl sheds her little frocks and dons the adult outfit as a symbolic entry into womanhood. However, the attire consists of the guniu, similar to sari but it is worn without the petticoat underneath. The anchal of guniu is spun around the waist and held together by a potuka or waistband. The blouse is full sleeved generally and overlaps in the front. Along with this a mujetro or a shawl is worn which serves many functions. Before the ceremony the girl child had to take bath. The whole village participates in this day of celebration. The puja is performed by a priest along with the sanai and madal played by musicians. The important food cooked by the women folk is selroti and aloo ko achar.

## **2.7. Education**

In the Districts the pioneers in the spread of education were Christian missionaries particularly to those of the church of Scotland Mission. When the Districts were taken over by the British, popular education was practically unknown. Only a few of the better classes had private tutors for their boys, a few who could read tried to hand on this accomplishment to their families and in Buddhist Monasteries novitiate monks were taught to chant Tibetan texts. But there was none of real general education and no school was worthy of the name were in existence.

The policy of modernizing of the Indian society and culture was encouraged by both the Colonial Administration and the Christian Missionaries. Both parties supported westernization programmes through education of the natives but with different aims. The Colonial administrators aimed at cultural imperialism and hoped that through education India could be reshaped in image of England and also the people be reconciled to British rule. Education would help to provide a cheap supply of clerks and interpreters to fill up subordinate posts in administration of the British Raj. While on the other hand, the missionaries who were allowed to come to India by the Charter Act of 1833 hoped that education would lead to mass conversion. Thus, Darjeeling hills became an experimental area that contributed to the colonist urge of the Empire.

Therefore, as a result the education of the colonial hills became the concern of both the government and to a large extent of the missionaries. In respect of education we had the voice of the high command Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent, who reported about the total negligence of the government towards the education of the people of the hills. Here it was very clearly showed by the British attitude that as materials for study the natives acquired all the marks of an inherent weakness. They stated that in their report that the people were a “wretched unmanageable race living the life of wild animals” and no appreciation for the value of education due to poverty, backwardness and ignorance according to the inspecting officer W. B. Jackson in 1853. (Nepal-Chakraborty, 2012: 184).

The first attempt by education to reach the hill people was made about 1850 by the Rev. W. Start, a private missionary, who added to his good work record in Darjeeling by opening a school for Lepchas. A band of German missionaries came after him, one of whom, a Mr. Niebel, devoted himself to school work, prepared some Lepcha primers and gather boys together into schools. However, it was not until the advent of the Rev. William MacFarlane in 1869 that any broad Scheme of vernacular education was introduced into the Districts. With the object of training the teacher he realized that it would be essential so he collected a band of hill boys, to teach whom he devoted the first years of his missionary life in the hills. At Kalimpong this group of boys was the nucleus of a training school. Mr. MacFarlane found that Hindi text-books could be use as a means of introduction and induce Government to give scholarships for students attending his courses of instruction. In the face of many discouragements and the frequent disappearance of his most promising pupils he taught himself to preserved and overcome all obstacles. Ultimately it led with the help of Government, to start primary school in many parts of the Districts.

## **2.8. Primary Education**

There were 25 primary schools with 650 boys and girls receiving instruction in 1873. In the Church of Scotland mission under his successors, progress was steady. In the spread of education those who were interested were not slow to follow the lead given but in the Districts the Scots Mission has been the most important influence in the spread of education.

There had been expansion to 70 primary school by 1907 with roll strength of 2,420 boys and 300 girls, average attendance being 1,880. The corresponding figures for 1944 are-

Number of Schools.	Boys.	Girls	<u>Roll Strength.</u>	
			Average attendance.	
299 for boys .. ..	10,166	1,424	8,645	
19 for girls .. ..	215	1,167	954	

(Dash 1947: 265)

The Scots Mission had run these one hundred and twenty schools. The Roman Catholic Mission 10 schools, 3 schools had run by the Ramakrishna Vedanta, with 18 Ashram and four by the Buddhist Mission (Young Men's Buddhist Mission). The Municipality of Darjeeling had under its direct management two Bliss Scheme Free Primary School, one for boys and the other for girls. The roll strength of 340 boys was in the boy's primary school and there were ten teachers as a staff, all of whom are trained. The girl's school had the roll strength of 123 girls and on the staff there were seven teachers.

There were two boys' primary school managed by Municipal with a roll strength 209 and one maktab with 32 pupils with the Kurseong Municipality.

In primary school the proportion of pupil to those of school going age was 56.5 for boys and 9.2 for girls. In secondary schools these figures excluded pupil reading.

However, the Government during 1943-44 contributed Rs.32, 268 for the maintenance of boy's primary school and Rs. 7,190 for girl's primary school, the Districts Board Rs. 3,396 for boys' schools and Rs.11, 064 for girls' schools. Fee income from boys' primary schools was Rs. 9,876 and from the girls' Rs.1, 687. The Mission and other private funds usually met the balance of the total expenditure of Rs. 1,19, 275 on boys' schools and Rs.32,885 on girls' schools.

In the Districts the table below shows how primary education has developed –**See Annexure 10**

## **2.9. Secondary Education**

In the District there were presently six High and 12 Middle [English Schools for Boys and four High and four Middle English schools for girls. Figures for pupils and expenditure are given below –

	Roll Strength on 31.3.44	Number of Hill Boys	Number of Hill girls
High English for boys	2122	1297	0
Middle English for boys	1629	1123	72
High English for girls	1266	28	733
Middle English for girls	570	92	245

(Dash 1947: 266)

There were six High schools for boys:-

- (1) Government High English School, Darjeeling.
- (2) St. Robert's High English School, Darjeeling ( R. C. Mission).
- (3) St. Alphonsus High English School, Kurseong (R. C. Mission).
- (4) Scottish Universities Mission Institution, Kalimpong.
- (5) Pusparani High English School, Kurseong (unaided).
- (6) Siliguri High English School (aided). (Dash 1947: 267)

For boys the twelve Middle English School were located as follows:-

- (1) Darjeeling, (2) Darjeeling for Hindi-speaking pupils, (3) Sukhiapokri (Scots Mission), (4) Mirik (Scots Mission), (5) Pedong (Roman Catholic Mission), (6) Ghum, (7) Kurseong, (8) Phansidewa, (9) Kharibari, (10) Naxalbari and (11) and (12) Kalimpong. (Dash 1947: 267)

The four girls High Schools are:-

- (1) The Nepali Girls High School in Darjeeling (originally called the Girls Boarding School). On 31<sup>st</sup> March 1944 in this school the number of pupils reading was 444 of whom 27 were hill boys, 331 were hill girls and the remainder were Indian Christians.
- (2) The Maharani Girls School in Darjeeling. In this school the pupils were mostly Bengali speaking.
- (3) St. Joseph Girls High School at Kurseong (R. C. Mission).
- (4) Kalimpong Girls High School (Scots Mission). (Dash 1947: 267)

However, at Kalimpong the Sisters of Saint Joseph de Cluny supervise Saint Philomena's Middle English Girls Day School for hill children. The Roman Catholic Mission maintained the school and receives a grant from Government. In Darjeeling connected with the R.C. Loreto Convent is St. Teresa's Middle English School for the children of hill men. The school had over 200 pupils, mostly girls.

From 1941 the scholarships had been awarded on the result of the Primary Final Examination. In the Grade I scholarships (Rs. 3 per month for two years) had been awarded as follows. 6 to hill boys, 1 to a Bengali boy and 6 to Bengali girls. In the Grade II scholarships (Rs. 2 per month for two years) were awarded as follows:- 27 to hill buys, 12 to hill girls, 14 to Bengali boys (3 Muslims and 5 Scheduled Castes) and 1 to a Bengali girls.

Each year at least 3 Middle Scholarships were awarded of which one was open, one was reserved for a Muslim and one a more was reserved for educational backward classes. Thus, from 1933 to 1943 3 hill boys secured open middle scholarships and 14 reserved scholarships.

### 2.10. Collegiate Education

In Kalimpong the Scottish Universities Mission Institution taught up to the Intermediate Arts stage and there were 30 students in the College Department in 1944. Along with this and a few institutions for European education were the only places in the District where College teaching was given.

### 2.11. Special Education

About 150 males and 192 females were receiving special instruction in various institutions, all situated in the hill portion of the District were as follows:-

Schools	Boys	girls
Teachers Trianing School	15	15
Industrial Schools	63	277
School for the Blind	12	-
Tols	38	-
Monastic (Buddhist) School	32	-

(Dash 1947: 268)

There were three teachers' training schools; one at Kalimpong for boys was run by the Scottish Universities Mission Institute. For girls there were two training schools, one maintained by the Church of Scotland Mission, Kalimpong, with 5 pupils on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1944 and the other on the Roman Catholic Mission at St. Joseph School, Kurseong (10 pupils). In 1940 the school for the blind was founded by the Hon. Mary H. Scott and is being managed by her. The use of Braille as well as music and

handicrafts were taught to boys. There were four teachers as a staff as well as Blind teacher trained at the Behala Blind School. The accommodation of five cottages for the student who lived in them under the full charge of a master. At Ghum there was a Monastic School and receives grants totaling Rs. 30 per month from the Government and the Darjeeling Municipality. At Kalimpong the Roman Catholic Church had run an orphanage where between 40 and 50 were cared for and educated. At Kurseong the Mission had also run an industrial and technical school for training boys in carpentry, printing, book binding, weaving, tailoring, cane work and leatherwork.

However, in addition to this special education mentioned above for the young or adolescent, in 75 night schools of the primary school standard the adult education was provided. It was for those who were occupied at the day time. During the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1944, 903 students received instruction in these schools. The lesson taught in these schools included reading, writing, and arithmetic up to the lower primary standard and simple hygiene. Hence, most of the night schools were attached to day primary schools and teachers received grants up to Rs 5 per month.

### **2.12. Physical Education**

No particular attention was paid to physical education prior to 1938. Most of the schools taught some stereotyped and dull drill and in some secondary school's hockey and football were played. In 1938 a District Organizer of Physical Education was appointed and from that day a long needed change had been taking place. Each year this officer holds at different centre short courses of training for teachers of Primary and Middle schools and to inspect their physical training work he visits the schools. A competitions and tournaments were organized by Indian School Sports Association. This effort was for the improvement in the standard of games in the High, Middle and Primary schools. The Scout movement was very popular. Most of the schools in urban and few in rural areas had their own troops and packs. At Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, the District had three Scouts Associations.

### **2.13. Education in Tea Areas**

There were 57 tea garden schools and 17 night schools. Since, the few of these were of the four class type but most were of the lower primary standard. The pupils' total number was 1,693, which was very small against the number of school going age. Thus, there was serious problem because as soon as they were able to do any thing use

full, the children were put to work on the garden to earn money and supplement the family resources instead of being sent to school.

#### **2.14. The Hill compared with the Terai**

Where as, in the Terai there were 70 Primary Schools for boys, 4 for girls, 13 makhtabs, three boys' Middle English school, one Junior Madrasah and one High school for boys. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 1944 the number of children receiving instruction in the Terai was as follows. **See Annexure 12 & 13**

#### **2.15. Administrative Control**

In the District the provincial control of education was exercised by the Inspector of Schools of the Rajshahi Division whose office was at Jalpaiguri. The High School of the District was directly control and inspects by him. For the primary education the Inspector of Schools was assisted by two Sub-Inspectors at Darjeeling and at Kurseong, one Assistant Sub-Inspector at Kalimpong and an Inspecting Pandit for the Siliguri Subdivision.

The schools were controlled by the District Board and two Municipalities. They also maintained and assisted these schools through Education Committees. The District Board consisted of 3 members of the Board and 3 non members of the Board and the District Inspector of Schools ex-officio. The Scots Mission controlled and maintained the schools by three Superintendents located in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. At Kurseong the Roman Catholic Mission controlled their schools by the Superintendent who in addition to being the Principle of High School and an Industrial School also supervised Five Primary Schools.

A Committee managed every Government or aided school which was reconstituted after three years. There was a requirement of approval of the Deputy Commissioner for the membership of all committees.

#### **2.16. Important Schools**

About 1860 the Government High School Darjeeling had its origin in a Government Middle School established at Darjeeling. Along, with this started the Tibetan Boarding School in 1874. In 1892 these two schools were amalgamated and raised to High School status. At first the High School had two departments, the General Department meant for boys of all races and Special Department designed for Bhutia, Lepcha and Tibetan boys. In 1927 the Special Department was abolished and was

replaced by School Final Classes which also proved unpopular and in 1937 it was in turn abolished. Therefore, the School now prepared pupils for the Matriculation examination of the Calcutta University. Thus, Five Indian vernaculars and four classical languages were taught and on the managing committee were six non-officials representing the Bengali, Behari, Tibetans, Nepali, Christian and Muslim communities of Darjeeling.

There were 389 pupils as follows in 1944. See **Annexure 14**

The above pupils, 18 were Muslims, 68 were Buddhist, 12 were Christians and 2 were Jains.

In 1887 the Scottish Universities Mission Institution at Kalimpong was opened replacing a smaller school at Darjeeling. This institution provided education for boys from the infant stage up to the Matriculation stage and for young men and women up to the Intermediate Arts stage. In attached to it was a training school turning out teachers for Primary schools. The High school in 1944 had 750 pupils on the rolls, of which 45 were boarders, 650 were hill men. Hence, there were 30 students in the college department and 15 in the training department. Therefore in the hill area of the district almost all the trained teachers employed obtained their training here.

At Kalimpong, there was the Church of Scotland Mission Girls High School and Training College. Here the pupils were Nepali, Lepcha and Tibetan with a few plains children and Chinese.

In 1944 on the rolls of the High School there were 504 girls and five in the training classes. In the Middle School classes Nepali was the medium of instruction and in the High School Department English was the medium of instruction. There was also a hostel in the school with accommodation of 65 pupils. The staff of the school had trained women teachers including two graduates in Science, one a European and one a Nepali.

### **2.17. European Education**

The original development of Darjeeling was nevertheless a health resort suitable for its Government servants. Therefore, it was not surprising that there was a need of schools for the children of European Government Servants who used it as a sanitarium and who could not afford to send their children to be educated in their native land. Hence, to meet these needs the schools were opened up in the District. The schools

which were started up at first were on a small scale and had a precarious existence. Gradually they gained stability. Thus, the main aim was to provide for European and Anglo-Indian children that type of education and upbringing to which the parents had been accustomed in their native country. But the schools were attracted to the Indian parents too who were able to afford the fees beside so called European and Anglo-Indian parents.

In Darjeeling the earliest of the European School was the Loreto Convent for girls founded in 1846 and managed by the Loreto nuns who have their mother house in Rathfarnham, Dublin. It was at Snowy View where the original building for teaching continued until a more specious building on the present site was completed. In 1892 that building was replaced by the main building now in use. Later on, a concert hall was added. In 1925 a class room building, a hospital and a skating rink were constructed.

Most of the teaching was though given by the Sisters of the institute but they were aided by secular teachers and matrons most of whom were resident. The study courses were those laid down by the Code of Education for the European Schools and included preparation for the Cambridge Junior School and Higher School certificate Examinations, for the Trinity College and Royal Academy examinations in Music and Theory of Music, the Royal Drawing Society Art examination and for elocution examinations.

In 1864 the St Paul School in Darjeeling was opened up for boys with 30 pupils on the rolls. The school had one building when it opened. Until 1895 the numbers increased gradually but from that date the prosperity of the school declined until, in 1907 the average numbers of pupils was a little over hundred. The recovery took place later and the school since 1936 had been full. There were 257 pupils on the rolls in 1944, all of whom were boarders. However, the boys of all races were admitted on equal terms but in order to preserve European tone of the school the Indian entrants do not exceeded 25 percent of the total roll strength. The school had a teaching staff of 13 masters and 5 mistresses in 1944 about half of whom had a degree of English Universities and a remainder degree of Indian Universities. The school also had an experienced steward, an English trained hospital sister and four house matrons. The school prepared the boys for Cambridge Junior and the School Certificate examinations. The boys those who were in top form were prepared for the Intermediate Arts and Science examinations of the Calcutta University. The schools also had

debating society, a carpenter's shop and excellent arrangement for organized games. The playing grounds and the tennis courts were being some of the best in Darjeeling.

The school had a very magnificent site of about 500 feet above Darjeeling with an unrivalled view of snow mountains. Four blocks of buildings were there enclosing a dignified quadrangle which contained dormitories, class rooms, physics and chemistry laboratories. Apart from the main buildings and the below them the Chapel stood. In 1935 it was dedicated. The design was excellently made in the modern style and sited prominently on a ridge. It was one of the features of Darjeeling which was visible from almost every part of the town.

In 1895 the St. Michael School for girls in Darjeeling which was under the management of the Sisters of the Order of St. John Baptist was now handed over to them. In 1886 after it had been founded as the Darjeeling Girls School by Bishop Milman of Calcutta. It was made a Diocesan School with the Metropolitan as President in 1895. The 1899 cyclone destroyed the site and all the buildings. But no lives were lost and for the temporary use the Lieutenant Governor placed the Darbar Hall at the disposal of the Sisters. The school in 1900 was housed in Rivers Hill and Richmond Hill. For a new site a good piece of forest land was granted and in 1901 a service of dedication took place when the first sod was cut. Thus, in September 1904 a new school building and a Chapel dedicated to the Good Shepherd and St. Michael was blessed by the Metropolitan. The name of the school was changed from Diocesan Girls School to St. Michael School in 1929.

In 1888 the St. Joseph College, North Point, Darjeeling was founded. It was conducted by the Jesuit Fathers under whom the Rector of the College was in charge. The college was founded when Father Henry Depelchin was placed in charge of the small school of St. Joseph at Sunny Bank. For expansion provision the Government gave an excellent plot of ground on the crest of the spur running north from the Birch Hill. In 1891 the school was removed to the new site after a building had been erected on it. Now the college possesses fine building to which Government had made grants-in-aid, good laboratories for physics and chemistry, a cinema hall and excellent play grounds. The Jesuit Fathers taught and they were assisted by a few lay masters. The ages for the admission of boys were 7 and 12 years in the school department. But for the admission in the college the student must had passed the matriculation in either first or second divisions. In 1944 31 Indian boy students were there in addition to boys from

Sikkim, Nepal and Tibet. The numbers of students in the school were 390 boys out of which 317 were boarders and 73 were day boys. There were 30 day student in the college department of whom most of them were hill men.

The Mount Hermon School was founded in 1895. It was an institution of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. It was a co-educational school. The Board of Governors of the school was made up missionary representatives of many different missionary societies. The school was founded in order to provide a Christian school in a favorable climate where missionaries and other English speaking children might be trained physically, mentally and spiritually under Christian influence, guidance and education. At North Point Darjeeling the school building and play ground was situated in the centre of hundred acre Mount Hermon Estate. This was a secondary school and it followed the courses prescribed by the Education Department for European Schools, Bengal, with additional courses in music, handwork and domestic science. Thus, all pupils took part in organized games and physical training.

The enrolment on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1944 was about 248 of which 132 were boys and the remainder girls. About 191 were classed as Europeans and Anglo Indians and the remainder were Parsis, Jews and Indians. 201 were boarders and the remaining were day scholars.

Therefore in India the main school building known as the Queen Hills was one of the finest educational buildings. Hence, three additional hostels accommodated the boys.

During the period the member of the school were 38 as staffs of which were American, English, Scotch and Anglo Indian.

Therefore, the need of education for the children of English residents in India arose during the period of European War of 1939-45. To supply the needs of such parents various schools started in India. In Darjeeling the two of those which opened were New School and the Singamari School.

In Kurseong the oldest of the schools for Europeans was Victoria Boys School. In 1879 it was founded by Sir Ashley Eden for boys and girls. In 1880 the school was moved to Dow Hill. The present Victoria School for boys was opened in 1897 and the Dow Hill School for girls was separated. The Victoria School was a Government School established originally for the children of Railway employees. But later it opened

to the sons of Government servants and also to European or Anglo- Indian boys of the parents of any occupation. The School capacity was about 200 all of whom were boarders. The classes from II to IX were taught and for the Cambridge School Certificate. On a commanding site the school was situated which was near the top of the Dow Hill above Kurseong and had excellent buildings including an assembly hall, gymnasium and class rooms with well equipped laboratories. There was also a fine play grounds in school. the school staff consisted of a head master, nine assistant masters, two lady teachers, a physical training and games master, an Indian Language teacher, a steward, a lady housekeeper, three matrons and 4 clerks.

In 1897 Dow Hill School was separated from the Victoria School and in 1898 opened as a Middle School with 80 children and a staff of a head mistress, 5 junior mistresses and a matron. In 1944 about 10 day scholars were there. It was a Government school originally intended to provide education for children of Government servants of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European community. The pupil majority continued to come from these communities but in 1944 there were 14 Indian children of various communities in the school. The school prepared the student for the Senior and Junior Cambridge Local examination. There were all main subjects which were taught i.e. music, domestic science, games and arts which were all part of the curriculum. The subject like Bengali was also taught as a second language. The school was near to the Victoria School and occupied the same site. There was also a playing grounds, tennis and badminton courts. There was a hospital serving both the school with fully qualified staff of three trained nurses.

In 1890 the St. Helen College was opened in Kurseong. It was conducted by the Daughters of Cross of Liege and was opened in small rented house by Mother Marie then Provincial. In 1891 expansion made it necessary to move into larger premises and when the earthquake of 1897 had made the latter unsafe as second move followed. In 1899 the foundation stone of the present building was laid down. The school accommodated about 180 boarders during those periods and had generally 200 on the rolls. The Sister Superior was the head mistress with the other staff such as twelve Sisters and ten lay mistresses. The school too followed the same pattern as the above school and included preparation for the Cambridge Local examinations. Musical education and elocution were given particular attention and pupils were prepared for the usual music examinations. There were also commercial classes and the curriculum

included physical culture and games. There was a good ground for tennis, hockey, net ball and badminton.

In the memory of the Most Rev. Dr. Paul Count Goethals, S.J., Archbishop of Calcutta, the Goethals Memorial School was founded. In 1907 the school was formally opened by Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Generally, the school was under the management of the Christian Brothers of Ireland and occupies an estate of over 140 acres two miles from Kurseong. This school was founded to impart a sound literary, moral and religious education to Catholic boys of the European and Anglo-Indian communities but Christian boys of other dominations as well as non Christians were received as boarders. There were 225 boarders and 19 day Scholars in 1944. The studies were laid down as those of the Code for European Schools and the students were prepared for the Cambridge School Certificate and Junior School Certificate examinations.

In 1900 there was the most important establishment for the European School in Kalimpong, founded by the late Very Rev. Dr. J. A. Graham, C.I.E., D.D., Guild Missionary of the Church of Scotland. Until his death on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1942, he was the Honorary Superintendent of the St. Andrew's Colonial Homes which had been founded by him. These Homes were established with the object to provide for children wholly or partly of British or other European descent such as education and training based upon Protestant principles, as may fit them for immigration to British Colonies or for suitable work elsewhere. On an estate of about 611 acres the Homes was situated. It was on the hillside above the Kalimpong Bazar at heights ranging from 4,500 to 5,000 feet above sea level. In the cottages scattered over the hill side there were accommodation for 600 children, each cottage holding 24 to 34 children and being in charged of two ladies from Britain or the Colonies. All work was done by the children themselves as there were no servants in the cottages. Thus, this gave them the excellent practical training in domestic works which proves of great use in afterlife. The excellent buildings of Homes included 18 cottages, a hospital and isolation block, 8 school buildings, 11 staff houses, a Chapel built in memory of Mrs. Graham, wife of the founder, administration buildings (stores, bakery, farm, diary, hostel, clothing, depot, workshops and office), a swimming bath, a workers club house, Scouts and Girl Guides, dens and a holiday homes for old pupils. A Higher Grade school and a Secondary section were there in Homes. The pupils on the Higher Grade side were

taken up to the Board of Apprenticeship Training examination and on the Secondary side were prepared for the Cambridge examinations and the Calcutta University Matriculation. Most of the teaching staff in this school had come from Britain and half of whom are University graduates. Thus, the pupils of this school were found in all parts of the world, many occupying responsible posts and acquitting themselves with credit. Hence, the Homes were managed by a Superintendent controlled by a Board of Management meeting three times a year in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Calcutta.

In 1922 the St Joseph Convent was founded in Kalimpong as a sanatorium for Sisters teaching in plains school and in 1926 was opened as a boarding school for Anglo-Indian and European girls by the Sisters of the Congregation of Saint Joseph de Cluny. There were on the rolls 140 boarders and 50 day scholars including 25 hill children in 1944. The pupils were prepared for the Cambridge Senior Certificate examinations and the Trinity College Music examinations. However, the attention was given particularly to health and physical development which were supervised by a Doctor and a games mistress. There were also a two large playing fields in school.

Beside this, in the District there were religious association and worship which had been linked with cultural and educational activity. Here the Christian Missionary effort had made great use of education and probably it was true to say that cultural progress had depended more on the work of religious men than on cultural associations of non-religious type.

On the other hand, as usual Muslims were few but the Muslim culture centre round their mosque near which in Darjeeling there were a madrasah, a maktab and a musafirkhana open to non Muslims as well as Muslims. These institutions were directed by Anjuman-i- Islamia and leads Muslim culture generally. About the Buddhist culture the monasteries were the centre and the standard of education imparted in them was judged by secular standard which was rather low. The Buddhist monasteries in Kalimpong Sub-division were more numerous and it was here in the District that Buddhist culture had survived most strongly. Where as, the spread of Christian culture had been vigorous and well recorded. In the District the first attempt to introduce Christianity was made by the Rev. W. Start, a Baptist and he brought out to follow him a band of Moravian Missionaries from Germany who had their headquarters at Takvar and for many years worked among Lepchas without much result. Thus, in the District in the early days the converts were mainly Lepchas but at

the present time the Christian community included people of all the various races. The Bible had been translated into the Nepali language which was the language most generally used.

Several Churches were built in the District which was intimately linked with the establishment of European schools. In 1885 a Catholic Church name St. Francis of Assisi was built near the Loreto Convent and an Indian Chapel built in 1898 next to St. Joseph College. In 1893 next to the Convent a Church of Immaculate Conception was built due to the increase of town community. Later around 1908 Lebong had a Church dedicated to St. Michael. In 1934 the mission reinforced its appeal by establishing two Indian High School in the town-St. Robert School and St. Teresa situated in the grounds of the Convent. Thus, St Mary College in Kurseong similarly, a house of theological studies became a centre of missionary effort in the neighborhood. Next to the College in the field an orphanage and dispensary were started and in 1891 St. John Church was built for the Nepalese Catholics of St. Mary Hill. For the domiciled community of the town St Paul Church was built. Hence, the mission had run a cooperative bank, a technical school and in the subdivision many primary schools. Where as, in the Siliguri Subdivision most of the Catholics were immigrants from Chota Nagpur working on tea gardens.

In 1883 the first attempt at missionary effort by Catholics was made in Kalimpong when it was hoped that they could advance into Tibet. In Pedong a station was opened where Tibetan books were printed. To enter Tibet was found impossible so the mission at Pedong was devoted itself to converting Nepalese. Thus, many Gospels, the Acts and various other religious books were translated into Nepali by the French Fathers. The field was handed over in 1935 to the Canon Regulars of St. Augustine, now who had 6 stations with resident priests, viz., Kalimpong, Pedong, Mariabasti, Gitbeong, Algarah and Gorubathan. In July 1943 it was estimated that there were 6,172 Catholics in the District and 21 Churches or Chapels at least where Mass was said every day.

In the District there was an Indian Christian Association which claimed that there are about 12000 Christians of local origins, most of whom were of Nepali races. There were very few in the community who had received education beyond the primary standard and the Indian Christians of the District hold therefore practically none of the higher administrative posts.

On the other hand, the Hindu culture had centered round Nepali, Hindi and Bengali places of worship and associations. In 1924 the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan was founded and had done much to spread the influence of Nepali literature and culture and with this object had published books. In 1924 the Manobinod Library was established and was managed by hill people for their own benefit. In 1931 the Himachal Hindi Bhawan in Darjeeling was founded with the object of popularizing the Hindi language and literature locally. This Bhawan had run a public library of 2,250 volumes and a reading room both of which were open to all and it organizes literary discourses in Hindi and maintained educational institutions including a co-educational Hindi Middle English School and a Sanskrit Tol. Beside this, there was also another Hall named Nripendra Narayan Hall, was a centre of Hindu cultural life mainly Bengali and contained a public library named after the wife of a prominent Bengali. This institution was maintained as a common meeting place of Hindus for their socio-religious activities.

In the District there were 15 public libraries most of which were located in the chief towns. These libraries were fairly well equipped and provide satisfactorily for the needs of the reading public, some offering additional recreation to subscribing members. In 1943 the total number of members of these libraries was 1909.

However, in the Darjeeling hills the guiding spirit behind the women's education was Miss Macfarlane the Reverend's sister who established the first girls' school in 1872. She received her teacher's training at Normal School at Glasgow and by joining the Ladies Association of the Church of Scotland she came on a mission to help the hill girls. In 1872-73 the girl students were 56 and by 1977-78 the number of girl students increased to 80 out of total population of 95,000 in Darjeeling district.

### **2.18. Girls School**

There was also Miss Higginson missionary which was an Anglo-Indian sent by the Church of Scotland Women's Mission, Calcutta. She was also helped by a very intelligent pupil Buddhimaya. When Miss Higginson took over on the roll there were 33 girls of which in standard 1 one girl could read English well, she and another girl in class 2 could do sums correctly.

The curriculum of the school included sewing, knitting, music and singing. The younger children learnt from the lesson cards and writing was taught on the blackboard

and slate. While the subjects like mathematics was of a simple kind, elementary geography was taught to the bigger girls. The medium of instruction was Hindi and the Hindi Reader was used as a text in the first, second, third and fourth grade. Along with this the Church of Scotland also offered learning to those men and women who had to work whole day in the fields like in Chibbo, Pudung, Bam and Tasiding. The ex-students were the teachers. In this way the first native batch receiving education encouraged their wives and sisters at home to go to school. As a report stated hill women were slowly brought within the folds of education, "A number of young women had been coming very regularly. These were the wives of the students in the Training School.

The vocational and technical education was brought by these missionaries for the poor natives who was of practical use and would enable them to earn a living in future. In 1894 at Kalimpong Mrs. Graham started an Industrial School for women where knitting and crochet work was taught to them. In 1897 it came to be known as the Kalimpong Home Industries and became famous for its lace work and knitting. Women from the neighbouring areas came to learn it. The hill women were also encouraged by Mrs. Graham about Poultry farming especially rearing of Turkey as the Mission realized that manual training was even more useful than book knowledge.

The ladies Mission also did another remarkable work such as reaching out to those women confined at home mostly Indian girls, Bengalis, Muslims and a few Nepali families. The missionaries in the hills were interested in spreading education to females kept indoors. In the rest of Bengal the Ladies Zenana Mission was already active by 1890's educating middle class Hindu girls. This Mission got down to work but in 1890 due to conversion of Brahmin lady by Mrs. Graham a lot of controversy were stirred up and Hindu men did not allow their wives to be taught by the missionaries. The ladies of the mission undauntedly worked to provide secular education for a small fee to Bengali and Nepali families along with Bible lesson. They visited 12 Bengali homes and 19 pupils were given education along with 37 Nepali students in 1895. In the hills the Zenana system of the plains was absent except for a few Bengali, Muslim and Nepali families.

The hill women in majority were free to move about and elementary education was offered to all by the Church of Scotland Mission who believed that the education of women was the key to social progress. The Ladies Mission also took care by

providing food and shelter to destitute children of the natives. In the Hindi School a part of the Girls' School in Kalimpong these children along with the children of the coolies were provided with rudimentary education. However, its work was limited in nature among the poor men, women coolies and their children. The learning standard was very low. A letter written by W.W. Hornwell who was a member of the Church highlights the point when he wrote that moreover parents were not at all enthusiastic about their girls receiving primary education on its own account but welcome it when it was combined with useful industrial training which would give them economic independence.

However, there were major defects in the education of the natives women by the British. The inclusion of religious teaching by the Church of Scotland in the course of study served in some cases to discourage parents from sending their children to school. Another defect was the want of trained teachers and the Mission Schools were unable to meet the demand sufficiently.

Beside, in order to encourage the natives the reluctant school girls of Nepali Girls School were offered one annas per day for attending classes in 1890.

The Governor General in Council was well aware of all these problems and showed interest in the question of elementary education in the rural and urban area and the facilities offered to the girl child. In Darjeeling it often aided the primary units run by the Mission.

In 1872 three schools were established in the tea areas of Soom, Takood and Lebong. This was the pioneering efforts of the Church of Scotland who felt with regard to education of the children of the tea garden. Nevertheless education for the first time touched the lives of the children of the tea workers even though the education was of elementary kind.

### **2.19. Education of women**

However, in the field of education, the orthodox life style of the Indian society imposed on women presented obstacles to female education. The social evils like the purdah custom and early marriages limited the number of girls in the schools. The majority of girls due to these customs were withdrawn from the school before they had a fair opportunity to acquire any worthwhile knowledge. In fact, the women's education was considered unnecessary, unorthodox and dangerous. These social evils were not

only confined to Darjeeling region but were widespread in many other parts of India. Such state of society gave a spark to some enlightened leaders particularly in Bengal, to reform the social system and they tried to give rightful place to women in the society.

The attainment of women education was very poor among the Nepali community. The question of women's education were even worse as they had to do the household chores, collect firewood, fetch water, look after the young ones and graze the cattle. Moreover, the natives were not prepared for wasting both precious time and money in sending the girl child to school. In such condition the delicate yet active English women were to join hands in helping the unfortunate Indian women to educate themselves. For the native women's position was precisely an indicator of the development and progress of the colony and a justification of the British domination.

The colonial writings on the education of hill state unfortunately failed to notice the indigenous form of informal education like monastic learning or with regard to women in particular the knowledge of myths, legends or fables, use of medicinal herbs and such form of traditional learning that existed prior to 1835. However, it is possible to locate traces and testimony of the voice of women on those sites where women inscribes as healers, ascetics, singers of sacred songs, artisans and artists. Taking the mind of people the Tabula rasa the British offered formal education. It can be argued at this point that there was a certain ambivalence in the colonial approach to education in the hills as only elementary education was allowed with the wider goal of conversion and discipline. Since, they were afraid that mere scholastic element would breed political discontentment.

Therefore, there had been a ferment of changes in the social set up brought about by the early reformers. All these development had a powerful impact on the women to educate themselves and also filling them with a great enthusiasm while providing opportunities to organize themselves. But before this, education was the right of a selected section of the society and the idea to keep women servile denied them education. Thus, education was given the highest priority as it was the key to national progress. Ample attention was paid to female education with the object of remodeling and transforming the society. It organized a network of schools for girls where education was imparted in the mother-tongue.

There were important issues faced by the women of the region

1. Illiteracy
2. Poor education
3. Disparity in educational facilities and nutritional intake between boys and girls
4. Patriarchal society resulting in domestic violence
5. Absent in women political participation
6. No social reform for women
7. Restricted women's mobility
8. Gender issues are only the problems of women not of the society
9. Inadequate access of health care

However, the women in the region were bound by family laws and there were severe limitations on women's rights, based on the patriarchal system which defined men as having the right to control women. The mobility of women were restricted, marginalized and denied their rights to live freely. Domestic violence was a continuing problem and this do not come to light men dominating ideologies and the fear of breaking up the family relations on the part of women.

Thus, in the Darjeeling Hills, taking the above educational backdrop it can be summed up that the education of female coupled with other aspects of social change was gradually bringing about a slow transformation in the role and status of women in the hills as well their self perception.

## **2.20. Economy of the Region in Focus**

However, in the hills the women migrant came along with their husbands to settle down and work as a porters and prized ayahs, tea garden laborers and shopkeepers or as simple housewives. The Darjeeling hill station became cosmopolitan in character and the European contact helped the local settlers to modernize. The new ideas, institutions and improvement in the standard of living were brought by the British with them. The Darjeeling habitants were involved in seeing, observing and participating directly or indirectly in these activities that serve for them a source of learning new and valuable things. While participating or working for employment in the new venture the instruction, direction and guidance received by the hill people was a sort of education in general. The economic dependency of women has long been understood to be a major factor in structuring inequalities between men and women.

The private life of a British family in the hills was well organized by the memsahib's who employed the hill men and women as servants. In Darjeeling the native ayahs and maids emerged as a colonial institute. They watched closely all the activities and very soon learnt to take care of the colonial houses meeting their requirements of cleanliness, tidiness, house décor, etc and soon became accustomed to the western style eating habits and culinary expectation of an Anglo- Indian household. The ayahs had heavy responsibilities of bringing the morning tea, brushing the hair of memsahib, laying out her walking boots and parasol. They saw how the mistress in the manner used material from the local bazaar to brighten up the house and the used of Victorian furniture, pretty laced and even heavy curtains together with decorations on the mantelpiece. Hence, they got an idea of home décor. In the hills the British houses were picturesque with a flower gardens looked after by the lady of the house helped by the hill servants.

The native ayah was assigned a very important duty of looking after the children and even sometimes acting as wet nurses. They usually bathed, fed, dressed the minors and made good baby sitters and took the babies even for the evening stroll in the perambulators. Thus, British children were attached to their dutiful and loyal ayahs. It can be assumed safely that the number of servants employed made housekeeping an easier task for the white women and gave them training to become colonial wives. The colonial discourse at home made the British women the authority enforcing the ideal of cleanliness, order and industry. The colonial mistress never forgot their roots and their relationship with the local ayahs and servants which were based upon the master and slave narrative. The European domination was readily accepted by the local people as the majority of them did not look upon the British as an occupying force as they themselves were nascent to the hill station and were grateful for getting employment.

Beside this, the other work of women were in the tea garden areas included preparing nursery bed by sorting out the stones and roots; planting the seedlings; plucking of tea leaves from March to November and plucking was so swiftly done that it was often impossible to follow the motion of their hands. The other types of work performed by the women were pruning of the tea bushes, weeding the garden, spreading out of tea leaves on trays, cleaning of the tea leaves and carrying the tea leaves to the factories on their back. Therefore, the impact of the tea gardens on the

lives of the hill women shows that the new colonial economy provided the women a livelihood, which brought about a change in the social set up. Traditionally women in society were economically dependent on their husbands who controlled most of their productive resources, income, tools, knowledge and skill. But now this dependence decreased with the shifts from home production to wage employment in which women had direct control over the income earned by them. The inhibition of culture against women seeking employment outside home tended to decline with increased exposure to the plantation life.

In 1862 the introduction of Cinchona Plantation at Mungpoo furthered the economic stimulus for the hill station of Darjeeling. But there was a difference in the payment between the male and female workers as shown in the factory records at Mungpoo for the year 1899 as 5 annas per day for the male, 4 annas per day for women and 3 annas per day for children workers. Here one should note that the women workers whether in tea or cinchona plantation no maternity leave were granted which speak volume about the colonial exploitation of the female workers. Although the official reports speaks of the rudimentary health service. Thus, these women had to face the burden of reproduction and malnutrition. The colonial masters were rather interested in acquiring cheap labor to lower the cost of production and this came to them in the form of women and children. These women performed informal work at home too as a result it was a double work load for the women whose contribution were not being recognized.

However, the British were drawn by the charm and climate of the hills but they didn't mingle with the locals. They were 'Sahabs' and 'Memsahab' and generally treated locals as their servants. Hence, they built a little England for themselves in Darjeeling with the opening of schools, hospitals and churches just as they had in back home.

Beside this, they even started an Amusement Club in Darjeeling which had tennis courts, ballroom, billiard room, library, skating rink and theatre. The most modest one was in Kurseong housing the present radio station. The grounds had a beautiful flowers and plants and frequently one could hear laughters and merriment from parties and dances held within. But the British were only allowed to become members.

The British brought a lot of discipline with them and had a system for everything. They started a judicial system and administrations. They also formed municipality in Darjeeling in 1850 and in Kurseong in 1879. It started with six commissioners in which three being Indian.

Kurseong was a little town of a picturesque. By the road side there were flowers and benches to sit on. Everyday the jamadars (sweepers) swept the roads. The present day railway station was used as a stable and horses were kept there for transportation. The rickshaws were polished and shined. The dundees were kept spotless by the Bhutias for their masters to sit on. How amazing it was as they could carry a person all the way up hill to Dow Hill from town in just about 20 minutes.

In the roadside there was a Kerosene street lamps and the man lit them one by one in the evening. The setting seems to be perfect as there was an idyllic town in the midst of forests filled with lush plants and flowers.

### **2.21. Hospitals**

The first hospital in Darjeeling was the Darjeeling Charitable Hospital established in 1864. It was run by the Municipal Funds and contribution of wealthy British and the natives. The native patients mostly Nepalese numbered 3,209. The Eden Hospital was made for the British and for the native of the Darjeeling Hills the Lewis Sanatorium was built in 1887 with liberal donations. In the nineteenth century many charitable dispensaries were established in order to supplement the work of the government. As early as 1871 from Scotland the Church appointed Henry Faulds as the first medical missionary to serve the villagers. In 1894, the Chartist Hospital run by them at Kalimpong received a grant of Rs 3,500 from the government for construction work. In 1897 for the Kalimpong Mission a payment of Rs 1,200 was made from the Darjeeling Improvement Fund. The medical work of the Chartist Hospital was supported by the women guide where there were 26 beds and was in charge of medical missionary and two lady nurses. At Nimbong in Kalimpong subdivision the same mission also maintained dispensaries.

However, the rest of the hills under the tea garden management took their own initiative regarding the provisions of medical benefits of the workers. There were dispensaries which were built and it was look after by a qualified compounder assisted by two men for treating outdoor patients. There were number of tea gardens who

usually shared the services of a single compounder who came on a horse. There were free medical facilities for the workers. But unfortunately the British authorities were not very concerned about the health of native women and also welfare in the tea belts. There were no maternity leave facilities entitled for women. Therefore, the gardens in Assam and Bengal showed a tendency towards low birth rates due to the physical labor demanded of them. A Committee was appointed by Government of India to enquire into the matter and the Committee discovered that in 1871-1900 out of total population of 750,000 coolies only a population of 550,000 was left in 1906 allowing for departures and death testified to extremely low birth rates in the garden itself. This low birth rate in the tea gardens in the north and western India according to the colonial authorities were due to the weakness of the marriage tie among the coolie immigrants rather than the difficulties faced by the workers themselves. In their report cases they admitted of infant mortality and ill health among the laborers.

In 1839 in Darjeeling it was Dr. Campbell who first experimented tea growing seriously.

In the region the growth has been rapid, haphazard and without proper direction. The result is such that there is an unhealthy urban area with deplorable drainage and inadequate water supply. Yet no adequate remedies for these defects have been devised. The Siliguri is the only transshipment point for those who wished to visit the hill. Here the visitor usually starts either with car, bus or hill train to reach his destination.

The another problem faced by the hill women like other Indian women with regard to health was the disturbing factor of prostitution that was encouraged by the authorities for facilitating mercenary sex. Thus, the colonial policy of imperialism was to keep the British officers away from Indian mistresses as a distance was to be maintained between the ruler and the ruled. The British officers were encouraged to marry British women but the authorities provided prostitutes for the ordinary soldiers. The British imperial authority rested on the army more so after the revolt of 1857. Hence, very attempt was made to satisfy the needs of the troops even if these were morally repugnant and dehumanizing. Moreover, the prostitution made it safe for the British ladies to move about freely in India.

## 2.22. Political Environment

The population of Darjeeling began to rise rapidly after the establishment of the Company rule over the area. In 1839 the population was 100 and it rose to 10,000 in 1849 (District Gazetteer: 1947: 38). The immigration of people from the neighboring areas particularly Nepal the population swelled at an unprecedented rate. The reasons behind the growth of populations by immigration were caused by following factors.

- 1) The growing Tea industry created an employment opportunities.
- 2) The opening of railways between Siliguri and Darjeeling increased the communication facilities.
- 3) The construction of hydro- electric power plant.
- 4) The opening of schools for the Europeans and Anglo – Indians.
- 5) The utilization of forest resources.
- 6) In addition to these, the British Government encouraged the people to immigrate from Nepal to cultivate fallow land in the region that was given to them free of cost.

Even after the independence, the immigration continued as the Nepalese were permitted to settle and hold property in India without restriction under the terms and conditions of the Indo – Nepal Friendship Treaty of 1950, the Tripartite Delhi Agreement of 1951 and revised Indo Nepal Agreement in 1956.

Article VII of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship reads, the Government of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of similar nature.

However, there were several other factors which motivated the East India Company towards Darjeeling and the adjacent region. One of the major reasons was the geo-political importance of Darjeeling being a part of Sikkim with which the British commercial compulsions were closely associated. The English Rulers had special interest on Sikkim because of its strategic position. The Sikkim borders touched China, Nepal, Bhutan and India. Thus, Sikkim carried out the historic Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route which was the shortest one from India to the heart of Tibet. However, the annexation of Darjeeling from Sikkim and Bhutan and the containment of Nepal, the English traders started to increase trade with Sikkim, Nepal and Tibet through

Darjeeling. The import items included horses, blankets, tea, tar, coal, wool musk, musical instruments, shoes and the export items consisted of European piece-goods, rice, salt, indigo, brass and copper wares, tobacco etc. Hence, throughout the nineteenth century the volume of trade through Darjeeling went on increasing and the prospects of the Central Asian trade through the Himalayas appeared to be more alluring.

The friendly relationship between British India and Nepal provided another major factor for the British thrust towards Darjeeling. After Jung Bahadur Rana (1846-77), the Prime Minister of Nepal, replaced the Gorkha King by making him only a tutelary entity. Jung Bahadur not only offered the British Government military assistance in the Anglo-Sikh war (1848-49) but himself appeared at the head of 9000 Nepali soldiers and helped the English suppress the Great Sepoy Revolt in 1857 and Lucknow as rescued from the rebel hands. This mercenary role of the Nepali soldiers inspired the British Rulers to use Darjeeling as a permanent recruiting centre for the British Indian Army. In the second half of the nineteenth century the recruitment of the Gorkhas (all categories of Nepali speaking recruits were known as, Gorkha, in the British Indian Army). E. Drummend, the then Magistrate of Dinajpur urged the Government of Bengal for more recruiting centers at Darjeeling so that there can be an increase in the recruitment of Nepali as they would be in every way more efficient, courageous and trustworthy body of men than any to be had in the plains. Therefore, there was an increase in the number of the Gorkha Battalions which was quite dramatic, from five in 1862 to twenty in 1914. Thus, Darjeeling became an important recruiting center for these Battalions because initially the Nepali rulers in Kathmandu did not favor recruitment of Gorkha soldiers for Indian Army from within Nepal.

Another major factor which drove the British Rulers towards Darjeeling was the possibility of the growth of tea industry in the district. Dr. Campbell's experiment in Darjeeling soon followed the progress report of Jackson on tea plantation. From 1856 onwards the tea cultivation on commercial scale began in the district and there was a rapid flourish of industry which attracted the British planters in considerable number. Therefore, there was an increase in the rate of growth of tea industry in Darjeeling during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Beside tea plantation, the prospects of forest products and cinchona plantation had also attracted the Britishers.

The last important factor which had initially encouraged the English East India Company to move towards Darjeeling was the possibility of setting up a Sanatorium and health resorts for the British Officials and businessmen.

In 1829 the two officials of the East India Company, namely Lloyd and Grant when first visited Darjeeling, they saw only some few Lepcha households in and around the place but did not find any Nepali inhabitant. In 1835 similarly when the East India Company first acquired Darjeeling from the Raja of Sikkim there was no Nepali house. Entirely the hill tract was under forest and had only a small population of one hundred Lepchas who were the original settlers in Darjeeling. Their language was Tibeto-Burman origin and came under the religious influence of the Indo-Tibetan or Lamaist Buddhism.

In 1850 Dr. Campbell the first Superintendent of Darjeeling reported that the total number of inhabitants in district has arisen to 10,000. Therefore the ethnic majority of Lepchas began to be rapidly outnumbered by the migrants from Nepal. In 1869 when a rough census was taken of the inhabitants of the district, the total number was found to be increased to 22,000.

The first Census of India was published in 1872. There was an increase in the total population of Darjeeling to 94,712. The migration from Nepal continued to increase and when the second census of India took place in 1881, the Nepalese formed the absolute majority not only in the three hill sub-divisions but also in the whole district of Darjeeling.

Therefore from the mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till date, the ethnic composition of the three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling had undergone a sea-change. This was evidently caused by the waves of massive migration from Nepal due to three major factors. Firstly, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the ascendancy Prithvinarayan Shah, the founder of Gorkha dynasty in Kathmandu unleashed an aggressive drive of the high caste Hindu monarchy of Nepal for centralization and expansion. This caused socio-economic tensions inside Nepal and imposed a repressive measure of dominations of high caste Hindu Nepalese over the Buddhist and other non-Hindu Nepali tribes and communities. The Kirat region was particularly a tribal land marked by the system of “Kipat” land holding which was a kind of community land ownership system. Hence, such “Kipat” lands vested in a particular ethnic group could not be permanently alienated. But, after the establishment of Gorkha Supremacy over the

“Kirat” region in eastern Nepal undergone a change of collective ownership of the “Kipat” lands in the Royal possessions making the Nepali tribes of the region landless. The Nepali communities such as the Rais, the Limbus, the Gurungs and the Tamangs in the “Kirat” region were downgraded to the status of “Sudra” making them vulnerable to the oppression of the Brahmins and the Kshatriya caste. These Nepali tribes did not have any conformity to Hindu scriptures invited serious punishment known as “panchakhat” which included confiscation of property, banishment, mutilation, enslavement and even death. Thus, a large number of Rais, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang and other low caste Nepalese started migration from the eastern region of Nepal. They found the British India, particularly the hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling a convenient and accessible place for settlement.

Secondly, the willingness of the English tea planters to encourage settlement of the Nepali migrants as plantation workers of the tea gardens of the hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling. The English assumed that the Nepali migrants were hard working and could adapt themselves to the working conditions of the tea gardens which were situated at the high altitude in the hills of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. The English planters for tea gardens in the Terai region preferred the tribals from the Chhotanagpur region of Bihar such as Santals and the Oraons. However, due to their poverty-stricken background both the Nepali migrants and the tribals from Bihar could be recruited with low remuneration throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early decades of the present century. Thus, in the initial phase there was a rapid flourish of tea industry in Darjeeling.

Thirdly, the British policy of recruiting the Nepalese for the Gorkha Battalions in the Indian army encouraged migration from Nepal to Darjeeling. However, the basic reason for this was the British recognition of the Gorkha loyalty which was amply proved during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857. Beside this the British Rulers also encouraged the recruitment of Nepali migrants in the police service as well as in various construction works connected with the growth process of Darjeeling as a Sanatorium and a tourist centre.

Therefore, the major factor which motivated the British rulers to encourage the Nepali migrants throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to out balance the original ethnic domination of the Lepchas and the Bhutias in the region. The British had the perception that the Lepchas and the Bhutias were unlikely to shift their loyalty

from Tibet as they were strongly integrated by a common heritage, religion, language and culture.

On the other hand the Nepali had not only proved their loyalty to the British during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857 but also they were mostly Hindus. These Nepalese were considered to be the traditional enemy of the Buddhist Tibetans and the Buddhist Bhutias. The British felt that here the religion will play a leading role and the Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism. Since there was a rapid emergence of the dominant position of Nepalese in the ethnic composition of Darjeeling, the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the composition of Darjeeling accompanied by the settlement of a small number of Bengali middle class families from plains. They not only hold administrative services and learned professions in the urban areas of the hill sub-divisions but also assumed managerial and clerical services in the tea gardens. The Biharis and Marwaris also started to settle in small numbers as a whole sale dealers and retail trade of the district. In 1941, the population figures of the Bengalis, the Biharis, the Marwaris and the others coming from the plains did not constitute more than 5.1 percent of the total population in three hill sub-divisions of the districts, whereas 86.8 percent of the populations were Nepali speaking. Beside this, the other hill men and the scheduled caste formed another 8.1 percent. Whereas in Siliguri the sub-division of Darjeeling district included mostly the plains and a part of the Terai forests and a segment of tea gardens, the majority of population was constituted by the Bengalis which further increased after the influx of the refugees following the partition of Bengal in 1947.

### **2.23. Conclusion**

However, the caste system in Darjeeling that we may note was the emergence of various groups who migrated from Nepal during the colonial period. This was due to the several reasons as mentioned in the above paragraph. This migration greatly influenced the basic caste structure of the region because of the fact that the Lepchas and Bhutias were considered to be the original settlers in compared to the other caste. Thus, the colonial regime played a vital role or rather political role in the creation of new caste structure in the region by providing people with variety of opportunities to migrate in the region for maintaining their livelihood. Therefore this was in reality a way of reiterating the entire structure of the region which reproduced the variety of caste with its attended implications.

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