

## Chapter-5

### Economic Changes

In general economy is the state of a given region in terms of a network of production, management of natural resources, state of the network of trade and industry and in all of which human participation through which they lived their life. So the population of a particular given area non-distinguishably related with the state of economy of the region. Naturally the nature of economy, its growth, sizable development all centered around the demography and the natural resources available in that region, the former being the main caterer. Thus the terms and conceptions such as industrious population, rural population, and urban population emerged and developed according to the nature of economic activities of the population in a region. So economy becomes dependent on the human activities through which the jungle areas turn into culturable or industrial area. In case of North Bengal, all the reports of survey and settlement of the British Government recorded the changing economic development with the settlement of new demography in the region parallel to the aboriginal economy which also came into changes in some extent. With this government records the phenomenon of influence of the changing profile of demography on economy of North Bengal may be observed in the following way.

#### I

Demographic composition of a given region naturally builds the economy of the region along with the natural resources, physiographic condition and the natural environment of the area. In this respect, North Bengal as it was less populous was greatly owed to the immigrant population, the constructing element of demography of the geo-cultural tract. In this respect, the first and foremost contribution of the settlers was to bring the large uncultivable jungle and watery areas North Bengal into culturable and cultivable land. So M.O. Carter, the surveyor of land settlement for the district of Malda noted that since the last decade of the nineteenth century the large influx of Santas and Muhammadan population from the other side of the Ganges turned the large uncultivated land of tal areas between Tangam and Purnabhaha valleys into cultivated land. <sup>1</sup>It is also true in the other districts of North Bengal where large volume of land had been under jungles and watery low areas. The immigrated population became settled one with the transformation of those lands into agricultural one by them. This can be well understood from the comparison of the statistics of the time of Hunter and that of the Carter.

**Table-5.1**  
**Distribution of Land in Cultrable and Unculturable Areas**  
**Malda**

Nature of Land	1869-70 (in sq. mile)	1930s (in sq. mile)
Cultivated	666.54	1353.20
Cultural but not Cultivated	381.45	302.30
Uncultrable	240.32	189.89

**Source: Compilation from Hunter,W.W., A Statistical Account of Bengal: Maldah, N.L. Publishers, Sibmandir, Siliguri, West Bengal,2012, first published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, p.57 & Carter, M.O., Final Report on the Surveyand Settlement Operation in the district of Malda, 1928-1935, Published by Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, 1938, Reprinted by N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2013, pp.42**

Thus, the land which was 666.54 sq. mile under cultivation in 1870s turned into 1353.2 sq. mile in 1930.in compare to total land cultivated land to total culturable land was 52 percent in 1870s and increased to 82 percent in 1930s. <sup>2</sup> However, in post-partition period the net area sown was decreased being 721600 in 1947-48 or 78.5 percent of the total area of the district. <sup>3</sup> During 1958-59 area of 6.40000 acres was under tillage being 79.4 percent of the total area of the district.

The Shersabadiyas Muslims were efficient agriculturists had greatly helped in reclamation of land clearing the forests and jungles. Greater proportion of Tal region under the police stations of Ratua and Harishchandrapur were turned by them into the agricultural land. They also expanded towards the *doab* region between the rivers of Tangan and Punarbhaba. They had much knowledge about the nature of soil and nature which are the main components of agriculture. Naturally following the natural tendency they used to cultivate the land in suitable time with their natural laborious nature turned the land to produce good and high standard crops. They followed the scientific method of managing the land plotting them into rectangular fields and got high volume and good quality of return. They also could repair the agricultural equipments and work as carpenters and blacksmiths turning them very resourceful for the districts Malda and Dinajpur. <sup>4</sup> In fact, these people helped much in clearing jungles turning *barind*, the least fertile land in the district of Malda into cultivable land. <sup>5</sup> From the following table the estimation of the crops in various natures in Malda during 1917-18 may be observed.

**Table-5.2**  
**Different Crops in Malda**  
**1917-18**

Crops in Malda	Area of Cultivation (in acres)
Rice	290000
Oilseed	80000

Jute	30000
Mulberry	23000
Mango orchards	15000
Tobacco	10000
Total cropped	842700

Source: **Compiled from Lambourn, G.E., Bengal District Gazetteers , Malda, First published by the Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1918, Reprinted by N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, pp.46-52**

So in a large area and with a verse number of crops cultivation took in important form of economic profession of the local people. The phenomenon became more prosperous and developed with the employment and flocking of the large number of people of immigrant nature into this economic transition prior to 1920s. The variety of production of the district was resultant of the demographic composition of the population in the district during the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the population of North Bengal was founding its basis. Thus the Biharis were not interested in Jute production but to others. On the other the Santals were pro-highland and preferred Maize cultivation in the district. On the other the people belonged to *diara* region preferred in living and cultivation in the *duba* and *tal* region of the district. But the new generation of the people directed their attention to cultivate the most profitable form of cultivation.<sup>6</sup> However the important aspect of economic life of the district was the animal rearing in which sheep and pigs were important. The Santals and Malpahariyas were greatly engaged in the sheep rearing profession in the district and the Doms and other lower caste Hindu tribes were engaged in the rearing of Pigs.<sup>7</sup> It has come to the notice that the local agriculturists were not capable by nature to the works like jungle clearings. So one of the manager of the Wards estate experimented to import the Santal laborers to clear the jungle and till the land on wage basis. This resulted in bringing a large proportion jungle area under cultivation. Inspiring by the experimentation the other zamindars also followed the same policy and larger number of Santals from their traditional habitation in Santal Parganas came into Dianjpaur to be employed in clearing jungles, bringing them in cultivation and cultivate the land for a greater produce. Initially the Santal labourers were given the land to reside in a very low rent for particular duration. After that particular period the rent used to be increased in a very greater rate compelling the settled Santals to go into other Jungle areas. The places left by them were filled up by the Bengali Hindu cultivators.<sup>8</sup> This gradually led to the more and more jungle areas under cultivation. As the Santals in the district could not remain settled permanently for higher price of rent they moved from one place to another clearing the Jungles and living for a temporary period contributing in agricultural production very much.

It has been mentioned earlier that the Zamindars of the district of Dinajpur induced the low caste Hindus to settle in their estate to meet up the gradual growth of the Muslims in the land.

However it was the immigrants who were largely employed in the field, though initially temporary in nature, as the laborers in gang coming from Purniah and other districts of Bengal and Bihar. Besides, there were many permanent laborers who were employed in the larger estates. Even some of the large agriculturists of Dinajpur used to let the land in tenure to for cultivation.<sup>9</sup> [ The women and children also were employed in large number. So the unit or family migration used to be happened to supply labour in the cultivation. There were seventy nine parganas in Dinajpur district having 770 estates of paying revenue. However, the post-partition period West Dinajpur district witnessed large volume of land under cultivation. Thus, in 1949-50 the net area under cultivation was 633800 acres in the district being 81.5 percent of the total area of the district. In 1952-53 it was reduced little being 78 percent of the total area of the district under cultivation.<sup>10</sup> The district of Darjeeling witnessed rapid expansion of cultivation during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It obviously like the other districts was happened due to the large scale clearing and reclamation of jungle tracts. This was contributed by the Nepalese in the hill tract and by the tribals like the Santals and Oraons in the Terai region. However, the Nepalese generally selected the sites at the bank of a river or at the nearby land of the watercourse. The technology they implemented in the agricultural production was far developed than that of the other. With this the primitive system of *jum* was followed by the local people such as the Mechs and other aboriginal people of the region. <sup>11</sup> In fact the changes may be understood from the description of Fred Pinn <sup>12</sup> who described the Jhooming cultivation of the Lepchas with that of note of Campbell on the more settled cultivation of Kalimpong region. <sup>13</sup> Hunter opined that the aboriginal tribes of North Bengal might have learned the art of cultivation with plough from the Nepalese due to the scarcity of jungles and began a settled life. It is very interesting that the aboriginal people in the hill used agrarian implements of Bhutia name such as takci (a hoe), tari (an axe), so-o (a curved knife or bill-hook), ban (a straight long knife), lakhfiyak (rake) and karja (hook for uprooting weeds). <sup>14</sup> This indicates towards the Bhutanese influences over the indigenous tribes in hill tract. However, the aboriginal people in Darjeeling also learnt to cultivate in the slopes of the mountains constructing terraces because of scarcity of plain land. <sup>15</sup> Thus in 1925 in the plains of the district the main crops were Rice (49523 acres), Jower (millet) (186 acres), Maize (497 acres), Mustard (2292 acres), Sugaracane (282 acres), Jute (3690 acres), Dyes (247 acres), tobacco (542 acres), garden produce (801 acres), Fruit (265 acres), Potatoes (313 acres), Miscellaneous food (620 acres) and Miscellaneous non-food (3843 acres). At the same in 1920 in Kalimpong and some areas of the west of Tista the main crops were rice (8204 acres), wheat (2542 acres), Barley, etc. (267 acres), Millet (Kodo) (7454 acres), Maize (39739 acres), Mustard (539 acres), Cardamom and spices (1466 acres), Fruit (203 acres), Potatoes (322 acres and Miscellaneous food(291 acres) etc. During the post-partition period there was expansion in crops in cases of rice, maize and potatoes. In other crops no much expansion was found. Thus in 1962-63 in the district the main crops were Rice (31193 acres), Wheat (133 acres), Barley (180

acres), Maize (27331 acres), Gram (30 acres), sugarcane (138 acres), Potato (4297 acres) and vegetable and fruits (6058 acres). In 1966-67 those crops developed to rice (67953 acres), Wheat (215 acres), Barley (235 acres), Maize (29209 acres), Gram (3438 acres), Sugarcane (255 acres), Potato (6374 acres) and vegetables and fruits (9327 acres).<sup>16</sup> In post-partition period the cooperative societies were playing important role in agricultural sector also. In the hill tract of the district the societies totaled 203 in 1967 having 12400 members. All these helping in production and marketing of those agricultural productions.

In Jalpaiguri district there was no existence of village community as it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth century India. This was resulted by the fact that the district was constituted by the small farms in relation to the tenant-farmer, farm labourers and the under-tenants.<sup>17</sup> However, the economy of the district was mainly based on agriculture. In 1870s the Deputy commissioner, though could not ascertain the proportion of cultivated, cultivable and waste land in the permanently settled parganas, estimated that three fourth of the area were under cultivation, of the one fourth again three fourth was culturable but not cultivated and the remaining portion was unculturable. However, the following table may highlight over the land distribution of the Western Duars part of the district.

**Table-5.3**  
**Distribution of Land in Cultivated and Uncultivated Areas (land in acres)**  
**Western Duars (1870)**

Name of the Parganas	Total land	Cultivated	Uncultivated
Bhalka	76041	9070	66971
Baxa	192442	6212	186230
Bhatibari	95125	9257	85868
Chakoa Kshattriya	88601	3671	84930
Madari	124385	6404	117981
Lakshmipur	105353	5619	99734
Maraghat	218581	18729	199852
Mainaguri khas	135077	15316	119761
Mainaguri Izara	62752	60000	2752
Chengmari	93393	10619	82774

**Sources: Compiled from W.W.Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal: Jalpaiguri, N.L. Publishers, Sibmandir, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2012, first published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, pp.83**

So in 1870 there was much land being not brought under cultivation. However, among those a good proportion was not culturable. In spite of this there was great possibility of bringing the land under cultivation. But, as the manager of the Chaklajot Estate opined in 1907 that 'want of energy of the people' prevented the double cropped production of the land, it needed large energetic and laborious persons to be imported to bring those lands under cultivation.<sup>18</sup> This

was happened with the large volume of immigrants into the district from Santal Paraganas, Chhotonagpur, and Bihar and with the Nepali immigrants.

Hunter noted that even the small cultivators of the land did not themselves work in the field rather they employed hired labourers in their field. Thus the Dhangars from Chotonagpur and others from Bihar districts used to come Jalpaiguri, initially temporarily, and were employed as laborers. Some Dhangars were also employed in the laborious work of carrying *palkis* mainly in the Darjeeling High road.<sup>19</sup> However, gradually the people of those regions settled in Western Duars, particularly in tea plantation areas and began to stay permanently. They also became engaged in cultivation as it was said about the Cultivating class of the Oraons. It was initially happened in Western Duars, the non-regulation area of the district with the initiatives of the government officials of procuring laborers from the neighbouring districts. This led to the cultivation of Western Duars very rapidly. This can be understood from the following table.

**Table-5.4**  
**Land under Crops in Western Duars (in acres)**  
**1901-02 to 1907-08**

Name of the Crop	1901-02	1907-08
Rice	3637000	631600
Jute	59800	125500
Tobacco	112900	119400

**Source: Compiled from John F. Gruning, Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri, The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1911, reprinted by N.L.Publishers, Siliguri, W.B., 2008, p.77**

So there was great expansion of cultivation under the crops of Jute and tobacco and mostly in the region of Western Duars, specifically, regarding the production of tobacco. However, with this the decreases of rice production also attract our notice. In fact the growth production in jute and tobacco was at the cost of production of rice, specially of *bhadoi*.<sup>20</sup> This obviously indicates to the growth of cash crops instead of food crops in North Bengal district following the Government policy of commercialization of agriculture in general. With these efforts large proportions of lands were brought under cultivation with the passing of time and land culturable but uncultivated remained to be not so much.

During post-partition period the huge immigration of the displaced persons from erstwhile East Pakistan and later on Bangladesh necessitated the intensive cultivation in the existing culturable land in the district like other parts of North Bengal. During 1944-45 amounting 100 acres of land was found out as the culturable wast land and they were brought under cultivation after independence.<sup>21</sup> However, the major portion of the land could not be

procured as the land to be cultivated. This was the nature of land also reported in the first decade of the twentieth century. In spite of this the refugees with their best efforts brought large proportion of land under cultivation. Thus in 1970-71 the area under rice cultivation was 645100 acres, Jute in 104100 acres, wheat in 2500 acres, Barley in 1500 acres, Maize in 6800 acres, Pulse in 3000 acres, Mustard in 5600 acres, Potato in 5800 acres, Sugarcane in 800 acres, Ginger in 200 acres, Tobacco in 1000 acres and Pineapple in 500 acres.<sup>22</sup> The district of Cooch Behar was also mostly based on agrarian economy. However, even during the turning of the twentieth century there was saying among the Cooch Beharis that the 'what *bapdada* have not done I cannot do.' So, new modes of cultivation were not followed by the natives of the State of Cooch Behar.<sup>23</sup> However, still the State was cultivated in large scale and its economy was based on this agriculture. The following table will furnish the area under cultivations in different time in the region.

**Table-5.5**  
**Distribution of Land in Cultivated and Uncultivated Areas (land in acres)**  
**Cooch Behar**

Land cultivated/ non-cultivated	1868-70	1901-1902	1949-50	1964-65
Cultivated	477401	408441	439400	648500
Culturable waste land	162507	180776	130200	58900
Unculturable	42926	127299	75100	90500
Uncultivated	214996	102110	160500	102070

Source: J.C. Sengupta, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar, published by State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Calcutta, 1977, p.62

So there was a decrease of cultivated land from 1868 to 1901 from 477401 acres to 408441 acres and grew little in 1949-50 to 439400 acres. In fact the area under cultivation varied with the increase or decrease of population of the State. For example during the period between 1881 and 901 the population of the State decreased to some extent. With the same line the cropped area of the State decreased whereas the fallow land of the State increased. Again as the population began to advance at a great rate since the partition of India in 1947 the net cropped area increased to 439300 acres. With the accelerating growth of population since 1951 the net cropped area grew more to 648500 acres in 1964-65.<sup>24</sup> Thus not only the nature of demography but also the size of it influenced the agricultural expansion.

The district of Cooch Behar had few coolies and agricultural day laborers. Among the few there were the smaller cultivators who in their leisure time employed themselves as the hired laborers in the field of the neighbor. However, number of the Dhangars and other people from Sahabad district of Bihar were imported into the district for cultivating land in the State by the

agent of the bog land holders. Thus there in the State of Cooch Behar a distinct class of day-laborers emerged who neither owned nor rented any land. .<sup>25</sup> However, the day laborer coming from Chutia Nagpur and Bihar were mostly employed in construction works of road, tanks and rails. On the other the native poor people were employed in the land as the adhiars giving land them in a contract of fifty percent share.

The changes of demographic composition in North Bengal also led to the land holding composition in the region making transfer of land to the new landed gentry. In the third settlement<sup>26</sup> a large number of people who were not born to the land could obtain lease from the Government in the newly settled areas.<sup>27</sup> Thus some acquired jotes through escalation of land price caused by migration furthered transfer of jotes through sale to the outsiders. Swaraj Basu opined that the large influx of people led a growing demand for and a rise in land prices.<sup>28</sup> The local people tempted by the hike in price of land began to sell their lands. This resulted in transformation of the local and middle jotedars into under-tenants and subservient to a new class of landed gentry. Thus in Jalpaiguri while the number of jotes held by the Rajbansis decreased, those hold by the Marwaris, the Upper Caste Begali middle-class people and others sharply increased.<sup>29</sup> This also led to the changes in existing agrarian social structure.<sup>30</sup> This also led to the unprotected tenancy structure in the form of adhiari system in which the sellers sunk to the position of adhiars at the mercy of the new jotedars.<sup>31</sup> During post-partition period the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act of 1953 brought all cultivators into direct relationship with the State. The ceilings of land up to 25 acres of agricultural and 15 acres of non-agricultural land led to the vesting of large amount of land to the government for redistribution to the landless laborers and cultivators having uneconomic holdings.<sup>32</sup> The West Bengal Land Reforms Act 1955 laid down the procedure of distribution of such lands. The West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1971 brought down the previous ceilings of 25 acres to maximum 7 standards hectares (about 20 bighas) and minimum of 2.50 standards hectares according to the number and nature of family.<sup>33</sup> In the meantime revisional survey and settlement operation was undertaken by the government to prepare new record of rights and from August 1967 intensive drive was launched for recovery of lands held in benami or through clandestine transfer and all other lands. Thus lands were recovered and redistributed to the landless most of whom obviously were immigrants, may be contemporary or enumerated long before.

## II

In every record of the British officials there is detail of growth, development and volume of manufacturing industries in Malda district. Among them the most important were the cotton and silk industry. Buchanon Hamiltorn in 1810 witnessed that at the time in Malda the clothes were made mixing of silk and cotton in equal proportions and named it as 'Maldiki Cloths' in which 4000 looms were employed. Hunter wrote that the manufacture of the silk fabrics known

as Maldehi cloths was confined to the native capital and the artisans of this country were engaged in the manufacture.<sup>34</sup> But these capital investors were the non-Bengali traders of India and the artisans labourer also were immigrant workers in the district in large number. However, there were also the Malda people who used to prepare the thin muslins and Jamdanis and Buchanon reported of such 120 families at Malda.<sup>35</sup> The women in great numbers were also employed for the dying of the clothes. Hunter reported of four important kind of silk fabrics manufactured in Malda namely *Mazchhar* or riplets or the river, *Bul bulchasm* or nightingales' eyes, *Kalintarakshi* or pigeons' eyes and *chand tara* or moon and stars.<sup>36</sup> In all these large number of manufacturer were engaged supplied by the neighboring districts and states. The Mahajans of non-Bengali origin in maximum traded the clothes buying from the manufacturing places at Malda and selling them in Calcutt and Baneras.<sup>37</sup>

There were also good number of indigo industry and lac industry in Malda and we have seen in the last chapter how the people from Murshidabad and Chhotonagpur and Santal parganas of Bihar region immigrate into the district to engage in the manufacturing of those products. Concerning the indigo industry Hunter reported quoting Mr. J. Brown the number of *rayats* cultivating indigo and their servants in Kaliachak were 5663, Kamat ploughing *coolies* numbered 10, the boatmen numbered 2052, manufacturing *coolies* numbered 2189, carters numbered 635, servants paid monthly numberd 444 and other 99 being totaled of 11.92 persons. The report of the Survey of Cottage Industries in Bengal detailed about the brass and bell-metal industries in the district and recorded of 650 persons engaging in the industry in different parts of India.<sup>38</sup> M.O. Carter reported of the lac industry in Malda and the vast area of lac growing in the region from Ratua police station to the south to the Mahananda through Manikchak, Kaliachak, Shibganj and Nawabganj.<sup>39</sup> However, as the silk industry needed a huge amount of money to be invested the *Marwaris* took the opportunity and they gave advance to the reelers and weavers in condition the products to be sold to them.<sup>40</sup> Thus the *Marwaris* took the advantage of advance and compelled the reelers and the weavers to sell their products to them in cheap rate impoverishing them. It was one kind of borrowing cultures by the Marwari or other Indian traders cum *Mahahans* from the European planters in India. However, this resulted into the formation of the Cooperative societies of Bengal which traded the products through the agency or *dalal* to the favourable markets of United Provinces, Madras and Bmbay<sup>41</sup> Lambourn reported that there was silk market competition between the European market and the *Khamru* markets which led to the variation in price of cocoons in the district. The European market was under the control of French and English firms which traded through the indigenious agencies in the local markets. On the other the Marwaris of English Bazar controlled the *khamru* market. The local reelers were given contract to supply raw silks with advance leading them under the capitalist domination of the Marwaris.<sup>42</sup> Swdeshi movement was a great impetus to the development of silk industry in the district. Both the silk weavers and the cotton weavers were under the mercy of the Mahajans though the silk

weavers were more prosperous.<sup>43</sup> The Dinajpur district, though was an entirely agricultural district the small manufacturing activities were mostly done by the immigrant people such as the imported labourers from Bihar and Santal Parganas both men and women and those were traded by the mainly the immigrant Marwaris. Among the paddy huskers and the pounders the most numerous were the cooly women from Behar or the Santal Parganas numbering about 10,000 in 1911. The men and women of the Hari caste were mainly engaged in fish dealings in the local market. They also engaged in basket making manufacturing activities. The women from Behar and Santal Parganas were also engaged in basket making, grain dealing and parching and gunny making. On the other the indigenous women of the district had little share in those activities. However the Rajbansi women in the district were largely found in interior markets as the vendors. The Santal settlers both men and women were greatly engaged in the transplanting of rice.<sup>44</sup> Among the small scale industries in the district of Dinajpur the Ralli Brothers established the Jute Press at Raiganj and produced *kaccha* bales for the market of Calcutta. The workers employed here were the upcountry *coolis* of lower class. Another small jute press was set up at Khansama and also by a Bengali firm. There were oil-mills in the towns of Dinajpur and Parbatipur were owned by the Marwari merchants.<sup>45</sup> The rice husking industry was also important in the district of Dinajpur. In this local grain dealers were engaged but the upcountry cooli women were employed in the production. The *dhenki* or pounder (a heavy wooden beam) was important in it. *Gur* manufacturing was an important industrial activity in the district. Manufactured at Birganj, Pirganj and Patniola police stations the *gur* was traded into Faridpur, Dacca, Rajshahi and Malda. In this the Benali traders were engaged. The people belonged to Malo, Namasudra and Hari caste were engaged in the fishing activities in the *bils* under the zamindars with *donga*, a small dugout, and the *dingi*, a larger plank-built boat. Though not in large scale the professional weavers such as the Tanis, Jugis and the Jolahas were engaged in the weaving of phota, a kind of coarse cloth of jute and cotton mixed principally at Baliyadangi and Chirirbandar out-posts.<sup>46</sup> The swadeshi movement could not have much positive impact in the indigenous industry of Dinajpur.

The Doms and some of the Santals were engaged in the making of baskets of different kinds for various domestic and social and commercial uses. An important example of commercial use of the baskets was the *dons* made for storing grains in hemispherical shape. Ranisankail was important center for grass mating. Coarse clothes were used for making bags in Baliyadangi to trade in Calcutta.<sup>47</sup> During the post partition period number of establishment were set up for the industrial development with machinery activities. In 1960 there were 7863 establishments in the districts of West Dinajpur. There were 267 handloom textile establishments, 275 tailoring establishments, 241 establishment of Manufacturing sundry hardware, 211 establishments of Gold and Silver ornaments, 204 establishments of potters, number of shops of bicycle repairing, 97 establishments for Bidi manufacturing, 3226 establishments for production of rice (rice mills and others), 2470 establishments for production of edible fats and oils and so on. A large

number of persons were employed in the establishments of whom many were the displaced and immigrated persons from East Bengal. However, the traditional industries of *gur* processing, Mat and basket making also continued. Tea plantation developed in the district with the establishment of Debijhora Tea Estate in Chopra police station. Large number of industrial cooperative societies emerged during this period. A very important feature of this period was that several numbers of training and training cum production centers were opened for the better techniques in existing industries. Among 18 such centers two were only for the tribal people and one only for the scheduled caste members.<sup>48</sup> These obviously were provoked by the demographic composition of the district during the period.

In the district of Darjeeling demography oriented economic condition was developed with the emerging tea industries in the region which is considered as the tea economy and tea demography in the district. Attempts were begun for tea cultivation in Darjeeling during 1856-57 periods under the efforts of Karsiang and Darrjeeling Tea Company and owned by the Darjeeling Mortgage Bank. But from 1866 onward the steady development of the tea plantation happened in the district.<sup>49</sup> The following table will highlight over the development of tea operations in the district in the early phase (1866-1874) of tea plantation.

**Table-5.6**  
**Tea operations in Darjeeling District**  
**1866-1874**

Year	No. of Gardens	Extent of land under cultivation in acres	Out-turn of Tea in lbs.	No. of Labourers employed
1866	39	10392	433715	Not known
1867	40	9214	582640	Do
1868	44	10067	851549	6859
1869	55	10769	12788697445	-
1870	56	11046	16891868347	-
1872	74	14503	293862612361	-
1873	87	15695	295671014019	-
1874	113	18888	392791119424	-

Source: **A Statistical Account of Bengal: Darjilling, W.W. Hunter, Maldah, N.L. Publishers, Sibmandir, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2012, first published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, p.149**

The Darjeeling Company established four tea gardens during the period between 1860 and 1864. During the period in 1872 the Company had 8547 acres land of which 1300 acres were brought under tea in which the number of labourers about 1300 persons were employed. The manufacturing season for the teas was March to November and large numbers of labourers were to be recruited during the time. Obviously this tea plantation economy was dependent on the emergence of the labourer specifically by the people of Nepalese origin induced by the

Company management and others from the Chhotonagpur and Santal Parganas of Bihar State as the local majoritarian caste of the district were not interested in the activity. Thus the people of Lepchas, Bhutias, from the plains and the majority of the Nepali immigrants were encouraged to be settled in the tea growing areas.<sup>50</sup> [In fact, with this process of settlement of the laourers within the surroundings of the tea gardens a new economic demography emerged in the demographic atlas of North Bengal which throughout nineteenth (last quarter) century and twentieth century and even after that formed and continued to be a new economic-cultural zone in North Bengal districts. The period followed 1870 was the period of great rise of tea plantation in the district of Darjeeling and by 1874 the tea plantations increased to 113 in numbers. The cultivated area also increased to 18888 acres and the number of labourers increased to 19424 persons.<sup>51</sup> The development of the tea plantations may be observed from the following table.

**Table-5.7**  
**Statistics of Tea in Darjeeling**  
**1874-1951**

Year	No. of Tea Gardens	Total area in acres under tea	Approximate yield in lbs	Averages yield in lbs. per acre of mature plants	Number of Labourers employed		
					Permanent	Temporary	Total
1861	22	3251	42600	--	--	--	2534
1881	155	28367	5160316	238	--	--	--
1891	177	45585	10910487	277	--	---	---
1901	170	51724	13535537	276	24257	16194	40451
1911	156	51488	14250615	284	26510	13051	39561
1921	168	59005	14080946	252	45977	2733	48710
1931	169	61178	20496481	345	61572	2093	63665
1941	136	63173	24815216	400	67838	1861	69699
1951	138	62580	29283499	468	--	--	69590

**Source: Administration of Bengal and Indian Tea Statistics [collected from Census 1951, West Bengal, District Handbooks, Darjeeling, A. Mitra, West Bengal Government Press, Alipore, West Bengal, 1954, p.xxxi]**

There were 142 tea gardens in the district of Darjeeling in 1940 in the area 63059 acres. The distribution of the tea gardens in the different parts of the district during this time may be observed from the following table.

**Table-5.8**  
**Distribution of the Tea gardens in Darjeeling**  
**1940**

Thana	Number of Tea Estates
Sukhiapokri	9
Pulbazar	2
Darjeeling	19
Rangli Rangliot	9
Jore Bunglow	16
Kalimpong	0
Garubathan	6
Kurseong	25
Mirik	5
Siliguri	27
Phansidewa	13
Kharibari	11

Source: Dash, A.J., Bengal District Gazetteer, Darjeeling, first published by the Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, 1947, Reprinted by N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, 2011,p.114

According to the employment record of the tea companies during 1870 the labour force in the tea industries in the district of Darjeeling was 8000 persons which increased in 1921 to 44279 persons and in 1940 that increased reached at 6140 persons. However, in 1941 census it was recorded that the actual numbers of population in tea gardens or tea population were 146508 persons. The distribution of the tea population (labor) in the district was as follows:

**Table-5.9**  
**Distribution of population in the Tea garden areas in Darjeeling**  
**1940**

Thana	Number of labourers
Sukhiapokri	14358
Pulbazar	3321
Darjeeling	24048
Rangli Rangliot	13202
Jore Bunglow	21594
Kalimpong	0
Garubathan	6094
Kurseong	20596
Mirik	14710
Siliguri	13867
Phansidewa	8719
Kharibari	5999

Source: **Dash, A.J., Bengal District Gazetteer, Darjeeling, first published by the Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, 1947, Reprinted by N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, 2011,p.115**

It is apparent from the above table that Kalimpong was kept aside from the tea plantation industry. This was due to the fact that the hill tract of the hill district was populated and immigrated by the cultivator class and a large part of the tract was brought under the reserved forest areas. However, as per the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1965 the total area under tea plantation in the district was as follows:

A.J. Dash reported that 96 percent of the labour recruited in the tea plantations of hill tract of the district were of Nepali origin and there was no shortage of labour in the hills. The laborers at the time even worked in number of gardens being single individual. So the inter-garden mobility of the Nepali labourers were reported. On the other the tea garden of the terai region were populated by the 7 percent labourer of Nepali origin and the remaining percent were to be recruited from the scheduled caste immigrant labourers of Chhotonagpur. This division of racial nature of the tea labourer in the same district due to the geo-physiographical division of the tract was very significant in the transition of the North Bengal demography. Had the Chhotonagpuria labourers not come or recruited in tea gardens of the Terai region there might be more Nepali immigrants in the Terai region resulting turning down the subsequent demographic ecology of the region.<sup>52</sup> Another important feature of the tea garden population was that of the working population in the tea plantation the males constituted 39 percent, the females 43 percent and the children 18 percent.<sup>53</sup> There were some other industries which were cottage industries by nature meted with the local needs and local markets. Thus handloom weaving existed in terai region. The Tibetans and the Bhutias manufactured clothes and sold to the people of Darjeeling. The wool weaving, in this context was important in which the Tibetans had greater contribution. It had been shown in earlier chapter that how the people of Tibetan origin traded woolen cloths in Darjeeling. However, with the Chinese occupation of Tibet the raw wools importing became stopped leading to the decay of that industry in the district of Darjeeling.<sup>54</sup> in the mineral products of the district mainly consisted of coal, iron and copper also numbers of persons were engaged. During the period between 1896 and 1900 extraction was made from certain exposures about 4 miles North of Bagrakot railway station. However, the entire production was consumed by the local manufactures. Prior to the Second World War 150000 bags of charcoal were consumed by the local population. So the engagement of the persons and labourers in it may be understood.<sup>55</sup>

**Table-5.10**  
**Areas under Tea Plantations in Darjeeling**  
**1965**

Name of Subdivision	Area of the Tea Estates	Area under the cultivation including fallo	No. of Estates	
			With tea factories	Without tea factories
Darjeeling Sadar	23770.94	11325.81	50	3
Kalmpong	2869.04	1143.59	6	-
Kurseong	15943.41	6370.05	31	3
Siliguri	20332.17	9131.52	42	2
Small growers	21.44	19.74	-	-
Total	62937.00	27990.71	119	8

**Source: Tea Board; Tea Directory, Calcutta, 1966, taken from De, Barun, et.al., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling, Government of West Bengal, 1980, p.229**

In other plantations such as in cinchona or Tobacco or coffee there was not so large volume of recruitment affecting the demographic scenario of the region. Though the large scale industries were absent in the district of Darjeeling there were large number of small scale industries in the district. They are getting financial assistance from the government. From the following table the strength of such industries may be realized.

**Table-5.11**  
**Small Scale Industries in Darjeeling**

year	Number of Registered factories	Number of persons employed
1951	153	7525
1961	171	8877
1966	184	8202

**Dy. Chief Inspector of Factories, West Bengal, taken from De, Barun, et.al., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling, Government of West Bengal, 1980, p.243**

The following table will present the existence various kinds of small scale industries in the district of Darjeeling which also highlight over the nature of the economic status of the population of the district during the time.

**Table-5.12**  
**Small Scale Industries in Darjeeling**  
**1967**

Name of Industry	No. of Units
Rice/Oil/Flour	16
Hndcraft	3
Wood-craft and furniture	10

Black smithy	30
Shoe-making	13
Candle	4
Confectionery and Bakery	5
Servicing and repairing of vehicles	10
Soap-making	5
Tailoring	32
Rado and Batteries	7
Engineering	11
Steel Trunk manufacturing	11
Weaving	6
Printing press and Book-binding	5
Miscellaneous	38

**Dy. Chief Inspector of Factories, West Bengal, taken from De, Barun, et.al., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling, Government of West Bengal, 1980, p.243**

All these indicated lower middle class demography engaging the industrial activities and non-development of any big industry or capitalist community in the region though the people belonged to mostly industrial in nature are very much present in the district during the time. However, these are the all immigrants people all hailed from different states of India and from proper Bengal part were engaged in the industrial activities of small scale. In post partition period this development got a new pace for the comings of both the legal and illegal migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and later on Bangladesh of whom the wealthier persons could flourish with small industrial activities. However, the most of the small industrial ownership belonged to the non-Bengalis like Marwaris, Punjabis, Uttar Pradeshis, Biharis of higher social hierarchy and others. Like the demographic variation in plantation labourer there was also difference between the hill and terai regarding nature of small scale industry. Thus the rice, oil and flour mills were mostly flourished in Siliguri whereas the furniture, handicraft and wood-craft units were flourished in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseon, Gorubathan and Mirik. Candle-making, confectionery, bakery and soap making almost found in Siliguri wheres tailoring generally spread in the hills.<sup>56</sup> So there emerged hill tract's small industry and Tera-plains areas' small industrial zone in the district.

During this time Siliguri developed largely due to the post-partition geo-administrative location and changing demographic scenario of the region with the coming of large volume of migrants of business class and professional classes leading to the industrial development of the region. The District Gazetteer described the phenomenon in such that, "Owing to the vantage location of Siliguri town in relation to the North Bengal districts as well as Bihar, Assam, Sikkim and Bhutan, its industrial and commercial growth since the partition of the State in 1947 has been phenomenal and this trend is likely to be maintained in the future."<sup>57</sup> Thus there were 31

rice and flour mills in Siliguri which reached to 11 rice mills, 43 *atta* mills and 2 flour mills there. The saw mills in the district increased from 7 in 1961 to 18 in 1965, Automobile servicing establishment from 31 in 1961 to 64 in 1965 and plywood factories 2 in 1965. Besides there grew umbrella assembly, soap making, manufacturing of sodium silicate and aluminium utensils, different cottage industries etc. .<sup>58</sup> The Kalimpong Industrial School set up in 1897 and transformed into a cooperative society in 1958 by name of Kalimpong Arts and Crafts Industrial Cooperative Society Ltd. was important in this context. The demographic diversity of the region strengthened the establishment. Here the works like the embroidery and appliqué of the Tibetans, the weave products of artistic Lepchas and fabrics and handlooms weave of the Nepalis and the Lepchas were incorporated signaling unity in diversity culture of North Bengal.

The district of Jalpaiguri had no manufacturing community. The people being basically agriculturists even no small scale industry for commercial purpose developed in the district.<sup>59</sup> However, the settled Jugi and Tanti castes were engaged in weaving making coarse clothes for the local people and the Meches were engaged in making hollowed trunks of wood with their agricultural activities. However, like Darjeeling tea was most prosperous industry in the district. This tea industry could develop with new demography of the tribal people from Chhotoanagpur and Santal Parganas and the Nepali labourers who were locally called the '*coolies*.' The best among the labour coolies were the Oraons. Though initially they were worked temporarily gradually they began to settle there.<sup>60</sup> However from the following table the growth of tea industry with growing employment of labour force may be observed.

**Table-5.13**  
**Statistics of Tea in Jalpaiguri,**  
**1874-1951**

Year	No. of Tea Gardens	Total area in acres under tea	Approximate yield in lbs	Averages yield in lbs. per acre of mature plants	Number of Labourers employed		
					Permanent	Temporary	Total
1874	1	--	---	--	--	--	--
1881	47	5637	---	--	--	--	--
1891	79	35683	---	--	--	--	--
1901	235	76403	31087537	441	47365	21254	68619
1911	191	90859	48820637	582	6693	18622	75315
1921	131	112688	43287187	426	86693	1871	88564
1931	151	132074	66447715	534	112591	4262	116853
1941	189	131770	94604450	765	136491	4896	141387
1951	158	134473	137194660	1020	---	--	176196

**Source: Administration of Bengal and Indian Tea Statistics. The population of Laborers in 1951 is inserted from Union Table B III of 1951, [Census of India, 1951, V-VI, W.B., Sikkim &**

**Chandernagar, Part-IA, Report, A.Mitra, Manager of Publications, Delhi, Government of India Press, Calcutta, 1953, p.263]**

Thus like Darjeeling district in Jalpaiguri district there also grew a new demography as 'tea demography' in the Jalpaiguri Duars region. Gradual growth of labour force led to the expansion and extension of tea estate making prosperous the tea plantation a new economic zone developed there. In post partition period, we have seen in earlier, voluminous growth of population throughout the district happened and in Duars region people of upper Indian traders, Bengali migrants and Nepali labourers and later on good number of Bihari Muslims began to settle their turning the Duars as multi ethnic zone in North Bengal.

However, there were weaving activities of making *dhokra* (gunny cloth of coarse quality, *phota* (stripped cloth made of jute), *eri chadar* for local consumption. However during post-partition period those traditional manufacturing were becoming diminishing. With the coming of the displaced and refugees from east Bengal with new demographic efficiency and also the upper county people new industries such as rice and oil milling, *atta* mills and *Mashala* mills, stone-crushing, saw-mills, automobilic workshops, engineering workshops, carpentry, leather works, bakery, trunk making, candle manufacturing, brick and tiles manufacturing, suitcase making, *bidi* making, pottery, tea chest manufacturing, cane and bamboo products were developed in the district. Jaldhaka Hydel project greatly worked supplying electricity in the Northern North Bengal consisting Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.<sup>61</sup> Buxa Duars became important for Dolomite and Coal existed in the west side of Jayanti River. The following table will show the registered units of industrial activities in the district of Jalpaiguri.

**Table-5.14**  
**Units registered with the chief Inspector or Factories, West Bengal**  
**District of Jalpaiguri (1969-75)**

year	No of Units	No. of Persons employed daily
1969	251	18980
1970	250	20357
1975	253	19900

**Source: Directorate of Cottage & Small Scale Industries, West Bengal, Statistics on Industrial Potential: District Jalpaiguri, Calcutta, 1971**

There we 9840 establishments for industrial activities in the district in 1960s being 22.4 percent of the urban areas and 18680 persons employed in the industry being 23.6 percent of the urban area. It was 1.72 percent of the total of the state establishments and 1.44 percent of the workers of the state totals. There were saw mills at Lataguri, Dabgram, Gayerkata, Alipurduar, Rajabhatkhawa, Nagrakata, Damanpur, Hamiltonganj; carpentry were in Jalpaiguri, alipur Daur,

Maynaguri; rice and oil mill in Jalpaiguri, Maynaguri, Alipur Duar, Falakata, Dhupguri, Gayerkata, Sonapur; Engineering Workshop was in Jalpaiguri, Dabgram, Mal, Maynaguri, Birpara and Gayerkata; Bricks and Tiles in Jalpaiguri, gayerkata, Falakata, Alipur Duar, Mayanguri; Gold and silversmithy in Jalpaiguri and Alipur Duar; Bakery in Jalpaiguri, Alipur Duar, Kamakhyaguri, Mal; Cane and Bamboo making at Lataguri, Damanpur, Alipur Duar and Jalpaiguri; Cotton handloom weaving in Jalpaiguri, Devnagar, Mandalghat, Sarium, Bhastali, Balasudar, Kamakhyaguri; Eri rearing and reeling Kamakhyaguri, Brass & bell-metal in Jalpaiguri; Pottery in Singimari, Mal and Steel turnk and suitcase at Jalpaiguri and Alipur Duar.<sup>62</sup>

There were 384 registered units of registered establishments for industrial activities in the district unregistered being 10000 units. However, the ericulture industries became flourished in the district in 1960s with the government assistance and initiative. The following table will show the development of the ericulture industry with its own demography of labour force.

**Table-5.15**

**Production of Eri-Eggs and Number of Persons employed in Eri-culture Industry in Jalpaiguri district: 1967-72**

year	Total production of eri-eggs (in grams)	No. of Persons employed in regular establishments	Average casual labourers engaged in nurseries throughout the year	Employed in villalgle rearing work	Total expenditure (in Rs.)
1967-68	7036	11	1190	1925	27775
1968-69	5813	11	1097	1279	28578
1969-70	6239	14	932	1295	40211
1970-71	5360	14	705	1290	36067
1971-72	6077	14	499	1140	38899

**Central Bank of India- Lead Bank Survey Report, Jalpaiguri district, siliguri, 1972, p.73**

The small scale industries in the district of Jalpaiguri like Darjeeling were under individual ownership specially of the Marwaris, Punjabis, upper Indian people and Bengalis of Proper Bengal or the UP-Biharis or Bengalis of different Castes. However, some of the units were run by the cooperative societies. In 1963 there were such 35 societies in the district of which few worked successfully. Another important small scale industry in the district in post-partition period was the handloom which developed in Alipurduar, Kumargram, Raniganj and Maynaguri. It is very significant that the migrant tangail artisans coming from Bangladesh settled in the district manufactured 'Tangaile Sadis' having a great demand. Another important feature of the period was the establishment of the Branch of the West Bengal Finance Corporation at Siliguri to supply raw material to the small scale industries of North Bengal.<sup>63</sup> During June 1973 among the 80 industrial co-operatives in the district 18 were in working condition. The tea industry grew in post-partition period in the district. About a quarter percent of population of the district belonged to the tea garden area being engaged by 190000 workers in the tea estates

during 1964-65 periods. By 1973 there was accounted of 151 tea gardens having 59988 hectares areas in the district. With the growth of tea population ordinary Labour Welfare Centres and Model Labour Welfare Centre came into appeared I the district. Thus the industrial development of the district both in colonial and post-colonial period was influenced by the constructed demography of the period.

Like the district of Jalpaiguri the district of Cooch Behar also agriculture based tract. There were only 'Eri' throughout the district, *mekli*, the jute fabrics in Mekhlignj, coarse gunny cloth, pottery all for home consumption existed as industries in the pre-partition period. During post partition period small scale industries developed in the State of Cooch Behar, later on the district. Plywood establishment, paddy husking units of small dimensions, bamboo crafts became important during this time. However, in most cases the post-partition immigrated Bengali people and the previously immigrated non-Bengali; specially the Marwaris were engaged in the industrial activities. The post partition displaced persons from East Pakistan and latter from Bangladesh were greatly engaged in the village industries with or without Government assistance. In this respect the handloom weaving, shoe making, conch-shell preparing, Paddy-husking, *bidi* making, wheat crushing were important.<sup>64</sup> During the post-partition period with the efforts of the and formation of the new demographic composition specially in 1960s number of registered and non-registered industrial establishments in the nature of small scale industries evolved in the district of Cooch Behar. Thus in 1972 the registered industrial units numbered 560 and the non-registered units reached at about 1300 numbers<sup>65</sup> However the Rajbansi people were very much efficient in bamboo craft, even the bamboo replaced the wood in articles of daily use at the time. There were also hides processing units in the district mostly led by the Muslim merchants in the district. The availability of hides numbering 90000 pieces and skins numbering 250000 pieces corroborated the fact. Those might have been traded to Calcutta through agents.<sup>66</sup> From the following table we may have some ideas on the registered industrial units in the district during the year of 1972.

**Table-5.16**  
**Registered Small Scale Industrial Units in Koch Bihar**  
**1972**

Type	Number of Units
Food Products	84
Textiles	225
Beverage industries	8
Chemical and chemical products	22
Footwear and other wearing apparels	12
Woodwork other than furniture	53
Furniture	19
Metal products	18
Building materials	7

Tobacco products	24
Clay modeling	17
Printing and publishing	10
Miscellaneous	61
Total	560

**Source: J.C. Sengupta, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar, published by State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Calcutta, 1977, p.86**

Two important industrial activities in the district were the Tobacco products and handlooms. During 1972 the handlooms in the district numbered to 6192 having employed 3955 persons in the looms. During the field survey in Dinhata and Tufanganj subdivision of the district of Cooch Behar I have come across with number of such handloom areas which actually began in 1970s. Mrs. Marani Saha, a widow of Sri Sibnath Saha, Baronachina, Dinhata informed me that her husband coming from East Bengal initially had been engaged in handloom working under a person also from the same place who came before him. Later on with the assistance of his dada (boss) her husband himself set up looms in his newly house at Baronachina, Dinhata, Cooch Behar.<sup>67</sup> Thus many of the people migrating from erstwhile East Pakistan became engaged in handloom production either as owners or as workers. Here it also should be mention that the loom workers even not being Tantis used to be engaged in the profession for the living of life in new paradise leaving the old one in their birth places. The following table will is to furnish the strength of the handlooms in North Bengal during 1970s.

**Table-5.17**  
**Number of Handloom Units in Koch Bihar District**  
**1972**

Subdivisions	Number of units	Number of Looms
Koch Bihar Sadar	765	1540
Dinhata	95	400
Tufanganj	110	280
Mathabhanga	115	180

**Source: J.C. Sengupta, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar, published by State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Calcutta, 1977, p.88**

Another important industrial activity in the district was of the tobacco products. There was an effort from the Wrapper and Hookah Tobacco Research Station, Dinhata since 1952 to produce the cigar wrapper tobacco. With these efforts the production of the wrapper tobacco began which expanded in 1970 in 15 acres area. The state government also assisted the development of the industrial effort forming a Training-cum-Production Centre in Dinhata in 1966.<sup>68</sup> In fact, it has been highlighted that Dinhata-Sitai-Sitalkuchi belt was an important area of Tobacco cultivation. This obviously helped in the development of the tobacco industrial units in the district. The post-partition and immediate before-partition immigration of the people of

Eastern part of pre-partition Bengal in large volume led to the emergence of large number of new comers in the tobacco industrial production either as labour or as trader-cum-owner. In Cooch Behar at the time the greatest role was played by the 'Roy Bidi Factory' popularly known as 'Ma Bhawani Bidi Factory', 'Kohinur Bidi Factory' and 'Shyamal Bidi' factory in producing wrapper tobacco or Bidi in the factory and providing large number of the migrated people employment there. The male bidi workers then dominated in the factory rather the females who became more in numbers latter on. Hiran Bala Saha, a resident of Netaji Colonyl, Amartal, Cooch Behar told that she and her brothers learned the making of Bidi in Pakistan. They used that learning as the livelihood in their new homeland.<sup>69</sup>

**Table-5.18**  
**Registered Factories in North Bengal**

District	1960	1970	1980	1984
Jalpaiguri	229	242	254	289
Darjeeling	170	166	166	187
Cooch Behar	12	14	13	17
Malda	6	11	8	12
West Dinajpur	33	33	30	34

**Source: Study on Industrial Development in North Bengal IDBI, (Bandyopadhyaya, Parmial, Cooch Bihar Jelay Shilpa Sambhabana, in Madhuparni, Special Issue, Cooch Behar District, 1989, p.454)**

### III

It has been come to clear from the above discussion that the trade in North Bengal mainly was carried on by the non-Bengali up country Hindus and the people belonged to the eastern part of Bengal and proper Bengal. in this trade commerce activities the district of Malda geo-historically was in a significant position and location. All the trade of North Bengal and even Bihar, especially eastern Bihar with southern part of Bengal and also other parts of India used to be happened through Malda initially through the river areas and with the gradual development through the railways. During 1870s the most important commercial seats in the district were English Bazar, Baldah, Rohanpur, Nawabganj and Hiatpur.<sup>70</sup> With the turning of twentieth century the trading centers expanded and trade in large amount went through Rajmahal in the Santal Parganas. However, the Katihar-Godagari railway curbed the importance of English Bazar- Rajmahal route in trade.<sup>71</sup> The religious gatherings such as at Ramakail, Kansat, Sadullapur, Kurnra, Rathbari, Panduah and Powal were also important for trading transactions.<sup>72</sup> In those fairs the traders wire the people belonging to other parts of Bengal and India but the consumers were the Polis, Deshis and the Rajbansis from different parts of the district.<sup>73</sup> In Ramkeli *mela* various articles and cattle were sold among which the most important was the Jangipur blankets from Murshidabad. It had a great demand in the district.

Melas at Bhaluka, Bamaongola were also important. The weekly market at Balia-Nawabganj used to be attended by five thousand to six thousand people from different parts of the districts during the second decade of the twentieth century. During post-partition period the melas received more importance for trading purpose. Concerning with Ramkeli *Mela* it was recorded in the West Bengal District Gazetteers that many of booths were founded booths to facilitate the trading of commodities like blanket, steel trunks, cooking utensils, furniture, mats etc. The traders from different parts of West Bengal as well as from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh used to attend the gatherings.<sup>74</sup> The manufacturing trade in the district was carried on by the few Europeans and mostly the Indian banias and mahajans. All those traders were immigrants belonged to the North-West Provinces and Behar.<sup>75</sup> This led the accumulation of profit and also capital in the hands of the people not from the district and at the time of last quarter of the nineteenth century economic drain happened by the Indian natives from the district of Malda and likewise in other districts of North Bengal too. During 1930s there was a small sugar brick-dust and flour mill in English Bazar owned by a Marwari. There was also an oil mill in English Bazar area owned by an Agarwala.<sup>76</sup> The people of upper country also came ahead for establishment of the banking system and two such establishments were set up by Rai Dhanpat Sinh Bahadur and Lakshmiapat Sinh at Malda and another at English Bazar by Pares Nath Shah & Borthers. In rural and Bandar areas the money-lending business was carried by the shopkeepers.<sup>77</sup> It has been told earlier that the majority of the silk merchants were Marwaries in the district.

There were indigenous banking system in Malda since the eighteenth century carried by the private bankers known as the *shroffs* and they were not from Malda but hailed from the other parts of India. Buhanon Hamilton in the first quarter of the nineteenth century reported of seven banking houses in Dinajpur mostly belonged to the Osho-yal. They might have role in the trading and commercial activities of the district of Malda. There were also a class of money changers called potdar in the district who traded as middlemen in exchanging money with cowries. In this exchange they made their profit.<sup>78</sup> Regarding the role of the Bankers in Malda it was stated by Sri Kaliprasanna Saha, a pleader of Malda, that the bankers lent money, supplied small capital, issued hundis, financed trade and a few also being received deposits.<sup>79</sup> Labour unionism became an important feature of post-colonial economic transition in North Bengal. Thus a good number of unions emerged in Malda during post-partition period. The All India Insurance Employees' Association, Jalpaiguri Division, Malda Base Committee, the United Bank Employees' Association, Malda, State Bank Employees' Union, Malda, Bldi Workers' Union, the Rickshaw Pullers' Union, the Dokan Karmachari Samiti, the Mald Darjee (Tailors) Workers' Union, the Municipal employees' Union, Class III & Class IV, All India Posts and Telegraphs Workeres' Union, Malda, Malda Motion Pictures Workers' Union etc. These unionism obviously mingling with political trends began to influence the small scale industrial economic sector of North Bengal districts.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Dinajpur played an important role in Bengal trade having certain main water channels through which the produce of Bengal found its way to the sea or to the districts of Behar and the North Western Provinces.<sup>80</sup> The southern Bengal or the Bengal proper being trade rice from Burma, the district of Dinajpur supplied its surplus rice to the upcountry, to Behar and the United Provinces. The rice of Dinajpur at the time also went to the Eastern districts of Bengal such as Faridpur, Dacca and Maymensingh.<sup>81</sup> However, both in internal trade and external trade the district became important leading to the large number of trading class flocking into the district. This district also traversed by the mahajans or grain merchants who mainly controlled the trading activities in the district. They made advances to the cultivators and instead of taking any interests received crops during the harvest time from the peasants in a lower rate from the market.<sup>82</sup> There were large numbers of banking establishments in the district led by the people from the upper country

Like the other districts of North Bengal internal trade of the district mainly carried in the hats, the local markets. The people from neighboring villages and petty traders from other parts of Bengal and India used to bring their products and sell them in the gatherings of large number people. The hats were constituted by the temporary shaded areas with an open space with some permanent shops. The markets were generally held on the land of any of the zamindars in the district. The zamindar used to impose a small fee on the trading on the day of the Hats.

In the trade of rice and other commodities the middlemen had a great role in the district. This hierarchy of the middlemen was comprised again by the up country men and the people immigrated into the district from other parts of Bengal proper and the East. During post partition period in initial stages good number of traders who had trade relation with Bengal proper and north western part of Bengal began to play the role middlemen. In fact the wealthier person belonged to different cases during this time became engaged in trading activities and money lending. Some of them used to purchase village commodities from the *grihasthas* and stocked them and later on sold them in the local marts or *hats* to the larger merchants. Those larger merchants sold those commodities to the markets of metropolis of Bengal or other parts of India or to the greater financiers who were to export them.<sup>83</sup>] Thus there were 32 *hats* as wholesale markets in the district and 174 *hats* of retail trade. So a greater size of trading and commercial activities mostly run and conducted by the immigrant communities was an important feature of economy of the district of West Dinajpur.

With the modernization of Darjeeling district through British policy of its development capital largely extended in the district of which a part also went to Nepal and Sikkim as the savings of the Bhutias and the Nepali settlers who sent their savings to their relatives in their homesteads.<sup>84</sup> However, the expansion and growth of economic activities attract a large volume of traders in the district with the traditional traders of the Tibetans, Bhutias and Nepalis. Thus the

indigenous up countrymen like the Marwaris, the Beharis and also large number of Bengalis from Bengal plains came in the district and gradually became dominant controlling authority of trade and commerce both in the plains and hill tracts of the district.

In plains Siliguri, gradually, was becoming the epicenter of trade not only of the district but also of whole of the North Bengal tract. The road system of the district as well as the Darjeeling Rails way made Siliguri connected with rest of Bengal and Assam and then with India. On the other the traditional passes and other hilly ways to Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and even China led to the large scale development of trading and commercial activities in the district. However, the most important community of controlling trade in the district was the Marwaris. They dominated in most of the exporting trades such as of cardamom, oranges and potato and in all import trade of consuming goods. Besides, they had also the largest share in the retail sale of consuming goods and also purchasing of produce of the small producers. Even since 1845 when Jetmull Bhojraj Firm was established in the Darjeeling town and number of Marwari business firms emerged with the accession of Kalimpong from Bhutan. This, obviously, signify the role of the Marwari traders in the economic development of the district. Dash praised about efficiency, hardiness and assiduity of the Marwari community leading to their superior business astuteness.<sup>85</sup> However, with the Marwaris, the Beharis and the UP people had also good share in the trading and commercial activities of the district. They had also control of the commodity trade in the district and retail supply of consumption goods in the district. Besides, the local people of this region also had a good share in the trading activities. Thus the trade in furs had engaged a number of Tibetans, Nepalis, Chinese and even the Kashmiri Muslims. In bristle trade through Tibet and Bhutan the main conductors were the Tibetans and the Chinese. Even in trading of gold dust from Tibet and silver from China into Kalimpong were carried on by the Tibetans and the Chinese Muslims. On the other the orchards were all owned by the hill men and most of the crops were sold on the trees to the up country Muslims who again employed the hill men in collection of those fruits.<sup>86</sup> Good number of Bengalis, later on, became engaged in the trading activities in the district.

However, the in case financing trade and commerce it was mainly controlled by the Marwaris and to some extent by the Biharis. The Report of the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-30 furnished names of some important firms engaged in financing activities in the district. They were Lachmandas Ramchandra, Purukhchand Lakhmichand, Koramal Jethmujl, Joteram Ramrikhdas, Siram Mulchand and Khetsidas Ramlal.<sup>87</sup> The Marwaris gathered their funds with trading in piece-goods, wool, cardamom, grains and also from loans and charging interest on them.<sup>88</sup> Even when the hill men began business with building, road or timber contracting, driving motor cars and lorries for hire they depended on the Marwaris for financing. However, with the passing of Bengal Money-Lenders Act of 1940 the large Marwari private banking firms became more concerned with the trade financing and also in direct

trading<sup>89</sup>. The another aspect of the economic activities in the district, it should be mentioned here, the professionalism and in certain other business the hill men and the plains men, the Bengali were becoming dominating in contrast of the Marwari and Bihari domination in other trade and commercial activities. In the wholesale trade of food grains and groceries the hill men had a share of 10 percent and in retail of the same they had fifteen percent share. The pharmacies were totally under the authority of the Bengalis. In case of shoemaking business surprisingly the Chinese people had sixty percent share while the hill men had a share of ten percent. The hill men had also good share in the building material business. Besides the brass work, restaurant business, motor driving, building and road construction work hill men had dominating share. Most importantly the international trade in the frontier of Nepal and Tibet the controlling share was in the hands of the Nepalis and the Tibetans. On the other the professional and Government services, specially in Kalimpong, distribution of Bengalis, Biharis and hill men and others may be seen from the following table.

**Tabel-5.19**  
**Distribution of Professional Services**  
**Kalimpog, 1947**

Professional Services	Bengalis & Biharis (%)	Others(%)
Gazetted Services	60 (all Bengalis)	40 (all Europeans or Anglo-Indians)
Non-gazetted Srvicce	60 (Benagli 40, Bihari 20)	40 (all Hill men)
Medical Profession	40 (all Bengali)	60 (Europeans 40, hillmen 20)
Legal Profession	60 (Benagli 40, Bihari 20)	40 (all Hill men)
Teaching Prfession	20	80 (Europeans and or Anglo-Indians 30, hillmen 30)

**Source: Dash, A.J., Bengal District Gazetteer, Darjeeling, firs published by the Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, 1947, Reprinted by N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, 2011, p.176**

From the above table it is clear when the Marwaris were contributing the development of the district the Bengalis and other plains people were contributing the intellectual development of the district. However, the post-partition period witnessed a greater change in the demography both in size and in structure in the district, specially in its plains region leading a rapid growth of the Siliguri subdivision into a greater economic zone of North Bengal turning Siliguri into greater urbanity. During post-partition period the growth of Siliguri with the settlements of large number of various trading classes and traders from different parts of India with large number of Bengali merchant families has been described in detail by Sibaprasad Chhatteropadhyaya in his great and laborious work of 'Siliguri: Purnanga Itiahas' in Bengali language.<sup>90</sup>

In the district of Jalpaiguri the local population like the Rajbansis, the Muslims and the Meches lived an easy life based on cultivation resulting their not choosing of trade or manufacturing activities as their profession. Naturally they were not interested in trading activities resulting the trade and commerce falling in the hands of the immigrant people since the nineteenth century or before than that. However, up to 1970s there was no large banking establishments in the district evidencing the absent of large scale or big business community. The jotdars, shopkeepers, traders and some money lenders in practice mainly conducted loans aggravating trade in the district.<sup>91</sup> However, the development of tea industry leading to the influx of the large scale tribal population into the Western Duars area gave great stimulation to trade. The tea garden areas with a huge number of tea population created large markets for their own. The markets naturally emerged in the neighboring area of the gardens. Thus the cultivators of the district nearer to the garden area could sell their produce to those markets to that tea population. Thus the district of Jalpaiguri in its new feature of tea economy added local markets within its periphery. Even in the large market of the tea areas the large demand of rice led to the importation of rice from the district Dinajpur in considerable quantities. There was also demand of Raniganj coal to the tea gardens for household fuels.<sup>92</sup> The Bengali merchants who settled in the district during the last quarter of the nineteenth century took part in the trade with the eastern Bengal districts and also with Bhutan, Tibet and Central Asia. Sirajganj, Dacca and Faridpur had good trade relation with the district. The hats and the fairs played important role in the trade and commercial activities. In the Jalpesh fair at the *Sivratri* festival peoples from all the parts of the district and also from Rangpur, Dinajpur and other districts of Northern Bengal attended. The Bhutias with their ponies, blanket and other articles made good profit in the fair.<sup>93</sup> In fact, the Duars being the route to Bhutan and from there to the other parts led to the immigration a large number of people in the region engaging in trading activities. This was very much happened by the post-partition displaced persons from East Bengal province of Pakistan.

However, since the second decade of the twentieth century there was development of cooperative system and banking establishments. Non-scheduled banks like the Bengal Duars Bank Ltd. and the Raikut Industrial Bank Ltd. came into being at the time. All these took greater shape during the post-partition period. Large number of commercial banks, Insurance corporations and Co-operative Banks helped in greater expansion of the trading and commercial activities in the district. Especially the refugees and the displaced persons from East Bengal were greatly helped by those financing organizations could become engaged in the commercial activities in the new land. From the field survey large number of people, displaced and refugees, reported of getting loans from those financial corporations to take trade as their profession during 1970 and 1980s<sup>94</sup> They also made associations to protect their interests. Thus in post-partition period in the district of Jalpaiguri number of traders' association emerged. The important among them were the Alipur Duar Merchants' Association, Dhupguri Byabsayee

Samiti, Fish Merchants' Association, Jalpaiguri District Merchants' Association, Jalpaiguri District Mill Owners' Association etc.<sup>95</sup> All these mostly organized by the new demography of the district.

Like the other districts of North Bengal in Cooch Behar also the trade and commerce were in the hands of the Marwari communities who came from Bikanir being more energy and enterprise than the Cooch Beharis.<sup>96</sup> They traded in tobacco, jute, mustard-seed, rice, and mustard-oil as exports and piece-goods, salt, brass and copper utensils, sugar, molasses, pulses of sorts, spices, cocoa-nuts and betel-nuts etc. as imports. The following table will furnish the amount of exports and imports in State.

**Table-5.20**  
**Export and Import**  
**1870**

Export (in pound)		Import (in Pound)	
Tobacco	70000	Cloth	50000
Jute	40000	Salt	15000
Mustard-seed and oil	20000	Other articles	25000
Rice	10000	Total	90000
Miscellaneous	10000	-	-
Total	150000	-	-

**W.W.Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal: Kuch Bihar, N.L. Publishers, Sibmandir, Siliguri, West Bengal,2012, first published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, p.69**

So there was a balance of trade in the State during 1870s. The state also helped in developing the facilities of export and import in the state by creating communicational facilities. The banking system developed in 1920s in the State again aggravated the trade and commerce in the State. The huge number of hats and some *Mela* played important role in trading exchanges. At the time people from United Province came into the district in a good number who also got settlement in the Cooch Behar town area, now in Bhawaniganj *Bazar* and played important role in the trades and commerce. [Interview] During post-partition period the growth of commercial banks and cooperative banks led the people to have loans and helped them to be engaged in small scale trading activities. The people coming from East Bengal province of Pakistan after partition of India being displaced or as refugees flocked into the district in huge number and a good number of them became engaged in the trading activities in from of vegetable merchants, groceries, stock merchants, hawkers, shop keepers, sweet sellers and many others. During survey in the district I have come across number of persons of these kinds. The 'Udichi' market ( the previous Bhawaniganj) newly reformed is mostly comprised by the immigrants of post-partition East Bengal and their successive generations having another two blocks of the UP

peoples and the Marwari community.<sup>97</sup> From the above discussion it is clear during the nineteenth and twentieth century there was gradual growth and development of trade, commerce and industries in North Bengal districts. In this context the districts of Malda and Dinajpur were very prominent and dominant in producing rice leading to the founding of larger number of rice mills in the southern belt of North Bengal. This trading of rice mill and rice exportation was totally in the hands of the Marwari and Bengali merchants such as the Baishbeniya, the Baishyas, the Gandhabaniks, the Subarna Baniks etc. The local trade on rice and paddy was carried by the Sahas and the Tilis. However, most of the owners of the rice mill were the Marwaris. The peoples belonged to the Haris, the Namasudras and the Malos were engaged in fishing in Dinajpur but whole sale of the fish trade was under the control of the Bengali merchants the Sahas and the Kundus. The Tilis, the Poddars, the Sartiers and Marwaris were involved in the trade of raw silk.<sup>98</sup> Thus in Malda-Dinajpur region of North Bengal two indigenous classes emerged as the trading and merchant classes such as the Marwaris and the Bengalis. Naturally the economy of the region grew with their contribution.

It has also been seen that the trading in Darjeeling districts were carried and controlled by the Marwaris, the Beharis, the Tibetans, the Bhutias and the Bengalis. However, the large scale trade was led by the Marwaris and the Bengalis. The finances were led by the Marwari community. Both in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri trade on tea and wood was mainly controlled by the Bengali and the Marwari merchants. The business on wood was very important in Jalpaiguri. Rameshwar Lahiri, Durgamohan Basu, Kshitish Basu, Tulsi Charan Mukherji, Satyen Ganguly were eminent in wood business in Jalpaiguri district. On the other Manmath Nath Sarkar, Bireshwar Chattopadhyay, Nibaran Chandra Ghatak, Pramod Ranjan Bhowmic were eminent wood merchants of Siliguri in twentieth century.<sup>99</sup> The tea industry in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri witnessed a great enterprise by the Indians as well as the Bengalis began in 1879 with the effort of Bhagwan Chandra Bose, father of Jogesh Chandra Bose and some other Bengalis. From great and noble work of B.C. Ghosh on the development of tea industry in Jalpaiguri district we may have details of rise and decline of tea industry in the region between the period 1869 and 1968 under the control of the Indians particularly of the Bengalis. This also elaborated the rise of the Bengali merchant class in the region during the period influencing the economy of district.<sup>100</sup> The biography of Jogesh Chandra Ghosh also give some ideas on this.<sup>101</sup>

#### IV

In this section the economic profile of North Bengal in relation to the demographic profile may be discussed in tabular form. The following table will highlight over the size and nature of the land holding demography of North Bengal in immediate after the independence of India with the end of the colonial rule.

**Table-5.21**  
**Total Number of owners employing Bargadars**  
**In North Bengal Districts**  
**1951**

Area of all cultivated lands owned (in acres)	Malda	West Dinajpur		Darjeeling	Jalpaiguri	Cooch Behar
		Raiganj	Balurghat			
0 to 1.00	5043	2263	1466	1366	1669	4144
1.01 to 2.00	11322	4128	3109	2296	3524	7033
2.01 to 3.00	10434	4672	3459	2199	4374	7466
3.01 to 4.00	9815	4554	3516	2280	2772	7892
4.01 to 5.00	5968	3677	2527	1805	7370	5213
5.01 to 6.00	3815	2367	1818	1131	1636	3724
6.01 to 7.00	4104	2730	1600	796	1708	4078
7.01 to 8.00	2057	1407	1142	741	2216	2573
8.01 to 9.00	2056	1392	811	356	831	2549
9.01 to 10.00	2330	1630	1137	481	4237	2568
10.01 to 15.00	4050	2620	1976	1280	3586	3823
15.01 to 20.00	2100	1770	1177	439	1758	2412
20.01 to 25.00	801	729	580	216	1168	1305
25.01 to 33.33	583	721	484	128	772	1213
33.34 Upwards	609	502	637	139	1039	1013
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>65085</b>	<b>35162</b>	<b>25439</b>	<b>15653</b>	<b>38627</b>	<b>57006</b>

**Source: Mitra, A, Census 1951, Land and Land Revenue Department, An Account of Land Management in West Bengal, 1870-1950, West Bengal Government Press, Alipore, West Bengal, 1953, p.226**

From the above table it is clear that in the districts of Malda, West Dinajpur and Cooch Behar there were huge number of land owners and Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri had comparatively much less land owner class this must have been happened due to the non-availability of land for Jungle and Mountain areas in the belt. Again in both the districts of Malda and West Dinajpur there was highest number of land owners holding land of 1.01 to 2.00 acres of land. In Malda there were also a large number of land holders holding land of 3.01 to 4.00 acres. In Cooch Behar and Darjeeling also these three categories of land owners were most in numbers. But in

Jalpaiguri the land owners mostly belonged to the holding of land from 4.01 to 5.00 acre and then form 2.01 to 3.00 acres. So not so much big land holder class remained in the district of North Bengal. But most of them came under the ceiling of maximum land.<sup>102</sup>

**Table-5.22**  
**Number of Bargadars employed by the Owners**  
**In North Bengal Districts**  
**1951**

Area of all cultivated lands owned (in acres)	Malda	West Dinajpur		Darjeeling	Jalpaiguri	Cooch Behar
		Raiganj	Balurghat			
0 to 1.00	4578	2025	1264	1293	1412	3589
1.01 to 2.00	101	3736	2772	2238	3027	6171
2.01 to 3.00	9905	4179	2943	2137	3766	6465
3.01 to 4.00	8454	3945	2974	2181	2192	6795
4.01 to 5.00	4859	3184	2118	1733	6060	4301
5.01 to 6.00	30	1970	1425	1034	1034	2980
6.01 to 7.00	3272	2275	1240	718	1203	3220
7.01 to 8.00	1544	1136	811	664	1440	1972
8.01 to 9.00	1508	1094	570	307	388	1944
9.01 to 10.00	1480	1244	787	398	2782	1874
10.01 to 15.00	2769	1751	1239	1074	1684	2630
15.01 to 20.00	1273	1085	618	330	607	1602
20.01 to 25.00	421	321	247	160	264	862
25.01 to 33.33	243	269	164	80	169	730
33.34 Upwards	157	110	174	65	223	565
Grand Total	58249	28324	19346	14412	26251	45700

**Source: Mitra, A, Census 1951, Land and Land Revenue Department, An Account of Land Management in West Bengal, 1870-1950, West Bengal Government Press, Alipore, West Bengal, 1953, p.226**

The total number of bargadars employed in North Bengal was in the district of Malda (58249) followed by the district of Cooch Behar (45700). The number of Bargadars in West Dinajpur also high but low in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. It is also noticeable that in land belonged to the big holding owners employed less number of bargadars and small holding owners employed

large number of owners. It may be assumed that the small holding owners were mostly belonged to the non-agricultural classes.<sup>103</sup>

**Table-5.23**  
**Total number of owners employing bargadars for the following out of total land owned (in acres)**  
**In North Bengal Districts**  
**1951**

Area of all cultivated lands owned (in acres)	Malda	West Dinajpur		Darjeeling	Jalpaiguri	Cooch Behar
		Raiganj	Balurghat			
0 to 1.00	465	238	292	73	227	555
1.01 to 2.00	1149	392	337	58	497	862
2.01 to 3.00	1229	493	516	62	608	1001
3.01 to 4.00	1061	609	542	99	580	1097
4.01 to 5.00	1129	493	409	72	1310	912
5.01 to 6.00	781	397	393	97	599	744
6.01 to 7.00	532	455	360	78	505	858
7.01 to 8.00	510	271	331	77	776	601
8.01 to 9.00	548	298	241	49	443	605
9.01 to 10.00	600	386	350	83	1455	694
10.01 to 15.00	1281	869	737	206	1902	1193
15.01 to 20.00	827	685	559	109	1151	810
20.01 to 25.00	380	408	243	56	904	443
25.01 to 33.33	298	452	320	48	603	483
33.34 Upwards	452	392	463	74	816	448
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>11809</b>	<b>6838</b>	<b>6093</b>	<b>1241</b>	<b>12376</b>	<b>11306</b>

**Source: Mitra, A, Census 1951, Land and Land Revenue Department, An Account of Land Management in West Bengal, 1870-1950, West Bengal Government Press, Alipore, West Bengal, 1953, p.226**

Though highest number of Bargadars were employed in the district of Malda, highest proportion of land was given under the Bargadars in the district of Jalpaiguri (12376 acres) followed by the districts of Malda (11809 acres) and Cooch Behar (11306 acres). It is also

noticeable that like the previous table that highest proportion of land given to the Bargadars in Malda, Cooch Behar and Dinajpur by the owners of 1.01 to 5.00 acres of land but in Jalpaiguri it was given by the owners of 9.01-10.00 acres land. However the following tables will more clear the agrarian demographic scenario for the period of 1901-1951.<sup>104</sup>

**Table-5.24**  
**Percentage of all agricultural self-supporting persons to total population**

**1901-1951**

Year	State & District					
	West Bengal	Malda	West Dinajpur	Jalpaiguri	Darjeeling	Cooch Behar
1901	19.8	26.2	30.2	26.0	22.5	22.6
1911	23.4	24.8	31.4	25.2	19.4	30.2
1921	23.4	26.4	32.1	24.7	23.1	30.4
1931	18.5	19.2	22.7	17.0	11.1	23.4
1951	14.9	15.1	20.9	13.0	7.2	22.4

Source: **Statement IV.1**, P.455

**Table-5.25**  
**percentage of self-supporting persons in Cultivators of own land to total population ,**

**1901-1951**

Year	State & District					
	West Bengal	Malda	West Dinajpur	Jalpaiguri	Darjeeling	Cooch Behar
1901	17.0	19.3	27.1	24.9	22.2	21.6
1911	16.3	19.3	25.9	21.6	18.1	28.8
1921	16.2	17.8	26.5	22.5	22.2	29.1
1931	8.2	8.7	11.5	6.4	4.1	14.7
1951	7.5	8.1	11.3	5.4	4.3	12.4

Source:P.455

**Table-5.26**  
**Percentage of self-supporting persons Agricultural Laborers to total population ,**  
**1901-51**

Year	State & District					
	West Bengal	Malda	West Dinajpur	Jalpaiguri	Darjeeling	Cooch Behar
1901	2.4	6.7	2.8	0.3	0.2	0.7
1911	6.1	5.1	5.1	2.4	0.4	0.7
1921	6.3	8.1	5.3	1.6	0.6	0.6
1931	7.2	7.9	6.9	5.2	2.6	5.8
1951	4.2	3.5	3.4	0.5	0.7	2.7

Source: **Census of India, 1951, West Bengal, Sikkim,& Chandernagore,Volume VI, Part-II Tables, Mitra, A., Manger of Publications, Delhi, Government of India Press, Calcutta,1953,Statement IV.1, P. 456**

**Table-5.27**  
**The manner in which lands were cultivated in 1940 & 1951**

State & District	Percentage of land cultivated			
	By family –members and labourers		By bargadars	
	1951	1940	1951	1940
West Bengal	79.7	77.4	20.3	22.6
Malda	81.8	90.4	18.2	9.6
Dinajpur	78.6	85.5	21.4	14.5
Jalpaiguri	68.0	74.1	32.0	25.9
Darjeeling	92.1	Not available	7.9	Not available
Cooch Behar	80.2	Not available	19.8	Not available

Source: **Census of India, 1951, West Bengal, Sikkim,& Chandernagore,Volume VI, Part-II Tables, Mitra, A., Manger of Publications, Delhi, Government of India Press, Calcutta,1953, Statement IV.25, P.481**

So it is clear from the above table that percentage of agricultural self-supporting persons were decreasing in all the districts of North Bengal as per the line of the province of Bengal in colonial period and State of West Bengal in post colonial period. However, the proportion of decrease was much high in the district of Darjeeling from 22.5 percent in 1901 to 7.21 in 1951, a decrease of two-third proportion happened. It was also high in the district of Jalpaiguri (from 26.0 in 1901 to 13.0 in 1951) and Malda (from 26.0 in 1901to 15.1 in 1951). The decrease was lest in Cooch Behar (from 22.6 percent in 1901 to 22.4 percent in 1951) and also less in West Dinajpur (from 30.2 in 1901 to 20.9 in 1951). Likewise the percentage of decrease in cultivators of own land to total population was highest in Darjeeling (from 22.2 percent in 1901 to 4.3

percent in 1951) followed by Jalpaiguri (from 24.9 percent in 1901 to 5.4 percent in 1951), Malda (from 19.3 percent to 8.1 in 1901 percent in 1951), West Dinajpur (from 27.1 percent in 1901 to 11.3 percent in 1951) and Cooch Behar being least (from 21.6 percent to 12.4 percent in 1951). On the other agricultural laborers increased in Malda from 2.4 percent in 1901 to 4.2 percent in 1951, in West Dinajpur from 2.8 percent in 1901 to 3.4 percent in 1951, in Jalpaiguri from 0.3 percent in 1901 to 0.5 percent in 1951, in Darjeeling from 0.2 percent to 0.7 in 1901 percent in 1951 and in Cooch Behar much more from 0.7 percent in 1901 to 2.7 percent in 1951. However concerning the percentage of immediate previous decades the percentage in all the districts decreased in the line of the State. Most importantly the Bargadars were highest in the district of Jalpaiguri (32.0 percent in 1951) followed by the district of Dinajpur (21.4 percent), Cooch Behar (19.8 percent), Malda (18.2 percent) and Darjeeling (7.9 percent) <sup>105</sup>

**Table- 5.28 (Continued)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Castes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**  
**1961**

State/District	Total Worker	Cultivator	Agricultural Labourer	Mining, Livestock and others	Manufacturing in Household Industry	Manufacturing in Other Industry
West Bengal	2346629	944643	651989	147790	87282	147330
Darjeeling	33494	15644	1563	5900	1881	1596
Jalpaiguri	148116	113351	5956	12749	1848	1483
Cooch Behar	156769	134464	10442	1219	2158	902
West Dinajpur	97383	60916	22129	975	2420	1419
Malda	56239	24968	2696	3600	4683	1367
Total Of North Bengal	492001	349343	42786	24443	12990	6767

**Table-5.28 (concluded)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Castes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**  
**1961**

State/District	Construction	Trade and Commerce	Transport and Communication	Other Service	Non-workers
West Bengal	17687	71567	37328	241013	4543685
Darjeeling	335	1458	694	4423	48887
Jalpaiguri	771	2899	1125	7244	270539
Cooch Behar	115	2703	335	4931	321544

West Dinajpur	605	2499	573	5847	189070
Malda	252	1714	509	7691	107194
Total Of North Bengal	2078	11273	3236	30136	937234

Source: Census of India 1961, Volume XVI, West Bengal & Sikkim, Part-II(i), Social and Cultural Tables, J. Datta Gupta, 1965, pp.419-21

**Table-5.29 (Continued)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Tribes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**  
**1961**

State/District	Total Worker	Cultivator	Agricultural Labourer	Mining, Livestock and others	Manufacturing in Household Industry	Manufacturing in Other Industry
West Bengal	1029996	502070	292421	139448	13773	18796
Darjeeling	46155	22421	1148	16329	644	157
Jalpaiguri	165793	55279	3573	98962	834	149
Cooch Behar	3169	2211	156	530	60	79
West Dinajpur	73169	46322	23386	506	1037	204
Malda	45405	35636	7722	230	558	59
Total Of North Bengal	333691	161869	35985	83899	3133	648

**Table-5.29 (concluded)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Tribes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**  
**1961**

State/District	Construction	Trade and Commerce	Transport and Communication	Other Service	Non-workers
West Bengal	3389	3796	3551	52752	1024085
Darjeeling	101	1018	201	4136	50289
Jalpaiguri	156	444	429	5917	188948
Cooch Behar	26	23	11	73	5640

West Dinajpur	107	153	44	1410	96980
Malda	37	75	92	996	54117
Total Of North Bengal	427	1713	777	12532	395974

Source: Census of India 1961, Volume XVI, West Bengal & Sikkim, Part-II(i), Social and Cultural Tables, J. Datta Gupta, 1965, pp.429-31

**Table-5.30 (Continued)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Castes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**  
**1971**

Name of District/PS	Total Main workers	Cultivators	Agricultural labourers	Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantations, Orchards and allied activities	Mining and Quarrying	Manufacturing Household Industry	Manufacturing other than Household
MALDAH DISTRICT	68414	27257	21154	4594	62	4030	2926
WEST DINAJPUR DISTRICT	131631	74428	44595	1485	4	1497	1870
Darjiling District	33481	9648	13161	8239	1	1417	1079
JALPAIGURI DISTRICT	176772	110789	21818	23502	97	2643	2488
KOCHBIHAR DISTRICT	174341	130605	30624	1517	-	1549	1506

**Table-5.30 (concluded)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Castes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**

**1971**

Name of District/PS	Construction	Trade and Commerce	Transport, Storage and communications	Other services	Non Worker
MALDAH DISTRICT	409	2537	861	5764	196283
WEST DINAJPUR DISTRICT	298	2149	988	4317	297947
Darjiling District	323	1335	1162	5563	64859
JALPAIGURI DISTRICT	451	2905	2291	9788	418652
KOCHBIHAR DISTRICT	123	2016	673	5728	490679

**Source: Ghosh, Bhaskar, Census of India, 1971, Series-22, West Bengal, Part-II, C(i), Social and Cultural Tables, Compiled from Table C-VII and C-VIII, pp.160-165**

**Table-5.31(Continued)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Castes/Tribes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**

**1991**

State/District	Total Worker	Cultivator	Agricultural Labourer	Mining, Livestock and others	Manufacturing in Household Industry	Manufacturing in Other Industry
MALDAH DISTRICT	834408	288514	288987	26073	29620	72674
WEST DINAJPUR DISTRICT	1022790	438852	360832	12040	19855	41039
Darjiling District	438248	108426	517862	92086	2722	28866
JALPAIGURI DISTRICT	882769	259056	149548	84603	9942	52682
KOCHBIHAR DISTRICT	633424	319642	172764	8225	15319	31855

**Table-5.31 (concluded)**  
**Workers and Non-workers among Scheduled Castes**  
**In the Districts of North Bengal**

**1991**

Name of District/PS	Construction	Trade and Commerce	Transport, Storage and communications	Other services	Non Worker
MALDAH DISTRICT	8055	49160	17849	3276	1722205
WEST DINAJPUR DISTRICT	7046	60502	19586	62916	2048464
Darjiling District	10525	49780	20350	73648	855072
JALPAIGURI DISTRICT	15735	78182	37883	81572	1854211
KOCHBIHAR DISTRICT	4905	43057	20043	47476	1473263

**Source: Census of India, 1991, Series-26, west Bengal, Part XII-B, District Census Handbook, Primary Census Abstract, for the districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, West Dinajpur and Malda**

From the above tables it is clear that during the period of 1961-1971 though regarding the number of cultivators and agricultural laborers there was no much development in the districts of North Bengal except the district of Darjeeling it greatly developed during the period between 1971 and 1991. However, in the case of the years of 1961 and 1971 only the Scheduled castes people have been accounted and for the year both the SC and ST people have been taken into account, as the data has been processed by me from the Census records available to me, it is not that so great increase happened with this inclusion. In fact, the period between 1971 and 1991 large growth of poor and agricultural people comprised a large share by the people from post-Bangladesh liberation war has been witnessed by the districts of North Bengal. This, largely and greatly, paved the way of transformation of the agrarian demography of North Bengal. However, in case of trading activities and other services the changes was not so massive as like as the agrarian activities during the thirty years of 1961-1991 periods. But progressive development happened in a smaller extent.

So within the period of study a gradual change in economic sphere of North Bengal went on since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the beginning period of my study. With this the appearances of the new functional classes, trading and commercial classes in different phases

of Colonial period, post-colonial period and post-Bangladesh liberation period North Bengal emerged as an important economic zone from commercial point of view. This commercial importance of this region mainly based on agrarian economy. During the post-colonial period the tobacco business greatly developed and turned the Dinhata-Mathabhanga belt of tobacco production into trading mostly with North-East India and also with North –west India to some extent. During the survey of this region it has come to know a great number of middlemen popularly known as ‘Sada Patar Byapari’ and this were mostly hands of the Hindu people. But since 1980s the Muslim people of this region have been occupying trading sphere as middlemen. The changes of economy also influenced the local people of this region. Thus the Rajbansis coming out from their traditional agricultural production system and they also began to cultivate tea and pineapple in their land of Jute, paddy and wheat. Moreover, the demographic changes brought into its carriages many other changes like land-man ratio, land-man relationship, commercialization of agriculture, growth in rural and urbanity (may be observed in the tables of Appendix), socio-economic core-peripheral change and many others. All these changes again have led in changing the demographic profile of North Bengal as a process of vis.a vis.

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**Appendix: 5.1**

**Table-5.32 (cont.)**

**Displaced persons from Pakistan by livelihood classes**

**1951**

State , Division & District	Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependants	Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependants	Cultivators labourers and their dependants	Non-Cultivating owners of land ; Agricultural rent receivers and their dependants	Production other than Cultivation
Malda	2221	17626	4243	307	5553
West – Dinajpur	13213	39356	15494	326	8224
Jalpaiguri	12793	27597	2710	281	12283
Darjeeling	214	2124	156	4	2460
Cooch Behar	18476	30636	12007	268	13164

**Table-5.32 (conclu.)**

**Displaced persons from Pakistan by livelihood classes**

**1951**

State , Division & District	Commerce	Transport	Other services and misc sources	Total
Malda	4815	423	24314	60198
West – Dinajpur	8375	882	22660	115510
Jalpaiguri	18180	4347	19142	98572
Darjeeling	4353	1734	4703	15728
Cooch Behar	12646	650	12284	99917

Source: Census of India, 1951, West Bengal, Sikkim, & Chandernagore, Part-II Tables, Manager of Publications, Delhi, Government of India Press, Calcutta, 1953, pp.500-501

### Appendix-5.2

**Table-5.33**  
**Growth of towns in North Bengal Districts**  
**(1901-1981)**

Year	State/Districts					
	West Bengal	Koch Bihar	Jalpaiguri	Darjiling	West Dinajpur	Maldah
1911	81	4	2	2	-	2
1921	89	4	2	2	-	2
1931	94	4	1	6	-	2
1941	105	6	1	6	1	2
1951	120	6	2	4	3	2
1961	184	6	7	4	6	2
1971	223	7	8	4	7	2
1981	291	7	12	7	8	4

Source: Source: Ghosh, S.N., Census of India' 1981, Series-23, West Bengal, Part-II A, Household Table, West Bengal, Calcutta, P.78

### Appendix-5.3

**Table-5.34**  
**Growth of Urban population in North Bengal Districts**  
**(1901-1991)**

Year	State/District					
	West Bengal	Koch Bihar	Jalpaiguri	Darjiling	West Dinajpur	Maldah
1911	2349608	15794	11765	24579	-	18072
1921	2517874	17261	14813	28703	-	17202
1931	2895867	18030	18962	43479	-	19686
1941	4740222	26821	27766	58164	6952	27178
1951	6281642	50180	66145	94481	41940	35161
1961	8540842	71446	123814	144637	98969	50785
1971	10967033	96652	168080	180212	173690	68026
1981	14446721	122260	311221	282153	268726	97196
1991	18707601	169497	585247	396060	417200	186537

Source: Ghosh, S.N., Census of India' 1981, Series-23, West Bengal, Part-II A, Household Table, West Bengal, Calcutta, P.79

## Appendix-5.4

**Table-5.35**  
**Growth of inhabited Villages in North Bengal**  
**1901-1981**

Year	State/District					
	West Bengal	Koch Bihar	Jalpaiguri	Darjiling	West Dinajpur	Maldah
1911	-	1180	1401	516	4379	3502
1921	-	1154	429	314	3515	1645
1931	-	1183	446	543	3573	1711
1941	-	1383	906	590	3228	1415
1951	38474	1181	793	617	3197	1577
1961	38465	1138	774	536	3130	1603
1971	38074	1144	744	507	3173	1611
1981	38024	1139	736	659	3036	1615

Source: Ghosh, S.N., Census of India' 1981, Series-23, West Bengal, Part-II A, Household Table, West Bengal, Calcutta, P.82

## Appendix-5.5

**Table-5.36**  
**Growth of Rural Population In North Bengal**  
**(1901-1991)**

Year	State/District					
	West Bengal	Koch Bihar	Jalpaiguri	Darjiling	West Dinajpur	Maldah
1901	14837538	551056	536475	244387	741284	586239
1911	15649161	575218	651475	255320	791512	680475
1921	14956474	573338	681133	265534	695536	668972
1931	16001169	571023	722031	288582	745821	700754
1941	18489330	611882	820075	332735	827774	817137
1951	20018338	618769	850602	365136	934942	902419
1961	26385437	948360	1235478	480003	1224828	1171138
1971	33344978	1317531	1582079	601565	1686197	1544631
1981	40133926	1649383	1903655	742116	2136221	1934675
1991	49370364	2001648	2342296	903859	2710453	2450495

Source: Ghosh, S.N., Census of India' 1981, Series-23, West Bengal, Part-II A, Household Table, West Bengal, Calcutta, P.8