

Chapter – I

INTRODUCTION

The Partition of India or the Second Partition of Bengal in 1947 is the most important historical event in the Indian sub-continent. The Partition had drastically changed the demography and administrative structure in India specially West Bengal and precisely Jalpaiguri district which is too close to the intentional boundaries between India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). According to Radcliff's recommendation the Partition was followed by a massive influx of refugees from East Pakistan to India. The migration was actually started on the eve of partition i.e. from 1946 after the Noakhali Riot. Thereafter millions of refugees intruded into West Bengal and Jalpaiguri district in different waves.

The Ph.D thesis - *"The Partition of India And Socio-Economic Transformation of The Mufassal Towns in Jalpaiguri District in The Post Colonial Period (1947 – 2011)"* aims to highlight the impact of the transformation in the border district of Jalpaiguri which is wide and very important for its location from the administrative point of view. The district Jalpaiguri is adjacent to the international boundaries of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Bhutan and too nearer to Nepal. The district also is adjacent to the states of Assam, and Sikkim and also the hilly district of Darjeeling and the plain land of Coochbehar. Thus, the nature of demography of Jalpaiguri district is different from the other districts in Bengal. Besides these, this district has 40 clans of Adivashi Tribal Communities which have 151 languages (1967 census). So, before the Partition and independence (1947) a huge migration of refugees from East Pakistn into the district had led the subsequent changes in the fields of administration, economy, polity and livelihood apart from the district's ethnicity.

Statement of the Problem:

The period of the thesis begins from 1947 which signifies the Partition followed by the massive number of refugee migration through the border district of Jalpaiguri which had subsequently brought changes in ecology, demography and socio-economic lives of the area. It highlights and analyses the basic factors causing changes in the socio-economic scenario which have led to the growth and development of numerous Mufassal Towns or small urban centers in the district since the partition (1947) till 2011. The thesis restricts itself to 2011, because the data collected for the work is on the basis of the latest census of 2011 as base year. Apart from this the land acquisition policy of the erstwhile Left Front Govt. in West Bengal adversely differs from the TMC Govt. which came into power in 2011 by the 13th State Assembly Election. The TMC Govt. strongly took the policy that no fertile land of unwilling farmer would be procured for the sake of industrialization. This strategic difference in land-acquisition policy for industrialization and urbanization in the region under the study is one of the most important aspects of upgrading the agro-rural belts into Mufassal Towns in different regions of Jalpaiguri district.

The word – ‘Mufassal’ has been used from the local term which means ‘*Bandar*’ or village market where the people gathered nearly of 7 – 8 villages to collect their useful commodities of daily life. The surplus products were sold in this *Bandar* market. These places are fertile land for exchanging the cultural and economic views. People of different sects, castes, creed and languages are present here. These ‘*bandars*’ are of semi-urban nature. Here the people come to enjoy amusement and recreation from the surrounding villages. So, the cultural and socio-economic transformations of the mufassal towns have immense contribution which has made a far-reaching impact of a large scale area like the whole district. However, the definition of mufassal town characteristically is not a town; it is a semi-urban or peri-urban centre or non-municipal town or census town. So, on the eve of partition (1947) the district had no municipal town (except Jalpaiguri town), but had numerous small urban centres or mufassal towns which largely

developed within short period by the huge influx of refugees migrated from the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

The undivided district was extended upto the river Sankosh on the east nearing the demarcating line of Assam and Coochbehar on the south while Bhutan and Darjeeling guard Jalpaiguri from north to west and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) on the south. This district is geographically much important as it is lying adjacent to the international boundary of Bangladesh and Bhutan. Jalpaiguri has become so attractive and appealing, not because it is only naturally beautiful but the people living here in semi-hilly region is very simple, innocent, co-operative and happy with their minimal possessions.

The district Jalpaiguri can be called a 'Mini India'. People of different languages, castes and creeds live here in harmony. They are Mech, Rava, Garo, Dukpa, Bhutia, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Oraon, Malpahari, Munda, Kishan, Kheria, Chikbaraik, and many other tribal sects. With them a large number of Rajbangshis, local Muslims and Bengali Hindus stay here. But the economy is not so sound and stable. It is mostly based on agriculture on the southern parts like Dhupguri, Falakata, Mainaguri, Alipurduar (now district) and tea, timber and tourism on the north-western parts like Malbazar, Lataguri, Chalsa-Matelli, Odlabari, Damdim, Nagrakata, Banarhat, Dalgaon (Birpara) etc.

The overview is on the socio-economic growth along with cultural evolution in the Post-independence period of this locality. It has been already cited that this locality is full of multi-lingual people with multiple culture and customs. In the colonial period the demographic picture was very poor and negligible. The density of population was also very disappointing. The means of livelihood was tea, timber and tourism-centric. There were three categories of people – a) management i.e. owners, b) office staff (Babu) and c) workers in the tea-belts while management and workers or labourers were in the in the agro-sectors. In agro-belts or system the office staff is not indispensable. The food, shelter and cloth were then the crying need. People could not think even about education, the only source of knowledge, culture and awareness. They would work for food and minimum needs in life.

But soon after independence i.e. 1947 a huge number of people especially Bengali speaking migrated to India from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) as refugee for safer shelter of their families. They suffered from insecurity in East Pakistan due to frequent ethnic riots and inhuman torture. Some came through proper legal ways, some with the help of agents. Due to huge migration and infiltration in the wide regions of Jalpaiguri which is the adjacent district of East Pakistan and Assam the demographic structure of the region has completely changed. The Refugee Rehabilitation Department of Bengal had tried to set up many colonies in different parts of the district.

Second refugee onslaught had come in this district after the Bangladesh War in 1971. After this war due to political instability and communal riots several thousands of Bengali Hindus crossed the boundary and took shelter in Jalpaiguri district. Shortly they settled in different parts of this vast region and started working in agro-fields ignoring the options of profession. Simultaneously they gave much importance on education of their children. Shortly there occurred a remarkable change in economy in this region. Soon the conscious people stepped forward to the better and modern amenities of life which are more available in the towns than rural belts. Facilities in the fields of communication, medical services, education, trade and commerce were given utmost importance. On the basis of these prime requirements some rural market places of that time like – Maynaguri, Dhupguri, Falakata, Alipurduar, Birpara, Madarihut, Nagrakata, Malbazar etc. have upgraded to the status of town – now all with the background of village or mufassal. The data-base analysis, observation and findings are at the root of the socio-economic and cultural mutations of these semi-urban or Mufassal towns.

Due to Partition (1947) and huge refugee's onslaught the economy and society of Jalpaiguri district affected numerous social groups and classes which made various socio-political activities and movements in the district. A distinctive feature of Rajbanshi Movement – 'UTJAS' (Uttarbanga Tapasili Jati and Adivashi Sangathan) and 'Kamtapur Movement' came up with its opposite separatist forces like Namasudra, Nasya Sekh of North Bengal and of the Tribal people 'Adivashi Bikash Parishad' etc. Though Adivashi Bikash Parishad is a NGO and its actual

motto was to develop the socio-economic condition in different sects of the Adivashi people. But now it has become a political party. Thus, the society in Jalpaiguri district was purely a plural society marked by considerable diversification in social and cultural life. But it is also remarkable that throughout the period (1947 – 2011) and also in colonial period under consideration and review of Jalpaiguri district remained free from any ethnic conflict between Hindu-Muslim, though tension prevailed. It is hoped that this study will help in bringing out the differences as well as the similarities of the local pattern of socio-economic changes which took place at national and state levels.

Hypothesis: Finally, the study is based on a clear hypothesis placed under known facts of the problem to explain relationship between the people and their mission towards urbanization. Here the researcher collects data methodically. Thus, the researcher emphasises specially on '*Working Hypothesis*'. Wherever data appears inadequate, '*Alternative Hypothesis*' is used methodically.

Methodology:

To overcome the problems with the local materials, the researcher followed a methodology where a method is planned for a systematic approach of investigation. He chooses the following methods to complete the research work. Since the nature of the work requires a multi-disciplinary approach, the present researcher needs following methodologies –

i) Survey Research Method (Field Study): As part of this method the researcher has met and interviewed as many people as possible who were either active in or eyewitnesses to the social, economic and political life from 1947 to 2011. There was constituted a source for important and interesting information of socio-economic perceptions. Interviewing people specially social workers and political leaders of various Mufassal towns, peasants and labour activists who have lived and experienced the period under study, are the most exciting part of this study.

ii) Research Method of Documentary Analysis: Here the study includes the support of numerous Mufassal towns for official records, accounts, reports, newspapers, speeches, historical documents, Laws and Acts, interviews, advertisements, private notes, literature, drama, art, group–interactions and journals and even magazines of the places under review of Jalpaiguri district.

iii) Case Study Method: Here a prolong observation has been made through the study upon the social, political, economic, cultural and religious life of the people under review to have a acceptable conclusion and output of the study of Jalpaiguri district.

iv) Historical Research Method: To reach the goal the researcher takes the support of two types of data – a) the primary data and b) the secondary data. Here the study shows the primary sources consult with the original records and the secondary source shows the printed materials i.e. different books, articles, journals, magazines, newspapers, periodicals, extracts of seminars etc. A through insight and analysis help the scholars to frame a sound conclusion upon his analysis and observations.

Overview of Literature:

The economy, society and political aspects of Jalpaiguri district have been dealt in a strong manner, published through some little magazines. With the publication of Jalpaiguri Centenary Souvenir (*Jalpaiguri Sata Barshiki Smarak Grantha, Pub: 1969*) edited by Sri Reboti Mohon Lahiri, a great step was taken in respect of historical investigations of the district. The magazine - ‘*Madhuparni*’ (Pub – 1987) edited by Sri Ajitesh Bhattacharya published from Balurghat did a commendable job in publishing the different volumes pertaining to the different districts of North Bengal and in this connection the Jalpaiguri issue contained many valuable articles on urbanization of the Jalpaiguri district in the Colonial Age.

Besides these, a lot of investigation works in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal have been done during the Colonial Period. Notable writer–historian Prof. Ranajit Das Gupta and Ashim Choudhury have tried to give a meaningful insight into the process of urbanization in the Jalpaiguri district. Prof. Das Gupta through

his valuable work – ‘*ECONOMY, SOCEITY AND POLITICS IN BENGAL: JALPAIGURI 1869 – 1947*’ (Pub: Oxford University Press, 1992) has tried to study the colonial economy in the background of different nationalist as well as subaltern movements. In this regard he has also touched the urbanization process in the district with the formation of “small town grown in colonial context”. The study showed a constant dichotomy between a potential for radical socio–economic transformation and eventual non–realization of that potential. So, the process of urbanization in the district didn’t touch the expected level. This was the final conclusion of Prof. Ranajit Das Gupta. Prof. Ashim Choudhury gives us an information of the development of urbanization of Jalpaiguri district through his work - ‘*Development, Urbanization and Rural–Urban Relationship in Plantation Dominated Economy – Myth and Reality: The Case of Jalpaiguri District in North Bengal*’ in Biplob Das Gupta(Ed), *Urbanization, Migration and Rural Change: A Study of West Bengal* (Pub: A. Mukherjee, Calcutta, 1988). However, their views were on the plantation economy mainly and the gradual trend to urbanization

originated from there. But they could find the tendencies of urban growth here, however, in a foetal form in the Jalpaiguri town only.

Dr. Shesadri Prosad Bose through his book - ‘*Colonial India, Predatory State: Emergence of New Social Structure in Jalpaiguri District (1865 – 1947)*’ (Pub: Readers Service, Kolkata, 2008) has dealt with the socio–economic and political ambit of the Jalpaiguri district in colonial period and in this connection has shown the evolution of the *Jotedari System* and the inter–dependence of the Jotdars with the colonial masters. And contrary to this argument the process of urbanization in the district has also been dealt with. But surprisingly Shubhajyoti Roy through his book titled ‘*TRANSFORMATIONS ON THE BENGAL FRONTIER*’ (Pub: Routledge Curzon – Taylor & Finance Group, 2002) totally avoids the reference about urbanization in the Jalpaiguri district in the colonial period.

Another source titled - "*SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN NORTH BENGAL: A SUB HIMALAYAN TRACT*", Ed – by Sukhbilas Burma, New Delhi, 2007, Vol. – I & II. The book, a compilation of articles contains the information on the socio – political movements stirring the Sub–Himalayan region of North Bengal during the period of last 100 years. These two volumes highlighted the general causes of the socio–political movements in a general way. But the writer did not mention the background of socio–economic mutations of these movements. The book – '*THE UNREST AXLE: ETHNO – SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN EASTERN INDIA*,: Ed – by Goutam Kumar Bera, New Delhi, 2008, highlights the study of a social movement represents a sphere of social activity and social change. Scholars interested in this discipline find pleasure in deciphering the involvement of ethnic groups who make attempts to change an existing structure, which gets the nomenclature 'ethno–social movement'. The book brings into relief of some observations on ethno–social and political movements of Eastern India over a time–frame of about two and a half centuries. To have a wide coverage of the subject the book accommodates two important social mobility movements launched during the last century by two dominant caste groups of Bengal who are spilled over to the adjacent country and the impacts of refugee's penetration. But the writer did not emphasize on economic roots of the refugee's advent in this area.

Another important book – '*REGIONALISM, ETHNICITY AND LEFT POLITICS*, by Sajal Basu, (2005) Rawat Publication, give us a lot of information. In this book the writer mentioned the problems of linguistic and cultural identity, ethnicity and autonomy and the demands have led to violent expressions like Gorkhaland and Kamtapur movements. But the writer did not highlight the refugee's onslaught from East Pakistan, Nepal or Bhutan to the border districts of West Bengal. This creates a major problem. The famous article – '*PARTITION, MIGRATION AND THE PROCESS OF URBANIZATION IN WEST BENGAL (1947 – 1971)*' by Tridibantapa Kundu in the book – '*Urbanization in Indian: Past and Present*', Ed – Chittabrata Palit, 2009 gives us numerous data about the refugees' onslaught from East Pakistan to border districts of West Bengal. But

here the writer did not pay his kind attention to the social and cultural mutation after the refugees' penetration in North Bengal.

An important article titled – '*LIFE IN THE MUFASSAL TOWNS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY BENGAL*' by M.S. Islam on the book – '*In the City in South Asia Pre-Modern and Modern*' Ed – Kenneth Ballachat and John Harission, Pub – Tandrita Bhaduri Readers Service, 1980. Here the writer expressed how the Mufassal Towns or semi-urban centers emerged after partition. But the writer did not stress on the cultural mutation among the different castes, creeds, languages and religious sects of North Bengal. Another important book – '*Essay on CULTURAL HISTORY OF NORTH BENGAL*' by Sailen Debnath, N. L. Publishers, Siliguri, 2008. Here the writer adequately reflects together the important cultural aspects and profile of people's culture of North Bengal in the stream changes in the duration of the course of history from the remote past to the present.

There are another two important contemporary books - the first one is '*Paschim Banger Poursabha Bibartan Theke Nirbachan*', written by Biswanath Chakraborty, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, March, 2010. Here the writer draws his attention that after the Partition (1947) how refugee's influx made small towns and pourasabha in West Bengal. But there is no discussion about the cultural mutation among the different sections of people of North Bengal.

The second book is '*URBAN SOCIOLOGY*', written by Rajendra Kumar Sharma, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (P) Ltd. 2007. Here the writer highlights the sociological background of urbanization. But there is no discussion about the role of the refugee's to make the changes of society, economy and culture of Jalpaiguri district or North Bengal.

However, the major portion of the previous studies has focused on the process of urbanization in the Jalpaiguri district in the colonial period. But significant research investigations regarding the post colonial urbanization pattern in the district is still in its infancy. The partition saga and the concurrent migration wave transformed the socio-economic and political map of Bengal and in this

perspective. Jalpaiguri district also underwent massive transformations. The colonial economic situations hardly gave encouragement to the growth of small towns since metropolitan towns would cater the commercial interests of the colonial masters. So the small towns grown in the colonial perspective was hardly encouraging. But in the post-colonial period the inauguration of welfare economy changed the perspective of the state. As a result a market improvement could be visible in respect of development of small towns' growth in India. In these perspectives the researcher's present dissertation aims to show the pattern of urbanization in the Jalpaiguri district.

In the colonial period plantation economy fed only one small town's growth i.e. Jalpaiguri, but in the post-colonial period the process of commercialization, agriculture and its state holders also changed. Naturally their tendencies also were reflected in the urbanization process. So as a result instead of having only solitary example in the district, now Jalpaiguri district was marked with a number of Mufassal townships. So many present dissertations aim knitting the threads of different socio-economic and political ambits in order to have a meaningful insight into the process of Jalpaiguri district's urbanization in the post-colonial period.

Research limitations:

To fulfil the work a wide range of primary and secondary sources have been used. A bibliography providing indication of the materials both official and unofficial which have been consulted. But most of the unpublished materials were consulted in 'State Archives' in Kolkata and Refugee Rehabilitation Office, Jalpaiguri. As to study on the district an important source is Jalpaiguri town, the head quarter of the district. In Jalpaiguri the researcher utilizes the 'District Library' and Azad Hind Pathagar for collecting of voluminous informations. But it is very sad to say that the devastating flood of the Tista that occurred in Jalpaiguri in 1968 caused havoc loss with a major part of local materials such as the record that had been preserved at the Divisional Commissioner's Office and the Collectorate Record Room in Jalpaiguri, the files of Weeklies and Journals published from Jalpaiguri and records of business organizations like 'Indian Tea Association', Jalpaguri, 'Tea

Association of India' (Dooars Branch), Binnaguri, Indian Tea Planter's Association, Jalpaiguri etc.

Numerous Non-Municipal Towns or Mufassal Towns of the district such as Dhupguri, Falakata, Maynaguri, Banarhat, Malbazar, Domohini etc. for collecting basic information have been visited. Information is collected from various libraries, offices, municipal offices, schools and colleges. But these towns had no record room and there were no preserved records chronologically. So there was difficulty in collecting records. The recent data were available but early records were not visible.

However, in the post-partition or post-colonial period (1947 – 2011) due to the introduction of commercial crops, brooming land price, development of transport and communication system, growth of population by infiltration from East Pakistan and Assam, the insular mentality of the region broke down. So, the mission of the investigation is to find out the trends of economic development of other trading centers in the region to see whether these centers exhibited any tendencies of urban growth. Thus, the aim of the work is to highlight the semi-urban centers or Mufassal towns through the post-colonial ages of this locality where no important similar work had been done yet.