

## **CHAPTER III**

### **POST COLONIAL URBAN SOCIAL HISTORY OF DARJEELING**

Urbanization as a process has significant physical and social effects on the urban landscape. The town of Darjeeling as a hill station evolved due to the British cultural imprint on the Hill Landscape.<sup>1</sup> The post colonial Darjeeling witnessed further urbanization resulting problems and issues of different kind. From the sociological point of view, urbanisation means the spread of urbanism. Urbanism is seen as a phenomenon that brings about substantial transformation in a person's way of life such as changes in attitudes, values or behavioural patterns. People living in city or towns do have a state of mind.<sup>2</sup>

The urbanization of Darjeeling started with the establishment of a health resort by the British army personnel. However, the real catalyst was the establishment of the tea gardens in the region. Apart from Darjeeling town, Kurseong and Kalimpong owe their birth and growth due to the same cause. Moreover, urbanisation process in the Queen of Himalayas cannot be understood within the confines of its territory, and without taking into account urbanization that is taking place in the plains close to the Darjeeling foot-hills. Thus urbanization in Darjeeling hill area cannot be adequately understood

without reference to Siliguri – a rapidly growing urban settlement at the doorstep of the entire Eastern Himalayas including Darjeeling.<sup>3</sup>

With the societal process of urbanization lies one important aspect that is the growth of urban population. The statistics may well provide a picture of the level of urbanization in Darjeeling Hills in the last four decades. While for Darjeeling hills, the level of urbanization in 1971 was 17.24 percent, it went higher in 1981 to 21.59 percent. During 1991, the level of urbanization came down to 18 percent due to socio-political disturbances but again it went to higher side that is 20.01 percent. Not a single urban settlements in the Eastern Himalayas do have such a steady growth in the level of urbanization. Darjeeling hill area has, thus, become most urbanized (47 percent) of all the hill urban areas of this part of Himalayas. The census of 2001 amply suggests that Darjeeling town holds 107530 population which is the highest amongst all the towns of the Eastern Himalayas. The decadal population share of the district of Darjeeling and the Darjeeling hills respectively with percentage share may be shown in the following table.

**Decadal Population and Population share of Darjeeling Hills  
(1901-2001)**

Year	Darjeeling District Population	Darjeeling Hill Population	Percentage Share
1901	265780	178651	67.22
1911	279899	193304	69.06
1921	294237	206961	70.34
1931	332061	239377	72.09
1941	390899	286355	73.26
1951	459617	328785	71.53
1961	624640	404792	64.80
1971	781777	479978	61.40
1981	1024269	551374	53.83
1991	1299919	684818	52.68
2001	1605900	* 850558	* 52.96

*Source: Computed from District Census Handbook, Darjeeling, 1961-1991 and Provisional Population Totals, West Bengal, Census of India, 2001. \*As projected using exponential growth.*

It has already been mentioned in the Prologue of the thesis that social scientists usually refer to a three-part model of urbanisation. The first part of the model deals with demographic changes involving an increase in the proportion of the population in the concerned urban unit wherein migration is a major contributor of urban growth. The second part is the structural change in which an urban society at large is a production centre. Here urbanisation is a necessary component of industrialization. The third part of the model deals with behavioural urbanisation tracing social changes mainly

change in values attitudes and behavioural pattern.<sup>4</sup> The study of urbanisation process in Darjeeling therefore takes into account all these factors making Darjeeling one of the most urbanized hill stations in India.

A Government of West Bengal publication while writing on Darjeeling mentioned that "the area has always been a bridge-buffer between North Bihar and Assam with its present road and rail transport functioning around a newly enlarged old rail road facing the Himalayas of Siliguri. This staging point between Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling after 1947 Bengal partition, became a case of urban capture. Its broad gauge rail terminal named New Jalpaiguri is deference to the much older town close by to the south was aligned to take the sweep of the North Behar-Assam rail link built in the late 1940's: Its proximity to the roads up the Teesta to Kalimpong and Tibet and to Sikkim, as well as to the Duars and Terai (and thence to the Morang tract of Nepal) led to the alignment of the National Highway from Behar to Assam and improvement of roads in Darjeeling hills. At present Siliguri is the major urban centre of the region and the centre of the Terai, Duars tea industry with satellite military encampments across the neck from Nepal to Bhutan border to the North".

Darjeeling is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. The society in the area is made up of various elements drawn from diverse origins. The social diversity is perhaps the most

powerful manifestation of the area. The social groups with diverse ethnic and linguistic origins, representing various racial stocks and social status have found a place for themselves at different points of time adapting themselves to the different ecological niches offered by the physiographic and climatic setting of the area. The waves of immigration have drawn the ancestors of the majority of the present population of the area from the surrounding territories across the Himalayas. Their dispersal has resulted in the creation of a social mosaic with ethnic distinctiveness.

Approximate ethnic group-wise composition of the population of Darjeeling may be mentioned as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. **Nepali:** This is a generic term and subsumes more than 15 ethnic groups under it. Various castes and tribes (like Sherpa, Subbas and Tamangs) that immigrated to the area during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from Nepal and subsumed under this group. Today they are the permanent settlers and bonafide citizens of India.
2. **Lepcha:** They are the earliest settlers and are regarded as the autochthonous tribe of the region.
3. **Bhutia:** They are the tribe that migrated to the area from Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet during both the colonial and post-colonial era.

4. **Tibetan:** They include refugees that fled Tibet and came to the area after the Sino-Indian war of 1961.
5. **Bengali:** They comprise both permanent settlers and migrant Bengalis of South Bengal and the refugees from Bangladesh.

To comprehend the process of social change in Darjeeling therefore is to put together different factors, cultural, social, economic and political into a manageable configuration. The years that followed after independence saw the rapid growth in the population in the region. Over the years, people belonging to different castes, tribes, religions and speaking various languages have found places across the geographical and temporal spaces in the 'queen of the hills'. It can be said that Darjeeling today is an ethnographic museum and a cultural melting pot. Darjeeling Himalaya offers the most remarkable example of growth of population stemming mainly from immigration from outside. The most potent factor contribution to the growth of population in the area has been the tea industry. Another important factor which also encouraged immigration in the district has been the general trade and services. Besides, immigrations due to political reasons (mainly from Bangladesh, Tibet and Bhutan) have played a significant role in the growth of population in Darjeeling.<sup>6</sup>

The contemporary society of Darjeeling has been made complex as the ideologies or the paradigms defining the normatives

are contradictory in nature. Moreover the skewed patterns of social mobility, the narrow cultural self consciousness among tribes, castes, religious minorities and interest groups and political culture increasingly loosing legitimacy have introduced elements that render outcome of social change unpredictable.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless the process of social change in post colonial Darjeeling is an evolution of a society into a democratic setup harboring on principles that provide social, economic and peaceful relationship among diverse religious and ethnic groups. Compared to the situation obtained just after independence Darjeeling has undergone substantial social metamorphosis without however bringing about structural changes in society. This has resulted in tensions and often led to a lot of social crises during its different stages of evolution as an urban unit. Moreover there has taken place a sea change in the subjective domain or the consciousness of the people in respect of social change.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, any discourse of social mobility and social stratification in Darjeeling is more or less based on its vivid cultural heritage. It needs extensive thorough insight to comprehend the heritage of Darjeeling in its entirety given its varied cultural depth, multiple cultural and social overlaps and a great variety of "Little Nations" which its "Great Nation" encompasses. It is rightly argued that Darjeeling does not have one great nation, but many great nations. Although Buddhism held a position of overwhelming significance,

latter Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and several tribal cults enriched the culture of Darjeeling. On these polyarchic cultures of Darjeeling the colonial influence had an overwhelming effect on the cultural institutions of Darjeeling historically superimposing itself on this indigenous area.

Argumentatively, to understand the historicity of the Urban Social structure of Darjeeling is to dwell on the complexity in the change and continuity of its urban society. Like most of the towns in Indian today, Darjeeling has become unlivable both on account of the degradation of the environment and the disorder in the social, cultural order despite attempts of planned sustainable urban development. Attempts have been there of both the state and the Government of India to introduce a balance regional growth through planned industrial and urban development, since 1970s. However, those have not yielded good result.<sup>9</sup> There is a general overview that urbanization in Darjeeling like the rest of India is a socio-economic process connected with a scientific technological evolution which has influenced society, economy as well as the demographic, ethnic and other social processes. According to Kavtsebovskaia – “urbanization implies changes in the nature of peoples activities, in the notion between population engaged in agricultural activities and in the population distribution according to the types of settlement; in population concentration of mains activities in shaping of urban way

of life and its growing influence on the other sections of population.”<sup>10</sup>

The most striking feature of Darjeeling's society is its long tradition. The emergence of early social life is associated with the evolution of the first Lepcha village followed by the medieval and modern periods of history. For that reason Darjeeling's social life pattern is a mosaic of segments belonging to the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Today urbanization has become a worldwide phenomenon. On the basis of Western experience urbanization means a break down of traditional social institutions and values. In Darjeeling context this means among other things that the society in Darjeeling today is made more complex as the ideologies or paradigms defining it have changed. History suggests that the urbanism in Darjeeling has been a European legacy devoid of continuum of rural-urban flux. The town of Darjeeling got urbanized to satisfy imperial and elitist interest and the neighbouring hinterlands gradually started depending on Darjeeling as the centre of secondary source of economy.

Migration is a key process underlying the growth of urbanization. Far from being a mechanical process, it is governed by economic, social and cultural factors. Generally, the immigrant communities are referred to as ethnic groups in different urban studies in India and elsewhere. Migration is basically a social process following the lines of caste, kinship, friendship, village, linguistic and

regional ties. It is seen that the immigrants tend to cluster around people with whom they have linguistic, local, regional, caste and kinship ties. <sup>11</sup> In western cities usually concentration of immigrants is locally referred to as Ghettos. Here the immigrants have little relation with communities of their origin. In the Indian context the immigrants usually maintain contacts with their native villages and are not isolated from them. The study of Darjeeling as an urban unit from the sociological point of view is interesting. The Nepalese who came to Darjeeling from Nepal maintain relations with their counterparts with their respective native places. In the urban context the culture of Darjeeling is a creation of the local cultural and social environment of Nepal mixed with the Lepcha Tibetan tradition. Thus in Darjeeling there is a situation of cultural pluralism with different linguistic and regional immigrant communities living in their own respective cultural worlds.

Darjeeling social urban history is a study of migration specially among the Nepalese who have shown that many urban Nepali residents in Darjeeling have settled in the town since they first came as coolies to work in the tea factories. Mitchell points out that the word "urbanized" is used in two ways and that the two meanings are frequently confused. The word is first used in a demographic sense to refer to being settled in a town, and second in a more sociological sense to refer to changes in social behaviour such that "migrants become committed to the town". <sup>12</sup> The social concept of urbanization

is key to understanding how people conceive their society. Human society tries to change geographical areas, such as land, locations, mountains, rivers into cultural objects, possessions and assets. The making and remaking of Darjeeling urban structure consists of a process of status formation and the appropriation of physical and cultural endowments. Social urbanization influences individuals, families, groups and neighbourhoods. Thus there is an omnipresent and ubiquitous process of urban formation that is consequent upon social practices which may have super local, consequences.<sup>13</sup>

The town of Darjeeling is an early colonial hill station – famous for its scenic beauty and the tea industry. Today it is well known as a tea manufacturing centre not only in India but also abroad. All of these factors are relevant for understanding the relationship between urbanization and society in operational terms. Darjeeling has clearly demarcated spatial segments commensurate with the grade, social division among its inhabitants. The administrative formal divisions namely wards do not reflect social division as clearly as to the various streets and areas of the town. Interestingly unlike urbanization in the plains Darjeeling lack Mohallas (neighbour) Galis (lanes) or Paras (neighbourhood). Instead it has its “Birch Hill” ‘Jalaphar” “Lebong Race Course, Chowk Bazaar, Bhutia Basti, Singamari.Dhobi Talao, Kak jhora, Chota Kak Jhora, or Police line. People simply as territorial units in the town does not view these spatial divisions: they are accepted more as cultural sites

and living marks of abodes and identities. Geographical demarcations thus amount to socio-cultural markers as well as insulation and inclusions, though in varying degrees.

It is interesting to note that those who have their houses located on the margins of major roads and important areas have also become 'marginal' socially and culturally. On the other hand, such people have the advantage of serving as social links between both sides of the socially uplifted areas. This is particularly true of the original colonial part of the town and the outer town. Retaining tradition in the outer part of the town is an important concern as status and honour are associated with and derived from the original colonial part of the town. The allocation of space to different communities and segments is a well-recognized aspect of status determination. This form of space - segregation with its explicit unevenness is taken for granted because it is transmitted from generation to generation. The perception of space - segregation is formed largely because of underlying structural constraints most notably in the case of Darjeeling community and class based, distinctions. The taken for granted social world is thus seen through mental structures, and these are in turn the product of an internalization of structures of the social world. <sup>14</sup>

Simultaneously Darjeeling has also been absorbing modernity during the past too years. Modernity has created new urban structures and thereby new patterns of status and honour; it has

also weakened traditional experience of these themes. Since colonialism and modernity are not absolute phenomena and the two could co-exist, one could think of a paradigm of space and status in the form of a synthesis of colonialism and modernity.<sup>15</sup> Darjeeling looks old and new as well as traditional and modern. It represents tradition new offices shops, markets institution, residences schools etc. symbolize modernity. As these exhibits of modernity have not wiped out colonial spatial and residential patterns, there is a co-existence of the two. <sup>16</sup>

Darjeeling is therefore both a physical identity as well as a cultural social phenomenon. The people of Darjeeling know the separation from one neighbourhood to another. Yet what is more significant for them is the name of the neighbourhood and the meaning and the message it gives to its members and to other inhabitants. Thus urbanization has become a cultural construct and a determination of status. People are well aware of the “official classification” of words and their actual delineation. In social life however it is the classification of “Bastis and Daras” that is more effective marker of identity and social ties. Darjeeling is both an extraordinary and an ordinary town. Population wise it is like any town but its cultural heritage, colonial landmarks and beautiful natural settings make Darjeeling unique. It is an ordinary town in some respects because it has all the features of a modern urban centre – banks, colleges, schools, multiplex, roads, means of

transport and communication government offices, a police station etc. But the effects of its long history are also discernible.

Darjeeling is not only the headquarters of a district but also a substantially large town and cultural centre located at a strategic point on the trade route between north and south. The urbanity of Darjeeling was a matter of great pride during colonial times and also during post-independence period. It was regarded as the crown of West Bengal. Darjeeling was always 'urban' and it was never a village in the garb of a town. Classifications like 'regional entry point', European town or even Mufaisal towns do not fit Darjeeling. This is because Darjeeling is not a town that lies between a village and a city. Darjeeling is not a residual entity, for village idioms and practices. A distinctive urbanity is to be found intermixed here in varying degrees for its unique historical experiences.

What Akos Ostor<sup>17</sup> says about a Bengal town applies to Darjeeling as well. Local legends, rituals, bazaars act as effective conceptual tools for probing into cultural spaces within Darjeeling. The notions of itihās (history) bazaar (market) Sarkar (government) and andolan (rebellion) as used by Ostor provide a convincing description of the dialectics of Darjeeling's social formation. The description of Darjeeling in Hooker's Journal the vivacity of Lower market or Chowk Bazar (Nepali equivalent) with its numerous shops and traders, the coming of the British and their subsequent colonization of the town and its post-independence ethno-centric

regional assertions and regional autonomy movements have all left their traces over the entire gamut of Darjeeling society.

The cultural, heritage of Darjeeling, which is evident in its natural endowments colonial architecture and objects and in the tea and tourism industry, has generated a sense of belonging and attachment to the town. The symbolic strength the people derive from Darjeeling's cultural panorama is quite remarkable. Literary production and the cultural orientation of the people of Darjeeling are dependent to a great extent upon what exists in Darjeeling as a historical reality. The members of Darjeeling's literati are aware of Darjeeling's history and make positive references to it. Booklets, articles, reports document etc. on Darjeeling are well known to a large cross-section of people. Darjeeling has clearly an identity of its own and its people have a creative imagination rooted in memories, both mystic and historical.

Urbanization, de-urbanization and lately re-urbanization characterize Darjeeling's ups and downs Hookers's journals, Fred Pinn's book and Dozey's historical account give us an account of its part grandeur as the summer capital of Bengal. The decline of Darjeeling's administrative status from being a district to that of an ordinary district headquarter after 1947 indicated its downfall, but development during the past two decades have given evidence of Darjeeling's re-urbanization. Darjeeling administrative status has been elevated to that of an autonomous Hill Council namely the

Gorkha Hill council. This is in recognition of the fact that it has as many as forty to fifty offices, six colleges including a post-graduate college (Darjeeling Government College) and a network of roads and small vehicle routes within its confines. The expansion of tourism, the establishment of Tele-communication and tourist links with major cities and towns, the emergence of 'local service' gentry and finally the commercialization of tea and tourism are positive forces of urban development.

After Darjeeling's rise to the status of an autonomous council headquarters, its population grew. As the headquarters of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, Darjeeling has gained tremendous pressure on its administration. The offices relating to the administration, education, irrigation, public health engineering, tourism, and so on and so forth which have given an impetus to Darjeeling's population growth. An appreciable expansion in the tourism industry widened trade links and also encourages outsiders to visit Darjeeling.

Since late eighties, Darjeeling Hill was not only granted a special administrative status it also had the privilege of being chosen for development by the way of special assistance been given by the Central and State Government. The birth of the Gorkha Hill Council resulted in the re-urbanization of the town by way of new programmes and activities. Urban life, as a social phenomenon is visible in Darjeeling in a variety of ways. Darjeeling has many

bazaars or markets – the lower market, or the Chowk Bazar, the Super Market, the Mahakal Market, and the markets which have mushroomed adjacent to the Mal and Chowrasta and a fairly diversified occupational structure, as well as with several educational institutions, health care facilities, and other civic amenities. Even the life style of the people of Darjeeling are infected with consumer oriented aspiration. But this apparent urbanity has a cultural ethos hidden within in social relations, inter caste / community ties, spatial segregation behavioural patterns and other forms of primary activities make Darjeeling a typical urban entity. However, urbanism as a way of life has not made major inroads in the interrelations amongst Darjeeling's residents. The root of the family structure, and the adherence to certain socio-cultural values in inter-personal relations remain traditional in many respects even today for example in Darjeeling the traditional value have remained largely intact. More than these common areas of social inter-action, community specific festivals like Dasai, Tewar, Loshar help bringing a sense of homogenous culture.

The social space of Darjeeling is clearly observable to the citizens of Darjeeling at two level (i) through popular literature and music and (ii) through observations of the interrelations between cultural ambience and social status. An examination of various popular writings, pamphlets, guides reveal the importance of Darjeeling town. Since Darjeeling was situated on the trade route

between Tibet/China/Sikkim and India its importance was considerable. The magnificent Kanchenjunga at the backdrop of the town speaks of its natural beauty, and the beautiful colonial architecture speaks of the importance status that Darjeeling enjoys as a cultural and political entity.

The appreciation of Darjeeling as a celebrated palace for tourism has contributed to a romanticised image of the town. The formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has led to the process of re-urbanisation and employment generation. Even the decline of the town as a tea manufacturing area have still managed to retain its multicultural character. The economic revival of the town came by way of its tourist industry trades and services. Today despite numerous government offices and civic amenities and the level of social relations, Darjeeling still retains many colonial characteristics. These are early visible in the manner in which communities interact and also in the way spatial segregation is linked to status hierarchy.

A curious correspondence between community structure and space organization (that is various areas) has upheld the diverse characteristic of Darjeeling. The four main religious communities of Darjeeling namely the Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims together they form eighty percent of the population of Darjeeling. The Nepalese are at the top of the ritual hierarchy and ahead of other groups with regard to education and white colour jobs. The Lepcha,

Bhutia, Tibetan and Marwari communities who together form 50 percent of Darjeeling's trade commerce and in effect the town's economy. Urbanization as a socio-culture phenomenon is evident from the numerous wards of the Municipality. A single community exclusively inhabits some of the wards or areas eg. Bhutia Busty where one finds an exclusive concentration of Lepchas or Sherpas or the Zakir Hussain Busty where concentration of Muslims is evident. But when areas have more than one community or more less the same social status, they are generally engaged in similar economic activities. In some single community areas for example Beechwood, H.D Lama Road, Jalaphar, Meadowbank Birchill people are engaged in different economic pursuits because of intra-caste social differentiation. Traditional activities such as carpet weaving, hair cutting, priesthood, trade and commerce are pursued on a commercial basis by the Marwaris, Tibetians, Nepalese and Lepachas. However there are few neighbourhoods with a plurality of groups corresponding to diversity of occupations undoubtedly in general, or a close empirical connection can be seen between space and community affiliation in Darjeeling. This correspondence has effectively kept community tradition intact. The location of temples, mosques and churches in different localities also speaks of the spatio-socio-cultural character of the town.

Today Darjeeling can be viewed, as a social universe constituted by communities defined by their relative status. The

basic principles of differentiation and stratification demarcate boundaries within the universe. Despite socio-cultural homogeneity among the members of a denigrated social, space, differences in economic and power relations are still discernible. Thus the position of a given family in the social space is dependent also upon the position it occupies in different domains. The area provides a sense of social security and social recognition.

Like many other towns Darjeeling has witnessed 'dependent urbanization': Dependence of state support and the wider economic order has largely determined the re-urbanization of Darjeeling. Small towns also suffer in competition with bigger towns and cities, receive the lion's share of the available infrastructure and resources. If Darjeeling has survived as a town, it is more because of the District Planning Act 1994 and the Municipal (Amendment Act 1997), and the Darjeeling Hill Areas Development Council, the local bodies have a framework for development planning of the area under their control and an obligation to prepare a Draft Development Plan once in five years and an Annual Development Plan each year. Moreover with the creation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1988, new infrastructures have been created to address the neo-economic market order.

Though many areas in Darjeeling is community based, the Municipal Wards have a different character. Out of the total wards, one can read in the naming of different wards, a conscious effort to

synthesize tradition in modernity and modernity in tradition thus denote “Urbanization”, separately as well as by way of a synthesis. Shops and residences are often found together, the former on the ground floor and the latter on the first floor. Such an arrangement is not only convenient, but it also eliminates contradiction between people’s social and economic life.

A population of about 107530 (Census 2001) engages in as many as ninety-five different occupations and economic pursuits.<sup>18</sup> This indicates the diversified nature of urban occupational structure and the making of traditional and modern occupations hair cutting, shop keeping, teaching, etc. are performed as non-traditional activities in a ‘market situation’. Some new occupations have being almost monopolized by some caste and communities. For example the tribal castes control modern trade commerce, teaching and government jobs. The social aspect of space is evident in the commercial zones of the town. New markets do not have a single saree shop rather one notices outlets for more westernized wear like jeans, skirts, trousers or T-shirts with western logos on it.

A paradigm shift in our conceptualization becomes necessary when people become conscious of their social space and status more than their material and existential conditions. “Material objects and events alone do not create the social world in which people live in the natural and material worlds are transformed into the social world by way of social space and status”.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis is on the recognition

of the space status nexus in a town like Darjeeling. Here is a town in which urbanization is constructed on the basis of differentiation and ordered ranks of people in the form of social hierarchy. Though Darjeeling is a multifaceted town with diverse fields of activities, the urban dimension appears in different forms of its social fabric.

In Darjeeling geographical space clearly indicates space of social relation. The geographical distances are social spaces. In the given situation of Darjeeling's new social spaces or divisions may not easily come into being. Hence a sort of stability characteristics is found in Darjeeling. So entrenched is this space status demarcation that even peoples disquiet and anxiety do not stir the established cultural notion and their practices. The making and re-making of social space indicates a need for the reconceptualisation of social relations and space allocation. Darjeeling demonstrates a double contingency, a double game in real life situation by way of a synthesis of colonialism and modernity. Without dismantling boundary maintenance it has accepted new classifications and social division. A new system of social recognition and urbanization, without severely attacking the existing characteristics, Darjeeling's multiculturalism shows in the past and hope in the future speak of the co-existence of the old and new, the colonial and the post-colonial in Darjeeling.

Darjeeling characterises a unique combination of the ideal and actual social worlds in the enactment of socio-cultural activities.

Caste or community no doubt remains a recognizable entity in festivals and social gatherings the ideology and moorings of the people in general reflect space-segregation and social distance never remains hidden. At times competition for access to cherished social space is also observed. It indicates that no status is indisputable forever. Darjeeling has very recently witnessed an effective struggle for creating new classifications of social classes, divisions and institutions. Hence urbanization remains commensurate with social space to a recognizable extent. It is important to remember that though Darjeeling as an urban centre is primarily connected to a colonial beginning it is just as Indian as a British town is British. <sup>20</sup>

But what therefore prevented the growth of a dynamic urban situation in Darjeeling. What are the factors behind the twisted and rhythmless urbanization of Darjeeling. In the first place the Tea Industry in Darjeeling came about as a result of a big capital investments during the colonial period. When India gained independence the Calcutta based Indian capital took over. Neither the entrepreneurs, nor their highly paid officials lived in an around Darjeeling, nor was the Darjeeling tea auctioned at Darjeeling. So the major portion of the value of the tea flew out of Darjeeling. Only that portion of the value given as wages to the tea garden workers used to be spent in Darjeeling. So Darjeeling being one of the top most producers of Indian Tea became at the same a non-entity so far as decision-making, financing and marketing was concerned. Till the

late 1980(s) the management of the Tea Industry never felt it wise to invest in anything apart from providing the workers with rudimentary social and civic amenities.

Secondly the development of Tourism in Darjeeling conferred benefits on the landed gentry of the town by entrancing urban ground rents, yet they were never a party to the development of Darjeeling town. The hotel owners do not have much communication with the sections of the people in the town mainly the working class. Due to property and educational qualifications this group enjoyed leadership position in the Municipal affairs. Town leaders at the helm of the Municipal affairs naturally utilized the greater part of the Municipal funds in providing civic amenities like sanitation drainage water supply road services to their parts of the town. All these bottle necks and the non-existence of channels of communication tended to make Darjeeling a segmented town “with ethnically organized classes and status groups occupying different positions on a horizontal plane, instead of being a vertical structure with differentiation strata”.<sup>21</sup>

By the mid 1980(s) the state of mind again started blowing. This time the change was from within the Gorkhaland Agitation, followed by a significant decrease in economic growth brought about important changes in the process of urbanization. Non Nepalese who did not mentally belong to the city, with their root in distant Kolkata, and having no power interest sold off their properties. According to

George Simmel, mentality of belonging to any urban centre is an important qualification for the members of an urban community. <sup>22</sup> More important changes were taking place in the attitude and social situation of the people during post Gorkhaland Agitation as regards to the urban community in Darjeeling. By dint of their political interests and leadership roles in civic life, a new urban elite in Darjeeling has started taking place .

Apart from political personnel, many in Darjeeling were going in for higher education and joining various professions. By the beginning of the seventies a large number of educated people were taking up white-collar jobs in Darjeeling, they were also taking them up in the adjoining districts of Darjeeling and Siliguri. But these people did not have any culturally generative role in the town even though they feel as belonging to the town. They largely sustain the satellite character of the town in a continuous and contiguous urban region. The daily traffic of passengers increased between Darjeeling and Siliguri can be gauged from the fact that in 1961 there was just one to two buses plying from Darjeeling to Siliguri by 1991 there are twenty two buses plying in the very same route. This new millennium has witnessed at least 40 Buses and 1400 shared taxi's and jeeps ply in the route.

The growth of an educated white-collar class in Darjeeling has created an interesting situation. The class can be broadly divided into two groups. The first group who have originated from the

colonial period itself, is composed of lawyers, office workers, teachers and small businessmen who reside in the town and go to work in the town. Most of them are from old established families of the town and hold landed properties. Second, after the Gorkhaland agitation, there has been the rise of a new class, many of whom have established communication with the working class, and the plantation workers and have individually achieved important roles in social, economic and political fields. Organized political movements were throwing up leaders from unexpected caste, occupation and status group. These people were rising to leadership positions on the basis of their party support aspiring for a separate state. At the same time numerically superior and economically viable but not traditional power groups were also competing for leadership in community. This resulted a kind of internal power struggle and rivalry.

The more Darjeeling changes, the more it remains the same, concrete structures dot the whole town but some pockets of the city remain unchanged the Mall still continues to do business with its pony rides and ice cream stalls. The town has been fast changing during the last decade. Visitors coming to early Darjeeling during the 60(s) and 70(s) probably wouldn't even recognize the town now with the numerous concrete buildings and hotels the hoarding, the neo-urban culture. While the racial distinctions between the upper white town and the lower black town do not exist in contemporary Darjeeling, a class or socio-economic distinction has replaced them.

It is still considered prestigious and a status symbol to own a house in the former European area. The impact of Anglicisation has also been great, and several respondents interviewed in 1998 and 2000 agreed that there had been an increase in the number of English-speaking people. Americanisation is apparent in the growing number of fast-food restaurants, video parlours, cyber cafes and penchant for soft drinks such as Coca Cola and Pepsi as well as in the adoption of Western attire such as denim jeans and other customs. A bilingual or multi-lingual culture has evolved, of people speaking English, Nepali and Hindi or Bengali as well as Tibetan, Lepcha and other languages. There is still a marked and rapidly growing distinction between Darjeeling town and the rural areas of Darjeeling hills.

Thus the urban-rural distinction is progressively sharpened in some respects but blurred in others. There has been an increase in drug taking and crime. The tea-planting community still adheres to British traditions.<sup>23</sup> The open hill spaces – the lungs of Darjeeling, that nobody cares for, filled with hundreds and hundreds of residential structures, hotels and shops with new ideas and attitudes. Darjeeling today is crumbling, any one walking down to Singamai or the Chowrastra or to Lal Kuthi (the present DGHC headquarters) or Dali will realize the unplanned growth continues to ruin the town. Real estate market continues to boom and yet there is no place for people on the margins. Interestingly one also finds that more people are now aware of their rights. There have been the

development of civil society organizations. The average citizens' personal involvement with the city has increased, which is a change for the better.

The phrase that best describes Darjeeling is "a department store", it keeps changing every now and then. The often-used phrase "cosmopolitan" is no more apt for Darjeeling. The city is not only vertically but horizontally divided, making classification impossible to understand the diversity of Darjeeling in its fullest form. One has to stand at Mall and watch the four roads go into different directions, symbolizing the various sections of the society. While one road leads to the wealthy section another goes down to business hub of Chowk Bazar and yet another to the traditional middle-class Darjeeling and another to the administrative headquarters. The fabric of the society of Darjeeling is continuously changing, but what is disturbing is that this change is a mix of both evolution and degradation. Darjeeling is earning the reputation of becoming the drug and girls-trafficking centre. Over population and too much vehicles have been crippling the infrastructure posing threat to road, water-supply, electricity and general health. But what is still heartening is that despite the wide spread of urbanisation, pockets of city still retain their Old World charm and culture, like Birch Hill, North Point. Jalapahar, shops like Glenary's or Keventer's the Ghymkhana or the Planter's Club. Though in many areas small shops and stores have been transformed into shopping arcades, and old cinema halls have paved

the way for multiplexes and shopping malls. The urban centre has burgeoned beyond the capacity of the corruption ridden civic bodies and the political hoodlums.

It is apparent that the 'Queen of the Himalayas' has a long way to go the change is too little and has taken far too long. There is greater realisation, but the momentum for any great social change hasn't gained ground yet.

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