

CHAPTER TWO

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The nature, trend and the quantum of trade of an area is largely dependent on its environment. The study of the environmental features of Siliguri and its neighbouring areas will help us in our effort to know the different aspects of retailing of consumer goods of this city. In Chapter-II and III, we are narrating the environmental features and various other causes which have helped to develop this city as an important trade centre of India. The contents of Chapter-II and III will reveal that Siliguri is an ideal place for a study to know the problems of retailing of manufactured goods in India. During the last fifteen years, the population, volume of trade and size of the city has expanded in an unbelievable pace and after the completion of the Master Plan prepared by the Siliguri Planning Organisation, it is expected that Siliguri will become one of the biggest trade centres of India. The most important feature of this growing city is that it has got no big industries except some Tea Gardens in its adjacent areas. She is purely a trade centre feeding the needs of the large number of customers of the city as well as the people of Hill areas, namely - Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Sikkim and Bhutan.

## S I L I G U R I

Siliguri is the Headquarter of Siliguri Sub-Division. It is a big Railway Junction and is the nerve-centre of the North-Eastern Zone of the country in respect of trade and communication. Siliguri has been rapidly expanding in various dimensions. During 1931-1961 it has grown ten-fold. According to 1971 Census, the population of the Town is 97,462 the decade variation being +49.86% covered by an area of 4.97 square miles. Siliguri Town is inhabited by 97,462 as per Census of 1971. In 1950 it was declared a Municipality. <sup>The</sup> Siliguri Planning Organisation located in the Town is having an all-out effort to effect a planned growth to this region. It has also quite a number of different <sup>Small</sup> industries and has all the institutions that are usually located in a Sub-Divisional Town. Siliguri is an important commercial and small scale industrial centre. The State Bank of India, Central Bank of India, United Commercial Bank, United Bank of India, Allahabad Bank, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, Bank of India and many other Banks and financial institutions have their Branches at Siliguri. The West Bengal Government is taking keen interest to develop Siliguri as an important centre of small-scale industries. The principal industries of the Town are rice and flour mills, bakeries, fruit preservation and canning, umbrella assembly, saw mills, ply-wood industry, furniture industry, automobile servicing industry, soap manufacture, aluminium utensils manufacture industry. The whole area is rapidly developing into an industrial complex.

The growth of the Town has started centering round the Railway Station area with the setting up of godowns and ~~the~~ dwelling-cum-commercial establishments. This area of the Town has poor accessibility by Road and also suffers from bad ~~the~~ drainage. The open space in the West and South has rapidly been filled up by large-scale industries like Rice Mills, Saw Mills and setting up of houses for industrial workers. The other areas are mainly residential with a few Office Buildings interwoven in between the residential houses.

*District*

During 1961-1971 the population of the Darjeeling <sup>District</sup> has increased by 22.58% over its population of 1961. In the State of West Bengal as a whole, the population have increased by 27.24% during the decade 1961-1971. But the population of Siliguri Town has increased by 49.86% over its population of 1961. The following table shows how rapidly a small Railway Station has become a big city and important trade centre of Eastern India.

**INCREASE IN POPULATION OF DARJEELING DISTRICT  
FROM 1901 TO 1971**

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Year	Population	Decade Variation.	Percentage Decade Variation
1901	2,65,780	-	-
1911	2,79,899	+ 14,119	+ 5.31
1921	2,94,237	+ 14,338	+ 5.12
1931	3,32,061	+ 37,824	+ 12.85
1941	3,90,899	+ 58,838	+ 17.72
1951	4,59,617	+ 68,718	+ 17.58
1961	6,24,640	+ 1,65,023	+ 35.90
1971	7,65,677	+ 1,41,037	+ 22.58

**GROWTH OF POPULATION IN SILIGURI TOWN SINCE 1931**

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Year	Persons	Decade Variation.	Percentage Decade Variation
1931	6,067	-	-
1941	10,487	4,420	72.85
1951	32,480	21,993	209.72
1961	65,471	32,991	101.57
1971	97,462	31,991	49.86

There are many causes of this remarkable urban expansion at Siliguri. Political disturbances in East Pakistan are the main cause of influx of people from that country to Siliguri. Just after<sup>the</sup> partition of India in 1947 a large number of people migrated from East Pakistan and they settled in Siliguri. The above table shows that the population of Siliguri Town has increased by 209.72% during the decade 1941-1951. After that a series of communal disturbances in East Pakistan compelled a large number of people belonging to minority community of that country to cross the border. Many of them chose Siliguri for their future settlement. China-India Border clash is another important cause of the rapid growth of Siliguri Town. During that time the Government of India decided to construct large number of Military Barracks in Darjeeling District, Doars area and Terai area. Large number of Military Jawans stay in these barracks. They procure all their requirements from Siliguri. Establishment of North Bengal University and North Bengal Medical College near Siliguri has also helped to grow this town rapidly. Bagdogra Airport is only few kilometres away from Siliguri. Tea Auction Market of Siliguri which was opened recently is also attracting large number of customers from different parts of the country and also from some foreign countries. There are some big Tea Gardens near Siliguri Town. The employees and workers of these Gardens are the regular visitors of Siliguri Market. Matigara, which is only 5 Kms. from Siliguri, is rapidly

developing as an important industrial complex of North Bengal. Industrial workers of this area purchase their requirements mainly from Siliguri Market. <sup>The</sup> <sup>Region</sup> Dooars under Jalpaiguri District, is famous for Tea Gardens. Large number of Tea Gardens of this area have employed few thousands of employees and workers. Buses ply regularly from <sup>the</sup> Dooars to Siliguri. These people come to Siliguri for collecting their essential goods. Terai and Hilly region of Darjeeling District is famous for its woods. There are large number of Saw Mills in Siliguri Town which have ~~are~~ employed many people. Transport business is a very popular business of Siliguri. There are more than 50 Transport Company Offices at Hill Cart Road and Sevoke Road. Siliguri is the Gate-Way to Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam and Hilly areas of Darjeeling District. Large number of people earn their livelihood from transport and automobile business. Sevoke Road is full of ~~are~~ automobile shops and motor garages. Salugara, only two kilometres from Siliguri Town, has become an important industrial centre. Industrial workers purchase their requirements from Siliguri Market. Akashbani (Radio Station) of Siliguri is also only 4 kilometres away from Siliguri Town. Perhaps Siliguri is ~~the~~ the only place in India where Broad, Metre and Narrow Gauge Railway Lines exist. There are three Railway Stations in ~~are~~ Siliguri Town. Large number of Railway employees live in Siliguri. The soil of Siliguri is ideal for pine-apple cultivation. Few thousand persons in Siliguri are now engaged in pine-apple cultivation and pine-apple trading. Many persons of India and

Foreign Countries now know Siliguri for its big size sweet pine-apples. Construction of Farakka Barrage is also largely responsible for development of Siliguri. Now Siliguri has direct Road and Railway Link with South Bengal. Inclusion of Sikkim in India has also large contribution to the rapid growth of Siliguri. For all these reasons Siliguri has become an important trade centre of Eastern India.

#### RETAIL MARKETS OF SILIGURI :

Bidhan Market, Hill Cart Road Market and Mahabirasthan Market are the three important trade centres of Siliguri Town.

#### BIDHAN MARKET :

Late Bidhan Chandra Roy, the renowned Chief Minister of West Bengal, made a plan to construct a good market in Siliguri for those people who had to come from East Pakistan due to political and communal disturbances there. Bidhan Market of Siliguri is the result of that plan. It is really a good market. A portion of this market is reserved for vegetable and fish shops. The remaining portion is occupied by the shopkeepers dealing with different consumer goods. The main defect of this market is the want of car-parking space. In the adjacent areas of this market, a new market known as Seth Srilal Market is under construction. Some shops have started their operation in this market. For convenience we have included these shops in the list of retail shops of Bidhan Market.

In our study we shall describe this market as  $M_1$ . It is situated almost on the centre of the Town. As large number of retail shops are found in one place, this market has a special attraction to the customers. Buses, trucks and taxis do not ply inside this market. Chances of accident are less which is another important cause of attracting customers.

### HILL CART ROAD MARKET :

Hill Cart Road is a famous Road of Darjeeling District. It is the main Road of Siliguri Town. There are large number of retail shops on both sides of this Road. But Hill Cart Road is mainly important for Banks and other Offices. It is a long Road. For our study purpose we have included shops of this Road in our list covering the area from Mahananda Bridge to Railway Crossing Gate near Alupatty. Customers who come from Bagdogra, North Bengal University and Medical College, <sup>IL</sup> Dooars and Military Barracks they generally procure their goods from Hill Cart Road Market. We shall describe this market as  $M_2$ .

### MAHABIRSTHAN MARKET :

Large number of retail shops are also found in this market. But Mahabirasthan and its adjacent area Naya Bazar is mainly known as Wholesale Market. Few old retail shops are also found here. Retail shops from Railway Crossing Gate to Kalibari Road are included in our list of shops of Mahabirasthan Market. The narrow <sup>IL</sup> Road and Railway Gate are the greatest problems of the retailer of this area. In our study this Market will be known as  $M_3$ .