

Abstract

The role of the Partition of India or the Second Partition of Bengal in 1947 is the most remarkable and diversified event in India. The Partition had broadly changed the demography and administrative structure in India specially West Bengal and precisely Jalpaiguri district which is too close to the international boundary of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Bhutan and also Assam, Sikkim. Thus, the nature of demography of Jalpaiguri is different from other districts in Bengal. Besides this, this district has 151 languages of 40 Adivashi clans (tribal communities). So, the administrative district Jalpaiguri is a land of variety, specially in view of ethnicity. The Partition was followed by a massive influx of refugees from East Pakistan which was actually started with the Noakhali Riot (1946). Thereafter millions of refugees intruded into West Bengal and Jalpaiguri district in different waves.

The title of 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 valuable for its location from the administrative point of view. The year of Independence or the Partition (1947) brought the subsequent changes in the fields of administration, demography, economy, polity and livelihood apart from ethnicity. The study highlights and analyses the basic factors causing changes in the socio–economic scenario since post independence till 2011. The time period of the thesis is the Partition (1947) to the Census of 2011. The strategic difference in land acquisition policies of the erstwhile State Government in respect of industrialization and urbanization in the region under his study is one of the most important aspects of upgrading the agro–rural belts into Mufassal towns in different regions of Jalpaiguri district.

The district Jalpaiguri is really a multi–racial district in West Bengal. 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 others. With them a large number of Rajbangshis, Local Muslims and Bengali Hindus stay here. Thus the district can be said “mini India”. It is mostly based on agriculture on the southern parts like Dhupguri, Falakata, Maynaguri, Alipurduar (now district) and tea, timber, tourism on the north-western parts like Malbazar, Lataguri, Chalsa–Matelli, Odlabari Damdim, Nagrakata, Banarhat, Dalgaon etc.

After independence and Partition (1947) huge number of people specially Bengali speaking class migrated to India from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) as refugees for safer shelter of their families. They suffered from insecurity in East Pakistan due to frequent ethnic riots and inhuman torture. After all there was a huge migration and infiltration in the wide regions of Jalpaiguri which is the adjacent district of East Pakistan and Assam.

Thereafter the second refugee’s onslaught had come in the district after the Bangladesh War in 1971. After this war due to political instability and communal riots 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 service, education, trade and commerce were given utmost importance. On the basis of these prime requirements some rural market places of that time like – Alipurduar, Maynaguri, Dhupguri, Falakata, Malbazar, Birpara 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 in the district.

Through the Partition 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 the Rajbanshi Movement – ‘UTJAS’ (Uttarbanga Tapasili Jati and Adivashi Sangathan) and ‘Kamtapur Movement is separatism. Thus, the society in Jalpaiguri district was purely a plural society marked by considerable diversification in social and cultural life.

A few number of investigation works in Jalpaiguri district have been done by some notable writers (Prof. Ranajit Dasgupta, Ashim Choudhury, Biplab Dasgupta, Sukhbilas Burma and others) have tried to give a meaningful insight into the process of urbanization in the Jalpaiguri district specially in colonial period. But their views were only on the plantation economy. They found the tendencies of urban growth in a foetal form in the Jalpaiguri town only. In the post independence period due to the introduction of commercial crops, booming land prices, development of transport and communication system, growth of population by infiltration from East Pakistan and Assam, the insular mentality of the region broke down. And thus numerous small towns or Mufassal towns grew up. So, the researcher decided to highlight the semi-urban centres or Mufassal towns through the Post-colonial ages of this locality where no important works had been done yet.

However, the close observation and analysis of the researcher firmly highlights that the migration of the refugees from East Bengal after Partition (1947) brought a fast and radical change in the socio-economic and cultural fields of the district. Basically the district has moulded the total cultural atmosphere of combining of the ‘Tri-dhara Sanskriti’ or Tri-angular Culture. These ‘Tri – dhara Sanskriti’ are i) the Rajbanshi Culture, ii) the Adibashi Culture and iii) the Refugee Culture. So, it can easily be concluded that the rapid positive changes in the socio-economic fields of Jalpaiguri district came through the arrival and involvement of the migrated refugees of East Bengal after Partition (1947). Therefore, the role of the refugees to upgrade the Mufassal towns is recognized by all.