

Chapter Five

Nepali migration and settlement into Eastern India in Colonial and Post-Colonial phase

Eastern India has attracted migrants from Nepal specifically to Darjeeling area and Duars of West Bengal. Very common argument is that migration from Nepal to Darjeeling existed even before the eighteenth century. Initially Gorkhas migrated to the area following its conquest. The trend of migration continued and large volume of it was seen in the nineteenth century with British efforts. Growth of plantation economy and the development in construction work attracted migrant community of Nepal towards Darjeeling and Duars area. Temporary works like construction of road, woodcutting, seasonal agriculture and other divergent works became prominent at that time with the increase of population in the area. Nepalis in huge number started to migrate to the area and took the jobs of temporary nature. Evidence shows that in regard to establishment of Nepali settlement in Darjeeling district petition was placed by the Gorkha officials to British government. Sardar Bahadur Bhimdall Dewan Rai, retired Gorkha official made a prayer to British officer for a piece of land for the establishment of Gorkha Colony in Darjeeling district. After his retirement he pleaded for that land and said that the colony would provide future soldiers, coolies at short notice to the British when mobilization of armies would be ordered. In the petition 21 square miles of the Zamindari was prayed for to the British government which was under forest and equally suitable for cultivation as well as for Gorkha settlement. Prayer was made for lease of land for 99 years or even 50 years with option for renewal. It is also reported that there was need of coolie corps soldiers for the different Gorkha Regiments and Military Police Battalions and authorities complained to their higher officials about the shortage of Gorkhas in the region. They stated that land was not available in Darjeeling where new Gorkhas could migrate and settle. It was also reported that all the slopes of Darjeeling was either occupied by tea or reserved forest. British officers said small bits of Khas Mahal land is also under occupation. Sardar Bahadur, recommended that land situated in the Kalimpong Sub-Division could be granted to him with Zamindari rights on such favourable terms as was granted to tea planters in the district. He stated Gorkha of military caste, fresh from Nepal would be

allowed to settle down in this zamindari.¹ Similar application was also placed to Assam government. There are no proper records which could indicate the land grant process for Nepali settlement in Darjeeling or West Bengal. But it is understandable that Gorkhas or Nepalis with the support of British settled in the various belt of Darjeeling district and also in Assam. As the state of West Bengal is adjacent to the eastern border of Nepal, migration in the district of Darjeeling from Nepal occurred significantly and it is a live issue even at present. Initially Nepali settlement started in Darjeeling and then spread to other parts of West Bengal as well. Issue of Nepali migration and the pull-push factor or sector where migrant accommodated themselves has been taken up in other segments. In this chapter the main causes of Nepali migration in Eastern India, specifically in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal will be discussed. Establishment of sanatorium in Darjeeling, tea plantation in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district, construction of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railways, infrastructural development, boundary proximity and other issues facilitated the Nepali migration to West Bengal in colonial period. In postcolonial period friendship treaty, trafficking, expulsion of Bhutanese Nepali, modern facilities, job opportunities, migration tradition worked for Nepali Migration in the area.

The census of 1881 has stated that among the immigrants who resided in Bengal, majority were from Nepal. Their number was 85,011 and they were engaged as coolies on the tea gardens of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri and in the indigo gardens of Chumparan, as well as scattered settlers or labours in other areas along the frontier of Eastern India. These Nepalis were mainly temporary immigrants. The Government of Nepal discouraged permanent Nepali migration to India. It has been seen that there were 89,855 Nepali speaking people in 1881 and among them 85,011 were migrants.² This signifies that at that period very small number of Nepalis permanently resided in Bengal. Even, in 1872, the then Bengal and Assam had 29,468 and 1635 Nepal born population respectively.³ Nepali migration rapidly grew within the short period from 1872 to 1881. It has been seen that in 1921 there were 143,044 Nepalis in Darjeeling and in 1931 there were 157,944 Nepalis of whom, 59016 were

¹ State Archive of Meghalaya, Progress for May 1917, *Application from Sardar Bahadur for settlement land for establishment of Gorkha Colony*, File-B, Political Department, Political Branch.

² Census of British India, 1881, Vol. 1.

³ Census of British India, 1872.

born in Nepal and mainly concentrated in Rangli-Rangliot, Jore Bungalow, Kalimpong, and Kurseong. In Jalpaiguri there were 28,878 Nepali speaking people in 1931 and they were mainly concentrated in Kalchini, Madarihat, Mitiali, Kumargram and Nagrakata.⁴ Distribution of the Nepalis across the district of West Bengal can be understood properly from the Census figures of 1981 to 2001. Census data from 1981 to 2001 reveal that Nepali migrants concentrated mainly in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri while a considerable number of Nepalis were also been found in Kolkata, and the urban areas of 24 Parganas. In 2001, 40,140 Nepal born people migrated to West Bengal. Out of the figure Darjeeling district received only 16,454 and Jalpaiguri received 9959 Nepali migrants.⁵ The table-13 below shows the distribution of Nepali migrants in percentage across the districts of West Bengal.

Table-13
Distribution of Nepali Migrants in Percentage Across West Bengal 1981- 2001

Place of enumeration(W.B-District)	Nepali Migrant in Percentage		
	1981	1991	2001
Darjeeling	38.91	42.19	41.00
Jalpaiguri	37.78	25.63	24.81
Cooch Behar	0.36	0.72	0.54
Dinajpur (Uttar Dinajpur + Dakhin Dinajpur)***	1.20	1.80	2.24
Maldah	0.42	0.77	0.83
Murshidabad	0.15	0.38	0.38
Birbhum	0.50	0.33	0.51
Barddhaman	4.40	5.18	4.29
Nadia	0.73	1.08	0.90
North 24-Parganas	6.37	5.10	6.04
Hugli	1.38	1.49	2.35
Bankura	0.33	0.24	0.40

⁴ Census of India, 1931, Vol. 5, Part-1, Bengal and Sikkim.

⁵ Census of India, 2001.

Puruliya	0.41	0.43	0.44
Midinipur	1.92	1.39	2.06
Haora	2.78	1.94	2.64
Kolkata	8.36	9.63	8.72
South 24-Parganas	###	1.70	1.85
<u>West Bengal</u>	100.00 (57,744)	100.00 (41,736)	100 (40,140)

Source: (i) Year 1981 to 1991 (Datta, Pranati., 2004, *Population Movement From Nepal to West Bengal*, *Indian Journal of Regional Science*, Vol-XXXVI, No-1, p. 89) (ii) Year 2001 (Census of India 2001).

*** Dinajpur was not divided till 1991, ### There were no divisions of 24-Parganas before 1981 Census.

A large number of Nepalis are presently living in both the rural and urban areas of Darjeeling. As Jalpaiguri district is adjacent to Darjeeling a significant number of Nepalis migrated and settled over there, but mostly in rural areas. Few Nepalis also migrated to Kolkata. Due to improved communication system, cost and hassle of travelling to Kolkata had reduced and job opportunities had increased. The existence of large informal sector in Kolkata provided jobs even to the less educated Nepalis who are ready to work as porters, watchmen, night guards etc. All these have attracted the Nepali migrants to Kolkata and other urban centers in postcolonial period. The most distressing fact is that the sex industry of Kolkata has attracted the Nepali women for prostitution. Volume of Nepali migration to other districts is most insignificant. So in our study we shall focus on Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal mainly.

Geographical Proximity and Nepali Migration:

“The land of thunderbolt” Darjeeling is the northernmost district of the State of West Bengal in Indian subcontinent with the shape of an irregular triangle. Darjeeling district contains a total area of 3149 square kilometers⁶ (1,215.83 square miles). The district consists of four subdivisions: Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseang and Siliguri. The altitude of the region varies from 300 to 12,000 feet above the sea level. Darjeeling falls naturally into two distinct tracts. The *Terai* is stretched immediately under the hills and the ridges and deep valleys of the lower Himalayas. It is the low-lying belt of country where several rivers and

⁶ Census of India 2001.

streams rushed down. The remaining part of the district consists of a huge mountainous ranges increasing to the height of 12,000 feet. There are no such flat valleys or plain land except few slopes⁷. In the north the boundary of the district is attached with the State of Sikkim. The narrow baseline of the district on the south divides Purnea of Bihar and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal. In the east the district is separated from Bhutan by a small river known as Jaldhaka and on the west Darjeeling is adjacent to Nepal. The small district of Darjeeling thus shares its boundaries with two independent states of Bhutan in the east and Nepal in the west. Because of the geographical proximity to Nepal border, Darjeeling has always experienced Nepali immigration in large number. Whenever there was necessity, Nepalis crossed the boundary and migrated to Darjeeling area. In the crisis period it has always happened that people from Nepal entered Darjeeling district and took shelter. Kumar Prodhan argued that there were many Nepalis residing as British subjects, they were mostly runaway people from their own country Nepal.⁸ Tea industry of the place facilitated the escape of Nepalis from Nepal to the tea estates of Darjeeling. As the number of tea estates rose in the Darjeeling district and even in Duars area Nepali population also increased rapidly. Gradually Nepali community became majority in the whole Darjeeling district and few belts of Duars.

Historical Evolution of Darjeeling and Nepali Settlement:

The history of Darjeeling is intertwined with the history of the neighbouring territories of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Bengal. Parts of the area of Darjeeling shifted from one power to another and the district got its present shape only after several such operations. Initially the land between Sikkim and the plains of Bengal that comprised the area of present day subdivisions- Darjeeling and Kalimpong was under the Raja of Sikkim⁹. There were only a few villages mainly with Lepcha inhabitants in the territory of Darjeeling. In the year 1706 the area of the present Kalimpong subdivision was captured by the Bhutanese¹⁰. On the other hand, by that time, the Gorkhas emerged as a dominant race in the region and after

⁷ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *Bengal District Gazetteers – Darjeeling*; Logos Press, New Delhi, p. 2.

⁸ Adhikari, Jagannath & Gurung Ganesh, 2009, *Migration, Security and Livelihoods: A case of Migration between Nepal & India*, Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Nepal, p. 56.

⁹ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 2.

¹⁰ Dash, Arther, Jules., 1947, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*; Government Printing, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal. P. 38.

overrunning the hills and the Valleys of Nepal they marched towards the east. Ultimately in 1780 they invaded Sikkim¹¹. During the next 30 years Sikkim was repeatedly defeated and lastly, Gorkhas overran the state of Sikkim as far eastward as the Tista River and occupied the Terai. The present area of Darjeeling also came under the Gorkhas. The British colonial became worried at this Gorkha aggression all through the length of northern border of their Indian possession. Subsequent developments led to the outbreak of war between the British East India Company and the Gorkhas in 1814. The tract which Nepal had wrested from Sikkim was yielded to the East India Company and the Raja of Sikkim, who had been evicted from power, was restored to his position. In 1817 by the Treaty of 'Titalya' the entire land between the rivers Mechi and Tista, extending over 4000 square miles, was restored to the Raja¹². Thus Sikkim and the present district of Darjeeling remained as a buffer region between Nepal and Bhutan.

Ten years later disputes arose between Sikkim and Nepal on the frontier issue. According to the terms of the treaty, the problem was referred to the Governor-General. Two officials, Captain Lloyd and Mr. Grant (Commercial Resident at Malda) were deputed to deal with the dispute in 1828. On this event Lloyd spent six days in the 'old Gorkha station' called Darjeeling¹³ in February 1829. He was attracted by the advantage of the place as a site of sanatorium. It is to be mentioned here that the success of the hill stations of Western India encouraged the Government to do something for the British people of Calcutta and the Bengal Presidency. An experimental location for ailing troops was opened at Cherrapunji in Assam, but it was rejected because the site was one of the wettest places in the world. Lloyd strongly advocated the significance of securing position of Darjeeling. Its strategic importance as an entry point into Nepal and Bhutan was also pointed out. Mr. Grant was also impressed by the place and reported to the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck about the advantages of the place of Darjeeling as a sanatorium¹⁴. Present Governor General

¹¹ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 19.

¹² Banerji et.al., 1980, *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta, p. 92.

¹³ The name Darjeeling is derivation of the Tibetan words '**Dorje**' meaning **thunderbolt** (originally the scepter of Indra) and, '**ling**' meaning **a place or land**, In other words "**the land of thunderbolt**" In fact, the famous Buddhist Monastery standing on the top of the Observatory hill was known by this name. J.D. Hooker, in his book *Himalayan Journals* used the term 'Dorjiling'

¹⁴ Hunter, William, Wilson., 1877, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol-X, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, India, p. 88.

Lord William Bentinck afterward deputed Captain Herbert, the Deputy Surveyor-General to inspect the area with Mr. Grant and eventually, the Court of Directors approved the plan. General Lloyd was directed to open negotiations with the Raja of Sikkim. On the 1st February 1835 he succeeded in obtaining implementation of a deed of grant by the Raja of Sikkim.¹⁵ The full deed is reproduced in the Appendix-II. After the signing of the deed Darjeeling became the part of British India.

In 1841 the government granted the Raja an allowance of Rs. 3,000 as compensation which was raised to Rs 6,000 in 1846¹⁶. In 1839 Campbell was posted in the tract and by his effort the station was developed. He encouraged cultivation and took initiative for the infrastructural development of the place. Private houses, bungalows, hotels, and roads were constructed. All this encouraged migration from the neighbouring areas, particularly from Nepal. The increasing prosperity of Darjeeling created some jealousy in Sikkim and the relations between Sikkim and the Company gradually deteriorated. In November 1849 Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell were kidnapped¹⁷. Ultimately they were released unconditionally but the Company in the name of revenge sent a small force to Sikkim in 1850. Yearly grant of Rs. 6,000 to Sikkim was withdrawn and finally the Company annexed 640 square miles of Sikkim Terai and the part of the Sikkim hills, surrounded by the Ramman and the Great Rangit on the north, by the Tista on the East and by the Nepal frontier on the West containing 5,000 souls, which they attached to Darjeeling¹⁸. Thus the population of 5,000 added to the district population might be of Nepali origin. By the annexations of Terai the British territory merged with Nepal on the west and with Bhutan on the east.

The boundary of the district was further reorganized after confiscation of Kalimpong from Bhutan. Some border conflicts between Bhutan and British protectorate state Coochbehar and after unsuccessful negotiations, the Government of India finally decided to annex the Bengal Duars and the portion of hill territory to prevent the Bhutanese incursions into Darjeeling district. British expedition was sent into Bhutan and finally a fresh treaty was

¹⁵ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 21.

¹⁶ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 21.

¹⁷ Dash, Arther, Jules., 1947, *op. cit.* p. 39.

¹⁸ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 24.

concluded with Bhutan in 1865.¹⁹ Bhutan Duars were surrendered to the British and along with it the Kalimpong area which was under this tract. Finally in the year 1866 Kalimpong was transferred to the District of Darjeeling and with it Darjeeling reached its present position.²⁰

Thus with the formation of Darjeeling the Nepalis who were already settled in the land came under British colonial rule and became the citizen of Darjeeling. With the political reorganization many Nepalis from neighboring Nepal and also to some extent from Sikkim came to Darjeeling. Even colonial establishment, historical evolution of the place under colonial influence created conditions for fresh Nepali migration to the place. Thus by the time Nepalis became predominant citizens of the district.

Administrative Reorganization of the District:

The district passed through several administrative reorganizations after it got its present shape following the annexation of Kalimpong. Initially the district was divided into two subdivisions. The head quarters subdivision had an area of 960 sq. miles including all the hills on both sides of the Tista. The Terai subdivision with an area of 274 sq. miles including the whole area of foot hills²¹. The headquarters of the Terai subdivision was Hanskhawa from 1864 to 1880 and then it was transferred to Siliguri. Earlier Siliguri was under Jalpaiguri district, and afterwards it was transferred to Darjeeling district with a small surrounding area and made it the headquarters of the Terai subdivision²².

In 1891 the growing town of Kurseong was made the headquarters of the new subdivision, which included both the Terai and the lower hills west of the Tista²³. In 1907, Siliguri was recognized as a subdivision.²⁴ Kalimpong, meanwhile, was in the Sadar subdivision. In 1916 in order to develop the area Kalimpong was recognized as a new subdivision²⁵. Thus at present there are four subdivisions under the Darjeeling district,

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Dash, Arther, Jules., 1947, *op. cit.* p. 42.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.* p. 43.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

namely- Darjeeling, (Sadar subdivision), Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri. Until October 1905 the district of Darjeeling was included in the Rajshahi Division, and was placed in the newly created province of East Bengal and Assam. Afterwards as a result of partition of Bengal in 1905 it was transferred to the Bhagalpur Division. In March 1921 it was re-transferred to the Rajshahi Division. In August 1947 after the Partition of Bengal the district came under West Bengal and in Presidency Division.

Initially under the British administration, Darjeeling District was recognized as a “Non Regulation District” (a scheme of administration applicable to economically less advanced districts in the British Raj). Acts and regulations of the British Raj did not automatically apply to the district in line with rest of the country unless they were specially extended to the District. Later, under the Government of India Act, 1919 there was no representative in the Legislative Council from Darjeeling. The area was declared a “backward tract”. The administration of the District was vested in the hand of the Governor-in-Council. By this reform any Act passed by the Legislature which extended to the whole of Bengal automatically applied to the Darjeeling District. The Governor-in-Council had the power to implement the law or not to implement in his jurisdiction, or to modify and implement. Under the Government of India Act of 1935 representation in Legislative Council was sanctioned from Darjeeling. After Independence in 1947, Darjeeling was merged with the state of West Bengal. The separate district of Darjeeling was established consisting of the hill towns of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and some parts of the Terai region. Administration reorganization of Darjeeling district, coming of the subdivisions Kalimpong, Kurseong, Darjeeling and Siliguri under it and sanction of special administration facilities for the district, unification of whole tract under one administrative unit made the situation favourable for Nepali migration. With the consolidation of the district Nepalis migrated to the district in significant numbers.

Demographic Change for Migration in Darjeeling District:

Earlier the area of Darjeeling district was very sparsely populated. When the British first received Darjeeling in 1835, the area was almost entirely covered with forest. It was estimated in the year of 1835 i.e. when the East India Company first acquired the

nucleus of the Darjeeling district from the Raja of Sikkim, the region comprising 138 square miles, contained only 100 souls²⁶. The deep forest and backward communications must have kept down the number of inhabitants. Once the process of development set in the population of the area began to increase rapidly. This trend was most profound during 1835-1850. Dr. Campbell, the first Superintendent of Darjeeling, encouraged the inhabitants of the region to induce the neighbouring tribes to settle in the territory and convert Darjeeling into a commercial centre of the hills. He was tremendously successful in this task. The original inhabitants, perhaps Lepchas, were rapidly outnumbered by settlers from Nepal and Sikkim. Campbell in his report of the year 1850 said that the number of inhabitants of the region had risen to 10,000- nearly 100 times more than the previous record.²⁷

In 1869 when a rough census was undertaken of the inhabited area, the population figure was over 22,000 persons. The regular census of the entire District was taken by the Government officials in the cold weather of 1871-72 and the total population as figured was 94,712, of which 53,057 were males, and 41,655 females, dwelling in 18,864 houses. The average density of the population was 77 per square mile. It is to be mentioned here that, the 1869 Census was taken on the inhabitants within the limits of the Darjeeling Municipality, which correspond to those of the tract originally ceded by the Raja of Sikkim to the British Government for a sanitarium in 1835. As the Kalimpong Subdivision of the district was annexed after the Bhutan war of 1865, the Census record of 1869 gave no figure of Kalimpong Subdivision²⁸. Even more, there can be no doubt that a large portion of this increase of population in between two years was due exclusively to the incompleteness and inaccuracy of the first Census²⁹. Due to the difficult nature of the area, the absence of regular villages, and the scattered population, it was found impossible to attempt a simultaneous Census. The people of the area lived in their separate enclosures near their patches of cultivated land at a considerable distance from each other. The survey, no doubt, was the milestone of the demographic study of the Darjeeling district.

²⁶ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 35.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Dash, Arther, Jules., 1947, *op. cit.* 49.

²⁹ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p.35

It was observed that when the Kalimpong tract was occupied, the area was almost covered by forest. Very few plots were cultivated by native cultivators and some tea growing plots were there along the slope of the hill. The forest of the area was largely cleaned away for expansion of cultivation, and immigration of agriculturists started. Immigrant population was mainly Nepalis from Nepal. Because of population pressure on the land in the eastern part of the country, the people of that region happily migrated to this part of Darjeeling where the land was easily manageable. At the time of annexation of Kalimpong in 1865 there were only 3,530 souls. This number increased to 12,683 in 1881 and to 26,631 in 1891. In between ten years the growth rate of population was 110.0 percent. In 1901 the population had grown to 41,511 or by 55.9 percent³⁰. Immigration after this period continued with variation of volume.

In the overall assessment of the Darjeeling district the census of 1881 pointed out that the population had increased to 1, 55,179, with the growth rate of more than 63 percent. During the next 10 years the growth of population of the area was also notable. The growth rate was near about 44 percent in the period.³¹ At the time of the census operation a number of people fled across the border to Nepal because of the fears of the intentions of Government.³² After all it is supposed that the census of 1891 took a satisfactory count. From 1891 up to Independence the growth rate of population was sluggish but since Independence to present day the growth rate has been significant. The table-14 bellow shows the population of Darjeeling district from 1872-2001

Table-14
Population of Darjeeling District from 1872-2001

Year	Population	Increase	Percent
1872	94,712	---	---
1881	155,179	60,467	63.84
1891	223,314	68,135	43.91
1901	249,117	25,803	11.55

³⁰ *Ibid.* p.36.

³¹ *Ibid.* p.35.

³² *Ibid.*

1911	265,550	16,433	6.6
1921	282,748	17,198	6.48
1931	319,635	36,887	13.04
1941	376,369	56,734	17.75
1951	459,617	83,248	22.12
1961	624,640	165,023	35.90
1971	781,777	157,137	25.16
1981	1,024,269	242,492	31.02
1991	1,299,919	275,650	26.91
2001	1,609,172	309,253	23.79

Source: (i) Figure from the year 1872 to 1941 (Dash, Arther Jules., *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, p. 49. (ii) From 1951 to 1971 (Subba Tanka B, *Dynamics of a Hill Society*, 1989, p. 12. (iii) From 1981 to 2001-relevant volumes of Census of India.

Table-14 shows that the population of Darjeeling district increased enormously till 1891, but after this period the growth rate declined till 1941. The percent of growth rate varies from 7 to 18 percent. After 1941 upto the present day the growth of population in Darjeeling district is significant. In the book '*Dynamics of Hill Society*' T.B.Subba explains that the Census of 1961 included the population of a part of Phansidewa area which was earlier in Bihar but was included in Darjeeling under the State Reorganization Act, 1955.³³ Due to this fact the growth rate was high in 1961 Census. Growth of population in Darjeeling district is mainly because of immigration from outside. The most influential pull factors contributing to the growth of population in the area has been the tea industry and other developmental activities of the district. Another important factor which also encouraged immigration in the district was the general agriculture. These factors has pulled the Nepali migrant to the area.

Economic Development and Migration into Darjeeling District:

Economy of an area is always influenced by its topography, climatic variations, soil conditions etc. Hence economy of Darjeeling has also been shaped by its environmental conditions. Tea plantation is the most important economic activity of the region. In addition,

³³ Subba, Tanka, B., 1989, *Dynamics of a Hill Society*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, p. 12.

agriculture, domestication of animals, and related activities are also the other livelihoods of the people. Nowadays tourism has become an important source of income of the local people³⁴.

Agricultural crops in Darjeeling district can be grouped into two categories, Food crops and Cash crops. Food crops include rice, potato, wheat, barley etc. and the cash crops mainly are tea, cinchona, ginger etc. Fruits such as orange, papaya, peaches, pine-apples, guava are important³⁵. In the census of 1901 no less than 78 percent of the populations were in agriculture sectors. The number of rent-payers in the district was 55,000 and tea garden coolies were 64,000. Only 7 percent of the total population was engaged in manual industries.³⁶ When the British first occupied the track, they noticed the old, nomadic, wasteful system of cultivation (*jhum cultivation*) practiced by the Lepchas in the hilly area. With encouragement from the British a large number Nepali immigrant labours who came in to the place introduced an advanced system of cultivation in the area. Indian-corn was started to be grown in the Kalimpong area. In the Terai area food crop was cultivated by the local inhabitants.

The establishment of the Tea industry in the Darjeeling district mainly in the hill area played a great role in shaping the economy and population pattern of the place. Initially plantation was started on an experimental basis but since 1856 the industry began to develop on an extensive scale for commercial purpose. This large number of tea estates provided job opportunity to huge number of labourers.³⁷ Cinchona cultivation in the District was also started in 1861-62.³⁸ This also thrived depending on Nepali labourers. Except the Terai, which was disreputably unhealthy, Kalimpong and Kurseong subdivisions also witnessed an increase of population because of new settlement for cultivating land and growing tea.³⁹

³⁴ Khawas, Vimal., 14 March, 2008, *Demography of Darjeeling Hills*, Global Demography Project, p. 3. (Retrieved from: <http://beacononline.wordpress.com/2008/03/14/demography-of-darjeeling-hills>, Retrieved on. 22/12/2008)

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *Op. cit.* p. 121.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 122.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 124.

Plantation industry and agricultural development in hilly area thus proved to be the strongest pull factors of Nepali migration.

Development of tea plantation opened up the other sectors of economy. By the time communication of the area started to develop. Darjeeling, in fact, became the summer residence for the British. While extension of plantation was the most important pull factor for the Nepali immigration in the region the Nepalis who came in also involved themselves in the construction of buildings, roadways and railway track. The educated among them got engaged in jobs like those of clerks, headmen and assistants in tea gardens, railway guards and in other profession. Needless to say, there were many Bengalis who came to the place, took up jobs and settled down in the district. Later on the political unrest in the neighbouring countries viz. Tibet, Bangladesh and Bhutan also led to migration from those areas in large numbers. Nepalis from Nepal, Tibetans from Tibet, Bhutanese from Bhutan and also Oraon, Santhal, Munda, from the nearby state of Indian Territory migrated to the region. They with local people like Lepchas and Rajbansis, Koch, Mech of plains people started to coexist.

Some native industries also developed in the region for the fulfillment of the basic needs of the local people or for little export. The important among those were weaving of coarse cotton clothes, making of mustard oil, pottery etc. generally for the consumption of the local populace. The local Sherpas manufactured articles like baskets, trays, ropes, the axes, chisels, hammers, spades and other iron instruments. Among other manufactured important articles were shoes, earthen pots and bamboo mats.⁴⁰ The district has some mineral resources like coal, iron and copper; but the difficulty to collect these became the main hurdle of growth of such industry.⁴¹ Nowadays the village industries are not properly developed because of the import of well finished goods from outside. The main trade of the district is confined within State. Chief exporting materials from the district have been tea, gunny-bags, wool, cardamom, maze and imports being composed of piece-goods, cotton yarn, rice, kerosene-oil, salt and different articles of daily consumption.⁴² The hilly part of Darjeeling district is largely dependent of the Terai area of the district. All the economic

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 127.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 128.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 130.

developments that took place in the district by the effort of the British attracted Nepali immigrants to the place. Nepalis who emigrated involved them in different sectors of economy.

Statistical Account of the Nepalis in Darjeeling District:

Darjeeling district is multi cultural, with different ethnic communities and mixed cultural traits. In spite of the presence of various ethnic communities, the Nepalis are in majority in the district. Politically Darjeeling emerged out of Sikkim which was partly ruled by Bhutan and partly by Nepal for some time in its history. So, the people coming from such conquering countries cannot be termed as immigrants.⁴³

A look at the Census figures will give an idea about how the Nepalis have increased in number in the Darjeeling district. In 1891 out of 22, 3,314 people, 88,000 persons were born in Nepal.⁴⁴ So, it can be safely assumed that the Nepalis who formed near about 40 percent of the population of the Darjeeling district at that time were all migrants from Nepal. The figure did not include the persons whose parents or grandparents were born in Nepal i.e. whose forefathers had come from Nepal. Identification of such persons would have given a more comprehensive idea about the number of immigrants. In 1901 it was found that sixty-one percent of the residents were of Nepalis. The figure included Nepali Brahmans, Chhetris, Newars, Thakuris, Sannyasis, Gurungs, Mangars, Sunwars, Rais, or Jimdars, Khambus, Yakhas, Gharlis, Murmis, or Tamangs, Kamis, Sarkis, Damais, and Limbus.⁴⁵ In 1931 people of Nepali extraction including the Sherpas and Limbus, formed about fifty-two percent of the population in the district.⁴⁶ In 1941 it was found that the Brahmans, Chhetris and the Khasas like the Newars, and the Sannyasis, Nepali high-caste Hindus, the primitive tribes which were Hinduized and engrossed into the Nepalis society like the Gurungs, Mangars, Sunuwars and Bhujels, the Kirata tribes which were in the process of being absorbed into Nepali caste society like the Rais or Jimdars, Khambus, Yakhas, and Ghartis,

⁴³ Subba, T. B., 1992, *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, p. 38.

⁴⁴ Banerji, A.K. *et al (ed)* 1980, *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Calcutta: Govt.of West Bengal, p. 101.

⁴⁵ Banerji, A.K. *et al (ed)* 1980, *Ibid.* p.102.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the so called low castes and tribes on the way to being converted into castes like Kamis, Sirkis, Damais, and Tamangs and yet to absorbed, Tibeto- Nepalese tribe like the Sherpas and the Limbus together numbered 2,54,608 – accounting nearly sixty-eight percent of the population of the district.⁴⁷ The table-15 bellow gives an idea about the Nepali population in the district during 1872 – 1951.

Table-15
Nepali Population in Darjeeling District

Year	Total Population	Nepali Population	Percentage
1872	94,712	32,338	34%
1891	223,314	88,000	39.40%
1901	249,117	151,961#	61%
1921	282,748	134,000	47.40%
1931	319,635	166,210#	52%
1941	376,369	254,608	67.6%
1951	459,617	285,009	62%

Source: (i) For the year 1872 (Hunter W.W. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1877. p.53); (ii) From the year 1901 to 1951 (Banerji, A. K. et al, *West Bengal District Gazetteers; Darjeeling*, Calcutta: Govt. of West Bengal. 1980. p. 101- 104).

the figure is calculated from the percentage.

Examination of the migration tables of the Census gives an idea about how the number of Nepali migrants has increased by leaps and bounds over the years and how it has contributed to the growth of Population in the district. ‘Dash’ estimated in Bengal District Gazetteers-Darjeeling that in the year 1931 there were 18.5 percent people born in Nepal had migrated to Darjeeling district.⁴⁸ The trend continued, even though the volume of migration decreased over time. Migration from Bihar alone was more or less comparable to migration from Nepal but, unlike the Nepalis who were concentrated in the hills the Biharis were mainly settled in Terai.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Dash, Arther, Jules., 1947, *op. cit.* p. 50.

Table-15 indicates that the volume of migration that had taken place from Nepal is much bigger than migration from any other state or district. In 1961, the people who were born in Nepal but settled in Darjeeling district constituted 6.58 percent of the population.⁴⁹ In the year 1971, 4.7 percent people of Darjeeling district were born in Nepal.⁵⁰ While, in 2001 slightly higher than 1 percent of people from Nepal had migrated to Darjeeling district.⁵¹ The rate of migration went down considerably. There are many reasons why this has happened. The socio-economic factors in Nepal that pushed the Nepalis towards India were changing and job opportunities in countries other than India were gradually increasing. On the one hand, gradual economic development and the aid provided by the foreign countries to Nepal were improving the situation in Nepal and on the other hand the lure of huge salary for the semi-skilled or skilled labourer in the Middle East countries attracted the Nepalis to the Middle East. Moreover, Darjeeling district is no more a sparsely populated area and there is no easy accessible free land for cultivation. Nowadays other urban centers of India and of course the Gulf countries provide much more lucrative opportunities than Darjeeling. The table-16 bellow shows the migration of Nepalis to Darjeeling district from their birth place.

⁴⁹ Census of India 1961, *District Census Handbooks: Darjeeling*, West Bengal.

⁵⁰ Census of India 1971, *Series 22, West Bengal, District Census Handbook- Darjeeling, Part X-C*, West Bengal.

⁵¹ Census of India 2001, *Migration Profile, D-Series: West Bengal*, West Bengal.

Table-16
Birth Place of Population of Darjeeling District

Place	1931 Census*		1961 Census**		1971 Census***		2001 Census****	
	Population	Percentage	Population	percentage	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage
Born in Bengal (including Darjeeling District)	2,18,935	68.50%	4,68,911	75.07%	6,20,964	79.5%	1,433,074	89.06%
Born in Bihar	24,540	7.68%	40,287	6.45%	45,105	5.8%	51,296	3.19%
Born in Sikkim	5,321	1.66%	5,961	0.96%	5,854	0.7%	2,969	0.18%
Born Elsewhere in India	8,277	2.59%	20,739	3.32%	23,355	3.0%	45,363	2.82%
Born in Nepal	59,016	18.46%	41,109	6.58%	37,139	4.7%	16,454	1.02%
Born Elsewhere in Asia	2,052	0.64%	46,434	7.43%	48,065	6.1%	59,885	3.72%
Miscellaneous (Including U.K.)	1,494	0.47%	1,199	0.19%	1,295	0.2%	131	0.01%

Total	3,19,635	100%	6,24,640	100%	7,81,777	100%	1,609,172	100%
--------------	-----------------	-------------	-----------------	-------------	-----------------	-------------	------------------	-------------

Source: (i) * (Dash, Arther, Jules, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*) (ii) ** Census of India 1961, (iii) *** Census of India 1971, (iv) **** Census of India 2001.

It has been seen that Darjeeling had been the suitable destination of migrant Nepalis from very earlier time. In 1891, there were 88021 Nepali migrants in Darjeeling district, which was 76301, 70021, 58026 respectively in 1901, 1911 and 1921 census.⁵² It is noticeable here that earlier migration rate to the district was high but, it is decreasing continuously. It is interesting that in the district with time older migrant people died and their successors, who were born in the district, replaced them. Thus, with time though migration has decreased, Nepali speaking population in the district has grown up. A new method was adopted by Dash in the '*Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*' to measure the district population. He classified population on the basis of racial origin and not on the basis of religion. The table-17 bellow shows the main classification of population for the whole District and for each of the Subdivisions that he mentioned.

Table-17
Population of the Subdivisions of the Darjeeling District According to Race, Tribe and Caste in 1941⁵³

Communities	Subdivision of the District				
	Sadar	Kurseong	Kalimpong	Siliguri	District Total
Muslims	1,122	350	332	6,924	8,728
Scheduled Castes	1,182	962	1,095	47,511	50,750

⁵² Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Part-1, Report.

⁵³ Details of the race, cast and tribes of the population of the Darjeeling District have been given in the Appendix- IV.

Plains Hindus (Other than Scheduled Castes)	4,417	2,608	2,607	29,644	39,276
Nepalis	1,32,767	53,936	62,333	5,572	2,54,608
Other Hillmen	7,010	1,549	11,451	73	20,083
Indian Christians	72	94	205	359	730
British	474	179	186	45	884
Anglo-indian	126	193	600	16	935
Europeans	145	66	8	9	228
Asiatics	223	95	214	56	588
<u>Total</u>	1,47,538	60,032	79,031	90,209	3,76,810

Source: Dash Arther Jules, 1947, Bengal *District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, p.62.

On the basis of the above table an attempt was made to calculate the percentage of population belonging to various races and groups in the district. To clarify the percentage significantly Dash separated Siliguri or plains part of the district from the other three hill subdivisions. The Table-18 below shows the percentage of population in Darjeeling district.

Table-18
Percentage of Population in the Three Hills and Siliguri Subdivision in 1941

Communities	Percentage of Population		
	Darjeeling district	Three Hill Subdivisions	Siliguri or Terai Subdivision
Muslims	2.3%	0.6%	7.7%

Scheduled Castes	13.5%	1.1%	52.7%
Plains Hindus	10.4%	3.4%	32.9%
Nepalis	67.6%	86.8%	6.2%
Other Hillmen	5.3%	7.0%	0.0%
Others	0.9%	1.0%	0.5%
<u>Total</u>	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%

Source: Dash Arther Jules, 1947, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*; p. 63.

Dash noticed predominance of the Nepalis in the three hill subdivisions in 1941. Nepalis and the other hill men constituted nearly 94 percent of the whole population in the hill subdivisions. In the hill region Muslims and Hindus from the plains were very small in number and mainly concentrated in the towns or semi-urban areas. A few Bengali Hindus, Biharis and Marwaris were spread in the tea plantation areas in the hills. More than half of the Scheduled Caste (Hindu Scheduled Caste and Tribes) populations of the areas were mainly employed in urban parts. Rests of population were native immigrants in tea gardens. Other Hillmen were very miserably represented in the Kurseong Subdivision. Contrary to the pattern in the hills, Nepalis consisted of 6.2 percent and Scheduled castes with the Plains Hindus consisted of 85.5 percent of the population in the Siliguri Subdivision in the plains. There were also appreciable numbers of Muslims in the rural areas of Siliguri Subdivision. In addition, as per the Census of 1941, strong Muslims elements were present in the town of Siliguri as well. In 1872 there were only 6,00 Muslims in the district. The figure rose to 8,516 in 1921 and to 8,391 in 1931. In the 1941 Census Dash observed they were 8,728 in number. Dash also observed that the *Rajbanshis* were a major race in the Terai. It is clear that the main concentration of the Nepalis were in the hilly parts of the district of Darjeeling at that time. After the formation of Bangladesh (formerly known as East Pakistan) as a Nation, Darjeeling district witnessed huge Hindu migration mainly in the Siliguri subdivision. So the number of the Hindus in the Terai region became larger. As a whole, in the district of Darjeeling the percentage of Nepali people has become smaller noticeably

because of the significant change in the demography of the Terai subdivision. Siliguri after emerging as a commercial town became the business centre of the neighbouring areas. The business community of various groups started to settle there. People from adjacent areas also began to pour in lured by better job opportunities. As stated earlier, the district also witnessed influx of people from Bangladesh. However, Nepalis are one of the most significant and dominant groups at the district level.

Caste and Occupation of the Nepalis Who Migrated in Darjeeling:

Many Nepali tribe and caste groups have migrated into Darjeeling district of West Bengal. In numerical strength the most important Nepali tribe in Darjeeling district is the 'Khumbus'. The home of Khumbus is in the eastern part of Nepal between the Sankos River and the Singalila range and Mechi River.⁵⁴ The Khumbus claim to be Jimdar, one of the fighting tribes of Nepal. They bear the title Rai. The number of people belonging to this tribe in the district in 1951 was 63,745.⁵⁵ After Khumbus, the 'Murmis', is in the next position in terms of number. In number they were 49,890 in 1951.⁵⁶ Murmis are Mongolian or semi-Mongolian race.⁵⁷ They are also known as Tamang Bhotias and bear the title Lama. Bulks of the Murmis are cultivators and many of them also serve in the police and army. A large majority of them are untrained labourers in the tea gardens, landless manual workers, or share-croppers and unskilled labourers in the urban areas. Newar, in fact, the name of a nationality rather than a caste, resemble Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Australoid as well as typical Tibetan strains.⁵⁸ In 1951 their number was estimated to be 14,827.⁵⁹ They are the traders, artisans, agriculturists and also in white collared jobs. Many of them work as shop keepers too. Limbus - another group of considerable numerical strength, numbered 19,838 in 1951. They mainly work as carriers and porters, but also engage in agriculture, grazing and trade. Three other numerous castes - the Khas or Chettri, the Mangar, and the Gurungs were 30,463, 19,413, and 17,864 in number respectively in the year 1951.⁶⁰ Khas, who are the successful cultivators in the district belong to military order of Nepal and have adopted the

⁵⁴ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 42.

⁵⁵ Banerji, A.K. *et al (ed)* 1980, *op. cit.* p. 104.

⁵⁶ Banerji, A.K. *et al (ed)* 1980, *op. cit.* p. 104.

⁵⁷ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.43

⁵⁹ Banerji, A.K. *et al (ed)* 1980, *op. cit.* p. 103.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp.42-43.

title *Chettri*. Chhetris, numerically the third largest ethnic group in the district and a warrior race were in prosperous economic position at home but migrated in a great number to Darjeeling district that offered them a good job opportunity. Mangars are associated with agriculture, trade and military occupation.⁶¹ The Gurungs are the nomadic pastoral people who obtain their livelihood by rearing and grazing cattle. The three dominant tribes of Nepal had taken a lead in overthrowing the Newar dynasty in Nepal in 1769.⁶² In the middle of the nineteenth century Darjeeling district became a great recruiting ground for the British Army and hardworking Chhetris, Mangars, Gurungs and Thakuris broadly called Gorkhas, were recruited in large number.⁶³ Other important Nepali castes in Darjeeling are Yakhas - an agricultural caste, calling themselves Diwan. In the caste hierarchy Kamis, Damai, Sarki and Gharti belong to the lower strata and are considered as untouchables.⁶⁴ Kamis consisted of 19,432 people in 1951 census. They were blacksmiths and goldsmiths. The Damais, who were 9,116 in number in 1951, were basically tailors and Sarki – 2,932 in number in 1951 work in leather business. Gharti is the slave caste with a population of 998 as per 1951 census.⁶⁵

This is a broad description of the occupational pattern in Darjeeling district. But they do not always follow their traditional caste occupations. Even a Brahmin may be found to function as a cultivator here. This is true for others as well. For example, the Gharti or slave caste traditionally worked as washermen and sweepers in Nepal, but in Darjeeling especially in the hill area, they refuse to take up such jobs. Such jobs and jobs of barbers and carpenters are usually taken up by people from the plains, by the Biharis in particular. Brick-making, stonework and associated industrial works gradually became common for all castes. Certain caste groups, however, continued with their traditional occupations. Among them are the Sarkis or cobbler caste, the Kumal Newars or potters, the Kamis and Bhama Newars who manufacture metal ware and also perform blacksmith's work.

⁶¹ Dash, Arther, Jules., 1947, *op. cit.* p. 73.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 74.

⁶³ Banerji, A.K. *et al (ed)* 1980, *op. cit.* p. 105.

⁶⁴ O' Mally, L.S.S., 1907, *op. cit.* p. 43.

⁶⁵ Banerji, A.K. *et al (ed)* 1980, *op.cit.* p. 105.

Profile of Jalpaiguri: The Host Area:

Next to Darjeeling district migration from Nepal has largely been witnessed in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal in Eastern India. Geographically the district has its close boundary with Bhutan and the state Nepal is very near the Jalpaiguri district. The district of Jalpaiguri contains an area of 2,961 square miles, situated between 26⁰ 0' and 27⁰ 0' north latitude, and between 88⁰ 20' and 89⁰ 53' east longitude.⁶⁶ The district of Jalpaiguri consists of the Western Duars which has been annexed by the British after the Bhutan-British war during 1864-65. The tract was covered with *sal* forest and heavy grass and reed jungle and scattered with wild cardamoms. In the 16th Century Koch kingdom was established and the present area of Jalpaiguri district or the Western Duars was taken as the protectorate of Koch. Around 1603, Mughal power annexed nearly the whole of the territory of the Koch kings. But during the period Duars area or narrow piece of country running along the foot of the hills came under the possession of the Bhutanese. Bhutanese tried to enforce their claim of suzerainty over the State Cooch-Bihar. Bhutanese were not interested to occupy the area permanently might be because of the heat of the plain, but exacted a heavy tribute from the area and harassed the inhabitants of the place. When Bhutanese invaded the State of Cooch-Bihar the Raja sought the help of the British power. For the first time British Government came into contact with the Bhutanese in 1772. The British sent assistance in favour of Raja of Cooch-Bihar and helped to drive out the Bhutanese invaders and pushed them into their own land. In the year of 1774 a treaty was signed between Bhutan authority and East India Company and peace was restored.⁶⁷ The British started to negotiate with Bhutan to promote trade but initially failed to do so. Even at that time Bhutanese had seized several areas of the country lying in the foothills called the Duars or passes and continued their raid into British territory. Failing to conduct peaceful negotiation the British power wrested Eastern Duars from Bhutan, and agreed to pay Rs. 10,000 a year as compensation for loss of Bhutan and tried to maintain peace. But, the Bhutanese continued their raid on Duars and committed outrages on British subjects and local inhabitants were plundered, killed or carried off as slaves. The British power by sending their delegates to Bhutan tried hard to solve the problem who were badly humiliated and made bound to sign some insulting agreement.

⁶⁶ Grunning, J.F., (Year Missing) *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers*, N.L. Publishers, West Bengal. P. 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 27.

Afterwards the British power took strong measure and announced about the permanent annexation of Bengal Duars and the annual payment previously made to Bhutan was withdrawn. Secondly, British authority demanded release all the captivated British subjects and the subjects of Cooch-Bihar and Sikkim amounting more or less 300 persons. The British also demanded restoration of the property confiscated by the Bhutanese in previous five years from them, the state of Cooch-Bihar and Sikkim.⁶⁸ But the Bhutan authority did not pay much attention on this ultimatum. In 1864 on the date of 12th November British Government issued a proclamation about the permanent annexation of Bengal Duars and within a few days British power drove away the Bhutanese from the area and occupied almost ten posts along the frontier of about 180 miles difficult jungle heights.⁶⁹ Bhutanese had put their effort to recover the territory but failed. Lastly a treaty of peace was signed between the two powers in November 1865 and peace was thus restored in the place.

After the annexation of Duars British colonial power started to develop the tracts. Tea industries rapidly increased in the Duars area, cultivation in the place also gradually developed. Reserved forest of the area became a good source of revenue for the British Colonial power. The present day Jalpaiguri district was formed taking the parts of western Duars. With the process of development the migration of people from neighbouring areas to the place started. Huge migration took place to the fertile wastelands of the Western Duars. Even the British power when ensured the safety of the place took measure to develop the area. Outsiders started to come to the place to settle. Census figure shows that there were 417,855 people in 1872, which increased to 580,570 in 1881. Population rose in Jalpaiguri district to 680,736 and 787,380 in the year 1891 and 1901 respectively.⁷⁰ The figure shows that a rapid increase of population took place in the area and it was largely because of migration to the place. Population in the tract increased largely because of the availability wasteland to convert into agricultural lands. The growth of population in the area was mainly because of the growth of Tea industry. In the year of 1874-75 Tea was first grown in the district and within short time the industry and the plantation area of tea largely expended.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 29.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 30.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 40.

In the year whereas there were 13 gardens consist with 818 acres of area had increased to 60 gardens with 4,670 acres of land under mature and 3,598 acres of land under immature plants in the year of 1882. Plantation area and number of gardens largely increased in the year of 1901. Number of gardens increased to 235 with 76,403 acres of cultivable areas and the total production was 31,087,537 pounds.⁷² As the tea is a labour intensive industry there was the demand of huge labour. The Duars area as was very sparsely populated needed importing of labour force. This led to a huge immigration of labourers from Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas. Nepali workforce also migrated largely to the place as work seekers in the plantation area. Nepalis, who were the main tea labour force of Darjeeling district plantation area also preferred to migrate to the Jalpaiguri district and mainly concentrated in the tea garden which were in the slopes of the hills. Many tea garden labourers who worked there for a long time and accumulated some money settled themselves in the district permanently. With other working force Nepalis also settled largely in the area and had took up land for cultivation and took the job of herders of buffaloes.

In 1891, there were 20,502 Nepali migrants in Jalpaiguri district, of which 13,449 were male and 7,053 were female.⁷³ Even in 1901, there were 18,649 Nepali migrants, which increased to 34,015 in 1911 and decreased to 23,681 in the year 1921.⁷⁴ In an estimate of 1951, there were 22,621 Nepali migrants which increased after the signing of the Treaty of 'Peace and Friendship' in 1950. In the year 1961 there were 38,142 migrant Nepalis in Jalpaiguri district.⁷⁵ In Census report 1901 it has been stated that among the Nepali castes Mangars were in majority. There were 3,709 Mangars in Jalpaiguri district. Whereas the Limbus were 2,938 and the Newars were 2,770. In the same year Murmis were 2,117; the Khambus were 1,818; the Gurungs were 1,176, the Yakhas were 1,163, and the Kamis were 1,082 in the area.⁷⁶ Large number of Nepalis in the Jalpaiguri districts is employed in the tea gardens of the area. Earlier this migrant Nepalis did not permanently settle in Jalpaiguri as they had done in Darjeeling and Sikkim and went back to their own hills after doing temporary works. Earlier they were mainly concentrated in tea gardens near the hills which

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 40.

⁷³ Censuses of India, Vol. III, 1891.

⁷⁴ Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Part-1, Report.

⁷⁵ Mitra, A., Census of 1951 and 1961, District Census Handbook-Jalpaiguri.

⁷⁶ Grunning, J.F., op. cit. p. 52.

are slightly elevated areas. The areas like Matiali, Sam Sing, Hansimara, Lankapara saw the main concentration of Nepali settlement. Usually, in the other areas also they settled and took the occupation of cultivators, grazier and etc.

Thus due to the British Colonial establishment and Colonial economic prosperity in Jalpaiguri district opportunity opened for huge labour force to the newly established enterprise. With other labour force huge population from Nepal came to the Jalpaiguri district of Eastern India and took the job in tea plantation. Gradually these Nepalis settled permanently and took other jobs. Even a good number of Nepali migrations took place in the region from Bhutan, but it is difficult to prove by proper evidence.

Character Differentiation of Nepali Migration in Colonial and Postcolonial Eastern India:

Nepali migration to Eastern India is a historical phenomenon and it is an ongoing issue. In the colonial period the British created the conditions for Nepali migration to Eastern India, specifically into Darjeeling district and a part of Jalpaiguri district. It was directly a colonial sponsorship migration. Colonial power for their colonial needs sponsored such migration to the area. After the establishment of colonial rule over Bengal British tried to protect their boundary. On the other hand, ambitious Gorkhas wanted to continue their expansionist policy and invaded Sikkim. Conflicting interests culminated in the peace negotiation. Economic activities of the Gorkha power were stooped. The British for their colonial economy started to run various enterprises like tea plantation, cinchona plantation etc in Darjeeling district. Scarcity of labour was very much acute in the district because of very low population. The British entrepreneurs to fulfill the labour needs started to recruit hardworking needy Nepalis in the emerging sectors. Establishment of sanatorium, railway network, government and private bungalows, military recruiting station created demand for unskilled and semiskilled labour. The British for their needs wanted to get Nepalis from Nepal. Special facilities were granted to the labourers in the tea garden areas. Quarter, hospital, rationing and schooling facilities were provided to the Nepali labourers. Agents and recruiting parties were appointed and special incentives were given to them for their effort to get Nepali coolies. With the growing population agriculture in the local area was also

encouraged. Land was granted, forest villages were created and Nepalis were encouraged to settle there. The British power for the extraction of forest resource, mainly the *sal* trees, herbs recruited Nepalis in huge number. Thus the British sponsored migration of Nepalis in Eastern India in the colonial regime.

In postcolonial times Nepali migration to the area continued but the state policy was changed. Newly independent country India wanted to maintain good relation with Nepal government. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between the two countries. Border restriction was not imposed, easy and free movement was granted for both the citizens of Nepal and India. Even performing of personal economic activities, acquiring of moveable and immoveable assets was also permitted for Nepali migrants to India, though permanent citizenship was not granted. Postcolonial state thus facilitated Nepali migration to India which is a legacy of the past. Though state directly did not sponsor Nepali migration but created conditions which facilitate Nepali migration to Eastern India. In the period of political unrest in Nepal even neighboring country Bhutan, Nepalis migrated to Eastern India. State did not maintain strict control over the border and did not take any strong measure to stop Nepali migration. In the postcolonial time when Bhutan government took strong measure against of the Nepalis settled in the southern parts of Bhutan huge inflow of Nepalis was seen in the Duars are of West Bengal and even in some parts of Assam. But Indian state did not take strong measure to stop forced migration of Nepalis from Bhutan. The process of illegal migration is still continuing. Even illegal trafficking of goods and human being is very alarming occurrence in the present days. Teenage girls, boys, even women and older people are trafficked at present in great number. Despite some activities in lower level and by NGOs Indian state is not taking strong measure to control such illegal activities. Thus state is facilitating Nepali migration to India as a whole.

In colonial period Nepali migration to Darjeeling district was very significant in number. When the state was taken from Sikkim there was very little population in the district. But gradually a good number of Nepalis started to migrate. In 1891 nearly 40 percent people in the area was Nepalis. In the year 1901 there were 61 percent of Nepali population in the region. At present almost all the population in the three hill subdivisions is Nepali

whose forefathers might have migrated once. Migration of Nepalis in the district has come down considerably whereas migration of Nepalis increased in all India basis at present. In colonial period 1931 census witnessed 16.49 percent increase of Nepali migration in the country and nearly 18.46 percent has migrated in Darjeeling district. In postcolonial period after the peace treaty huge Nepali migration was witnessed in India. In the year of 1961 Nepali migration increased by nearly 79 in the country, but among the migrants only 6.58 percent migrated to Darjeeling district. Nepali migration in Darjeeling district in the year of 1971 went down to 4.7 percent and nearly to 1 percent in 2001. But in 2001 significant rate of migration was seen in India, an increase of nearly 25 percent from the previous year. So, it can be argued that in colonial period Nepali migrants preferred Darjeeling as their destination but in postcolonial period they preferred other places of India. Population pressure, scarcity of resource, lack of job opportunity in the district discouraged them to migrate.