

# **The Conditions of Artisans of Darjeeling District (1835-1947)**

**A Dissertation Submitted**

**To**

**Sikkim University**



**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Philosophy**

**By**

**Smriti Shankar**

**Department of History  
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**June, 2017**



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# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

(भारत के संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा वर्ष 2007 में स्थापित और नैक (एनएएसी) द्वारा वर्ष 2015 में प्रत्यायित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)  
(A central university established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007 and accredited by NAAC in 2015)

Date: 27/06/2017

## DECLARATION

I, Smriti Shankar, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation title: “**The Conditions of Artisans of Darjeeling District (1835-1947)**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, in the Department of History, School of Social Science is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

The content of this dissertation has also been subjected to plagiarism check.

*Smriti Shankar*

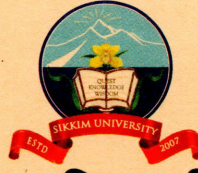
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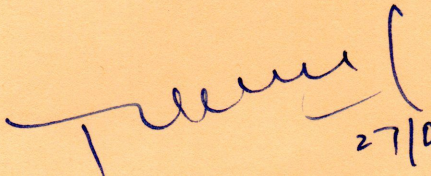
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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**The Conditions of Artisans of Darjeeling District (1835-1947)**” submitted to **Sikkim University** in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the **Department of History**, embodies the result of bona fide research work carried out by **Smriti Shankar** under my guidance and supervision. No part of dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association and Fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by him.

I recommended this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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Submitted by **Smriti Shankar** under the supervision of Dr. Vijay Kumar Thangellapali of the Department of History, School of Social Science, Sikkim University.

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**DEDICATED**

**To**

**My Mother Late Durga Darnal**

**and**

**My Younger Brother Late Suresh Kumar Darnal**



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**Smriti Shankar**



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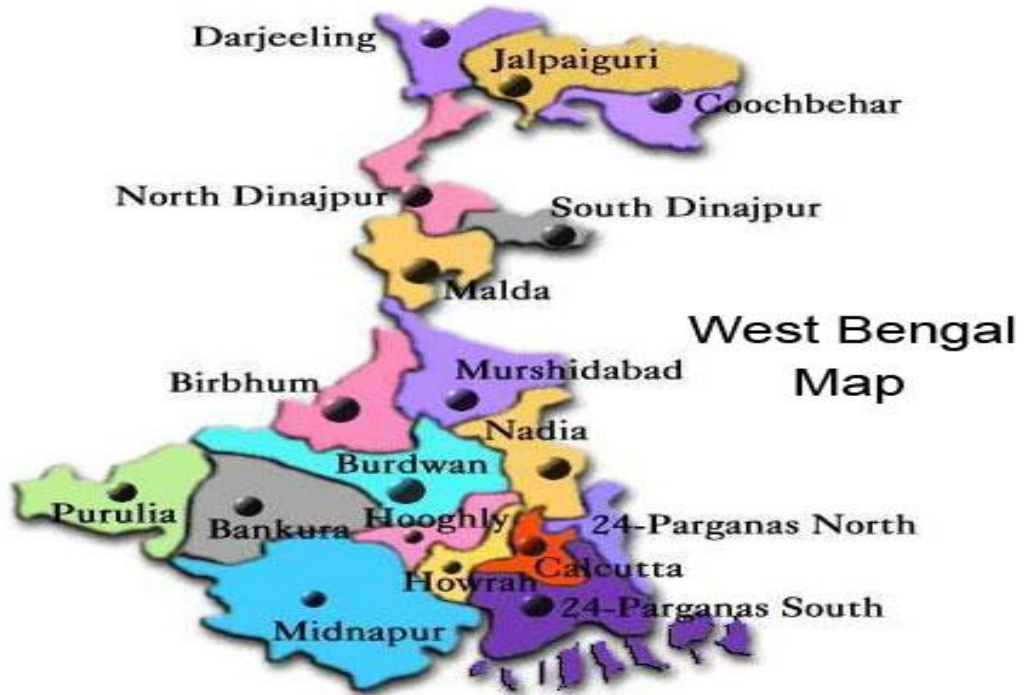
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Map. 1: West Bengal

Map. 2: Darjeeling District



Map 1. West Bengal



Map 2. Darjeeling District



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

A landmark year in the history of Darjeeling was 1835; it was the district of West Bengal comprising of four sub-divisions like Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong hills and Siliguri plains. When a greater part of Darjeeling was ceded to British India by Sikkim in 1835, the area of the region was just 357.4 Sq. Km. Darjeeling formed as a part of Sikkim and for a brief period of Nepal. However, neither the history of Sikkim, nor the history of Nepal furnished any account of its early history.<sup>1</sup> Darjeeling was gifted to the British. After this, the subdivision, Kalimpong is the headquarters and which is bounded on the east and west respectively by the Jaldakha and Tista River together with the Bengal and Assam Duars were annexed from Bhutan on November 1865 and included in the district of Darjeeling thereby increasing the area from 640 square miles. So, 1866 marked an epoch in the history of Darjeeling, peace was established on all front, hence began the march to progress and civilization.<sup>2</sup>

Large number of migration of people in search of economic opportunities has led to the concentration of diverse ethnic groups in many regions over the decades. Migration contributes to the formation of plural societies which consist of two or more ethnic groups living in a common geographical environment. Darjeeling district is inhabited by different ethnic groups with distinct identity as well as art and culture. Consequently, the handicrafts of Darjeeling do not follow any set pattern; contrarily, it represents the skills of different groups of artisans.

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<sup>1</sup> L.S.S. O' Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 18-33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



Among the prominent tribes and castes of Darjeeling district are Brahmins locally known as Bahun, Kshetriyas known as Chettri, Rai, Limbu, Lepcha, Bhutia, Kami, Damai, Sarki, pradhan (newar) etc. Kami, Damai and Sarkis were treated as untouchable castes of the society. Kami were blacksmiths and goldsmiths and involved in metal work. Damais were concerned with tailoring and music (Panchey baja during marriages). Sarki were concerned with leather related works.

Kami the artisanal caste of Darjeeling district preferred to take the title as Bishwakarma. They were migrated from plains from India to Nepal and then to Darjeeling. When the Nepalese first migrated to Darjeeling in the middle of the nineteenth century and they brought with them the artisans from Nepal.

These kamis were socially downtrodden and economically backward people. Caste system and untouchability was the main reason to drag them into backward conditions, because these people were landless, jobless, illiterate, depends on the clients and they did not have much more resources to uplift their economic condition.

### **Statement of Problem**

Occupation was one of the chief bases of the division of castes. Every separate occupation has produced a distinct caste, and the status of the caste depends entirely on the importance of its occupation in the region. The main purpose of this study is to examine historically the social conditions and economic importance of the artisans in Darjeeling district. Therefore, it is argued that the social status of any caste in India was determined generally by the economic importance of the profession of that particular caste. In general the social status of artisan castes in Darjeeling region was very low but in other parts of India artisans did not have any untouchable status such as in South India, Western India, Bihar and Central Provinces. This is due to the

importance of their occupation in agrarian and industrial economies. The artisans are part of rural life and connected to the agriculture in one way or other. These artisans produced agricultural tools and allied implements which were directly related to the agriculture. Agriculture has played a key role in the society.

However in Darjeeling region their social status was very low as they were untouchables. This happened because of the lack of importance of the profession of the artisan castes in the Darjeeling society. The link between their profession and the agriculture was not well established in this region due to the under development of agriculture in the region. On the other hand, the social conditions of artisans of Darjeeling district were deplorable. They faced discrimination in day to day life owing to untouchability particularly in housing, marriage, employment and general social interaction. This discrimination was preserved and reinforced through the practice and threat of social exclusion or physical violence.

Further, the economic conditions of the artisans were also backward. They could not buy raw materials in bulk and buying in small lots led them to pay more money due to high prices. Since the requirement of their product in the agriculture was less, there was no good market for their products. There is least scope for metal works in this region due to its geographic location and economic condition as said earlier. Due to the unfavourable weather conditions agriculture was not as flourished in this region as in other parts of India. So the demand for agricultural tools is also not so high. Again due to not so good economic condition of the region the demand for ornaments, jewellery, construction of temples and buildings are mediocre. Also there is lack of patronage of the artisans in these regions. Therefore, the artisans were of least importance among other communities of this region. It proved detrimental to the growth and welfare of artisan society in this region and they remained backward



economically and socially among other hill communities. Therefore, it can be argued that the social status of the artisans was determined according to the importance of their occupation in this economy.

### **Review of Literature**

Though various scholars have written books on Himalayan society, their culture, socio-economic status, technology and craft technique of Bengal as well as India but they did not concentrate on the artisans of Darjeeling district artisans. However some of the works touched the Darjeeling's socio-economic history.

Smritikumar Sarkar, in his *Technology and Rural Change in Eastern India 1830-1980*, deal with the big technology the railways, electric telegraph, weaving looms etc.<sup>3</sup> this book is a social history of technology and examines how British colonialism facilitated the introduction of new form of transport and manufacturing technology into Indian subcontinent and their impact on village society. He also mentioned about the artisans of Bengal like weavers, braziers, mason and blacksmith etc. But he did not touch any aspects on the artisans of Darjeeling which is the main concerned area of this work.

Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, in *Iron and Social Change in Early India*, talked about the Iron Age of India.<sup>4</sup> This book also explained the beginning of iron making and social changes in early India, metal technology, role of iron tools on forest, agriculture and its impact on economic development. It also focused on ancient states like Magadha, Kosala and Kathaiwar etc. which is not our concern.

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<sup>3</sup> Smritikumar Sarkar, *Technology and Rural Change in Eastern India (1830-1980)*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, *Iron and Social Change in Early India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006.

Janaklal Sharma, in his *Hamro Samaj Ek Adhayan*, deals with the general view of Nepal and Nepalese culture.<sup>5</sup> In this book he talked about the people of Nepal and their migration to Darjeeling district. Further he also mentioned about the origin of four Varna in Hindu society and their role. He explained the historical background of Nepali people. He has highlighted the Nepali artisans of Darjeeling and their social and economic status. Besides he mentioned the different Nepali caste like Gurung, Tamang, Rai and Subba. However he did not study the social status of the artisans of Darjeeling district.

Uddhab Prasad Pyakurel, in his Ph.D thesis entitled *Social Exclusion and Inclusion: A Sociological Study of Dalits in Nepal* in this thesis he talked about the dalits of Nepal.<sup>6</sup> In Nepal, dalits faced the discrimination in day to day life. He also mentioned about the Hindu Dharma Shasthras. Actually, he covered the facts which were related to dalits or the lower caste. But he did not give clear picture of artisans.

Vijaya Ramaswamy, in her article “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India”, she explained about the South Indian artisans who were called as Vishwakarma or Vishwabrahmins.<sup>7</sup> She also mentioned their ritualistic status. She further said that the artisans or the smiths were the descendent of Vishwakarma who was the son of Brahman. Besides she highlighted the mythological origin of Vishwakarma, and according to Vishwakarma Purana Vishwakarma also wearing the sacred thread which is similler to Brahmins. Further she stated about the socio-economic condition of early medieval South India.

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<sup>5</sup> Janaklal Sharma, *Hamro Samaj Ek Adhayan*, (Nepali), Saja Publication, Lalitpur, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Uddhab Prasad Pyakurel, *Social Exclusion and Inclusion: A Sociological Study of Dalits in Nepal*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Centre for the study of social systems, JNU, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Vijaya Ramaswamy, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 4 (2004), URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165073>.



L.S.S. O' Malley, in *Bengal District Gazetteer, Darjeeling* explained the geographical conditions, physical aspects, occupation, manufacture and trade of Darjeeling district including Kalimpong and Kurseong.<sup>8</sup> He also stated about the war of Nepalis and their strength and also mentioned the different castes of the Nepali community in general. In this Gazetteer, he further explained how Darjeeling comes under the companies rule and what changes were made by them in that region. He also highlighted little information about the Census.

Herbert Hope Risley, in his *The Tribe and Caste of Bengal (Ethnographic glossary Volume 1 and 2)*, he gave the historical background of tribes and castes of Bengal.<sup>9</sup> In these two books he beautifully mentioned about the different castes and tribes of Bengal presidency that includes their origin, tradition, culture social status and economic conditions. He touched some aspects of the Kamis of Darjeeling district which was highly helpful for this work. However, it did not give much information how these artisans became untouchables.

E.C. Dozey, in his *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 (With a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District)* has explained about the Darjeeling district and Sikkim.<sup>10</sup> In this book he mentioned the whole history of Darjeeling and each and every place which were situated in this region. He highlighted some points on artisans which was useful for this work. However, it did not give much information about the artisans of the regions.

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<sup>8</sup> L. S. S. O' Malley, *op.cit.*

<sup>9</sup> H. H Risley., *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Ethnographic Glossary*, Vol. 1, Government of Bengal, Calcutta, 1892.

<sup>10</sup> E.C. Dozey, *Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 (With a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District)*, Bibliophil, Kolkata, 2012.

Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan, Tej B., Sunar and Yasso Kainti Bhattachan, “Caste Based Discrimination in Nepal” makes a description of Nepali castes system which prevailed in Nepal.<sup>11</sup> They explained about the social status and economic conditions of dalits of Nepal and they also highlighted the conditions of Nepali dalit women. They also mentioned about the kami of Nepal and their position in the society. They also touched some aspect of the constitutional provision of the dalits.

R.V. Russal, in his *The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India* has explained about the caste system of Central Provinces of India.<sup>12</sup> He mentioned the occupational theory and racial theory of caste. He also talked about the entry of Aryan and dasyus. In this book he clearly explained about the artisans of Central Provinces of India. Their socio-economic conditions and their importance in the society. Though this study analyzed the artisans of Central Provinces of India thoroughly, it did not touch the artisans of Darjeeling regions.

Dick B. Dewan, in his *Education in the Darjeeling Hills (An Historical Survey 1835-1985)* deals with the Education system of Darjeeling.<sup>13</sup> This book is a social history of education. In this book he explain the history of Darjeeling, ethnic groups of the district their culture and traditions. To some extent he explained about the Nepali settlement but he did not give a clear picture about their caste system, which is the main area of the study.

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<sup>11</sup> Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan, Tej B., Sunar and Yasso Kainti Bhattachan, “Caste Based Discrimination in Nepal”, IIDS Working Paper Series Volume III, Number VIII, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> R.V Russal., *The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India*, Vol. I., Macmillan and Co., London, 1916.

<sup>13</sup> Dick B Dewan., *Education in Darjeeling Hills, An Historical Survey 1835-1985*, Indus Publication, New Delhi, 1995.



Prem Sunder, in *Caste, Class and Society (Then and Now)*, has given a detailed account of the caste system which prevailed in Nepal.<sup>14</sup> He also explained the Newari Caste system. He highlighted some points on caste which was useful for this work. However, it did not give much information about the artisans of the regions.

V. Chandra Sekher, in his *Other Backward Classes in India: Recognition and Reservation* he explained the caste structure of the India with Individual state.<sup>15</sup> In this book he clearly mentioned that in India these artisans were not untouchables. He also make a chart of different state and explain that in which state this artisans called what and placed under which category. In this book he also mentions that the artisans are the clean occupational caste. He also touched some aspect of the constitutional provision. Though this study analysed the artisans of India thoroughly, it did not touch the artisans of Darjeeling regions.

Bimala Shrestha, in *Social Life in Nepal* talked about the Hindu Varna system and the Nepali's caste hierarchy.<sup>16</sup> She mainly focused on Brahmin caste. Beside these she also touched the slavery system of Nepal. But she did not touch any aspects on the artisans of Darjeeling which is the main concerned area of this work.

Through this review of literature it can be understood that there is less number of work on artisans of Darjeeling so there is a need to conduct research on this topic.

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<sup>14</sup> Prem Sunder, *Caste, Class and Society (Then and Now)*, Educational Publisher and Distributer, Delhi, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> V.Chandra Sekhar, *Other Backward Classes in India: Recognition and Reservation*, Raj Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Bimala Shrestha, *Social Life in Nepal*, Vani Prakashan Co-operative Ltd, Biratnagar, 1997.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- To analyze the emergence of artisans in Darjeeling district.
- To understand the economic conditions of the artisans of the region in order to understand the importance of artisanal profession in the society.
- To analyze the social status of artisans in comparison with the artisans of other parts of India.

## **Methodology**

The study will be conducted with the aim of understanding social and economic conditions of Darjeeling district. This work will follow through different perceptions as provided by different historians and scholars. As the work surveys the history of artisans, so this work is mostly dependent on the documents which will be collected from the various published and unpublished works like governmental and non-governmental documents, articles in journal and internet website and to construct the thesis. Finally, all collected data will be analysed and critically interpreted for the final dissertation.

## **Chapterization**

The study is divided into five chapters including the introductory chapter and the chapter on conclusions.

### **1. Introduction**

In the introductory part, the importance of the topic, statement of problem, review of literature, objectives of the study, and methodology will be discussed. In this chapter



early history of Darjeeling and Kalimpong was described from geographical point of view.

## **2. A Historical Study of the Migration**

This chapter deals with the historical background and the migration of artisans from Nepal to the Darjeeling region. Further the main objective of this chapter is to identify artisans and define them. This chapter will also focus on their tradition, culture, rituals etc.

## **3. The Social Status of Artisans**

This chapter will give an analysis of the social status of the artisans in the Darjeeling district. It will also compare the social status of the artisans of Darjeeling district with the social status of artisans of other parts of India.

## **4. The Economic Conditions of Artisans**

This chapter will analyse the artisan's economic conditions in the society. This chapter will also explain the problems in their profession particularly in procuring metal and finding jobs. This chapter will deal on the economic conditions of the Darjeeling district through agriculture, trade and commerce. It will also highlight the economic conditions of artisans throughout India in general.

## **5. Conclusion**

The summary of the above chapters will be placed here.

## CHAPTER 2

### A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE MIGRATION

The term migration is so broad and it has different meaning. Migration is caused not only by the economical factor but also caused by many other factors like social, political, cultural, environmental, and educational and so on. There are many reasons that can be identified as factors of rural out-migration.<sup>1</sup> In general, both push and pull factors played an important role in the cases of migration. The push factors include the uneven values of land properties and the low daily wage rate which forced the migrants to leave their birth-place. On the other hand, high wage rates, better employment opportunities and gimmicks of the urban places are the pull factors which attracted the migrants to move to the urban centres.<sup>2</sup>

When the East India Company in 1835 first acquired Darjeeling district from the Raja of Sikkim, it was almost entirely forest and uninhabited. It was in fact, estimated that the whole of this tract, comprising 138 square miles, contained only a population of 100 people. At that time, Darjeeling was forest area and poor communications.<sup>3</sup> A primitive system of Government which countenanced slavery did nothing to encourage development and an increase of population. So, the Company took the

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<sup>1</sup> Gopal Sharma, "Socio- Economic Condition of the people of Darjeeling: Out Migration as a survival Strategy", *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, www.ijird.com, vol. 3, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Yogendra Bahadur Gurung, Migration from Rural Nepal Social Exclusion Framework, Central Dept. Of Population Studies, Tribhuwan University, Kathmandu, 2008, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p. 50.



decision to develop Darjeeling as a hill resort and gave an opportunity to neighbouring people to immigrate and took part in the development.<sup>4</sup>

After the appointment of Campbell as the first superintendent of the Darjeeling region in 1839, the settlement progressed rapidly. He develops the area, attracting immigrants to cultivate the mountain slopes and stimulating trade and commerce. Every encouragement was given to settlers, who received grants of forest lands. Campbell introduced a simple system of administration of justice.<sup>5</sup> By the year 1850, he was able to report that the number of inhabitants had risen to 10,000. Sir Joseph Hooker even compared the progress of Darjeeling to that of an Australian colony, both as regards the rapid extension of buildings and the accession of native families from the surrounding countries. When in 1869 a rough census was taken of the inhabitants in this tract, it was found that they aggregated over 22,000 persons.<sup>6</sup> In this way, a mixed population of different extracts started a new life together under a new situation and under a new cultural environment, and there by in the latest sphere of the British expansion and influence. These people with almost a similar background in their habits, economic activities and social customs rather all having suffered the same lot under feudalism and with almost the similar needs and problems began.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the areas like Teesta River, including Kalimpong area had been conquered from Sikkim by Bhutan. The Bhutan War of 1864 eventually saw the victory of the British. In 1866, this area too was taken by the British and annexed to the present day

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Dick B. Dewan, *Education in Darjeeling Hills, An Historical Survey 1835-1985*, Indus Publication, New Delhi, 1995, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> L.S.S. O'Mally, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1985, p 42.

<sup>7</sup> Dick B. Dewan, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

Darjeeling Sadar and Kalimpong area was treated as part of the Headquarters Subdivision of the District. In 1891, the Kurseong sub-division and in 1907, Siliguri sub-division were formed. In 1907, Darjeeling was added to the Bhagalpur sub-division and in 1912; it was added to Bengal and became a district. The organization of the four sub-divisions was complete in 1916.<sup>8</sup>

The clearing of the forests, opening out of land to people, the introduction and establishment of machinery, the establishment of the tea industry, agriculture all required more labour. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railways was also opened in Darjeeling in 1881. All these stimulated the growth of Darjeeling population.<sup>9</sup>

In the middle of the 19th Century the British were trying to increase their influence on the North Eastern parts of the country, they found out that the Nepalis were a very hardworking and laborious working force. This was an advantage to the British. Darjeeling had been made into a sanatorium for the weary British soldiers. But one of the most important factors for the large inflow of the Nepalis was the establishment of the tea industry which required a large labour force.<sup>10</sup> Construction of roads and railways all demanded workers. The first tea plantation was established in 1856 and by 1866 there were 39 tea gardens. According to the *Census of 1901*, tea garden labourers and their dependents constituted 2/3rd of the total population in the District. In 1931, they formed 42.25%. In the three sub-divisions, they formed 31.52% of the total population.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> E.C. Dozey, *A Concise History of The Darjeeling District Since 1835, With a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and The District*, Bibliophil, Kolkata, 2012, pp. 116-127.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



Agriculture also encouraged immigration, like Kalimpong the sub-divisions of Darjeeling District, has the highest percentage of the total population involved in agriculture. Both agriculture and tea plantations greatly increased the population of the area, also improving the prospects of trade and commerce.<sup>12</sup>

Besides these, there were other factors also which led to the flow of the Nepalis. Nepalis in Nepal had heard stories from their brothers in Munger (India), that money grew in tea bushes. Therefore, many thronged in millions. Moreover, the social, economic and political conditions in British India were much better when compared to Nepal. Here, evils like slavery, caste rigours and customs like *Sati* were being abolished or reformed. But in Nepal, such evil systems were still prevailing. Moreover, the caste system had become very rigid in Nepal.<sup>13</sup> Strict rules of caste had to be followed otherwise they would be socially ostracized. Ideas of caste and division of labour were introduced in the territory of Nepal.<sup>14</sup>

According to H H. Risley, caste is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from ancestor, professing to follow the same hereditary calling, and forming a single homogenous community. He found the caste name as generally associated with specific occupation.<sup>15</sup>

The Darjeeling Hills consist of a wide variety of people belonging to different ethnic groups, languages, religions and customs. Here we have the Lepchas, Bhutias,

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<sup>12</sup> Yogendra Bahadur Gurung, *op. cit.*, p 1.

<sup>13</sup> E.C. Dozey, *op. cit.*, p.133.

<sup>14</sup> D. Sedden, P Blaikie and J Cameron, *Peasants and Workers in Nepal*, Adroit Publisher, Delhi, 2002, p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> V. Chandra Sekhar, *Other Backward Classes in India: Recognition and Reservation*, Raj Publications, New Delhi, 2005, p. 54.

Nepalis, plainsmen, consisting of Bengalis, Biharis and Marwaris. Darjeeling offers a perfect example of the growth of population because of immigration from outside.<sup>16</sup>

Among the lower castes the most numerous were Kami (Blacksmiths and Goldsmiths) etc. Damai and Sarki. These three were so low caste in the society and they may not enter the courtyards of the temples, if they ran into persons of higher caste they would have to go down the way. They had to pay obeisance (*Jadau* in Nepali) whosoever they might be. They would be put to death if they went against their oppression.<sup>17</sup> These people were recruited to Gurkha Regiments only as armourers. They were employed in Defence at lower ranks and they were not allowed to enter the barrack compound, let alone live there. They have to live outside and perform their duties. They were quite numerous in Darjeeling district.<sup>18</sup> The total Kami population of the Darjeeling District at each of the censuses were shown below:

Table 2.1: Kami Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	9,826
1911	10,939
1921	11,779
1931	11,331
1941	16,272

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.75.

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<sup>16</sup> L.S.S. O'Mally, *op. cit.*, p 42.

<sup>17</sup> Prem Sunder, *Caste, Class and Society (Then and Now)*, Educational Publisher and Distributer, Delhi, 2010, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

In many parts of Nepal including mountains, valleys or plains the Kami caste is found. When the people migrated from Nepal they brought themselves this cruel caste system with them wherever they go. These kami people were the occupational castes of Nepal and classed as untouchables in the tradition of the Hindu hierarchy. They were migrated from plains from India to Nepal and then to Darjeeling. When the Nepalese first migrated to Darjeeling in the middle of the nineteenth century and they brought with them the artisans from Nepal.<sup>19</sup>

The Kamis are also found in the state of West Bengal specially Darjeeling district, Sikkim and various parts of India. Kami the artisanal caste of Darjeeling district preferred to take the title as Vishwakarma. They live in hilly terrain, thin forest with moderate rainfall, high humidity and moderate temperature. Actually, there is no any written historical record about the original homeland of Kamis. The Kamis belonged to the Aryans. The Kamis speak Nepali language and use Devnagari script. They are untouchables in the Nepali caste hierarchy. Kamis are superior to the Damais and Sarkis but inferior to the Chettris and the Bhramanas.<sup>20</sup>

Sunar, one of the sub-castes of Kami, is considered to be at the top of the hierarchy within the kamis. Kamis also practiced untouchability against all low castes below them but they were not treated as untouchables by any other low caste groups.<sup>21</sup>

They are treated as untouchables by upper caste only. In the case of other low castes, they practiced caste-based untouchability against those caste groups who are placed

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<sup>19</sup> Rajesh Gautam, Asoke K Thapa-Magar, *Tribal Ethnography of Nepal*, Vol. 1, Book Faith India, 1994, p.308.

<sup>20</sup> J.R. Subba, *History Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p. 313.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



lower than them. Caste-based untouchability among people is a socio-political and economic construction by the Hindu rulers and religious leaders.<sup>22</sup>

The Kamis are an endogamous group and are sub-divided into a number of exogamous thars (clan). The divisions are mainly for the purpose of marriage relations.<sup>23</sup> Though they worked for the people but they were treated as untouchables according to their occupation. Their gotras are as follows, which was brought into consideration at times of ritual ceremony.<sup>24</sup>

Table 2.2: Thars and Gotras of Kamis

Sl.No.	Thar	Gotra
1.	Kalikote	Aayetra
2.	Koirala	Yothgal
3.	Asurpate	Angirash
4.	Khati	Attri
5.	Khapangi	Kashyap
6.	Khadkathoki	Kaundinya
7.	Gadal	Kashyap
8.	Gadaili	Kashyap
9.	Ghatraj	Kapil
10.	Gajmer	Garga
11.	Ghatani	Sandille

<sup>22</sup>Tulsi Ram Panday, *et al*, *Forms and Patterns of Social Discrimination in Nepal, A Report*, UNESCO, Kathmandu Series of Monographs and Working Papers: No. 8, UNESCO, Kathmandu, 2006, p 16.

<sup>23</sup>J.R. Subba, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

<sup>24</sup>Ramlal Rasaily, *Rasaily Vamshawali*, (Nepali), Rasaily Bandhu, Urlabari, 2012, p 35.

12.	Ghamgothle	Kapil
13.	Ghimire	Kashyap
14.	Tiruwa	Kaushik
15.	Diyali	Bhardwaj
16.	Darnal	Watsa
17.	Deupate	Bhardwaj
18.	Dutraaj	Kapil
19.	Dural	Aatreya
20.	Lamgade	Aatreya
21.	Portel	Mrigu
22.	Paitu	Garna
23.	Pantha	Pandaw
24.	Baraili	Dhritikaushik
25.	Rasaili	Gautam
26.	Ruchal	Bardwaj
27.	Rahpal	Biswamitra
28.	Janak Karmi	Wamdev
29.	Singaure	Wasista
30.	Suncheuri	Wasista
31.	Sapkota	Kaudinya
32.	Shankar	Dhananjay
33.	Ramudamu	Krishna Anjali
34.	Dhanuke	Upamanyu
35.	Dhamala	Dhananjay

36.	Lohar	Lomas
37.	Lwagun	Lomas
38.	Lakandri	Jaymini
39.	Lamichane	Kaushik
40.	Humlali	Dhananjay
41.	Snai	Kasyap
42.	Jumlali	Kasyap
43.	Doteli	Kasyap
44.	Simkhada	Bhardwaj
45.	Setisilwal	Bhardwaj

Source: Ramlal Rasaily, *Rasaily Vamshawali*, (Nepali), Rasaily Bandhu, Urlabari, 2012, pp. 35-47.

The term Nepali has been used but Nepali is a heterogeneous community having within it various sub-communities, having their own traditions, origins, customs and languages. The term ‘Nepali’ represents a cultural linguistic denomination.<sup>25</sup>

The various Nepalese castes are well represented in the district. Among prominent tribes and castes of Darjeeling district are Brahmins locally known as bahun, Kshetriyas known as Chettris, Rai, Limbu, Lepcha, Bhutia, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Pradhan (newar) etc.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Atish Dasgupta, “Ethnic Problem and Movements for Autonomy in Darjeeling”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 11/12 (Nov. - Dec., 1999), URL: <http://www.jstor.org/Stable/3518047>, pp. 53-56.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



Table 2.3: Other Population of Darjeeling District

	1872	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Rajbanshi	23,124	....	....	29,460	28,944	23,191	26,969	17,991
Koch	....	30,801	....	.....	....	....	122	....
Dhhimal	873	....	631	....	444	....	375	....
Meches	893	...	267	342	201	....	379	275
Santhals	.....	.....	.....	1,859	2,246	3,607	4,299	4,045
Oraons	1,642	....	4,632	8,042	7,543	10,952	12,412	12,433
Mundas	....	.....	255	3,980	3,365	5,322	5,062	4,993

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p p.67-69.

Nepali Bahuns are fairly numerous in the district, Bahus are originally Hindus. As they were Brahmins by birth their occupation was either of a priest or preceptor,<sup>27</sup> according to different census their numbers were as follows:-

Table 2.4: Bahun Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	6,470
1911	6,195
1921	8,174
1931	8,791
1941	8,999

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.73.

<sup>27</sup> Bimala Sreestha, *Social Life in Nepal*, Vani Prakashan Co- Operative Ltd., 1997, p. 6.

Chettris of Darjeeling district were successful cultivators. According to census of 1901 their number was 11,597. When the next census was taken in 1911, their number had increased to 12,599. In 1941 census there were 25,941. The Census Reports shows that the population of the Chettris increased considerably over the years. They were widely distributed throughout the district.<sup>28</sup>

The following table shows the number of Rai recorded as residing in the Darjeeling District:

Table 2.5: Rais Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	33,133
1911	40,409
1921	41,236
1931	47,431
1941	56,794

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.72.

The Rais comprised of many units. They migrated from the Eastern Nepal via north Burma and Assam along the mid-hills (lower mountains) with their pigs in ancient times. The Rais are divided into ten Clans or Thars namely Athapre, Bantawa, Chamling, Kulung, Lohorong, Nemahung, Nehali, Sangpang, Thulung and Chayrasia.

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

They have a colossal linguistic diversity and their dialects are unintelligible to each other.<sup>29</sup>

Most of the Sherpa people lived in Nepal's eastern regions; however, some live farther west in the Rolwaling valley and in the Helambu region north of Kathmandu. They also live in Tibet, and Bhutan, as well as the Indian states of Sikkim and the northern portion of West Bengal, specifically the Darjeeling district. In 1901, there were 3,450 Sherpas in the district: in 1931 their number had increased to 5,295 and in 1941 to 6,929.<sup>30</sup>

The Magars were the oldest ethnic people in Nepal. Their ancestral homeland in Nepal extends from the western and the southern edges of the Dhaulagiri range of the Himalayas to the Mahabharata foothills in the south and Kali Gandaki river basin in the east. The Magars can also be found in Darjeeling district.<sup>31</sup> The figures below shows that increased population of Mangars in the Darjeeling district

Table 2.6: Magar Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	11,912
1911	12,451
1921	14,934
1931	16,299
1941	17,262

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.73.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Suman Raj Timsina, *Nepali Community in India*, Manak Publication Pvt LTD, Delhi, 1992, p. 13.



Bhujel, also known as Khawash, is an indigenous ethnic group of Himalayan Region ranging from Nepal, India and Bhutan. Bhujels were originally slaves in Nepal. Their number in Darjeeling district was 5,816.<sup>32</sup>

The Limbus is another community residing in District who bears the title of Subba and their original home was in East Nepal. Their flat features, slightly oblique eyes, yellow complexion and beardlessness give some grounds that they are the descendants of early Tibetan settlers in Nepal. They were quite numerous in tea areas in the Darjeeling and in the Khas Mahals of the Sadar and Kalimpong Subdivisions.<sup>33</sup>

Table 2.7: Limbu Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	17,803
1911	14,305
1921	13,804
1931	14,191
1941	16,288

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.74.

Another Nepalese caste in Darjeeling was the Newars, who were ruled in Nepal until 1769 when it was overthrown by the Chettris, Mangars and Gurungs. This caste bears the title of Pradhan. They were now traders, artisans, agriculturist and domestic

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<sup>32</sup>Arthur Jules Dash, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

servants. Some of them still adhere to their old religion Buddhism and some has become Hindu.<sup>34</sup> The population of Newars in the District has follows:

Table 2.8: Newar Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	5,770
1911	6,927
1921	8,751
1931	10,235
1941	12,242

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.73.

The Lepchas were the original inhabitants of the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim, Many Lepchas are also found in western and south-western Bhutan, Tibet, Darjeeling, and the Mechi Zone of eastern Nepal. The Lepcha people are composed of four main distinct communities: the Renjóngmú of Sikkim; the Támsángmú of Kalimpong, Kurseong, and Mirik; the Ilámmú of Ilam District, Nepal; and the Promú of Samtse and Chukha in southwestern Bhutan. The Lepchas practiced shifting cultivation, hunting and fishing. They had their own culture, language, tradition and religion. Regarding the religion of the Lepchas, they are either animists, Buddhists or Christians.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Prem Sunder, *Caste, Class and Society (Then and Now)*, Educational Publisher and Distributer, Delhi, 2010, p 82.

<sup>35</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *op. cit.*, p 77.

Table 2.9: Lepcha Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1872	3,952
1901	9,972
1911	9,706
1921	9,669
1931	12,101
1941	12,470

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.77.

The Gurung people are an ethnic group from different parts of Nepal. They helped in 1769 to overthrow the Newar dynasty and Gurung of Nepal was recruited to combatant rank in Gurkhabattalion.<sup>36</sup> Their numbers in the District are follows:

Table 2.10: Gurung Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	8,738
1911	9,628
1921	9,575
1931	11,154
1941	15,455

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.74.

Tamangs, are the indigenous inhabitants of the Himalayan regions of Nepal. Tamang are also a significant minority in Sikkim and Darjeeling District as permanent settlers.

<sup>36</sup> Suman raj Timsina, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

Most Tamangs are farmers, engaged in agriculture as small holders and day labour. Tamangs are also serving as brave Gurkha regiments and they are very numerous in the Darjeeling District. They are good cultivators and are found in large numbers in tea garden.<sup>37</sup> Their numbers in the Darjeeling district are follows:

Table 2.11: Tamang Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1872	6,557
1901	24,465
1911	27,226
1921	30,450
1931	33,481
1941	43,114

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.74.

The ancestors of the Bhutia migrated from Tibet to north eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and other parts of Nepal and Bhutan. They migrated through the different passes in the Himalayas. Geographical indications in the name of Bhutias last names are common. In Northern Sikkim, for example, where the Bhutias are the majority inhabitants, they are known as the Lachenpas or Lachungpas, meaning inhabitants of Lachen or Lachung respectively. In Sikkim, the Bhutias are mostly employed in the government sector, in agriculture, and increasingly in the business area as well. In the district of Darjeeling, Bhutias are often employed in government and commerce. Bhutias practise intermarriage within their clans and follow a very

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *op. cit.*, p 74.



hierarchical system of bride and groom selection. Clan discrimination is widespread, and marriage outside the community is looked down upon.<sup>38</sup> Their numbers in the District are follows:

Table No. 2.12: Bhutia Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	9,315
1911	10,768
1921	10,710
1931	5,334
1941	7,612

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.76.

Damais were the tailor caste and were recruited to Gurkha battalions only as Darzis. Damias were found in most areas in the Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling.<sup>39</sup> Their numbers in the Darjeeling District are as follows:

Table 2.13: Damai Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	4,643
1911	4,453
1921	5,781
1931	5,551
1941	8,162

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.75.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Sarki who work in leather are also recruited to Gurkha Regiments. They are numerous in towns and tea garden in the hills and in the Kalimpong Khas Mahals.<sup>40</sup> They have never been very numerous in the district their numbers recorded were:

Table 2.14: Sarki Population of the Darjeeling District

Year	Population
1901	1,823
1911	1,992
1921	2,036
1931	2,432
1941	2,778

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947, p.75.

Migration is the most common form of movement which indicates that rural areas continues to be an integral part of development efforts, a modern society demands. Moreover, migration has the potential to contribute to poverty reduction. It helps to increase their income, learn new skills, improve their social status, build up assets and improve their quality of life. But in the case of kami people it was reverse because where ever Nepali people goes they brought themselves their cruel caste system with them.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

### SOCIAL STATUS OF ARTISANS

The artisans, particularly blacksmiths, goldsmiths and metal-specialists were called as Kami in Nepali language. Many Kami peoples are still working with outdate manual machinery. They were treated as outcaste or untouchables not only in the Darjeeling region but also other neighbouring hill regions.<sup>1</sup> The Kamis are found in the state of West Bengal specially Darjeeling district and Sikkim. Kami the artisanal caste of Darjeeling district preferred to take the title as Biswakarma. It may be a derivative of Vishwakarma, which is used by the people of other parts of India. Actually there is no any written historical record about the original homeland of Kamis. They speak Nepali language and use Devnagari script. In the caste hierarchy of the region Kamis are superior to the Damais and Sarkis but inferior to the Chettris and the Bahuns<sup>2</sup>.

In Darjeeling district, occupational caste were generally limited to tailors, leathers workers and blacksmith, goldsmith etc. but the list is larger in the other parts of India.<sup>3</sup> Vishwakarmas are a community or caste who have adopted engineering, art and architecture professions in India since ancient period and are followers of Lord Vishwakarma. They are found all over India. They comprise blacksmith, carpenter, metal crafts man stone-carver, goldsmith. All over India, they considered themselves as superior to Brahmins and they wear sacred thread,

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<sup>1</sup> Bimala Sreestha, *Social Life in Nepal*, Vani Prakashan Co- Operative Ltd., 1997 pp.1- 17.

<sup>2</sup> J.R. Subba, *History Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p. 313.

<sup>3</sup> D. Sedden, P Blaikie and J Cameron, *Peasants and Workers in Nepal*, Adroit Publisher, Delhi, 2002, p. 94.

perform various priestly duties and accord them a position equal to that of Brahmins. Hence, they were also known as Vishwabrahmin in many areas of India.<sup>4</sup>

### **The difference of Social Status of Artisans between Darjeeling and Other Parts of India**

In the plains of India the traditional caste system is divided into five major groups, with each group containing dozens of castes and these groups are, Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors), Vaishya (merchants), Shudra (artisans) and Untouchables. These Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishya are the “twice-born” group because of their religious rituals and Shudra are considered clean (touchable) but not twice-born. The rank of the untouchables lies outside of the system. These untouchables are the lowest level of the Hindu caste system and they are considered impure and it is also believed that they have that potential to pollute any Hindu caste. He also mentions that all other non-Hindus are also untouchables because they are also outside of the system for ranking caste Hindus.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout India the socio- economic condition of artisans are not same. According to the South Indian tradition Vishwabrahmins were descended from five sons of lord Vishwakarma.<sup>6</sup> The community is widely spread throughout India and played a vital role in the village economy. The socio-economic status of artisans in India varied from a very high level to the low level in different parts of India. The artisans of this region have contributed greatly to Indian civilization and culture as temple and city

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<sup>4</sup>Vijaya Ramaswamy, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 4 (2004), URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165073>, p. 564.

<sup>5</sup> S K Modi, *Dalit low Caste of Hinduism*, Navyug Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2009 , pp. 55-60.

<sup>6</sup> They are Manu (blacksmith), Maya (carpenter), Thwastha (metal craftsman), Silpi (stone-carver) Vishvajnya (goldsmith).



builders, architects, engineers and artists. Without their immense contribution, Indian civilization would be very poor indeed.<sup>7</sup>

According to Ramaswamy the maker of the plough who lived in village were differed considerably from the people who banded together as Vishwakarma and travelling from place to place and they were dependent on the temple economy. The latter group, who did work in proximity to each other while constructing and embellishing temples, had opportunities for socio-economic advancement but also bore the risks of withdrawal of patronage and changes in religious focus. They have claimed a higher social status for many years and believe that the trades which they traditionally follow are superior to the work of a manual labourer because they require artistic and scientific skills.<sup>8</sup>

In the Central Province of India, artisans were claimed as Brahmins and sometimes avoided to take food from the Brahmins. Among the artisans of this place, sunars or the gold smiths were included in respected positions. Here they were treated as pure caste from whom Brahmin can take water.<sup>9</sup>

In the Caste System of Goa, the various Jātis or sub-castes to be found among the Hindus belonging to the four Varnas (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra), as well as those outside of them. The traditional Hindu caste system was also retained by the Goan Catholic peasant community. Artisan castes include Charis, Chitaris who call themselves Vishwakarma Manu, Maya, Brahmin and Kasars. Since they were not

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<sup>7</sup> Dore Raj, M. L. and Rajasekhara Reddy, K., "A demographic study of Vishwakarma Population of Mysore District, Karnataka State, India", *Asian Mirror- International Journal of Research*, Vol. II, No. II, May-2015, pp. 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> Vijaya Ramaswamy, *op.cit.*, p. 568.

<sup>9</sup> R. V. Russell, *The Tribe and Castes of the Central Province of India*, Vol. I, Macmillan and Co., Limited, London, 1916, p. 45.

considered as untouchables they were included in the Other Backward Class list of the Government of India.<sup>10</sup>

According to Smritikumar Sarkar artisans were the important part of the Indian society. They played an extremely important role in the society. In the Bengal also they were not an untouchable caste.<sup>11</sup>

The artisans of Darjeeling faced discrimination in day to day discourse owing to untouchability. They face discrimination and untouchability regarding housing, marriage, employment and general social interaction. This discrimination are preserved and reinforced through the practice and threat of social exclusion or physical violence. In the social hierarchy, artisanal communities are placed in the system as untouchables.<sup>12</sup>

The main question is why the artisans in Darjeeling were treated as untouchables though they were given high social status within Shudras in other parts of India? Therefore, the main argument is the social status of any caste in India was determined generally by the economic importance of the profession of that particular caste. In other words social status of artisan castes in Darjeeling region, were very low but in other parts of India artisans did not have any untouchable status such as in South India, Western India, Bihar and Central Provinces. Their social status was very high within the Shudras but where as in Darjeeling region their social status was very low i.e. they were the untouchables. This happened because of the lack of importance of

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<sup>10</sup> "Caste System in Goa", <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste-System-in-Goa>, accessed on 13-04-2017.

<sup>11</sup> Smritikumar Sarkar, *Technology and Rural Change in Eastern India (1830-1980)*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2014, pp. 125-127.

<sup>12</sup> Uddhab Prasad Pyakurel, *Social Exclusion and Inclusion: A Sociological Study of Dalits in Nepal*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Centre for the study of social systems, JNU, 2012, p. 73.

the profession of the artisan castes in the Darjeeling society. But in other regions, without the artisans their agrarian and urban economics could not have flourished.

However in the Hindu Dharmasastras compiled in India, nowhere the artisans are mentioned as untouchables. In the Indo-Gangetic plains, the artisans are the middle caste, in south India as Vishwa Brahmins and in central provinces they claimed equal to Brahmin.<sup>13</sup>

The following table shows the division of occupation of caste and communities included in middle class in the State and Union Territories based on their traditional occupation, state wise showing the caste name and their occupation:

Table No. 3. 1 State wise caste name and their occupation.

Sl.No	State	Name of the Artisans Castes	Occupations
1	Andhra Pradesh	Viswabrahmin, Viswakarma, Ausula, Kamsali, Kammars, Kanchari, Vadla, Vadra, Vadrangi and Silpis	Goldsmith, Brassmith, Ironsmith, Carpenters and Sculptors
2	Assam	Maria	Making bras metal utensils
3	Bihar	Kamar	Working on metal
4	NCT of Delhi	Sunar, Kasera, Tamera and Thathear	Gold smith
5	Chandigarh	Thathera/Thethera and Rehar	Making ornament of the base metal
6	Daman and Diu	Kasar	Metal Workers

<sup>13</sup> Dore Raj, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

7	Goa	Bhandari	Blacksmith
8	Gujarat	Lohar, Mistri and Soni	Metal Workers
9	Haryana	Sunar, Zargar, Soni and Rehar	Goldsmith, making ornaments of the base metal
10	Himachal Pradesh	Sunar, Zargar and Soni	Goldsmith
11	Jammu and Kashmir	Lohar and Tarkhan	Metal Workers
12	Karnataka	Viswakarma, Kasar, Kansar, Kachori, Kancheera, Kanchugara, Bogar and Otori	Metal Workers
13	Kerela	Viawakarma	Metal Workers
14	Madhya Pradesh	Sonar, Sunar, Swarnakar, Jhhari, Jhhadi, Awedhiya and Thathera	Metal Workers
15	Maharashtra	Jhhari, Jhhadi, Awedhiya and Thetera	Metal Workers
16	Manipur	.....	
17	Orissa	Thatari/Kansari	Metal Workers
18	Punjab	Thatera	Metal Workers
19	Pondicherry	Kammalar or Viswakarma, kammar, Thatar and Viswabrahmin	Metal Workers
20	Rajasthan	Thathera, Kansa and Bharna	Metal Workers and Goldsmith

21	Tamil Nadu	Kammalar or Viswakarma, kammar, Thatar and Viswabrahmin	Metal Workers
22	Tripura	Lohar, Karmar and Kamar	Metal Workers
23	Uttar Pradesh	Kasera, Thathera, Tamrakar and Kalaikar	Metal Workers
24	West Bengal	Kasari	Bell metal work

Source: V. Chandra Sekhar, *Other Backward Classes in India: Recognition and Reservation*, Raj Publications, New Delhi, 2005, p. 113-136.

The artisans are part of rural life and connected to the agriculture in one way or other. These artisans produced agricultural tools and allied implements which were directly related to the agriculture. Agriculture has played a key role in the development of human civilization. In Darjeeling region agriculture was not that flourished because of its geographical condition. Therefore, they had low status of untouchability for two reasons. One is the society of the region did not require their occupations and on the other they were immigrants and did not belonged to their society but there was no any evidence.<sup>14</sup>

In Darjeeling region, artisans are not allowed to enter into the upper caste homes. Artisans bearing an untouchable status are not permitted to work in enterprises such as grocery shops, tea-stalls, restaurants, or hotels. Furthermore, upper caste people in the hill villages do not buy milk from their artisans neighbours. Such a practice has

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<sup>14</sup> Bimala Shrestha, *Social Life in Nepal*, Vani Prakashan Co-operative Ltd. Biratnagar, 1997, p.1.



discouraged the artisans people of this region from being involved in businesses related to the production and sale of milk and milk-based products.<sup>15</sup>

The socio economic status of Kami in Darjeeling district is very poor. Low income and minimum social awareness have straightened education and other life sustaining need as privileges or material of luxury, clearly unattainable. This is particularly because of their limited profession. They are illiterate and very few are in business, civil service and agriculture. They do not have their own land for agriculture. Moreover, due to low income and big families, they are not habituated to save money and are not capable to start their own business. They have a big family where only one or two are employed, more precisely self-employed.<sup>16</sup>

The castes and community whose traditional occupation was a metal work like goldsmith, blacksmith, ornamental, tailoring and carpentering etc. fall under the clean artisanal occupation caste in India. But in the case of Darjeeling District these artisanal caste came under untouchable category.<sup>17</sup>

### **Influence of Caste System of Nepal on Darjeeling**

Since most of the caste of Darjeeling come from the Nepal, their social system was on the lines of Nepal's social system. It was the Gorkha conquests in Nepal that resulted in the status usurpation of the high castes. In order to bring uniformity in the newly established Nepal Kingdom, a uniform Hindu law was also introduced. Everyone had to follow and obey the Hindu laws otherwise were subject to five types of punishment

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<sup>15</sup> Tulsi Ram Panday, *et al*, "Forms and Patterns of Social Discrimination in Nepal, A Report", UNESCO, Kathmandu Series of Monographs and Working Papers: No. 8, UNESCO, Kathmandu, 2006, pp. 20-28.

<sup>16</sup> H. H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Ethnographic Glossary*, Vol. 1, Government of Bengal, Calcutta, 1892, pp. 393- 395.

<sup>17</sup> V.Chandra Sekhar, *Other Backward Classes in India: Recognition and Reservation*, Raj Publications, New Delhi, 2005, p.109.

which included confiscation of property, degradation to a low caste, banishment, mutilation and death. But punishment was different for different castes e.g. Brahmins were not subject to Capital punishment but the same crime resulted in severe punishment and even death penalty to others, excluding Chettris and Thakuris too. Even slavery was widely prevalent in Nepal. It was the Brahmins, Chettris and Thakuris who occupied important positions in state and administration, bureaucracy and the army. Their dominance in every sphere also further facilitated the growth of their language too i.e. Nepali. Besides Nepalis, the large number of Kiratas followed by the Murmis or Tamangs was present in Nepal. In Nepal, Hinduisation of the Kiratas was definitely more powerful and pervading. The State and its official discourse sought to strengthen the process as it was necessary for nation building in Nepal. The Kirata voice was never strong to challenge such domination. In order to escape punishment and humiliation, many migrated but the *Tagadhari* culture<sup>18</sup> followed them wherever they went. Some Brahmins and Chettris also migrated to these areas and they were mostly engaged in agriculture and dairy farming. This might be because the Brahmins and Chettris occupied the dominant positions in the social, economic and political spheres when compared to the Mongoloid or Tibeto - Burman groups. However when they came to Darjeeling, caste distinctions did not matter. The absence of domination by any one group gave them a strong community character as Nepalis. The Nepalese caste system is the traditional system of social stratification of Nepal. It consists of four broad social classes or varnas: Brahmin,

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<sup>18</sup> *Tagadhari* means wearer of holy chord (*Janai*).

Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra. The caste system defines social classes by a number of hierarchical endogamous groups often termed jaat.<sup>19</sup>

In their caste system, there was the absence of Vaishyas and Sudras. However, they have the occupational castes like Kamis (iron smiths), Damais (tailors) and Sarkis (cobblers or leather workers) who were regarded as outcastes. They too are Indo-Aryan racially and have Nepali as their mother tongue. The Mangars and Gurungs were initially treated as the Kshatriyas and had some common titles. (E.g. Thapa can either be a Chettri or Mangar). But later they were relegated to the status of Sudras. In fact the entire Nepali society was divided into two broad categories namely the Tagadharis, (the sacred thread wearing communities which include the Bahuns, Chettris and Thakuris ) and the others can be categorized as the Matwalis (to whom drinking is not taboo). The Eastern parts of Nepal were inhabited mostly by the Kiratas (the Rais, Limbus and Yakkas are given this appellation) and were known as the wild non -Aryan tribes living in the mountains , particularly the Himalayas and in the North-Eastern areas of India, who were Mongoloid in origin.<sup>20</sup>

One more interesting feature of the Nepali's social system is Newari caste system. The Kathmandu Valley was inhabited by the Newars. Among them there are 26 Castes, each having a hereditary occupation related to from Brahmins to untouchables. Thus Jyapu Newar (farmers) could claim to be Shrestas (Brahmin Caste). But with the Gorkha conquests, the Newars just became a 'jat' or caste within the emerging Nepali society. There was the infiltration of the Brahmin and Chettri everywhere in Nepal except in the high hills. Wherever they settled, even in the areas

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<sup>19</sup> Prem Sunder, *Caste, Class and Society (Then and Now)*, Educational Publisher and Distributer, Delhi, 2010, pp. 66-69.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 66- 82.

of other castes, Nepali became the lingua franca. Within two or three generations, Newar language lost its importance and it was never adopted as the second language of any other ethnic group. Racially, the Bahuns, Thakuris and Chettris are Caucasoid and have only Nepali as their main language, which is an Indo-Aryan language. The Newars, Tamangs, Sherpas and others are Mongoloid and have their own Tibeto-Burman languages.<sup>21</sup>

Newars were both Hindus and Buddhists. In both the Hindu and Buddhist Newar communities the caste system has been found. In this community, caste system was introduced by Jayasthiti Malla which was based on *Manusmriti*. Newar artisans also considered as untouchables in Newari community. If any person belonged to artisans caste of Newari community touched higher caste Newar, then the later needed sprinkling of water (water purification) on them.<sup>22</sup>

### **Origins**

The origin of the Kami was unsettled as comparison to the other tribes. It can be stated that they can be placed within the Brahmin and Kshatriya category. The reason for this is the Kami septs (thar) are akin to those of their peers the Brahmin and Kshatriya. Sapkota, Ghimire, Adhikari and Acharya are some of the septs that can mean the person could be a Brahmin or Kami or a Kshatriya.<sup>23</sup>

### **Community Relationship**

The Kamis are an endogamous group and are sub-divided into a number of exogamous thars (clan). Some of them are Darnal, Dural, Cintury, Rasaily, Gadaily,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Rajesh Gautam, Asoke K Thapa-Magar, *Tribal Ethnography of Nepal*, Vol. 1, Book Faith India, Delhi, 1994, p. 308.

Gazmer, Baraily, Lakri, Dhanuke, Dhamala, Ghimerey, Tiruwa, Lohar, Khati, Setisural, Lamichaney, Sapkota, Lamghade, Ghatraj, Shankar and Ruchal. The divisions are mainly used for marriage alliances. They have gotras, which was brought into consideration at times of ritual ceremony. They consider themselves as Shudras under the Varna order and feel superior to the Sarkis and Damai but inferior to the Chettris and Brahmanas. These kamis have surnames that are similar to those of the bahun or chettri like, Ghimiray, Sapkota,<sup>24</sup> Further they also have surnames that are similar to those of the Brahmin or Kshatriya caste like, Brahmin: Verma, Sharma, Rao, Rastogi, Acharya/Achari, Chari, Jha, Ranjan, Dixit, Dhiman, Panchal , Kshatriya: Soni, Singh, Mair/Mayer/Mehr, Katta, Seth, Chauhan, Babbar, Rana, Sisodia, Gogna Shinh, Sehdev, Sudera, Kanda, Karwal.<sup>25</sup>

During the mass migration of many different ethnic groups from Nepal settled into the hills and thus Darjeeling is peculiar in respect to its people, language, physical features, customs and traditions, etc. There is no written documentation prior to migration on who initially inhabited the Darjeeling Hill areas.<sup>26</sup>

In Nepal, as in India, there is a long history of the caste system. The caste system migrated along with the Nepalis and those who ended up in Darjeeling became known as Pahadis (hill people). The Brahmans and Chettris, the original dominant castes, were the ones to obtain the land and brought with them those of the low caste composed of Kami, Sarki, and Damai, to do the labour work. The result was a simple

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<sup>24</sup> Ramlal Rasaily, *Rasaily Vamshawali*, (Nepali), Rasaily Bandhu, Urlabari, 2012, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup>“Caste system of India”, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/Caste-system-of-India>, accessed on 10-05-2017.

<sup>26</sup> Gopal Sharma, “Socio- Economic Condition of the people of Darjeeling: Out Migration as a survival Strategy”, *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, [www.ijird.com](http://www.ijird.com), vol. 3, p.10.

but effective Caste system and tribal groups known as Janajatis were slotted into the middle.<sup>27</sup>

In Nepali society caste is the hierarchical differentiation of ritual status and operates as an institution or a system. The caste system is traditionally based on ritual an organization classifying the members of society according to the occupation they held, organizing better division of labour in the community, which now has evolved as social groups. In social hierarchy Brahmins, Chhettries occupies the upper most spots and Kami occupying bottommost rungs in caste hierarchy.<sup>28</sup>

Kami in traditional occupation have poor socio-economic condition. They are far behind from the reach social services. They are exploited through wages. The occupation is caste based occupation which is perceived lower grade work so they are excluded and there is no proper social respect to their profession although they have equal contribution in the development of the community and society. Kami who are in other occupation or outside the district have different experiences.<sup>29</sup>

Kamis are metal specialist on agricultural tools and basic domestic tools related to iron. Kami are treated to be untouchable and very low caste in Nepalese community. From this, can be seen that Nepalese society is clearly split into touchable and untouchables, have no marital relation with them, and do not allow them to enter their house. They also practice sprinkling water (act of purification).<sup>30</sup> The low-caste people are deprived of utilizing most of the temples, funeral places, drinking water taps and wells, restaurants, shops and other public places. There is also practice of

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<sup>27</sup> Suman Raj Timsina, *Nepali Community in India*, Manak Publication Pvt LTD, Delhi, 1992, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Prem Sunder, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> Bimala Shrestha, *op. cit.*, p15.

<sup>30</sup> Tulsi Ram Panday, *et al, op. cit.*, pp. 20-24.



untouchability with so called low-caste people. Basically, Kami are found to be involved in traditional as well as non-traditional occupation. In non-traditional occupation their involvement is in manual jobs that requires physical labour like substantial agriculture; businesses and non-profit organization. But their involvement in government is found to be nil.<sup>31</sup>

This people who are in non-traditional occupation get social respect more than people in traditional occupation. Traditional occupation holders do not get regular order for work so sometimes they are busy and sometimes they do not have job. Socially, these occupation holders get lower status in the society due to their occupation so youths have poor attraction on traditional occupation.<sup>32</sup>

The social boycott, a practice of exclusion of people from their families and group, is normally resorted to in cases of Inter-caste marriages, where a higher-caste man marries a lower-caste woman. It also happens when upper caste women marry lower caste men. In both cases, the women bear the brunt of the disapproval of the marriage; Failure to follow traditional norms and values (applicable to upper caste people and the lower caste people).<sup>33</sup>

This lower caste people suffer from a number of oppression such as battering, mental torture, rape, break-up of inter-caste marriage, false allegations, etc. Higher-caste people do not hesitate to beat low caste women in public places, if they are found to break laws, or norms and values of the Hindu tradition.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan, , Tej B., Sunar and Yasso Kainti Bhattachan (Gauchan), "Caste Based Discrimination in Nepal". IIDS Working Paper Series Volume III, Number VIII, 2009, pp. 79-89.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

They are treated as untouchables by upper caste only. In the case of other low castes, they practice caste-based untouchability against those caste groups who are placed lower than them. Caste-based untouchability among people is a socio-political and economic construction by the Hindu rulers and religious leaders.<sup>35</sup>

These are marginalized not only in the religious sphere, but in terms of political representation, economic participation or social exclusion, these people find themselves to be the most disadvantaged groups in Nepalese society. In other words, they are economically deprived, politically backward. And socio-culturally hatred by the Hindu upper caste groups. The development process is demolishing their infrastructure forcing them out of their home, depriving them of their traditional way of life and work.<sup>36</sup>

Many Nepalese came to work in the copper mines in the Sikkim which were again in the hands of Newar traders on lease. The miners were all Nepalese and belonged to the Magar tribe. Since the melting of copper had to be done by a special caste of blacksmith called Kamis, many Kamis too migrated to Sikkim. This appears to have led to a shortfall in Nepal's blacksmith population. Therefore, Nepal stopped the import of copper from Sikkim to discourage the migration of Kamis.<sup>37</sup>

### **Influence of Social Status of Artisans on Cultural and Religious Function**

Kamis have more or less same types of rituals in marriage, death and other religious and cultural functions as Brahman, Chhetri, and some other castes have. Priest from

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<sup>35</sup> S K Modi, *Dalit low Caste of Hinduism*, Navyug Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2009, p. 34.

<sup>36</sup> Prajnalal Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, (ed.) *Dalit Samudayaka Samasya Bisayak Rastriya Paramars Karyakram*, (Nepali), Antharrashtreeya Ekyavaddatha Samuh (Grinso), Kathmandu, 1996, pp. 24-30.

<sup>37</sup> George Kotturan, *The Himalayan Gateway History and Culture of Sikkim*, Sterling Publication pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1983, p. 83.

their own community supports them in organizing any types of functions and rituals as Brahmin priest considers it sin to perform in their houses. There was system of participation in other caste's or community's gatherings.<sup>38</sup>

Dowry system is not as prevalent in them as in other cases. Nwaran (naming of new born child) and first time food offering to the baby are same as other castes have. But they have their own priest as Brahmins do not enter their houses or touch them to perform any rituals.<sup>39</sup>

The Kamis follow the Hinduism and worship viswakarma, Shiva, Lakshmi and Saraswati as family deities. Hindu Kami visit Kashi, Pashupati, Mahakal temple Darjeeling as pilgrimage centre. Priest of their own community perform birth, marriage and death rites. The Jhakris belonging to their own community cure disease and drive away evil spirit. They also offer their obeisance to the *Bhimsen* and *Diwali*.<sup>40</sup> They sacrifice a matured cock during the *Bhimsen puja*<sup>41</sup>. They believe that all these puja and sacrifices prevent the new born baby from being deaf and dumb. They also celebrate *Dasai*, *Tihar* and *Chaita Dasai* festivals. Kami are discriminated in the religious and cultural spheres. The prohibition on entering temples prevents the Kami from participating in the religious activities inside the temples. They have to be content with worshipping outside the temple building. Kami women who enter the temple are humiliated by the temple priests as well as by higher-caste people.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ramlal Rasaily, *Rasaily Vamshawali*, (Nepali), Rasaily Bandhu, Urlabari, 2012, pp. 24-26.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *Bhimsen* means ancestral God of the clan and people worshiped him for good health and propriety. *Diwali* is an ancestral festival which was held in the Month of November in the time of full moon (*Mangsir Purne*).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, pp. 21-23.

<sup>42</sup> David N Gellner, "Caste, Ethnicity and Inequality in Nepal", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No.20, 1823, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419601>.

## **Conversion into Christianity**

Conversion to the Christian faith can be attributed to many different aspects of one's individual life and come from both in and outside the villages. The main motives for Christian conversion are provision of social welfare work with an emphasis on educational institutions, to improve their social status, the search for a stricter practice and a strong spiritual connection to God, as well as the availability of a community. But in some cases they follow Christianity and Buddhism also. These kamis were not allowed to practice Hindu rituals, norms and values in the same manner as other castes followed. To escape from this discrimination, they converted into Christianity. And yet even within their Christian communities only those belonging to higher castes can become religious leaders or occupy key positions in the church.<sup>43</sup>

## **Education and Social Status**

The education is a key variable in the exploration of the social status of the Kami. Education plays an important role in raising the economic status of the Kami. Education status of Kami is lower in comparison to other castes and ethnic groups. Women of the Kami community have less access to education. Most of the Kami children whose parents have other means of earning other than traditional occupation are seen to have got chances to go schools because of better earning in the family.<sup>44</sup>

Literacy is growing among them. Both boys and girls study up to the secondary level and dropout mainly under economic pressure or the status pressure, because in some places they did not get admission just because they belonged to the lower caste. In some cases girls mainly dropout after secondary level due to marriage. But in present

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<sup>43</sup> Dick B. Dewan, *Education in Darjeeling Hills, An Historical Survey 1835-1985*, Indus Publication, New Delhi, 1995, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp. 37-48.

day girls are also studied in higher level. There is no discrimination between boys and girls.<sup>45</sup>

### **Social Status as Revealed from Census Report**

The first regular Census under British regime was conducted in Darjeeling district in the year 1871-72 showing a kami population figure of 227. When the next census was taken in 1881 the population had increased to 3566. The expansion of population was almost equally remarkable during the next 10 years in 1891 it was increased 7048. This process was continued by the every year. According to the census reports the number of artisans people was increased.

Table No. 3.2 Population of Kamis in Darjeeling District

Year	Total Population of Darjeeling	Male	Female	Total Population of Kami
1872	94,712	.....	.....	227
1881	155645	2,097	1,469	3,566
1891	223314	.....	.....	7048
1901	249117	5118	4708	9826
1911	265550	5901	5038	10,939
1921	282748	7750	7613	15363
1931	319635	.....	.....	11331
1941	376369	.....	.....	15860

Source: *Census Report of India, 1872 to 1941*, Government of India

It is cleared from above that, untouchability is not merely the inability to touch a human being of a certain caste or sub-caste. It is an attitude on the part of a whole group of people that relates to a deeper psychological process of thought and belief,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

invisible to the naked eye, translated into various physical acts and behaviours, norms and practices.<sup>46</sup>

Untouchability is prompted by the spirit of social aggression and the belief in purity and pollution that characterises casteism. It is generally taken for granted that Kami were considered polluted people at the lowest end of the caste order. The jobs considered polluting and impure are reserved for this people. They are supposed to reside outside the village so that their physical presence does not pollute the other people of the village. Not only are they restricted in terms of space, but their houses are also supposed to be inferior in quality and devoid of any facilities like water and electricity.<sup>47</sup>

They have been relegated to do caste-based work as blacksmith and goldsmith, tailors, shoemakers and street cleaners, all are considered of low social status. Poverty and lack of other means of livelihood force them to continue their traditional occupations. Lack of modern technology skills and financial resources prevent them from getting employed in new industries or trade in the market.<sup>48</sup>

People are still in favour of caste systems and hierarchy. Culturally and religiously they have been side-lined for centuries from the influential position in a society. These are few problems that people face till today. It is said that Kami were in the past regarded as technical manpower of the nation and since ancient Vedic period they were highly known as metal specialist with mention of Viswakarmas in different Purans and Vedas.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Tulsī Ram Panday, *et al*, *op. cit.*, p.30.

<sup>47</sup> Uddhab Prasad Pyakurel, *op. cit.*, p.91.

<sup>48</sup> Prajnalal Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF ARTISANS

Some people were engaged with the tea industry and cinchona plantation. It is said that the principle source of income of the people of Darjeeling was from the tea industries. Over the years, the plantation sector has absorbed the largest number of workers, both male and female in the District. The tea industry is not only the principle source of employment but has also played an important role in the field of economy and earnings.<sup>1</sup> Many artisans joined in these economic systems for their livelihood. The economic activity and the nature of the artisans of the district were not so good. The fact that the kami population were poor and did not have sufficient support to their profession either from the state or from the society. They were passing through difficult situation and economic hardships.

#### **Economy of Darjeeling District: An Overview**

Darjeeling Himalaya is a blend of diverse ethnic and cultural elements and this region is the place of a large variety of inhabitants. When the British first acquired the hill territory in 1835, it was almost entirely under forest.<sup>2</sup> The whole territory of Darjeeling district came under the British occupation in three phases during the thirty years from 1835 to 1865<sup>3</sup>. It is a very fact that the population of the District is

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<sup>1</sup> Gopal Sharma, "Socio- Economic Condition of the people of Darjeeling: Out Migration as a survival Strategy", *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, www.ijird.com, vol. 3, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> Atish Dasgupta, "Ethnic Problem and Movements for Autonomy in Darjeeling", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 11/12 (Nov. - Dec., 1999), URL: <http://www.jstor.org/Stable/3518047>, p. 47.



steadily increasing since its inception.<sup>4</sup> The following table gives the details of population growth in the last few decades.

Table No. 4.1 Population Growth rates in Darjeeling District

Year	Population	Increase	Population of Kami	Percentage of kami in the total population
1872	94712	-	227	<u>0.24</u>
1881	155179	60467	3,566	<u>2.30</u>
1891	223314	68135	7,048	<u>3.20</u>
1901	249117	25803	9,826	<u>3.4</u>
1911	265550	16433	10,939	<u>4.12</u>
1921	282748	17198	15,361	<u>5.5</u>
1931	319635	36887	11,331	<u>0.42</u>
1941	376369	56734	15,860	<u>4.22</u>

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*, Government of Bengal, Alipore, 1947. Census Report of India from 1872-1941.

Large number of people was engaged with the tea industry and cinchona plantation. It is said that the principle source of income of the people of Darjeeling was tea and cinchona. Over the years, the plantation sector of this district has absorbed the largest number of workers, both male and female in the District. The tea industry is not only the principle source of employment but also played an important role in the field of economy and earnings.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Gopal Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

When the British were trying to increase their influence on the North Eastern parts of the country, in the middle of the 19th century, they found that the Nepalis were a very hardworking and laborious working force. Campbell introduced tea in Darjeeling. He also wanted to experiment with the manufacture of coarse paper by importing artisans from Nepal, using materials available locally. He also introduced Tea industries in Darjeeling which proved good for Darjeeling's economy. Plantation of tea was suitable in Darjeeling climatic conditions. In the tea estate coolies were important and British brought coolies mostly from Nepal and Tarai regions.<sup>6</sup>

### **Darjeeling Tea Industry**

In 1840, Campbell was transferred from Kathmandu to Darjeeling, and there started the experimental growth of tea and Campbell established the tea industries in Darjeeling. Darjeeling district has been producing finest quality tea in the world fetching the highest price. Starting on a commercial scale in 1856 the area under Tea Gardens is 19239 hectares producing 11-12 million kgs. of tea per year.<sup>7</sup>

Commercial tea production was an important factor in the economy of the Darjeeling region for over 150 years. Situated in the Himalayan forest ranges in West Bengal, the Darjeeling were transformed in the mid-19th century from as parsley populated, forested landscape to one dominated by extensive tea estates, linked roads, railway, a major town and many estate-based villages populated by workers.<sup>8</sup> The climatic conditions of Darjeeling were proved suitable for the cultivation of tea on plantation basis. Since its beginning, the tea industry has played an important role in the socio-

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<sup>6</sup> LSS O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1907, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> Gopal Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.12.

<sup>8</sup> Sherap Bhutia, "Economic Development and Environmental Issues in Darjeeling Himalaya of West Bengal, India": *A Theoretical Prospective, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, vol.3 No.7, [www.ijhssi.org](http://www.ijhssi.org), pp. 44-45.

economic lives of people of the region by providing direct employment to thousands of households and ancillary jobs to many more thousands in chest-tea, plucking, tea packaging and other tea-related trades. Tea is the main crop in the region and is grown over a vast area of hilly land. After the first 3 commercial tea estates were established at Tukvar in 1852, the area under tea expanded gradually to 39 estates in 1866, 56 in 1870 and 113 in 1874.<sup>9</sup>

### **Cinchona Plantation**

Cinchona was introduced between 1861 and 1869 on trial; large-scale production started from 1887. The first cinchona seeds received in Bengal were sent by Sir J. Hooker, in 1861, to Dr. Thomas Anderson, the then Superintendent of Royal Botanical Garden, Sibpur, Calcutta, who conducted all the cinchona experiment in Bengal until he left in 1869.<sup>10</sup>

By the combined efforts of Markham and Anderson, Cinchona plantation was started in 1861 in the Nilgiris, and nurseries started at Dimsong in Sikkim and Senchal in Darjeeling in the following year. By 1878, the plot at Dimsong covered 2,200 acres and yielded a considerable amount of bark, the crop amounting to no less than 3,40,000 lbs; at the latter the elevation proving unfavourable another habitation was allotted at Mungpoo (5,200 feet) in 1863 in the Riang Valley, which was 18 miles south east of Darjeeling and 5 miles east of Serail. Its cultivation was intensified in 1864 on Dr. Anderson assuming the charge of the Forest Department and in 1881 new plots was laid out at Labdah and Sitong on the southern slopes of the same valley. The cultivation was further increased owing to the great demand for quinine in Bengal. In

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Khemraj Sharma, *Socio-Economic Life Of Cinchona Plantation Workers In India*, N.L. publishers, Dibrugarh, 1997, p. 2.

1890 there were about four and half million plants (some eventually attaining a height of 30 feet) yielding quinine and febrifuge. Yet with all these colossal numbers, the demands made on the bark were found to be insufficient for the needs of India, and so much bark was imported from Java up to the close of 1914.<sup>11</sup>

The best of Indian quality mulberry silk is being produced in Darjeeling hills. Forestry is an important occupation of the people of Darjeeling. Darjeeling has about 38.91 % of its area under forest. Many forest-based industries have come up and there is huge potential for further development.<sup>12</sup>

In the Darjeeling district there is absence of large scale of industrial activity and little scope for developing such industrial zone due to reasons like lack of land, absence of proper transportation facilities and other required infrastructure amenities. The only industries people do associate with hills are tea and cinchona. These are the two sectors that have always come to the forefront in terms of getting any kind of developmental assistance in this region.<sup>13</sup>

### **Economic Condition of Artisans in Darjeeling District**

The plantation industries attracted labourers from neighbouring Nepal. Particularly, many artisan caste people migrated to Darjeeling district for this purpose. Once they migrated to Darjeeling, they maintained the same social system that was prevailing in Nepal.

Occupation was the chief basis of the division of castes, and there is no doubt that this is true. Every separate occupation has produced a distinct caste, and the status of the

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<sup>11</sup> E.C. Dozey, *A Concise History of The Darjeeling District Since 1835, With a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and The District*, Bibliophil, Kolkata, 2012, p. 216.

<sup>12</sup> Sherap Bhutia, *op. cit.*, p.45.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

caste depends entirely on the importance of its occupation in the region. The main objective of the arrangement of the castes system (*Varnashram*) in the later Vedic society was to divide society on the basis of occupation for its smooth functioning. But later on it made the system hereditary in order to maintain stranglehold of the self-declared so called upper caste upon the helpless lower castes.<sup>14</sup> Caste-based discrimination and untouchability traditionally had very strong ties because of occupational division of caste groups. All the privileges were enjoyed by the “high” caste people while the lower castes were left in the dungeon of poverty and mistreatment.<sup>15</sup>

Mostly Kami people involved in traditional as well as non-traditional occupation. In non-traditional occupation their involvement is in manual jobs that requires physical labour like substantial agriculture; businesses and non-profit organization. But their involvement in government is found to be nil.<sup>16</sup>

The main problem among the Kamis is Poverty. Due to their poverty they were subjected to too much exploitation. Most of the Kamis of the region have poor economic condition and hardly make decent livelihood. There are several reasons for it. It is difficult for them to get sufficient order of iron work and wages for their work and wage rate is not properly fixed.<sup>17</sup> Due to low education background and improper trainings, it is also very difficult to get good job in the market. Since they are

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<sup>14</sup> Radhakamal Mukherjee, *Caste and Social Changes in India*,: University of Chicago Press, URL: [http:// www.jstor.org/stable/2768625](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2768625), pp. 378-79.

<sup>15</sup> Prajnalal Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, (ed.) *Dalit Samudayaka Samasya Bisayak Rastriya Paramars Karyakram*, (Nepali), Antharrashtreeya Ekyavaddatha Samuh (Grinso), Kathmandu, 1996, pp. 32-34.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Bimala Shrestha, *Social Life in Nepal*, Vani Prakashan Co-operative Ltd. Biratnagar, 1997, p.1.

uneducated and hence unorganised. So, they are very much prone to the exploitation by the so called educated upper castes.<sup>18</sup>

All Kamis are not in traditional occupation. It was important to know the position of Kami according to their occupations and linked practices and perceptions with the occupation. Kamis are metal workers. Among them, blacksmiths, along with their traditional caste occupation of making and repairing iron tools, practice agriculture. Within the Kami group there is more professional groups called Sunar (gold or silversmith) who makes and repairs gold or silver ornaments. In fact, they were economically dependent on their clients for livelihood.<sup>19</sup>

The works like Iron work, construction works, manual work (daily wages, agriculture and porter) were popular among the community and job migration was high in the region and they had very less income. So, most of them were also engaged in other occupation like: agriculture, porter, construction work and other labour works to maintain their livelihood.

Most of them considered that who are involved in non-traditional occupation get social respect more than people who involved in traditional occupation. Traditional occupation holders do not get regular order for work so sometimes they are busy and sometimes they do not have work. Socially, these occupation holders get lower status in the society due to their occupation so youths have poor attraction on traditional occupation.

Kamis have the knowledge and skills, and this knowledge and skills have been handed down from generation to generation through practices. Kami people are good

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 11 – 17.

in the traditional arts and crafts. These peoples are the important traditional bearers of the craftsmanship. They make sickle, axe, *khukuri* (knives), *kodalo* (hoe, spade), *khuda* (a kind of swords), *kalash*, shares (plough tips), frying pan, fan, gun, kol, nail, chisels, *karauti* (sickle with serrated blade), pickaxe, washer, nut, sword, dagger, spear, soup spoon, fork, and all these tools are made in Aran (furnace). To make such implements, they had used various skills. These skills are *Pine Halne* (Hardening), *Pwal parne* (making hole), joining, estimating the ingredients for joining the metal, skill to estimate the required heat for bending of their work, *Koila Banaune* (preparing coal), *Pata pitne* (smelting), *Bangaune* (shaping and reshaping the rod), making socket and fitting to handle, ferrule, etc.<sup>20</sup>

Generally artisans were devoid of any land holdings while few possess only small land holdings. Even, that small land holding was fragmented in each generation, when the children (basically sons) divided the ancestral land holdings among themselves. So, they did not have any land for cultivation to supplement and sustain their livelihood. As a result, they were entirely dependent on their art (profession) for sustenance of their livelihood.<sup>21</sup>

In the past, land yielded power and power yielded land. Even now land is the main capital asset in the society.<sup>22</sup> Landlessness is high among the Kami. Because of the traditional division of castes by occupation, landlessness and illiteracy, participation in wage labour is high and they continue to experience discrimination in wage earnings for being Kami. They belong to the poor section of society. The level of income

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<sup>20</sup> Janaklal Sharma, *Hamro Samaj Ek Adhayan*, Saja Publication, Lalitpur, 1981. pp. 103-115.

<sup>21</sup> Bhattachan, Krishna Bahadur, Tej B., Sunar and Yasso Kainti Bhattachan (Gauchan) (2009), "Caste Based Discrimination in Nepal". IIDS Working Paper Series Volume III, Number VIII. pp. 81-89.

<sup>22</sup> *Caste Based Discrimination in South Asia: A Study in Nepal*, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, Q-3 Green Park Extension, New Delhi, 2008, p. 84.

is not satisfactory to run their daily life. The main cause of lower income is lack of order, lack of job.<sup>23</sup>

As a result these people were deprived of the very basic necessity of their upliftment on their own, they are completely banned from attain education and recitation of *Vedas, Puranas* or other religious scripture were completely forbidden. Any violation of such banishment was treated with cruel punishments. So, there was no scope of lower castes to climb upon their social position.<sup>24</sup>

The artisans of Darjeeling district (different thars of Kami all belongs to the so called lower castes) were also not left untouched by such deprivation of dignity and opportunity. Generally most of them are uneducated and follow the age old tradition of their ancestors. They are generally blacksmith, goldsmith etc. they do not have any formal training on their art but all they have learnt from their parents. As the professions were deemed to be hereditary as per varnashram. Since this profession is regarded as unworthy for upper castes as per varnashram so basically the lower caste Kami practices such profession.<sup>25</sup>

Education status of Kami was lower as compare to other castes and ethnic groups. Women of the Kami community have less educated. Most of the Kami children whose parents are involving in non-traditional work are seen to have got chance to go to school because of better earning in the family as compare to traditional workers. The educational institution, politics, trade and commerce, state grants of honours and titles were completely occupied and enjoyed by the upper caste.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid p. 86.

<sup>24</sup> Prajnalar Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-75.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



For their works manual and hard work is required. There is no fixed rate to their production or work and they were not getting actual price of their labour and efforts. Likewise price of the raw material is quite high. So it has become difficult to meet the market competition and survive from the traditional occupation. That's why attraction in the traditional occupation is very low among the people.<sup>27</sup>

In regarding wages, artisans got both in cash and kind but mostly in kind. Practice of giving crops as wages in the yearly or half yearly basis was common in the region. So traditional occupation has been provided lower status to Kamis due to their lower economic position. Society also looked it is a work of lower grade of earning. Earning to the traditional occupation was not sufficient to run their family. Therefore, they themselves and their families are also involved in other manual or agricultural work for extra earning. As the Kami people moved from place to place in their carts and need the help of their children to earn a living, education is not an option. There is a need to provide education, health awareness and to use their skills as ironworkers in other ways as it is difficult for them to compete with factory-made products. They needed a better self-worth and identity and to overcome the limitations of the caste system and their traditions.<sup>28</sup> According to youths earning by traditional means is getting harder with each preceding day so they found it difficult to work as only blacksmith, so they engage themselves in other occupation also.<sup>29</sup>

Most of the youth of the artisans families, who were in non-traditional works were involved in physical labour although they do not have regular and sufficient earnings.

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<sup>27</sup> Bhattachan, *et al*, *op. cit.*, p 89.

<sup>28</sup> D.Sedden, P. Blaikeie and J. Camron, *Peasents and Worker in Nepal*, Adroit Publication Delhi, 2002, p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Being non skilled labour and not highly educated they had not got good job but still they have better earnings than traditional occupation holders.

The people of these artisan castes were not allowed to enter the house of other so called upper castes and ethnic community, temples and community buildings. They are not allowed to touch cooked food and water, water tap. They had to stay in separate place in social gathering and religious and cultural ceremonies so that they did not touch things. It was in practice that if they touched eatable things, goods or water those things will not be useable. Kami in traditional occupation felt dominated and discriminated than the ones in other occupations.<sup>30</sup>

In Darjeeling region artisans were not allowed to enter upper caste homes, especially those with a kitchen. Artisans have an untouchable status so they are not permitted to work in enterprises such as grocery shops, tea-stalls, restaurants, or hotels. Furthermore, upper caste people in this region do not buy milk from their artisans neighbours. Such a practice has discouraged the artisan people of this region from being involved in businesses related to the production and sale of milk and milk-based products.<sup>31</sup>

The economic conditions of the artisans were completely backward. Most of them were suffering from poverty. Therefore, they could not buy raw materials in huge lots but they purchased it in small lots which mean higher prices. But ironically there were no good market for their finished products. There was no scope for metal works in this region as compared to other parts of India. There is least scope for metal works in this region due to its geographic location and economic condition as said earlier. Due

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<sup>30</sup> Prajnalar Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-27.

<sup>31</sup> Tulsi Ram Pandey *et al. op.cit.*, pp. 20-83.

to unfavourable weather condition, agriculture was not as flourished in this region as in other parts of India. So, the demands for agricultural tools were also not so high. Again due to the not so good economic condition of the region the demand for ornaments, jewellery, grand temples and buildings are also mediocre. Also there was a lack of patronage to the artisans of these regions. Therefore the artisans were of least importance among other communities of this region. It proved detrimental to the growth and welfare of artisan society in this region and they remained backward economically and socially among other hill communities.<sup>32</sup>

The artisans are part of rural life and connected to the agriculture in one way or other. These artisans were produced agricultural tools allied implements which were directly related to the agriculture. Agriculture has played a key role in the development of human civilization.<sup>33</sup> But in the case of Darjeeling the northern most District of West Bengal is the only hill district in the state. The three hill subdivisions of Darjeeling District. Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong comprises an area of approximately 2417 sq. Km. Agriculture in this region is grossly rain dependent. In this region agriculture was not that much flourished because of its geographical condition. So, artisans were not much important in the region. But in other parts of India the condition of artisans was better than here. Their demand was high in the society because in rural area agriculture is one of the important occupation so the agricultural tools were needed which was made by artisans.<sup>34</sup>

The problems faced by Kami in the society were neglected by the people and the development agencies. Addressing these problems is imperative not only to raise the

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<sup>32</sup> D.Sedden, *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>33</sup> Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, *Iron and Social Change in Early India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p. 211.

<sup>34</sup> Sherap Bhutia, *op. cit.*, p.43.

socio-economic conditions of Kami untouchables but also to facilitate a more general development process that would benefit all Nepali who were discriminated by Caste-based.<sup>35</sup>

Earning was another factor which also determines social interaction and respect. People who had better earnings had earned comparatively better position in the society. They were stationed at small bazar as goldsmith but widely they were stationed at rural areas and cater the need of the rural economic activity.<sup>36</sup>

The economic status of the artisan castes in Darjeeling district is far below the poverty line. Their unsatisfactory economic condition also makes their marketing power rather weak and inefficient. This makes it difficult for them to secure their sales and buying raw materials for new products. The technologies which they can use only produce goods on a very small scale and are not produced well enough for mass production on a large scale that can be bought by a large number of buyers. This often makes it difficult for them to enjoy financial success and prosperity.<sup>37</sup>

This study shows that the Kami people were far behind from the reach of social services. They are exploited through wages. The occupation is caste based occupation which is perceived lower grade work so they are excluded and there is no proper social respect to their profession although they have equal contribution in the development of the community and society.<sup>38</sup>

In early period, trade and commerce of this region with Tibet was more important and also flourished in India. They exchanged their items like musk, wool, salt, furs,

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<sup>35</sup> Prajnalar Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Tulsi Ram Pandey, *et al. op.cit.*, pp. 30 -33.

<sup>38</sup> Prajnalar Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

carpets, spices and some amount of gold dust etc. The wool trade is one of the most important factors in the early expansion of this region. Though this type of trade was major but there was no scope for metal trade. The major problem faced by the artisans is the nonexistence of proper market for their products. The artisans of this region do not have access to quality raw materials because there is no mining system and also due to poor transport system. Darjeeling society was having traditional and backward agrarian economy that led to the non-emergence of artisan class within that society.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand mining was not allowed in this region may be due to the geographical condition of the region. Metals were very necessary for these artisans. Since mining was not allowed the artisans could not get metal and naturally they could not perform their work. The major problem faced by the artisans is the acute shortage of quality raw materials and nonexistence of proper market for their products. That is why their social status and economic importance was very low in this region as compared to other parts of India.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout India the economic condition of artisans are not same. According to the South Indian tradition Vishwabrahmins were descended from five sons of lord Vishwakarma and had better economic conditions compared to Darjeeling region. They are Manu (blacksmith), Maya (carpenter), Thwastha (metal craftsman), Silpi (stone-carver) Vishvajnya (goldsmith). The community is widely spread throughout India and played a vital role in the village economy. The socio-economic status of artisans in India varied from a very high level to the low level in different parts of India. The artisans of this region have contributed greatly to Indian civilization and

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<sup>39</sup> Indira Awasty, *Between Sikkim and Bhutan (The Lepchas and Bhutias of Pedong)*, B.R. Publication Corporation, Delhi 1978, pp.15-17.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, Book Faith India, Delhi, 1998, pp. 17-19.

culture as temple and city builders, architects, engineers and artists. Without their immense contribution, Indian civilization would be very poor indeed.<sup>41</sup>

The crafts sector of the Indian economy is comprised of an estimated twenty-three million artisans. In terms of employment and contribution to the economy, this sector is second to agriculture. Many agricultural and pastoral communities also depend on their traditional crafts as a secondary source of income.<sup>42</sup>

The blacksmith and the carpenter may be considered first. There was a great similarity between these two groups of artisans and in many parts of India their occupation were interchangeable. They were both essential for agricultural implements. The work of the village blacksmith had always been reported to be crude and one of the difficulties in the introduction of improved implements had been his inability to repair them. The only articles other than agricultural implements that he made were certain articles of domestic use and tools for other artisans.<sup>43</sup> The position of the village blacksmith was not much affected by any outside factors. He had never produced a great deal of original work and had chiefly confined himself to repairs. On the other hand the demand for the village blacksmith was not an increasing one either, whereas in the towns industries requiring the services of a blacksmith were increasing. For example, there was the development of cutlery trades in north India and the growth of engineering workshops and iron foundries almost all over north India. It is not clear whether there was any movement of the village blacksmith to the towns to satisfy this

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<sup>41</sup> Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 4 (2004), URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165073>, p. 564.

<sup>42</sup> CH. Sruthi and T. Ramesh, "Thematic issues on Status and Position of Artisans in India", *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 20, No. 10, Ver. III (Oct. 2015) pp. 05-07. [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org), pp. 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> Jan Brouwer, *The Makers of the World (Caste, Craft and Mind of South Indian Artisans)*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, pp. 3-12.

demand. But in any case it could not have been considerable. Whenever he did go to the towns, he definitely improved his position. The blacksmith may be said to have been more or less in a stationary condition throughout the period, except the urban blacksmith who improved his position.<sup>44</sup>

The artisans of India form a major market for the Indian economy. These artisans comprise different types of professionals such as carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers (durries, carpets, sarees, khesh), mudha makers, potters, farm implement makers, hand tool makers, metal ware (brass, silver, copper) makers, sculptors (stone, wood, metal, clay) and handicraft makers. On one hand, these artisans form an important part of the cultural and industrial heritage of India. On the other hand, these artisans play a key role in shaping up the economy of people living in villages and rural areas. They not only offer their maintenance and repair services to help people living in the rural parts of the country but also bring the money that is essential for livelihood of families living in these regions. They also serve to develop the identity of rural India and provide them with autonomy of their own. The artisan sector of India presents with a vast potential for employment opportunities, thus generating rural income and also strengthening the purchasing power of people in the rural areas.<sup>45</sup>

Darjeeling's artisans are struggling for survival. Many have given up and moved away from their traditional occupations. Some other traditional workers were clinging on desperately not knowing what else to do. Their skills, evolved over thousands of years, are being dissipated and blunted.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>“Discuss Major Problem Areas of Rural Artisans in India”, <http://www.basudha.org/wiki/Discuss-Major-Problem-Areas-of-Rural-Artisans-in-India>, accessed on 18-05-2017.

<sup>46</sup>Prajnalal Vishwakarma and Ambika Prasad Niraula, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

Artisans of Darjeeling have the lowest social and economic status. They are lowest in the caste hierarchy. Exploited by the so called Upper Caste people, artisans have very little income. Indebtedness is a way of life. Lack of education, illiteracy, and restrictive caste barriers give many artisans a fatalistic acceptance of their low social status.<sup>47</sup>

Untouchability is one of the most fundamental discriminatory practices committed against the artisan peoples. Many other forms of discrimination, including discrimination in the labour market, have emanated from this practice. In addition, because of their impure and therefore low status, as well as their involvement in the traditional occupations that are detested by upper caste people, this people are forced to work for upper caste people.<sup>48</sup>

Occupation is very important factor in the determination of socio-economic status. Kami social participation has shown impact from occupation as they are also entering into other occupational field.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 100.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Darjeeling district was consisting of variety of people belonging to different ethnic groups, religion languages and customs. This was because of immigration of outside.

According to the first regular census of 1872, the kami population of the Darjeeling district was 227. After ten years in 1881 another census was taken during that year their number was increased to 3566 in the district. Like this their population was increased in every census. Though their number increased in every census but their socio-economic status was never increased. In the social hierarchy they were untouchables and according to economic side they were only the demand based worker. These castes suffered from many disabilities such as, social, religious and economical.

From the years after years, this kami people became backward. They did not have rights to take education, they also lost their religious and cultural rights, and they cannot marry beyond their community. All these cruel system became their fate.

Not only in Nepal, wherever these Nepali peoples go have they taken their evil caste system with them. Though in India sudras community are more but all the sudras are not treated as untouchables. In India all the artisans who make weapons, utensils, ornaments and the other things which are necessary for the humans in day to day life like tailoring, carpentering etc. are not treated as untouchables. On the other hand in Nepal this artisans community became untouchables. Though Darjeeling was a part of India but the people of Darjeeling follow the cruel caste system which prevailed in Nepal.

Nepali society was divided by the profession. The higher caste was Bahun whose profession was performing the pooja and rituals and in the bottom of the society was kami Damia and Sarki, whose work was to serve to the so called upper caste people. Their poor economic condition and illiteracy have forced them to do traditional work. Untouchability is the age old practice which is inhuman in the name of religion.

In India about 64 types of caste-based occupational groups were existing and around ninety percent of them performing particular caste functions and belong to intermediary castes. These occupational caste groups were (i) Artisan castes (ii) Service castes. The community is widely spread throughout India and played a vital role in the village economy. The socio-economic status of artisans in India varied from a very high level to the low level in different parts of India.

Artisans profession did not have any importance in the economy of the region, because the region was mountainous and their agriculture was backward and not needed much tools. This backward agriculture is clearly visible in Darjeeling and Sikkim till nineteenth century. So, they did not require artisans to develop their implements and to have a regular interaction with them. Because of that the artisans profession was neglected in this region. So, these artisans were considered as untouchables. However, there is no sufficient written evidence in making a link or delink the artisans with agriculture.

Because of the lack of importance to their profession in the region, the artisans of Darjeeling faced discrimination in day to day discourse owing to untouchability, particularly in regarding housing, marriage, employment and general social interaction. They were not allowed to draw the water from public wells; they could not attend the school. They were dominated by their behaviour like *Jadau* system

(Practice of paying obeisance to higher caste person). They were restricted of entry into temple. They faced social boycott like if a high caste marries a kami then he or she was boycotted from the society.

Social status of artisan castes in Darjeeling region, were very low but in other parts of India artisans did not have any untouchable status such as in South India, Western India, Bihar and Central Provinces. Their social status was very high within the Shudras but where as in Darjeeling region their social status was very low i.e. they were the untouchables.

In this society, caste system was so strong, in fact that even those who were converted into another religion such as Christianity and Buddhist carry the same caste distinction with them.

Both educated and illiterate people know that social discrimination are bad social practices and restricted are not good for the society. They do not have any logics to treat in that way. But still so called higher caste people and ethnic group treated Kamis as untouchables, unequally and discriminatorily.

The plantation industries attracted labourers from neighbouring Nepal. Particularly, many artisan caste people migrated to Darjeeling district for this purpose. Once they migrated to Darjeeling, they maintained the same social system that was prevailing in Nepal.

The main problem among the Kamis is Poverty. Due to their poverty they were subjected to the exploitation. Most of the Kamis of the region have poor economic condition and hardly made decent livelihood. There are several reasons for it. It is difficult for them to get sufficient order of iron work and wages for their work and

wage rate is not properly fixed. Due to low education background and improper trainings, it is also very difficult to get good job in the market. Since they are uneducated and hence unorganised. So, they are very much prone to the exploitation by the so called educated upper castes.

Most of them considered that who are involved in non-traditional occupation get social respect more than people who involved in traditional occupation. Traditional occupation holders do not get regular order for work so sometimes they are busy and sometimes they do not have work. Socially, these occupation holders get lower status in the society due to their occupation so youths have poor attraction on traditional occupation.

The problems faced by untouchables generally neglected by the society. These problems are imperative not only to raise the socio-economic status of kami or untouchables. Caste-based discrimination. Poverty and low levels of educational achievement prevent most untouchables from realizing their professional potential. If other people realize this potential it would in the long run benefit for the society.

Poverty compels people to untouchables and accept this status and live a neglected, humiliating life.

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