

**The Role of Trading Communities in the Economy of North  
Bengal with Special Reference to Siliguri (1833-1905)**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

By

**Nandan Kumar Sah**

Department of History  
School of Social Sciences

October 2021

## DECLARATION

I, Nandan Kumar Sah, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the M.Phil dissertation entitled "**The Role of Trading Communities in the Economy of North Bengal with Special Reference to Siliguri (1833-1905)**" submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in History**, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

*Nandan kumar Sah.*

**Nandan Kumar Sah**

Roll No: 19MPH005

Registration No: 19SU34634

Department of History

Sikkim University

6 माइल, सामदुर, तादोंग - 737102  
गंगटोक, सिक्किम, भारत  
फोन-03592-251212, 251415, 251656  
टेलीफैक्स - 251067  
वेबसाइट - [www.cus.ac.in](http://www.cus.ac.in)



6th Mile, Samdur, Tadong-737102  
Gangtok, Sikkim, India  
Ph. 03592-251212, 251415, 251656  
Telefax : 251067  
Website : [www.cus.ac.in](http://www.cus.ac.in)

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### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled "**The Role of Trading Communities in the Economy of North Bengal with Special Reference to Siliguri (1833-1905)**" submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in History**, by **Mr. Nandan Kumar Sah** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the Dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association, and Fellowship.

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

I recommend the thesis to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

**Dr. Vijay Kumar Thangellapali**

Supervisor  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
Sikkim University

Dr. T. Vijay Kumar  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
School of Social Sciences  
SIKKIM UNIVERSITY  
6th Mile Tadong-737102 Gangtok, Sikkim

**Dr. Veenu Pant**

Head of Department  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
Sikkim University

Dr. Veenu Pant  
Associate Professor & Head  
Department of History  
School of Social Sciences  
SIKKIM UNIVERSITY  
6th Mile Tadong-737102 Gangtok, Sikkim

6th Mile, Samdur, Tadong - 737102  
Gangtok, Sikkim, India  
Ph. 03592-251212, 251415, 251656  
Telefax - 251067  
Website - [www.cus.ac.in](http://www.cus.ac.in)



# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

6th Mile, Samdur, Tadong-737102  
Gangtok, Sikkim, India  
Ph. 03592-251212, 251415, 251656  
Telefax : 251067  
Website : [www.cus.ac.in](http://www.cus.ac.in)

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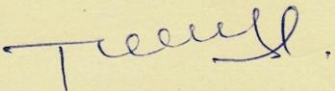
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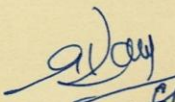
**“The Role of Trading Communities in the Economy of North Bengal with Special Reference to Siliguri (1833-1905)”**

Submitted by **Mr. Nandan Kumar Sah** under the supervision of Dr. Vijay Kumar Thangellapali, Associate Professor, of the Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Gangtok, 737102, India.

Nandan Kumar Sah.  
Signature of the Scholar  
(Nandan Kumar Sah)

  
Countersigned by the Supervisor

Dr. T. Vijay Kumar  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
School of Social Sciences  
SIKKIM UNIVERSITY  
6th Mile Tadong-737102 Gangtok.

  
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My Father

**Late Dina Nath Sah**

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Nandan Kumar Sah

# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF MAPS

LIST OF FIGURE

*Page No.*

---

<b>Chapter I: Introduction</b>	<b>1-15</b>
Statement of the Problem	
Review of Literature	
Objectives	
Methodology	
Chapterization	
<b>Chapter II: Socio-Economic Conditions of Siliguri in North Bengal</b>	<b>16-31</b>
<b>Chapter III: The Trading Communities in India</b>	<b>32-49</b>
Rajasthani Marwaris	
Baniya Community	
Parsis and Jain community	
Bengali trading community	
Trading communities in Northern India	
The Banjaras community	
Trading communities of Punjab	
Trading communities in Southern India	
<b>Chapter IV: Trading Communities Settled in North Bengal with Special Reference to Siliguri</b>	<b>50-66</b>
Marwari Community	
Bihari Community	
Nepali Community	
Bengali Community	
Other Communities	
<b>Chapter V: The Activities of Trading Communities in Exchanging Commodities with the Neighbouring Regions</b>	<b>67-83</b>
Frontier Trade	
Trans-Frontier Trade	
<b>Chapter VI: Conclusion</b>	<b>84-88</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>89-94</b>

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## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table No.</b>	<b>Title of Tables</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
2.1	Religion wise Population in Siliguri District in 1871 as per Census Report of 1872	22
4.1	Population in the Darjeeling District from the year 1872 to 1921	52
4.2	Siliguri Subdivision Population from the year 1872 to 1921	52
4.3	Marwari community Population in Bengal and Darjeeling District	56
4.4	Trading Caste group censuses in the District.	57
4.5	Population of Bihari in Darjeeling District	59
4.6	District census of Bihari Caste and Trading Community	59
4.7	Caste structure of the Nepalis	61
4.8	Demography of Nepalese in Darjeeling District	62
5.1	List of market in Siliguri surrounding areas	71
5.2	Import and Export from Tibet.	75
5.3	Commodities imported from Tibet	76
5.4	Commodities exported to Tibet.	76
5.5	Import and Export from Darjeeling District to Sikkim	79
5.6	Import and Export from Darjeeling District to Nepal.	81
5.7	Import and Export from Darjeeling District to Bhutan.	83

## LIST OF MAPS

<b>Map No.</b>	<b>Title of Maps</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
2.1	Map showing the North Bengal and neighbouring region	18
4.1	Map showing the Marwari migration in the North Bengal region and the route that followed in migration	55
5.1	Map showing Trans-frontier Trade Routes and Trade Registering Stations	69

## LIST OF FIGURE

<b>Figure No.</b>	<b>Title of Figure</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
3.1	Money-changer in India. Coloured Drawing from the Lally-Tollendal collection, about 1760	37

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

The etymology of trade is derived from the relation between the quantities of factors of production required to produce a unit of the same commodities in different countries.<sup>1</sup> The activity of buying and selling or of exchange or service between people or countries. It is also a particular area of business and the people or companies that are connected with it. The trade indicates ‘terms of interchange’, within this product range, on which trade would take place was determined by the relative ‘strength of the demand’ of the countries for the commodities.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, Traders as per *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* “A person who buys and sells things as a job called traders”<sup>3</sup>. They are sprinter of trade, who completes the trade, carries it forward. Trades cannot be imagined without traders. On the other hand, traders do not exist without trade. In this way, the two complement each other. Thirdly the term ‘community in broader terms refers to “a territorially bounded social system or set of interlocking or integrated sub-systems (economic, political, psychological, religious, ethical, educational, legal) serving a resident population plus the material culture or physical plant through which the subsystems operate. Territorial proximity and social completeness (fulfilment of all psychological and

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<sup>1</sup> Walt W. Rostow, “The Terms of Trade in Theory and Practice”, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 3, No.1, (1950), p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1962, p.1627.

social needs of a member within the territorial group) are thus the major hallmarks of a community.<sup>4</sup> One very often quoted definition of a community is that offered by Mac- Iver: Any circle of people who lived together, who belong together, So that they share, not this or that particular interest, but a whole set of interests wide enough and complete enough to include their lives, is a community. Thus, we may designate as a community a tribe, a village, a pioneer settlement, a city, or a nation. The mark of a community is that one's life may be lived wholly within it.<sup>5</sup> This definition identifies different types of communities. The community appears divergently of different people. In other words, the nature and extent of a community are largely defined in the individual context.<sup>6</sup>

The community, in short, maybe thought of as a global social unity in which exist various types of social organization. It is also a location and is also a place where people find the means to live. It is not only of economic activity and human association, but it is the place where memories are created, both individual and folk memories. Moreover, the community has the quality of duration, representing an accumulation of group experience that comes out of the past and extends through time, even though the individuals making up the community are forever coming and going.<sup>7</sup>

Trade and trading activity is an integral part of the economy of the country. The concept of the word 'trade', simply and effectively means a voluntary act done by

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<sup>4</sup> Dwijendra Tripathi, ed, *Business Communities of India: A Historical Perspective*. Replika Press, New Delhi, 1984, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Nels Andersen, *The Urban Community: A World Perspective*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2007, pp. 26-7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

and between two or more persons for the exchange of two or more items in between them, wherein all the parties to the transaction believe that the said transaction is for their benefit. The trading community serves as an important part of this. It has been going on since ancient times but it has changed over time. Over time self-sufficient village economy and barter system gradually transformed. The history of Bengal provides accounts of the centre of economic activity since the ancient times. In 1792, James Rennell (English geographer, historian and a pioneering oceanography, also served as Surveyor General of Bengal), who provided some of the first accurate maps of Bengal at one inch to five miles as well as accurate outline of India, wrote that throughout the region there was a brisk trade, which was carried out on boats. Salt, fish and rice became the prominent items that were transported through the inland network. He remarked, “The transport of commercial exports and imports, probably to the amount of two million sterling per annum; the interchange of manufactures and products throughout the whole country.”<sup>8</sup> With the changing times, the importance of the trading community started to appear.

Undoubtedly North Bengal was full of resources but it happens often that without communication the rich natural resources remain unnoticed. In 1835 when the British acquired hill territory almost 138 sq miles after that British took interest in this region. The location of Darjeeling was strategically situated in between –Sikkim and Tibet on the north, Purnia and Rangpur on the South, Nepal on the West, and Bhutan on the east. British desired to open up a commercial route with Tibet either through Sikkim or Bhutan. The ‘Treaty of Tumlong’ was signed between the English and the

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<sup>8</sup> Himanshu Prabha Ray, “The Archaeology of Bengal: Trading Networks, Cultural Identities”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (2006), P. 69.

kingdom of Sikkim in 1861 and the signatories were Sir Ashley Eden and Sidkeong Namgyal Chogyal. Thus after the opening of Darjeeling, free trade and commerce went through a well-planned communication network. After that in 1869, the construction of cart road Darjeeling and Siliguri were opened to traffic.

With the incoming political power, the European traders succeeded to cajole and manipulate intermediate groups. The socio-politics of Pre-colonial India will become clearer when the relationship between state, commerce and peasant society is understood. These changes benefited and provided more importance to an intermediate class of society- townsmen, traders, service gentry who were more popular in this regard. The eighteenth-century ruling class has differed in culture and organization. They created conducive circumstances for the development of commerce, towns, and markets and their agrarian production in India. In the first half of the eighteenth-century trading communities in Bengal acted as a broker, agents, middlemen or merchants and also simultaneously as *shroffs* or moneychangers. But from the northern side of Bengal, the situation was slightly different. Its structural diversity gave a distinct identity to a large extent.

Siliguri by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century both a trading hub and manufacturing centre. In the Terai, ordinary coarse cloth, gunny bags, mustard oil and common pottery were manufactured. Other articles of local manufactures are *kukris* and their sheaths, shoes, earthen pots and bamboo mats. However, produce on a limited scale. The main trade of the district is with Calcutta, the chief exports being tea, gunny- bags, wool, cardamom and maize and the imports being composed of European piece goods, cotton yarn, Kerosene oil and salt.

Governor Lord William Bentinck took initiative in the development of trade and industry in India. During the 1830s, the growth and development of the plantation industry in the Northern North Bengal (Darjeeling, Terai and Jalpaiguri) were evident. Apart from the tea plantation industry jute, tobacco, cinchona, cardamom, orange were the main articles of the trade. Further, the production and trade of raw silk, paddy, and rice also increased in Southern North Bengal (Malda and Dinajpur). In 1862, the first garden in Terai was opened at Champta near Khaprail. In 1866, a good number of tea gardens had been opened out in Terai. The tea plantation industry became an established enterprise in the northern parts of North Bengal. It created a great opportunity for the trading communities of the region to concentrate the tea and forest-based trading activities. However, over time, several tea gardens were established in Bengal.

The neighbouring area such as Jalpaiguri was earlier part of Cooch Behar known as the Baikunthapur Pargana or Battrishhazari. So nature was more or less the same. But there were no large banking establishments in Jalpaiguri. Here the money lending business chiefly conducted by jotedars, shopkeepers, Marwari traders and others. But business in the rural areas was entirely in the hands of Marwaris who were few in number and formed a close connection. This became the sole concern and gradually holding monopoly over that of community.

In the district of Jalpaiguri, money lending business was more profitable in the tea gardens of the Duars. Here also the pioneering moneylenders were the Marwaris. They sometimes advanced big loans to the tea garden owners. The crafty technique of Marwari money lending in the tea gardens has been explained by J. F. Grunning, "A Marwari money –lender is generally in no hurry to get the principal paid up and tells his debtors not to worry about it but to go on paying the interest... When the debtor

gets old or takes to drink, the moneylender sets to work to squeeze him, depriving him gradually of all his cattle, his wife's gold ornaments and other property.”<sup>9</sup>

Timber trade were very much known by the British. Thus, in the 1830s period, a new business field was opened following the timber trade in North Bengal. Bengali trading monopoly can be seen in that region as their several communities participated in this business. They were like Kangsha Banik (fishing community), *Tili or Teli* and *Saha*. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, timber had extensively used for constructing railways including railway sleepers in addition for making tea chests. Timber trade was developed in the Northern North Bengal. Trade and commerce were conducted in local hats and bi-weekly markets and the business was conducted by the traditional trading caste such as *saha, teli or tili* etc. The conservation of Forest Act, which was enacted in 1865, provided an opportunity for colonial government to use the forest resources effectively according to the colonial interests. North Bengal timber was also supplied to various European Companies, such as Hyall Company, Messers Querious etc. In 1878 North Bengal State Railway was opened up to Jalpaiguri. All this provided a favourable atmosphere for the advent or growth of trading communities, gathering of such group's men of commerce in this region in a large extent.

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<sup>9</sup> J. F. Grunning, *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers Jalpaiguri*. The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1911, p. 100.



## **Statement of Problem**

Before the arrival of Muslim and the Europeans Indian Trade was normally conducted by the indigenous trading communities. But in some places till Europeans the Indigenous dominations continued. After the advent of British far flung areas also touched with trade and commerce. In Siliguri and the Terai region before 1850 had been a part of Sikkim territory. After the intervention of the British in these region circumstances changed, the Sikkim Raja cut off from access to these areas and the British territory in Siliguri as well as Terai region was continuous with the British District of Purnia and Rangpur. This change connects Siliguri region with British policies which directly or indirectly connect the neighbouring region to come in search of resources.

Siliguri in North Bengal evolved from a tiny place to a trading hub over time because of the strategic location it touches national and international boundaries such as Sikkim, Tibet on the North, Nepal on the West, Bhutan on the East, Purnia and Rangpur on the South which ultimately helped for all round development as well as attracted different communities to settle in this region. The trading communities such as Bengalis, Rajbanshis, Santhals, Mundas, are the indigenous trading communities dominated till 1861. During this time line the activities of trade and trading community in a limited scale. No large scale goods movement noticed and the areas of trading communities in and around of these region. But after the treaty of 'Tumlung' between Sikkim and British the British encouraged the migration of the trading communities into Siliguri in North Bengal. Over time British and Sikkim which ensured foreign trade, welcomed traders and merchants from various parts of the region, and fixed the transit duties between British India and Sikkim. With this initiative significant changes noticed and finally end the trouble with Sikkim, Nepal,

Tibet and China and secured freedom for commerce across the Sikkim border. After 1861 Bengal, Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet and China came under one umbrella. On the other hand British took keen interest towards transport and communication. In 1869 British constructed Hill Cart Road from Siliguri to Darjeeling. There has been a steady application of capital to the improvement of the road ever since and after the development of the mechanically propelled road vehicle the road system of the district has attained further utility and importance. And other mode of transport also connect to this region in 1878 connected railways to North Bengal. After the treaty as well as smooth transport and communication attract the traders to migrate in these regions. So many trading communities from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet came here such as Nepali, Lepcha, Bhutias, Tibetans, Biharis, Marwaris, etc were alien trading communities settled in this region. This created conducive circumstances for traders to do the trading activities from the neighbouring regions in the frontier such as Calcutta, Purnia, Rangpur and trans-frontier such as Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan.

## **Review of Literature**

L.S.S. O'Malley's work, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*<sup>10</sup>, discussed about historical background of North Bengal special attention on the Darjeeling. Second chapter, clearly illustrated the relation with Darjeeling hill region as well as Terai areas to Sikkim and Nepal. The British monopoly in the district was discussed clearly. Chapter three discussed about the people inhabitant in the district. He illustrated the original tribe and the migrated people who settled in this region.

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<sup>10</sup> L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling*, Government Printing Press, Calcutta, 1907.

According to the censuses reports, he discussed the people of Siliguri and their engagement with different profession. In chapter ten, discussed the development of trade and industry in the District. He observed the importance and advantage of Darjeeling as a centre of trade and its importance owing to geographical location. He also highlighted the means of communication. However, in this work, there is an absence of comprehensive study about the trading communities.

C. A. Bayly in his book, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars- North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*,<sup>11</sup> he throws light on rich pattern of commercial life in Benaras. His main purpose was to put the inner history of the merchant class and also to create “the social and economic History of an old style Indian Business Community”. In Chapter IV “The Rise of corporations”, Chapter X “The Merchant Family” and Chapter XI “Merchant family as a Business Enterprises” these chapter were core area of concern about the economy. Interestingly, the work mainly based on the record book (*bahi khata*), illustrated the merchant family lineage and their involvement in the North India specially Benaras (presently Uttar Pradesh). He also throws much light on the bazaar, *Haats*, exchange system prevalent during the time. He discussed extensively about the trading communities in north Indian society. He has also mentioned the relationship between the small community under this family, village or caste in North India.

A.J. Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer Darjeeling*,<sup>12</sup> he discussed the history, people, trade, industry, communication etc very lucid style. He illustrated the historical background of the district and the dominion over British in Siliguri region.

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher Alan Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> A. J. Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling*. Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947.

He throws attention about the people habitant in this region. He discussed tribes based on the government record and the censuses data. Apart from the tribes he discussed thoroughly about different caste, religion, languages people who settled in these areas. He mentioned about different trade and their products. He highlighted different local hats and bi-weekly markets and livelihood of this area. He also mentioned about the trade relations with Sikkim, Tibet, Nepal and other neighbouring areas. However, in this work, there is an absence of trading communities and their role in this area.

J.F. Grunning, *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers*<sup>13</sup> his works deals the Eastern Bengal region mainly Jalpaiguri and the Duars region. he discussed the relation with the people from Jalpaiguri and the Duars region with the Darjeeling District. Apart from these he also throws light on the migration and the movement of people from Jalpaiguri and Duars region to the Darjeeling District in lucid way. He highlighted the trade policy of colonial government. He mentioned about the trade of commercial crops and after the developments of this region. He also mentioned about the hats and weekly markets in Jalpaiguri region and their relation with the district. However, this work does not look about the trading communities.

The book on *The Marwari Community in Eastern India* written by Narayan Chandra Saha<sup>14</sup> mentioned the historical background of the origin of Marwari as a community. He discussed the Marwari as a community, the emergence and the expansion towards the North Bengal region particularly Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cochbihar in a lucid way. He gives clear picture of the Marwari involvements, their activities in these areas. He also illustrated their migration into these areas and how

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<sup>13</sup> J. F. Grunning, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Narayana Candra Saha, *The Marwari Community in Eastern India: A Historical Survey Focussing North Bengal*. Decent Books, New Delhi, 2003.

they settled in these places. He throws light on all aspects of commercial enterprise, especially in Chapter seven. He also mentioned agrarian economy to a market-oriented and surplus-gathering economy. Similarly, main focus area on the Marwari community only and did not discuss other trading communities.

In *Journal of The Archaeology of Bengal*, in his article entitled *Trading Networks, Cultural Identities*<sup>15</sup>, by Himanshu Prabha Ray describes mainly about the ancient trade structure and socio-cultural relation. He also focused about the trading activities, communication and information transfer during ancient times. This is also explaining trading community of Bengal. This will help us how ancient Bengal society was having trade and trading communities in a trading network, how it runs. So it will help us as a background or how the trading communities transform from one period to another period. An article on *Trade in Pre-Colonial Bengal*<sup>16</sup> by Biplab Dasgupta gives information about the trade before advent of the British and also compare after British and others how changes their nature of trade. He also mentioned about the demand for quality textiles in European markets.

In a journal of *The Merchants, Companies and Rulers: Bengal in the Eighteenth Century*<sup>17</sup>, Sushil Chaudhury described Bengal trading communities from eighteenth century. He illustrated the nature of trade prevalent during this period. The role of trading community and how their role transformed from time to time. He mentioned that traders role shifted time to time some time acted as broker, agents or

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<sup>15</sup>Himanshu Prabha Ray, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Biplab Dasgupta, "Trade in Pre-Colonial Bengal", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 28, No.5/6, (New Delhi, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Sushil Chaudhury, "Merchants, Companies and Rulers: Bengal in the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 31, No.1, (Calcutta, 1988).

Merchants to the European Companies and over the time period changed, they acted as *shroffs* or money changers in Bengal and also other parts of India. He provided detailed account of *dadni* and *gomasta* systems prevalent in Bengal during Eighteenth century.

William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X<sup>18</sup>, discussed systematically about Darjeeling District. He mentioned about trading communities, race, caste hierarchy which help to interrelate with the trading communities. This will help us to find out how Bengal society was having trade and trading communities in a trading network, how it runs? Hunter illustrated the district from the government report that throws light on the district. The reports were very useful for the construction of the Bengal history and the identity of the district as well. He discussed about the communication system and the natures of town were very useful information. This works focused more on the statistics and the census of the people from 1872. He discussed elaborately the trade with the neighbouring region such as Sikkim, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. So it will help us to find out the trading communities transform from one period to another period. But he failed to give clear picture about trading communities in north Bengal specially Siliguri.

Dwijendra Tripathi Ed, book on *Business Communities of India A Historical Perspective* in that edited volume Chapter Second, N.R. Sheth works *Theoretical Framework for the Study of Indian Business Communities* in this discussed the Business communities, from the instances he analysed the concept of Business Communities. He throws light on the social foundation of business communities and their role in the society. His work very helpful for understanding the trading

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<sup>18</sup> Hunter, William Wilson, *A statistical account of Bengal*. Vol. X. Trubner & Company, London, 1876.

communities their concept, foundation etc. Chapter nine *article Class Charter of the Gujarati Business Community* written by Dwijendra Tripathi and M. J. Mehta, discussed about the class character among the Gujarati. They discussed how Gujarati trading community lineage works in the profession of business? They illustrated the Gujarati class and provided instances from where they shifted from their original homeland. They also throw light on Gujarati class left their impact on society, economy in the Gujarat and rest of India.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this research are:

- To study the various trading communities in India.
- To identify the trading communities settled in North Bengal with special reference to Siliguri.
- To analyze the activities of trading communities in exchanging commodities with the neighbouring regions.

## **Methodology**

The research has attempted analyzing texts, both primary and secondary to make a critical study of the trading communities. Concerning primary sources, the research has focused on contemporary gazetteers, government records, reports on trade etc.

The Secondary sources include the various Books, Articles, Newspaper and Journal etc remains the important source materials for this research which help to build a theory regarding the trading community.

## **Chapterization**

### **Chapter I: Introduction**

This chapter deals with the framework of the study that includes scope, statement of the problem, literature review, objectives, methodology of the study and chapterization.

### **Chapter II: Socio-Economic Conditions of Siliguri in North Bengal**

This chapter mainly focussed about the socio economic conditions to the people of Siliguri in the North Bengal region. This chapter throws light on the urbanisation of Siliguri, original habitants such as Mech, Dhimal, Rajbanshis on the other hand the migrated communities also explained more precisely. From pre-colonial to colonial period the destiny of Siliguri remains same or changes that was discussed.

### **Chapter III: The Trading Communities in India**

This Chapter throws light on the trading communities in entire India. The trading communities such as Rajasthani Marwaris, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Eastern and central India Bania, Bengalis Brahmans, Punjabis Khatrisand Chettiars and Naidus. Their impact on the economy, society of entire India were discussed.

### **Chapter IV: The Trading Communities Settled in North Bengal with Special Reference to Siliguri**

This chapter focuses on the nature of trading communities in North Bengal. It further explains how they evolved in this region. This chapter deeply analysed the traders who settled in these region and also try to find out their lineage and also



throws light on the development of trading communities such as traditional as well as the migrated from other region were discussed precisely.

### **Chapter V: The Activities of Trading Communities in Exchanging Commodities with the Neighbouring Regions**

This chapter explores the Traders engagement with the exchange goods in the local as well as the trans- frontier level such as Sikkim, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. Their role in exchanging of different commodities and the economy of the region. The local trade hats and bazaar in the one hand and on the other hand trans-frontier trade with the neighbouring region tremendously affected the economy of the areas as well as the traders.

### **Chapter VI: Conclusion**

This chapter critically summarizes the findings of the research work the role of trading communities in the economy of Siliguri in North Bengal and examines the trend and progress of the trading communities.

## CHAPTER II

### Socio-Economic Conditions of Siliguri in North Bengal

*Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.* C. Wright Mills<sup>1</sup>

North Bengal region are full of diversity in the context of landscape, language, culture, ethnicity etc.<sup>2</sup> The northern part of North Bengal spread the hill areas while the immediate foothills called Terai and Duars mainly belong to the sub- Himalayan range. Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district falls under this unit. The Terai and Duars region in North Bengal are curvy plain lying at the foot of the Himalayas were slope gradually declines from north to south. The Teesta River divided into two sides west and east. The western of it known as Terai while the eastern region is called Duars.<sup>3</sup> The term broadly described the entire area of the foothills of the Himalayas from west to east. The Terai area comprised very irregular belt, scantily clothed and interacted by innumerable river channels from the hills, which unite and divide the region. On the other hand, the word ‘Duars’ means doors to the mountain. A rough section from north to south resembles it as a gigantic set of steps from the lofty Himalaya to

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 03.

<sup>2</sup> Madhusudan Karmakar, *A Geographical Outline of North Bengal*. NL Publishers, Siliguri, 2011, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

southern North Bengal plains.<sup>4</sup> The Terai and Duars regions characteristics were illustrated by Dr. Bireswar Banerjee<sup>5</sup> in this way “There is another type of plain lying at the foot of the Himalayas. This is the typical piedmont plain or the alluvial fan surface of the Himalayan foot hills. This tract is known as the Terai and the Duars, the general elevation of which is over 250 feet.”<sup>6</sup>

The process of urbanisation began in North Bengal towards the end of eighteenth century as a result of administrative necessity of led to the urbanisation into a next level. British initially more concerned about political domination rather than social and economic. This hampered the economy as well as the faith of the people. But slowly they realised that, economy is the backbone of the administration. So in the latter period commerce trade and other economic activities provided support for the town. Thus, Darjeeling, Kurseong, Siliguri, Kalimpong came into existence. The effective link with neighbouring region, the communication and transport speeded urbanisation.<sup>7</sup>

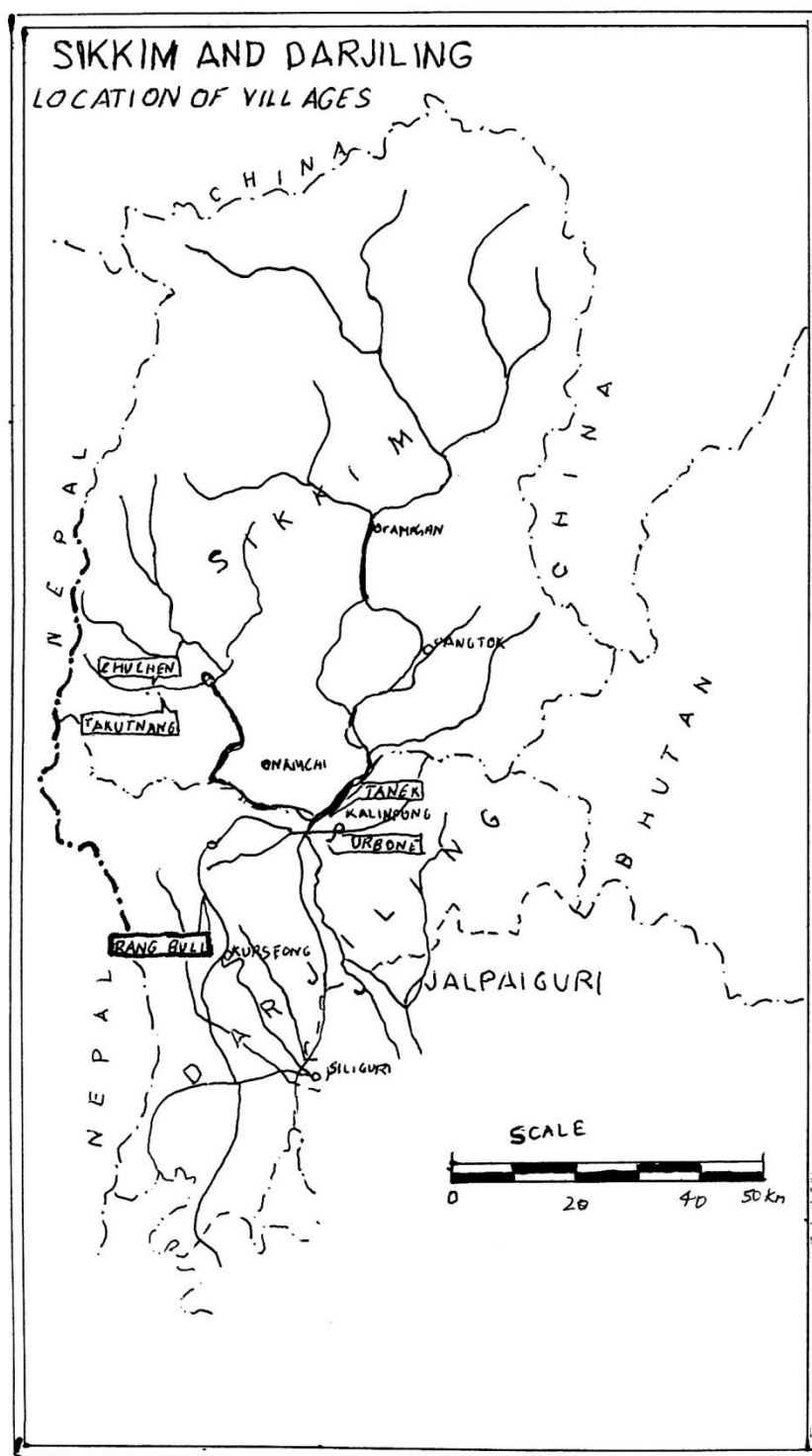
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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-6.

<sup>5</sup> Bireswar Banerjee, *Morphological Regions of West Bengal* - Geog. Review of India, Vol. 26, No. 4, (1964).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 138.



Map No 2.1: Map showing the North Bengal and neighbouring region.

Source: Tanka Bahadur Subba, *Dynamics of A Hill Society ( The Nepalis in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas)*. Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1989, p. 153.

Siliguri or the stony plain according to tradition derived its name from the stones which once lay in myriads on the bed of the Mahanadi river which flows to the north of the town which roughly in the centre of the Bengal Terai which bounded on the north by mountain spurs, on the south by Purnia, the east by Jalpaiguri and the west by Nepal. This forest tract extends from north to south a distance of 18 miles and from east to west 16 miles of this area, 18 square miles are under forest while 230 miles are wider tea and ordinary cultivation.<sup>8</sup> In 1835, tract of land called Darjeeling was handed to British because Sikkim Raja forced to give out of so called friendship. Though gave the Sikkim Raja a compensation of Rs. 3,000 a year by British Government in lieu of the valuable tract of land into the hands of the British for a mere nominal compensation. The Governor-General having expressed a desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling, on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government suffering from sickness to avail themselves of its advantages – “I, the Sikkimputtee Rajah, out of friendship to the said Governor-General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land south of the great Rangit river, east of Balasun, Kahail, and Little Rangit rivers, and west of the Rungpo and Mahanadi rivers.” Sikkim’s Raja on 9th *Maugh, Sumbut, 1891* (1835 A. D) affixed to the document.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> E. C. Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District since 1835: With a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District*. NL Publishers, Siliguri, 2011. p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> W. Newman, *Newman’s Guide to Darjeeling and Neighbourhood: A Historical and Descriptive Handbook*. W. Newman & Co., Calcutta, 1927, p. 69.

In the Report of the Superintendent (Dr. Campbell,) of the 23rd May 1851, it is stated that the Southern tract, called the Morung, “formerly belonged to Sikkim, after the total area may be reckoned at 4,000 square miles.”<sup>10</sup>

The foothill called Morung is chiefly covered with forest and jungle suited has very fertile soil, and is inhabited by tribes, such as the Mechis and the Dhimals, Rajbanshis, and other marginal tribes. The British endeavoured because see a opportunity for making bullion through this pass. Later the goods moving through the Siliguri to Tibet and the merchants the people saw the place of hope for their standard of living.<sup>11</sup>

The plain areas of the Darjeeling district base of the mountainous tract, in that the most populous part of the district is the Siliguri Subdivision, in that original inhabitant population were very marginal and its gave a puzzling picture of the people settled and migrated in this areas. Numerous settlers from the adjoining district of Purnia and Jalpaiguri, who engaged in cultivation. On the other hand, external immigration also noticed, people migrated from Nepal and settled in these areas. The population of the district is heterogeneous. The district comprised two parts one was hilly region where people are Mongolian origin belonging chiefly to various Nepalese caste, also include a large number of Lepcha, Bhutias and Tibetans. In Terai areas Bengalis, Biharis, Marwaris, Nepalis, Panjabis, and others very much dominating in these region.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> W. B. Jackson, *Selection from the Records of the Bengal Government: No XVII, Report on the Darjeeling*. Calcutta Gazette Office, Calcutta, 1854, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> L S S O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*. Logos Press, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 40-1.

Although the aboriginal tribes, such as the Lepchas, Nepalis, Bhutias are (except few Mechs, Dhimal, who reside in the plains) almost entirely confined to the hills division of the District, the recognised Hindu Castes are as a whole about double as numerous in the Terai as in the hilly tract, while the Hindu castes are, almost without exception, denizens of the Terai Sub-division.<sup>13</sup> Besides the Nepalis, the immigrants into Darjeeling District principally consist of people from the neighbouring Districts and from other parts of Lower Bengal. Those of them who take to agriculture settle down permanently in the Terai Subdivision, and mix freely with the other inhabitants of the plains. Gradually came to choose a distinct trade profession. There was no emigration from the District, if the Lepchas and Mechs are exempted, who are both migratory tribes, continually on the move. In 1871 the Deputy Commissioner reported that there were comparatively few Lepchas and Mechs in the District; the former having left British territory in large numbers and gone to independent Sikkim; while the latter had crossed the Tista river in the Terai, into the neighbouring District of Jalpaiguri.<sup>14</sup>

W. W. Hunter gives a detailed report of the population settled in the district were divided on the basis of religion. The majority of the population of this District are Hindus followed by Muhammadans, Buddhists, Christians and a sprinkling of aboriginal tribes still professing their primitive forms of faith. The Census Report of 1872, thus returns the population of the different religions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*. Vol. X. Trubner & Company, London, 1876, p .81.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85-7.

Table No 2.1: Religion wise Population in Siliguri District in 1871 as per Census Report of 1872

<b>Religions</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hindus	39,181	30,650	69,831	73.7
Muhammadans	3566	2682	6248	6.6
Buddhists	791	577	1368	1.5
Christians	318	238	556	0.6

Source: W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X, Trubner & Co., London, 1876, pp. 85-7.

Table No 2.1 shows that the Hindus number 39,181 males, and 30,650 females; total, 69,831, or 73.7 percent of the District population. The majority of these belong to the cultivation as their profession, apart from this also engaged in other profession such as clerks, or interpreters in Government service or on the tea plantations, or merchants, or petty dealers. The Muhammadans number 3566 males, and 2682 females; total, 6248, or 66 per cent of the total District population. In the same way the Muhammadans are also connected as cultivators, and the others as clerks or as traders but little progress; and the *Musalman* population, which is principally found in the Terai Subdivision. They engaged with preaching Islam faith. Buddhists males 791, and females 577; total 1368 or 15 per cent of the District population; in the separate District Compilation by Mr. Magrath, the Buddhists are not shown in the table according to religions; but in the table showing the ethnical distribution of the people. The several Bhatia's Buddhist in the Dalingkot tract lying to the east of the Teesta River came in the district which was annexed from Bhutan at the termination of the war in 1864. The Buddhists or Bhutias are employed either as cultivators, or as coolies or porters; some of them are priests or interpreters, and a few traders. Christians males 318, and females 238; total, 556, or 6 per cent of the District population; proportion of males in Christian population, 57 per cent. The Europeans



worked tremendously in this sector and did conversion in a large extent in the Terai and Duars regions. The British installed them in different sectors such as proprietors or managers of tea gardens, or in Government service. Deducting 532 as the number of Europeans and Eurasians, there remain a total of 104 as representing the native Christian population. The Deputy Commissioner in 1871 reported that “a German Mission had been established for many years in Darjeeling; and although it met with no visible success in the shape of conversions, it doubtless paved the way for future work by translating portions of the Scriptures into the Nepali and Lepcha languages.”<sup>16</sup>

Among the district, except Darjeeling Sadar, Siliguri, Kurseong, Kalimpong, all are purely rural in nature, however Kurseong situated next to station so it considered as town. The Deputy Commissioner mentioned that it is hard to make comparison between the native people of the town and that of the rural areas. The town inhabitant of the district far greater weight in proportion to its number than that of the rural parts. The Deputy Commissioner reports that, “if there were a greater demand for labour, the Bhutias and Lepchas would may be to a certain extent abandon in favour of living or in the vicinity of the town.”<sup>17</sup>

After 1850, when the Terai annexation over then the administrative part of the Terai at first decided by the Government that dived Terai into two their Northern Terai portion attach with Darjeeling District and Southern track placed under the Purnia Collector. But the people of Southern Terai show their dislike to the transfer to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

Purnia. Then Government forced to decide in the year to attach the whole track to Darjeeling.<sup>18</sup>

In Terai region, the inhabitation of Mechis tribes extending from the Brahmaputra to the Kossee river. It is 20 miles to the west of Mechi River. Next to Mechis one Caste or race predominantly formed throughout the foot of the Terai, such as Siliguri, Naxalbari, Khoribari, Phansidewa, Jalpaiguri broadly over the whole of the *Baikantapur Raj*, which extends from Siliguri to east which migrated to the west region such as Goalpara, in Assam, on the other.<sup>19</sup> The Meches are of Mongolian foundation and are assumed to be the Western Branch of the Kachari or Bodo tribe. Mr. W. B. Oldham, then Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, mentioned that “In the Darjeeling District specially Terai region Mech are original inhabitants, are clearly Mongolian race with fair skins and large bones and limbs.”<sup>20</sup>

The Rajbanshis or Koches, were predominant races in the Terai region. Regarding their origin diverse view were given, on view suggest they are the Mongoloid race that entered Bengal from the east by way of the Brahmaputra Valley. Other view suggests that they originally belong to Dravidian and settled in valley of the Ganges at the time of Aryan advancement into Bengal. The move into the first of Terai where they came in the contact with the Mongoloid races of the lower Himalayas and with them. A former Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, acknowledged the Rajbanshi “the most clearly visible way Dravidian race in Bengal. The women whose caste of feature is rough- hewn, the head uncovered and wear a dress in which blue or purple

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<sup>18</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>19</sup> E. C. Dozey, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> J. F. Grunning, *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers Jalpaiguri*. The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1911, pp. 36-7.

invariably predominant. Their language although is only Bengali and they have no specific dialect. The main connection to Hinduism is comparatively recent is shown by their own custom as about buried food and marriage, as well as by the presence of Dhimal who might be defined as a non-Hinduised Koch or Rajbanshi among and beside them.”<sup>21</sup>

In North Bengal, Dhimal tribes mainly belonged to Indo-Mongoloid ethnic shadow. They settled in the North Bengal region of Duars and Terai. The colonial ethnographers of British India recognised them as a non-Aryan aboriginal tribe. Their facial cutting very much similar to Limbu people of the Terai. They themselves considered Kirati descent. They consider the Rai, Limbu, and Koch People of Terai as their brother and sister or same brethren. Hodgson illustrated:

However juxtaposition of language does not support so close relation. Dhimals are nomadic cultivators of wild. For ages go beyond memory or tradition, may have passed beyond the herdsman’s state and have advanced to the third or agricultural grade of social progress, but so as to indicate a not entirely broken connection with the precedent condition of things... They never cultivate the same field beyond the second year, or remain in the same village beyond from four to six years.<sup>22</sup>

The 1872 Census recognised Dhimals as ‘Aboriginal Tribe’. The 1891 Census acknowledged Dhimals as Forest and Hill Tribes as well as Agriculturalists by

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<sup>21</sup> L S S O’Malley, op. cit., pp. 46-7.

<sup>22</sup> Madhusudan Karmakar, op. cit., pp. 170-4.

occupation. But next census headed by E. A. Gait categorised Dhimals as Hindu by religion; even the census stated that they (Dhimals) often called themselves as Rajbanshi.<sup>23</sup>

Nepalese are the ethnic group of North Bengal especially they preferred hilly region, the geographical location and temperature was favourable for them. Among them the different castes and dialect groups such as Gurungs, Mangars, Limbus, Tamang, Khas or Chhetri, Newars, Khambus, Murmis, Kami and Damai, etc. Infact, Nepalese is generic (collective) terms under these almost fifteen ethnic groups are included. In that Khambus (Rai) community were known as Kirats sincein ancient times. The Khambus basically aboriginal tribes who mainly settled in the Himalayan ranges. In Darjeeling and Terai region they are known as Rai community and bear the title of Rai. Next to this the Newar or the Pradhan community among the Nepalese lived in the Hilly region of Darjeeling. This Newars bears the title Pradhan. They mostly chose their profession such as traders, artisans, and agriculturists. In the Terai and hill region of Darjeeling the Lepchas are the original inhabitants. They belong to the Mongoloid group. They are mainly settled in Kalimpong. As per the 1872 census to population of Lepcha was 3,952. Next to this, Murmis are also belonging to the Mongolian or semi Mongolian groups who came to contact with Nepalese races. They bear the title Lama. Earlier they were chosen their profession as agriculturalist. Some were split into Hindus and some into Buddhists. After that Limbu community is a caste who settled in the Subha though their original home was in eastern Nepal. Later on they settled in undivided Sikkim. These groups collectively known as Nepalis.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> Madhusudan Karmakar, op. cit., pp. 147-50.

The land settlements were introduced in North Bengal during the colonial period in the Terai region along with hills. Campbell made the settlement for three year, before it has been annexed by the British, the Terai region, revenue comes from different sources – (i) From a dao or hoe tax paid by the Mechis and Dhimal tribes; (ii) From land which settled the Bengali inhabitants of the lower Terai; (iii) Cattle which sent from adjoining districts of Bengal to grace; (iv) From forest produce; (v) From market dues; (vi) fines and etc. The revenue was collected by the Bengali Officers called ‘Chaudharis’ who were also exercised civil and criminal powers. But after British intervention powers of Chaudharis limited and also deprived them from all the civil and criminal powers. After three year, 1853 the land was re-settled for ten years and the work and powers of Chaudharis remained the same. But year later after land settlement in 1864 the system of collection by Chaudharis were abolished. Instead a new Sub-division established in 1864 and its headquarters at ‘Honskawar’ in the Terai.<sup>25</sup> After 1880s the headquarter stationed at Siliguri on the extension of the railway. Thus Siliguri secured a place of sub division with a government office such as jail, post-office, government office, scrutiny house, police posting, and a hospital with 20 beds, all situated near the Railway station.<sup>26</sup>

In Terai two classes of tenants were prevalent. One, who was holding their lands directly from Government or the jotedars, who hold cases of land for ordinary cultivation. Secondly, the tea planters holding grants of land for tea cultivation. Both were transferable and heritable. The Jotedars are divided such as-tenants-in-chief (Jotedars), sub-tenants (Thikadars and Dar-Thikadars) and labourers paid in kind

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<sup>25</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op. cit., pp. 117-9.

<sup>26</sup> L S S O’Malley, op. cit., p. 209.

(adhiars). Their status defined according to this only. Some of them are pleaders or men of business and some are poor ryots.<sup>27</sup>

The land settlement of Terai in the year 1867 was based on the survey of 1863 to 1865. The survey suggests that the total area 14,405 acres, among this scattered plots in all parts of the Terai. In addition to that, there was 14,228 acres under the Forest Department and relinquished by it at the time of survey. In the official records these land mentioned as forest excess lands. Apart from these land the jot excess lands, have all been settled on thirty years leases, under the orders of July 1864, with 33 grantees, one of whom received 14,330 acres under the special orders of Government in April 1867. There are 175 acres in the Terai reserved for *bazaar*, camping grounds, etc. and 9543 acres as reserved forest.<sup>28</sup> The Terai areas, lands held on leases for ten years (including 12 leases which have expired and which have to be renewed), 806 holdings, comprising an area of 124,136 acres; lands held on thirty years leases, 28,633 acres; *bazar* lands, etc., 175 acres; forest lands, 9543 acres: total, 162,587 acres.<sup>29</sup>

The road and railways in the district created British for their motive. Prior to this the District, only roads which were rough narrow tracks leading through dense forests. They identified this problem, because they very much aware of the importance of these region so without proper movement it became so difficult for them for this to establish communication between Darjeeling and the Plain Lieutenant Napier (Subsequently Lord Napier of Magdala) was given a work for construction from Siliguri to Darjeeling. This road completed in 1842 called old Military road

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.147.

<sup>28</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.120.

which passes through thick forest and step ridges for a length of 40 miles. Now it's renamed Matigara-Kurseong road. This road was not suitable for wheeled traffic and Development of the Darjeeling Terai region. So 1860, the set up ready construction of Hill Cart road which completed in the year 1869. This road connect Siliguri to Darjeeling but the construction of this Cart was not an easy task unexpected difficulty faced. During 1860-70's low belt people faced sickness due to Malaria. The coolies, labours in the lower valley, in the Terai region, the Authorities faced shortage of labour to clear the virgin forest.<sup>30</sup>

The construction of Hill Cart road somewhere travelling provides to plain areas to Hill areas but it was too long and tedious journey. Though 1800 East Indian Railway expanded up to Rajmalal region but Ganga river big hurdle so from Calcutta to Sahebganj on the bank of Ganges, but after that forced to crossed river then by road to the foot of the Hills part Purnia, Kishanganj, Titalya and Siliguri through Cart, Bullock. The whole journey from Calcutta takes five or six days.<sup>31</sup>

In 1878 the Northern Bengal State Railway was opened for traffic as far as Jalpaiguri towards the end of the year extended up to Siliguri. Siliguri after that became the Administrative headquarter transformed to it from Hansqua near Phansidewa. Siliguri Rail line was open for traffic as far as Kurseong in 1880, after one year carried as far as Darjeeling with the destination of the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway. Siliguri, have three narrow gauge line towards 1880 the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway. The Kishanganj and the Tista Valley extension which provided the centre of trade with Darjeeling, Nepal and Tibet and Northern Duars. People of the

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<sup>30</sup> L S S O'Malley, op. cit., pp. 132-3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

plains taken as an opportunities created by the new feeder lines. Thus Railways opened a new hope for the trade and commerce on a large scale.<sup>32</sup>

In North Bengal, tea and timber products provided a huge capital to the company. In Siliguri and surrounding areas such as the district called Darjeeling from the time of 1880 left her traces in regards of tea and timber. Dr. Campbell<sup>33</sup> appointed 1840 the man of hope that means he realised the possibility of tea cultivation.<sup>34</sup> W. B. Jackson provided a report on Darjeeling “I have seen several plantations in various stages of advancement, both of the Assam and China plant, and I have found the plants healthy and vigorous, showing that the soil is well adapted for the cultivation. In the garden of the Superintendent, Dr. Campbell, in Darjeeling, in the more extensive plantations of Dr. Withecombe, the Civil Surgeon, and Major Crommelin, of the Engineers, in a lower valley called Lebong, the same satisfactory result has been obtained the leaves, the blossom and the seeds are full and healthy; the reddish clay of the sides of the hill at Lebong seems to suit the plant better than the black loam of Darjeeling.<sup>35</sup>

After Campbell posting in the hills he brought some china seeds from the Kumaon and planted this in the residence at the height of 7000 feet which not gave positive result due to forest and hailstorm. Years later, again plantation work started but this time in a thousand feet below Darjeeling. In 1851, the first factory was set up

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.133.

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Campbell was then Superintendent of Darjeeling.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>35</sup> W. B. Jackson, op. cit., p. 5.



in Darjeeling.<sup>36</sup> Darjeeling district tea was essential in the North Bengal. The tea plantation in Darjeeling is not an easy task. It has an attempt, where the industry was first established as a commercial enterprise in 1856. The first garden in Siliguri periphery region Khaprail at Champita in 1862 by Mr. James White in Terai region in surrounding Siliguri. In a decade tea cultivation expanded the North Bengal region.<sup>37</sup>

After 1870's the population growth started in the Darjeeling District. Due to the use of the waste land and the development of the tea industry. From the data, it is clear that tea state attracted the region to settle in this region. In the 1872 the tea state number only 74 with one area of 14,000 acres but after almost decade later this estate more than double, 153 estate with an area of 30,000. People from adjoining districts of Purnia and Jalpaiguri, Chhotanagpur, Santhal Paragana, Nepal region had come to work in this tea. This immigration forced the conversion of waste land to the habitable land.<sup>38</sup>

Before the advent of railways in this zone the nature and characteristics were same as village, Siliguri not got the identity of the town. But over the time it became trading hub as well as distribution centre and got the identity as town and the advent of a new community such community engaged with trade and commerce were called trading community, that is discussed in the separate chapter.

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<sup>36</sup> D. C. Roy, Ed. *Economy of North Bengal: A District Level Study*. NL Publishers, Siliguri, 2013, p. 194.

<sup>37</sup> J. F. Grunning, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>38</sup> L S O'Malley, op. cit., pp. 36-9.

## CHAPTER III

### The Trading Communities in India

This chapter explains the trading communities of India. Everywhere in India trading communities are there but some of the trading communities migrated to various places for better possibility. On the other hand some external forces also attracted such as goods and services, concessions in government levy, improved transport facility, Political Stability and contact with the western systems of trade and commerce. The trading communities such as Rajasthani Marwaris, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Eastern and central India Baniya, Banjaras, Bengalese, Punjabis Khattris and Chettiars and Naidus in the southern parts of India. Trading groups which existed in India since early historical periods and have performed their tasks with considerable social acceptability and respect. D. R. Gadgil, “Origins of the Modern Indian Business Class,” suggest that the emergence and growth of business enterprise had to depend on some important environmental factors:

- i. availability of enough surplus in agriculture to support non agricultural activity;
- ii. existence of urban centres to provide the necessary demand and infrastructure;
- iii. availability of trade routes for transport and communication; and
- iv. political stability to create security and support.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dwijendra Tripathi. Ed, *Business Communities of India: A Historical Perspective*. Replika press, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 14-5.

## **Rajasthani Marwaris**

Generally, the region of Jodhpur in Rajasthan the Marwari inhabitants mainly settled. Marwari is a speech of a community Marwari (alternatively Marwari, Marwadi, Mariadiete) mainly in the state of Rajasthan. The languages as well as the community is also found in the neighbouring state of Gujarat and some adjacent areas of western India. The Marwari expert Thomas A. Timberg write “Since significant of group of traders and industrialists came from Shekhavati region of the neighbouring state of Jaipur and Bikaner and outer areas of Rajasthan, there has been a tendency to join all these Rajasthani emigrant under the rubric of Marwar. In conversational usage, outside of Rajasthan, Marwari is used to refer to emigrant business from the surrounding areas of Rajasthan.”<sup>2</sup>

The Marwaris are a community by themselves in India and they were separated by caste, region, ritual and they were separated by differences and like all the communities living in India. The Marwari community like Rig vedic Aryns divided into four castes or for varna, they are the brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. The brahmanas were at the top of the society, engaged mainly religious custom and rituals and worships gods and goddesses. They mostly lived by the grant or land provided their by state or by royal families.<sup>3</sup>

The Kshatriyas were the protectors of the societies and their social status next to the Brahmanas. The members of this caste were known as the Rajputs who had a glorious past, bravery self sacrifices and chivalry. On the later stage all these such as their bravery, devotion, patriotism and heroism helped them to take part in the heroic

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<sup>2</sup> Narayana Candra Saha, *The Marwari Community in Eastern India: A Historical Survey Focussing North Bengal*. Decent Books, New Delhi, 2003, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

venture of trade and commerce which is full of risk and adventure. “A glorious tradition of gallantry has been set by the martial caste of Shekhawati like the Rajputs, the jats, the Yadavas, the kayamkhanis and the Gujras. The kshatriyas have continued the tradition till date, though other castes have also not lagged behind.”<sup>4</sup>

Among the Marwari community the Vaishyas had been ranked third in the list of social communities. Later, they become mahajans and money lenders. Basically, they were traders and were connected with both export and import business and to some extent with retail and wholesale trade, among the four castes of the Marwaris, they were fully dedicated their business profession who had migrated to every nook and corner in India. The geographical circumstances had created in them, since their birth, the spirit of enterprises, adventure, hard work, fortitude, fragility, adjustment, money saving tendency and it admits of no doubt that an these human qualifications are earnestly required for a man or a community to achieve success in trade and commerce. Later Vaishyas are sub-divided into categories, such as Agarwals, Maheswaris, Oswal, Khandewals, Porwals and so on. Of them the Oswals are Jains and the rest are Hindus.<sup>5</sup>

Marwaris took the trade as their occupation, it is by their choice or compulsion. Naturally, they opted for trade and commerce the only possible occupation open to them. The Marwaris migration from Rajputana region to rest of India. This movement of Marwari community into different part of India in search of opportunity for industry, trade and commerce. Thomos A. Timberg in his book, The Marwaris (from trader to industrialists), 1979 mentioned that “Thousands of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

merchants caste members from the north western state of Rajasthan (Bikaner, Jaipur, Jaisalmir and Jodhpur) moved east and south.”<sup>6</sup>

They mostly belong to Rajasthan an underdeveloped, land locked area north of Gujarat where for centuries poor traders migrated during droughts, becoming rural money-lenders. During nineteenth century they converged of Calcutta, having built themselves society into the economic life of many up country towns as important dealers in grain, rice and oil seeds. Later became the chief jute brokers, handling the fibre at its various state of production.<sup>7</sup>

### **Baniya Community**

During pre-colonial times in India mercantile class who primarily engaged with goods and services, the bulk of its composed or endogamous communities which have been so marked the features of Indian society. Among these communities, the sub caste grouped under the name or Baniya were finest. Kabir Das during the period of c.1500 compare Merchants, with Baniya. He states that “My Lord is a Baniya. His commerce righteously without scales and balances. He weighs the entire universe.” The traditional view of the Baniya caste was concisely stated by Abul Fazl in 1595 A.D. He states that “one caste of the Bais (Vaishyas), which is designated Banik, is called Baniya in ordinary usage and *Baqqal* in Arabic. It is divided into 84 sub-castes.” The Sanskrit word *banik* or *vanik* meant merchant, and the dictionaries and supported that the word comes from this word. The Arabic word *baqqal* used in Indo-

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-38.

<sup>7</sup>Helen B. Lamb, “The Indian Business Communities and the Evolution of an Industrialist Class”, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (British Columbia, 1955), p. 103.

persian writing as synonym for Baniya, meant grain merchant in India and greengrocer in Iran.<sup>8</sup>

In India money-changing bankers entitled the sarafs who mostly belonged to the powerful trading caste of the Baniyas. Historian, Irfan Habib (1960) has compared “the Hindu money-changing system to that of the West. Since the fourteenth century, India had come into a monetary economy with some strength.”<sup>9</sup>

The bonding among traders so well-organized that the factors of the English East India Company - who were allowed to trade within the Company as well as their own individual trade and commerce Indies and outside also. Like the European banker, the Indian money changer was well renowned who invested huge amount. Fernand Braudel mentioned that “Virji Vora of Surat for example was said in 1663 to possess 8 million rupees; Abdul Ghafur, a Muslim merchant, 100 with the same capital, a century later had 20 ships each of between. 300 and 800 tons, and it was said that his turnover alone was equivalent to that of the powerful India Company.” The Baniyas power and privileged were very prosperous. Though they worked acted as brokers but Europeans were forced to take on them as intermediaries in most of the trading activities. Their monopoly noticed in the sector of manufacture of the textiles in Gujarat which India exported during eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>James D. Tracy. Ed, *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World 1350-1750* (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press, New York, 1990, pp. 379-80.

<sup>9</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th century, Vol. II: The Wheels of Commerce*. University of California Press, New York, 1982, p. 124.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

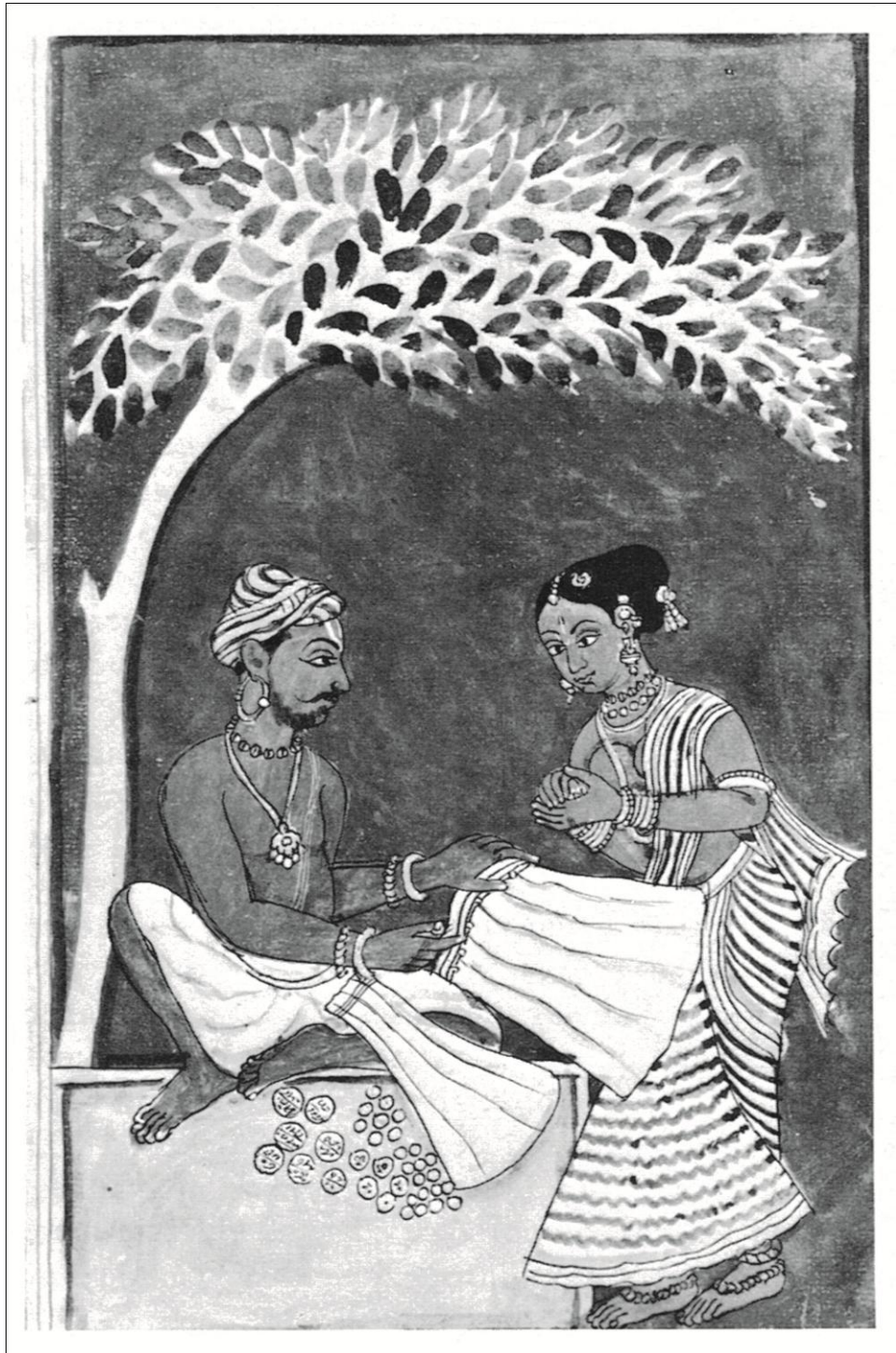


Figure No 3.1: Money-changer in India. Coloured Drawing from the Lally-Tollendal collection, about 1760.

Source: Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th century. Vol. II: The Wheels of Commerce*. University of California Press, New York, 1982, p. 126.

The fact is that trade of almost any kind has been the proper occupation of the Baniya and more so and far longer than any other caste, the Baniya have remained loyal to their traditional occupation. During 1910s in the central provinces, 60 percent of the Baniyas were found to be engaged in trade. When one speaks of the Baniya one means everyone who describes himself as such. Though there are some exceptions, the claim of one group to this status is generally reorganised by other Baniya sub castes, a situation rarer in other caste.<sup>11</sup>

Baniya Community signified in distinct linguistic, regional societies. Broadly Baniyas an occupational community. Rajasthan, Gujarat, eastern and central India each had their own specific Baniya groups. The community is composed of several sub-castes including the Oswal Baniyas, Paudwal (porwal) Baniyas, Wani Baniya. The great divisions of the Baniya caste occupy identical social and religious positions and recognize each other. The recognition transcends religious affiliation to the extent that a large section of the Baniyas in Gujarat and Rajasthan have professed Jainism for centuries. The Baniyas are spread over most of northern India and a large part of the Deccan, where they have dominated the commercial world.<sup>12</sup>

### **Parsis and Jain community**

Parsis and Jain's community success attracted marginal social groups which have less opportunity in contrast to the main Hindu oriented social system and also the less in number. However, Parsi or Jain trading communities success to the marginal states on the broader Society. As Desai argues: "The origin of Parsi enterprise in the nineteenth Century is not found in their social or Psychological characteristics. Being a Parsi helped in emergence as an entrepreneur; but only a Parsi

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<sup>11</sup> James D. Tracy, Ed, op. cit., p. 380.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 380.



trader was neither confined to internal trade nor suffered from the depredations of authorities like the Hindu trader and because he did not have to share the defeat of the Muslim trader by the British East India Company in the eighteenth-century struggle for the mastery of the seas. Nor was it enough to be a Parsi; the rich Parsis of Surat declined together with their Hindu and Muslim neighbours. The Bombay Parsis were responsible for the industrial upsurge, and their achievements cannot be divorced from their British auspices.”<sup>13</sup>

They came from ports areas in Bombay and Gujarat where they had long been navigators, Shipbuilders and foreign traders where they first to reach Bombay during mid nineteenth century. They become the wealthiest Indian trading communities, controlling whatever foreign trade was in Indian hands. They speak Gujarati and engaged in this foreign trade both as principals and as brokers for British firms. Their knowledge of English and acquaintance with British business methods gave them a signal economic advantage. They invested in British bank shares and sometimes become directors of the early British companies. Later become Bombay’s first Indian stock brokers. By the 1850’s these group had achieved considerable social prestige. Later, Parsis adopted western education, sports and dress and sometimes even dined with British.

In 1854, C.N. Darar, a Parsi banker and trader with many British contacts, built the first cotton textile mill.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dwijendra Tripathi, op. cit., pp. 16-7.

<sup>14</sup> Halen B. Lamb, op. cit., pp. 104-5.

## **Bengali trading community**

Bengali Brahmans over the period engaged in trade and commerce. Some became traders some became brokers to the European Companies. The traders of Bengal maintained their influence and presence independent of the European companies. Several vital traders in the various trademarks of Bengal and their relation and transactions with British. The traders had their centre of activities though he managed his commercial organisation through a network of agents.<sup>15</sup>

Bengal traders had certain features, such as they acted as brokers to the European Companies; they did not do directly with the products for provisions of goods for Europe. However, their area of work was very vast, such as brokers, traders, and shroffs, who were all engaged with buying and selling different commodities. They served as a bridge between the European companies and the ruling class. Throughout the period, the Merchants or traders of Bengal maintained their influence and presence independent of the European companies. Several vital traders in the various trademarks of Bengal and their relation and transactions with British. The traders had their centre of activities though he managed his commercial organisation through a network of agents a *gomastas* in almost all the trade centre of Bengal.<sup>16</sup>

## **Trading communities in Northern India**

In Northern India, during Nineteenth century trading class came into existence and British trade and commerce more and more depend on this trading community. In the northern parts of India, a hierarchical organised kind of system prevalent in which

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<sup>15</sup> Sushil Chaudhury, *Companies, Commerce and Merchants: Bengal in the Pre-colonial Era*. Manohar, New Delhi, 2015, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-11.

some of the trading community belong to different caste and religious group such as Hindu, Muslim, Jain had all performed many of the functions which the branch agencies of established commercial communities.<sup>17</sup>

In North India more security comes after the greater use of the paper instruments of credit. This provided one kind of security to the traders. By the 1830s and 1840s endorsed *hundis* had attained the status of paper currency. A *hundi* might circulate through the hands of twenty or thirty traders before it was finally cashed. The use of the *hundi* in providing more extensive merchant credit was earlier business practice, but it became general towards nineteenth century. Interestingly, in Benaras from the eighteenth century a tradition of trade related matters solving community formed called Naupatti sabha which continued towards nineteenth century. They also listed the name of the accredited Mahajan. More or less same kind of tradition also noticed in Agra, a kind of trade council which operated a series of regulation set out which more or less western model. Different types of traders were ranked on the basis of their respectability of their clients and the 'currency' of their credit within the bazaars.<sup>18</sup>

During the early nineteenth century, in the Ganga valley there were examples of social mobility. A families of liquor distiller (*kalwar*) caste, Consolidated their earned profit over the time period. In Allahabad and Benaras, kalwar families who adopted the caste name Jaiswal and purified their domestic practice became respected members of the commercial oligarchy and also participating ritual exchanges and shows their kindness and donate their wealth. Apart from that men from that families

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<sup>17</sup>Christopher Alan Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p. 447.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 451-2.

also engaged in the trade of betel nut (Barais) and tobacco also achieved wealth and later became wealthiest Mahajan in North and central Indian provinces.<sup>19</sup>

In Benaras as north Indian towns, many lower caste status community played crucial role in business in the early nineteenth century. In these areas high caste status communities such as khattri and Agarwal was very limited in number. In contrast to this low caste status trading communities such as kalwar, Teli and Barhais are found on a large scale and provided tremendous impact in the economy of Benaras and surrounding places. In Benaras several Barais (betel -leaf growers and sellers) were incorporated into the moral community of the creditable merchants or traders. They were given some relaxation in the bazaar and also allowed to cash *hundis* freely in the bazaar and also provided Interest free loan and a helping hand Naupati Mahajans.<sup>20</sup>

In Agra, a family of leather workers (Sita Ram) had ever and prominent member of the local trade guild. One family of high caste status in Benaras was regarded as inferior though wealthy. Even they faced lots of difficulty in finding marriage partners for their sons and daughters in the last century. In northern India, towards nineteenth century, markets in the hands of the merchant middlemen. This led the serious issues with trade because the middle men entered in the markets. In the case of raw cotton, for example, it might amount to sixty percent. In northern India, then the commodity and stock with the market relation that ruin the trade. Thus during this period, chain of middlemen were the chief feature. It can be argued that they had a definite function and not merely 'parasites'. But some group also supported

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 452-53.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 494.

middlemen such as Dantwala who defends 'arethias' and dalal in the cotton market during 1920s they save the peasants during drought and famine and bad season.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Banjaras community**

Towards eighteenth century, Banjaras lost its privileges because of the merchants capital came into existence. But prior to the eighteenth century, Banjaras in North and North-Western provinces played a crucial role for the long distance trade. Firstly, questions comes who were Banjaras in the hierarchy of mercantile communities, from the seemingly or nomadic to the patrician or aristocratic. At the lowest level communities that one would have assigned to a very primitive social stage until one realises that the functions they performed could only have come about when social development had left Prehistoric condition for behind. The Banjaras carried goods on boat and cart and by camel and bullocks. A bullock could travel fast in contrast to the cart but quite expensive.<sup>22</sup>

The name Banjaras is first used apparently in the sixteenth century is derived from Sanskrit *Vanij* (also the source of the name for the Indian mercantile cast of baniya). The Mughal emperor Jahangir (1605-27) noted in his memoirs (which translated by Irfan Habib): "In this country the Banjaras are a fixed class of people, who possess a thousand oxen, or more or less, varying in numbers. They bring grain from the villages to the towns and also accompany armies. With an army (like the one

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 494-500.

<sup>22</sup> James D. Tracy, Ed, op. cit., pp. 372-4.

then being prepared for Qandahar), there may at least be a hundred thousand oxen, or more.”<sup>23</sup>

European travellers, Peter Mundi (1632) took a great deal of interest in them. He called Banjaras a *Tanda*. “The Banjaras carried all their household along with them, as wives and children, one *Tanda* consisting of many families. Their course of life is somewhat like Carriers, continually driving from place to place.... There may be in such a *Tanda* 6 or 700 persons, men, women and children. There men are very lusty, there women hardy, in occasion of fight, about them like men. These people go dispersedly, driving their laden Oxen before them, their journey start.”<sup>24</sup>

Tavernier makes a similar statement about these carriers, whose name is misprinted in his text as ‘Manaris’. “They never dwell in houses and they take along with them their women and children. Some of them possess 100 oxen, others have more or less, and they all have a Chief, who acts as a prince.”<sup>25</sup> Mundy further noted that they normally traded on their own account: Their Oxen are their own. They are sometimes hired by Merchants, but most commonly they are the Merchants themselves, buying of grained where it is Cheapen, and carrying it to places where it is dearer, and from thence again relate themselves with anything that will yield benefit in other places as Salt, Sugar, Butter, etc.”<sup>26</sup>

But it seems that the Banjaras depends mainly on credit this led a serious problem for them also because every time they have fear of the interest (*biaj*) which increases. Kabir states that “where the capital (*mul*) diminishes, while the interest

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 374.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

(*biaj*) ever increased.” The dependence of the Banjaras upon credit from big merchants was noticed during nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

Banjaras were not only Hindu fold, Muslims constituted an important segment of the Banjaras in northern India. Although some Banjara communities were traditionally associated with trade in certain commodities, like the Labanas with salt, the Multanis with grain, and the Mukeris with wood and timber, it is clear that most of them had no inhibitions about carrying anything that yielded a profit.<sup>28</sup>

### **Trading communities of Punjab**

During pre-colonial Punjab trading communities such as the Khatri who were the backbone of the Punjab economy. From the origin of the Varna system, this trading community had Kshatriyas varna order. Many became Rajput and settled in their original place called ‘Hindustan’ and few migrated in Punjab and developed interest in service, trade, business, shop keeping, drapery and banking. Undoubtedly among trading community in Punjab khatri was an important trading communities. There were almost not any town where Khatri did not find, town and village of Punjab. Ganesh Das Wadhera<sup>29</sup> mentioned that “many Khatri family settled in the Punjab areas such as Kaliana, Rohtas, Bahlolpur, Jalalpur, Daulatnagar, Hajiwala, Herat,Dinga, AkiyaLakhanwal, Bhagowal, Islamgarh, Makhowal, Waraich, Sialkot, Wazirabad, Eminabad, DaskaNidhan Singh Wala, Pasrur, Buchcha, Pindi Bhattian, Malhian, Shaikhupura, Batala, Kalanaur, Dera Baba Nanak, Patti, Qasur, Jalandhar,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>29</sup> Ganesh Das Wahera was a zamindar of Gujarat. His work *Char Bagh- I Punjab (1849)* in Persian language was the most important source of information about the society and religion of Punjab.

Nawan Shahr, Amritsar and Lahore, among many others.” In many towns and cities they are identified as sahuks. For the better scope and livelihood they moved from one town to another.<sup>30</sup>

Aroras and Baniya who were trading caste, half of the Aroras of Punjab lived in the former province of Multan and Darajat (present day Pakistan). The Baniyas predominantly Sutlej- Jamuna Doab. Like the Khatri both were earlier agriculturist background. For instance, in Shahdara, Dayal Shah Arora and Raman Shah were two of the most important *sahuks* in the early nineteenth century. Of the many rich sahuks of Amritsar in the reign of Ranjit Singh, the most distinguished was Raman Shah Baniya. Trade and business in Punjab was by no means confined to the Hindus.<sup>31</sup>

In Punjab trading communities among the Muslim in Punjab were Khojas and the parachas. Interestingly they were earlier the Khatri, the Aroras and the Bhatias but over the time period converted into Islam. For instance, in Shahpur region the Khojas originally belong to the Arora. In Lahore areas predominantly the Khojas were Bhatia. Apart from these, the Parachas lived on a large scale and built their colonies in Makhad, Attock and Peshawar. They engaged in miscellaneous work such as petty shops and some of them pursued agriculture. they traded on a large scale with their neighbouring region. Their relation with central India noticeable import and export goods such as cloth, silk and indigo etc.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Dwijendra Tripathi, Ed, op. cit., pp. 213-4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-5.



## **Trading communities in Southern India**

In northern India which include both in the east and in the west , the industrial capitalists belonged predominantly to the traditional trading communities -the Marwaris, Parsis, Baniyas, Khattris or other in contrast to this the pattern in South India were totally different. Thus the most prominent of the traditional trading communities of South India the Nattukottai Chettys gives an all-round development to the pre-colonial to colonial and aftermath, similarly the Komati Chettys, another trading community from the Andhra region give their area of interest towards modern industry. In addition to that, the emergence of commercial and industrial entrepreneurship among sections of non-commercial ethnic groups and communities such as the Naidu or Kammas of the Coimbatore region, the Tamil Brahmans the vellalas and the Nadars.<sup>33</sup>

The modern entrepreneurship in South India was not only in the hands of traditional community. In northern parts of India trading communities such as Marwaris, Parsis and Baniya accumulating huge capital through different commodities such as opium, yarn, betel-nut, Tobacco etc. Nattukottai Chettyas did not enjoy the special advantage the opportunities. In fact Madras presidency not gained the commercial importance like Bombay and Bengal the nodal centre of international capital. It remained comparative poor cousin. But after nineteenth century with the advent of cash crop and the introduction of communication network there developed a need to maintain an expanding internal credit and trade network. Such condition facilitated the intervention of indigenous capital and from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Nottukottai Chettys, Komatis, Nadars,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

Devangas, Vellallas, Muslim moved to take advantage of these economic opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

During the last decade of nineteenth century, Nattukottai Chettys primarily engaged in money lending and trade. They began to utilise part of their surplus wealth to invest industries and modern incorporated enterprises. The Malabar Spinning and Weaving Co. Ltd was among the first mills to be promoted with substantial Chetty capital which established in 1888 at Calicut. The wealth for the mill was principally adopted by the A.L.A.R. Chetty family, zamindars of Devakottah, and the Desamangalam Namboodripad family of Travancore. Later it's came in the hands of or under the management of P. Somasundaram Chetty. During this period, a group of Chettys, finding cotton industry as a field of profitable investment so they established 'Koilpatti Mills' which established in 1889 with the support of Rowther Muslim traders. Taking full advantage of the profitable rice trade with Ceylon the Chettys invested huge amount of wealth in the rice mill in the Tanjore district. Chetty capital also took keep interest towards the Lakshmi Paper Mills at punalur in Travancore which established in 1909.<sup>35</sup>

In the Andhra region prominent Komati Chetty families the Nalams, Pydahs and the Motheys had also investing their surplus capital in jute, rice, cotton industries. The Krishna Jute Cotton Mills and the Guntur Cotton & Jute Mill Co., established in 1904 was essentially the product of prominent Komati capital. Among the Muslim traders only a few moved into industry and the most outstanding among them was

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 227-28.

Hajee Ismail Sait. He earned huge capitals from trading activities which he invested in industry which not lasting long which collapsed in 1906.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Trading Communities Settled in North Bengal with Special Reference to Siliguri**

This chapter focuses on the different trading communities in North Bengal; how they were evolved and expanded their trade? How the British Colonial rule traced to the Darjeeling district? And identified different trading communities and their position? After the annexation of the hill as well as Terai the scenario significantly changed. Before that, district had been an integral part of Sikkim territory, the British had to face lots of difficulty while passed in the district to reach it, the Sikkim Raja dominion created a kind of foreign rule. But the British show their diplomacy in Darjeeling hill as well as Terai region. Diplomatically, after their control in the District, British control over the area expanded in addition to the British District of Purnia and Rangpur in the plains in one way and the other way the Sikkim Raja was disconnect from ingress to the plains and indirectly dependent on the British.<sup>1</sup>

A historical conversion noticed in the year in the form of treaty of Tumlung (then the Sikkim Capital) 1861 between British and Sikkim which ensured foreign trade, welcomed traders and merchants from various parts of the region, and fixed the transit duties between British India and Tibet.<sup>2</sup> With this initiative significant changes noticed and finally end the difficulty with Sikkim and open a new chapter with Sikkim. The trade and commerce with this was much secured and provided traders a kind of opportunity in these regions. After 1861 Bengal, Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet and China came under one umbrella which transformed the trade and commerce with

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*. Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup> L S O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*. Logos Press, New Delhi, 1907, pp. 25-6.

indigenous and migrated traders.<sup>3</sup> It was not an easy task without communication such areas trade link not possible to sustain. British desired to build road and rail to the access towards this region. There has been an area of concern for them and invested capital regularly for the improvement of the road. After the complete of this road system also they more concern about road and vehicle management. Railways in the district opened in 1881 after that these two transport and communication system were contemporary to each other. These two accelerate the pace of movement of people as well as goods. The different trading communities such as Marwari, Bihari, Bengali, Nepali, and other communities settled and searching for their scope.<sup>4</sup>

Later these communities completely dominated the Nepali in spite of their number in these region were numerically sound. A. J. Dash mentioned in *Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling*, that “the areas filled up with different language, caste, communities, the result is a very mixed population of Nepali, Lepcha, Bhutias, Tibetans, Bengali, Marwari and Biharis in the Hills and Rajbanshis, Santhals, Oraons and Mundas in the plains with a sprinkling of British, Anglo-Indians, Chinese, Uriyas and Panjabis. Immigration has been considerable and still continues much of the population being temporary or semi-permanent.”<sup>5</sup>

After the annexation of the District to the British dominion the first regular census in 1872 were taken and that reflects the population. After an interval the censuses were taken that clearly reflects in the table no 4.1.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.41-42.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.49.

Table No. 4.1: Population in the Darjeeling District from the year 1872 to 1921.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Increases</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1872	94,712	.....	.....
1881	1,55,179	60,467	64
1891	2,23,314	68,135	44
1901	2,49,117	25,803	12
1911	2,65,550	16,433	-07
1921	2,82,748	17,198	06

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*. Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, p.49.

Secondly, the Siliguri Subdivision Census also shows the development and demographic structure from 1872 to till the period of concern. The Kharibari thana on the one hand lowest rate of increased and the other hand Siliguri thana the highest due to the access of the subdivision and the urban area. The total number of persons in the Siliguri Subdivision at each of the censuses is shown in the table no 4.2.<sup>7</sup>

Table No. 4.2 Siliguri Subdivision Population from the year 1872 to 1921

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Increase by percentage</b>
1872	47,985	.....
1881	63,038	31
1891	72,993	16
1921	75,787	4 (for three decades)

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*. Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, p.49.

Undoubtedly between 1872 and 1921 was remarkable population expansion in the district. One of causes of the rapid increase of population have been the improved

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.52.

communication network such as building of railways and roads which accelerate the pace of migration and large settlement also cleared the forest over these region.<sup>8</sup>

### **Marwari Community**

The Marwari community in the Darjeeling District played a beneficial and crucial role in the development of trade and commerce. Their sounding economic status of the district only due to his proficiency, zeal and risk taking ability in built.<sup>9</sup> Marwari's migrated to North Bengal from several places in India.<sup>10</sup> They came to this region for better means of life. Migration of the Marwaris in the district followed 3 routes viz., (1) the route passing through Delhi via Patna, Katihar, Kishanganj and Siliguri, (2) the road passing through Sahebganj, Malda, Kishanganj and Siliguri; (3) the route which connected Calcutta, Maldah, Dinajpur, Pabna, Rangpur via Siliguri. Prior to 1850 entering into these areas became very big obstacle everyone had to move about into the hills through a foreign terrain, and Sikkim closely attached their boundaries. So it's very difficult. But after its cession of Darjeeling to the British in 1850, Darjeeling had developed communication systems and Siliguri in the Darjeeling district attached with other British districts of Purnia and Rangpur through well planned communication system.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>10</sup> There are quite a few theories regarding the nature and definition of the word 'migration'. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, moving from place to place in search of means of subsistence or to escape a stronger foe, men, from time immemorial, have spread over the greater part of the earth's surface. Within recorded history, human migration have transformed the entire aspect of lands and continents and the racial, ethnic and linguistic composition of their inhabitants. Narayan Chandra Saha, *The Marwari Community in Eastern India: A Historical Survey Focussing North Bengal*. Decent Books, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 157-59.

This transformation attracted the different trading communities to search their scope among them Marwari took the fortune and migrate directly to the hill areas of Darjeeling and their periphery region such as Siliguri and other Terai region. But during the starting phase the migration, pace was slow due to the tough and tedious journey mainly dependent on foot and bullock cart. But in the later period after the improvement of transport and communication, the Marwari migration in the district increased.<sup>11</sup>

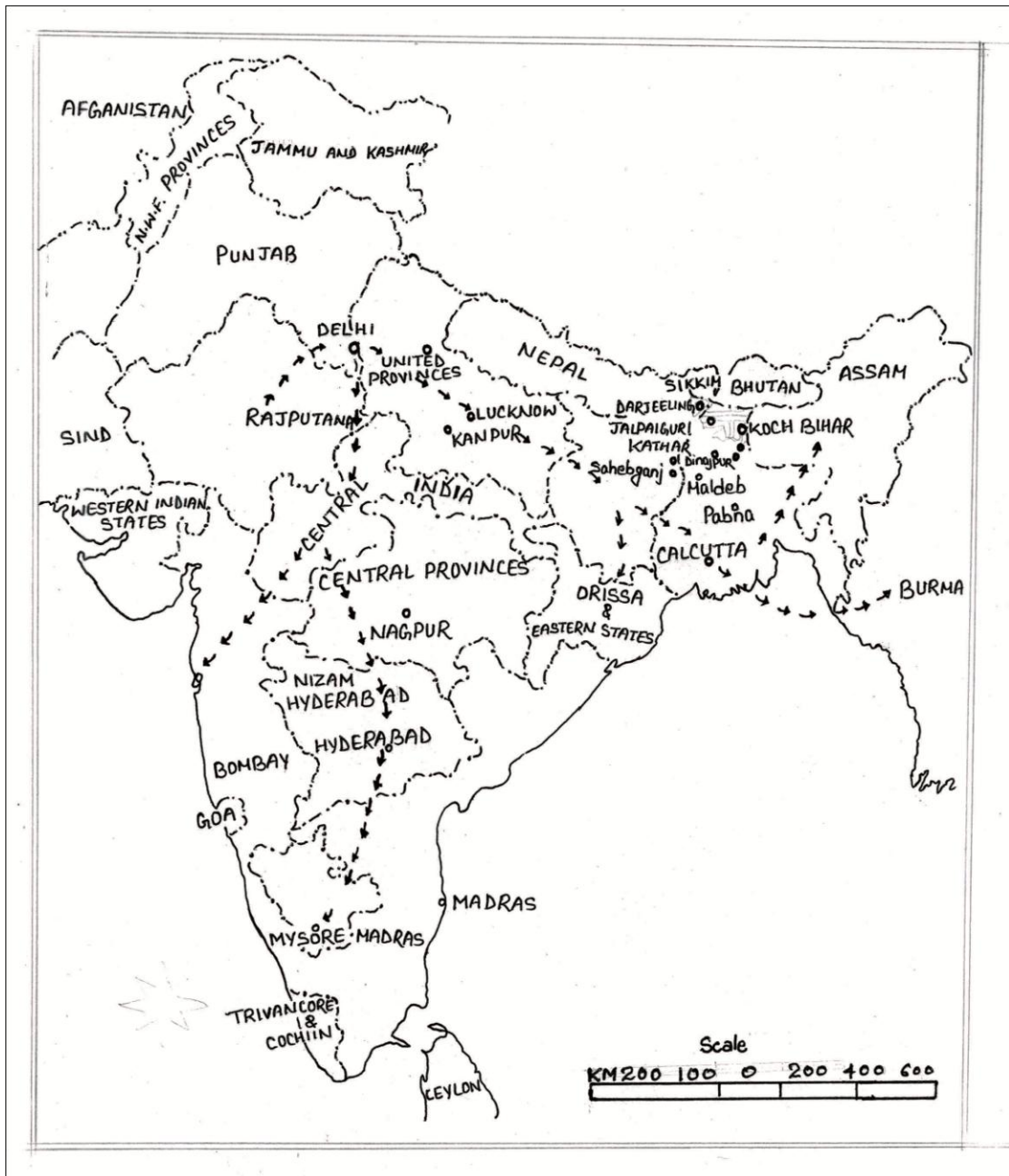
Marwaris are favoured mostly urban areas, census report provide their number Marwaris in the district. The district for instance the Marwaris number 1,002 in the Sadar Subdivision out of 559 Marwaris live in Darjeeling town, 66 in the Kurseong Subdivision and 140 in the Kalimpong Subdivision outside the urban area, 40 live in Siliguri and the Terai region.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 157-9.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., p.71.





Map No. 4.1: Map showing the Marwari migration in the North Bengal region and the route that followed in migration.

Source: Narayan Chandra Saha, *The Marwari Community in Eastern India: A Historical Survey Focussing North Bengal*. Decent Books, New Delhi, 2003, p.155.

The Deputy Commissioner estimates that “the living expenses of a good trader Marwari shopkeepers or traders in Darjeeling, including Municipal, house, and shop

rent about 15 to 25 rupees (\$1,10s.od. to \$2,10s.od.) per month. The Marwari traders or shopkeepers of the town generally lived alone for business purpose without their family.”<sup>13</sup> But this scenario changed after 1880s after proper transport and communication. They also settled on permanent basis with their family.<sup>14</sup> According to Mr C.F. Magrath’s “Darjeeling District Census gives comparative details about the population in Darjeeling and the Terai region. Based on this Census, it is easy to identify how many Marwari groups lived in the proper Bengal regions and the Darjeeling district.”<sup>15</sup>

Table No. 4.3: Marwari community Population in Bengal and Darjeeling District.

Years	Bengal proper			Darjeeling district		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1872	NA	NA	4,910	NA	NA	28
1881-91	3,101	1,578	4,679	74	6	80
1891-1901	18,442	7,299	25,741	501	146	657
1901-11	24,490	10,169	36,659	753	102	855

Source : Narayan Chandra Saha, *The Marwari Community in Eastern India: A Historical Survey Focussing North Bengal*. Decent Books, New Delhi, 2003, p.155.

Table No 4.3 clearly shows that both the sexes were noticed in the District that indicates their settlement in this region permanently in the District, male and female. The most favourable circumstances, such as communication network, urbanization railways, attracted the Marwaris communities to settle in this region.<sup>16</sup>

Marwari groups lived in the proper Bengal regions and the Darjeeling district. These two trading caste were lived in the district. Though their number in the district

<sup>13</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*. Vol. X. Trubner & Co., London, 1876, pp. 91-2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> Narayan Chandra Saha, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

were merely but these trading castes were influenced and affect the economy of the district.<sup>17</sup>

Table No. 4.4: Trading Caste group censuses in the District

<b>Trading caste</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Terai Areas</b>	<b>Hill Areas</b>
Agarwal	18	9	9
Oswal	34	21	13

Source: William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X. Trubner & Co., London, 1876, p.82.

The Table no 4.4 reflects the trading castes; among these are vaishya trading caste and up-country traders and merchants. Their number in the district increased after came in the British mainstream. So Marwari impact seen in the North Bengal particularly in the district (both hill and Terai) region in the considerable number.<sup>18</sup>

After the emergence of the Marwaris in this District, they played a very crucial character in trade and commerce, and their mastery over in this profession were not unknown in history. They either directly or indirectly connected with different enterprises such as export and import, whole sale and retail business, *aratdari* (stock business), *Jotedaris* (holding of Jotedars), money lending and commission agency. Thus the Marwaris were the Pioneers and maintained a dominating role in trade and commerce.<sup>19</sup> Apart from all these the finance of trade and agriculture in the District was also in the hands of Marwari to a more significant extent. Marwari communities engaged in Private firms, registered under the Moneylenders Act, are more closely concerned with actual trade financing and directly connected with trading. For

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<sup>17</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>19</sup> Narayan Chandra Saha, op. cit., p. 161.

instances, A. J. Dash mentioned in *Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling* that “ The Marwari dominates most of the exporting trades, viz., cardamom, oranges and potatoes and practically all the import trade of consumption goods. In addition they have almost complete control of the retail sale of consumption goods to and of the purchase of produce from, the small consumer and producer.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Bihari Community**

The Bihari Community is mainly from Purnia, Chotanagpur and the Santhal Pargana region came into this sphere. Gradually their number increased they choose different profession for their livelihood some became collie and some controlled the District's commodity trade and gave money in loan to the hill men tribes.<sup>21</sup> They enter into the profession of trade and held a significant position in the retail trade of the district. Bihari commercial history was unredeemed, unlike Marwaris. The hills and in the Terai Bihari communities played an essential role in the twentieth century. They gradually became mere dominant after independence. The Terai region their number were more in contrast to the hills due to their adaptability in the initial stage. They migrated from the plan areas, they most favoured plain region for their inhabitation and trade as well. So they were most in the Terai region.<sup>22</sup> A J Dash mentioned that “their number 2,968 in the Siliguri town, in the Darjeeling Subdivision 1,000 out of the 1,698 are residents of the town, in the Kurseong Subdivision there are 733 in the tea areas and 373 in urban areas, in the Kalimpong Subdivision out of 1,438 579 resides in tea areas and 746 in semi urban and urban areas.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., pp. 173-4.

<sup>21</sup> L S S O'Malley, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

Table No. 4.5: Bihari's Population in Darjeeling District

Rural and Urban	Biharis of Tea areas	Biharis of Urban areas	Total
Siliguri Subdivision	3824	2968	6792
Sadar Subdivision	698	1,000	1698
Kurseong Subdivision	733	373	1,106
Kalimpong Subdivision	579	859	1,438

Source: Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*. Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, p.71.

Table no 4.5 throws light on the rural and urban population of the district, both the rural as well as urban region Bihari community left its mark. Table suggests that the number in the Siliguri Subdivision were high with the compare of other three.

C.G Magrath mentioned the District census of Bihari Caste and trading Community. Based on the data it's clearly shows the profession of the different trading communities and their duties, and their participation in the society.<sup>24</sup>

Table No 4.6: District census of Bihari Caste and Trading Community

Bihari Trading Communities	Darjeeling District	Terai	Hills
Babhan	6	.....	6
Khatri	145	28	117
Nepali or Hajjam	435	405	30
Baniya	230	167	67
Teli or Tili	412	111	301
Halwai	90	43	47
Sonar	371	22	349
Baniya	230	67	163
Gandhabaniya	17	15	02
Subarnabaniya	49	47	02

Source: William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. X. Trubner & Co., London, 1876, pp. 81-2.

<sup>24</sup> William Wilson Hunter., op. cit., p. 81-2.

As per the table no 4.6, Babhan, a Bihari also called Bhuinhar or cultivating and Zamindari Brahmans. They are primarily an intermixture of Brahmans with an inferior caste. Census indicate that 6 of living in the Darjeeling district all living in the hilly areas. Second, Kshatriyas, the warrior caste in the ancient Hindu social System. Among this social System, Khatri in the census report is the superior trading caste of North India. Their number 145 in the Darjeeling district, of whom 28 in Terai and 117 in the Hills nearly all the station of Darjeeling. Thirdly Napit or Hajjam barbers 435 whom 405 in Terai and 30 in the hills. Fourthly, Baniya, traders and Merchants are 230 in number among 163 in the Terai and 67n in the Hills. *Teli or Tili* originally oil pressers and seller by caste occupation. They shifted from lineage profession and took the trade as a main profession in the District, their number 412 among that 301 in the Terai and 111 in the Hills. Sixth, Halwai; sweetmeat maker 90 in the District, in that 43 in Terai and 47 in the hills. Lastly, Sonar, goldsmiths and Jewellers, an offshoot from the Baniyas, 371 in the District in that 22 in the Terai or plains and 349 in the Hills.<sup>25</sup>

### **Nepali Community**

The Nepali society is conceived of a homogeneous one, the Nepali society do not sense individually. Tanka Bahadur Subba described “the ‘whole’, which the Nepali Society is, may be better understood by delineating its ‘parts’ and treating each of them as a whole.”<sup>26</sup> In Nepal, based on the evidence of caste structure, Newars existed much similar to the Hindu Caste structure. In theory, “the Newar Caste organization is based on the same Hindu principle which stipulates the five-fold

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 81-2.

<sup>26</sup> Tanka Bahadur Subba, *Dynamics of A Hill Society (The Nepalis in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas)*. Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1989, p.29.

division of the society. It was headed by the Brahmin and to be followed in order by the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, the Sudra and the Untouchable.” These fivefold division same way their duties based on caste. “The caste structure of the Nepalis in Darjeeling district region is comparable to that existing adaptation in the sense earlier sociologist like Mandelbaum used the term. The first index of adaptation can be the changing titles- the Brahman are called Sharmas, the Newars Pradhan. The Rai is an adapted form of Jinder, the Limbus are called Subbas, the Yakhas Dewan, Kamis Biswakarma, etc.”<sup>27</sup>

The caste hierarchy that existed in Nepal and Darjeeling district (Terai and hill) more or less in the same. The Caste structure are as follows in table no 4.7.<sup>28</sup>

Table No 4.7: Caste structure of the Nepalis

Status	Castes	Traditional occupation
High	Brahman (Upadhyayajaisi)	Priesthood & Agriculture
	Chhetri (Thakuri and Chhetri)	Warriors
Middle	Newar, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Yakha, Gurung, Manger, Jogi, Bhujel, Sunwar, Yolmu, etc.	Mainly agriculturists, except Newars who are traders
Low	Sunar	Goldsmith
	Kami	Ironsmith
	Sarki	Cobbling
	Damai	Music

Source : Shibani Kinkar Chaube, Ed, *The Himalayas: Profiles of Medernisation and Adaptation*. Sterling Publication, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 73-75.

<sup>27</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube, Ed, *The Himalayas: Profiles of Medernisation and Adaptation*. Sterling Publication, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 73-5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.74.

The Nepali community in this region scattered in the district. In Bengal, the Spoken dialect much more diverse in the localities. However, this understood all over a very much wider area. Before knowing the Nepali as a community, we have to know their identity as per language, custom, region, etc. E. C. Dozey mentioned that “Nepalis were divided on the basis of caste and this caste interrelated with their occupation. Thus, *bahun* their caste occupation (upper caste hierarchy) is priesthood, the Chhetris and are considered as warriors. Newar (traders), the Mangars (Soldier class), the Gurung (Shepherds), the Yakhas, the Sunwars (Gold Smiths), etc., each one has spoke their own dialect, among them a separate form of worshipping and customs.”<sup>29</sup>

Table No 4.8: Demography of Nepalese in Darjeeling District.

1871	1881	1901	1911
25781	.....	880000	134000

Source: Hosneara Khatun, *Business And Business Communities of Darjeeling Sub-Division From 1835 To 1962:A Historical Study*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, North Bengal University, Siliguri, 2013, P.209.

In Sikkim, Nepal and the Darjeeling District, the majority of the Nepalese were not unnoticed. In the Siliguri Subdivision, on the other hand, while the percentage of Nepalese is 6.2 percent.<sup>30</sup> The Nepalese consists 34 per cent of the Darjeeling District population, including the Terai region majority, are all migrants

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<sup>29</sup> E. C. Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District since 1835: With a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District*. NL Publishers, Siliguri, 2011. P. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., p.64.



from the State of Nepal. The deputy-Commissioner opined that ‘with the Passage of time occupy the whole District’.<sup>31</sup>

The Nepalese are divided into many classes according to their profession these are Newars, Murmis and Dhimal, who mainly engaged with the profession of traders, cultivators and shopkeeper.<sup>32</sup> Mr. B. H. Hodgson in his paper published in the *Asiatic Society of Bengal journal for 1848 Part-II* concerning about the general characteristics of the Nepal Tribes, states that “The Newars and Murmis are the chief races. Of all the tribes, the Newars are by far most advanced in civilization, and they are a steady, industrious people, equally skilled in Handicrafts, commerce, and the village of the Soil.”<sup>33</sup>

According to the census report of 1872 Mechs in Darjeeling District at 893 and the Dhimals at 873. They formerly noticed in these region but over time, the Mechs decreased in the District, and they also shifted in the Jalpaiguri District. Dr Hooker, in his *Himalayan Journal* (vol. 1. p.100), states that “Siliguri stands on the verge of the Terai, that low malarious belt which skirts the base of the Himalayas, from the Sutlej to Brahmakhund in upper Assam...”<sup>34</sup>

A J Dash pointed out that “the distribution of races and communities in the semi-urban areas of the district. Nepalis are remarkably numerous (83 percent) of these areas.”<sup>35</sup> The population in the town increased day by day due to large number of influx from the neighbouring region Nepal by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. So they mixed with each other and difficult to identify the original

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<sup>31</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op. cit., p.53.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-1.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.66

<sup>35</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op.cit., p.64.

inhabitant and the migrated one. On the other hand, Marwari, Bihari migration into these regions challenged their status, in trade and commerce. In the district heterogeneous class character notice during these time period. Nandini Bhattacharya published article mentioned that which based on the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* “the population rose from 94,996 in 1872 to 249,117 in 1901.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Bengali Community**

In Bengal, Bengalis were the traditional traders, preferred to live in plain areas and their contribution in trade and commerce had noticed during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Bengal sector of trade and commerce flourished due to their sea attached territory. So the Bengalis earned billions from trade with the Europeans. Bengalis have the great contributors to the history of Darjeeling. There would be no worth without mentioning the Bengalis.<sup>37</sup> The Bengali population of the district mainly restricted to the towns. According to the A j Dash “The figure of the Bengali population in the district are confusing. In 1891 Bengali was stated to be the mother tongue of 47,435 in number, in 1911, it was 45,985 people and in the year 1931, it was only 37,444. These data clearly reflect the declining nature of the Bengali community in the district.”<sup>38</sup>

A J Dash pointed out that “Bengali were took interest in the Government services record tells that their percentage in this sector almost 60 percent.” Apart from the services they also dominating in lending business or *mahajan* profession, their

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<sup>36</sup> Nandini Bhattacharya, “Leisure, Economy and Colonial Urbanism: Darjeeling, 1835–1930”, *Urban History*, Vol. 40, No. 3, Cambridge University Press, (Dundee, 2013), pp. 456-7.

<sup>37</sup> Hosnara Khatun, *Business And Business Communities of Darjeeling Sub-Division From 1835 To 1962: A Historical Study*, Unpublished Thesis, North Bengal University, Siliguri, 2013, pp.215-6.

<sup>38</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., p. 71.

area became expand in the district.<sup>39</sup> The involvement of Bengalis in the sphere of beautification to the district was not unnoticeable. With the effort of the traders, merchants and the intelligentsia the district beautification became the concern for them. In 1909 with the active involvement of the Bengali community such as Maharaja of Bardwan, Kailash Chandra Bose (lawyer) and Dr. Nil Ratan Sarkar (physician) were led the district a main concern of beautification and became the core of Bengal economy.<sup>40</sup>

### **Other Communities**

Marwaris, Biharis, Nepalis and Bengalis who dominated the trade in the district. In addition to them there were some other traders and businessmen from some other communities left a great impact in the economy and society of the region. Undoubtedly they were few in number but their role in the commercial life of Darjeeling was not negligible. They were the Kashmiris, Punjabis, Sindis, Parsis, Tibetans etc.<sup>41</sup> Punjabi community broadly included Sikhs. A. J. Dash mentioned that “the total number based on census 1891 recorded 344 who speak Punjabi in the Darjeeling district.”<sup>42</sup>

E C Dozey mentioned on the ground of parsi cemetery that “As the community in this station is small, indeed, deaths are few and far between; consequently the up keep of a sacerdotal establishment is neither necessary nor possible. There are only three persons buried in this cemetery, which is situated just below the Lebong Road about one and a half miles away from the Market Square, the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp.175-6.

<sup>40</sup> Nandini Bhattacharya, op.cit., pp. 457-9.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op.cit., pp. 56-7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.71.

first being Mrs. Shreen Dewacha, the wife of Lt. Col. Dewacha, I.M.S., who was buried here in 1907, on a small plot assigned hastily for the purpose by the Forest Department...”<sup>43</sup>

After the British influence in the district their religion also shaded with them in the district. For the greed of government services few conversion noticed. The Deputy-Commissioner in 1871 reported W. W. Hunter that “A German Mission had been established for many years in Darjeeling; and although it met with no visible success in the shape of conversions....”<sup>44</sup> They engaged mostly on manager of tea gardens in the district. W. W. Hunter mentioned that “In the 1872 census report 532 total Christian population report in the district out of that 104 as representing the native Christian population and rest are Europeans.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> E C Dozey, op. cit., p.141.

<sup>44</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op.cit., p. 86.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

## CHAPTER V

### **The Activities of Trading Communities in Exchanging Commodities with the Neighbouring Regions**

*Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes, in some measure, a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society.* Adam Smith<sup>1</sup>

A comprehensive study of the location of any place shows that its structure, geographical location and boundaries play a significant role in drawing out of that place. Throughout the North Bengal Siliguri place fulfilled the geographical location, boundaries and their topography which accelerate their development over the time period. The main concern from rural village economy to wholesale trade or distribution centre and the internal and external forces which involved in this were deeply area of concern.

After that various development projects had been initiated by the British to make this region a trade centre in connection with frontier trades among the Himalayan and Sub-Himalayan countries like Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, etc. The British Imperialist greed to open up a trade link between Calcutta and China even with central Asia through the trans-Himalayan mountainous trade routes.<sup>2</sup>

Trade prices mostly depend on cost of transport so in this context the role of transportation is more valuable in trading goods and their price. And the free flow of

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Penguin Books, New York, 2005, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Narayan Chandra Saha, *The Marwari Community in Eastern India: A Historical Survey Focussing North Bengal*. Decent Books, New Delhi, 2003, p. 68.

goods and their items.<sup>3</sup> The roads and railways came during the time of British rule. The British was to establish communications between Darjeeling and the Plains. During the time of 1839-1842, Lord Napier of Magdala deputed engineers to construct a road from Siliguri to Darjeeling. After lots of obstacle faced by them it finally completed in 1869. After that the movement and communication hills and plains had been improved by the construction at a cost of Rs. 14,68,000. By this connect to Siliguri or Terai with the Hill Cart road. But these Hill Cart Road was not sufficient. The district demands better transport and communication one Hill Cart Road not fulfilled and it was too long and tedious journey along the plains of Bengal. After that the Northern Bengal State Railway was opened firstly it connects up to Jalpaiguri and after a year it had been extended to Siliguri. In 1880-81 Darjeeling Himalayan Railway opens for traffic Between Darjeeling and Siliguri.<sup>4</sup>

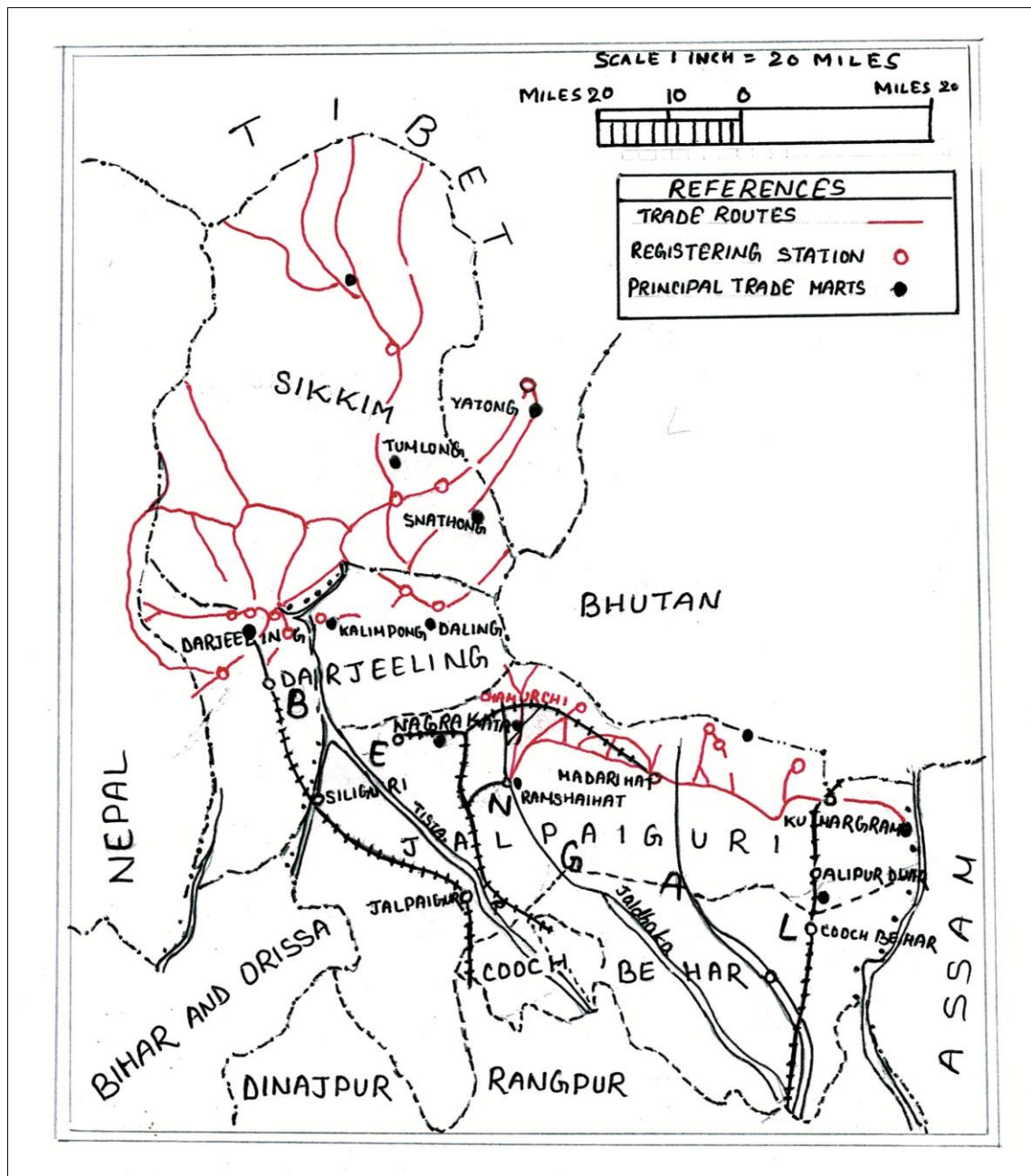
After the foundation of road and rail the structure of the Siliguri transforms. In one way it accelerates the flow of goods as well as people. After the well-developed road i.e. Hill Cart road and Darjeeling Himalayan Railway both connected to Siliguri with Hills as well as periphery region. Most of the trade through Teesta Valley with Sikkim and Tibet and with Kalimpong passes through Siliguri. Siliguri during the passage of time became distribution centre as well as a centre for the transfer of through traffic from one transportation System to another.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*. Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> L S S O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling*. Logos Press, New Delhi, 1907, pp. 132-3.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, *op. cit.*, p. 166.



Map No 5.1: Map showing Trans-frontier Trade Routes and Trade Registering Stations.

Source: *The Trade Of Bengal With Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan in 1921-22*, Prepared in the Department of Statistics, India, Government of Bengal, Forty-Fifth issue, Calcutta, 1922.

## Frontier Trade

North Bengal region had a great commercial potentiality which attracted to different trading or merchants communities. The trader's movement in these region started. The important trade of the District was with Calcutta via Siliguri. The Siliguri, of Terai, become during the passage of time distribution centre as well as centre for the transfer of through traffic from one transportation system to another. The chief items of exports are tea, jute, gunny bags, wool, cardamom and maize, while the import items are European Piece-goods, cotton yarn, rice, kerosene oil and salt. Rice is also imported from Dinajpur and coal and coke from Raniganj.<sup>6</sup>

The main trade centre in the Hills are Darjeeling town itself and Kurseong, Kalimpong and in the Terai or plain areas Siliguri, Matigara, Naksalbari, Phansidewa, Bagdogra, Khoribari, Adhikari, Garidhura and Panighata.<sup>7</sup> The Mahananda and the Teesta take their rise in the Darjeeling and Terai including the region of Sub-division Siliguri.<sup>8</sup>

In the district, trade and commerce predominantly expanded in different forms by means of weekly markets, held in the town or large village; and also by annual fairs or religious gathering, this encouraged people from the far-flung areas. These weekly markets held at Darjeeling, Namshu, Rohini and Kurseong in the hills, and Phansideva, Bagdogra, Siliguri, Naksalbari, Udaikari, Khoribari in the Terai. Apart from the weekly markets or *Haats* these region also witnessed religious fair in the larger context. The four principal religious trading fairs are held (i) the Rangit river's

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<sup>6</sup> LSS O'Malley, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., p.172.

<sup>8</sup> *Report on the Internal Trade of Bengal for the year 1876-77*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1877, p. 10.



bank (ii) the Balasan river's bank (iii) at Naksalbari areas and (iv) Hanskoa areas in the Terai region.<sup>9</sup> The daily markets and the periodical hats play an important part in the retail distribution of commodities and also it provide boost to the development of the core area where the daily market situated or periphery area where connected to this core area. Among these most of them are controlled by the Darjeeling Improvement fund.<sup>10</sup>

Table No 5.1: List of markets in Siliguri and surrounding areas.

Name of the Hat	Year of origin	Days of week when held	Important products handled	Daily average attendance
Matigara Hat	1877	Tuesday	Rice, Fish and Vegetables	7,000
		Friday	"Do"	8,000
Bagdogra Hat	1877	Sunday	Grocery, Vegetables, fish, jewellery, ornaments and agricultural implements	2,000
		Thursday	"Do"	2,500
Naksalbari Hat	1877	Tuesday	Paddy, Rice, Jute	5,000
		Saturday	"Do"	6,000
Adhikari Hat	1877	Tuesday	Rice, Vegetables, Cattle	3,000
		Sunday	"Do"	4,000
Kharibari Hat	1877	Monday	Paddy, Jute, Rice and vegetables	....
		Friday	"Do"	....
Banderjhuli Hat	1877	Sunday	Fish, Vegetables, Jewellery, Clothes, Agricultural implements and Fish	200
		Thursday	"Do"	300
Ambari Hat	1877	Tuesday	Vegetables, Jewellery, Clothes, Agricultural implements and Fish	.....
		Saturday	"Do"	.....
Phansidewa Hat	1877	Sunday	Fish, Vegetables, Fish, and Agricultural implements	1,000
		Thursday	"Do"	1,500

Source: Amiya Kumar Banerji, et al, *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjiling*. Government of West Bengal, 1980, pp. 283-5.

<sup>9</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*. Vol. X. Trubner & Company, London, 1876, p.158.

<sup>10</sup> Amiya Kumar Banerji, et al, *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjiling*. Government of West Bengal. Calcutta, 1980, p. 280.

Table No 5.1 shows *Hats* which were surrounded in Siliguri or near Siliguri areas established in 1877. Darjeeling Improvement Fund gave the boost to the development of the Siliguri. The geographical accessibility attracted to the traders to settle in the *Hats*. These Hats run either in a week or twice a week.<sup>11</sup>

Local Trade is not less in a number of *Bazaars* in the district mostly were controlled by the Darjeeling Improvement Fund. On the other hand Finance of trade and agriculture in the District is mainly in the hands of those who controlled trading, especially Marwari, Bihari and other traditional Communities. Their contribution not less in the commodity market and trade sector. The Marwari dominates were not unknown in the district. In the Darjeeling town itself the firm of Jetmull Bhojraj was established in 1845. After that Kalimpong also became the epicentre of the Marwari. From the following connection their early activity in Kalimpong. Beside Trade and agriculture Marwari community also engaged in Private firms, registered under the Money- lenders Act are more closely concerned with actual trade financing and also directly connected with trading.<sup>12</sup>

### **Trans-Frontier Trade**

The Darjeeling district is situated to the North of Zillah Purina and Rangpur divided into two portions, the Northern consisting of a hill and valley with an average altitude 4,000 to 9,000 feet above the sea level and the southern, or Morung, the edge of the first range of Himalayan and the plain covered Zillah Rangpur region.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 280-5.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., pp. 171-4.

<sup>13</sup> W. B. Jackson, *Selection from the Records of the Bengal Government: No XVII, Report on the Darjeeling*. Calcutta Gazette Office, Calcutta, 1854, p. 3.

settlement of Darjeeling in 1839 was not more than 100 persons. But after ten years duration in 1849 it increased 10,000. This may be chiefly by immigration from the neighbouring states of Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan. Siliguri and the Darjeeling District geographical location provided favourable circumstances for the development of Siliguri.<sup>14</sup> Siliguri connection and attachment with the neighbouring areas such as Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan played important part in trade. These neighbouring regions transformed the Siliguri as a distribution centre as well as centre of manufacturing in a larger context.

### **Tibet**

The establishment of trading relations between British India and Tibet is close attention from the government. Mr. J.W. Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of the District, visited Sikkim in October and November 1872 and after this tour, submitted to Government a detailed report regarding the actual extent, condition and prospects of trade with Tibet, the best line for the construction of a road over the passes, and on the other matter which would enable government to take action upon the important question of the resumption of commercial intercourse between India and the Countries beyond its Northern Frontier.<sup>15</sup> The Annual Administration Report of Bengal for 1873-74 clearly states that “the routes which connected through Tibet from Sikkim. From the Calcutta Gazettes from 1784 to 1788, which contains historical and State Papers, edited by President of the record commission, there is a notice issued by the Governor-General in Council to native merchants of Bengal, intimating the desire on the part of the Raja of Tisha Lumbu ‘to open an intercourse of trade between

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<sup>14</sup>L S S O’Malley, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op. cit., p. 159.

Bengal and Tibet', and promising encouragement and assistance each other."<sup>16</sup> By the report of the Deputy-Commissioner, who showed that there had been a steady annual increase of trade both Sikkim and Tibet during the four years brought unnoticed. Dr. Walker's Cyclopaedia places the subject in clear and intelligent form—"Through Darjeeling is the shortest mountain passage across the Himalayas into Tibet and Central Asia, and there is no doubt that a large commerce in British manufactures could be established for these countries. Mr. Bogle said that the trade passed in a noticeable one in broadcloths and that the demand for it was still huge in this time."<sup>17</sup>

Trade from Tibet in India carried via Darjeeling District followed two routes both of which passes through Sikkim State. One route leaves Tibet for Sikkim via the Jalap La, enters the district north of Pedong and other passes through Kalimpong. Goods mostly carried on Pack mules. From Gangtok the traffic is moved by bullock cart down the Teesta Valley. Wool coming down from Gangtok is carted to Kalimpong where it is processed and baled before onward despatch to the plains. Other commodities being moved to and from Tibet via Gangtok pass along the Teesta Valley by road or rail Siliguri.<sup>18</sup>

Undoubtedly, British were aware from the importance of Siliguri and the surrounding regions were situated. Major B.T. Reid, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling states that "if greater facilities were afforded for the transport of merchandize between Darjeeling and the main line of traffic in Bengal, the Station

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., pp. 166-7.

would become the centre of a large and yearly increasing traffic with the neighbouring States.”<sup>19</sup>

The deputy commissioner was aware from the transport and trade link so he was concerned about it. Major B.T. Reid, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling also states that “I think, be admitted that to invite the importation of a large quantity of merchandize in excess of the local demand would be a decided mistake, and that our endeavour should be confined to affording traders from the neighbouring States every facility for storing their wares on arrival, that they may have leisure to transact their business. Hereafter should Government provide improved means of communication between this Station and the larger trading towns in the plains, there cannot be a doubt that a very extensive and important trade would spring up, especially with Tibet and Sikkim.”<sup>20</sup>

With regard to the Tibet trade which registered at Gangtok and Yatung instead of at the station under the control of the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling. The total value of the past year’s traffic with Tibet mentioned in Table No 5.2.<sup>21</sup>

Table No 5.2: Import and Export from Tibet

Year	Imports from Tibet Rs.	Exports to Tibet Rs.	Total
1895-96	6,25,543	3,48,985	9,74,528
1896-97	5,89,181	3,11,194	9,00,375
1897-98	4,98,125	1,88,280	6,86,405

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Major B. T. Reid, *Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling to the under Secretary of the Government of Bengal*, proceeding of the General Department, No.329 to 24, July 1865, p. 43.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.

<sup>21</sup> *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1897-98*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1898, pp. 13-5.

Source: *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1897-98*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1898, p13.

With regard to the Import and Export shows the principal commodities imported from and exported to Tibet during the past three years, shows in table no 5.3 and 5.4.

Table No 5.3: Commodities imported from Tibet

Commodities	1895-96 Rs	1896-97 Rs	1897-98 Rs (9 month)
Raw Wool	4,43,808	4,36,180	4,29,904
Horses, ponies	58,364	28,291	25,092
Manufactured Wool (Indian)	8,007	19,381	15,027
Silver	7,500	7,596	11,100
Yak-tails	46,625	63,000	8,900
Manufactured Wool (Chinese)	.....	4,001	.....

Source: *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1897-98*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1898, p. 13.

Table No 5.4: Commodities exported to Tibet

Commodities	1895-96 Rs	1896-97 Rs	1897-98 Rs (9 month)
Silver	96,650	1,13,800	68,100
Indigo	19,816	48,495	38,510
Tobacco	10,771	21,592	27,326
Brass and Copper	16,647	10,148	17,762
Cotton piece goods (European)	99,986	42,455	12,736
Wool manufactured (European)	46,937	26,974	9,409
Iron	9,827	11,090	7,399
Raw silk	..	..	970
Mineral oil	1,000	707	726
Dying materials	3,080	3,326	190

Source: *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1897-98*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1898, p. 13.

The commodity on a large scale imported from Tibet to the district was Wool. Kalimpong development as a business centre undoubtedly for the wool trade. A.J. Dash mentioned in *Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling* “Over the Lakh of maunds of wool (3,846 tons) arrived annually in Kalimpong on caravans of mules conducted by Tibetans and in addition about 19,000 maunds are carted from Gangtok to Kalimpong. All these mules not use for local purpose export to Morung such as Siliguri and other periphery areas.”<sup>22</sup>

The Darjeeling district including Morung region imports wool from Tibet and the exports to Tibet chiefly of cotton piece-goods of European manufacture. Apart from these articles, cotton Yarn, Silver brass and iron sheets, rice, maize and tobacco are exported on a large scale on the other hand Yaks, Musk, Horses, Mules, Sheep and blankets are imported. These export and import relation with District provided a conducive and favourable relation in this region. But the famous quantity of Darjeeling tea exported to Tibet were unnoticed due to the planters have not yet developed the manufacture of the brisk tea which were fit the Tibetan plate.<sup>23</sup>

## **Sikkim**

Darjeeling prior to 1835 part of Sikkim, thus their relation after that more or less noticeable and favourable. English wanted Sikkim as a buffer zone for trade with Tibet. Mr J.W. Edger, the Deputy Commissioner of the District, visited Sikkim in October 1872 and submitted a detailed report regarding the geography accessibility. British keen desire to utilize Sikkim as buffer area for the Tibet. The report states that

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<sup>22</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>23</sup> L S S O'Malley, op. cit., pp.129-30.

“Although the construction of such a road would of course at the outset be regarded with much suspicion by the Tibetans, I have little doubt that, if once it were made, friendly relations with Tibet, and a trade singularly advantageous to both Countries, would follow almost of themselves; and without such a road, I do not expect much good from other measures. It is a surprising thing that no steps should have been taken to make a road immediately after the treaty of 1861; but I venture to hope that the matter may now receive the favourable consideration of Government.”<sup>24</sup>

As regard the trade with both Sikkim and Tibet everything is to be hoped for by the completion proposed main road through the former to the frontier of the latter country. The trade between Bengal and Sikkim and Tibet is registered at frontier stations established within British territory. The Darjeeling import from Sikkim consists of horses, cattle, including sheep and goats, blankets, salt, musk, wax, ghee, oranges, millet, rice, lime and copper. From the data it is noted annual increase in the trade during 1860 to 1863 are nearly double those of 1860. In the year 1860 to 1863 total import from Sikkim to Darjeeling Rs 89,535 but Rs19,450 return to Sikkim in the shape of goods, Rs 70,805 leaving the District in cash. And on the other hand the Darjeeling District export to Sikkim English cloth, calico, brazen and other metal utensils, tobacco and coral, the realized during the last four year as already shown to Rupees 19,450.<sup>25</sup> In the next decade 1876-77 the economic relationship with Sikkim improved, Darjeeling the total value of exports to Sikkim during the year is rupees 1,41,647 and Darjeeling imports from Sikkim rupees 8,02,657.<sup>26</sup> In the next decade more or less import and export unchanged but it increased during 1890s, during 1895-

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<sup>24</sup> William Wilson Hunter, op. cit., pp.159-60.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from H.C Wake, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling to the under Secretary of the Government of Bengal, proceeding of the General Department, No.24, July 1864, p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> *Report on the Internal Trade of Bengal for the year 1876-77*, op. cit., p. 270.



96 Darjeeling district exports rupees of 4,33,856 and imports from Sikkim 5,03,681. In the 1896-97 Darjeeling exports to Sikkim 4,17,902 and imports 7,55,906. 1897-98 Darjeeling exports 3,64,963 and imports 4,94,039.<sup>27</sup>

Table no 5.5: Import and Export from Darjeeling District to Sikkim.

Year	Imports from Sikkim Rs.	Exports to Sikkim Rs.	Total
1876-77	8,02,657	1,41,647	9,44,304
1877-78	18,222	16,589	34,811
1878-79	1,26,223	54,802	1,81,025
1879-80	2,51,491	48,085	2,99,576
1880-81	1,67,960	80,898	2,48,858
1896-97	1,19,713	1,44,471	2,64,184
1897-98	1,08,194	1,37,460	2,45,651
1998-99	1,05,756	1,47,058	2,52,812

Source: *Report on the Internal and External Trade of Bengal for the year 1876-1898*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta.

## Nepal

The geographical similarities of Darjeeling and Nepal tie this region. The native of Darjeeling hills areas precisely matched as the inhabitants of Nepal, they speak a pure Hindi, some Bhutias and Lepchas also have taken up their settlement in these region. So Darjeeling and Nepal had their relation also before British and after British colony.<sup>28</sup> The relation with Nepal to the Darjeeling comprised both the Morung and the hills. A. J. Dash mentioned in *Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling* “In the Terai (Morung) via Sanicharia in Nepal to Naxalbari, via Bhadrapur in Nepal to Adhikari via Galgalia ( Just outside the District in Bihar). Galgalia is served by rail and Naxalbari both by road and rail. On the other hand, via hills Gorakhia and Pashpatinagar in Nepal to Sukhiapokri, Simana, Manibhanjan or Mirik in the

<sup>27</sup> *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1897-98*, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>28</sup>W. B. Jackson, op. cit., p. 7.

Darjeeling district.” The Morung areas through Naxalbari and Adhikari do not carry any exports or rice mustered oil. “The main export commodities are cotton cloth, salt, copper and brass sheets cotton yarn, Kerosene oil and sugar with an estimated annual value of Rs. 2,35,000.”<sup>29</sup>

A.J. Dash also provided data of import and exports through this route “Annual imports are about 100,000 mounds of rice (3,663 tons) mustard oil to the value of Rs. 25,000 and small quantities of maize and potatoes. Trade through Galgalia is practically all import from Nepal of rice and paddy which is railed to Siliguri Milling takes place both at Galgalia and Siliguri.”<sup>30</sup>

The stations were established to register the traffic that crosses the frontier between Bengal and Nepal. Siliguri was one of these stations which were connected to other countries such as Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet etc. During 1870s there were 27 stations at work to register the traffic that crossed the frontier between Bengal and Nepal. Of these 15 were established on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1879, when the recognised plan of traffic registration comes into operations in the frontier Bihar District. The General report of trade given by the commission of the Patna Division has made the following remarks in the trade and commerce section of his General Administration for the past official year, “The experience I have had in collecting Darjeeling frontiers trade statistics confirms what the Sub-divisional officer says as to the difficulty of procuring great returns. Years ago I pointed this out and showed how mischievous incorrect statics may become at any time. I have just come across passages from Sir Steuart Bayley Administration Report of 1873, which I cannot resist quoting, as it puts forward more effectively than I have ever been able to do the view which I have

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<sup>29</sup>Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

been urging. At a time when the range for collecting figures on all possible subjects was hottest, Sir Steuart Bayley work that ‘statics were utterly, valueless unless carefully collected and analysed.’<sup>31</sup>

Table No 5.6: Import and Export from Darjeeling District to Nepal.

Year	Numbers of stations	Imports from Nepal	Exports to Nepal	Total
1878-79	4	35,000	7,000	42,000
1879-80	3	83,000	6,000	89,000

Source: *Report on the Internal Trade of Bengal for the year 1879-80*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1880, p.121.

## Bhutan

The Bhutan trade mostly carried through the Kalimpong Subdivision but in contrast to Tibet, Nepal and Sikkim limited quantity of trade passed and mostly done through Jaldhaka Valley to the plains. Much trade noticed with Jalpaiguri which were connected to the traffic between Jalpaiguri and Bhutan. The difference stations for the registration of trade between Bengal and Bhutan are Ambari, Baxa, Huntoparah and Haldibari all in the Jalpaiguri district.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand Siliguri, Pedong and Laba in the Darjeeling District. All these stations were kept one throughout the year with the exception of Hantipara and Ambari which were closed for seven months from April to October on account of the rains. The great bulk of the trade both import and export, is registered at Buxa. The following statements give the total value of the trade registered during the past three years.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Report on the Internal Trade of Bengal for the year 1879-80*, Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1880, pp. 120-1.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Jules Dash, op. cit., p.166.

<sup>33</sup> *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1897-98*, op. cit., pp. 16-7.

H. C. Wake Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling in his letter to the secretary mentioned that “The trade from Bhutan during 1860s were ignorant or hiding in nature. Mainly two routes which trade exports Darjeeling during this period. Firstly, Via Shaugney and Jungsa to Dalimcote, hence crossing the Sumlienghat to Poshook. Second from Paroo passing the frontier of Tibet and Bhutan by choomby and Rinchiagong in Tibet, via the Chula Yeklah and Rangeet. There is scarcely any perceptible increase in their importations, the total value during the four year is Rupees 1700 while in the other hand, the value of goods taken in exchange amounts to Rupees 4,200 only.”<sup>34</sup>

In the year 1896 to 1899 there has been total traffic registered all the principle articles, both under import and exports was steady with exception of fresh fruits and vegetables the value of the imports of which fell from Rs. 18,178 in 1897-98 to Rs. 10,745 in 1898-99; secondly the exports of which aggregated Rs.23,979.<sup>35</sup> The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri, states “that the general decrease in the value of imports when due to the scarcity during the year under report. In export, there was a decline under the items of cotton woollen piece goods, betel nuts, unrefined sugar and Indian silk manufactures; while the traffic in Indian cotton piece goods, tobacco, rice, brass and copper and their manufactures showed an improvement.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from H. C Wake, op. cit., p.50.

<sup>35</sup> *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1898-99*, op. cit., p.10.

<sup>36</sup> *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1897-98*, op. cit., p.17.

Table no 5.7: Import and Export from Darjeeling District to Bhutan.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Imports from Bhutan Rs.</b>	<b>Exports to Bhutan Rs.</b>	<b>Total</b>
1876-77	12,708	7,590	20,298
1877-78	18,666	33,997	52,663
1878-79	84,901	88,108	1,73,009
1879-80	3,85,406	2,89,588	6,74,994
1880-81	2,43,922	1,96,947	4,40,869
1896-97	1,19,713	1,44,471	2,64,184
1897-98	1,08,194	1,37,460	2,45,651
1998-99	1,05,756	1,47,058	2,52,812

Source : *Report on the External Trade of Bengal for the year 1876-1899,*

Government of Bengal, Government Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1877-1899.

Table no 5.7 shows the trade 1870s to 1890s this reflected that Bhutan and the Siliguri as a whole core and surrounding areas goods moved which were benefited to the district in a larger context. Siliguri neighbouring areas provided a booster for the trans-frontiers trade network. The trader's involvement on a larger scale noticed after the cordial relation with these neighbouring regions.

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion

It can be said that the trading Communities in India played a very important role in the economic development of the region during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. No doubt, trade and commerce determined the economy of a region and hence, it influences the people's life. The trading class exists everywhere from east to west and north to south with different characteristics developed by the geography and economy of the region. It is crystal clear that the trading communities have got their surnames, which further became their permanent identity, by the nature of work performed by them; for example 'Goldsmiths' in the work of jewellery, 'Telis' in the field of oil and 'Chamars' in the profession of leather. In Indian society, these classes were collectively termed as 'trading classes.' Some of the trading classes of North Bengal are the original inhabitants of the region but some of them are the outsiders who settled there. Mech, Dhimal, Rajbanshi, Bengali, Nepali are among the native inhabitants of this place, while Marwari Bihari Punjabi Banjara etc are counted among the people who came from outside and remained here since long back. The development of transportation system and the trading prospects in the region attracted these outsiders to settle here. Siliguri in North Bengal attracted them from 1870 as it was urbanised well and rose from the status of village and became a trading hub.

The trading communities of India spread their foot in every nook and corner of the country to make their position better. For instance, some of these communities like *Baniyas* and Marwaris from Gujarat and Rajasthan, were prevalent in every part of India. Wherever they went, they dominated over the trade and business of the region.

Further they also adopted their way of living as per the local conditions. They adjusted themselves according to the demand of the society. In Northern part of India, especially in Gangetic plain areas, the trading community belonged to the different religion and caste groups. Interestingly, some instances have also been found that these communities left their traditional profession and engaged in a new profession with new titles. For instance, 'Kalwar' community left their traditional profession and entered into the *mahajan* work with a new title such as Jaiswal. The *Banjara* community, which played an advance role in the long distance trade, mainly from remote places in northern India, were disappeared somewhere by the history. The problem with them was of their settlement at a particular place or habitation. Their tendency of moving here and there led to their backwardness in the living style. In addition to that Bengalis, Nepalis and Punjabis were mainly concerned in the sphere of trade and commerce in their specific native places only, their participation in the rest of the areas were negligible. The southern trading communities limited their activities within their region due to the cultural and language barriers.

The trading community of Siliguri transformed the trading activities of Siliguri. The outside traders, particularly Marwari and Bihari also effectively participated in the trade and commerce. Before 1850, Siliguri was part of Sikkim state, which was under Namgyal dynasty. British focused on this area because of its importance in trade and connectivity to the Sikkim, Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan which made this area 'the heart of the North East'. On the other hand, the Siliguri area was well connected with the Darjeeling District. The arrival of the British led to the introduction of Hill Cart Road and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, which changed the outline of the region. The climate was favorable for the British and it proved to be a major place for sanatorium. By 1850, tea became an important commercial crop in

the region. After 1860, tea gardens were established and thus, tea became an established enterprise in North Bengal. This created an opportunity for the trading communities to concentrate on tea. The British also encouraged the development of tea in the region, which made it an important source for their economic development. In this process, both the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and Hill Cart Road played a valuable role in the trading activities in Siliguri and Darjeeling.

The geographical location of Siliguri and its internal and external conditions influenced the trading activities in the region. North Bengal was full of natural resources and was needed to be explored with attention. British took advantage of it and created conducive circumstances for the development of commerce, towns, and markets in the nineteenth century. Siliguri became both the distribution and manufacturing center.

The various trading communities such as Marwaris, Biharis, Nepalis, Bengalis, Europeans, and Tibetans settled in North Bengal, especially in Siliguri. All these trading communities actively involved in the economic development of the region. Firstly, Marwari community played a vital role in the trade and commerce who tied in different activities such as *jotedari* (holding of jotedars), *atardari* (stock business), 'commission agency' and in private form too registered under the Moneylenders Act which was directly or indirectly connected with trading. Next to Marwaris, the Biharis gained an important place in the district. They settled not only in Siliguri but also in the nearby towns and villages that attracted the local and trans-frontier trade and market. Nepali and Bengali trading communities had already present in these specific regions. Nepali spoken dialect is much more diverse in the localities as per language, customs, regions, etc. Among Nepalis, the *Newars* were merchant group, who were also having skills in handicrafts and commerce. Bengalis



were the traditional trading community engaged mostly in skilled craftsmanship. Over the time, they shifted their attention to the service sector. Apart from this, Panjabis, Sikhs, Parsees etc communities also provided attention towards the nineteenth century for the economy of North Bengal, more specifically Siliguri.

North Bengal had a close connection with the neighboring regions at the local and trans-frontier levels in the context of exchanging goods. At the local level, *Bazars, Hats* and Fairs accelerated the development of trade and commerce in the region. They had attracted different trading communities to settle in these areas. All these led to the development of particular areas and with the passage of time, it became the major urban center. Further, North Bengal surrounded by internal and external boundaries, with its relation with Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan led to the regular imports and exports of goods. In this context, the role of Siliguri is of great importance. Later, Siliguri acted as a corridor of the entire North East. So, frontier and trans-frontier trade relations began with so noticeable extent because of accessibility and communication network that it led Siliguri to be an urban centre. The Siliguri market area *Mahabirasthan*, over the time period, became most densely populated. The economic necessities of Terai and Duars regions were fulfilled by Siliguri, as a major distribution center. Presently, Siliguri has secured the status of one of the major cities in West Bengal.

The economic development of the region not only gave the outside trading class an opportunity to make their mark but, also every facility of their desire. Due to being adjacent to the international border areas, the British paid a lot of attention to this area at that time. The legacy of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway provides proof of this. The climate here helped the British to build sanatoriums here. After which the arrival of the trading community from remote areas started. The trading class not only

served the commercial purpose but, also played an important role in settling of the place and making it an urban center. So, we can say that doing the past is the foundation of the present. The beautiful trading city that Siliguri is today, its foundation was forged in the past. Siliguri, economically, well sounded with the establishment of trade and commerce and these trading communities played a great role for this.

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