INTRODUCTION

The present research is the study of the environmental changes in the district of Jalpaiguri district in North Bengal in the late colonial period starting from 1860, the year when the tea plantation were being established by the British, and the terminal point is the year of Independence and Partition that is 1947.

The study in the local history is aimed at bridging certain gaps in our knowledge and throwing light to the dark corners of the history of our recent past. The local case studies help in better understanding in unfolding diverse historical process in relation to all India level. They act as complementaries to all India and provincial histories.

The period under study highlights the fact that the ecological history of British India is of special interest in view of the intimate connection between western imperialism and environmental degradation. The ecology of the world has been altered by western capitalism. Their dynamic expansion disrupted the ecosystems first through trade and later by colonialism. Such interventions reshaped the social, ecological and demographic characteristics of the habitats. The changes brought about by such interventions ensured the benefit of the imperialist country. Large scale settlement followed through
which the Europeans augmented their ‘ghost acreage’. They exercised their
control over mineral, plant and animal resources for industrial growth. These
interventions radically altered the existing food production systems and their
ecological and social fabric of Indian society. The British by exposing the
natives to the industrial economy and consumer society confirmed the
ecological change they initiated.

The tea industry culture also found its way into India with the help of the
British imperialists though tea was indigenous to India and was known by
the aborigines from time immemorial. Tea called the ‘boon of the orient’ is
regarded universally as a pure, safe and helpful stimulant is produced in
nature’s own lab rotary. Other than being an important non alcoholic
beverage tea also occupies a significant place in world commerce in the past
centuries and does so also in the present time. The British traders towards
the end of the 18th century in order to end the monopoly of Chinese tea was
in search of other alternative sources of tea leading to the establishment of
the Indian tea industry in the first half of the 19th century. The earliest step
towards the introduction of tea cultivation occurred in 1788 with the help of
great English naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. Tea plantations were started in
Assam, Kumaon, Dehradun, Garwhal, Kangra and Kullu valleys, Darjeeling and in the Terai regions of West Bengal.

The tea plantation in the Terai regions, which concerns with the area of this thesis, especially the Dooars region mainly falls under the district of Jalpaiguri. It is to be noted that right from introduction and expansion of tea plantation in district of Jalpaiguri continued unhindered producing to meet the upsurging demand for tea in the international market. The competition that the Jalpaiguri tea planters face is a stiff challenge in the markets which will need continuous and meaningful support from the government and international level. Apart from economical interests, we cannot afford to forget the inlaid question of survival of cosmopolitan compositions of a vast labour community who face a situation of destitution and uncertainty in life at the present moment.

Jalpaiguri which was the northern-most plain district in undivided Bengal had a number of distinctive ecological, demographic and socio economic features. Bengali Hindus and the Muslims immigrating from east Bengal dominated services and professions. To this was added the immigrant tribals like Oraons, Mundas and Santals who came here to serve in the newly established tea gardens.
The most distinguishing feature was the introduction and consolidation of the European-owned and controlled tea plantation economy. The district witnessed a typical form of economic penetration and exploitation under the colonial rule. The plantation economy became characterized by different forms of subjugation and systematic methods of coercion, even terrorization against labour.

The work also proposes to examine in its real terms that though there was establishment of tea industry in extensive scale in this area, was it able to do justification to the large population involved in this industry. It can be mentioned here that the tea plantation needed a huge supply of labour force to compete with the demanding market. This led to large scale migration of different tribal people specially from the neighbouring regions like Chotanagpur Plateau to the district of Jalpaiguri to act as the main labour force for production of tea in extensive scale. The change over from a closed cultural system to an open one raised the issue of ‘identity crisis’ that they face now. Thus a probe into the matter is essentially required which this research intends to do.

It is to be noted that though the history of Jalpaiguri’s tea plantation had been dealt with in details by the historians, work based on ecological
perspective needs a in depth study which still remains undone. On the other hand historians dealing with Environmental history like Madhav Gadgil, Ramchandra Guha in their book ‘This fissured land-An ecological history of India,’ had looked upon the nature of Western imperialism and its connectivity with environmental degradation with a new dimension.

This research work intends to provide the ‘missing link’ between the history of tea plantation in the district of Jalpaiguri, West Bengal and on the other deal with the ecological changes from social, cultural, political and economic perspective that the place went through covering the period from 1860-1947.

Viewed from the environmental perspective the establishment of tea industry resulted in certain changes in the environment of the region brought about by clearance of the forest on wide scale. The research work intends to investigate the causes that whether the disturbance of the virgin forest for establishment of tea industry created the ground for the natural disasters like flood and climatic changes that were to follow in the years to come.

The research work had been divided into five chapters in order to do justification to the title. Jalpaiguri being my place of occupation for last
eight years attracted my attention that how the tea industry started by the British had changed the place geographically, demographically, economically, ecologically and socially in the last few centuries.

The first chapter, ‘Origin and history of tea plantation’ deals with the history of tea, its place of origin in the world and how India gained recognition in tea trade in the world. It was noticed that the introduction of the tea plantation enterprise in the district was an extension of the cultivation and the manufacture of tea in other places of north-east India. That the Duars had considerable potential as a tea growing area was noted as early as 1859, that is several years before the annexation of the Duars. Tea planting was extended to the Dooars, the land east of Teesta connecting Assam with West Bengal, Gazoldhoba/Gazeldhubi being the first Dooars tea garden in 1874. The pioneer of the tea industry in the Dooars region was Mr R.Haughton according to District Gazetteer and Grunning’s report. The District record shows that Mr H.P.Brougham took the first lease of Gazoldhoba for 996 acres employing Richard Houghton as his manager of the Gazoldhoba garden.

The Dooars region was annexed from Bhutan in November 1864 and Jalpaiguri district was formed in 1869. The wastelands act (1874) came into
being which facilitated the growth of tea gardens in the Dooars region. According to the said act the land used for tea gardens were almost exempted from land revenue. It is noted that lands leased out for tea cultivation followed the new Wastelands Rules issued by the Government of West Bengal in 1896 which is still in force. There after a Thirty Years lease was granted. By 1906-1907 all the marked wastelands became occupied and the joteland or land for rice cultivation began to come under tea plantation. This practice continued till 1930 and nearly 150 tea gardens were established at Jalpaiguri.

The study tries to bring in to notice that the introduction and growth of the tea plantation enterprise in the district of Jalpaiguri, as in Assam, took place with the active assistance of the colonial state and were not the products of operation of the indigenous economic forces but of exogenous developments and requirements of the imperial order. It was geared to a demand abroad for an exotic drink. Earnings from tea export along with those from other major Indian exports played a critical role in Britain’s international trade and capital flow relations and in the maintenance of the British imperial system. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw phenomenal growth of tea plantation enterprise but this was essentially in the nature of creation and
consolidation of an enclave economy which failed to generate any broad-based and dynamic transformation process.

With the control of the tea gardens by the British, a distinctive feature of the Duars enterprise was the emergence of a small but growing core of Indian entrepreneurship, mainly by the Bengalis. This feature was absent in the plantations of Assam and Darjeeling. After surveying the history of the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri district it can be said that the year 1879 is the landmark in tea history as the first Indian managed tea company in Bengal which was formed by a few enterprising Bengali lawyers and clerks in Jalpaiguri. As the political power during this time was concentrated in the hands of the British and the tea market being controlled by them, the Bengali entrepreneurs faced difficulty to establish themselves in this sphere. Initially the Bengali entrepreneurs were lacking in finance and know how. Thus their struggle for recognition in this industry also needs mention.

There was a steady and systematic extension of British administration and control. The colonial authority assumed the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order and intervened vigorously whenever it considered that there was any threat to the existing order. Changes were also introduced in the agrarian system prevailing in the tract annexed from
Bhutan by resorting to periodic measurements of land and re-assessment of revenue. All this promoted the expansion of the tea plantation system which was launched under the aegis of the British planters. In the tea plantation areas, the European planters and their assistants in combination with their Indian counterparts began to exercise power and control. Migration of the labourers were also organized by the planters and kept under control. Thus the growing intervention of the colonial state came to have a deep and far reaching impact on the economy and society in Jalpaiguri district.

In the Duars region there was almost six times increase of population between 1872-1921. It is to be seen that this rise in population was due to massive migration of labour into the tea gardens. The population of Jalpaiguri district came to be composed of large number of immigrants. The change was due to the large scale migration of tribal peasants particularly the Oraon, Munda and Santal peasants from Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas to the tea gardens. The society became composed of diverse social groups belonging to different ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups, to various castes and religious communities.

The second chapter, ‘Ecological change and Plantation-A theoretical approach’ explores the four distinct modes of production i.e. gathering,
nomadic pastoralism, settled cultivation and industry examined in aspects of technology, economy, social organization, aspects of ideology and ecological impact. The chapter also tries to discuss the term ‘ecological history’ and ‘environmental history’. In practice ecology has tended to focus more narrowly upon the study of ‘nature’, ‘the non human world, the world we have not in any primary sense created’. Moving firmly within the parameters of environmental history we find the study of human engagement over time with the physical environment and its influence in human history. The different elements of nature like climate, topography, animal and insect life, vegetation and soils had directly or indirectly had its effects on the human activity and productivity. They help to promote or prohibit specific forms of social structure, economic organization and belief systems.

Environmental history emerged as a distinct field in United States in 1970’s, in the wake of environmental movement. The vast majority of books and articles on American environmental history cluster around two themes. One was the consequences of European colonization and the development of capitalism and the other was highlighting the works of individual and organization that had challenged the environmental destruction unleashed by colonialism and capitalism.
But the sheer ecological and cultural diversity of the Indian subcontinent radically and problematically distinguishes its environmental history from the French or American experience. India like France is a predominantly agrarian civilization with species diversity. The tropical environments here has facilitated and sustained a much greater range of livelihood patterns. The emergence of environmental history as a special area in South Asia was linked directly to the ongoing process of ecological degradation and to the growth of a vigorous environmental movement in the region. In the 1970’s India witnessed a series of country wide protests by the peasants and the tribals that lead to critique of forest policy in modern India. The forestry debate in turn led historians to look more closely into the role of forests and forest products in local economies and to investigate the origins and outcome of state forestry science and legislation. Thus the visible deterioration of these resources in the present, and the emergence of bitter social conflicts over their control and use haves brought them within the orbit of environmental history.

During the colonial period from 1757-1947, Indian forests were used as an important source of revenue. The British East India Company’s main target was to strengthen their rule over India and to increase their revenue from
forest products. They were not interested in protecting the Indian forest. India followed a strategy of expanding acreage under hoe and plow, at the expense of grassland and forest, rather than intensifying production on existing acreage. The villagers failed to maintain their traditional subsistence uses of the forest against the incursions of the market economy. They instead were successful in expanding agriculture than in maintaining their forest resources. Another additional pressure was the plantation cropping of perennial crops for world markets also led to depletion of forests. In the nineteenth century coffee and tea became India’s dominant export plantation crops and were grown almost entirely in the northeastern hill region.

The British drained their colonies of their natural resources. In order to accomplish this, the pattern of land use within India was organized in such a way to maximize the revenue it yielded for the British empire and its economy. Land was made the private property and was taken away from the village communities. The privately held land did not escape the eyes of the British and were put to heavy taxation. In the north and north east the land were handed over to the feudal landlords where the position of the peasants were reduced to the status of much exploited tenants and sharecroppers. In the south and west India cultivators were assigned lands. But the taxes
imposed upon them was higher. As they were unable to pay the high taxes they easily became indebted and the lands were lost to the moneylenders. The peasants were forced to cultivate cash crops such as cotton, jute and indigo to feed the expanding British textile industry but these not help them to meet their ends. Though more and more land was brought under cultivation, the productivity of agriculture remained utterly stagnant under the colonial regime. This resulted in several disastrous famines under British rule with millions of death.

Speaking of the tea industry in India, the tea planters held dominant financial and political leverage, preventing their critics from mounting effective pressure to mitigate their policies and preventing the state’s Forest Department, their competitor for control of forest lands, from gaining control over wide forest areas. The impact of the World War I on forest lands centered on wartime prosperity and expansion in the tea industry. With the rise of prices in Europe, acreage under tea extended rapidly.

The global depression of the 1930’s hit the tea industry rapidly. In India the wholesale price index for tea dropped by 53 percent in four years. The planters reduced production by firing many plantation workers. This resulted in unemployed group of workers. Some returned to their homes in the west
while most of them moved to the adjacent government forest land as squatters, growing crops in clumsy imitation of local shifting cultivation. In their desperation they damaged forest and soil cover. By 1933 the industry created an international system to regulate and, when necessary, limit production which assured profitability by 1934. The British government controlled all tea production and consumption from 1940 onward, and the rising competition of Indonesian tea was ended by the Japanese occupation of the islands. The tea industry in Assam and northern Bengal expanded another 20 percent by 1945. Thus the combined interest of the planters, imported labourers, and immigrant farmers placed heavy and escalating pressure on the forests.

Thus the intention of the British was to convert India as supplier of cheap raw materials and a market for higher priced manufactured goods. Large quantities of biological produce such as rice, cotton, jute, indigo, tea and teak and even gold and precious stones began to flow out of India. These commodities were produced cheaply. The tea plantations in northeastern India were set up by taking over tribal lands without any compensation. On them the labour worked under conditions in approximately slavery. The British people transmitted back home information on India’s landmass, its
plant wealth, its people and their customs. But in return very little technical information flowed from Britain to India.

Environmentalism achieved institutional diffusion through the wide development of professional science in the colonial context and through the further diffusion of climatic and medical environmentalism among intellectuals and in the government. Global environmental consciousness which emerged in the context of European colonial expansion occurred between 1660 and 1860. The trade and territorial expansion of the Venetian, Dutch, English and French maritime powers were characterized by a connected and coherent intellectual evolution of ideas and concepts with the drastic ecological consequences of colonial rule and capitalist penetration. The rapid ecological deterioration led to the process of counteraction.

The European companies trading in India were threatened economically and also the security for the supply of ships declined due to environmental deterioration. Moreover the intellectual and scientific developments also proved a stimulus in valuing the environment in literary, scientific and economic terms. The establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal marked the beginnings of a long association between British aggrandizement in India and the flowering of Oriental and scientific scholarship in the early
nineteenth century. The association helped to promote the flow of ideas between scientists in India and those outside the country. The development of colonial botanical garden also formed the basis for new kind of learning, information collecting and networking in the tropical environment. The colonial botanical garden provided the basis for the institutional emergence of environmentalist ideas

The sheer speed of ecological change implicit in the activities of capital in the context of colonial expansion made environmentalist ideas and conservation policies inevitable simply to protect European capital or settler investments. However this argument had been countered. The rates of ecological change were not significant in eliciting intervention until they could be noticed and quantified. The scientist only could evaluate this process. This is why the colonial state became so much dependent on the observations and predictions of the scientists. Far more significant was the way in which the very nature if the colonial state and its privileged network of connections for the diffusion of information effectively promoted a sophisticated environmental critique which was effective in encouraging the colonial state to enlarge its role far beyond that states known to Europe. A growing interest in long term environmental security ensured both continuity
in policy and the evolution of an apparently contradictory role in land management for the colonial state. The botanical gardens served a crucial purpose as symbolic texts, centers for calculation and repositories of information and expertise. Modern environmentalism emerged as a direct response to the destructive social and ecological conditions of colonial rule other than being a product of European predicaments and philosophies.

The chapter also reviews that whether the environmental history is global in nature or not. Scholars often debate that whether the environmental history is truly global in sense. They generally do not address the fact that landscape changes in core areas were recursively interconnected with the peripheral areas. National and local case studies had been referred focusing more on the environmental records of individual nations and groups rather than on the global historical process and material flows that have generated their problems as well as their options. Most of the global narratives treat different regions in terms of ‘comparisons’ rather than ‘connections’. The narratives had failed to consider world as a system in which environmental transformations in two geographically distant countries or regions may be closely intertwined in terms of causal connections.
The third chapter, ‘Survey of the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri district’, intends to survey some tea gardens situated in Jalpaiguri district and record the changes the place had undergone geographically, ecologically, socially and economically after the establishments of these tea gardens. By the early twentieth century the entire tract, except for intervals of patches of cultivation and large patches of reserved forest, came to be studded with tea gardens all over.

The first penetration of the capitalist enterprise in the Duars in the form of tea plantations took place in 1874. Subsequently years of the nineteenth century saw rapid extension of the tea plantations and large growth of tea garden labour force. The years witnessed the extension of roads, railway and communications. All this helped to open up markets for agricultural produce—rice, jute, tobacco, mustard, etc. All this provided the stimulus for commercialization of Jalpaiguri’s subsistence-oriented agriculture and for extension of cultivation and reclamation of land. In consequence, in late 1870’s and throughout the 1880’s and 1890’s clearing of jungles and reclamation of land for ordinary cultivation as well as for plantation made rapid progress. By the turn of the century large parts of the Duars changed from jungle wastelands with little human habitation into cultivated area and
growing settlements. Thus Jalpaiguri’s subsistence-oriented agricultural economy and society became increasingly integrated with the British Indian market and wider colonial economy.

In the Duars region there was almost six times increase of population between 1872-1921 due to massive migration of labour into the tea gardens. With the establishment of the tea plantations in the Duars region there was subsequent increase of population in the mid 1870’s resulting in introduction of new element in the demographic composition, social life and economy of the district.

The process of deforestation in the tea gardens of the Jalpaiguri district had its effect on the climate of the region. The process of deforestation and the climatic changes though slow and gradual, the impact was also felt slowly through the ages.

It has been found that the climate of Jalpaiguri district had undergone a change in the last hundred years. The intensity of rainfall had increased 2-3 times. At the same time the duration of the rainy season had also decreased. The approximate moisture content in the air yearly had also decreased to 14 percent in the tea garden area of the Duars region while around the
Jalpaiguri town the decrease was 9 percent. The setting up of tea industry followed by urbanization had lead to an increase of 10 percent of Carbon – Dioxide in the air from the year 1860-1970. This has resulted in the increase of temperature in this region.

The climatic change in this district had its effect on the surrounding living organisms. The forest of this district was also affected because of decrease in moisture in the air and irregular rainfall. The aridity of the soil had increased and the level of underground water had also fallen. This has resulted in loss of various kind of trees as well as animal species that had been there from the very beginning.

Large scale deforestation in Bhutan and Jhoom cultivation caused a lot of landslips, and the rivers coming down with enormous force during heavy precipitation in the hills, and carrying enormous amount of debris, started causing devastation around the 20th century. Gradually there were rise in the river beds leading to floods in this region. Though boulder protection was done, the on rush of waters was so high that the rivers often changed their course and destroyed fertile lands by depositing silt.
The clearance of forest regions had its effect on the water cycle and is very much related with the flood problems of Jalpaiguri district. It has been learnt that with the development of communication system in this region for facilitating the growth of tea industry in this region the process of ecological imbalance was initiated. This was followed by settling of human habitation and growth of towns leading to indiscriminate use of forest resources. Two – third of forest were cleared within a span of hundred years.

The change over of livelihood from simple forest dwelling to class of labourers supplying to the demands of commercial market had its impact on their existing culture, society and notion of life. With the collapse of the resource base, there was replacement of old systems of barter by money economy that destroyed the traditional relationships among the various tribes. The disruption of traditional social forms resulted from the drastic changes in modes of production introduced by modern technology had its effect on the family.

The religion of the population also underwent change. Before they were primarily animist that is they believed and worshipped in all kind of life forms. They had their own pantheon of Gods and traditional ritual practices. But later we find that there was change in their religion and thinking. The
migrated population and the original inhabitants were also influenced by Hindu religion. The Oraons, Mundas and Hos who were not converted to Christianity, were divided between Hinduized and not yet Hinduized sections.

There was a clash between pre-industrial and industrial cultures in India if looked from an ecological perspective. The British usurped the ecological space occupied by the hunter-gatherers who had access to non-cultivated lands. They took to shifting cultivation and reduced the space occupied by the food producers. Thus by nineteenth century the resource processors and transporters of colonial rulers developed a greater access to resources because of their high technology. They out-competed and usurped the Indian handicraft workers, artisans and wandering traders. This was marginally compensated by introduction of new areas that is by converting these usurped population as helpers of the British in the exploitation of the available resources for fulfilling their own purpose.

The fourth chapter, ‘Labour and ecological rights in the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri district’, deals with the methods of recruitment of the labourers, labour problems, their rights, their health and sanitation problems. Most of the labourers being from outside experienced various problems in adjusting
with the new environment and economy. The planters in order to exploit this
class imposed many rules and regulations which were sometimes not
favourable to them.

It was often said that the labourers in the Dooars was always ‘free’ in the
sense that the labourer was not placed under any kind of contract and could
leave whenever he please. The Duars labourers were ‘free’ in the sense that
they were not indentured labourers subject to penal measures. But at the
same time it may be considered that the Duars tea garden labourer was not
free from coercive methods of labour control. There was enough evidence to
proof that considerable coercion, direct as well as indirect, and sometimes
outright terrorization techniques were used by the planters and their agents
in procuring labour, putting them to work and keeping them under control.
The materials available make it clear that the Duars plantation labour was
wage labour put under various types of non-economic constraints which
severely restricted the mobility of labour and it turned out as ‘labour held in
bondage in a free market’.

There were indications of labour suffering from malnutrition in the region of
Dooars. This was mainly due to scarcity and high price of foodstuffs other
than rice. The condition of the labourers in the tea garden was poor. They
were put in a concentration camp like situation. Physical coercion, beatings, flogging were quite common. Incidents of death from physical torture were not unknown. For all this the managers enjoyed support of the colonial authority.

The labour system which included recruitment from a long distance, the separation of workers from their known environment, their total isolation from their proximate surroundings because of geographical location, ethnic, social, cultural and language distances and barriers, and various forms of open as well as concealed compulsion in organizing migration-made the workers particularly vulnerable to violence and coercion. Moreover the Duars plantation area was a non-regulation tract which meant that many of the ordinary laws and regulations were not in force in the area. This administrative feature gave virtually unlimited powers to the planters.

It was found that the labourers were strictly controlled, poorly paid, illiterate, malnourished and diseased. The involuntary nature of work, the hard toil, the meagre wages and the sub-human living conditions-deterred the local people from seeking work in the tea gardens. It was witnessed that the government was not aware with the results of the rapid extension of tea industry by clearing vast tracts of jungle. The results were carefully studied
by the Commissioners of 1868 and they tried to throw light on the incidence of mortality in the early days of the industry. It was found that fevers, dysentery, ulcers and cholera were the common fatal diseases. The unfavorable climatic conditions existing in the tea gardens were taken as the main causes for these diseases.

Behind the rise of the trade union movement in the tea gardens the Bengal Assam Rail Road Worker’s Union played an important role. The members of this Association secretly kept in touch with the labourers of the tea garden. They were at last successful in forming an association of the labourers of the tea garden in protest against the oppression of the planters. ‘Jalpaiguri Cha Bagan Mojdur Union’ was formed. From 1946 onwards the tea gardens of Jalpiguri witnessed the birth of various trade unions. At Alipurduar in 1946 under the initiative of R.S.P the United Trade Union Congress different associations were formed in the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri. They raised their voices against the low wages, revive and reform the job agreements, to maintain equality in all the gardens in regard to privileges granted to the workers.

The fifth chapter, ‘Towards understanding the ecological changes: Conclusion’, provides a conclusion to the thesis undertaken. The Indian tea
industry from its origin right down to the 20th century did not lose its momentum. In the year 1947 India gained its independence and the tea companies were handed over to the Indian individuals or companies.

Thus the British imperialism set in a process of demographic expansion by disrupting the ecological and cultural fabric of the society. The district of Jalpaiguri witnessed a rapid transformation from natural subsistence economy and society to a colonial phase. The district provided a paradigm of mal development which was caused by colonial commercialization and capitalism. The plantation system which was a manifestation of colonial capitalism initiated in this district failed to bring about any such dynamic transformations in the economic and social order. Throughout the period of British rule the district remained essentially a rural and plantation district. Much higher levels of demands were imposed on natural resources of the country to furnish the raw material for their economy. To avoid having to pay for the exploitation of these resources they took over vast resources as government property which, until then, was owned communally. There was a clash between pre-industrial and industrial cultures in India if looked from an ecological perspective. They out-competed and usurped the Indian handicraft workers, artisans and wandering traders. This was marginally
compensated by introduction of new areas that is by converting these usurped population as helpers of the British in the exploitation of the available resources for fulfilling their own purpose. The plantation system introduced in the district of Jalpaiguri also thrived on labourers who were put under various compulsion and oppression. This led to suffering and impoverishment of this particular class and often collapse of the natural resource base sustaining many components of the Indian society. Thus Jalpaiguri also witnessed various tensions and conflict in the social, cultural, ecological and political life which found its expressions through various manifestations that the district witnessed in the coming centuries.