Chapter- 3

History of Darjeeling District as a Tourist Destination from the Colonial Era to Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) 1835 -2010

3.1. Introduction

History is an account of past events which can looked at from various points of view. Historians look at the past events from various perspective pertaining to their field of interest or school of thought. So we have nationalistic, colonial and subaltern views of history. A sociologist and an anthropologist may interpret the same past events differently from their own points of view. This chapter is an attempt to look at historical events which concern the development of Darjeeling as a tourist destination from the perspective of tourism.

This chapter narrates the history of the Darjeeling District from colonial period to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (1835-2010) from perspective of development of the District as a tourist destination. This historical period (1835-2010) as far Darjeeling is concerned covers three important phases. The Colonial Phase (1835-1947) the Phase after the Indian Independence before the establishment of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) (1948-1987) and the Period after the establishment of DGHC can be termed as the DGHC Phase (1988-2010). Though whole history of Darjeeling District can be divided into two phases as Colonial Phase and Post-Independence Phase, in view of bringing clarity to the role played by different organizations in the development of Darjeeling as a tourist destination the historical period is divided into three.

Since Darjeeling District was meant to be a sanatorium for the aligning soldiers and civilians of the British Empire, it could be seen as a health tourism destination from the very beginning. The main attraction of Darjeeling District was its cool climate. As it was difficult for the Britishers to endure the heat of Bengal plains they flocked to Darjeeling District in summer. Large scale infrastructural developments including roads, railway, communication
and accommodation facilities under the aegis of the British Empire helped the growth of
destination. The introduction of tea and the establishment of large number of tea gardens
brought financial stability to the district and the tourism expanded beyond Darjeeling Town
to the various satellite towns like Kurseong and Kalimpong. The establishment of Darjeeling
Himalayan Railway (DHR) made the destination more accessible to tourists and more tourist
began to arrive in Darjeeling District. Darjeeling District became a summer retreat and the
some tourists extended their stay even up to three months.

The Period after the Indian Independence (1948-1987) when the Government of West Bengal
looked after the tourism development of the district, Darjeeling continued to grow in spite of
the restriction imposed by the Central Government for foreign tourists. This period specially
noted for the increased flow of domestic tourists. The establishment of Mirik as a minor
destination was a major step in the growth of Darjeeling District as a tourist destination.

The Hilly Regions of Darjeeling District where most of the tourist attraction are located, went
through a period of political turmoil from 1980 to 1987 in connection with the demand for a
separate state carved out of West Bengal (Samanta, 2000). The long drawn political agitation
brought the development of the destination to a halt. In addition to this many heritage
properties of inestimable value were senselessly destroyed by the agitators. (Tamlong D.,
2012) The agitation came to an end in 1988 when the DGHC accord was signed and
Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed as an autonomous administrative District under
the governance of DGHC. The rule of DGHC came to an end in 2010 and Gorkha Territorial
Administration (GTA) was formed in 2011.

3.2. Colonial History of Darjeeling District

In 1828 Captain Lloyd and J. W Grant happened to visit Darjeeling on their way to Sikkim.
They were enchanted by the various prospects of Darjeeling as a trade post, military
cantonment and a sanatorium (Sen, 1989). They recommend to the then Governor General
William Bentinck, the acquisition of Darjeeling for any or all of the above purposes. Upon
receiving the recommendation from Captain Lloyd and J. W Grant, William Bentinck, the
Governor General deputed Captain Herbert, the Deputy Surveyor-General, to further examine
the country to ascertain the feasibility of establishing a sanatorium. Once the possibility of
the sanatorium was established beyond doubt and General Lloyd, who was Captain
previously, was appointed to start negotiations with the Raja of Sikkim, the actual owner of
the land, for the cession of Darjeeling in return for an equivalent in money or land. (O'Malley, 1907) Captain Lloyd managed to obtain a deed from the Raja of Sikkim handing over Darjeeling to the British as a mark of friendship between him and the British. In return he was allowed a subsidy of ₹ 3000 a year, which was later on raised to ₹ 6000. (Bhanja, 1948, Reprint 1993) Thus Darjeeling became a British territory in 1835.

3.2.1. Annexation and Expansion of Darjeeling District.

In 1848, Dr. Campbell, then superintendent of Darjeeling and Joseph Hooker, the renowned naturalist, were imprisoned in Sikkim while travelling through the country. A punitive military expedition by the British in 1850 to free them culminated in the annexation of Darjeeling and cancellation of the subsidy to the Raja (Bhanja, 1948, Reprint 1993). In 1866 Darjeeling District was expanded with the addition of Kalimpong, acquired from Bhutan by the treaty of Sinchula (1865). In 1891 Kurseong subdivision was created out of Darjeeling Sadar sub-division. (Sen, 1989) In 1907 Siliguri subdivision was formed from Kurseong subdivision subsequently in 1916 Kalimpong was raised to the status of a subdivision. (Dash A. J., 1947). Today Darjeeling District consists of four subdivisions namely, Darjeeling Sadar, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri. (Wikimedia, the free encyclopedia, 2014)

3.2.2. Development of Darjeeling District as a Tourist Destination

The hill stations during the British Raj were excluded enclave where the British found the safety and comfort of the home which they left as they embarked for the east. (Kennedy, 1996) Darjeeling was developed with the sole purpose of having a sanatorium for the British troops and civilians who could not cope with the scorching summer heat of the plains. (Sen, 1989) The various infrastructural developments together with salubrious climate made it an attractive tourist destination. Tourists began to flow to Darjeeling from its very inception and the numbers increased manifold with the completion of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, (Kennedy, 1996) the world heritage site of today.

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, which induced greater influx of tourists to Darjeeling, was also a catalyst in the development of many towns on its way. Kurseong which was insignificant hamelt developed into a town and became the headquarters of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR). (Dozey, 1916) Soon it was turn into a complementary destination to Darjeeling Town. Many tourists who were prepared for a long holiday in
Darjeeling District preferred Kurseong to Darjeeling Town because of its milder climate and less harsh winter. Siliguri, which was a small village surrounding the railway station, grew in to prominence as a collection centre for Darjeeling tea and a transit hub for visitors to Darjeeling (Roy B., 2007).

Kalimpong situated at a height of nearly 4000 feet with delightful climate having much less rainfall compared to Darjeeling Town and Kurseong had all the favourable conditions to become a complementary destination to Darjeeling Town. (O'Malley, 1907) The establishments of Colonial Homes, Churches, Buddhist monasteries, and Hindu temples made the destination more attractive as an educational and religious hub. The development of Darjeeling District as a tourist destination continued all throughout the colonial period.

The Post-Independence period the Government of West Bengal established a Tourism Office, as part of the Forest Department, which provided valuable information on the weather conditions and availability of accommodation facilities in Darjeeling District to the proposed visitors. In 1964 the Directorate of Tourism was opened. In November 1975 West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTDC) came into being. The birth of this Corporation was significant because of the role it played in organising tours and systematising tourism activities in Darjeeling (Chatterji, 2007).

3.2.3. Development of Tourism Infrastructure

The development of Tourism infrastructure is essential for the development of any tourist destination. Tourism infrastructure includes general infrastructure and superstructure. General infrastructure comprises of all forms of construction on and below ground, required by any populated area in extensive communication with the outside world and as a basis for extensive human activity within, such as highways, railway lines, power houses, communication network, water supply system, sewerage, hospitals, police lines, industries for productive goods and services essential for living and so on. Superstructure include wide range of facilities and services, such as, lodging, food and catering, historical sites, entertainment houses, shopping centres, transportation facilities, tourism organizations, human resources, sports and so on (Krishan K. Karma & Mohinder Chand, 2006).

The British invested heavily on the development of Tourism infrastructure. The major advances in general infrastructure include Hill Cart Road, Darjeeling Himalayan Railway,
Post Offices and Telephone facilities. Major expansions in superstructure embrace accommodation facilities such as hotels, boarding houses and dak-bungalows, entertainment facilities like clubs, parks, public halls and sports facilities such as golf course, tennis courts and racecourse.

3.2.3.1. Roads

A road connecting Darjeeling to the plains was a dream of its planners. It is they who coined the slogan “No Road No Darjeeling” (Pinn, 1986). The task of constructing a road from Siliguri to Darjeeling was entrusted to Lord Napier, who was a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers (Bhanja, 1943). The road thus constructed named as the ‘Old Military Road’ which proved to be unsuitable for wheeled traffic so another road named ‘Hill Cart Road’ (O’Malley, 1907) was constructed and opened for traffic in 1860. It was estimated that over 100 roads were constructed during the colonial era by the administration and were handed over to various government departments for their maintenance and upkeep (Dash A. J., 1947).

3.2.3.2. Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR)

The expansion and the rapid growth of Tea Industry in Darjeeling necessitated a cheaper and faster means of transport which could carry large volume of goods. The travellers to Darjeeling too were undergoing innumerable difficulties for the lack of comfortable means of transport. In solution to these issues the idea of a hill railway was mooted (Bhanja, 1943).

In 1878-79 a Company was established for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating of a steam tramway between the railway terminus at Siliguri and Darjeeling. The construction of the line was started in 1879 and reached its full completion in 1881 (Basu, 2002). It was christened as the “Darjeeling Himalayan Railway”. For travellers journey by Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) was an exhilarating experience as it winds along the mountain track towards Darjeeling Town its ultimate hill destination (O'Malley, 1907).

Introduction of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway led to a substantial increase in the number of visitors and the span of time they spent in Darjeeling. A significant number of visitors extended their stay up to three months in summer (Kennedy, 1996).
3.2.3.3. Post, Telegraph and Telephone

The British Government realizing necessity of communication started a Post and Telegraph Office in Darjeeling on the Mackenzie Road. The establishment of the Post and Telegraph Office led to the opening of number of post offices in the different part of Darjeeling District. By 1906 the number of post offices grew to 33 with 305 miles brought under postal communication. (O'Malley, 1907) The telephone facility too grew at a rapid rate. By 1947 direct communication with Calcutta was established and the number of subscribers reached 450 with five telephone exchanges (Dash A. J., 1947).

3.2.3.4. Ropeways

Ropeways were excellent means of transport which connected remote locations to various towns and centres of trade. They were widely used for transporting people and goods like baled wool, timber, food grains, tea, etc. Chief among them, the Kalimpong Ropeway was used for transporting commodities between Kalimpong Town and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Depot at Tista Valley (Dash A. J., 1947).

3.2.3.5. Accommodation facilities

Accommodation facilities in the form of hotels, Boarding houses, Dak Bungalows came to be established from 1839. The first Hotel launched in Darjeeling Town was ‘The Darjeeling Family Hotel’, with 12 rooms. This was followed by ‘Wilson’s Hotel’ in a two storied building with 18 rooms. The first modern Hotel of Darjeeling ‘The Mount Everest’ (1915) was built following the latest principles of continental hotels. The magnificent snow clad Himalayan ranges could be seen from this hotel. Kurseong had three prominent hotels namely, Clarendon Hotel, Sorabjee’s Hotel and the Wood Hills (Dozey, 1916). Apart from these hotels many boarding houses and private houses too accommodated visitors and offered them comfortable stay. (Newman, 1900). Some Dak Bungalows especially the ones on the Jorpokri-Tanglu-Phalut route were exclusively meant for tourists (Dash A. J., 1947).
3.2.4. Religious Tourism Sites

These buildings were constructed as places of worship but over the years they have become tourist attractions especially because of their architectural elegance and spiritual environment surrounding them.

3.2.4.1. The Churches

Among the many churches in Darjeeling Town, St. Andrew’s Church deserves special mention. The foundation stone for this Church was laid on 30 November, 1843. On the interior wall of the church mural tablets were placed in memory of some of the oldest residents and settlers of Darjeeling, chief among them is Lt-General Lloyd, the discoverer of Darjeeling. (Dozey, 1916)

St. Columba’s Church was built in May 1804 by the Church of Scotland Mission. The Church of the Immaculate Conception was built in 1893 on the site of the old Loreto Chapel by Bro. Rotsaert who was also the architect of St. Joseph’s College, North Point. The statues in the church are rare specimens of beauty and elegance. The Union Chapel was built in 1869 on the Auckland Road for Protestants who are not communicants in other churches (Dozey, 1916).

The churches especially the Anglican churches were part of the geographical setting of an ideal English country side. The British felt the need to create a familiar surroundings in the hill stations to make it a colonial enclave which gave them a sense of home. Recreating England with its meticulous geographical details especially in the hill stations of the British Raj was part of their strategy to make the enclave look close to their homeland. The English tourists who flocked to the hill stations found a familiar atmosphere which was welcoming and not intimidating. Even the flora and fauna were imported from England to suit the colonial taste rather than conserving the local biodiversity (Kennedy, 1996).

3.2.4.2. Buddhist Monasteries

The history of Darjeeling is closely connected with the history of Buddhist monasteries from its inception. The Darjeeling monastery, the first of all the Buddhist monasteries in Darjeeling was erected on the Observatory Hill in 1765 was ransacked by the Nepalese army in 1780, leaving only a small shrine named “Mahakal” (Roy B. , 2007). The remnant of the
monastery was finally transferred to its present site at Bhutia Busty during 1878-79 (Dozey, 1916). Today it is known as Bhutia Busty monastery which is a popular tourist attraction.

The Ging monastery, situated towards the north of Darjeeling town, was originally located below the village of Ging. It was demolished due to certain political differences after 1861. When the political stalemates were resolved in 1879, a thatched structure was erected in the place of the previous monastery. In 1896-98 it was replaced with a stone structure. Ghoom monastery was founded in 1875 by Lama Sherabgyatsa, one of the yellow-sects Geylukpa. It was primarily intended as a place for political meeting rather than for religious purpose. On 27 March, 1918, it witnessed the consecration of a 15ft. image of Champa or Maitraya, the coming (5th) Buddha (Dozey, 1916).

Buddhist monasteries were scintillating of monuments Darjeeling District. The Nineteenth Century advancement in tourism made monasteries a tourist attraction. Tourists visiting Darjeeling District were encouraged to visit Buddhist monasteries or Hindu temples as part of their itineraries. They sight of them were considered equal to the unspoiled view of snow-capped mountains or witnessing a mist enveloped waterfall (Kennedy, 1996).

3.2.4.3. The Hindu Mandir

It is one of the oldest buildings in the whole of Darjeeling. The exact date of its erection is unknown. The antiquity of this temple could be proved by the fact that when the first Marwari firm was established in Darjeeling in 1830 this temple was already existing in the same site of now. The temple was erected by Rangit Singh, an ex-army Subadar employed in the local Police Force. The temple has five separate buildings, each one dedicated to different Hindu gods (Dozey, 1916).

3.2.4.4. The Mosques

There were two Mosques during the time of British in Darjeeling, namely the Jamma Masjid and Chota Masjid situated at Butcher Busty. According to the available historical records the Jamma Masjid was erected by Naser Ali Khan, Daroga Salamat Ali, Munshee Tarikulla and other Mohammedans most of them were Government servants. The exact date of the erection of the building is not known. A MusafirKhana had been built adjacent to the Mosque for the
reception of travellers of any caste or creed and furnished them with a shelter free of charge for a period of three days (Dozey, 1916).

3.2.5. Tourism Sites for Entertainment, Relaxation and Convalescence

These sites were built for the purpose of entertainment and social interactions among the Europeans. Few of these centres had facilities for indoor games, meetings, conferences, and dining. Some of them were sanatoria used for restoration of health after illness caused by the long and enduring stay in the plains while others were meant for rest and relaxation.

3. 2.5.1. The Darjeeling Club

The Planter’s Club which was formed in 1863 was first located in ‘Thron Cottage’, then in ‘Alice Villa’ and finally established itself in a building above and to the east of Commercial Row. It was converted in 1908 into a Limited Liability Co., and named as “The Darjeeling Club, Ltd.” Officers attached to the several government services and planters were entitled to have its membership. (Dozey, 1916)

3. 2.5.2. The Pleasaunce Park

This park was situated to the south-west of St. Andrew’s Church. It covered 2.5 acres of ground. In the centre of the park there were two pavilions, which were meant for shelter in case of sudden rain. A separate bandstand was also erected for the purpose of having band shows. (Dozey, 1916) Today it is converted into a cultural centre named ‘Bhanu Bhavan’.

3.2.5.3. The Lloyd Botanical Garden

The Botanical Garden was erected in 1878 on a site donated W. Lloyd, the proprietor of the local Bank in Darjeeling, and it came to be known after his name. The garden had two main parts, the upper or indigenous section, and the lower or exotic section. The paths intersecting them were lined with tea plants. The whole plot measuring 14 acres of land was neatly laid out contained many exotic plants including the Australian Blue Gum tree (eucalyptus). A pavilion was also erected for use of picnic parties (Dozey, 1916).
3.2.5.4. The Victoria Falls

At a short distance away from Darjeeling Railway Station down to the south is situated the beautiful Victoria Falls created by Kakjhora, a small mountain stream. From a distance 100 feet high, it cascades down over a rock and rushes down to the valley below, through deep ravines to Sidrapong. At Sidrapong Power Station, at an elevation of 3,500 feet above sea level, the waters of the Victoria Falls were harnessed for generating electricity for Darjeeling (Nest & Wings, 2003).

3.2.5.5. Birch Hill Park

The land on which Birch Hill Park stands was acquired by British Government in 1877 at a cost of ₹30,000. Some addition and improvements to the structure were done by Sir Ashley Eden. It is 1.5 miles from Chowrasta. (Dozey, 1916)

3.2.5.6. Natural History Museum

Natural History Museum was opened as part of the infrastructural enhancement of Darjeeling Town. The Museum functioned from a concrete structure containing 20 spacious rooms until 1915, then it was shifted in to a new building constructed under the stewardship of Mr. Crouch, the Architect to the Government of West Bengal. The Museum was equipped with a large gallery for exhibition purposes, a basement for storage, and an upper storey designed partly for the exhibition of living insets meant for original research work. (Dozey, 1916)

3.2.5.7. Town Hall

It was built solely for the purpose of public gatherings. The construction was begun with the laying of the foundation stone by Ronaldshay in October, 1917 and was completed in 1921 with the estimated cost of ₹2, 50,000, half of the amount being contributed by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar in memory of his late father Maharaja Nripendra Narain Bhup Bahadur. The hall was meant to accommodate 600 persons (Dozey, 1916).

3.2.5.8. Eden Sanatorium

Darjeeling was acquired by the British with sole aim of having a sanatorium (Sen, 1989). This aim was at last accomplished with the construction and opening of Eden sanatorium in
1883. Sir Ashley Eden was responsible for its construction. It was furnished with 64 beds having additional facilities such as a tennis court and a billiard-table for outdoor and indoor recreation (Dozey, 1916).

3.2.5.9. Lewis Jubilee Sanatorium

The Eden Sanatorium was exclusively meant for Europeans so the Indians too started looking for a facility similar to that of Eden sanatorium. This was enabled with the setting up of Lewis Jubilee Sanatorium. The land and the initial amount for construction were donated by the Maharaja of Cooch Bihar. The construction of the sanatorium was completed in 1887 (Dozey, 1916).

Development of Darjeeling as a tourist destination during the colonial era was brought about by meticulous planning involving the best talents available at that time. The willingness of the British Government to invest heavily for various infrastructural projects had been the secret of the growth of Darjeeling as a tourist destination of international repute.

3.3. Tourism Development after Indian Independence

After independence the administration of Darjeeling fell into the hands of a group of Anglicized Indians. They were English in taste though Indians by birth. The group consisted of Indian nobility and upper-class Bengalese. They were interested in the conservation of the environment of Darjeeling. As the power of Indian aristocracy declined with abolition of zamindari (the title given to the land lord by the British Government) titles and privy purses, this group too lost its influence over the administration of Darjeeling (Chatterji, 2007).

In 1958 the Tourism Department of West Bengal opened an office as part of the Forest Department. The office functioned as a tourist information bureau which disseminated information regarding weather, condition of roads and availability of accommodation. In 1964 the Directorate of Tourism was opened. In November 1975 West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTDC) came into being. The Corporation began to organize conducted tours which eased the burden of tourists who need to make all the arrangement of tour by themselves (Chatterji, 2007).

The number of tourists visiting the region during this period (1947 – 1987) is not available as the tourism department of the state government has not been keeping any statistics. Paul
Chaya Rani in her article “The development of Tourism in Darjeeling Hill Areas 1979-1984” tells that there were approximately 200,000 tourists visiting Darjeeling Town every year (Paul, Development of Tourism in Darjeeling Hill Areas (1974-1984), 1986). It is noted that the population of Darjeeling Town according to 1991 census is only 73062. So in 1984 the number of tourists outnumber the number of residents in Darjeeling Town.

3.3.1. The Introduction of Permit

The permit system introduced in the wake of Indo-China War affected the growth of the destination as it was declared as a “restricted area” for foreign tourists. Obtaining a permit to visit Darjeeling District by foreign tourists was no means easy as only about 50% of the applications for permit were met with positive replies annually. 1962 to 1985 Darjeeling Hills was virtually closed to foreign tourists. Till 1985 the foreigners who wished to visit Darjeeling District was to allow to visit Kalimpong only for two days and other place such as Tiger Hill, Lebong Race Course, Jorebunglow, Ghum and Kurseong for a fortnight, for which they had to take prior permission from Indian Mission abroad, Foreigners Regional Registration offices or Home Department of the State Government (Chatterji, 2007).

3.3.2. Hotel Boom and Domestic Tourists

The years 1971-1975 witnessed a boom in the hotel industry of Darjeeling. The Government of West Bengal began to provide loans for building of hotels. Sunrise Hotel and Alice Villa too witnessed renovation during this period. With the sole intention of providing accommodation for the young tourists a youth hostel was also established in Darjeeling (Bhattacharjee Menuka, Personal Interview, June 12 2014).

The limited inflow of foreign tourists was compensated by heavy influx tourists from Kolkata and surrounding places numbering approximately two lakhs a year. (Chatterji, 2007) A significant section of the domestic tourists who visited Darjeeling District during this time were government employees who could avail themselves of the travel schemes funded by the government (Bhattacharjee Menuka, Personal Interview, June 12 2014).

The integration of Sikkim into the Indian union in the year in 1975 (Ray, 1984) gave further fillip to tourism in the region. The tourists who visited Darjeeling also visited Sikkim and vice versa (Bhattacharjee Menuka, Personal Interview, June 12 2014).
3.3.3. Foreign Independent Tourists (FIT) and Package Tours

The latter part of 1980s witnessed a large scale influx of Foreign Independent Tourists (FIT) popularly known as backpackers derived from their custom of carrying all their belongings in a knapsack on their back. Package tours too gained momentum during this time. Summit Tours owned and operated by Bonn Pradhan played a crucial role in the development of package tours (Bhattacharjee Menuka, Personal Interview, June 12, 2014).

3.3.4. Development of Mirik as a Minor Destination

Mirik as a tourist destination owes its origin to Siddarth Shankar Ray, the former Chief Minister of West Bengal as its development started during his tenure as the Chief Minister (1972-1977). (Tamlong D. T., Darjeeling & North Bengal from an Administrator's Perspective, 2006) The main tourist attraction in Mirik was a lake which was constructed along a natural spring. Boating in the lake was a favourite sport which attracted good number of tourists. Other attractions in Mirik were Rameetay Dara which provided beautiful views of the plains as well as mountains, Rai-dhap an ideal picnic spot and orange Orchards in Mirik Busty (Village) (Nest & Wings, 2003). Day Care Centre and Youth hostel were two important establishments that provided food and accommodation to the tourists. Mirik had been the first tourist destination in Darjeeling District developed solely by Indians (Bhattacharjee Menuka, Personal Interview, June 12, 2014). By 1984 Mirik was well established as a one of the tourist destinations in Darjeeling District (Paul, Development of Tourism in Darjeeling Hill Areas (1974-1984), 1986). The political agitation which started after 1984 brought the tourism development in Darjeeling to a stand still (Tamlong D., 2012).

Darjeeling District as a tourist destination witnessed unimpeded growth during the brief period after independence. The growth was mainly due to the proactive steps taken by the Government of West Bengal through its Tourism Development Corporation. The personal interest and initiative of Siddhartha Shankar Ray, then Chief Minister of West Bengal, made Mirik an attractive tourist destination within the district.
3.3.5. Tourism Development under Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) was formed according to a Tripartite Accord signed between the President of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) Subash Ghising, Government of West Bengal and Central Government on 22\textsuperscript{nd} August 1988. DGHC came into existence as an Autonomous Administrative Unit and all the departments under State Government, except the Home Department, Police, Fire, Excise and tourism were transferred to it. (Tamlong D. T., Darjeeling & North Bengal from an Administrator's Perspective, 2006)

DGHC improved the tourism infrastructure in Darjeeling hills through construction of various facilities for tourists while taking care to promote tourism through various promotional event like fair and festivals.

3.3.5.1. Tourism infrastructure under DGHC

DGHC worked assiduously for the extension of the existing tourism destinations by adding infrastructure. It restored many dilapidated tourism facilities and also constructed new ones to provide additional amenities to the tourists. The most notable among the various tourism project accomplished under DGHC were War Memorial at Batasia Loop, Rock Garden, Gangamaya Park, Shrubbery Nightingale Park, Rambhang Park, and Japanese Peace Pagoda. All these projects come under the vicinity of Darjeeling Town and the area of the destination got extended through the completion of these tourism projects.

Among the other tourism project completed by DGHC apart from the projects at Darjeeling Town include way side inns at Peshok, Giddapahar, Dilaram, Simana, Chitre and Dhudia Viewpoints at Giddapahar near Kurseong, Relli near Kalimpong and three viewpoints between Kurseong and Darjeeling along the Old Military Road, the Tourists Reception Centres at NJP and Bagdogra, the Tourist information Centre and Cafeteria at Kurseong, the Trekkers’ Huts at Rimbick, Phalut, Molle, Sandakphu, Ramam, Srikhola, Gorkey and Tonglu, Tiger, renovation of viewpoint at Lovers’ meet on Peshok Road, Dello and Tourist Lodge at Kalimpong a (Kamal Kumar Gurung, Personal Interview, June 12 2014).
3.3.5.2. Tourism Promotion Activities under DGHC

Tourism promotion is one of important aspects of Tourism Industry. DGHC has been actively involved in promoting Tourism in Darjeeling District right from its inception. DGHC with the collaboration of the Tourism Department of the Government of West Bengal has been organizing fairs and festivals to attract large number of tourists to the District. Among the various festivals organised for the promotion of tourism included Teesta Tea and Tourism Festival, Orchid and Flower Festival at Kalimpong and Kurseong and Carnival at Darjeeling Town.

3.3.5.3. Eco Tourism initiatives During DGHC Rule

It is to be noted that many of the ecotourism projects in the district were the fruit of hard work and initiatives of many private entrepreneurs, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such like Help Tourism, Save Environment and Regenerate Vital Employment (SERVE) and Government agencies such as Forest Department and DGHC. In spite of the fact that many of the projects are not initiated by DGHC since they were started during the time (1988-2010) of DGHC they are included under the heading ‘Ecotourism initiatives under DGHC’.

Eco Tourism as a concept started appearing in the tourism literature only 1980s. It was a response to the development of sustainable form of tourism which keep in the environment of the destination intact by leaving only the foot prints of tourists. In beginning the term ‘ecotourism’ applied to travel that involved any aspect of nature. So most of the ecotourism packages were nothing new but mass tourism taken outdoors. The increased awareness of environment and sustainable development reshaped eco-tourism as a form of tourism that involves responsible travel to natural areas and which conserve environment and sustain the welfare of the local people (Karmakar M. , 2011).

Darjeeling Hills is a natural ecotourism destination with its picturesque landscape covered with lush green tea gardens, sanctuaries with vibrant wildlife, forest containing varieties of trees and medicinal plants, rivers moving swiftly to the plains, streams gushing through thick forests forming cascades and rapids on its course offer a splendid experience to any lover of nature. Ecotourism as a distinct type of tourism has begun in Darjeeling District very recently. The first eco-tourism project of Darjeeling District was in Tinchulay, a village about
the 32 kilometres from Darjeeling town. With the completion of this project other ecotourism spots have come up in many places of Darjeeling District. A brief account of these spots and their uniqueness would be useful in understanding the expansion of the destination in the recent years.

3.3.5.3.1. Tinchulay

Situated at a 6000ft height, Tinchulay is a small picturesque forest village comprising of 17 household covering an area of approximately 40 acres, falling under the Takdah Block of Darjeeling District. The origin of Tinchulay is connected to an interesting belief of local people. They believe that there was a large furnace fixed on three mud peaks, which was used for cooking food by queens of the ancient times. The word Tinchulay originated from the association with the furnace and its three mud peaks. The word Tinchulay means the three mud peaks. During the colonial period (1835-1947) the area was well known for agricultural produce and vegetable required for the army cantonment in Takdah were supplied from Tinchulay. Even today farming continues to be the chief means of livelihood of the villagers. (Sujata, 2007)

An ecotourism project was launched jointly by Save Environment and Regenerate Vital Employment (SERVE) and Help Tourism, an NGO promoting ecotourism tourism, to make the villagers inclined towards the preservation of natural resources and self-sustenance by participation in the implementation of the project. This project helped in introducing forest nursery, floriculture, and flower nursery, agricultural production using Meter Square Farming, Bio Compost, Orange Nursery, and Handmade Tea (Sujata, 2007).

3.3.5.3.2. Mongpong – The Nature Resort

Mongpong is situated 222 km north east of Siliguri is an ideal ecotourism spot. The scenery of the place is very attractive as it is resting on one of the foot hills of Himalayas. The facilities offered for tourists include a forest rest house, managed by Forest Development Corporation. Views from the premise of the forest guest house include the panoramic view of the Mahananda Wild Life Sanctuary and the widespread Teesta Valley landscape. The amusement facilitates include boating and rafting facilities in the Teesta river. It is a paradise for bird lovers. The ideal time for visit would be December- January. A large collection of
birds such as Brahmini duck, Pin-tailed, poacherd, mallard, bar-headed who migrate from the Central Asia and Ladhak are seen in this area (Karmakar M., 2011).

3.3.5.3.3. Lava

The name ‘Lava’ is originally a word form Bhutanese language which is consisting of two parts namely “La” means the Lord and “Va” means the “presence”. Till 1700 AD Lava was part of the Lepcha kingdom later it was captured by the Bhutanese. When some Bhutanese traders came to Kalimpong through Nathula Pass for trade they found Lava a suitable resting place. Enchanted by the beauty of the place some Bhutanese families made their permanent residence there. In 1982-83 some enthusiastic local youth inspired by the ecotourism projects of Kullu, Manali in the state of Himachal Pradesh started a home-stay for tourists. In 1996 the Wet Bengal Forest Development Corporation took imitative to develop the area into an attractive ecotourism spot (Sujata, 2007).

Trekking is the most popular sports undertaken by the tourist visiting this area. Common treks include trek to Tiffin Dars, and Aluabari. Bird watching too is gaining popularity as a sport in this destination. (Karmakar M., 2011, p. 69)

3.3.5.3.4. Lolay Gaon

This is a little hamlet situated in an altitude of 5500 and 56 kilometres away from Kalimpong town. This spot is gifted with the most fascinating view of Kanchenjunga. The sunrise seen form Jhandi Dara, a viewpoint in the village is as exciting as that of Tiger Hill. The natural beauty of Lolay Goaon which is unique in many respects makes it an ideal ecotourism spot. The Tourist Accommodation facilities include tents made for tourists in the orange orchards, Guest house of Forest Department, DGHC Tourist Bungalow (Karmakar M., 2011, p. 70).

3.3.5.3.5. Bunkulung

Bunkulung is a little village situated in the Kurseong subdivision of Darjeeling District about 56 kilometres away from Darjeeling Town. Till 1960 this village was known as ‘pinglungtar’ then changed into “Bunkulung” meaning “rolling stone” in Lepcha language. The population of village initially consisted of Lepchas but currently most of the community members are of Limboo tribe. Bunkulung was said to be one of the first places in Darjeeling District where
oranges were grown and the area had become famous for its juicy oranges, nowadays the oranges have become rare while mangoes, lichies, pineapples, and jackfruits are in abundance. (Sujata, 2007)

The village is rich in flora, fauna and avifauna. The development of the village as an ecotourism spot was achieved with the help of West Bengal Forest Development Corporation and DGHC Department of Tourism, NGOs and with the intense cooperation of the local people.

3.3.5.3.6. Rishap

It is a picturesque eco destination just about 4 kilometres from Lava and about 40 kilometres from Kalimpong, located at an altitude of 850ft spread across 25 acres. The name “Rishap” comes from the combination of two Lepcha worlds “Ri” meaning dancing spot or hill and “Shap” means the dance. It was a place from where the Lepchas worshipped Kanchenjunga through dance. In 1945 the area came to be occupied by “Gurungs” one of the hill tribes of Darjeeling District (Sujata, 2007).

Moved by the natural beauty and mesmerizing view of the sun rise, Gopiu Sherpa, one of the hoteliers of Lava started the eco-tourism project at Rishap with one wooden cottage containing two rooms and a kitchen. By 2009 the accommodation facilities augmented to nine hotels and five residential cottages (Sujata, 2007).

3.3.5.3.7. Reli

Reli is a beautiful ecotourism spot located on the bank of a river. It is approximately 10kilometres away from Kalimpong. In 2005 DGHC Department of Tourism built four cottages in Reli and named them as “The Traditional Gorkha House”. Each cottage has two well furnished rooms with attached bathrooms (Kamal Kumar Gurung, Personal Interview, June 12 2014).

The history of Reli brings out some interesting facts. Prior to 1968 the area was a beautiful garden of litchis and pineapples owned by Dr. Graham, a Scottish missionary worked in Kalimpong during the colonial period. The earthquake of 1968 had destroyed the whole area and the government had to declare the area as ‘no man’s land’. In 1975 under a government scheme the landless people belonging to Subba tribal community of Pudung Busty was
rehabilitated there. In 1988 the construction of Reli-Mukti Bridge connected Reli with the rest of Kalimpong. As the connectivity with Kalimpong was established, many wealthy people of Kalimpong began to purchase land in this area due to the captivating scenic beauty and abundance of water. The construction of the “The Traditional Gorkha House” led to the influx of tourists (Sujata, 2007).

3.3.5.3.8. Bara Mangwa

Bara Mangwa is an ecotourism spot approximately 20 kilometres away from Kalimpong Town. The name “Bara Mangwa” originated from a Lepcha word “Mangwa” meaning opening bud of millet. In 1984 M. K. Pradhan, one the local entrepreneurs started an organic horticultural farm comprising of medicinal plants, vegetable and flower plants in Bara Mangwa. In 2001 with the collaboration of Help Tourism the area was turned in to an attractive ecotourism spot (Sujata, 2007).

3.3.5.3.9. Rampuria

Rampuria is an eco-tourism spot located within the boundaries of Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary. It is approximately 22 km form Darjeeling Town. The origin of Rampuria is different from all other ecotourism spots in Darjeeling District. During the Colonial Period the construction of roads was an important activity in Darjeeling District, which needed large number of labourers. The easiest way to find the workforce was to attract able bodied men Nepal. The labourers who came from Nepal settled down in the areas closer to the Mungpoo road. In 1948 these settlers were rehabilitated in the present Rampuria village, categorizing the settlement as “Permanent Forest Village”. The village began with 17 houses and the inhabitants mainly live on agriculture (Sujata, 2007).

3.3.5.3.10. Makaibari

Makai Bari is a unique ecotourism spot within the boundaries of the Makai Bari Tea Garden. Makai Bari Tea Garden is surrounded by a natural forest with rich flora and fauna avifauna covering an area of 400 acres. There are seven eco-villages in Makai Bari comprising of 750 households. The villages spread around area of 34 hectors consisting of mole hills and gentle slopes filled with lush green tea bushes and evergreen dense forest (Sujata, 2007).
The ecotourism practices were in vogue in the area for the last forty years much before development of the concept of ecotourism. In 2005 the area was termed as “Eco-Village”. Many international and domestic tourists visit this village during the season. The ecotourism activities are carried out with the combined leadership of Mr. Banerjee, the owner of the teagarden and Help Tourism, an NGO promoting ecotourism in Darjeeling (Sujata, 2007).

3.4. Conclusion

History provides us with facts and events of the past which in themselves are empty unless they are seen from a perspective. Viewing history from a touristic perspective can give us new insights into the making of a destination. The incredible effort put into by the British to make Darjeeling District a favourite international destination is well recorded in the pages of history.

The unrelenting effort of the British to have a hill station for Bengal Presidency ended in the discovery and final annexation of Darjeeling. The salubrious climate of Darjeeling made it suitable for a sanatorium which was the desperate need for British who could not cope with heat of the plains. The establishment of a sanatorium also meant creation of a homely atmosphere which would be conducive to healing and convalescence. This need to replicate the colonial home environment demanded a transformation of the landscape which was thronged with local flora and fauna into a Garden of Eden filled with English flora and fauna. The insatiable need for recreation and socialization gave birth many clubs, parks, entertainment facilities. Religious institutions especially the churches provided the colonial rulers with an identity dissimilar to the natives.

The journey to this dream destination was made comfortable with construction of Hill Cart Road and introduction of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. The introduction of railway changed the demography of the destination. The number of tourists increased considerably and tourist season got extended. Darjeeling grew to be the ‘Queen of the Hills’ one of the most coveted destinations in British India and the summer capital of Bengal Presidency. Kurseong and Kalimpong too grew to become complimentary destinations to Darjeeling.
In the post-Independence period, the government of West Bengal opened tourism office as part of the forest department. In 1975 WBTDC was initiated. The birth of this corporation was a great help for tourists because the corporation took initiative in conduction tours to Darjeeling. The introduction of permit for foreign tourists in the wake of Chinese aggression in 1962-65 made Darjeeling District a restricted area for foreign tourists. During 1972-75 a hotel boom was experienced in Darjeeling and more and more domestic tourists started flocking to Darjeeling. The integration of Sikkim to the Indian Union too helped the growth of tourism in Darjeeling District in a positive as those tourists who visited Sikkim also visited Darjeeling. The most important highlight of this period was the development of Mirik as a minor tourist destination.

The formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) was an epoch making event in the history of Darjeeling. The Council was an autonomous body with many departments under its sway. DGHC has accomplished many tourism projects which expanded the existing destinations of Darjeeling Hills and opened some new tourist destinations in the rural areas.