Chapter 2

Advent of the Bengali Entrepreneurs in the Himalayan and Sub – Himalayan Region of Bengal

Entrepreneurship as such is a subject about which all perhaps intuitively know something. Everyone is supposed to know how two and two make not four but eight! How money can be used to multiply itself rather than just add up! Everyone knows how the best use of human resources and utilise manpower in such a way that can produce more and more resources. These are all matters about which everyone have their own opinion; all that summated together is Entrepreneurship in the local context but there has not been enough written about the summation of the experience of local people in the tea industry. Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh, an eminent expert on the history of North Bengal rightly remarks that ‘the main problem in writing the entrepreneurial history of the tea industry in North Bengal is that the data is in the minds of the managers, it has never been written down in detail’.

It, however, seems to me that this problem is prevailed not only in Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling hill but also in the tea plantation industry in Assam and Cachar as well.

The rise of Bengali entrepreneurs in the tea plantation industry in the Himalayan and sub – Himalayan region of Bengal that is Duars in Jalpaiguri district and the hill area and the Terai region of the Darjeeling district in colonial period is a social phenomenon. They have been found to be emerging from a particular social group. This group of people have common origin and uniform social behaviour and unique relation among them. They have similar economic objective that is how to set up a number of tea gardens of their own in spite of hindrances created by their alien counter parts. All these things contributed to a large extent to unite them as a class. What is more interesting is the recognition of the Indian Planters’ own Associations like “Indian Tea Planters’ Association” (ITPA), “Terai Indian Planters’ Association” (TIPA) by even the ruling British planters against whom the founder had waged a persistent Jehad right from the moment of its birth. They could not deny the popularity of these Associations in spite of their bitter feeling towards it.

The origin of the Bengali entrepreneurs will be narrated here by drawing the pen picture of their social base from where they put their footsteps in this economic
venture of the proposed area of my research dissertation. The society is being stratified on the basis of some accepted classifications. On account of this social division, one class comes forward to undertake social leadership, other economic and another political leadership. However, on the basis of this theoretical framework mentioned above, the emergence of the Bengali entrepreneurs in the tea plantation industry in Himalayan and sub–Himalayan region of Bengal will be explained 

It is true that particular socio–economic conditions always give rise to a class of people who undertakes the entrepreneurial activity. In spite of having the same economic environment all members of the society can never transform them as an entrepreneur. It requires some qualities like risk taking attitude and of course having the ability to grasp the economic opportunities anytime anywhere. The group of people who react to economic opportunities and grasp them properly can only be an entrepreneur in future. The Bengali entrepreneurs who came from various part of East Bengal owe the similar characteristics mentioned above which helped them largely to become an entrepreneur in the Colonial period. The aim of this chapter is to explain the emergence and the advent of the Bengali entrepreneurs in the tea plantation industry in North Bengal in the last phase of the nineteenth century and the first phase of the twentieth century.

The socio–economic and political condition of Bengal changed a great deal in these years which must have had an impact on the social base of the Bengali entrepreneurs. However, in the atlas of the entrepreneurial activity in the tea plantation industry we find two types of entrepreneurs there like Hindu and Muslim though most of them were belonged to the Hindu Community. Throughout our period we find that most of the Bengali entrepreneurs were the legal practitioners who remained the single largest occupational group. They were followed by the service holders, Jotedars and merchants. Despite the challenges thrown up by the Muslim entrepreneurs by virtue of their advantageous social and economic position, the Hindu entrepreneurs continued to dominate the industry. In this respect formal education prepared them to go far rather than the Muslim tea industrialists.

The first region where the Indians especially Bengali’s emerged as an entrepreneur in the tea plantation industry was the Darjeeling hill, the summer capital of the British Government. However, in the beginning phase I would like to clarify
one thing. Question may arise why I have choose the term ‘Bengali’ rather than ‘Indian’ in the given period where the first word of every Tea Associations established in North Bengal denote Indian like “Indian Tea Planters’ Association” (ITPA), “Terai Indian Planters’ Association” (TIPA). The answer is that though the first word of these Associations bore the term Indian but the creators were all Bengalis. Even they were the only community across the whole India who showed first interest as an Indian in the tea Industry in spite of facing hindrances, discriminations from the European planters. In those days Darjeeling Hill, Terai, Dooars region of Bengal and Assam were the only places where the white tea planters appeared first. In this field the Bengalis were the only Indian who appeared as entrepreneurs side by side with the European planters. In Assam, references should be made to two Cachar Bengali gentlemen Baikuntha Charan Gupta and Dinanath Dutta who had to set up the tea estate at Varnepur in Cachar 7. However, in Bengal along with the European enterprise in the tea plantation industry in Himalayan and sub – Himalayan region, the Bengali entrepreneurs who came from various parts of undivided Bengal also played an important role in this field indeed. It is quite interesting to note that the first Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry in North Bengal came up in Darjeeling hill. The name of this first venture by a Bengali was the Makaibari Tea Estate. This tea estate in Darjeeling hill was started with the joint venture of Captain Samler and G.C. Banarjee in the year 1858 8. In 1859 Captain Samler was appointed as an Agent of the Darjeeling Tea Company. A month before he died in 1859, Samler sold the garden to G.C. Banarjee permanently who ran his commissary and mail services business out of the old Tarapore Building at Kurseong next to the present day Goenka petrol Pump9. The Tarapore Building has since been demolished but the Makaibari garden has not. However, recently in 2014 the ownership of this garden has transferred to Dipankar Chattarjee, a stalwart in Indian tea industry. The last owner of the tea Estate was Swaraj Banarjee (popularly known as Raja Banarjee) 10. It is very unfortunate to say that G.C. Banarjee’s pioneering work in Indian tea was never given any recognition. So, after observing the fact in Darjeeling hill how can we say that the first Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry was launched in Jalpaiguri Duars which have so long been acknowledged and abetted by different historians over the years11.
By 1856 development in the tea plantation industry in Darjeeling hill had been advanced from the experimental to a commercial stage. The Rev. T. Boaz, L.L.D. in January 1857 stated that tea had been raised from seed at Takvar by Captain Masson, at Kurseong by Mr. Smith, at Hope Town by a company, on the Kurseong flats by Mr. Martin and between Kurseong and Pankhabari by Captain Samler, an agent of the Darjeeling tea concern. Development now proceeded at a rapid rate. In 1856 the Alubari tea garden was opened by the Kurseong and the Darjeeling Tea Company and another garden by the Darjeeling Land Mortgage Bank on the Lebong spur. In 1859 the Dhutaria garden was opened by Dr. Brougham and between 1860 and 1864 gardens at Ging, Ambutia, Takdah and Phubsering were established by the Darjeeling Tea Company and at Takvar and Badamtam by the Lebong Tea Company. The Gardens now known as Makaibari, Pandam and Steinthal were also opened in this period. In this phenomenon, the Bengalis appeared slowly but with steadiness. In 1874 the numbers of gardens in hill were 174. The numbers of Indian owned gardens were only five as follows –

(a) Jogmaya Tea Estate of Paul Chaudhury family

(b) Makaibari and Happy Valley Tea Estate of the Banarjee family

(C) Arya Tea Estate of Burdwan Maharajadhiraja

(d) Sourini Tea Estate, Phuguri Tea Estate and Samripani Tea Estate of Bhagawati Charan Rai.

The Summer Capital of the Bengal province that is Darjeeling hill must be considered not only in terms of the social history of the British but of the Indians as well. The British usually preferred to remain themselves aloof from the Indian masses but they were highly depended on these Indian masses for the construction and maintenance. Nearly every European who went to the hill stations in the early years relied on local people for porterage services. It was very common for a visitor to employ more than fifty or sixty men to carry the clothing’s, crockery and other necessary articles for a season’s stay in Darjeeling hill. However, a dearth of census data makes it difficult to know the history of the Darjeeling hill in the first half of the nineteenth century.
Apart from the massive influx of Indians as labourers, the first Indians to establish some sort of presence in the hill station were the princes like the Maharajadhiraja of Burdwan, Coachbehar Royal family and so on. They made Darjeeling as a seasonal residence in the first half of the twentieth century. However, among these royal families the Maharajadhiraja Bahadur of Burdwan was the only one who showed some interest in the tea plantation industry in hill. Why such initiatives lacked in case of other royal families is not known. It is true that the Cooch Behar Royal family established a tea estate namely Cooch Behar Tea Estate (P.O. Falakata) in the first half of the twentieth century in Dooars but why they did not take up such entrepreneurship in Darjeeling hill in spite of having wealth and prestige, needs deep attention of the academic world. However, the Burdwan Royal family acquired huge properties under the tutelage of U.C. Mehtab. They acquired near about 1,600 acres of land consisting of forests, tea estates, residential houses, agricultural lands etc. The name of the tea estate established within the jurisdiction of the royal family was Arya Tea Estate. It was fully a European garden formed in the year 1885 but the land where the tea estate set up was granted by the Burdwan Royal family. Consequently, the European tea Company gave a handsome amount of revenue to the family.

Not only the Indian princes entered the hill stations, a few number of Bengali people also for the sake of profession immigrated there from numerous part of undivided Bengal in the middle of the nineteenth century. To run the administration, educated English learned people became inevitable to the colonial Government. For instance we can mention the name of Ganesh Chandra Banarjee (G.C. Banarjee), the pioneer tea planter in Darjeeling hill. He was actually belonged to an aristocratic Zamindar family of Dacca by birth. He left his family settled at Boral in 24 Parganas of West Bengal at the age of 16 and travelled to North Bengal on horseback, leaving behind his family and fortunes. In Darjeeling hill he incepted his career as a translator and scribe with the East India Company. In addition to it, he was a young polyglot. Thus he established a good relation with the rulers and it helped him become the first Indian entrepreneur in the tea plantation industry in Darjeeling hill. This cordial relation culminated at the creation of a beautiful tea garden namely Makaibari Tea Estate with Captain Samler, a deserter from the British imperial army in the year 1858. Another Bengali entrepreneur who started his
career as an administrator and later transformed himself as a tea planter was Benimadhab Mitra. He was a fellow of the ‘Royal Horticultural Society’, London. His son Jitendra Nath Mitra was the first Chairman of the Darjeeling Municipality as an Indian. This family laid the foundation of Sannyasisthan Tea State in 1878.

The next outstanding family who succeeded to emerge as a tea planter in hill was the Pal Chaudhury family of Ranaghat, Nadia. Trade and money lending was their major source of income. In many cases, profits earned from business were invested in purchasing Zamindari rights. Before the battle of Plassey, they earned huge wealth by acting as an agent or Bania and middleman for the Company’s servants and also through the British private trade transactions. By the end of the eighteenth century they were confined to a more restricted role with the development of agency houses. Over the years, many of them had established them as influential traders and landowners of substance. Towards the end of the nineteenth century we find a number of well to do traders, money lenders, Zamindars who emerged as newly trading communities. Silk and salt trade respectively became two major sources of income to them. The affluence of the Pal Choudhury family was an outcome of this phenomenon. Later they expanded their economic activities to other areas but most notable thing was their interest shown in purchasing Zamindari estates, sub – in feudatory tenures and revenue firming rights. So after gaining huge wealth and fortune from various sources, they began to search other areas for investment. During that period tea industry was the normal choice to them. Two reasons, according to my survey were responsible behind this scenario. First, the middle of the nineteenth century had witnessed a spectacular change in Darjeeling hill with the creation of new tea estates. It undoubtedly opened up a new field to them. To invest there they did not face any major problem from the British Government as they carried on the legacy of maintaining good relation with the British Government prior to the Battle of Plassey. Secondly, tea was the only venture where quick return in short time was only possible. The forerunner of the Pal Chaudhury family in the tea plantation industry was Naffer Ch. Pal Chaudhury. His first and foremost venture was the Jogmaya Tea Estate which he bought from Mr. Bells in 1864.

It is absolutely true that until 1933 the ownership of most of the tea estates in Darjeeling hill belonged to the British Sterling tea companies having their head offices in London. By creating formidable barriers to the entry of ‘natives’, colonial
tea companies maintained an oligopolistic position up to 1947 though exceptions were also there like the Banarjee family of Makaibari, Happy Valley Tea Estate and Paul Chaudhury family of Jogmaya Tea Estate and so on. However, in between 1933 – 1947 the gradual entry of the Indian entrepreneurs took place in this region. The sudden fall of tea price in London market due to the economic slump since 1930’s and of course the immense effect of India’s freedom struggle movement to wipe out the British Government fall the colonial firms from grace and made a hasty retreat from India. Although a large number of British managing agencies like Andrew Yule, Gillanders Arbuthnot, Devenport & Co., Begg Dunlop & Co. packed up after 1947, many others remained. But they could not survive their position in the tea industry owing to the shortage of fund, mismanagement and followed the same path even after 1960’s like their forefathers. This situation no doubt accelerated the advent of Indian entrepreneurs in this field. This vacuum was fulfilled by the notable industrialists of Kolkata like Goenka, Bidla, Khaitan family. For instance, the tea estates established under the initiative of the Duncan Brothers & Company were owned by G.P. Goenka and are now being controlled and managed by the same family. In regard to the Bengali entrepreneurs we can mention the names of Mr. Parswanath Ghatak who owned the Mission Hill tea Estate from a British planter after independence.

The next tea planting area where the Bengali entrepreneurs put their feet was the Dooars region. The British classified the land of the Dooars region into three types: the tea plantations subject to privilege regulations, the reserved forests areas and the Khas Mahal areas. By early twentieth century the entire Dooars area came to be studded with tea plantations. There was a structural change in the Jalpaiguri society after its annexation to British Bengal. Before annexation it was a little village. A small garrison was stationed there. Besides the Raikots had their revenue office and residence located here. Because of these two establishments, some traders, petty officials and lawyers came in course of time to settle there. Among the first batch immigrants a large number of Bengali people came here from Rangpur. Before the creation of Jalpaiguri as a district town all the legal works were done in the Rangpur Court. Earlier these were held in Beharampore. However, the British Government realised that it became really difficult to keep eye over the Garo, Khasi region historically called North East Frontier Association from Beharampore. Hence, the
Court was shifted from Beharampore to Rangpur. But with the creation of Assam as a province in 1874 it became really inconvenient for the Britishers’ to keep a connection in between Guwahati and Jalpaiguri, a newly originated district. In addition to it, owing to the disturbances of snakes in Rangpur, the optimum pressure coming from the European tea planters of the Dooars region and also the phenomenal identity of Jalpaiguri as a biggest town after Guwahati in North – Eastern compelled the colonial rulers to think whether they would remain the court in Rangpur or not. This resulted in the transforming of Court from Rangpur to Jalpaiguri. That is why we could not see such a massive European Club in the whole North – East region excepting Jalpaiguri town 39.

So, with this effect a new administrative headquarter was created in Jalpaiguri district and it opened up some new opportunities in the field of employment. The local residents of Jalpaiguri district especially the Rajbangsi’s could not respond effectively to the new opportunities. Perhaps being traditional they were in general conservative and were not inclined to venture much beyond their own periphery. Hence, all the positions were filled up by the immigrant population from rest of Bengal as well as from outside. A nebular social stratification began to take shape there since that period which indeed made the platform for the rise of the Bengali entrepreneurs of the Jalpaiguri town 40. It is true that at the time of the amalgamation of the Duars, the Bengali population was negligible. The celebrated accounts of Samuel Turner (An account of an Embassy to the Court of Teshoo Lama in Bhutan and Tibet), Captain Pemberton (1838 Report on Bhutan), Dr. D.F. Rennie (Bhutan and the Story of the Dooars War) and George Bogle ( 1876 Narrative of George Bogle) do not mention any Bengali settlement in the Dooars. The possibility of Bengali residents in Jalpaiguri subdivision seemed promising but its augmentation and immigration to it and to Alipurduar was a post Anglo – Bhutan war feature 41. The Jalpaiguri Gazetteer is clear about this fact and it reads that “After the formation of Jalpaiguri district with it’s headquarter at Jalpaiguri town and sub divisional headquarter at Alipurduar, the district began to attract educated Hindu gentry from various parts of East Bengal. The administration needed clerks and lawyers. Once the clerks and lawyers came and settled down there, their needs attracted doctors and teachers. .... Thus a process of urbanisation set in.” 42
So, centring round the administrative headquarters, all kinds of commercial activities began to grow up there. For administrative reason in all most all cases a massive connection developed with metropolitan centres that is Calcutta by the 1870’s through transport and communication. Trade and commerce, administrative ramifications including establishments like the Judiciary – all these illuminating factors together produced a factory of employment there which indubitably attracted a large number of educated unemployed youths of Eastern Bengal. First of all, subordinate administrative posts were created which were opened at that time to the Indians. Next, came the clerical jobs and most importantly the British Judicial system opened up considerable employment opportunities for the native people. In fact, during the period the prime focus of the best talented students were addressed to law. The British Judicial system provided such sort of opportunities to the young talented unemployed Indian legal practitioners, among them the Bengali youths ranked first. So being attracted by these new openings of employment these youths started to migrate there. Thus a new society was born which was completely different from the earlier one whose infrastructure was based primarily on agriculture.

It is true that all the employment amenities in Judicial and administrative sector were not filled up by these youth pleaders. It highly required formal English educated people. To fulfil the need the local people residing there acquired formal education in a number but that was not up to satisfactory level. Thus it provoked a number of English educated people residing in Eastern India to immigrate in to Jalpaiguri town with intention to settle there permanently. The upper caste Hindus by virtue of their academic qualifications were said to have swallow up the opportunities. The same caste group also came to fill up the vacancies in the Judicial set up. A few Muslim families also migrated to Jalpaiguri town from various part of Eastern and Southern Bengal like Noakhali, Tipperah, Rajshahi, Dacca in response to the fresh opportunities mentioned above but their number were not so high as the Hindus were. The important but the small Hindu community were the Marwaris. This group did not show any interest until the 1930’s to promote a company in this sector but played an important role since 1910 by providing all types of assistance to others in promoting companies. In regard to this community the Daga and the Kalyani family took the main role. Further, to run the local commercial activities an efficient indigenous credit system was necessary for trade and commerce.
Therefore, the new opportunities in employment and commercial activities were restricted to only those who had the qualifications and means. In this context it will not be exaggerated to say that this is the main reason why the great majority of the Bengali educated class can be found in every nook and corner of the Country and across the World where the British colonial economic activities had spread. However, among the pioneer Hindu promoters the Ray and Ghosh group belonged to the Rarhi sub – community. We know that the western part of the river Ganges including the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura are historically known as Rarh and the residents of this area are commonly known to us as Rarhis. The upper part of the river Ganges is historically known to us Varendra Bhumi and the residents of this area are commonly known as Varendras 47. Both Tarini Prasad Ray and Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, the first generation entrepreneur within the Bengali Hindu community came from the adjacent villages of Manikganj subdivision in Dacca district. Both the leaders had their respective followers who always played an important role by giving assistance to them from all angles. Whenever this two Hindu pioneer began to form a new company membership to the board of directors were always filled by their beloved followers. Certain names are worthy to be mentioned here like JayGovinda Guha, Annada Charan Sen, Purna Chandra Ray, Kaviraj Satish Chandra Lahiri, Purna Chandra Das and so on 48. The Muslim group led by Nawab Musharuff Hossain also followed the same style mentioned above. However, socio – cultural distinction was present between the Hindu and Muslim entrepreneurs. They had high social origin, formal education and specialised occupational background. They always gave first preference to social prestige rather than financial gain to do any work 49.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>6598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>7936</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>11469</td>
</tr>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>14520</td>
</tr>
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(Source: Census of India, 1921, Bengal Part ii, Table xiii, Pts. A, B and appendix ix; Table xv)
Table 2.2  
**Caste composition of Jalpaiguri Entrepreneurs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total No of Entrepreneurs</th>
<th>No of Hindus</th>
<th>No of Muslims</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1877 – 1909</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909 – 1930</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: *Census of India*, 1931, Bengal Part ii, Table xvii)

The first factor which contributed to a large extent behind the rise of the Bengali people as an entrepreneur in the tea plantation industry was the granting of non-transferable tea leases to individuals. During the first phase from the foundation of the new district non-transferable tea leases were granted to individuals. This privilege was received not only by the white coloured people, Indians were also stood in the same line who developed their tea gardens with their own money and small investments from other individuals including government officials, army officers and doctors and so on. The risk involved in these initial ventures was very high and the capital invested was very small. By the turn of the century individual efforts were replaced by large joint-stock companies like “Jalpaiguri Tea Company” formed in the year 1879. Practically it was an association of poor men determined to do a big thing. However, they started with very small capitals which they could gather. The people who had cash money at hand to start a tea garden did not hesitate to enter into the terra incognita. The Jalpaiguri Tea Company was raised with a small capital of Rs. 50,000 only. The company had only two hundred shares of Rs. 250.00 each. In its beginning stage, only selected seventy three share holders subscribed hundred and fifty four that was more than three fourths of all the shares. It really indicated a strong personal attachment or bondage of friendship among them. A plot of 600 acres was taken by this group of entrepreneurs on lease which was earlier rejected by the British planters on account of its smallness in size. The declaration of the dividend by the Jalpaiguri Tea Company in 1888 for the first time as a Tea Company emboldened others to penetrate into this economic field. It undoubtedly originated a favourable invest environment to the native people migrated in Jalpaiguri town. However, after three years from the foundation of their first Tea Company they established another one namely Gurjhangjhora Tea Company in the year 1882. The name of the garden run under this company was Gurjhangjhora.
Tea Estate. The land where the garden was set up was earlier rejected by the British planters on account of communicative problem 52.

The second factor which accelerated the immigration from various part of undivided Bengal was the free entry railway passes granted by the British Government to the Dooars. During that period no extra inducements were necessary for immigration to the Dooars. By taking the advantage a large number of people began to advent there from the adjoining districts of Rangpur. Between the Census of 1881 and 1981 near about 32,224 immigrants were sent in Dooars from the aforesaid region. The migrants from Rangpur and Dinajpur belonged to the Jotedar, Zamindar classes and most of them were pleaders, investing in the new profitable tenancies in this area.

The third factor was the non – availability of land. Due to the scarcity of waste lands in Dooars during the first decades of the twentieth century the Indians especially Bengali entrepreneurs started to find out land of desired quality where they could establish tea garden. This process was resulted in the formulation of a number of tea estates in Assam and Terai by the Bengali entrepreneurs. In the meantime an attempt was also made from the residential Jotedars to convert their Jote lands into tea gardens as the capitalised value of the Jote lands proved less profitable in comparison with the tea gardens. Hence a number of Jotedars began to convert their Jote lands into tea gardens or sold to the tea companies. In this context we can easily mention the name of Prasanna Deb Raikot of the renowned Raikot family of Jalpaiguri town who was said to have promoted some proprietary estates on his Zamindari lands like Baikanthapur Tea Company Ltd. Established in the year 1916 with Bhandeerpur and Shikarpur Tea Estate (1917) and Karala Valley Tea Company Ltd. (1919) 53.

The fourth factor was the high demand of qualified pleaders. In the last decades of the nineteenth century it became a fashion of doing a degree in law rather than other subject. Several reasons were responsible for this fact, first of all it was so easy to achieve a degree in law rather than other subjects and secondly, for the newly acquired territories qualified pleaders were highly demanded to the British Government. Due to the scarcity of qualified pleaders, the Collectorate or Magistrate of many districts in Bengal awarded persons certificates qualifying them to act as legal advisors in their respective districts. These certificate holders were also pleaders
but their jurisdiction was limited within the district only. It was seen frequently that in many cases a certificate – holder or Mukhtar earn a lot in comparison with a qualified lawyer. To illustrate the fact mentioned above, we can easily utter the name of Jadav Chandra Chakrabarty, the pleader and the founder of the Jadavpur Tea Estate in Dooars. In the late nineteenth century most of the members of the Jalpaiguri Bar Association practised by virtue of the certificates issued by the District Collector. Only Jadav Chandra Chakrabarty was a B.A., B.L. During the period Victoria College (Now it is known as Acharya Brajendra Nath Sil College, commonly known as A.B.N. Sil College) was the only college in the Northern part of Bengal from where a student could achieve B.A., B.Ls. and M.A., B.Ls. However, Jadav Chandra Chakrabarty was such type of a lawyer who earned a handsome income from various settlement cases during that period. For example, during the year 1907 – 10 his average annual income was Rs. 60,000 approximately from legal practice alone. Further he was also retained by the Royal Bhutan Government to represent Bhutan in Boundary demarcation cases. In this way he earned both favour and property from the Bhutan Government and this helped him to obtain land for the Anjuman Tea Company Ltd. (1882).

So, as a newly formed district obviously Jalpaiguri had a special attraction for the lawyers. To affix the land – revenue in the newly formed Jalpaiguri district as well as civil suits on land and attestations of land – titles shot up the demand for pleaders. Moreover, fresh demands were also came from various European Tea Companies as well as Jotedars of having a law agent in order to deal with the legal matters mainly in connection with land. It resulted in the migration of a number of qualified pleaders in Jalpaiguri from various districts of East Bengal. It is true that in this process those who came to Jalpaiguri were earlier retained by the Bhutan Government for the Bengal – Bhutan boundary demarcation. It helped them a lot to establish them as a successful lawyer towards the Jotedars as well as to the European Tea Companies. Almost all of the first group of Bengali pleaders were the law agents of the European Tea Companies. It is true that the Jalpaiguri pleaders were absentee landlords. They acquired jotes only in South Maynaguri Pargana. Most of the successors of the first group Bengali pleaders styled them as Jotedars. According to Milligan’s report, “large portion of land was held by Amlas, Vakils, Mukhtears of District Court.” This group of people, according to some economic historians, were
called “National Bourgeoisie” as they played an important role to modernise the society and polity of this region. They also nourished a national feeling among them.

The fifth factor which lured the Bengali entrepreneurs to come in this economic venture was the huge profit earned by the European Tea Companies during the First World War. It opened up more new markets across the World for Indian tea. The war time profit was a great attraction to a large number of Indian entrepreneurs as they realised that high rate of profit was assured from this trade. In the first phase the Jotedars as well as the merchants kept themselves aloof from investing in the economic field. Rather they were highly interested in making quick money by offering loan to the European Tea Companies in high rate of interest. It is true that the European tea gardens were financed by the financial institutions situated in Calcutta or elsewhere but sometime it was proved insufficient to run the tea gardens. Hence they expanded their hands to the outsiders and this opportunity was taken by the residential Jotedars, merchants. However, the scenario began to change since the First World War when it was proved that it was more profitable to invest in the tea business instead of making quick money by offering loan to the European Tea Companies in high rate of interest. Hence the Jotedars came forward with their land and the merchants with their money and it resulted in the formation of a number of tea estates by the Indians especially Bengali entrepreneurs. For example we can mention certain names like Bhojnarayan Tea Estate in Terai, Anandapur Tea Estate, Laxmi Kant Tea Estate in Dooars and so on.

Sixthly, there were other two major areas in Dooars where the British Government took much interest. These were the reserved forests and tea gardens. In the year 1863 T. Anderson the then Director of the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta was appointed temporarily as the conservator of Forests in the Dooars region. He realised that the forests in the Dooars region were of little use to the local community and it should be made available to the other parts of Bengal for commercial utilisation. The department was very much optimistic to a large extent that the Dooars timber would replace the more extensive timber from Oudh and Nepal in the markets of East Bengal and would soon be able to generate a handsome profit on its own. Moreover the beginning of the North Bengal Railway in 1874 for transporting tea and timber across the whole India facilitated the demand of high quality of timbers of the Dooars forests for the construction of rail lines. In addition, under the pressure from the
Dooars planters Association’ the Secretary of State entered into a contract with the ‘Octavious Steel Company’ in 1891 to construct the Bengal Dooars Railway. All these facts mentioned above produced a high demand of timber merchants in the region in order to supply good quality of timbers in the markets of East Bengal for high profit and also for the Government to move along with the company appointed for the construction of railways. To fulfil the need a number of European contractors were appointed there like F.A. Shillingford but their number were not enough at par with the demand. This gap was fulfilled with the immigration of a number of Bengali enthusiastic people coming from various part of East Bengal. They earned a lot of money by doing this job as a contractor which later intrepid them to act as an entrepreneur in the tea plantation industry of this region. In this context, we can mention the name of Beharilal Ganguli, Ibrahim Sowdagar and so on. Beharilal Ganguli hailed from Jessore. He came to Jalpaiguri as a timber merchant. From a timber trader he later on transforms himself as a Jotedar by his own incredible virtue. He had close relations with Khan Bahadur Rahim Baksh. Both of them jointly bought the Altadanga grant which was originally taken by Kalimohan Roy and Durgabati Sen. This resulted in the formation of the Altadanga Tea Estate in the year 1878. This tea estate was controlled and managed by the Jalpaiguri Tea Company.

Table 2.3 Number of Sleepers supplied from the Buxa Forest Division 1879 – 1882

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Sleepers supplied from the Buxa Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>18,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>22,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>29,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>21,602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Proceedings Report of the Forest Administration of Lower Province of Bengal.)

Seventhly, the emergence of nationalism across the whole of Bengal also left its indelible impetus in this region, especially in Jalpaiguri town. Like many other Indians, the immigrant Bengalis of the Jalpaiguri town endeavoured to do something by which the vanity of the colonial Government would be crush. The immigrant Bengalis of the Jalpaiguri town educated in English education tried to demonstrate
that in every sphere of activity they were as capable and efficient as their European
counter parts. Whenever and wherever it was possible they tried to show that their
capabilities were at par with those of the Europeans. This was the main reason why
they assumed it as their foremost duty to penetrate into every field where the
Europeans traded. This nationalistic idea actually inspired them to take initiative as an
entrepreneur in the tea plantation industry in future.

Eighthly, among the Bengali entrepreneurs a very few of them before
transforming themselves as a tea - planter worked as an employee in some gardens
run by the European companies. Naturally by seeing the white tea planters they
achieved a lot of experiences about the tea plantation industry. Ostensibly, the contact
with the European planters helped them a lot in the process of securing grants of
waste lands, procuring of labourers for their own gardens and so forth. In those days,
no statutory rules and obligations were implemented by the Colonial Government for
the tea garden labourers. The rates of wages were very low and other benefits for the
plantation labourers were also negligible. Therefore, the labour cost did not pose an
inconvenient environment to the planters for running their tea estates. The system of
recruitment of labour force was known to the Jalpaiguri professionals. Because before
transforming themselves as a tea - planter they worked as a supplier of labourer to
various garden. For instance, we can mention the name of Sachindra Chandra Mitra of
Jalpaiguri town who earned a lot of money by supplying labourer coming from
Chotanagpur, Hazaribag, Ranchi area into the Teari – Dooars region.

Ninthly, the management and control of the Sterling or British Rupee Public
Limited Tea Companies were maintained by the European Managing Agency Houses
of Calcutta like Devenport & Co., Gillanders Arbuthnot, Begg Dunlop & Co.,
Andrew Yule & Co., Duncan Brothers & Co. and so on. According to the survey
carried out by me it is important to mention that there were 18 Sterling Tea
Companies and 33 British Rupee Public Limited Tea Companies working in
Jalpaiguri town. The British Rupee Joint – Stock Companies first appeared in
Jalpaiguri town in the year 1882 but the style of granting waste land on lease to set up
tea gardens were incepted since 1875. In between 1875 to 1900 altogether 170 new
leases were granted to different European shareholders.

30
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total No of leases</th>
<th>No of leases sanctioned to Leaseholders</th>
<th>No of leases transferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875 to 1900</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Progress Report of the Forest Administration, 1877/78, 1882/83, 1876, 1881, 1900.)

However, in order to safeguard their assets and also for the sake of commercial interests especially after the crisis generated in 1860’s, the British Joint – Stock Companies vested all the responsibilities of their estates to the Managing Agency Houses to secure their assets. Thus in this way the management and control of the Sterling or British Rupee Public Limited Tea Companies were passed into the hands of the Managing Agency Houses. But the task of supervision was left to the native employees usually known as ‘Babus’. They were actually placed immediately after the European manager. Among the Babus, the Bengali people ranked first. In those days, Bengali was the only community who in contrast with the other community learned the English language for the first time. Hence, to run their tea gardens these English learned people were highly demanded to the European manager. Here lies the main reason which is why in those days most of the Babus were Bengali. However, they were addressed by the European manager as ‘Bangali Babu’. Their foremost duty was to look after cultivation and processing. In short, all types of work enviable excepting the duty of a manager to run a tea estate properly were attributed to them. Thus, they attained a lot of experiences which helped them later on to set up a tea estate of their own. For example, we can mention the formation of the Dhawalajhora Tea Estate. Manager Anath Bandhu Sen of Gurjangjhora Tea Estate, Manager Harimohan Biswas of Malnady Tea Estate, Barababu (Head supervisory staff) Rajanikanta Ghosh of Rangamati Tea Estate and many more tea garden employees played an important role to set up the ‘Bengal Dooars National tea Company Ltd’. on 19.08.1912. The garden run under the flagship of this company was the Dhawalajhora Tea Estate in Alipurduar sub – division, Dist – Jalpaiguri established in the year 1915. Gudambabu (Store keeper of a garden) Ratneshwar Dasgupta of Banarhat Tea estate extended his hands towards the Saha Brothers.
namely Ramananda Saha, Nityananda saha coming from to establish the Ambari Tea Estate under the flagship of Sahabad Tea Company established in the year 1920.  

Further, the Bengali Babus the most skilled workers and supervisory staff of the European gardens, proved as an extra advantage to the Bengali entrepreneurs. It is to be noted that a large number of Bengali Babus attained a respectable position from the European planters for their style of work and devotion to garden in the atlas of the tea industry. In some European garden, the Bara Babu and the manager were seen to take food in the same table and also shared views to each other for the improvement of the garden. But after hearing the call from the Bengali–owned gardens to work as a manager or supervisory staff they did not hesitate to relinquish their service for the sake of nationalism in spite of smaller pay–packets. So, the knowledge of cultivation and processing acquired by the Indian staff that is the Bengali Babus worked earlier at the European gardens proved as an invaluable help to the Indian planters which increased their confidence to establish a tea garden of their own like their counterparts.  

Lastly, the most important factor which helped the rise of the professional and other occupational groups as entrepreneurs was the pattern of business organisation. We know that in proprietary business organisation personal supervision and complete involvement is essential. But the Joint–stock business organisation is a team work. It can only run by the effort of a team including manager, staff and so on. The Bengali entrepreneurs followed the second policy where executive power was exercised on their managerial and secretarial staff by the board of directors who were elected by the shareholders to run the garden in their interest. In short, it was a perfect example of absentee ownership in capital. However, this feature was not only available within the Bengali entrepreneurs of the Jalpaiguri town, even the Bengali entrepreneurs in Darjeeling hill and Terai region also followed the same policy.
Table 2.4 Caste, Occupation and Native places of the Bengali Entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri Town.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Native places</th>
<th>Tea Estate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jadav Chandra Chakrabarty</td>
<td>Hindu Brahmin</td>
<td>Pledger</td>
<td>Pabna</td>
<td>Jadavpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munshi Rahim Baksh</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Govt. Service</td>
<td>Noakhali</td>
<td>Altadanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajendra Kumar Neyogi</td>
<td>Hindu Non – Brahmin</td>
<td>Pledger</td>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>Khayerbari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidhu Bhushan Samaddar</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Pledger</td>
<td>Jassore</td>
<td>Turturi and Patkapara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogesh Chandra Ghosh</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Pledger</td>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>Subhasini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyotish Chandra Pal Chauhdury</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Zamindar</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>Radharani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ananda Chandra Rahut</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Zamindar</td>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>Anandapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prasanna Deb Raikot</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Zamindar</td>
<td>Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>Bhanderpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarini Prasad Ray</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Pledger</td>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>Madhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laxmi Kanta Das</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Zamindar</td>
<td>Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>Laxmikanta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second significant aspect of the Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry took place in the Terai region of the Darjeeling district. The term ‘Terai’ originates from a Persian word signifying dampness. By 1907–08 no more waste lands were available in the Dooars region. It compelled the Bengali entrepreneurs to search for arable or Jote lands suitable for tea cultivation. This search sent the Indians across the boundary of the Dooars that is the Terai region as well as in the lower province of Assam. Empirical study reveals that there were several reasons which led the Bengali entrepreneurs to open up the gardens of their own in the foothills of the Darjeeling district. These are as follows:

Firstly, with the development of ‘Darjeeling Himalayan Railway’ (DHR) and the demand of timber from the forest zone across the river Mahananda accelerated the process of migration of a number of Bengali traders and professional
men in this region. J.D. Hooker in his “Himalayan Journals” stated that “The Terai region is called ‘Morung’ and supplies ‘sal’ and ‘sisso’ timber for the Calcutta market, the logs being floated down the Konki and cosi rivers to the Ganges”. Dr. Barun Dey and Pranab Ranjan Roy in an article “Notes for Darjeeling District” writes that “The Baikunthapur estate was an important centre of the timber – logging industry and trade. Many merchants from Bihar as well as Giri Gosains of the Dasnami Naga sect of Benaras invested in this”. So in lure of huge profit some of them permanently settled here which later helped them to become a tea planter. As a researcher it is important to mention that the immigration of outsiders in lure of timber business was not confined within the Terai – Dooars region only, its effect was also expanded in Assam as well. In Goalpara district, Assam the large number of Bengali people residing there are timber merchants even today. However, the name of Satish Chandra kar, the founder of the Satish Chandra Tea Estate can be cited here as an example about the Terai region.

Secondly, the formation of tea gardens by European planters like Gungaram, Hansqua, Ord Terai, Tirrihannah, Simulbarie, Belgachi, Paharghumia and so on in the middle of the 19th century in the Terai region in spite of its unhealthy climate actually accelerated the process of immigration of a number of educated Bengali youths to work as a tea garden employee. By doing this job over the years they attained a lot of experiences which helped them later on to set up a tea estate of their own. For example, we can mention the name of Gopal Chandra Sarkar, the owner of the Bengdubi Tea Estate. He began his career as an employee of a European tea garden in Dooars and later worked as an Assistant Manager in an Indian garden namely Kamalpur tea estate. By virtue of his work, he later on bought the Bengdubi Tea Estate from a European tea company.

Thirdly, accepting the two novel characters in regard to the emergence of the Bengali entrepreneurship in the Terai region there were other types of professionals such as Bankers, tea garden managers, Government officials, Tahashildars who later transform them as a planter To cite examples we can mention certain names as follows –

1) Bogra Loan Office, P.O. – Bogra, East Pakistan founder of the Ashapur Tea Estate;
2) Jyotirindra Nath Sen, Chairman of the Dinajpur Bank of Undivided Bengal founder of the Niscantapur Tea Estate;\textsuperscript{75}

3) Tarapada Banarjee, Manager of the Simulbari Tea Estate later became the owner of the same estate\textsuperscript{76}.

4) Kamal Krishna Haldar, Tahashildar of Burdwan Maharajadhiraja in Darjeeling hill founder of the Kamalpur Tea Estate, P.O. – Bagdogra.\textsuperscript{77}

Fourthly, the war time profit in tea business during the First World War attracted the entrepreneurs in the creation of tea gardens to a large extent. But their dreams could not succeed at that time on account of the scarcity of suitable lands in the Dooars region. Hence, owing to the absence of Khas lands their attraction was shifted to the Terai region where jote lands were available. Moreover, the Jotedar class of this region after realising the capitalised value of their assets which lay unproductive before being taken up for plantation was gradually attracted to invest in tea. For example we can mention the name of Bhojnaranjan Singh, a Rajbanshi Jotedar by class who converted his jote lands into tea cultivation. The name of this garden is Bhojnarin Tea Estate. The Raikots of Baikunthapur also allowed their Zamindari to be utilised for tea garden employees group like Sunny Valley, Merry view, Saraswatipur, Karala valley Tea Company. The size of the Indian owned gardens were much smaller than the British owned Gardens.\textsuperscript{78}

However, the emergence of the Bengali entrepreneurs received a setback initially during the post war slump (1919 – 1921) but since 1924 further the tempo increased steadily till the Great Depression in 1930’s. In 1933 the International Tea Agreement was signed by various tea producing companies which stipulated that no more new tea gardens could be set up. This proclamation certainly bought a deadline in the atlas of the Bengali entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry.

Prior to 1947, new tea estates in India were often established on the extension of the existing ones. The practice was like that; any tea estate acquiring through extension a large area was ultimately divided into two tea estates. This practice certainly gave rise to such new tea estates like Matidhar and Bijlimani in Terai. But after independence no such tea estates came into existence.\textsuperscript{79}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Native places</th>
<th>Tea Estates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kamal Krishna Haldar</td>
<td>Hindu Brahmin</td>
<td>Tahasildar</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>Kamalpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyotindra Nath Sen</td>
<td>Hindu Non Brahmin</td>
<td>Govt. Service</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>Nischintapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiran Chandra Bhattacharya</td>
<td>Hindu Brahmin</td>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>Pabna</td>
<td>Kiran Chandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satish Chandra Kar</td>
<td>Hindu Non Brahmin</td>
<td>Timber merchant</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>Sathihs Chandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachin Chandra Mitra</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Labour Contractor</td>
<td>Jessore</td>
<td>Kharibari and Manjha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saha Brothers</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>Sahabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jitendra Nath Mitra</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Govt. Service</td>
<td>Darjeeling Town</td>
<td>Sannyasitshan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalini Ranjan Sarkar</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Finance Minister</td>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>Matidhar and Bijlimani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalini Ranjan Ghosh</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Pleader</td>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>Thanjhara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, from the above table it is proved that heterogeneous type of Bengali people was there who later on transformed them as a successful entrepreneur by their own virtue. In respect of the Dooars region, we find the majority of legal practitioners as entrepreneur where as in the Terai region we observed a complete different picture. Here various types of people coming from various part of undivided Bengal took the prime role in building up the Bengali entrepreneurship. The reclamation of these areas from forest land, the colonization of these areas with peasantry, the bringing in of the entrepreneurial function have been done not necessarily by the local people but by the migrants who came from outside. They also made an immense impact in the development of Jalpaiguri or Siliguri or northern portions of Dinajpur.
References


2. Interviewed: Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Dept. of History, University of North Bengal. Date: 12/04/2012.


10. Interviewed: Mr. Swaraj (Raja) Banarjee, Present owner of Makaibari Tea Estate, Kurseong, 24/08/2011. For getting more information about present status of ownership of this garden, the readers can see Assam Tea Directory Hand Book, Year 2012
11. Ranajit Dasgupta in his book *Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal: Jalpaiguri, 1869 – 1947*, Oxford University Press, 1992, Delhi, Pp. 59 – 61 gave a finest description of the Bengali Entrepreneurship in the tea plantation industry in Duars. Dr. Sib Sankar Mukherjee in his research work ‘Emergence of Bengali Entrepreneurship in Tea Plantations in Jalpaiguri Duars (1879 – 1933 )’, Ph. D. Thesis, University of North Bengal, 1978 gave a chronological development of the tea plantation industry in Jalpaiguri Duars under Bengali entrepreneurship. The work of renowned tea planter Sri Birendra Chandra Ghosh (popularly known as B.C. Ghosh) namely *The Development Tea Industry in the District of Jalpaiguri 1869 – 1968* is worthy to be mentioned here. Both of them argued that the growth and development of the Bengali entrepreneurship in tea plantation industry took place for the first time in Duars in 1879. Even Professor Das Gupta stated that this feature was not present in the Darjeeling (P.59). However, these argumentations mentioned above are not correct as a whole. Because the first Indian entrepreneurship mainly Bengali entrepreneurship took place in Darjeeling hill in 1858 by Sri G. C. Banarjee (that is Makaibari Tea Garden), not in 1879 in Jalpaiguri Duars. I hope this attempt by me will bring an unwritten document of history regarding Indian entrepreneurship mainly Bengali entrepreneurship in Indian tea into limelight.


23. Interviewed: Rabi Mitra at his own house “Matri Bhawan”, Sevoke Road, Siliguri, Last Bengali owner of the Sannyasisthan T.E. Date: 09/06/2012.


36. Interviewed: Mr. Nilmani Ray at his own house Caltex Road, Mal Bazar, Dist – Jalapiguri, 16/04/2012. He is the Present owner of Mission Hill T.E., Mirik, Dist – Darjeeling.


40. Sibsankar Mukherjee, op. cit., p.103.


42. Abani Mohan Kushari, *op. cit.*, p. 63.


45. E.A. Gait, *Census of Bengal 1901*, Ch. 1, p. xxxviii.


47. Siibsankar Mukherjee, op.cit., p. 75.


57. Dr. Bimalendu Majumder, op. cit., p. 110.


59. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue (Forests), Bengal, April 1865, the Collectorate Record Room, District Magistrate Office, Jalpaiguri, p.21.


63. Sources have been collected from various Proceedings Report of the Forest Administration in the lower province of Bengal of Various years. For the year 1879 see p. 37, Year 1880/81, p. 36, Year 1882, p.37, Year 1883, p. 60.


70. Sashi Bhushan Dutta, Final Report Darjeeling Terai settlement, 1898, p. 05.


74. Interviewed: Sunil Ch. Sarkar, Age 83, (Grandson of tea Planter late Gopal Ch. Sarkar who owned the Bengdubi T.E. from a British Tea Company), at his own house Bengdubi, P.O. Bagdogra, Dist - Darjeeling. Date: 30/10/2012.


76. Interviewed: Mrs. Chanda Banarjee, Age 70, (Wife of Mr. Ranjit Banarjee son of Tarapada Banarjee) at her own house Akshaytara Apartment, Sevoke Road, Siliguri, Date: 08/10/2012.


78. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Terai Indian Planters’ Association (TIPA), op. cit., p. 4.