

Book Reviews

***Darjeeling: A Favoured Retreat*, by Jahar Sen, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1989, ISBN 81-85182-15-9, pp. 120, ₹120.**

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The author presents a multi-dimensional approach to Darjeeling starting from its historical background, with its strategic considerations both for defence and trans-Himalayan trade and moving onto the development of Nepali language and literature. In this experiment, the author has extensively utilized the archival sources and the records preserved in the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Darjeeling.

The Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16) drew the British directly into the Himalayas. The British relation with Sikkim also had its origin in the Anglo-Nepalese War. Due to its strategic location, the British sought the assistance of Sikkim during the war. By the treaty of Titalya signed in 1817, the British gained many advantages. The author also narrates the process of the development of Darjeeling, since its origin in 1835. Further, the author presents the most fascinating role of Darjeeling as an '*Entrepot of Trade*'. [*Entrepot Trade is the trade at one centre in the goods of other countries. An entrepot is a trading post where merchandise can be imported and exported without paying import duties, often at a profit.*] Many reports and records speak about the trade between Darjeeling and Tibet. It, further, expressed hope that Darjeeling was the gateway through which commerce and culture of the West could reach Central Asia.

The author unveils the merit of B.H. Hodgson on the Himalayas, Campbell's paternal anxiety for its development and the findings of the Jackson Report adding a new dimension to the importance of Darjeeling as a Centre of transfrontier trade. From 1861 onwards Darjeeling as a commercial centre attracted attention of mercantile economy, due to the growth of tea plantation industry. Even Bengal was deeply interested in the tea trade. Many formidable steps were taken by the British government in order to encourage *Trans-Himalayan* trade. The author furnishes information about the striking aspects of Darjeeling as an entrepot of transfrontier trade with Nepal, Tibet and Sikkim, with their imports and exports discussed in some detail.

The strategic considerations compelled the British to secure and to develop Darjeeling. Moreover, some of the annual reports of the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, contain interesting information as to the purpose of the recruitment work. For instance, from 1866 to 1904 as many as 27,428 Gorkha soldiers were recruited by the Darjeeling Recruiting Centre.

On the other hand, the book also peeps into Anglo-Bhutan relations, which was not cordial throughout the nineteenth century. Due to the frequent raids and intrusion, the British were compelled to safeguard Darjeeling from the aggression of the Bhutanese. That's why the frontiers of Darjeeling were patrolled. Moreover, the development of communication system, too, was often necessitated by military considerations.

The author cites reference to a booklet, entitled *The English Stations in the Hill Regions of India: Their Value and Importance with some Statistics of their Produce and Trade* (London, Trubner, 1881), by H. Clarke who stressed the need for development and importance of the hill stations not only as health resort but also for transfrontier commerce and defence of the northern frontier of India. In the same vein he proposed, Major-General D.J.F. Newall in his Report on the *Military Defence of Darjeeling* dated 4 January 1872 and in his book, *The Highlands of India*, also strongly advocated the military colonization of the hills.

Besides development and town concern, the author also depicts the picture of Literature (especially of Lepchas) and Culture of Darjeeling with a brief historical background. The author gives some interpretations of Lepcha language. An article written by A. Campbell, Superintendent of Darjeeling, contains the first reference to the Lepcha language. Again the author adds that the Lepcha language and script must have been very much in use at Darjeeling in 1848 when J.D. Hooker visited Darjeeling. However, the author admits that no records are available to tell us whether the Lepchas are indigenous people of Sikkim or immigrants from the east or the west and how long they had been in Sikkim given their claim for an autochthonous status. Spring points out with some illustrations that military recruitment and military service both inside and outside Nepal were contributory factors to the spread of Nepali language. Kumar Pradhan has made a comparative study of the role of Nepali language in the configuration of Nepali society both in Nepal and India.

The author also explores the pioneering role of Christian Missionaries and the British Government in the field of education in Darjeeling. For instance, with reference to vernacular education, he points out, many schools were opened. Rev. William Macfarlane in 1869 supported the cause of vernacular education. Due to these early initiatives, the West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961 made Nepali a second language alongside Bengali in the three hill sub divisions of the district for official purposes of the state. The author also points out the contribution of newspapers and journals which were circulated in Darjeeling district in 1892. The first journal published in Nepali language in India is *Gorkha Bharat Jivan* (1886). Many Nepali figures aroused interest in literature, and lead to the appearance of the *Gorkha* (1945), mouthpiece of the Gorkha League.

Therefore, it is highly appreciable book in which the author gives his best to make an extraordinary survey of primary data regarding Darjeeling as to depict the best picture of Darjeeling to the scholars and students for a better understanding of its social

history. The book which studies the diverse aspects of the history of Darjeeling, closes with these inspiring words: 'The history of Darjeeling, spanning four generations, is a story of transformation from delusion of tradition to disillusion of modernity.' A search for a new horizon is, indeed, a quest for new openings and it is best captured in the unexplored adventure of Entrepot trade, which would subsequently lead to the growth of Trans-Himalayan Trade between Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal, contributing in no small measure to the present socio-economic conditions of Darjeeling.