

The **History of Darjeeling**-- covers the history of Darjeeling town and its adjoining hill areas belonging to Nepal, Sikkim Bhutan, Bengal and Great Britain, i.e. the East India Company.

The area of Darjeeling was inhabited by the Lepchas, Limbus and Bhutias as part of Sikkim from ancient times. In 1642, Phuntsog Namgyal became the first Chogyal ruler of Sikkim. Tensung Namgyal became the next Chogyal of Sikkim in 1670. It was during his rule that Sikkim lost the area of Kalimpong to Bhutan.

The Gorkha army from Nepal invaded Darjeeling in the 1790, attacked the capital of Sikkim at Rabdentse, and annexed territories up to the Teesta River into Nepal. In the meantime, the British were engaged in preventing the Gorkhas from overrunning the whole of the northern frontier. The Anglo-Gorkha ( Nepal) war broke out in 1814. Defeat of the Gorkhas led to the Treaty of Sugauli in 1815 in which, 'Nepal had to cede all those' territories the Gorkhas had annexed from the Raja (King) of Sikkim to the East India Company, including the land area between the rivers of Mechi and Teesta Rivers.

On 10 February 1817, the British reinstated the land area between rivers Mechi and Teesta to the Sikkim's Chogyal as per the Treaty of Titalia.

With the intervention of the British, the Gorkha were prevented from turning the whole of Sikkim into a province of Nepal and Sikkim (including the present District of Darjeeling) was retained as a buffer state between Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet.

Ten years later dispute once again arose between Sikkim and Nepal, which according to the Treaty of Titalia, were referred to the Governor General. Governor-General of India, Lord William Bentinck, sent two officers, Captain George Alymer Lloyd and Mr. J. W. Grant, to help resolve the dispute in February 1829. It was on the journey to Ontoo Dara that the two officers stayed at Darjeeling for 6 days at "the old Goorka station called Dorjeling" and were "much impressed with the possibility of the station as a sanatorium."

On 18 June 1829, Lloyd communicated to the government regarding the possibility of Darjeeling serving as a sanatorium, while about the same time Mr. J.W. Grant also urged the government to possess the tract. So he stressed the need to procure the place for

- *The advantage that the Britishers would have, as it would serve as a strategically important position in commanding entrance to Nepal and Bhutan.*
- *Serve as a British outpost in the Himalayas.*
- *Serve as a base for the defence of the trade route to Tibet through Sikkim.*
- *From its commanding height, the whole of Sikkim and the neighbourhood could be observed and protected.*
- *A summer resort for British officials to escape the heat in the plains*

Later Captain Herbert, the Deputy Surveyor General, was sent to Darjeeling to examine the area. The court of Directors of the British East India Company approved the project. General Lloyd was given the responsibility to negotiate a lease of the area from the Chogyal of Sikkim. The lease as per the Deed of Grant was granted on 1 February 1835. This Deed of Grant, which is commendably short, runs as follows:

*"The Governor-General having expressed his desire for the possession of the hills of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government, suffering*

*from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I the Sikkimputtee Rajah out of friendship for the said Governor-General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India, that is, all the land south of the Great Runjeet river, east of the Balasur, Kahail and Little Runjeet rivers, and west of the Rungpo and Mahanadi river”.*

Thus, Darjeeling was gifted to the Britishers. This was an unconditional cessation of what was then a worthless uninhabited mountain. The land gifted to East India Co. in 1835 did not comprise the whole present Darjeeling. It was narrow enclave of 138 square miles, about 30 miles long and 6 miles wide. It was entirely surrounded by the Raja's dominions - entry and exit being restricted to a narrow path, which included the sites of Darjeeling and Kurseong towns and touched the plains near Pankhabari.

*The Raja( king) of Sikkim got in return, immediately was a gift parcel - one double barrelled gun, one rifle, one 20 yards of red-broad cloth, 2 pairs of shawl- one superior quality and the other of inferior quality.*

*The Raja ( King ) appeared before the Governor General for compensation. In 1841 the British government granted the Chogyal an allowance of Rs.3, 000 per annum as compensation, and raised the grant to Rs. 6,000 per annum in 1846. At the beginning Sikkim was not favourably disposed to the ideas of gifting Darjeeling - but finally circumstances made it...!*

The development of the town dates back to the mid 19th century .In 1835, a member of the Indian Medical Service, **Dr. Arthur Campbell**, was appointed as agent of the leased tract, and **Lieut. Napier** (later Lord Napier of Magdala) set to work improving the area and laying the foundations of the hill station of Darjeeling. Dr. Campbell became the first superintendent of the sanitarium in 1839.

A road connecting Darjeeling with the plains was constructed in 1839. A hotel was started at Kurseong and one at Darjeeling. In Darjeeling itself about 30 private houses were erected. The population rose from not more than 100 in 1839 to about 10,000 in 1849, chiefly by immigrants from the neighbouring states of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan

**Dr. Campbell** brought Chinese tea seeds in 1841 from the Kumaon region and started growing tea on an experimental basis near his residence at Beechwood, Darjeeling. This experiment was followed by similar efforts by several other British. The experiments were successful and soon several tea estates started operating commercially.

The rapid growth of Darjeeling led to jealousy from the Chogyal of Sikkim. There were also differences between the British Government and Sikkim over the status of people of Sikkim. Because of the increased importance of Darjeeling, many citizens of Sikkim, mostly of the labour class, started to settle in Darjeeling as British subjects. The migration disturbed the feudal lords in Sikkim who resorted to forcibly getting the migrants back to Sikkim.

The relation deteriorated to such an extent that when **Dr. Campbell and the eminent explorer Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker** were touring in Sikkim in 1849, they were suddenly captured and imprisoned. This detention continued for weeks. An expeditionary force was sent by the Company to Sikkim. However, there was no necessity for bloodshed and after the Company's troops had crossed the Rangeet River into Sikkim, hostilities ceased. An annual grant of Rs. 6,000 was stopped and the British annexed 640 square miles of additional

territory from Sikkim. It comprised the entire 'Sikkim Morung or Terai' i.e. the Siliguri subdivision and in the hills ' the whole southern part of Sikkim, between the Great Rangeet and the plains of India, and from Nepal on the west to the Bhutan frontier and the Teesta river on the east'

On 1<sup>ST</sup> February 1861, Col. Gowler and Ashley Eden marched from Darjeeling and reached the Sikkim's capital of Tumlong. The Diwan ( Governor) fled and the old Raja ( King) abdicated in favour of his son. On March 28<sup>th</sup> 1861, Ashley Eden signed a treaty with the new Raja. This treaty was of great advantage to Darjeeling as it ended the annoyances caused to its inhabitants and secured full freedom for commerce. A road from Darjeeling to Teesta was constructed. Sikkim undertook to complete the remaining part.

In the meantime trouble arose with the adjoining state of Bhutan. The Bhutanese were constantly raiding and plundering the areas of Darjeeling. There were also rumours of a planned attack on Darjeeling. In 1863, Ashley Eden was deputed to negotiate with Bhutan. The British envoy was openly insulted and returned to Darjeeling. In the winter of 1864, a military force was dispatched to Bhutan and the whole of Bhutan Dooars was captured.

The area of Kalimpong along with the Dooars became British property following the defeat of Bhutan in the **Anglo-Bhutan war** (Treaty of Sinchula – 11 November 1865). Kalimpong was first put under the Deputy Commissioner of Western Duars, but in 1866 it was transferred to the District of Darjeeling giving the district its final shape. The Darjeeling district can be said to have assumed its present shape and size in 1866 , to 1234 sq. miles. Darjeeling became a part of the British Indian Empire, and the remainder of kingdom of Sikkim became a protected state.

So 1866 marks an epoch in the History of Darjeeling, peace was established on all fronts, hence began the march to progress and civilization.

The Darjeeling Municipality was established in 1850. Tea estates continued to grow. By the 1860 es, peace was restored in the borders. During this time, immigrants, mainly from Nepal, were recruited to work in the construction sites, tea gardens, and other agriculture-related projects. Scottish missionaries undertook the construction of schools and welfare centres for the British residents: Loreto Convent in 1847, St. Paul's School in 1864, Planters' Club in 1868, Lloyd's Botanical Garden in 1878, St. Joseph's School in 1888, Railway Station in 1891, and Town Hall (present Municipality Building) in 1921. With the opening of the **Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in 1881**, smooth communication between the town and the plains below further increased the development of the region.

"Darjeeling disaster" was an earthquake in 1898 that caused considerable damage to the young town and its native population.

Darjeeling's elite residents were the British ruling class of the time, who visited Darjeeling every summer. An increasing number of well-to-do Indian residents of Kolkata (then Calcutta), Maharajas ( Kings) of princely states, land-owning zamindars and barristers of Calcutta High Court also began visiting Darjeeling. The town continued to grow as a tourist destination, becoming known as the "Queen of the Hills" in North East India. The town did not see any significant political activity during the freedom struggle of India owing to its remote location and small population. However, there was a failed assassination attempt by revolutionaries on **Sir John Anderson, the Governor of Bengal** in the 1930.

After the independence of India in 1947, Darjeeling was merged with the state of West Bengal. A separate district of Darjeeling was established consisting of the hilly towns of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and the Terai areas of Siliguri. When the People's Liberation Army annexed Tibet in 1950, thousands of Tibetan refugees settled across Darjeeling district.

Today Darjeeling is visited by tourist from all different parts of the country and the world. The tourists are spell bound with the virgin greenery still visible in this part of the Himalayas. The Darjeeling hills abound in rich flora like rhododendrons, magnolias, orchids etc. About six hundred different species of birds inhabit the forests. Darjeeling is blessed with extreme natural beauty. A place you just cannot afford to miss. The old colonial summer retreat is surrounded by spectacular and wonderful vista view of Mt. Kanchenjunga- the world's third – highest peak, a variety of trekking options, and the opportunity to cool down after a stint in the plains. The town is also a suitable place for travellers heading to Sikkim...!