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DARJEELING : A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PERUSAL



Chief Editor :
Terence Mukhia

Editorial Assistants :
Kishan Harijan & Sushna Subba

KALPA GRIHA PUBLICATIONS,
Upper Johnson Hatta, Sonada - 734219
Dist. Darjeeling.

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Publisher's Note

It is a pleasure and privilege of Kalpa-Griha Publication, Sonada, to place in the readers' hand an unique book edited by Terence Mukhia. As the reader can see, the book entitled "Darjeeling : A Multi Disciplinary Perusal" covers a wide variety of topics contributed by seven writers. It makes available the cultural values of locality with quite a good number of valuable information to the world of readers in English. In fact the writers are opening windows for others to peep into the matter through their perspectives. In this way the book with a reason and vision fulfills a need of the time.

Kalpa Griha publication, Sonada, in itself was a need of the time in the field of publication in this locality. Keeping in view the requirement of international identification of books it has secured ISBN since 2009 for the authors who want to publish their books from this publication. Earlier it was not widely practiced by even the renowned local publishers to issue ISBN to their authors. The Kalpa Griha Publication is extremely happy to introduce our authors to the wide circle of readers in different languages. We are very happy to present this book written in English to our readers. I wish all the best to the editorial team and the contributors.

Jogen Darnal

October, 2011

Editorial

Nothing happens by chance. It was God's will that some of us teaching in different colleges happened to meet and discuss informally on various issues related to the Darjeeling hills. Later we came to know that all of us shared a common interest, i.e., to bring about a book on Darjeeling. Seven of us submitted the articles for the book finally. This book is the result of that very first meeting and we are happy to bring to the readers researched articles written on Darjeeling from different perspectives. We do hope that the readers and the research scholars interested in Darjeeling will find this book interesting and meaningful.

The first article considers Darjeeling from religious angle. The article entitled *Origin and Development of Catholicism in Darjeeling* by Terence Mukhia deals with how Catholicism has originated and developed in Darjeeling. In the coming volumes he intends to deal with the origin and development of Catholicism in Kurseong, Kalimpong and Pedong areas as well. The second article by Miss Nilima Moktan looks at Darjeeling from socio-educational point of view. She focuses on the midday meal scheme in relation to values, health and attendance of primary school students in Darjeeling district. She tells us that it is impossible to talk of education of the poor without addressing the issue of hunger since there is a close connection between learning deficiency and empty stomach. Sunny Rawat considers Darjeeling from eco-geological point of view. He deals with the causes and the remedial measure of landslides in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas. He shows that besides natural causes the irresponsible dealing of human beings with nature has led to such calamities. Sushna Subba focuses on Darjeeling from historical and feministic point of view. At the same time she considers it from religio-educational point of view. She highlights the role of women Catholic religious congregations and their contribution in the field of education. She has shown how different congregations came and settled in different parts of Darjeeling contributed significantly in different fields. Lekhraj Balmiki has focused on the Balmiki community in

Darjeeling. The major thrust of this article is the contribution of the British Government in developing Darjeeling during the colonial period. Looking at it from Socio-cultural and political perspective he shows how they remain as oppressed and untouchables in the society. Considering Darjeeling from historical perspective Mr. Kishan Harijan deals with the role of the British in developing Darjeeling. The major thrust of the article is the contribution of the British Government in Developing Darjeeling during the Colonial period. A joint article by Mr. Sinor Lama and Miss Kabita Lepcha shows environmental concern. They take us to Kalimpong town to tell us about the problems and prospects of solid waste management.

There are two special persons who deserve our thanks. Mr. Kishan Harijan and Mrs. Sushna Subba had been assisting me right from the beginning. They not only helped in editing the work but they helped me in many ways and were sources of great encouragement to me. I am grateful to them.

We are grateful to Dr. Fr. Tomy Augustine, Rector & HoD, Dept. of Philosophy, Salesian College Sonada for his support and valuable suggestions. Special words of thanks to Mr. Jogen Darnal, teacher, St. Robert's H. S. School for accepting our proposal to make it Kalpa Griha publication. We are grateful to Mr. Gautam Tamang for his technical assistance. Thanks to each and everyone who assisted us in one way or the other in publishing this book.

*- Terence Mukhia,
October, 2011.*

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CATHOLICISM IN DARJEELING (1846-2002)

Terence Mukhia

Introduction: Catholicism that began in Darjeeling in 1846 covers 165 years today. According to a census conducted by the Darjeeling diocese in 2004, there were 8,101 Catholics in Darjeeling, 7,319 in Kurseong and 11,286 in Kalimpong sub-divisions. There were 26,706 Catholics in the Darjeeling Hills and 5958 Catholics in Sikkim. The purpose of this write up is to trace the beginning of Catholicism in Darjeeling and to study its gradual development. The other areas like Kurseong and Kalimpong have been kept outside the scope of the present paper. The Darjeeling diocese has been divided into many deaneries for a better administration. I have not even considered the whole Darjeeling deanery.¹ I have focused on Darjeeling and its surrounding areas only in this present article.

1. Claims over Darjeeling: The Vicariate of Patna was erected in 1845. According to the decree of erection, Bihar, Sikkim and Nepal came under Patna, but the name of Darjeeling was not mentioned. So both Patna and Calcutta began to claim Darjeeling. In 1847 when Capuchins established themselves in Darjeeling. Mgr. Carew, the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal, gave up his claim to Darjeeling. He ceded it along with the district of Hazaribagh to Mgr. Anastasius Hartmann OFM, Capuchin, the Prefect Apostolic of Patna²

In 1859 when Calcutta was entrusted to the Belgian Jesuits³ they began their claim over Darjeeling. Jesuits of Calcutta and even Milanese Missionaries were appealing Rome for a place in Darjeeling that was under the Vicariate of Patna. In 1868 Rome decided to divide the district of Darjeeling into three separate zones. But this project of the *Sacred Congregation for Propagation of Faith* (SCPF) met with many obstacles. Mgr. Steins, the Jesuit Vicar Apostolic of Calcutta, laid claim to the whole

District of Darjeeling as a part of the Vicariate of Calcutta while Mgr. Tosi claimed it as part of the Vicariate of Patna. Milanese missionaries knew that Darjeeling would not be given to them so they asked for Hazaribagh. On November 23, 1871 the district of Hazaribagh was separated from Patna and joined to the Vicariate of Calcutta, while Darjeeling remained under the jurisdiction of the Vicariate of Patna.⁴

2. The Protestant Missionaries: Rev. William Start, a Moravian Missionary, was the first Christian missionary to come to Darjeeling in 1841.⁵ He was determined to preach among Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese. He brought twenty German missionaries at his own expense. A school was started for the Lepchas at Takvar in Darjeeling.⁶ Mr. Start and Mr. C.G. Niebel translated the Gospels into Lepcha language. Mr. Start also translated the *Gospel of Luke* and *the Acts of the Apostles* into Nepali. This version was published by the Bible Society and was circulated among the Nepalese.⁷ These Moravian missionaries translated into Lepcha language the book of Genesis, a part of Exodus and the Gospels of Mathew, Mark and John.⁸ Rev. Start was a Church of England Clergyman who had turned independent Baptist. We do not know what made him a Baptist.⁹ William Start retired to England in 1852.¹⁰ His job was taken over by Rev. Mr. Niebel until his death on October 9, 1865.¹¹ The Baptist Mission in Darjeeling was closed in 1969.¹²

In June 1870 another great Scottish Missionary came to Darjeeling. He was Rev. Mr. William Macfarlane.¹³ Due to his hard work the Eastern Himalayan Mission (EHM) of the Church of Scotland grew from its base in Darjeeling to Kalimpong, Kurseong, Terrai, Sikkim and Bengal Duars and even to Nepal and Bhutan.¹⁴ In 1892 Scandinavian Mission (SAM) appeared in Darjeeling. Six women and three men under the leadership of Rev. John F. Frederickson came to Darjeeling with an aim of going into Tibet. Frustrated in their attempts they settled down in Ghoom, Darjeeling. As per agreement with the Eastern Himalayan Mission of Scottish Missionary they concentrated among the Bhutias and Tibetans whereas EHM concentrated on the Lepchas and the Nepalese. Numerous other small missions and independent missionaries came to Darjeeling after that, but they had very little influence.¹⁵

3. The Roman Catholic Missionaries: Mr. R. S. Laughan, the Judge of Patna, requested the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal, Dr. Carew, to establish a Convent School for the benefit of the children of the European families

migrating in the hills.¹⁶ In 1846 the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal sent a few Loreto nuns to open a European school in Darjeeling. Together with them came Rev. Fr. John McGirr.¹⁷ Father J. Henrichs says that this was what is recorded in the *The Chronicles of the Loreto Convent*, Darjeeling: "On October the 10th, 1846 the first batch of Loreto Nuns arrived in Darjeeling with their chaplain, Rev. Mr. John McGirr. The entry in the bazaar of their caravan of six palanquins and 74 bearers must have been quite a big event for the station which then was not much more than a big village. They had taken two months, travelling by water from Chadergore to Kishnganj, and the old military road. The journey of course had been brought with many incidents that they had a narrow escape from a whirlwind, and that water had got into the tin box where the Church vestments were kept, washing the colours one into another. This of course, was a tragedy for the dear mothers."¹⁸

The first batch of Roman Catholic missionaries to arrive in Darjeeling was the Loreto Sisters (IBVM). They reached Darjeeling on October, 10, 1846. We have the following record of the first community of the missionaries in the *Annals* of the Convent:

Mother Mary Teresa Mons, Superioress
Mother Mary de Chantal Kelly
2 Lay Sisters, Novices.
There went with them the Chaplain,
Rev. John McGirr, and an orphan girl.¹⁹

4. The Beginnings: November 3, 1846 marks another new beginning for the Roman Catholic Mission in Darjeeling when the first neophyte was baptized. In 1848 Fr. McGirr built a presbytery, but he could not stay there very long. Soon it was known that Darjeeling was under the Vicar Apostolic of Patna, Rev. Hartmann. Fr. McGirr had to return and his place was taken over by a Capuchin priest Rev. Ignatius Persico from Patna diocese. He was an Italian and became the first parish priest of Darjeeling.²⁰ "Later, he became bishop of Agra (1854-60), and after having been sent on missions which took him all over the world, he died in Rome as a cardinal (1893-96)."²¹ The Catholic population in the beginning comprised of Loreto nuns, their pupils, British soldiers, tourists and holiday makers.²² There was no Church. The faithful attended the Mass in the Convent chapel for thirty-seven years. Only in 1885 a separate chapel was built between the actual Archbishop's House and St. Robert's School.²³

5. **The First Catholic School in Darjeeling:** The earliest Catholic school in Darjeeling was the Loreto Convent for European girls. The convent was founded by Mother M. Teresa Mons and other two Irish pioneer ladies in 1864. In 1849 a special department began in Caroline Villa which admitted the boys up to eight years of age. Fourteen years later it was transferred to 'Spring Field' which adjoined the convent.²⁴ There were six students with six teachers in 1846 and forty-five student with eighteen teachers in 1863. The highest number of pupils being fifty-four with seventeen teachers in 1857.²⁵ Even Fr. McGirr was planning to open a European school for boys. But he could not follow up his plans since he had to go back.²⁶ The school for the native people was not thought of till that time.

6. **Darjeeling under the Capuchins (1847-1887):** Fr. McGirr's very young and able successor, Fr. Ignatius Pesico, started in 1848 a European school for boys named St. Gregory's Seminary. Unfortunately, he was called away after a year by Mgr. Hartmann to be his secretary.²⁷ When Fr. Persico became the parish priest of Darjeeling there were just a handful of Catholics. They spent most of their time in educating people.²⁸ Fr. Accursio Insermini came as the pastor of Darjeeling from 1859 to 1880 for 21 years.²⁹ Before the advent of Fr. Insermini two other priests viz. Fr. Felix and Fr. Archangelo Polverelli worked in Darjeeling for sometime. Fr. Insermini looked after the need of the convent and of the military depot of Jalpahar, in Darjeeling. In 1861 he erected a chapel in Jalpahar. He also re-opened the Catholic Boys' School. In 1881 a new Church, St. Francis of Assisi's Church, was built which later on was transferred to Jalpahar.³⁰ Fr. Accursio died in 1885 in Darjeeling and was buried in the grounds of the convent³¹ As a fruit of his labour, fourteen adults were baptized in 1886: twelve Nepalese, one Buddhist and one Lepcha.³² In 1897, the Capuchins opened St. Joseph's Seminary in Sunny Bank. It was a school and a seminary. The first priests produced by this seminary were - Vincent French, Jemon Pawar, Finton Pill and Joseph Ford.³³ Capuchins laboured in Darjeeling for forty years (1847-1887). "During their stay almost 400 baptisms were registered, half of them during the last seven years."³⁴ They are the ones who laid the foundation stone for Catholic community. Of course, Loreto (Irish) nuns have played a great role in this.

7. **Advent of the Belgian Jesuits (1887):** Calcutta was entrusted to the Belgian Province of the Society of Jesus in 1859. Due to unsanitary conditions and the oppressive climate many of them died.³⁵ Within ten years of their entry into Bengal, eight of them died of various sicknesses. Seven of them were seriously ill. So they had to be taken back to Belgium. For the good of the suffering and the sick Jesuits Darjeeling was selected as the best place. In this way the Belgian Jesuits stepped in Darjeeling for the first time in 1887. Darjeeling became a health centre for them. But the recovered patients began the mission of Christ in the hills.³⁶ Regarding the handing over of the mission to the Belgian Jesuits Henrichs writes:

As had been arranged between the two bishops, the transfer took place on December the 1st 1887, the indemnity to pay for the properties being fixed at Rs. 35.000. By the end of January 1888, the community counted 8 members (four priests, three scholastics, one brother) with Fr. Depelchin as Vice-Rector and parish priest at the same time.³⁷

8. **St. Joseph's College (1888):** In 1877 Capuchins founded St. Joseph's Seminary in Sunny Bank. In due time this seminary was converted into St. Joseph's College. The college was opened in 1888 and there were only thirty-five boys on the roll that year. In 1895 the number reached two hundred.³⁸ Fr. Henri Depelchin arrived in Darjeeling in January 10, 1887. He became the first Rector of this College. St. Joseph's College got affiliation to Calcutta University in June 30, 1889. The increase in number led the missionaries to look for a better place and building. The present North Point site was bought from the government at the cost of Rs. 6000. Fr. Depelchin blessed the new building in December 8, 1891. The College was transferred from Sunny Bank to this new site in December 28, 1891. But just before this great event Fr. Depelchin was transferred in December 24, 1891 and he was replaced by Fr. Alfred Lent. Fr. Alfred was the one who shifted the boys from Sunny Bank to the new College building in Singamari, North Point, Darjeeling.³⁹ The names of the Rectors of St. Joseph's College from 1888 to 1988 have been given here below:

Before the Independence of India:

Fr. Henri Depelchin (1888-1891)

Fr. Alfred Neut (1891-1895)
 Fr. John Schaefer (1895)
 Fr. Constant De Clippeleir (Acting Rector 1895-1896)
 Fr. Hippolyte Waelkens (1896-1902)
 Fr. J. Meunier (1903-1907)
 Fr. F.X. Crohan (1907-1913)
 Fr. Joseph Fallon (1913-1919)
 Fr. Joseph De Gheldere (1919-1925)
 Fr. Nicholas Krier (1925-1928)
 Fr. Joseph De Gheldere (1929-1934)
 Fr. Alphonse Schockaert (1935-1940)
 Fr. Charles Vrithoff (1940-1946)
 Fr. Henry Barre (1946-1949)

After the Independence of India:

Fr. Maurice Tant (1949-1950)
 Fr. Maurice Stanford (1950-1955)
 Fr. Emile Gales (1955-1959)
 Fr. Maurice Stanford (1959-1965)
 Fr. James Mc Cabe (Acting Rector 1965-1966)
 Fr. Gerald Leclaire (1966-1972)
 Fr. Victor Tucker (Acting Rector 1972-1973)
 Fr. Gerard Van Wallegghem (Acting Rector 1973-1974)
 Fr. Gerard Van Wallghem (1974-1984)
 Fr. Anthony Sharma (1981-1984)
 Fr. Leo Forestell (1984-1988)

09. Future Development Under the Belgian Jesuits: Fr. Fierens worked in Darjeeling for three years. He was rather sickly due to fever contracted in Chota. Nagpur and Orissa. During his stay about 150 people received baptism, 56 of which in the year 1890 alone. Due to his ill health he had to return to Europe where he died shortly after his arrival. Fr. Fieren's letter cited by Fr. Henrichs tells us that there was a Protestant reaction to the work of Jesuits. Eleven other Belgian Jesuits were to follow Fr. Depelchin as parish priests of Darjeeling from 1892 to 1947.⁴⁰

During that period Rev. Paul Goethals was the Archbishop of Calcutta. He opened a house for the sick and suffering servants of Christ in Darjeeling. That time it was known as the Archbishop's House. The

Archbishop took a great interest on the people of the hills. He is the one who built the main Church of Darjeeling (Cathedral of Immaculate Conception). Further the Archbishop sent assistant priests of high caliber like Fr. Scharlaeken and Lui Bodson.⁴¹ In 1891 the bungalow for the priests was destroyed and the present Bishop's House was built in its place.⁴² The foundation stone of the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception built by Brother Eugene Rotsaert, a Jesuit, was blessed by Archbishop Goethals on December 8, 1892, on the day of the Feast of Immaculate Conception. In 1892 Fr. Alphonse Scharlaeken was sent to Darjeeling. He spent forty-five years in Darjeeling. He Knew 'ins and outs' of scholastic philosophy and theology. He is the author of the book of meditations entitled *Half Hours with God*. Fr. Scharlaeken concentrated on Lepchas. He learnt Lepcha language and wrote catechism notes in Lepcha. Unfortunately, they could not be published.⁴³ Where are the manuscripts now ?

November 10, 1897 was a great day in the history of Darjeeling! The first Hydro Electric Power Station in the whole of Asia was established in Sidrabong, Darjeeling. For the first time electric bulbs burnt in Sarwari (Old Government House). This was the achievement of G.P. Robertson, an engineer.⁴⁴ In 1898 there was a heavy landslide in Darjeeling. It destroyed the school of Fr. Scharlacken. Many people were buried alive together with their houses.⁴⁵ In 1899 Fr. Bodson came as an assistant of Fr. Scharlaeken. He was a professor of philosophy in the seminary and a missionary in the hills. He succeeded in opening a school in Lingding near Tista Bridge. The District Commissioner had not allowed building or buying or even hiring a house there. However, he had declared if somebody from the village gives the house they could open a school. A generous man came forward with the donation and a school started. Soon there were forty boys on the rolls. But one night at the instigation of the Protestants the school was destroyed and Fr. Bodson was declared to have transgressed the regulation.⁴⁶ The stay of Fr. Bodson and Scharlaeken in Darjeeling was short. The acute need of priests in Chottanagpur took them there.⁴⁷

After the departure of Fr. Scharleken and Fr. Bodson the mission work in Darjeeling slowed down. They had laboured much for the military in Jalpahar and chiefly in lebong where the biggest Church in the district was built in 1908. A school was also started. But we do not have any records of them. However, this much is known that Rev. Fr. Charles Grant had opened a middle school during the First World War. We have

some information from 1925 onwards. Three primary schools and two middle schools were opened. These two middle schools later were raised to high schools.⁴⁸ In 1931 a group of about fifty Protestants (Dr. Yen-Singh's family and others) were received in the Catholic Church. A similar event occurred at the same time in Kalimpong where a Protestant Pastor's family (Sittling family) joined the Catholic Church. From May to December 1931 the Catholic population of Kalimpong had passed from sixty-seven to one hundred and thirty. In October alone fifty-three Protestants had been received.⁴⁹

10. Canadian Jesuits in Darjeeling (1947): The first batch of five Canadian Jesuits, four priests and a brother, arrived in Darjeeling in January 1947. Darjeeling heralded the independence of India with the installation of Fr. Johan Prendergast, as the first Canadian Jesuit parish priest of Darjeeling on March 30, 1947 just two months after his arrival in Darjeeling. Within the next twenty years new school and college buildings were constructed: for St. Joseph's College and St. Robert's School in Darjeeling, for St. Alphonsus in Kurseong and for St. Peter's in Gayaganga. Another significant development was the establishment of several new parishes and mission stations. Sittong in Kurseong, Lepcha Busty in Darjeeling, Matigara, Bhimbar and Hatighisa in Terai region came under the Jesuits. When the Diocese of Darjeeling got its first local Nepali Bishop in 1962, this policy of expansion spread vigorously.⁵⁰

It was from Darjeeling mission that the Canadian Jesuits penetrated Bhutan. In early 60s the Bhutan Government requested the Canadian Jesuits for assistance in the field of education. As a result some schools were opened in Bhutan region between 1960 and 1970. Tashingang School was the first one to be established. Sherubtse School in Kangling, which later became Bhutan's first college, followed it. Punakha School and Jigme Sherabling School were opened in Khaling. Fr. Mackey was the head of the mission that contained seventeen Jesuits. Among them was a Brother Johannesma who established an agricultural institute in Khangmo. Fr. Leclair became the first principal of Sherubtse College, which was under Delhi University, in 1983. In late 70s the Canadian Jesuits began an all India recruitment programme to get candidates for their congregation. They got a good response. The increasing number led to a double development: a candidate house in Gurung Basti (Siliguri) and a novitiate (Manresa) in 8th Mile, Kalimpong. The novitiate was

temporarily conducted in Goethal's Mt. Carmel residence in Kurseong, but later it was transferred to its present location. By 1986, two - thirds of the ninety-five Darjeeling Jesuits were Indians.⁵¹

In 70s and 80s the Jesuits also kept them busy with social concerns. Fr. Edgar Burns at Hayden Hall began many social and village out reach programmes. In Kurseong Fr. Abraham Murray launched self-help projects in poultry and egg production for poor students. In Darjeeling, Fr. Edward McGuire opened Gandhi Club where poor Bazar boys were trained in music and gymnastics. By 1997 there were one hundred and thirty-seven Jesuits in Darjeeling Province. New mission stations were opened in Kankebong-Kajjalia facing the Nepal border and in Munsong above the Tista river bordering Sikkim. Today Kajjalia and Munsong have become Quasi-parishes. In Kajjalia St. Mary's Church was built in 1993 and in 1994 St. Peter's Church was built in Munsong. In 1999 there were one hundred and twenty one Catholics in Munsong.⁵²

11. Number of the Baptized Since 1846: On November 3, 1846 two persons were baptized by the pioneer, Fr. McGirr. They were Agnes Margaret Laughnan and Julia Rebedda Anthony (No. 1 and 2 in the Baptism register). In the following year also only two could be baptized. After this Fr. McGirr had to leave the place. Fr. Ignatius Persico came to replace him. During his stay he baptized five persons in Darjeeling. He was followed by Fr. Felix Capnus. In 1851 Fr. Archangelus Capnus came to Darjeeling. He baptized sixteen persons. In 1856 Fr. Accursio came to Darjeeling. During his stay, from 1856 upto 1880, he has baptized one hundred and seventy four people.⁵³ Up to 1860 there were only forty-two Catholics. By the end of 1870 only ninety names were registered in the *liber baptizatorum*. The next decade, 1880 found a hundred and sixty-one Catholics. Two hundred and ninety-nine names were registered in 1900. There were 436 names in the baptism register, book one, which has the record of baptism from 1846 to 1893. Moreover, 6300 names were registered till the end of the year 2000 in the Baptism Register of Darjeeling. By February 2002 there were 6346 names in the Register. By March 2002 there were 8273 names in the baptism register of the church. Here below I have provided the total number of entries in each register of this parish.⁵⁴

REGISTER NO.	YEAR	NO. OF ENTRIES
Book One	1846-1893	436
Book Two	1893-1945	789
Book Three	1908-1926	633
Book Four	1926-1946	961
Book Five	1946-1966	672
Book Six	1966-1972	1449
Book Seven	1972-1977	276
Book Eight	1977-1995	633
Book Nine	1995-2000	2254
Book Ten	2000-March 2002	70
TOTAL	MARCH 2002	8273

Following are the priests who worked in the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception, the Mother Church in Darjeeling.⁵⁵

Priests Before Independence:

- Fr. Ignatius Persico (1848-1849)
- Fr. Felix (1849-1851)
- Fr. Archangelo Polverelli (1851-1859)
- Fr. Accursio Insermini (1859-1880)
- Fr. Charles Joseph Gentili (1880-1881)
- Fr. Louis Seagliarini (1881-1884)
- Fr. Accursio Insermini (1884-1885)
- Fr. James (1885-1896)
- Fr. Louis Seagliarini (1886-1887)
- Fr. Englebort Lentjes (1887, the last Capuchin priest)
- Fr. Henry Depelchin (1887-1891 the first Belgian Jesuit parish priest)
- Fr. John M. Schaefer (1892-1894)
- Fr. Vincent Naish (1895-1903)
- Fr. Henry Annacker, Fr. Anthony Van Kasteren and Fr. Louis Bodson (1904 for sometime)
- Fr. Remy Louwyek (1905)
- Fr. Frederick Peal (1906-1914)
- Fr. Charles Grant (1914-1919)
- Fr. Edmund Van Tichelen (1918-1936)
- Fr. Charles Grant (1936-1939)
- Fr. John De Berraly (1939-1942)

Fr. Betram Tolley (1942-1946)
Fr. Herold Craig (1946-1947)
Fr. John Prendergast (1947, the first Canadian parish priest)

Priests After Independence:

Fr. Eric Benjamin (1954-1962, late Bishop of Darjeeling)
Fr. Michael Rai (1963-1965)
Fr. Prendergast (1965-1967)
Fr. Augustine Gurung (1967-1973)
Fr. Michael Rai (1973-1975)
Fr. Charles Mukhia (1975-1977)
Fr. Marcus Yonzon (1979-1988)
Fr. Michael Lepcha (1989-1994)
Fr. Elias Pinto (1994-2002)

12. Sacred Heart Church, Singamari (1951): This parish was segregated from the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception in 1951. There were no Catholics in Singamari upto 1888. When St. Joseph's School was being built workers came from other places like Maria Busty, Sepoy Dhura, Lebung, Lepcha Busty, Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan. Some of them were Catholics. According to the *Liber Baptizatorum*, Sacred Heart Church, Singamari, the first name registered in the baptism register is that of Rudolph Subba, in July 27, 1951. But he is not the first one to be baptized from Singamari. The Singamari Parish was separated from the Immaculate Conception Parish in 1951. By February 9, 2002, there were 1931 names of Catholics registered in the baptism register of the parish.

13. Erection of the Diocese of Darjeeling and the First Local Bishop (1962): It was only in November 25, 1962 that the Diocese of Darjeeling was erected by joining together the part of Darjeeling District under the Archbishop of Calcutta and the Prefecture Apostolic of Kalimpong and Sikkim. The diocese got the first local Bishop in the person of Eric Benjamin. He was nominated Bishop in August 9, 1962 and one month before the erection of the diocese he was consecrated Bishop in Malta in October 7, 1962. After serving the diocese for thirty-two years he passed away due to a heart attack in 8th Mile, Kalimpong, in May 12, 1994. Two days later his body was buried in the Cathedral of Immaculate conception.⁵⁸ Three and a half years later Rt. Rev. Stephen Lepcha was elected Bishop on November 4, 1997 and was ordained on December 8, 1997.

14. **Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny, SJC (1956), Missionaries of Charity, MC (1964) and Sisters of Notre Dame, SND (1985):** Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny established Bethany Convent in 1956 in Gandhi Road, Darjeeling. Later they established St. Michael's Convent in North Point, Darjeeling in 1969. After an agreement with the late Bishop Eric Benjamin, the sisters of Missionaries of Charity (henceforth MC Sisters) came to Darjeeling in 1964. They settled down in a house opposite of T.V. Tower on Rock Ville Road on August 27, 1964. They started an orphanage and a dispensary there.⁵⁹ After an agreement with Bishop Eric Benjamin, the Notre Dame Sisters came to live in West Point in September 1984. The Notre Dame Convent in 1950s was a summer villa of the Jesuits. The old building was once used as Loyola Pastoral Centre. Later, it was shifted to Divyavani, a new building, in 1984 in the Convent Road, Darjeeling. Prior to the sisters' arrival the old building was occupied by Bethany sisters from Mangalore for two years (1982-1984). In September 1984 the Notre Dame Sisters took over and they started a school in the old Hall which was once Manresa (novitiate) of the Jesuits. In 1993 construction for the new school building began. On March 16, 1994 it was blessed and inaugurated by Bishop Eric Benjamin. It is a co-ed school. The school has been upgraded to class twelve from 2002.

15. **The Darjeeling Diocese Catholic Association (1966):** The Darjeeling Diocese Catholic Association (DDCA), an apex body of the laity of Darjeeling Diocese, was the brainchild of late Bishop Eric Benjamin, the first local bishop of the Darjeeling Diocese. DDCA came into being on July 23, 1966 during the first meeting held at St. Robert's School, Darjeeling where Prof. Gerald Mukhia of St. Joseph's College was unanimously elected as its first President. Fr. Pius Marcus served as the Ecclesiastical Representative. DDCA is formally affiliated to All India Catholic Union (AICU), an apex lay organization in the national level. AICU is recognized by CBCI and the Central Government of India. DDCA is registered under Society Act of West Bengal Government XXVI, No. S/1L/42120/06-07. It is successful in creating awareness about the rights and privileges of the Christian Minority through seminars, meetings and mass media in the Darjeeling Hills. It has mobilized the laity to form Unit Association in the parishes and sub-stations. (There were forty Unit Associations by the end of April 2007). Under the initiative of DDCA lay collaboration proved effective in the publication of religious literature like Hamro Samachar, Nava Jeevan, Nav Jyoti and a diocesan magazine called Tea Leaves, and many others. One of the significant publications was a

complete Bible in Nepali edited by Rev. Fr. William Burke, a Jesuit priest, and published by the Bellarmine Institute of Language, Darjeeling, in 1999 with the help of lay collaborators.

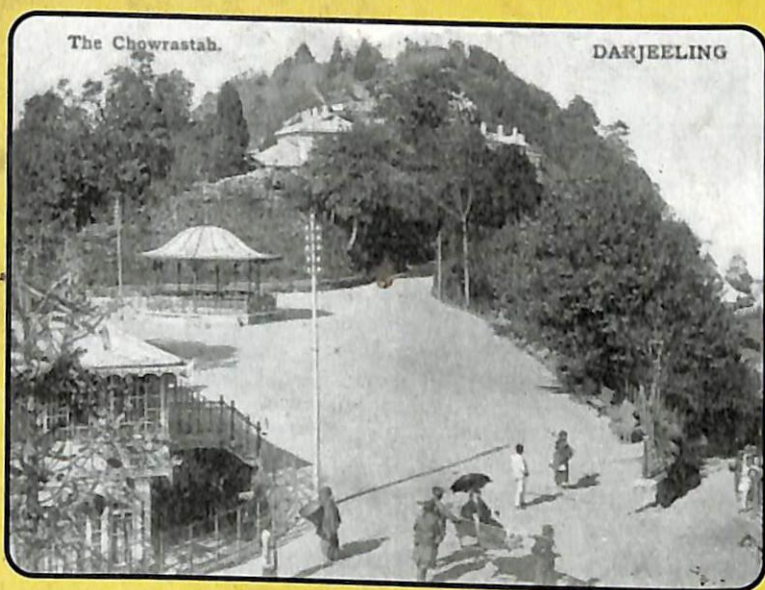
Conclusion: Advent of Catholicism in particular and Christianity in general was a boon to the people of Darjeeling hills. It is an undeniable fact that Catholicism has contributed extensively practically in all the fields. The early missionaries, priest and religious, gave everything they had and took nothing in return. Before I conclude let us have a glance at the Directory of the Darjeeling Diocese, 1999, to get a rough idea about how much their works have developed. However, these will be external observable facts only and the real contribution, i.e., the spiritual development of the people need not be proved. The Directory records the names of 62 diocesan priests, 26 Jesuit priests and 16 Salesian priests working in the diocese. A sum total of 264 Catholic nuns were in the diocese. There were 36 parishes and 83 sub-stations. There were 16 full time catechists, 30 part-time catechists and 20 voluntary catechists. There were 30,755 Catholics in the diocese. Darjeeling and Kurseong put together had 7,786 Catholics. There were 5 colleges, 11 higher secondary schools, 12 high schools, 45 primary schools, 5 training schools, 19 dispensaries, 40 mother and child health care centres, 3 crèches, 3 home for the aged, 13 hostels for boys, 14 hostel for girls, and 3 orphanages and many other things. Those interested in getting updated statistics can refer the Directory of 2004. Since my study is limited upto 2002 I have not given here the statistics found in the directory of 2004. This is for the information of the readers that there are at least five scholars at present who are doing research either privately or formally on the various aspects of Catholicism in the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim.

END NOTES :

1. Deanery means a specific area under the leadership of a dean or in-charge who is normally a priest.
2. Cf. "Catholic Mission in the Hills," A paper given to the Candidate by Charles Mukhia. A retired diocesan priest, belonging to the Diocese of Darjeeling.
3. Cf. Thomas Pothacamury, *The Church in Independent India* (Bombay: Examiner Press, 1961), 96-97.
4. Cf. "Catholic Mission in the Hills".
5. Cf. Dick B. Dewan, *Education in the Darjeeling Hills- An Historical Survey 1835-1985* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1991), 78.
6. Cf. Cindy L. Perry, *Nepali Around the World - Emphasizing Nepali Christians of the Himalayas* (Katmandu: Ekta Books, 1997), 31.
7. Cf. *ibid.*, 31
8. Cf. E. C. Dozey. *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 with a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District* (Kolkatta: Jetsun Publishing House, 1989), 73 (See also Dewan, 78).
9. Cf. Perry, 38.

Darjeeling : A Multi-Disciplinary Perusal is a remarkable attempt to profile the socio-educational and religious fabric of Darjeeling. It is a significant and welcome contribution by young scholars, to the ongoing reflection on Darjeeling, the role of education, especially by the Catholic Institutions, and the British contributions to shaping its past, present and future, as well as voicing its current socio-ecological concerns.

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