

# PARTITION AND REFUGEES PENETRATION: A Changing Demography, Economy and Culture of Dhupguri in the post colonial period (1947-2011)

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Dhupguri, now an important town of Western Duars and has become the largest agro-based town and fourth Municipal town in Jalpaiguri District. It located on the banks of Kumlai, Bamni and Gilandi river, serves as a gate way to the International boundary of Bangladesh.....it is also situated within 90 km. radius of the other international boundaries of Nepal and Bhutan. Dhupguri was merely a village on the eve of partition (1947). But after independence due to heavy influx of refugees from East Pakistan Dhupguri became a Mufassal town or small town in 1961. Then from 70's to 90,s Dhupguri became an important centre of communication and business in the district and thus, within short time Dhupguri has become a popular town in the district. This demographic progress is remarkable in the sense that on the eve partition (1947) the population of Dhupguri town stood merely 1,500. But in 2011 it raised to 44,719 of which 22,953 are males while 21,766 are females<sup>1</sup>.

**Area, Population and Density of Population of Dhupguri**

| Year | Area Sq.Km | Total population | Male  | Female | Density/Sq.Km |
|------|------------|------------------|-------|--------|---------------|
| 1971 | 14.6       | 16808            | 9181  | 7627   | 1151          |
| 1981 | 14.6       | 23089            | 12206 | 10883  | 1581          |
| 1991 | 14.6       | 30375            | 16099 | 14236  | 2080          |
| 2001 | 14.6       | 38100            | 19889 | 18211  | 2610          |
| 2011 | 14.95      | 44719            | 22953 | 21766  | 2991          |

Sources: Census of India, (1971 to 2011)

Dhupguri O.P. (Out Post) was formed by the portion of Thana Salbari laying on the west of the river Dudua and the river Rohit (notification No. 4849 dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1895). The O.P. was declared to be a P.S. by Notification No- 3222 dated the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1905<sup>2</sup>. However, the Thana Salbari was not found till then.

The development of communication of Dhupguri immensely improved in 70's specially, the NH-31B was made from Siliguri via Jalpaiguri, Maynaguri, Dhupguri, Gairkata and this road is linked with the main NH-31 near Birpara which runs towards Alipurduar and Assam. An important state high way- Dhupguri- Falakata linked road was made in 1964 by which the people of Dhupguri can shortly go towards Coochbehar to Assam and towards Alipurduar to Assam. In this way Dhupguri became the nerve of the road way communication in Jalpaiguri district and by the road way the people of Dhupguri easily go to every corner of the country. The railway main line (NFR) was made from NJP via Dhupguri, Falakata to Coochbehar and Assam. Thus, the railway communication of Dhupguri also flourished and the people of Dhupguri shortly go to the major megacities of the country. Due to the highly developed communication of Dhupguri the businessmen and people of other occupations who came here in search of livelihood and the population of Dhupguri is rising day by day.

Nearly 40's in the 20<sup>th</sup> century some enthusiastic persons i.e. Haran Ch. Roy, Bharat Ch. Roy, Khan Sahab Abdulkarim, Zamirulla, Mechhua Mahummad and other associates first took an initiative to make Dhupguri Hat. It may be called also Bandar. Then Hiralal Bayet, Gauri Sanrkar Maheswari, Ram Paul, Kanu Ram, Gani Mian and a wealthy Thakur family (Sudhir Thakur, Sachin Thakur) had played an important role to reform Dhupguri<sup>3</sup>. The thakur family was the pioneer of Netajee Para. And then after partition (1947) refugees' onslaught from East Pakistan and Assam (Bangalee Khadao Andolan-1962) in several years the population of Dhupguri highly raised. For the permanent settlement refugee youths made new roads, lanes and one by one Madhya Para, Ghosh Para, Cinema Hall Para, Bairatiguri, Mill Para, Santi Para, Bhowal Para, Netajee Para, Hospital Para, College Para etc. were developed spontaneously<sup>4</sup>. Numerous shops, educational institutions, play grounds, offices, vehicles increased with the rising population.

From the 60's numerous government offices, schools, hospitals etc. were established in Dhupguri. BLLRO office was established in 1956 at south side of Dhupguri Maiden. The first club- Dhupguri club was established in the western side of the Maiden. But now it became the Dhupguri Community Hall which was established in 1996<sup>5</sup>. Sub-Registry Office was established in 1967. Sripatiranjnan Paul was the first permanent sub-register of Dhupguri. Dhupguri B.D.O office was established in 1955. Nirmal Ch. Roy was the first B.D.O of Dhupguri<sup>6</sup>.

Dhupguri Hospital was established on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1957. Md. Aziz, Bibhuti Bhusan Mitra, Ganga Charan Modak etc. donated the land to build the hospital. The first Doctor of this hospital was Dr. Narayan Ch. Ghosh. Then it became only a primary health center with 10 beds. Than in 1985 the hospital became upgraded with 20 beds and in 1995 it rose to 30 beds. Now Banarhat, Duramari, Sakoajhora and Jhar Altagram- these 4 primary health centre are under Dhupguri hospital<sup>7</sup>.

The most important event of Dhupguri is establishment of the regulated market in 1975. The building was inaugurated by agricultural minister Kamal Guha on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1980. The five markets were under the Dhupguri Regulated Market. These are Dhupguri, Maynaguri, Banarhat, Mal & Nagrakata. Another important event of Dhupguri is establishment of a Fire Station. The long ways demand of people of Dhupguri and adjacent areas finally shaped on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb, 1996<sup>8</sup>. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest fire station in the district.

Dhupguri is the largest agro-based town in North Bengal. The local Rajbanshi and Muslim community had taken initiative to this agriculture. But they produced as per their needs only and they are happy with it. Among the cash crops they known only jute and betel nut which were of good quality also had its fame and got good price enough for the simple people to lead their undemanding livelihood.

After the Partition (1947) the huge number of refugees especially the Hindu Namasudra community had flourished to introduced commercial crops there. They are very much hard worker and enthusiastic. By their contribution Dhupguri and her adjacent areas produced a huge number of jute, tobacco, potato and others green vegetable. Due to huge production of potato Dhupguri may be said 'Burdwan of North Bengal'. Now in Dhupguri block there are six cold storages for potato. Besides this numerous vegetables i.e. tomato, green chili, cabbage, carrot were produced immensely. Dhupguri became the largest market of commercial crops (Super Market) in North Bengal. Every Tuesday and Saturday more than 20 thousand peasants gathered in Super Market with their production for selling and these vegetables especially potato and tomato are exported to different corner in the country through lorry and goods train. Thus, within short period Dhupguri become a center of agriculture in the district and Dhupguri market has become one of the best market in North Bengal.

### **Potato – Culture in Dhupguri**

Among the above vegetables the potato should be discuss separately. Because, the potato - culture became the key and backbone of the changes in the economic profile of Dhupguri. Due to huge production potato Dhupguri may be said 'Burdwan of North Bengal' now days.

Soon after Independence and Partition (1947) a blow of refugee's influx from erstwhile East Bengal (now Bangladesh) makes way in to Dhupguri area. Among these people most of them were from the peasant community specially Namasudra Community who were very much skilled and laborious in agriculture. They came and bought land bit by bit from the local Rajbanshi and Muslim people who it in abundance and had no greed for getting high price for their piece of land sold from the vast stretch they had.

However, there are two types land; one is 'Dola' which is fertile moist low land. This plots of lands covered numerous rivers stream and abundant rainfall. This type of land is good for jute and paddy growing. The other type of land is 'Danga' was

simple elevated land at distance from river and it is good for tobacco and various types of vegetables. Though potato – growing started in Dhupguri after the Bangladesh War (1971) but it got raise in high after 80's in the last century. At that time the development of communications and market in Siliguri in close vicinity with the connection with Sikkim, Nepal, Assam and North Eastern States brought the opportunity to Dhupguri farmers to get good returns from their agro-products. These concurrent events encouraged the farmers of Dhupguri to shift towards growing vegetable in more land putting aside the cultivation of paddy, jute and tobacco as these crops were losing their demand due to diminishing of jute industry, infiltration of smuggled betel nut from Nepal at cheaper rate etc.

The pioneer potato – grower were Indra Mohan Das, Jitendra Ch. Sarker and Ganesh Ch. Dutta. All of them were East Bengal Refugees and started to use new methods of farming by introducing use of chemical, fertilizer, pesticide and quality seeds in potato cultivation. This helped to increase the quantity and cosmetic quality of potatoes which attracted the instant demand in the market. By an interview with Mr. Tapas Das, son of Indra Mohan Das the researcher became able to know that they came here from Kamalabagh (PS) of Dacca district (Bangladesh). They started potato cultivation from 1980-81 at Khalaigram Anchal which is five km. (east) from Dhupguri town. In 1994-95 Indra Mohan Das was cultivated nearly 120 bigha of land for potato crops. According to him 60 bigha is their own land and rest 60 bigha is lease from others. He had paid nearly Rs. 1000 – 1200 per bigha as lease for one season. Unfortunately Indro Mohan Das, the pioneer potato-grower of Dhupguri had died in 1995.

Sri Jitendra Ch. Sarker, by profession he is a teacher but a famous potato-grower by passion who personally brought seeds and contemporary technical supports from Agricultural Research Centers of Uttarpradesh. Later days may other big farmers – like Ganesh Ch. Dutta, Sambhu Das, Ibrahim Hossain Sarker, Ajoy Nandi Subhas Sen, Subhas Roy, Sushanta Raksheet, Nihar Ranjan Kar and many others are the famous for potato-growing in Dhupguri and this potato-culture has brought a change their lifestyle. Among them the researcher took an interview with Sri Ganesh Ch. Dutta who had came as refugee in 1971 from Munshiganj, dist-Dacca, Bangladesh. He had settled Registri Office Para, Dhupguri. Ganesh babu Started potato cultivation from 1980. In the last year (2016) he had cultivated nearly 140 bighas of land in Uttar Boragari area. His own land is 30 bigha and rest quantity of land he takes on lease basis from numerous small farmers.

It is very noticeable feature that Dhupguri have run more than 8-10 thousands Rickswah Van from the adjacent areas. Most probably this huge number of Rickswah Van cannot find any other towns in North Bengal. Due to agro-based town every day the several thousands of peasants with their vegetables were come to the market by this Van. Thus, Dhupguri may be called 'the town of Rickswah Van'.

From 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the left political atmosphere had left far-reaching effect in Dhupguri region. Some noted communist leaders like Nityananda Das Gupta, Banamali Roy, Suresh Ch. Dey, Subhash Sarker, Subhash Roy etc. organized the agri-labourers and small industry labourers at Dhupguri and her adjacent areas. After Left Government rose to power (1977) in the state, Banamali Roy, an eminent personality of Dhupguri became a cabinet minister and thereafter the true development of Dhupguri started to go up. Various offices, banks, schools, college, fire station and a beautiful park were set up at that time.

Due to rising population and another development of Dhupguri need a municipality. Finally Dhupguri Municipality was established on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2001 under the chairmanship of Sri Nitya Sundar Tribedy (SDO-Jalpaiguri Sadar). The first election of Dhupguri municipality was held in 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2002 and newly Municipal Board was formed under the chairmanship of Sri Satya Ranjan Ghosh. Another fifteen members were- 1) Smt.Lalita Roy, 2) Sri Soumyajit Sinha, 3) Sri Nitai Basak, 4) Sri Abjakanti Mandal, 5) Sri Arun Sikdar, 6) Sri Chandra Roy, 7) Sri Naren Dutta, 8) Sri Badal Sarker, 9) Sri Bikash Mustafi, 10) Sri Uttam Paul, 11) Smt. Jayanti Roy, 12) Smt. Mamata Roy 13)Smt. Koushalya Baheti, 14) Smt. Mahasweta Mitra and 15) Sandhya Modak. The total area of municipality was 14.55 sq. km. In 2001 the total voters of Dhupguri town is 38,099 where the male is 19,825 and the female is 18,274<sup>9</sup>.

### **Educational Institutions**

The oldest and reputed educational institute of Dhupguri is Dhupguri High school- established in 1945. The first Head Master of this school was Omar Ali Mian. Md. Safiar Rahaman, Sahab Abdul Karim and Bibhuti Bhusan Mitra were the pioneer of this school<sup>10</sup>. Another important school of in the town is Bairatiguri High School which established in 1960 and Amulya Kr. Das choudhury became the first head master of this school. For girls the reputed school is Dhupguri Girls High School established – 1961 and Dipali Bhowmik became the pioneer head mistress of the school.

About higher education in Dhupguri Sukanta Mahavidyalaya has been playing very important role. This is the first college in the district which is established in a block town, but it covers a vast area of Dooars and the middle of Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar and Cooch Behar town. An Organising Committee was set up with the members of Subodh Sen (Secretary), D. P. Bhutia (BDO), Nirmal Kr. Sarkar, Pujan Chakraborty, Banamali Roy (MLA and cabinet minister of Dhupguri), Punai Oraon (MLA Nagrata), Manik Sanyal (Jalpaiguri), Harihar Bandopadhyaya, Anuradha Chakraborty, Amulya kr. Dhar Choudhury, Mohan Lal Oraon (MLA Mal), Sri Dharendra Nath Roy (MLA Rajganj) Chairman DBTA, Secretary DBTA, etc<sup>11</sup>. This committee was presided by S. A. Ahmed (SDO- Jalpaiguri Sadar) as administrator. After getting Govt. notification the first class started on 25<sup>th</sup> Sept.1981 at Dhupguri Boys hostel (Sodasona Hostel)<sup>12</sup>. Finally, permanent college building was established on the northerern side of the Dhupguri – Falakata State High Way which is two km. eastward from heart of the town. The college introduced subjects of English, Bengali, History, Philosophy, Political Science and Economics. Aftermath Education, Geography, Sociology, Sanskrit and science stream were also included subsequently. The first batch of the college started with 182 students. But the number of students rose to 5500 and above. So, it is a big trouble to accommodate all the students in the short premises of the total infrastructure of the college. Due to gradual demand and interest in higher education another similar college especially a girl's college is of utmost importance in this region. Finally, very recently (July, 2013) Govt. notification had reached to establish a girls college (Dhupguri Girls College) in this region.

### Cultural Activities

Cultural activities of Dhupguri had flourished from the embryonic form of the town. Before Partition (1947) numerous local cultural programme such as Kusan Yatra, Bisha-harir pala, Chore-chunnir gan, Bhaoyia gan (folk song of Rajbanshi communities) etc happened in several times. After partition with the coming of refugees from East Bengal various religious-cultural programme such as Krishna Yatra, Sankirtan, Kabigan, Rupban yatra were found in Dhupguri. Puppet dance, mazi, Madari ka khel and Chaitra-er Gnajan dance also very popular in this region. In 80's – 90's in the last century two important yatrपाला in Rajbanshi language – 'Manimala' and 'Maynar Chakur Ja' had flourished not only in Dhupguri but also in whole district and North Bengal too<sup>13</sup>.

Immediate after partition (1947) several important Magazines were published in Dhupguri. The first important magazine Jhankar was published in 1958 by the editorship of Sri Nirmal Kr. Sarkar. This magazine was the first hand script magazine in Dhupguri<sup>14</sup>, though it existed only 9-10 months. Lal Nakshatra of Sri Tapan Chattopadhyaya was popular not only in Dhupguri but also in the whole district too. The famous weekly magazine Tista-torsa is edited by Dr. Krishna Dev. Very recently Chaturtha Barta edited by Dr. Sudhansu Kr. Sarkar has become prominent<sup>15</sup>.

About dramatic culture Dhupguri had got an eminent position in 50's when Sri Nityananda Das Gupta came Dhupguri high school as a teacher. He was the pioneer of first drama club -Rabindrayan. Except the drama of Rabindranath numerous English drama –Shakespeare, Bernardshaw etc. were played in the club in several times. The dramatist Dilip Dutta had got a close contact with famous drama artist Utpal Dutta, organized Tarun Natya Sanstha which had left a far reaching impact on the whole district and Bengal too. Others reputed drama artist were Sri Jagadish Roy, Sri joyangeshwar Chanda, Sri Tusher Bandyapadhyaya, Sri Kr.Amit Dey etc. Amit Dey also writes numerous poems, songs and dramas etc. The famous poet in Bengali literature Sri Subodh Sarkar had spent some years when he came to join Sukanta Mahavidyalaya as a lecturer<sup>16</sup>.

About the field of music numerous personalities were stayed in Dhupguri whose contribution were flourished in whole district and Bengal too. Balaram Mukharjee was a great player of sitar who had to close contact with the world famous sitarist Ostad Alauddin Khan. Son of Dhupguri Baul Kala Chand Darbesh is famous Boul singer performed different corner of Bengal – India and outside India also. The famous spouse Siddheswar Roy – Sumitra Roy had played a regular Bhaoyia song in radio center Siliguri and TV center Kolkata. Khirood Sarkar became famous for his Zari song. Besides these Abhoy Hazr'r Dhak, Gajen Bairagi'r Bishara and Ganat Rava,r Rava Dance and song are very famous in whole district and Bengal<sup>17</sup>.

Among the small towns in the district Dhupguri is very important for organizing religious and social festivals like Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, Holly, Chaitra Sankranti,Iyd Utsab etc. The Durga Puja of Naba Jeevan Club and Kali Puja of STS Club are very attractive. Peoples of different sections meet to come enthusiastically to take part from not only the district but also the different corners of North Bengal and Assam too.

However, the post colonial period (1947-2011) in the Jalpaiguri District ushered a phase of commercialization of crops. The amazing growth of tea – timber and tobacco (now tourism) industry in the Jalpaigur District could suggest a quantum jump in the economic growth of the region. But in Dhupguri with the growth of vegetables especially potatoes and the establishment of

well communication such as rail and different high way had played an important role for initial economic growth of the region. Basically, the partition of India (1947) was the most important factor which had an immense contribution to the process of the development of urbanization in Dhupguri. By this project it had explored and investigated a new meaningful insight in to the urban pattern of Jalpaiguri district as well as West Bengal. The partition (1947) unleashed series of socio- economic tension in India and Jalpaiguri district. Naturally this area witnessed the close effects of partition.

So, from the above discussion it is clear to us that how demographic changes made close impact on socio-cultural and economic transformations in the district which leads political tension, now-a-days in the Dhupguri.

**Foot notes:** 1) Mufassal town – Small town /census tow,  
2) Bandar -- Small market  
3) Dola -- Low land,  
4) Para – Small locality  
5) Bigha – Land measuring unit (60x60 gauzes)

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6. Ibid, p – 16.
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12. Subodh Kr. Sen, Op. Cit. p – 24
13. Ibid, p – 24-26.
14. Ibid, p – 25-26.
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17. Ibid, p – 26.

#### Interaction of Eminent Personalities of Dhupguri

1. Sri Subodh Sen : Cultural Activist and former head master, Shalbari High School, Dhupguri (28-10-2013)
2. Sri Pujan Chackraborty : Old Citizen, Cultural Activist and former Head Master – Bairatiguri High School, Dhupguri (28-10-2013)
3. Sri Minal Kanti Sarkar : Cultural Activist and former head master, Jateswar High School, Dhupguri (29-10-2013)

4. Sri Monotosh Pramanik : Cultural Activist and Asst. Professor, Sukanta Mahavidyalaya, Dhupguri (10-11-2013)
5. Sri Parimal Ch. Sen : Cultural Activist and former Principal – Sukanta Mahavidyalaya, Dhupguri. (28-10-2015)
6. Sri Sailen Roy: Political Activist, School-teacher and Chairman of Dhupguri Municipality, Dhupguri. (16-06-2017)
7. Sri Ganesh Ch. Dutta: Famous Potato-grower, Registri Office Para, Dhupguri. (16-06-2017)
8. Sri Indra Mohan Das: Famous Potato-grower, Khalaigram, Dhupguri. (16-06-2017)
9. Md. Sirajul Haque : Head Master, Bairatiguri High School, Bairatiguri, Dhupguri. (17-06-2017)

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