

# **ECONOMY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**A DISTRICT LEVEL STUDY**

**Darjeeling**

**Jalpaiguri**

**Koch Bihar**

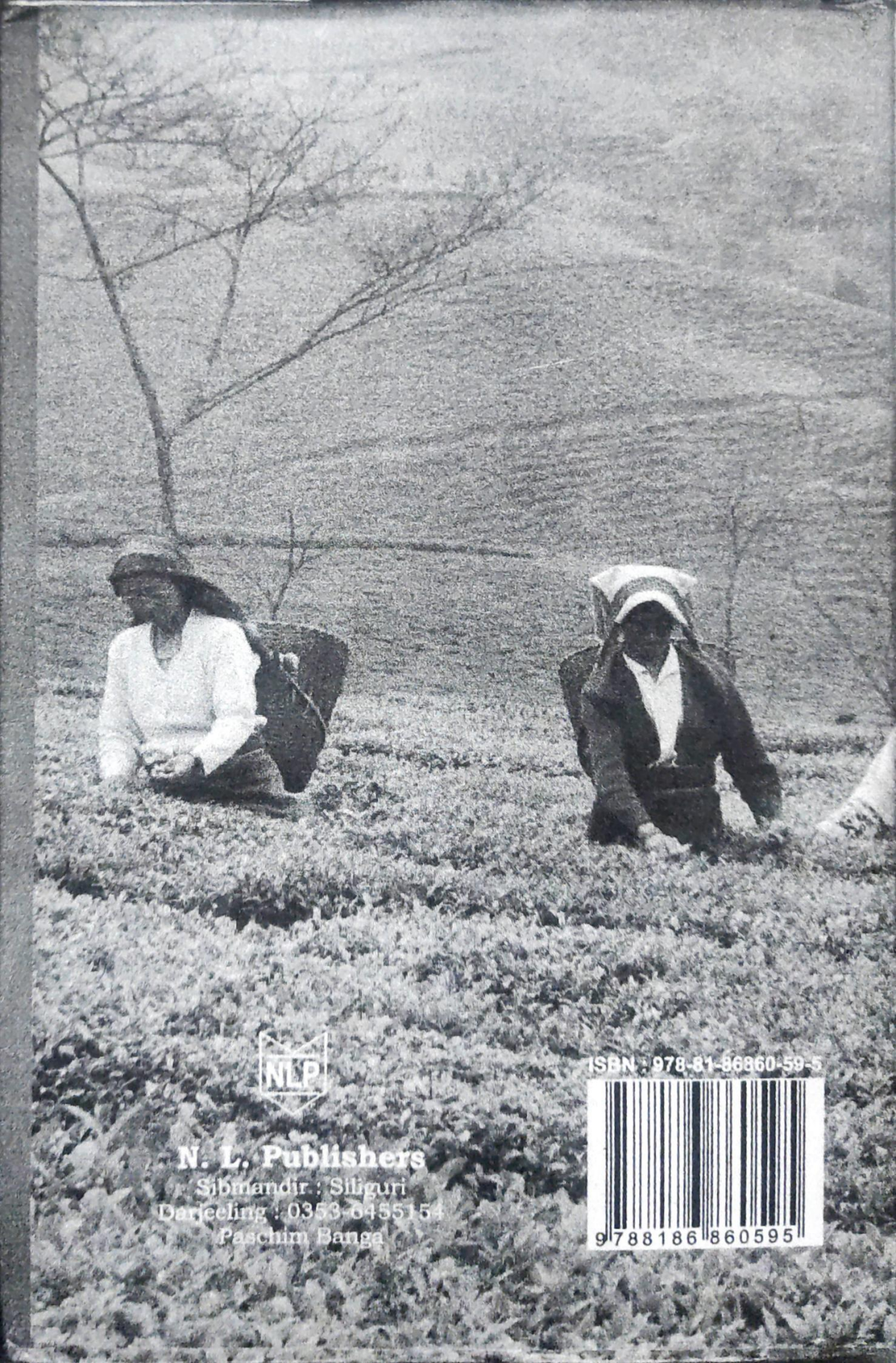
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# TOURISM LANDSCAPE IN JALPAIGURI DISTRICT: A GEO-ECONOMIC SPATIAL STUDY

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## Introduction:

Economic transformation through tourism has now been accepted by all countries and thus tourism has been recognized as an industry (Sharpley & Telfer et al, 2006). It invites foreign exchange earnings, accelerates employment and income potentials in almost every sector of economy at national regional and local levels. Tourism industry plays an important role in the economy of North Bengal after tea industry. The Northern hilly country and the rolling topography of Dooars snow clad peaks, furrowed ridges, murmuring streams, foaming torrents, lakes, smiling valleys, abundant historical ruins, antiquities, architectures, ethnic diversity and the rich cultural expressions - all these components have built the framework of tourism in North Bengal.

The modern tourism in North Bengal region had its origin with the emergence of Darjeeling, the first hill station of the country. Darjeeling owes her 'chance discovery' in 1820 when two British civil servants- General Lloyd and Dr Chapman were sent for finding out a health resort in the hills for the ailing white soldiers residing in the hot, humid plains (Malley, 1907). The absorbing scenic, grandeur majestic snow-capped peaks in the backdrop-exhilarating climate, lush green dense forests rich in varied forms of flora and fauna all enthralled them. Thus the British Government did the annexation of the area by a treaty with the King of Sikkim. Subsequently settlements grew up on the forest-clad spurs of the Ghoom-Senchal ridge. This was the humble beginning of a village having around only 100 souls in 1839. At a later stage the construction of Hill cart road and Pankhabari road, introduction of tea and cinchona plantations, initiation of educational institutions and the setting up of narrow gauge Darjeeling Himalayan Railway- all ushered in heavy influx of immigrants along with the exodus of tourist and made Darjeeling world famous as the 'Queen of the Hill stations'. After this, there emerged other hill stations like Kurseong, Kalimpong and Mirik for various purposes. Thus, several tourist nuclei have been grown up in the lap of Darjeeling Himalayas which beckon both the international and domestic tourists.

Except these tourist destinations the other tourist places of the district are confined to North Bengal plains. Thus the tourist places of Jalpaiguri district have been gained popularity in recent times.

## Tourism in Jalpaiguri District:

The district of Jalpaiguri is one of the rich tourism belts of North Bengal. It occupies an area of 6227 sq. km. The total population of the district is 34.02 lakh. However most of the tourist destinations of this district are forest-based although there are a few pilgrimage and historical places. A brief description of these places of touristic appeal is mentioned below:

### Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary- A Fragrance of the Jungle:

The place is a lovely natural wilderness strewn with a number of perennial streams and flanked by the rivers Malangi and Torsa from the east and the west. One hundred and four sq. km. of lush panorama of mighty trees interspersed in an area of tall grasslands. This is Jaldapara, the most rich tourist spot of Jalpaiguri district. It is situated in Alipurduar Sub-division and is 124 km from Siliguri. Its area is 216 sq. km. This sanctuary was constituted in the year of 1941 for the protection of wildlife, *particularly one-horned Rhinos*, an animal threatened with extinction. NH 31 divides this sanctuary into two halves. The Nn. Bhabar zone falls on the east-west migration route of the resident population of Asiatic Elephant in North Bengal- whereas the southern Terai grasslands are the heaven for the Great Indian One-horned Rhinos.

### Tourism Resource Base:

#### Geological - Natural Scenery:

With all its natural beauty and grandeur, Jaldapara provides a perfect place for sober and mature tourists, particularly for naturalists, scholars, artists. During autumn and winter, the enchanting beauty of the sanctuary is accentuated. In these periods the blue skies enhance the spectacular display of the landscape scenes, especially the spectacular sunset. The morning mist at the break of the day envelops the tree stands and as the sunshine gradually penetrates through the foliage, Nature's peace flows into one, filling the soul with joys of physical and spiritual well being.