
Demographic Profile of the Workers and Scheduled Tribes in the Tea Gardens of Alipurduar District

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Abstract: This paper is a part of research work on scheduled tribes by Manik Paul under the supervision of Dr. Debasish Biswas to investigate into the demographic profile of the scheduled tribes (ST) population in the tea gardens (T.G.) of Alipurduar district in West Bengal. The demographic profile of scheduled tribes has been described in the tea garden wise and Block wise in Alipurduar district. It is very difficult to identify all the scheduled tribes community in the tea gardens in a specified manner. However, the investigator try to give a brief demographic profile of scheduled tribes community in the tea gardens from various district reports and census reports of India. According to 2011 census, there are 29.46% population are reside in the tea gardens area in Alipurduar district where 31.30% are male and 28.47% are female population. The study shows that out of all scheduled tribes population in Alipurduar district there are 54.87% scheduled tribes population reside in the tea gardens of the district where 54.01% are male and 55.04% are female population. It also shows that there are 28.81% ST population reside in all blocks of Alipurduar district. From all the tea gardens population 53.66% population are scheduled tribe.

Keywords:Alipurduar district, Demographic Profile, Scheduled Tribes, Tea Gardens.

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Introduction

The tribals are 'Adivasi' or original dwellers, living in the subcontinent from unrecorded time and possibly driven into the forests by more aggressive settlers - Aryans being the earliest one to socially subjugate them. In order to resist complete domination, tribals evolved

their distinct identity through endogamy, their cropping pattern, hunting and food gathering. Above all, in their intensely personal relationship with the forest around them, they formed perfectly balanced rhythms which can best be described as symbiotic.¹

P.G. Krishnan² defines “tribe is a social group of simple and kind, the members of which speak a common dialect, have a single government act together for common purposes and have a common name, a contiguous territory, a relatively uniform culture or way of life and a traditions of common descent.”

A.B. Bardhan³ defines the tribe as “course of socio-cultural entity at a definite historical stage of development. It is a single, endogamous community with a cultural and psychological makeup.”

D.N. Majumdar⁴ defines the tribe as “a collection of families or common group bearing a common name, the members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos, regarding marriage, professions and have developed a well assured system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations.”

Kamala Devi Chatopadhyaya⁵ defines “a tribe ordinarily has an ancestor or a patron deity. The families or groups composing the larger units are linked through religions and socio-economic functions.”

Profile of Alipurduar District

Alipurduar district is a new district of West Bengal. It is the 20th district in the state of West Bengal and 7th district of North Bengal which is established on the 25th June in 2014. Alipurduar district previously joined with the district of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal. This district comprises one municipality area i.e., Alipurduar and six community development blocks i.e., Alipurduar-I, Alipurduar-II, Falakata, Madarihat-Birpara, Kalchini and Kumargram. In these six blocks there are 66 Gram Panchayets and 9 census towns. Alipurduar is the district headquarters. It comprises mainly of rural population and more than 80% of its total population belong to SC/ST. A huge number of ethnic tribes like Rajbanshi, Rava, Mech, Santal, Masadia, Boro, Toto, Oraon etc. are residing in this district. There are 65 tea gardens in the district.

According to census 2011, the total population of this district is 15,01,983. Total male population is 7,70,905 and female population is 7,31,078. The sex ratio is 948 per 1000. The population density is 539 per sq. Km. The percentage of total literacy is 64.7. The official languages are Bengali, English and the regional languages are Bengali, Hindi, Bodo, Nepali. The main tribes of the district are Boro, Mech, Toto, Santhal, Oraon, Munda etc.

Historical Background of Tea Industry in the Dooars Region

Alipurduar district is carved out from Jalpaiguri district in 2014. So, the history of tea industry of Alipurduar district is related to the district of Jalpaiguri which was established in 1869. The tea industry of Jalpaiguri District is situated on a vast area of Dooars Region. A large number of poor people worked here. The tea industry of Bengal was established in Darjeeling district by the English tea planters in the decade of 1840. A vast area of Dooars was captured by the English after Anglo-Bhutan war (1864-1865)⁷. After the establishment of Jalpaiguri District in 1869, the tea gardening was opened on the bank of Tista River near Gajoldoba by Richard Haughton, the pioneer of the tea industry in the Jalpaiguri district, in 1874. From D.H.E. Sunder's Settlement Report⁸ it appeared that the tea industry in this district began in 1874-75 and the first lease issued to 22 gardens in 1877. Gradually, so many tea gardens were set up after the settlement of Gajoldoba tea garden. These are Fulbari tea garden (1875); Dalimcot tea garden, Bagracot tea garden (1876); Kumlai, Damding, Washarbari, Manabari tea garden (1877); Manihope, Patabari, Ranichhera tea garden (1878). In the same way, more than 150 tea gardens were growing up during 1874-1930 AD. The total area comprised in them was 139751 acres at that time. Most of the tea gardens were the ownership of English planters. Very few of the tea gardens were under the ownership of middle class Bengali Babu of Jalpaiguri Town.

Origin of the Scheduled Tribes Worker in the Tea Gardens

According to the Sunder's report⁹ on 'Survey and Settlement of Western Duars 1889-1895' the castes of coolies employed in tea gardens are hillmen who came from Nepal and Darjeeling; Oraons, Mundas and a few Kols who came from Chotanagpur District; Oriyas from Ganjam and Santhals from Santhal Pargana. Meches, Dhimens and Garos came from other side of Brahmaputra as also Bhutias were seen working in gardens though their numbers were few. Skilled labour in the way of carpenter, masons etc came principally from Purnea and Muzaffarpur districts. Moreover the local supply of labourers were entirely limited to cultivators who only worked during the cold weather months and principally employed on contract in building, clearing jungle lands, brickmaking or cutting firewood. As a rule, these people return to their country or homestead in March and April to cultivate their crops. With extensive establishment of tea gardens by the British the scenario began to change. Now different types of crops, vegetables and cotton were being cultivated in a planned manner. Very few tribes especially the Mech stuck to their earlier occupation like weaving. The Ravas still could confine themselves in the forest area and the Tharu's, Garos, Totos, Dhimals and the Bhutias declined in number.

Population, Household and Workers in the Tea Gardens of Alipurduar District

According to Labour Department report of Alipurduar district¹⁰ at present the total registered tea gardens in the district are 60 (total 65) out of which 37 are normal, 19 are sick and 4 are closed. The Table-1 illustrates the tea garden wise population, household and total worker in Alipurduar District.

Table-1. All Tea Gardens Population, Household, Worker in Alipurduar District

STATUS OF TEA GARDEN	NO. OF TEA GARDEN	POPULATION	HOUSEHOLD	TOTAL WORKER	% of worker to total pop
NORMAL	37	213994	32088	46601	21.25
SICK	19	132048	15940	23570	17.85
CLOSED	4	26920	2990	4911	18.24
All T.G.	60	372962	51018	75082	20.13

From the above Table -1, it shows that there are 372962 total populations, 51018 household and 77082 total workers in the tea gardens of Alipurduar District. It also shows that there are 213994 populations in normal tea gardens, 132048 populations in sick tea garden and 26920 populations in closed tea gardens. The table shows that 20.13% of worker to the total populations are engaged in the tea gardens from which 21.25% in normal tea gardens, 17.85% in sick tea gardens and 18.24% in closed tea gardens.

Table-2. Normal Tea Gardens Population, Household, Worker in Alipurduar District

Name of Garden	Status	Population	Household	Total Worker	% of worker to total pop
Atiabari	Normal	5761	1234	1489	25.85
Beech	Normal	10254	1802	2189	21.35

Bharnobari	Normal	7835	1507	1959	25.00
Bhatkhawa	Normal	6235	1046	1828	29.32
Bhatpara	Normal	7805	1138	1529	19.59
Central Duars	Normal	9078	1254	1965	21.65
Chintula	Normal	6750	900	1276	18.90
Chuapara	Normal	6093	960	1726	28.33
Dalgaon	Normal	8921	1140	1752	19.64
Dima	Normal	9336	1470	2017	21.60
Ethelbari	Normal	2910	431	677	23.26
Gopalpur	Normal	5800	903	1269	21.88
Mahua	Normal	478	56	88	10.02
Mechpara	Normal	8208	1012	1318	16.06
Nangdala	Normal	4530	851	1250	27.59
Nimtijhora	Normal	6435	647	970	15.03
Radharani	Normal	1417	321	424	29.92
Rahimpur	Normal	1834	237	240	13.08
Rajabhat	Normal	5300	799	1113	21.00
Sarugaon	Normal	3110	576	662	21.29
Satali	Normal	13066	1518	2405	18.41
Singhania	Normal	2702	425	733	27.13
Subhasini	Normal	6189	700	910	14.70
Tasati	Normal	6793	1177	1272	18.74
Kartik	Normal	4420	652	1175	26.58
Dhowlajhora	Normal	3775	413	831	22.01
Srinathpur	Normal	1066	215	234	21.95
Majherdabri	Normal	3775	395	928	24.58
Chuniajhora	Normal	2744	449	540	16.36
Phaskowa	Normal	1520	300	382	25.13
Rydak	Normal	12330	1298	1863	15.11
Jayanti	Normal	4775	669	1076	22.53
Kumargram	Normal	6368	1180	1358	21.33

Sankosh	Normal	6851	1258	1758	25.66
Newlands	Normal	8542	1264	1657	19.40
Mathura	Normal	6488	1463	1744	26.88
Turturi	Normal	4500	428	525	11.67
Total		213994	32088	46601	21.25

Source: Labour Department Report of Alipurduar District, 2022

Table-3. Sick Tea Gardens Population, Household, Worker in Alipurduar District

NAME OF GARDE N	STATUS	POPULATION	HOUSEHOLD	TOTAL WORKER	% of worker to total pop
Birpara	Sick	20710	1349	2460	11.88
Dalmore	Sick	6957	1142	1107	15.91
Dalsingpara	Sick	12000	1140	1752	14.60
Dimdima	Sick	7189	1155	1645	22.88
Dhumchipara	Sick	5356	1159	1918	35.81
Gargenda	Sick	4000	802	1517	37.93
Hantapara	Sick	11508	1109	1898	16.49
Jaybirpara	Sick	2623	508	641	24.44
Kadambini	Sick	4643	571	1104	23.78
Kalchini	Sick	10775	620	1969	18.27
Makrapara	Sick	3910	402	477	12.23
Mujnai	Sick	5904	855	1095	18.55
Raimatang	Sick	6190	854	1261	20.38
Ramjhora	Sick	5961	846	962	16.14
Toorsa	Sick	5550	783	810	14.59
Tulsipara	Sick	4080	598	1141	24.97
Kohinoor	Sick	5180	800	857	16.54
Patkapara	Sick	4500	770	1632	36.27
Rahimabad	Sick	5012	450	793	15.82

Total		132048	15940	23570	17.85
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Source: Labour Department Report of Alipurduar District, 2022

Table-4. Closed Tea Gardens Population, Household, Worker in Alipurduar District

Name of Garden	Status	Population	Household	Total Worker	% of worker to total pop
Bandapani	Closed	7733	707	1161	15.00
Deklapara	Closed	4800	425	600	12.50
Lankapara	Closed	9177	1080	2132	23.23
Madhu	Closed	5210	778	1018	19.54
Total		26920	2990	4911	18.24

Source: Labour Department Report of Alipurduar District,2022

From the above Table –2 and Table-3 it is found that most of the population (20710) are lived in the Birpara tea garden and lowest population (487) are lived in the Mahua tea garden. Among the workers most of the workers (2460) are seen in the Birpara tea garden and lowest workers (88) are seen in the Mahua tea garden. In Alipurduar district 20.13% of total workers to the total population are engaged in the tea gardens. Among the tea gardens the most of the percentage (**37.93%**) of total workers to total population are found in the Garganda tea garden and the lowest percentage (**10.02%**) of total workers to total population are found in the Mahua tea garden. From Table-4 it is showed that in the closed tea gardens maximum 23.23% workers to the total population are in Lankapara tea garden and minimum 12.50% workers to the total population are in the Deklapara tea garden.

Scheduled Tribe Population in the Tea Gardens of Alipurduar District

Table-5. Block wise Total population and percentage of ST Population in the Tea Gardens of Alipurduar district:

Block Name	Tea Garden	Total Pop	Male	Female	ST pop	ST Male	ST Female	% of ST pop

APD-I	Total	216931	111378	105553	36605	18774	17831	16.87
	All T.G.	16097 (7.42%)	8088 (7.26%)	8009 (7.59%)	12588 (34.39%)	6269 (33.39%)	6319 (35.44%)	78.20
APD-II	Total	218272	112434	105838	40245	20386	19859	18.44
	All T.G.	16630 (7.62%)	8367 (7.40%)	8263 (7.80%)	7988 (19.89%)	4004 (19.64%)	3982 (20.06%)	48.03
Falakata	Total	290722	149626	141096	46293	23537	22756	15.92
	All T.G.	22130 (7.61%)	11070 (7.40%)	11061 (7.84%)	19346 (41.79%)	9637 (40.94%)	9709 (42.67%)	87.42
Kumargram	Total	199609	102592	97017	59877	30237	29640	30.00
	All T.G.	41281 (20.68%)	23968 (23.36%)	22127 (22.81%)	32586 (54.42%)	16197 (53.57%)	16389 (55.29%)	78.94
Kalchini	Total	298458	154829	143629	120282	59744	60538	40.30
	All T.G.	166775 (55.89%)	82907 (53.55%)	83866 (58.39%)	80533 (66.95%)	39667 (66.39%)	40966 (67.67%)	48.29
Madarihat	Total	202026	101536	100490	78341	38975	39339	38.76
	All T.G.	127326 (63.02%)	63190 (62.17%)	64135 (63.82%)	56353 (71.96%)	22730 (71.15%)	28623 (72.76%)	44.26
Alipurduar	Total	1324818	631195	693623	381616	191635	18998	28.81

Alipurduar	All	390239	197590	197461	209394	103504	105890	53.6
	T.G.	(29.46%	(31.30%	(28.47%	(54.87%	(54.01%	(55.04%	6
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Source¹¹: Census of India 2011

From the above table, it shows that in Alipurduar district there are 53.66% of scheduled tribe population to the total population are reside in the tea gardens area. It also shows that there are 16.87% of scheduled tribes population reside in the Alipurduar-I Block where 78.20% population reside in the tea gardens of Alipurduar-I Block. It shows that in Alipurduar-II Block there are 18.44% ST population are reside where 48.03% of scheduled tribes population are reside in the tea gardens area. In Falakata Block there are 15.92% ST population are reside where 87.42% of scheduled tribes population are reside in the tea gardens area. In Kumargram Block there are 30.00% ST population are reside where 78.94% of scheduled tribes population are reside in the tea gardens area. In Kalchini Block there are 40.30% ST population are reside where 48.29% of scheduled tribes population are reside in the tea gardens area. In Madarihat Block there are 38.76% ST population are reside where 44.26% of scheduled tribes population are reside in the tea gardens area.

The above table also it shows that in Alipurduar district there are 29.46% population are reside in the tea gardens area where 31.30% are male and 28.47% are female population. It also shows that there are 54.87% of scheduled tribes population reside in the tea gardens of Alipurduar district where 54.01% are male and 55.04% are female population. It shows that there are 28.81% ST population are residing in all blocks of Alipurduar district. From all the tea gardens population 53.66% population are scheduled tribe. It also shows that in Madarihat Block most of the population (63.02%) are reside in the tea gardens area and out of which 44.26% are scheduled tribe. In Alipurduar district the lowest scheduled tribes population (7.42%) are reside in the tea gardens of Alipurduar-I Block and out of which 78.20% are scheduled tribe.

Conclusions

It is clear from the above analysis that most of the scheduled tribes community in Alipurduar district reside in the tea gardens. They mostly came from Chhattishgar, Orissa, and Jharkhand to the district of undivided Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar.¹² The study shows that out of all

scheduled tribes population in Alipurduar district there are 54.87% scheduled tribes population reside in the tea gardens of the district. From all the tea gardens population 53.66% population are scheduled tribes.

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