

Tribal Habitat and the Characteristics of Their Houses: A Case Study of Oraon, Munda and Santal Tribes in Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the three major scheduled tribes of Jalpaiguri district who were brought to this region during the last half of 19th century and the first half 20th century. These once migrated tribes now contribute 67.44% of the total tribal population of the district (according to 2011 Census): they are Oraon, Munda and Santal. They are also the major scheduled tribes of the state West Bengal. In the district Jalpaiguri, these three tribes were brought by the British to work mainly as labourers in the newly formed tea gardens, railways and in the reserved forests. Tribes from Santal Parganas were brought to settle as agriculturists in this district. In the later stages, after the British left this region, the ownership of the tea gardens changed but these tribes didn't leave the region and lived here permanently. The work attempts to understand the present habitat and characteristics of their houses. For doing this work, extensive fieldwork was done based on an interview schedule. Altogether, 650 households were chosen from all the 13 blocks of the district on the basis of random stratified sampling. The study reveals that the major concentration of these tribes is still found in the tea garden villages and few in the forest and non-forested plain areas. The Oraon and Munda tribes are largely found in the tea gardens but Santals are predominantly marked in non-forested areas, sustained on agriculture. In the tea gardens, besides, the garden provided semi-pucca houses, kaccha houses and informal houses are also common while in the forest areas and non-forested plain areas, kaccha houses are mainly observed made by earth, plant stalk and bamboo.

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Introduction:

Jalpaiguri is one of the unique districts in West Bengal from socio-anthropological perspective. It not only has the highest number of scheduled tribe population in the state but in terms of diversity of tribes also this place is enriched. All the 40 tribal communities which are found at the state level exist in this region. Besides, 18.89% of the total population is tribal. Here, on the one hand, the Indo-mongoloid tribes such as Toto, Drukpa, Mech, Rabha etc. are there, who are indigenous to this region, on the other hand, the tribes of central India i.e. Oraon, Munda, Santal, Bhumij, Mal Paharia are also living. In fact, the Oraon, Munda, and Santals account more in number than the

indigenous tribes of this place. They are the three major scheduled tribes of the district according to 2011 census (Oraon, Munda, and Santal account for 50.35%, 11.78% and 5.31% respectively among the total tribal population of Jalpaiguri district). Broadly, human evolution in terms of society or economy is greatly determined by the intentionality of the human beings themselves (North, 2005). But the change among the tribes is mostly determined by the non-tribal population's intention and decision. This micro-regional study is also not an exception to this view. Here, attempts have been made to understand the present habitat and characteristics of houses of these three major tribes the district. These three tribes were

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actually brought to this region by the British during the last half of 19th century and the first half of 20th century to mainly work as plantation labour in the newly formed tea gardens; to work as labourers in the railways and in the newly declared reserved forests. Many of them were brought here to work as agriculturists (Santals). Therefore; they did not come to this region by their own intention. The study aims to reveal the present scenario of the houses and habitat of these tribes who were once brought by the British in this region: the characteristics of their habitat, the physical features of their houses e.g. type of house, ownership of the house, size of the house and building materials.

2. Database and Methods

The study is based both on primary and secondary data (Fig. 1). The primary data was based on the field survey through schedule from all the 13 blocks. Overall, 650 households were chosen on the basis of proportional allocation method of random stratified sampling. Out of that, 446(68.6%), 160(24.6%), 44(6.8%) households are Oraon, Munda and Santal respectively. Overall 45 sample villages were chosen for the field survey (Fig.3) on the basis of the same method.

Proportioanal Allocation =

$$\frac{\text{Tribal population of each block}}{\text{Total tribal population of the district}} \times 100$$

The basic criterion to choose the villages is that the villages have an adequate number of scheduled tribe population. The information about the various tribal communities was given by the village panchayats as the village level information about communities was not available in the census. The secondary data for this whole study was collected from various government offices and websites, e.g. Census of India, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Report on Forest Resources of Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal. The whole work can be divided into four halves:

- Physical background of the study area
- Historical set up of the district with special reference to tribal population and history of the concerned tribes in this district
- Spatial distribution of the major tribes of the district
- Features of tribal habitat and the characteristics of their houses

For understanding the physical and historical set up of the district, literature was the only source.

Therefore, the first part of the paper is based on existing literature. Field observation played an important role to portray the features of tribal habitats and their houses. The last part of the study is based entirely on primary data.

After the compilation of data, suitable cartographic techniques were used to represent it and observations were made on that basis. The primary data was represented both community wise and block wise. For the compilation of data, SPSS 20 and MS Excel 2007 were used and for the preparation of maps, ArcGIS 10.1 was used.

3. Study Area

Jalpaiguri district extends between 26° 16' and 27° 0' North latitudes and 88° 25' and 89° 53' East longitudes covering a total area of 6245 sq.km. It has international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh in the north and south respectively and state boundaries with Assam in the east, district boundaries with Darjiling in the west and Kochbehar in the south and south-east. The study undertakes the undivided Jalpaiguri District before its segregation from Alipurduar sub-division in 2014. Because, the latest census of India, 2011 does not show the population of tribes on the basis of the community for the newly formed Alipurduar district, it shows only the total scheduled tribe population in the district and block level (Fig.2).

4. Background of the study

4.1 Physical Background of Jalpaiguri District

The physical set up of Jalpaiguri district is crucial to understand the tribal habitat of the region as the term habitat itself means the environment where living organisms or communities live. The region which comes under western dooars has the following physical features:

- **Physiographically**, the whole region is a part of Lower Ganga Plain. Most part of it is engulfed with the plain area. However, in the north and north-eastern part of the district, dissected hills are found.
- The **rivers** of this district have their origin in the mountainous areas of Sikkim, Bhutan, Darjeeling, and Tibet. The rivers are flowing along south to south-easterly direction. Two types of river systems are noticed in this district: the Brahmaputra and the Ganga system. Most of the rivers, like Tista, Jaldhaka, Torsa, Kaljani, Raidak and Sankosh are part of Brahmaputra system. The Ganga system contains mainly the

Mahananda with its tributaries (Grunning, 1911; Chakraborty, 1987; Rakshit, 2003). In many tea gardens, the rivers become voluminous during the rainy season (e.g. Raydak tea garden, Kumargram block). Some ephemeral streams become vigorous during the torrential rain for a short period (e.g. near Hantapara tea garden, Madarihat-Birpara block).

- **Soils** are mostly sandy, highly acidic, heavily leached and poor in base and plant nutrients. Since most of the hilly rivers flow through this region, these areas are flood prone. The torrential rains falling during the rainy season led to a high surface, inward as well as lateral run off and deplete the soil of its natural minerals and salts which lead to acidity and deficiency in major and minor plant nutrients. The continuation of rain also interrupts the decomposition of organic matter and hampers the natural processes in building up soil fertility (Rakshit, 2003). The soil is one of the most important parameters for the growth of tea plantation because the acidic soil is ideal for the growth of tea plants.

- Trewartha's **climatic** classification falls Jalpaiguri district in humid-subtropical type (Caw). It resembles Cwg climate of Koppen which is also known as Mesothermal climate or Ganga climate (Tiwari, 2006).

It is characterized by dry winter; rainfall received in the rainiest month is ten times of the driest month. In the coldest month, the average temperature is less than 18°C while in the warmest month it is above 10°C. In this district, heavy rainfall is observed due to the nearness of hills. In the foothill zones, the rainfall is much heavier while the temperature is not very extreme in this region (Gruning, 1911). May and June are the hottest months throughout the district and December and January are the coldest months. The period from June to about the beginning of October is the Southwest monsoon season. The cold season starts from mid-November to the end of February. By April, mean temperature increases and gradually increases in July and August. From June to September, monsoon current flows northwards and is deflected in the west in North Bengal. As a result, the wind direction during the rainy season in Jalpaiguri district is east or south-east (Rakshit, 2003).

4.2 History of Jalpaiguri district as a tribal landscape

The district Jalpaiguri was formed in the year 1869 after the annexation of five police stations of Sukhani sub-division with the newly formed Western Duars district (western Duars district existed only from 1864-

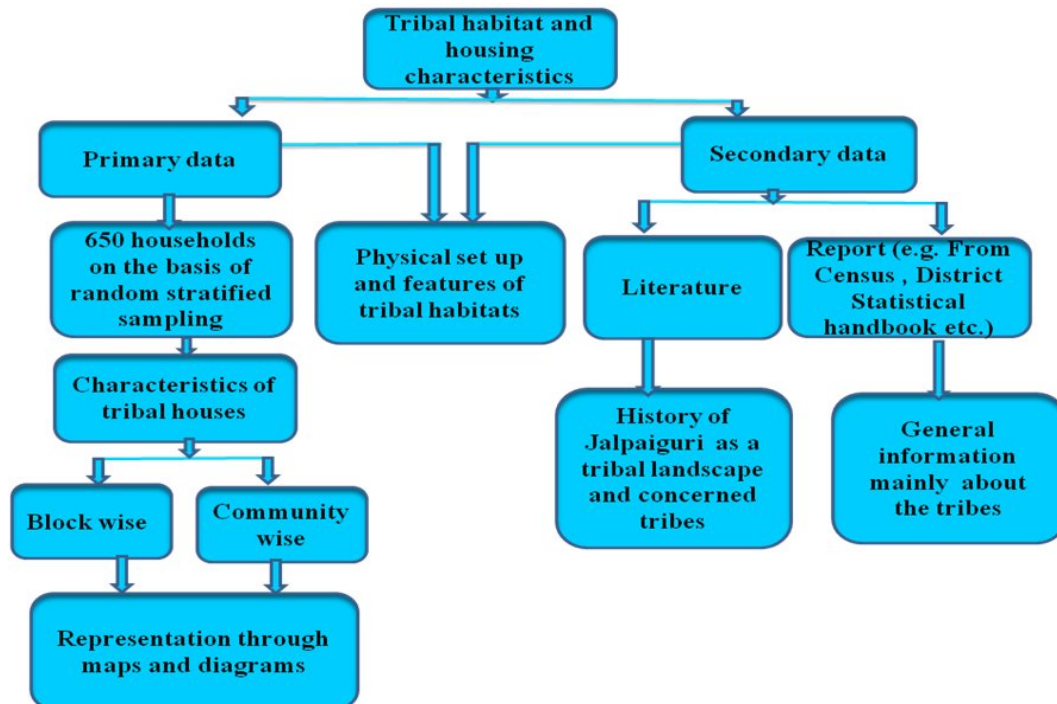


Fig. 1 : Flowchart showing the method of the research

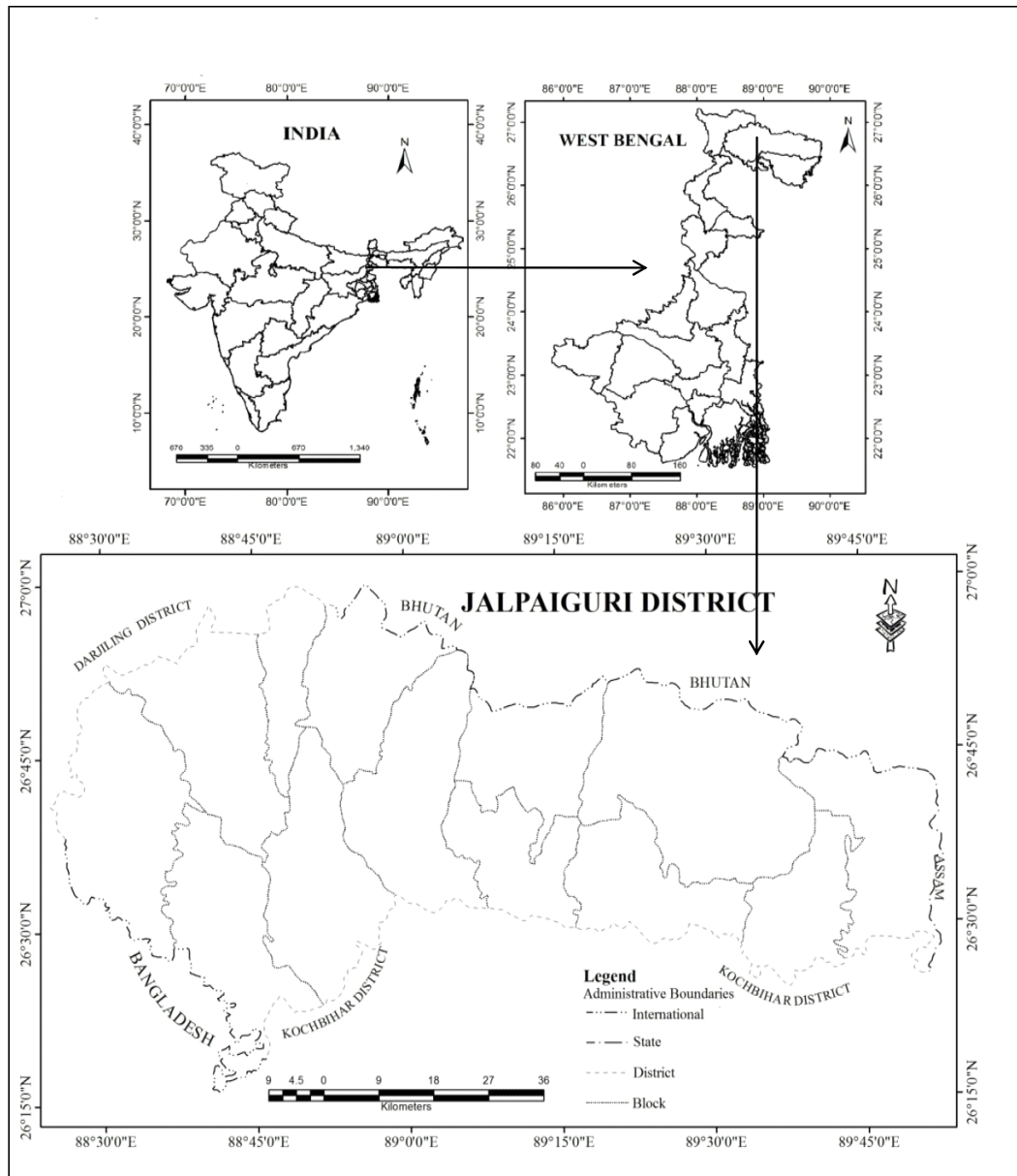


Fig. 2 : Study Area

1868). The tribal scenario of this region can be discussed under three phases:

- i. Pre-colonial Scenario
- ii. Colonial Scenario
- iii. Post-Colonial Scenario

i. Pre-Colonial Scenario

During the pre-colonial era in this region, the extreme northern part was inhabited by the Indo-mongoloid tribes like Meches, Garos, Rabhas, Drukpas, Totos who used to practice shifting cultivation. These tribes had a close contact with the Bhutanese. For the

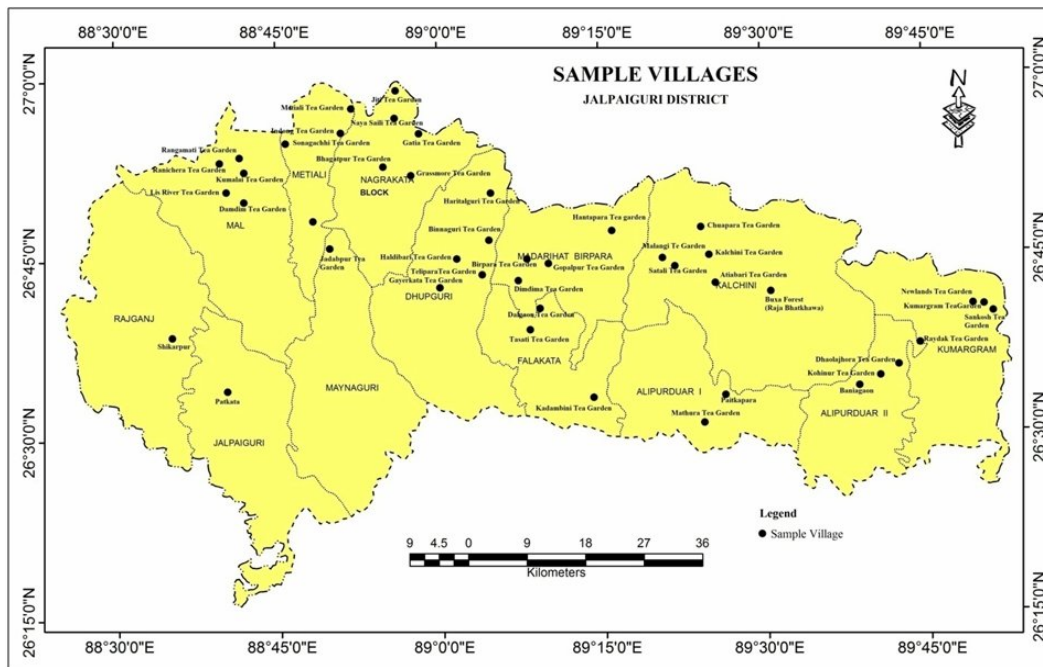


Fig. 3 : Sample villages in Jalpaiguri District

necessity of the Bhutanese merchants, the tribes were brought in the mountainous region of Jalpaiguri district from Bhutan (Majumder, 2001). In fact, between 1765 to 1865, the Duars belonged to Kochbehar state but because of the weakness of the Koch kings, Bhutan used to domain this region. The southern narrow trip was inhabited by the newly Hinduised Koch and Rajbanshis who were the settled agriculturists. But the middle part was a frontier zone which was characterised by both the settled agriculturists and the shifting cultivators. This part of the forest land was used by the migratory cattle breeders from the neighbouring areas of Bihar, Rangpur and Kochbehar. The region's economic set up was basically peasantry (Bhattacharya, 2007).

ii Colonial Scenario

After the Bhutan-duars war (1864-65), the region came under the domain of British and there was the creation of the new district Jalpaiguri in 1869. The British started many settlement operations which radically changed the economy of the region and in turn the habitat of these tribes. The fixed-land-fixed-rent system of the British was not suitable for the shifting cultivators like Mech, Garo, Rabha etc. Most of these tribes emigrated to the east towards Assam. Then there was the formation of tea gardens and reserved forests

which initiated the process of migration of the tribes from Chotanagpur namely Oraon, Munda, Santal and so on. The British made several tribal reserves which actually changed the natural setting of the tribal habitat in the region. The British formed 78 colonies in the forests. It was of two types: one that is inhabited by the local tribes and another by migrated tribes (Majumder, 2001). Attempts were made to make separate colonies for Mech and Garo tribes in Alipur tehsil but all of them did not settle as they were not the settled agriculturists. Therefore, these two reserves were allotted for the tribes who came from Chotanagpur as tea plantation labourers. Later the Mechpara and Garopara tea estate were born from these colony names. Another important reserve was allotted for the Santals covering an area about 30 square miles between Gadadhar and Rydak river, in Mahakalguri taluk in Alipurduar subdivision (Bhattacharya, 2007).

iii Post-Colonial set up

In the post-colonial era, only two Indo-Mongoloid groups of tribes are found in the extreme northern part: the Totos and the Drukpas. However, few tribes from Nepal also came here (Majumder, 2001). The mid-land is inhabited by the tea belt zone and the tribes of Chotanagpur while the southern most part is

dominated by the Rajbanshi and Bengali castes (Bhattacharaya, 2007). But tea gardens are scattered all over the region and in the middle part, other tribal communities like Mech, Rabha are also seen.

4.3 The migrated tribes of Chotanagpur in Jalpaiguri District

It can be stated, that the change in economic set up by the expansion of the tea gardens, reserved forests, new land reform policies by the British had changed the whole tribal set up of the region. But, as the main focus of the study is given to the migrated tribes of Chotanagpur, a thorough background should be given for their habitat. All the three tribes under study were originally settled cultivators in the Chotanagpur plateau. In the nineteenth century, a series of revolt and unrest took place in Chotanagpur region. The Hinduisation of local Adivasi king, introduction of non-tribal people mainly the Hindus from the surrounding region, taking up the administrative posts by the non-tribal people, introduction of tradesmen and their occupancy of the lands instead of cash, the British penetration, pouring of moneylenders etc changed the economic set up and habitat of Chotanagpur region (Bhowmik, 2016). After the introduction of Permanent Settlement in the region, the situation became worse. Different types of taxes were imposed by the East India Company and the landlords. The tribes became landless and converted to agricultural labourers (Sanyal, 2001; Majumder, 2001). Huge pressure of debt made their life miserable. After all these, the nature also played with them with its severe form i.e. occurrence of flood and famine. These calamities snatched the lives of many tribes. This situation completely shattered their lives and left them uprooted, unemployed. The British took the chance of this and sent them to the tea plantation regions as they needed cheap labours for the newly formed tea gardens of Jalpaiguri. Besides working in tea gardens, the tribes from Santal Parganas were also brought after the formation of Jalpaiguri district to settle permanently as this region was sparsely populated. Santals were also brought from Singbhom and Manbhoom. They were given land to do agriculture and some of them were sent to work as forest labourers (Bhowmik, 2016). But most of the tribes of the study area are concentrated in the tea gardens. Gruning (1911) stated how the number of tea gardens increased within a short period of time. Between 1876-77, the number of tea gardens was 13(818 acres) which became 60(8268 acres) in 1882 and 235 in 1901(76403 acres). In Bengal, the tea

plantation started after 35 years of Assam's tea plantation. Even in Bengal, the first plantation started in Darjeeling Hills in between 1854-1856. But when there was a shortage of wastelands, the British focused in this region i.e. Duars (Dutta, 2001; Dasgupta, 1987). The tribes under study i.e. Oraon, Munda and Santal when came in this region, therefore, were concentrated in three main types of economic activities:

- A. Labourer in tea plantation
- B. Labourer in forests
- C. Agriculturist

These economic activities led them to live in these places till now.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1. Spatial Distribution of Three Major Tribal Communities

The three major tribes are not distributed equally in the district. According to 2011 census, Oraon, Munda and Santal account 50.35 percent, 11.78 percent and 5.31 percent respectively and comprise 67.46 percent of the total scheduled tribe population. In the present study, these three tribes were taken for special consideration. During the field survey, the blocks having high percentage of Oraon are found in Maynaguri (100 percent), Dhupguri (93.75%) and Kumargram (92.86%). Highest percentage of Munda is found in Jalpaiguri (90%), Nagrakata (46.67%). Santal tribes account for 6.77 percent of the total population and major concentration is found in the blocks Rajganj (30%), Alipurduar II block (28.21 %) and Metiali (22.64 %). The Santals are mainly found in Alipurduar II block. A Santal village was found in this block named Baniagaon where 100% households are Santals and they are dependent on subsistence agriculture.

5.2 Characteristics of Tribal Habitat

The concept of habitat is derived from ecology and denotes the place where plants and animals live and grow. However, human habitat is different from plant and animals as here the idea of social organization exists. Roy Burman (1988) rightly remarked that "Habitat is a synthesis of the bio-culturally determined pursuit of the quality of life, institutional and infrastructural basis for supporting the quality of life and the resource base for driving livelihood" (c.f. Singh, 2014:26). In this study, the tribal habitats have developed in the dooars region. The dooars region comprises the eastern part of Jalpaiguri district

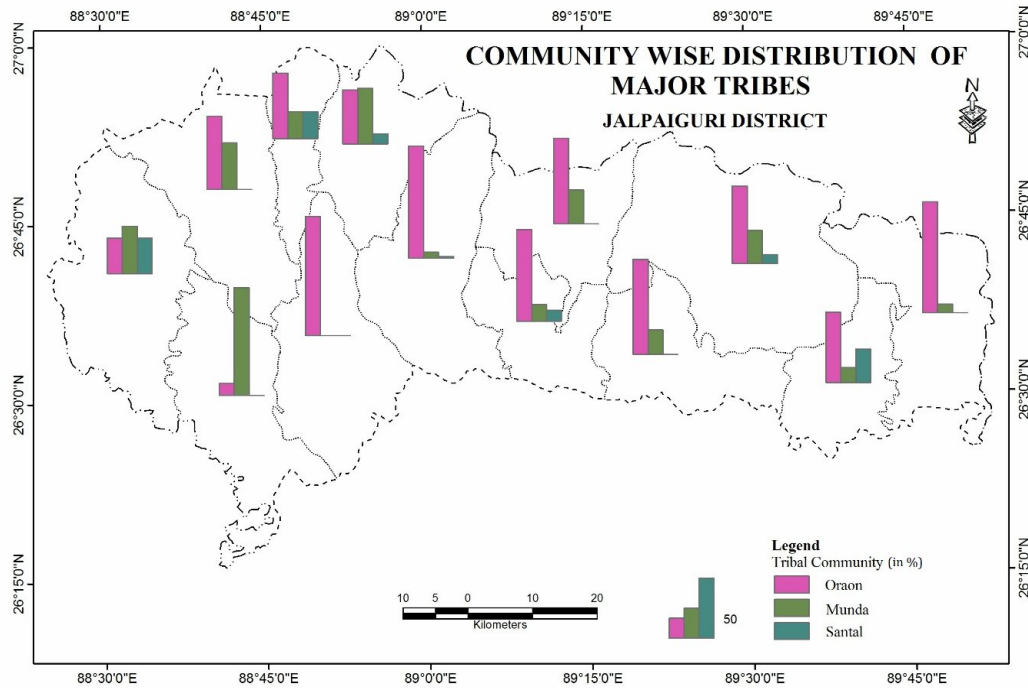


Fig. 4 : Community wise distribution of tribes in Jalpaiguri District based on sample

(between River Teesta and river Sankosh) and known as Western Dooars. This region is characterized by dense forests, never-ending tea gardens, damp climate and mighty rivers. In this physical condition, the following characteristics of tribal habitats have been marked:

- The habitats of these concerned tribes have been marked in three types of locations: tea gardens, forest areas and non-forested plain areas.
- In the tea gardens, the houses are provided by the garden authorities to the labourers. These houses are of semi-pucca types i.e. concrete floors and walls but the roofs are made by tile, tin or asbestos (Fig.5). In some instances, informal houses or shacks are identified, the inhabitants of whose don't work in the garden but live there (Fig.6). In these gardens, kaccha houses are also seen.
- In the forest areas, largely the houses are made of bamboo, plant stalk or tiles.
- In the non-forested plain areas, people are mostly dependent on agriculture. Here kaccha houses are common where roofs are covered by plant stalk; walls are made of bamboo or in some cases, jute sticks or tins and floors are earthen (Fig. 7).

- The Oraon and Munda tribes are in majority in the tea gardens and work as plantation labourer. They are intermixed with other tribes. The Santal households are in less number in the gardens. They live in the non-forested plain areas, dependent on subsistence agriculture.

- One of the major problems in the villages is animal attack. The houses are severely affected by the elephants. That's why in many places, people construct houses on a raised platform mostly by bamboo. These types of houses are more common in the Buxa forest (Rajabhatkhawa) from Kalchini block, Hantapara from Madarihat-Birpara block, Jadabpur tea garden in Maynaguri block etc. (Fig.8).

- Old houses are very common in the gardens. In these houses, the earth is excavated from the concrete floor; windows and doors are broken, and the tin or asbestos made roof has been replaced with plastic made roof. Lack of repair is a common problem in these houses.

- Communication and transportation is another issue of these habitats. It is difficult to reach some of these villages as there is no direct mode of transportation or limited scope of transportation.

5.3. Characteristics of the houses

On the basis of field observation and precise survey, the following information has been obtained from the houses. Observations were made on the type of house, ownership, materials used in the roof, floor, wall and size of the house. Both the inter-block and inter-tribal study was conducted.

5.3.1 Type of Living

In the study area, the concerned three major tribes inhabit in most of the tea garden villages. Therefore, the category house in site/service area or backyard shack accounts highest share in the whole district (96.15%). Here it should be mentioned, those who don't live in the gardens but have the house adjacent to their cultivation field are also part of this category. Almost in all the blocks, 90% houses are under this category and even in some blocks, all the houses are of this type e.g. Nagrakata, Kumargram, Matiali, Alipurduar II, Jalpaiguri, and Rajanj. On the other hand, shack in service area accounts only 1.85 % and found in Dhupguri (6.25%), Mal (5.56%) and Kalchini (1.90%) blocks. The people under this category are basically those who don't work in the garden at present

but have constructed their little shack in the garden area and depend on for some part-time work in this area. Another category is the informal houses at unauthorized places and accounts for a very little share in the study area (2%). In Kalchini, Dhupguri and Jalpaiguri blocks, this category is present. However, the people are mostly those who are living near the gardens or who are living in the forest patches (Fig. 9).

Within the tribes, informal houses in the unauthorized places are found highest among the Oraon tribes (3.13%) and it is totally absent among the Santal tribes (Fig. 16). Among the Santals, all the households are found in the service area or as backyard shack room. Shack in the site is found highest among the Oraon tribes (2.24%).

5.3.2. Ownership of House

On the basis of ownership, the households can be categorized into i. Live for free ii Rent and iii. Own. The live for free indicates those who are living in the gardens but have not got any residential facility from the garden authority and therefore, constructed their house there. This category also involves those who



Fig 5



Fig 6



Fig 7



Fig 8

Fig. 5 : Semi-pucca house at Chuapara Tea Garden (Kalchini block); Fig. 6 : Informal settlement at Chuapara Tea Garden (Kalchini block); Fig. 7 : Kachcha house at Baniagaon (Alipurduar II block); Fig.8 : House formed at the raised platform to protect from Elephant attack at Hantapara Tea Garden (Madarihat-Birpara block).

are living other areas than gardens. In Maynaguri, all the households are of this category. Overall, nearly 20% households have this type of ownership. Rent category accounts highest in the district (73.54%) and most of the blocks have this category ranging nearly from 70%-80% except Alipurduar I and Alipurduar II blocks. In these two blocks, the category 'own' also have a significant share. In Alipurduar II block, the Santal community lives who have their own house and they are dependent on agriculture. While in Alipurduar I block, some houses are provided by the Government through Indira Awas Yozna (now known as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yozna). Therefore, this category is found highest in Alipurduar II block (38.46%). In the district level (according to field survey), only 6.92% households have their own houses (Fig. 10).

5.3.3. Types of House

Two types of houses are observed in the study area: Semi-Pucca and Kaccha. The semi-pucca houses are those which have cemented wall and cemented floor. Most of the houses provided by the gardens are semi-

pucca houses. Although the houses are semi-pucca, the condition of these houses is very poor. In many houses, the floors are broken and the earth is excavated while in some houses the asbestos has been replaced by plastic or wood. But in many gardens, the houses were repaired or new houses were provided. The semi-pucca category accounts 67.38% and highest share is found in Birpara-Madarihat block (85%). On the other hand, the Maynaguri block has all the Kaccha houses (Fig. 11).

Kaccha houses are found highest among the Oraon community (36.10%) followed by Santal (29.55%) and Munda (23.55%). While the semi-pucca house shows highest share among the Mundas (76.25%) which is provided by the tea garden authority (Fig. 18).

5.3.4. Size of House

Medium sized houses account the highest share (68.15%). Some rooms have been constructed by the household members themselves. However, these are not the properly constructed rooms and basically

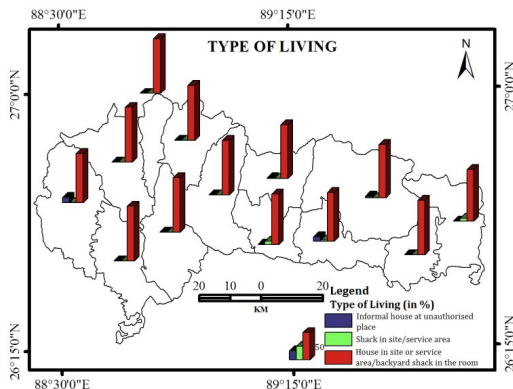


Fig.9

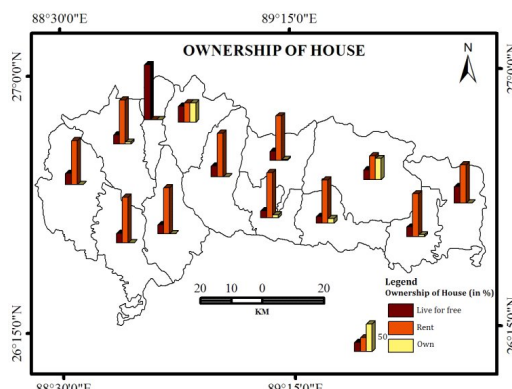


Fig.10

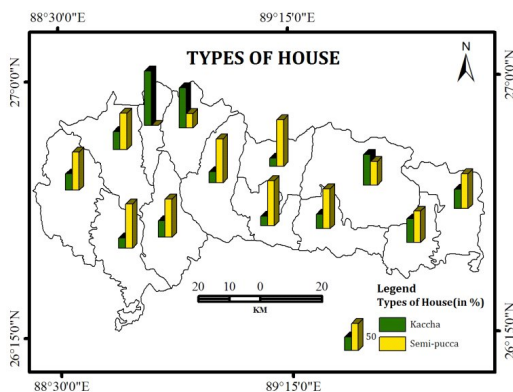


Fig.11

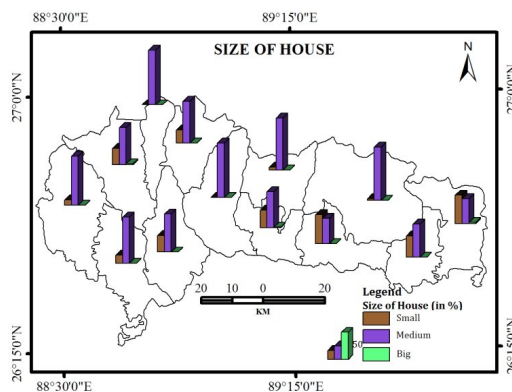


Fig.12

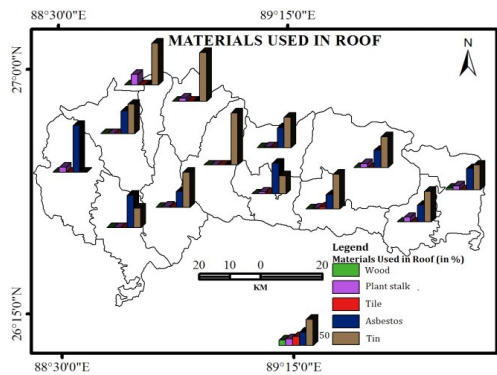


Fig.13

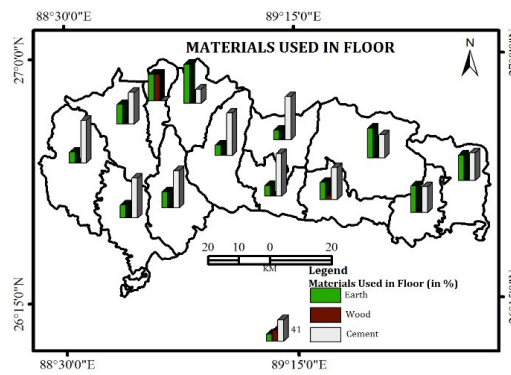


Fig.14

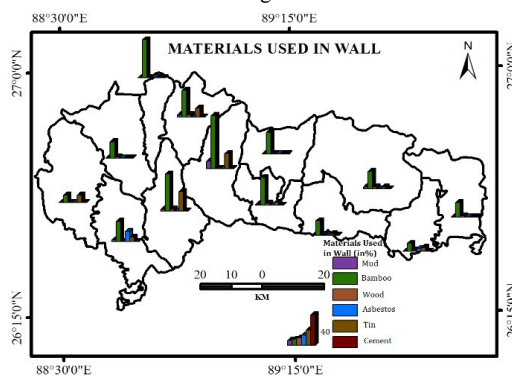


Fig.15

made by thatches, bamboo, and mud. In the Maynaguri block, these types of houses have been observed in highest amount (100%). Next to medium-sized houses (68.15%), small sized houses are also observed in a considerable amount (31.23%). More than half of the houses in Kalchini and Mal blocks are of small sized. Big sized houses are almost nil in the district (0.62%). In Mal, Dhupguri and Nagrakata blocks, it ranges between 1%-2% (Fig. 12).

Among the Oraon community, the small-sized houses are highest (32.96%) while the medium-sized houses are highest among the Santals (81.82%). Big sized houses are almost absent in the study area but observed a little amount among the Mundas (1.25%) and very insignificant (0.45%) among the Oraon (Fig.19).

5.3.5. Materials used in Roof

More than half of the households use tin as a roof material (56.15%). In the Rajganj block, all the households surveyed, come under this category. Besides, Alipurduar I (94.12%), Falakata (67.44%),

Kalchini (66.67%), Alipurduar II (58.97%) Kumargram (58.93%), Madarihat-Birpara (58.33%) and Nagrakata (56.67%) have a considerable amount of households having tin as a material of roof. Next, to tin, another important material is asbestos which also has a considerable share in the study area (38.15%). In almost all houses of Jalpaiguri block, asbestos was found (90%). In Matiali block and Dhupguri block also, a great number of houses have asbestos as a roof material (62.26% and 58.75% respectively). Plant stalk is also used as a roof material in some houses (4.15%). Except for Nagrakata, Matiali and Rajganj blocks, in all other blocks, this material is found but not in large extent. Wood is another material which is found to be used but in very small amount (0.46%). Only in Mal block, it is observed (Fig. 13).

If studied from the inter-tribal perspective, the tin which is found common among the households, is most frequently seen among the Munda communities (60.63%) followed by Oraon (54.93%) and Santal (52.27%). On the other hand, usage of asbestos as a roof material is highest among the Santals (45.45%). Among the other materials plant stalk and tile is seen among Oraon (4.71%) in highest amount (Fig.20); wood is only seen among the Oraon in very little amount (0.67%).

5.3.6. Materials used in Floor

Although cemented floors are found most frequently in the tea garden villages (6.23%) but their condition is very bad. Madarihat-Birpara, Dhupguri, Jalpaiguri, Raiganj, this material is seen profoundly. Next, to that, the earthen floor is noticed and it is found highest in Alipurduar I block (73.53%). The wooden floor is seen in those houses where houses are constructed on a raised platform. This is done mainly due to protect from elephant attack. In Maynaguri, half of the houses are seen to use this material (Fig. 14).

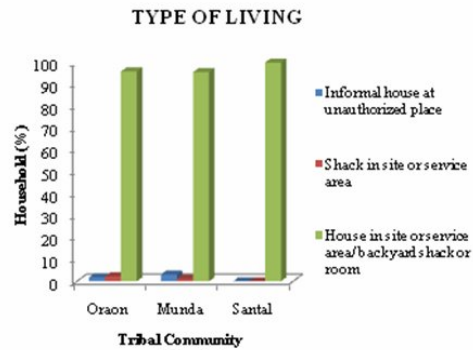


Fig. 16

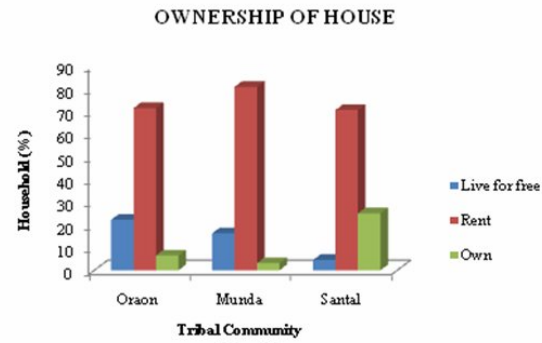


Fig. 17

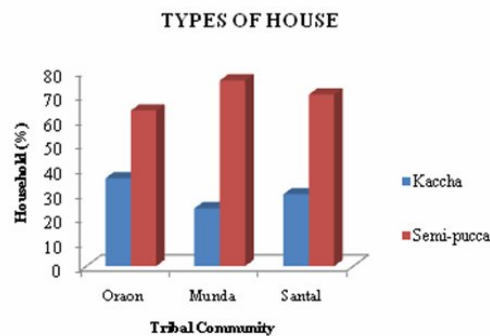


Fig. 18

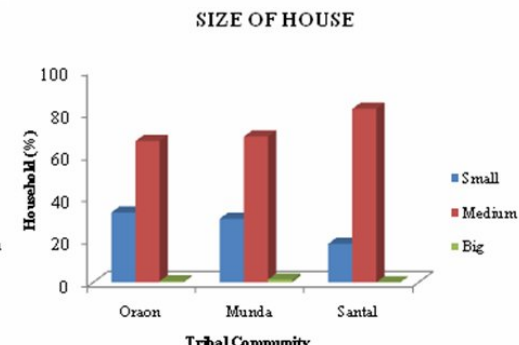


Fig. 19

The cemented floor is found in highest share among the Munda community (66.88%) followed by Santals (65.91%) and Oraon (58.74%). The earthen floor is highest among the Oraon community (39.24%) followed by Santal (34.09%) and Munda (28.75%). The wood is only found among the Munda (4.38%) and Oraon (2.02%) communities (Fig. 21).

5.3.7 Materials used in Wall

As it is seen, most of the houses have cemented walls (65.38%) which is followed by bamboo (26.31%), tin (4.62%), wood (1.38%), asbestos (1.38%) and mud (0.92%). The houses provided by the garden are semi-pucca, therefore, they have cemented walls. This category is found highest in Mal and Jalpaiguri block (80%) and totally absent in Maynaguri block. Because, in that block, people constructed houses in the tea garden area and are all kaccha houses (Fig. 15). Bamboo is also used as a constructing material and in Rajganj, Maynaguri and Falakata block it is used in a considerable amount (70%, 50%, and 48.84% respectively). Wood and asbestos are also used but in lower share. Asbestos has only been seen in Matiali

block (13.21%) and Kumargram block (3.57%). While wood is seen in many blocks e.g. Alipurduar I (2.94%), Alipurduar II (2.56%), Dhupguri (2.50%) etc. Mud is also found in some blocks e.g. Rajganj (10%), Alipurduar I (2.94%), Alipurduar II (2.56%), Falakata (2.33%), Matiali (1.89%) and Dhupguri (1.25%).

Cemented walls are again found highest among the Mundas (71.25%) while bamboos made walls are common among the Santals (36.36%). Among the remaining materials, tin and asbestos are highest among the Oraons (4.93% and 1.79% respectively); wood is found in highest share (2.27%) among the Santals (Fig. 22) and mud is highest among the Mundas (1.88%).

From the present study, it can be noted that the most of the tribal households were identified in the tea gardens. Therefore, the inter-tribal variation is not very clear.

6. Conclusion

The study shows the habitat and the characteristics of the houses of the three major tribes in the district

MATERIALS USED IN ROOF

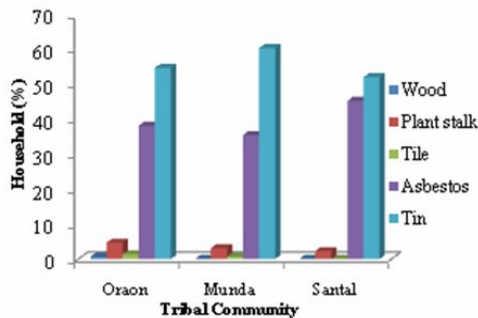


Fig. 20

MATERIALS USED IN FLOOR

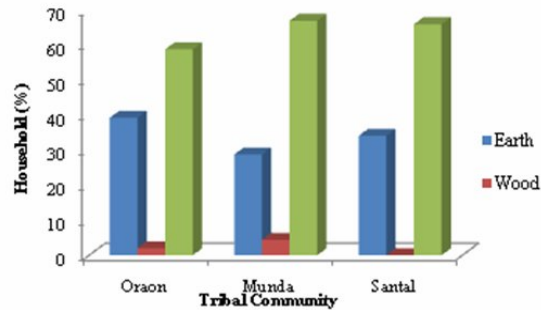


Fig. 21

MATERIALS USED IN WALL

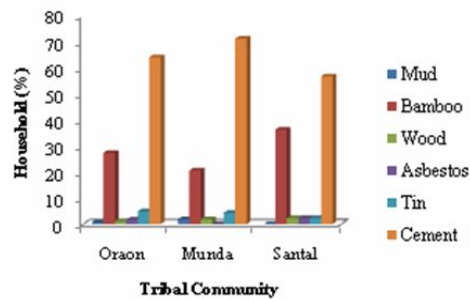


Fig. 22

of Jalpaiguri. These habitats were developed by the British near or at their place of work. Till now, most of them are living in the site of their work i.e. plantation labourers in the tea gardens, forest product collectors near the forest and cultivators near their agricultural field. But the condition of their houses does not show a good living quality. In the tea gardens, indifferent attitude of the garden authorities made the situation worse. The broken walls, windows, and doors, exposed earth in the cement floor of the houses indicate the same. Apart from tea gardens, the tribal habitats noticed in forest area and non-forested plain area also not show any healthy sign. The animal attack, lack of repair, poor transportation systems etc. are commonly associated problems of these places. In spite of having all these problems, they cannot think about shifting the places because of their limited educational knowledge. Government indeed has an important role to eradicate the problems here and the garden authority also should be more cordial to understand the problems of the labourers. Above all, people's participation can be one of the best

approaches to resolve all the issues related to the habitats of these tribes.

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