Chapter-1

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

1.2 Review of earlier works

1.3 Research gap

1.4 Objectives

1.5 Methodology

1.6 Study area and the people

1.7 Problem faced

Chapter -1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Maoist conflict is one of the greatest challenges toward Indian society. According to the former Prime Minister of India, it has been the single biggest security challenge to the Indian state. As many as 84 districts spreading over 12 States in India are affected by the Naxalite and/or Maoist 'insurgency', while they are active in 119 districts in 20 states in India[1]. The districts which have been the worst sufferers of the Maoist violence are located across the so-called *red corridor* area (Chopra, 2011). The *Red Corridor* is the region that extends across the Indian territory through the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar, and beyond up to Nepal (Kennedy and Purushotham,2012).

In West Bengal, Maoist conflicts spread over the forest areas of Bankura, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur (the western part in particular) and the newly created Jhargram districts. These forest areas have generally been clubbed together by an umbrella term Junglemahal. Though there is a considerable number of non-tribal population in this area, the majority of the local inhabitants are the tribal people (also called as the *adivasi* or

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[1]As per the statement made by Mr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Government of India at the *Rajya Sabha* on 29th August, 2012 as quoted by *The Hindu* dated September 12, 2012.

indigenous people). They are mainly the Santal, Bhumij, Lodha and Birhor ethnic groups[2], who are the erstwhile forest dwelling tribes. These forest areas historically house too many tribal communities. However, with increasing importance on industrialization and urbanization in the post-independent period in India the forest coverage has been gradually decreasing and many of the tribal groups still continue to reside in the dwindling forest. Throughout the red corridor region, the Maoists and/or the Naxalites have built up a stronghold involving the peasants and tribals in order to overthrow the State power and to 'bring about communism by continuing the revolution under the leadership of the proletariat', as stated under the *Aims and Objectives* in the Constitution of the CPI (Maoist)[3]. To counter the Maoist violence, the Union Government in India and the State Governments concerned have adopted counter-insurgency measures. The issue of human development, mainly for the tribal people, in India is therefore, facing great challenge from this conflict (Midya, 2013).

To find out the reason why such conflicts are so frequent in this region, J. F. Gomes (2012) empirically demonstrates that the Maoist conflict in India is the outcome of grievances arising out of social insecurity and feeling of social exclusion. However, the projected beneficiaries as well as the resultant victims of the conflict have been the

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[2]An ethnic group can simply be defined, according to Schermerhorn (1970), as a collectivity within a larger society having a real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements. For Barth (1969), it is a group that identifies itself and is identified by others as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. There are other definition also (e.g., Smith, 1965;Van den Berghe, 1981; Horowitz, 1985;Rossen, 1989; Tonkin *et al*., 1989; Danda, 1991, etc.).

[3]This has been stated in the *Aims and Objectives* in the Article 5 of the Constitution of the CPI (Maoist), retrieved on July 9, 2012 from *www.satp.org*.

poor peasants and tribal people. As a result of this conflict, thousands of marginal people have lost their livelihood and lives, and their cultural life has been shattered significantly. Due to the conflict between the two embattling forces (i.e., the Maoists and the security forces) operating across the affected regions for a few decades, the cultural identity and political behaviour of the people appear to be affected.

Junglemahal has become a household name in the State of West Bengal in the wake of the 'Lalgarh incidence' of recent past. Primarily, the Maoists chose Banspahari, Jamboni, and Lalgarh areas of Junglemahal in West Bengal for building up their organizational base (Midya, 2013). The people reportedly felt presence of the Maoist activists since 1996-97 in Junglemahal area. The Maoists were then concentrating on establishing social networks with the poor marginal tribal groups, and were found to organize agitations against police oppression and the then ruling political parties by taking 'underdevelopment' as the frontline issue. They started to keep contact especially with the local youths (both educated and uneducated) who were frustrated over their extreme poverty and unemployment.

Following the incident at Salboni in Paschim Medinipur district on 2nd November, 2008, the conflict between the Maoists and the State Government got a remarkable turning point. The incidence witnessed a mine explosion near the Kolaichandi canal (close to Midnapore town), resulting in severe injuries to some police personnel. The place of explosion was about 30 km away from the nearest *adivasi* tract. The reason of the attack was to mark the protest against displacement of tribal population for setting up of a private steel plant (Jindal Steel Works) at Salboni in Junglemahal area. The explosion occurred on the convoy of the then Chief Minister of West Bengal, Shri

Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and the Union Ministers Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, Mr. Jitin Prasad and others when they were returning from Salboni after attending the foundation-stone laying ceremony of the plant. This incident earned a high-alert in every police station in and around Junglemahal. In response to the violent incident, police took severe measures against the tribal villagers under Lalgarh police station, in particular, for supposedly harbouring the Maoist cadres. Security forces started joint operation on 5th November, 2008, across a number of villages such as Chhotopelia, Bashber, Kantapahari, etc., including raid of tribal houses at night, destroying properties, arrest of men, and torture on men and women, etc. Due to this excessive and unexpected brutal actions and torture of police, a popular movement started spontaneously under the banner of the *Pulishi Santrash Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee* (PSBJC) or People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA). The organization tried to resist the police and state oppression. The movement was the spontaneous response against indiscriminate torture by the police over common people throughout the region.

Under this situation, the Maoist came forward to help mentally and physically to the people of the area to raise their voice against the administration. Gradually, they won the popular support of the marginal people by organizing some pro-people activities. However, the public support towards Maoist activities did not last long, as it appeared in Lalgarh and its surrounding areas of Junglemahal. As soon as the Maoists undertook their terror tactics by killing the local CPI (Marxist) functionaries, and the local tribal people, the people were trying to distract themselves from the violent activities. In course of time the movement became weak, but it seemed to have left long-lasting effect on the cultural life and political behavior of the tribal people of the area in particular.

Under this backdrop, I have tried in the present study to examine how the cultural life and political behaviour of different communities living in the conflict-ridden areas have been affected. For the present purpose, four villages of Junglemahal area in Paschim Medinipur and Jhargram districts have been studied. I have attempted further in the study to assess the socio-economic condition of the people concerned, the effect of the movement on the rights of the tribal communities in general and women in particular, and the impact on education of the children and on social networks including the role of kinship and friendship of the communities concerned.

1.2 Review of earlier works

The Maoist conflict in India owes its origin as early as in 1940s to the demand for separate statehood of Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh, not to the Naxalbari movement of 1967 as sometimes referred to (e.g., Guha, 2007; Planning commission, 2008; Shah, 2009; Shah and Pettigrew, 2009). The Telangana movement started in 1946 (Thirumali, 2003; Kennedy and Purusotham, 2012). The Naxalbari conflict took place in 1967 in a small village called Naxalbari in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The history of emergence of Naxalbari movement was indeed a peasant movement as stated by Kujur (2008). This rebellion left nine tribal people and one police personnel dead, and subsequently, led to the birth of the Naxalite movement in India. Though the rebellion itself was confronted by government within 72 hours with the use of forces, it had already garnered its recognition from the communist revolutionaries from across the country (Gomes, 2012). In April 1948, the dissident faction of the Communist Party of India

(CPI) which was responsible for organizing the insurgency in the Telangana region formally adopted Maoism (Kennedy and Purushotham, 2012). Since 1960s the Maoist and/or Naxalite movement appears to win support from the landless poor and marginalized tribals and peasants, especially from the younger generation (Ghosh, 1975; Banerjee, 1980; Sinha, 1989; Singh, 1995; Bhatia, 2005; Kunnath, 2006; Shah, 2006; Gupta, 2006; Shah and Pettigrew, 2009). The Maoist movement principally focused on the strategy of 'annihilation of class enemies', although most of the people who lost their lives in the armed struggle with the state power were the poor tribals (Nigam, 2010; Simeon, 2010). Gautam Navlakha, on the contrary, assessed this movement as the people's rebellion to protect their traditional natural resources from the onslaught of the neo-liberal state (Navlakha, 2010).

The All India Fact-Finding Team on assessing the violent incidence of recent past at Lalgarh in the erstwhile Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal in its report (2009) claimed that the struggle in Lalgarh was a legitimate and democratic expression of the grievances of the people against state action. According to Dilip Simeon (2010), the Naxalite movement is not a movement of landless peasants and tribals seeking to overthrow state power. It is a project defined as such by those who are neither peasants nor workers nor tribals, but who claim to represent their interests. Ramchandra Guha (2007) observes that the Scheduled Tribes (STs) are in fact economically one of the worst performing groups in India (even behind the Scheduled Castes) and exclusion of the STs from the growth of the mainstream India is one of the key driving forces of the Maoist movement.

Attempting to trace the root of the violent conflict, Iyer (2009) observes that the land redistribution has been one of the main goals. Do and Iyer (2010), using a district level dataset on the Maoist conflict in Nepal, show further how the lack of economic opportunities triggers conflict with suitable geographic conditions helping it to perpetuate. Gomes (2012) observes that the underdeveloped districts and districts with higher land inequality are more prone to such conflict and a lower growth in income of the Scheduled Tribes significantly increases the intensity of the conflict. Indeed such a conflict, if not tackled timely and efficiently, could have enormous negative socio-economic consequences. Such violence often leads to destruction of existing infrastructure and discourages investment, apart from the loss in human capital (Gomes, 2012).

The districts across the *red corridor,* where the Maoists are very active, are inhabited principally by the disadvantaged ethnic groups belonging particularly to the tribal communities, who have been living on a subsistence economy. These groups are found to be 'on the brink of starvation' with high rate of illiteracy, high rate of early marriage, alarming poverty, severe malnutrition and miserable health condition (Midya, 2012, 2014). The demographic profile of the tribal population indicates high rates of infant mortality and of death at child birth, early marriage of girls and high rate of alcoholism causing great deal of impoverishment. The medical facility is insufficient or completely lacking in some areas and the people are also unaware about their health care. In addition, enlisting the poor under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) scheme shows great arbitrariness, as many really poor people have not been included in the list. The people do not have idea about the poverty-alleviating schemes supposed to be running under the

local governments, i.e., the panchayats. Most of the government programmes, thus, prove to be ineffective in alleviating the miserable life conditions of the tribal people since most of the government schemes do not reach them. Early marriage results in teenage pregnancies and death of teenage mothers at the time of delivery. The girl children are married off very early owing to severe poverty and lack of proper education and knowledge of reproductive health. Most of the children are either non-school-goers or dropouts in the early primary stage (Midya, 2012, 2014).

Maoist violence is also understood as a contradiction in the context of globalized capitalism (Mohanty, 2015). Scholars have also tried to trace the history of the Maoist movement in Junglemahal of West Bengal from different viewpoints. Shah and Pettigrew (2009) illustrate a sociological analysis of the spreading of the Maoism in South Asia by intensive fieldwork. Basu (2011) tries to identify the root cause and symptoms of the left-wing extremism in India. Nandini Sundar (2006) explores the varied forms of the counter-insurgency measures particularly in the context of the Baster region in Chhattisgarh.

1.3 Research gap

In the context of Maoist movement in India, most of the scholars did their research works on the basis of available secondary data. Only a very few social scientists carried out research from the real ground level. The first category of research works dealt mostly with the nature, causes and consequences of this movement. However, there was hardly any available work which tried to understand the real scenario of culture and

traditional political system in the Maoist affected areas or the effect of the Maoist activism on the local tribal communities and *vice versa*. The present endeavour aimed at filling up this research gap with attempt to find out answer to the questions like – What was actually happen to the people of this region during the extremist movement? What was the ground reality behind the public support to this violent movement under the leadership of the Maoist activists? How have the tribal culture and traditional polity been affected by the Maoist violence?

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the present research are the following:

I. To assess the socio-economic condition of the Maoist-affected villages in the study area;

II. To assess the effect of the movement on the rights of the communities of the study area;

III. To assess the influence of the movement on education of the children of the area;

IV. To understand the effect of the movement on the social networks including the role of kinship and friendship on the life and culture of the communities concerned;

V. To assess the stress on the women as a result of this movement; and,

VI. To understand the change in political behaviour of the communities living under the Maoist threat at the Junglemahal area in West Bengal.

1.5 Methodology

The present research was carried out following a set of anthropological research methods. The primary data including quantitative and qualitative information were collected through intensive fieldwork during January, 2015 to December, 2018 in the chosen area of study. The data were obtained through observation, case study, interview, life history and focused group discussion methods, and through the techniques like use of the Household Survey Schedule (HSS), structured and unstructured questionnaires, mapping, etc. (Fig. 1.1). On the other hand, secondary data have been collected from the government reports, research articles, mass media, books, etc. Snow-ball technique has been very effective in identifying the activists and the victim families. Most of the quantitative data have been presented through tables and charts. The qualitative data have been presented basically through the case studies.
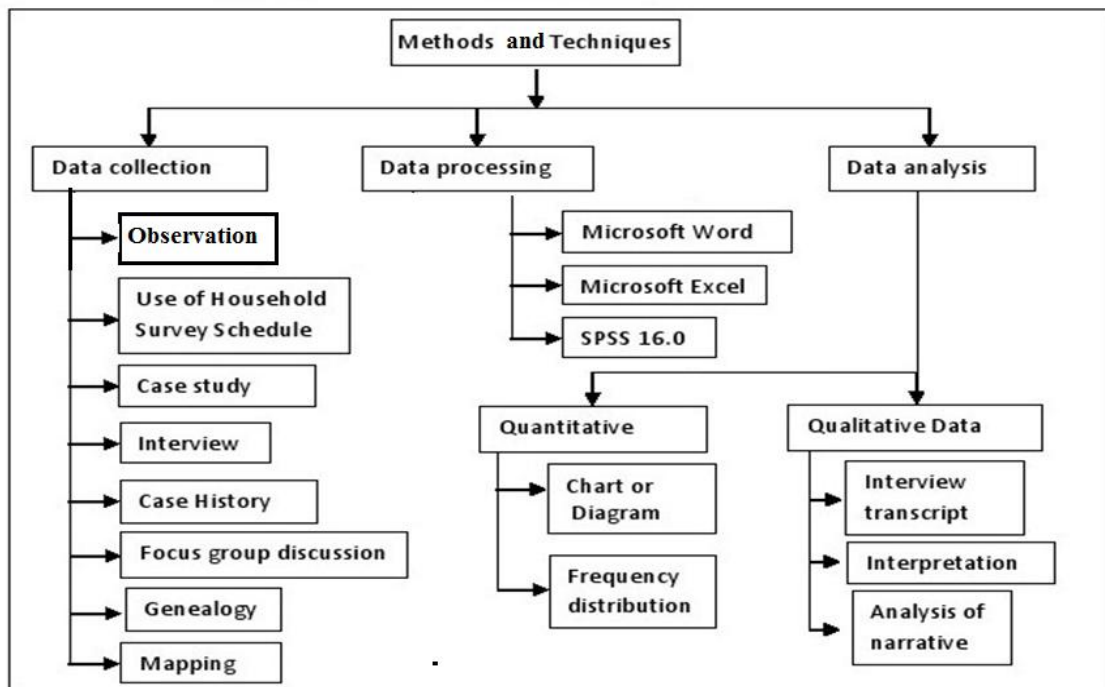
Figure 1.1: Diagram of Research methods and techniques used in this study

Most of the data were the self-declared ones by the respondents.

1.5.1 Selection of the study area

The selection of study area was one of the most challenging tasks for this kind of research work. Special care was taken to identify the prospective villages. The villages located within the Junglemahal area were selected on the basis of their ethnic composition, history, location and attachment of the village with the deadly conflict. I have selected four villages, *viz.*, Chhotopelia, Aushabandhi, Shimuldanga and Kashitoria. Chhotopelia falls under the Lalgarh Police Station where the Maoist movement first originated in Junglemahal area of West Bengal, and later, it became the significant epicenter of the movement. Aushabandhi village falls under the Kotwali Police Station and it is located very close to the district headquarters at Midnapore town and still got affected. Kashitoria village falls under the Jhargram Police Station. It is a multiethnic village and selected purposively to understand the effect, if any, on the inter-ethnic interaction. Shimuldanga became one of the epicenters of the Maoist violence in recent past. On the issue of displacement from their traditional habitat, the Santals of this village came out to support the movement whole-heartedly. Thus, the villages were selected purposively to understand the diverse nature and extent of the violent conflict.

1.5.2 Research Design

Research design for the present study is shown in Fig. 1.2

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│         ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐            │
│         │  Study of secondary sources about the │            │
│         │  Maoist movement and to find out the  │            │
│         │         research gap                   │            │
│         └──────────────────────────────────────┘            │
│                          ⇩                                   │
│           ┌─────────────────────────────────┐               │
│           │  Identification of research      │               │
│           │           problem                │               │
│           └─────────────────────────────────┘               │
│                          ⇩                                   │
│         ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐            │
│         │  Selection of study group and area    │            │
│         │          for the study                 │            │
│         └──────────────────────────────────────┘            │
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│        ┌───────────────────────────────────────┐           │
│        │  Collection of the geo-physical,        │           │
│        │  demographic and socio-economic data    │           │
│        │  on the study group and area            │           │
│        └───────────────────────────────────────┘           │
│                          ⇩                                   │
│      ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐           │
│      │  Collection of data for fulfillment of    │           │
│      │  the research questions through case      │           │
│      │  study, observation, interview, case      │           │
│      │  history and focus group discussion       │           │
│      │  methods                                  │           │
│      └─────────────────────────────────────────┘           │
│                          ⇩                                   │
│     ┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐          │
│     │  Processing, analysis and interpretation   │          │
│     │  of the collected data (both quantitative  │          │
│     │  and qualitative)                          │          │
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│         │  Writing and submission and/or         │           │
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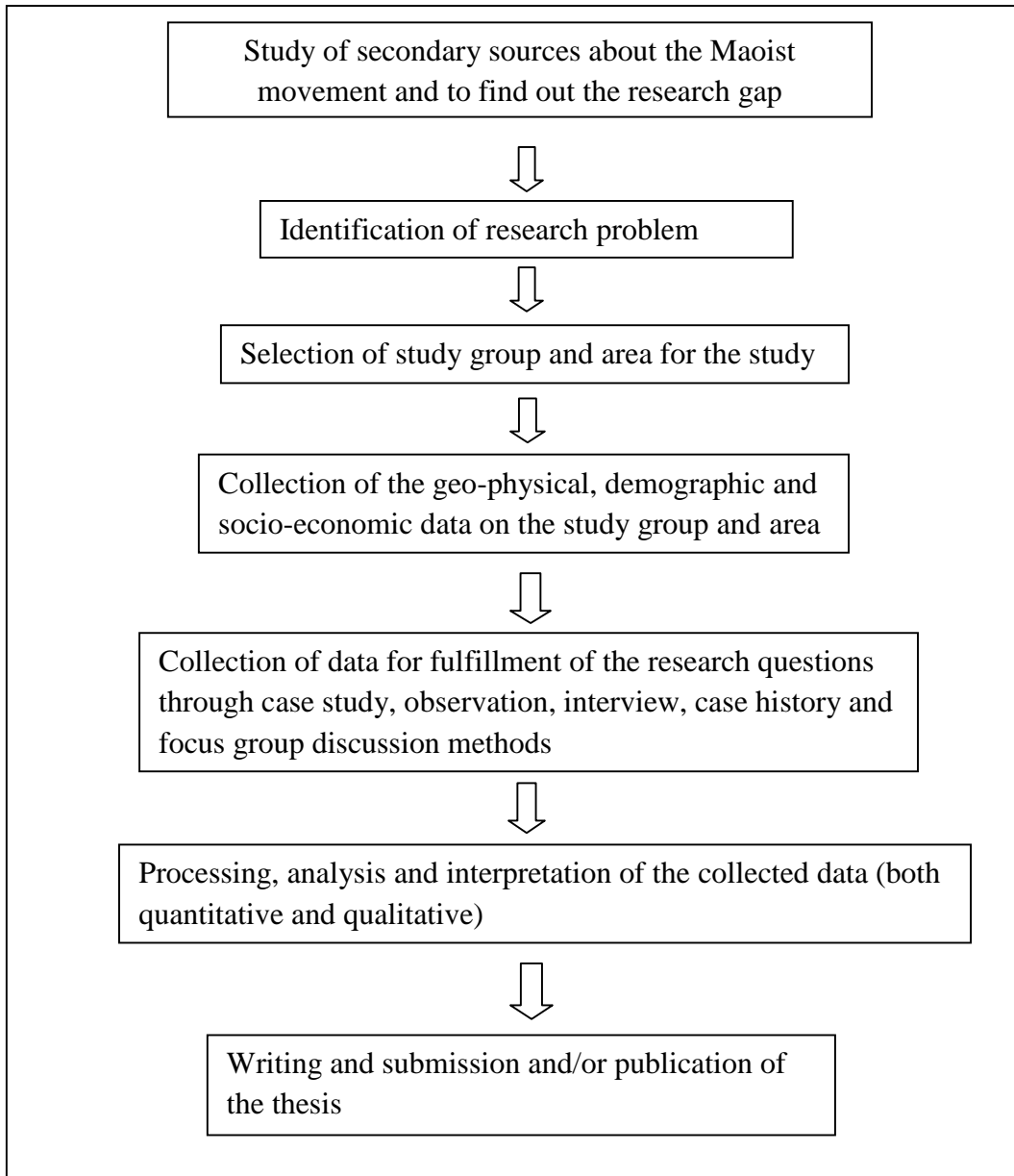
Fig. 1.2 Research design of the present study

1.6 Study area and the People

As already mentioned, this study has been conducted at four villages in Junglemahal area of the erstwhile Paschim Medinipur district, West Bengal. But now, two of the villages are included in the newly created Jhargram district. Ethnic compositions of the villages are given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: The ethnic groups under study

Sl. No.	Villages under study	Name of the Police station	Ethnic composition	Ethnic group(s) Living	Dominant Ethnic group in the village
1	Chhotopelia	Lalgarh	Uniethnic	Santal	Santal
2	Kashitoria	Jhargram	Multiethnic	Santal, Hari, Teli	Hari
3	Shimuldanga	Salboni	Uniethnic	Santal	Santal
4	Aushabandhi	Kotwali	Uniethnic	Santal	Santal

1.6.1 Brief description of the Study Area

1.6.1.1 District Profile of Paschim Medinipur

The erstwhile Midnapore, the largest district of West Bengal, was located in the south-western side of West Bengal. On 1stJanuary, 2002, Midnapore district was divided into two districts: Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur. The district headquarters of Paschim Medinipur is located in Midnapore town. Paschim Medinipur district is surrounded by Bankura and Hoogly districts in the North, and Howrah and Purba

Medinipur districts in the East, the State of Odisha in the East, and by the State of Jharkhand and Purulia district in the West. This is the southernmost district of Burdwan Division of West Bengal. It is situated between $22^0 57^{'} 10^{''}$ and $21^0 36^{'} 35^{''}$ North Latitude and between $88^0 12^{'} 40^{''}$ and $86^0 33^{'} 5^{''}$ East Longitude. The forest region of Paschim Medinipur district, particularly its western part, falls under the so-called Junglemahal region. Paschim Medinipur district has the highest Scheduled Tribe (ST) population in the State of West Bengal.

Map 1.1: Map of Paschim Medinipur (Block wise)
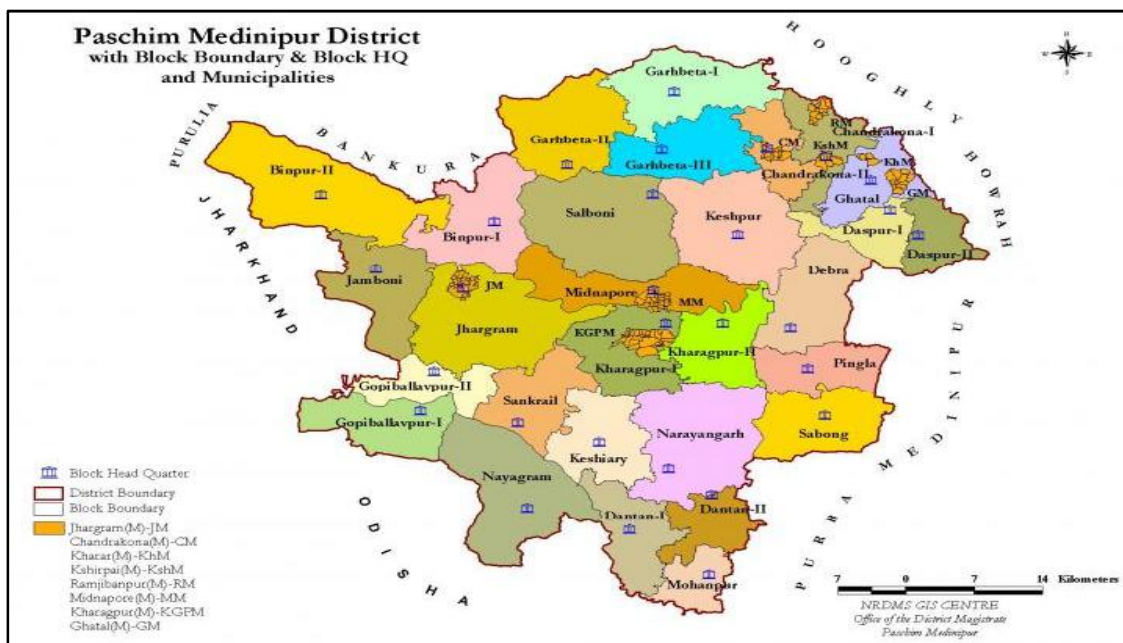
Paschim Medinipur, with an area of 9368 km^2, consists of four Sub-Divisions, twenty nine Community Development (C.D.) Blocks and eight municipalities. As per the Census of India (2011), a total of 8,695 villages are distributed over twenty nine C.D.

Blocks in the district. The names of the blocks and municipalities (Sub-division wise) are as follows:

Table 1.2: Distribution of Blocks and Municipalities in Paschim Medinipur District

Sl. No.	Name of the Sub-Division	Name of Block and Municipality
1.	Midnapore Sadar	**Blocks-**Midnapore sadar, Garhbeta- I, Garhbeta-II, Garhbeta-III, Keshpur, Salboni **Municipality** - Midnapore
2.	Kharagpur	**Blocks** –Kharagpur-I, Kharagpur-II, Keshiary, Debra, Pingla, Dantan-I, Dantan-II, Sabang, Mohanpur, Narayangarh **Municipality** - Kharagpur
3.	Jhargram	**Blocks** - Jhargram, Binpur-I, Binpur-II, Jamboni, Sankrail, Gopiballavpur-I, Gopiballavpur-II, Nayagram **Municipality**- Jhargram
4.	Ghatal	**Blocks**-Ghatal, Chandrakona-I, Chandrakona-II, Daspur-I, Daspur-II **Municipalities**- Ghatal, Chandrakona, Khirpai, Kharar, Ramjibanpur

There are altogether twenty eight Police Stations (P.S.) in the district. Under Kharagpur Sub-division, there are ten Police Stations, *viz*., Dantan, Belda, Pingla, Kharagpur (L), Kharagpur (T), Sabong, Mohanpur, Narayangarh, Keshiary and Debra. Under Medinipur Sadar Sub-division, there are six Police Stations,*viz*., Kotwali, Gorbeta, Goaltore, Keshpur, Anandapur and Salboni. Under Ghatal Sub-division, there are three Police Stations, *viz*., Chandrakona, Daspur and Ghatal. And, under Jhargram Sub-

division, there are nine Police Stations, *viz*., Belpahari, Binpur, Lalgarh, Jamboni, Jhargram, Gopiballavpur, Beliaberah, Nayagram and Sankrail. Two villages under present study come administratively under Medinipur Sadar and Jhargram Sub-divisions.

The climatic condition in the district is tropical, moist and sub-humid. The distribution of rainfall is irregular and uneven. Hard and rugged rock lateritic topography characterizes the western part of the district, while the eastern side contains nearly flat alluvial plains.

Table 1.3: Demographic features of Paschim Medinipur District

Population (Census 2011)	59,13,457
Males	30,07,885 (50.87%)
Females	29,05,572 (49.13%)
Scheduled Caste	11, 28,269 (19.08%)
Scheduled Tribe	8,80,015 (14.88%)
Sex ratio	966
Total Literates (rate)	40,78,412 (78%)
Male literates (rate)	22,66,913 (85.26%)
Female literates (rate)	18,11,499 (70.50%)

Source: Census report, 2011, Government of India

The main rivers of this district are the Kansabati, Silai, Subarnarekha, Keleghai, etc. The north-western and the western part of the district are mainly covered with forest.

A large portion of the western part of Paschim Medinipur district is drought-prone, whereas the eastern part is flood-prone.

1.6.1.2 District Profile of Jhargram

On 4th April, 2017 Paschim Midnapore district of West Bengal was again sub-divided into two districts: Paschim Medinipur and Jhargram. After splitting from the Paschim Medinipur district, the Jhargram district stands to be the 22nd district in the State. The headquarters of this district is located at Jhargram, which is around 15 km away from the National Highway-6 (popularly known as Bombay road). This district is famous for its forest beauty and topography culminating into the hill ranges of Belpahari and Kankrajhor forest to the west and the Subarnarekha River to the south.

Jhargram is situated between $21^052'$ and $22^048'$ North Latitude and between $86^034'$ and $87^020'$ East Longitude. As per the 2011 census report, Jhargram district covers an area of 3,037.64 km^2. This is bordered by Bankura district in the North, in the East by the river Kansabati and partly by the river Subarnarekha and Paschim Medinipur district, in the West by Purulia district and the Jharkhand state, and on the South by the State of Odisha. As per 2011 census, the district has a population of 1,136,548 including 96.52 per cent rural and only 3.48 per cent urban segments. There are 29.37 per cent Scheduled Tribe (ST) and 20.11 per cent Scheduled Caste (SC) population.

The forest coverage of Jhargram is distributed over the Jhargram sub-division and comprises of Binpur-I, Binpur-II, Jhargram, Jamboni, Gopiballavpur-I, Gopiballavpur-II

blocks in general and Belpahari, Binpur, Jamboni, Jhargram, Gopiballavpur-II and Beliaberha police stations in particular.

Jhargram district has ten police stations, eight community development blocks, eight panchayat samitis, seventy nine gram panchayats and only one municipality, *viz.*, Jhargram municipality.

Map 1.2: Map of Jhargram district

Map 1.3: Map of the study area

Study Area

Map of India showing Red corridor area in West Bengal

Map of Paschim Medinipur District showing LWE affected areas

Source: Paschim Medinipur Human Development Report,2011
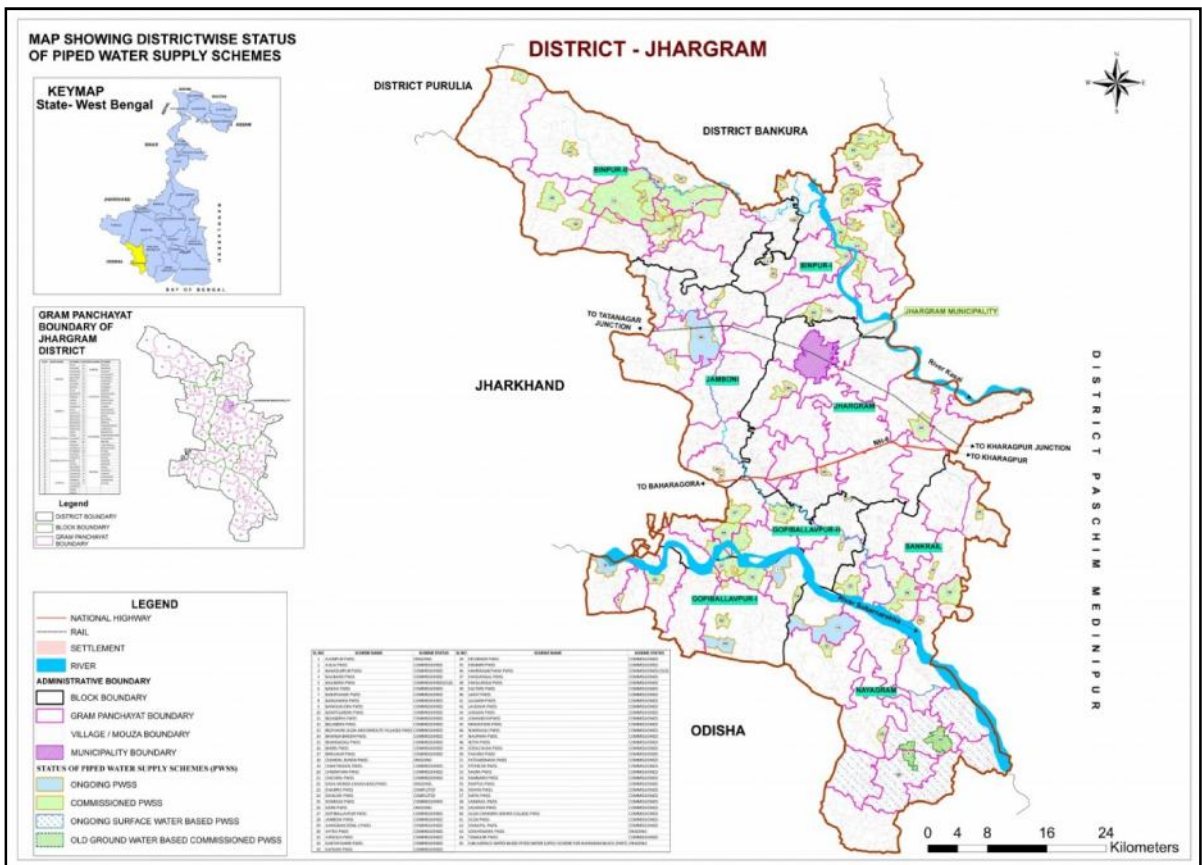
1.6.1.3 A brief note on the Junglemahal area

Literally, the Junglemahal means the 'jungle estates'. It is a densely forested area. This area has an interesting geo-history. According to O'Malley (1911), the term 'Junglemahal' was applied in the 18th Century AD to the territory lying between Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and the hilly country of Chhoto Nagpur in the erstwhile Santal Pargana. In order to coordinate the administrative system in the area, a regulation (Regulation XVIII of 1805) was passed in 1805 by the British rulers by which the territories, called the Junglemahals, situated in the *zilas* of Birbhum, Burdwan and Midnapore, were detached from the jurisdiction of the Magistrates of those *zilas*, and placed under the jurisdiction of an officer called the Magistrate of the Junglemahals.

The district thus formed was composed of 23 *parganas* and *mahals*, of which seven were transferred from Midnapore. In 1832 after the Bhumij rebellion, a change of administration was came into effect, and by the Regulation XIII of 1833 the district of the Junglemahals was broken up, the greater part of it being formed into the district of Manbhum (Mondal, 2011). But now, it comprises the forest areas of Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, Bankura and Purulia districts.

Junglemahal is mainly inhabited by the indigenous or tribal population along with some lesser known low caste Hindu groups. The tribal communities constitute over 70 per cent of the population in the region. The major tribal groups found in the area are the Santal, Oraon, Lodha, Munda, Bhumij, Mahali, Kora, etc. The non-tribal groups include

the Goala, Teli, Mahata, Dom, Kaibarta, Tanti, Hari, etc. of the second category, the Mahatas enjoy more privilege and political importance due to their large population and economically better off position in Junglemahal area. They belong to the constitutional category of Other Backward Classes (OBC), though they were considered as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) till 1930. Dr. Pasupati Mahato highlighted the Mahatos' dominant role in the fight against colonial power. They fought jointly with the Bhumij, Santal, Munda, etc. ever since the *Chuar*[4] Rebellion to the *Medi*[5] Movement (Mahato, 2000). They are the foremost and courageous community in Junglemahal region.

During the tribal movement of the recent past, later popularly referred to as a Maoist movement, in the entire Junglemahal area the tribal communities unanimously accepted a Mahato man (Chhatradhar Mahato) in a meeting on 8th November, 2008 as the leader of resistance movement against police atrocities and exploitation of local people by the state. It indicates the bravery and integrity of the Mahato people.

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[4]It was one of the significant tribal revolt against the British led by Durjan Singha. It occurred during 1798 to 1799 in the erstwhile Jungle Mahal. It was a tribal protest movement against excessive revenue demand and Bengal famine. The very term *Chuar* was a derogatory term used for the working class.

[5]It was a Khond uprise in Odisha during 1846 to 1855, led by Chakra Bisoi, against the British rulers. The revolt was the protest against stopping of the *Mariah* system (traditional human sacrificed practiced by the Khond), introduction of new tax system, etc.

Map 1.4: Map of West Bengal

Map 1.5 Junglemahal region in West Bengal
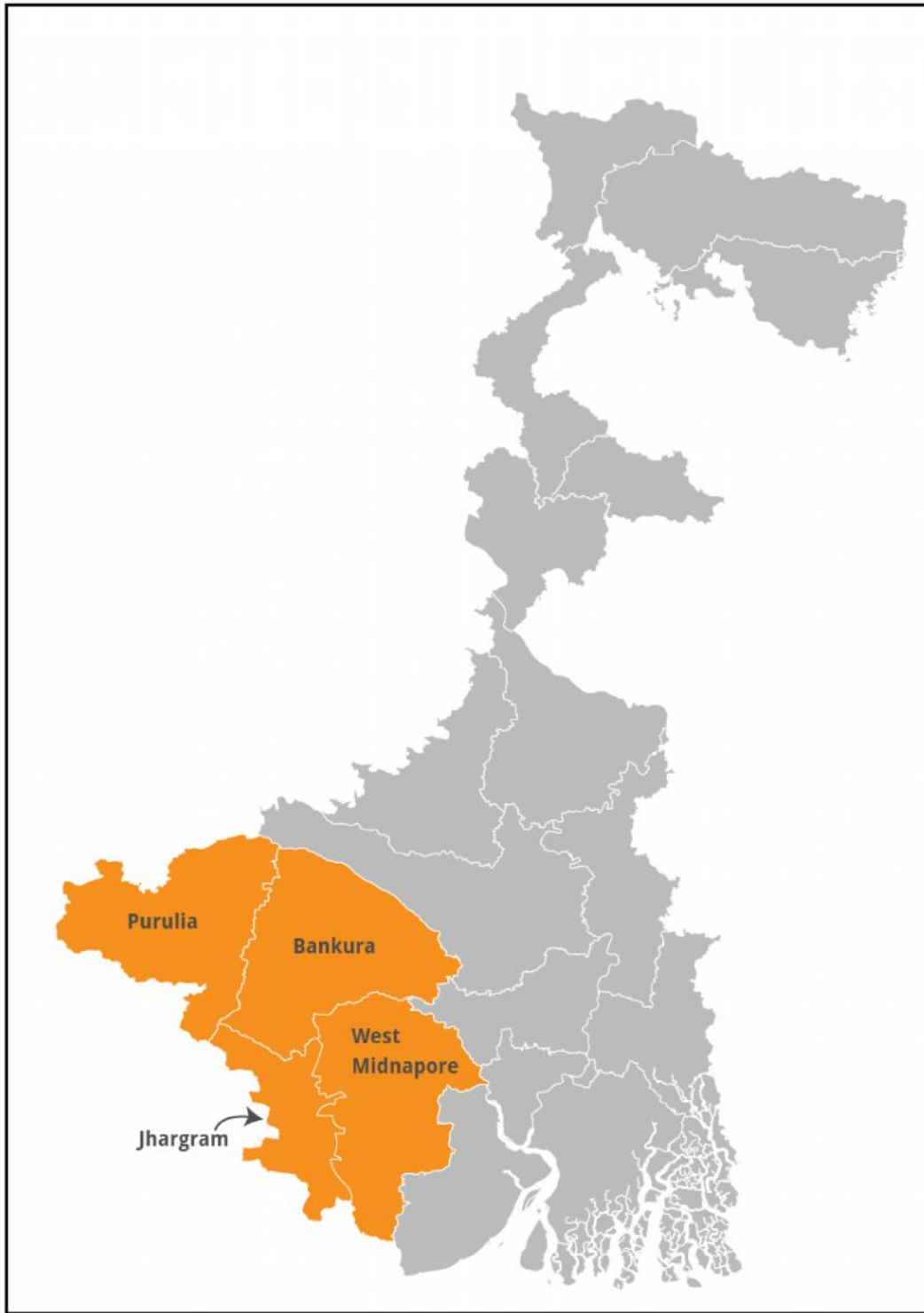
1.6.1.4 A brief note on the villages under study

1.6.1.4.1 Chhotopelia (JL No.697)

Chhotopelia is a tribal village under the Sijua Gram Panchayat of Binpur-I Block and falls under Lalgarh Police Station of Jhargram District in West Bengal. This is under the Pelia *mouza.* In this village, there are three hamlets, locally called as *para.* These are the *Uporerpara* or *hanadi* (upper land hamlet), *Nicherpara* or *Noyadi* (lower land hamlet) and *Khejurpelia.*

It is a medium-sized village having a population of 399 with 208 males and 191 females. It has altogether 82 families belonging exclusively to the Santal community. The village is located approximately 45 km away from Midnapore town and 8 km from Lalgarh Police Station.

This village is surrounded by Lalgarh forest in the east and Sijua village in the west, Joypur and Harhulia villages in the north, and Barapelia village in the south. Most of the houses are built of mud with thatched roofs and these are closely situated to each other. However, a very few families have *pukka* houses which are constructed under the government schemes, *viz.*, the *Indira Awas Yojona* (IAY) and the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin* (PMAY-G).

There are seven Santal *paris* (i.e., clans) at Chhotopelia. These are the Murmu, Hembram, Tudu, Mandi, Saren, Hansda and Baske.

Agriculture is the main economic pursuit in this village. Some other earning sources are handicraft works, basketry, collection of forest products, daily manual labour,

shop keeping, etc. The livelihood strategy of the people mainly centres round collection of forest products such as fruits, nuts, firewood, *sal (Shorea robusta)* leaves, honey, etc.
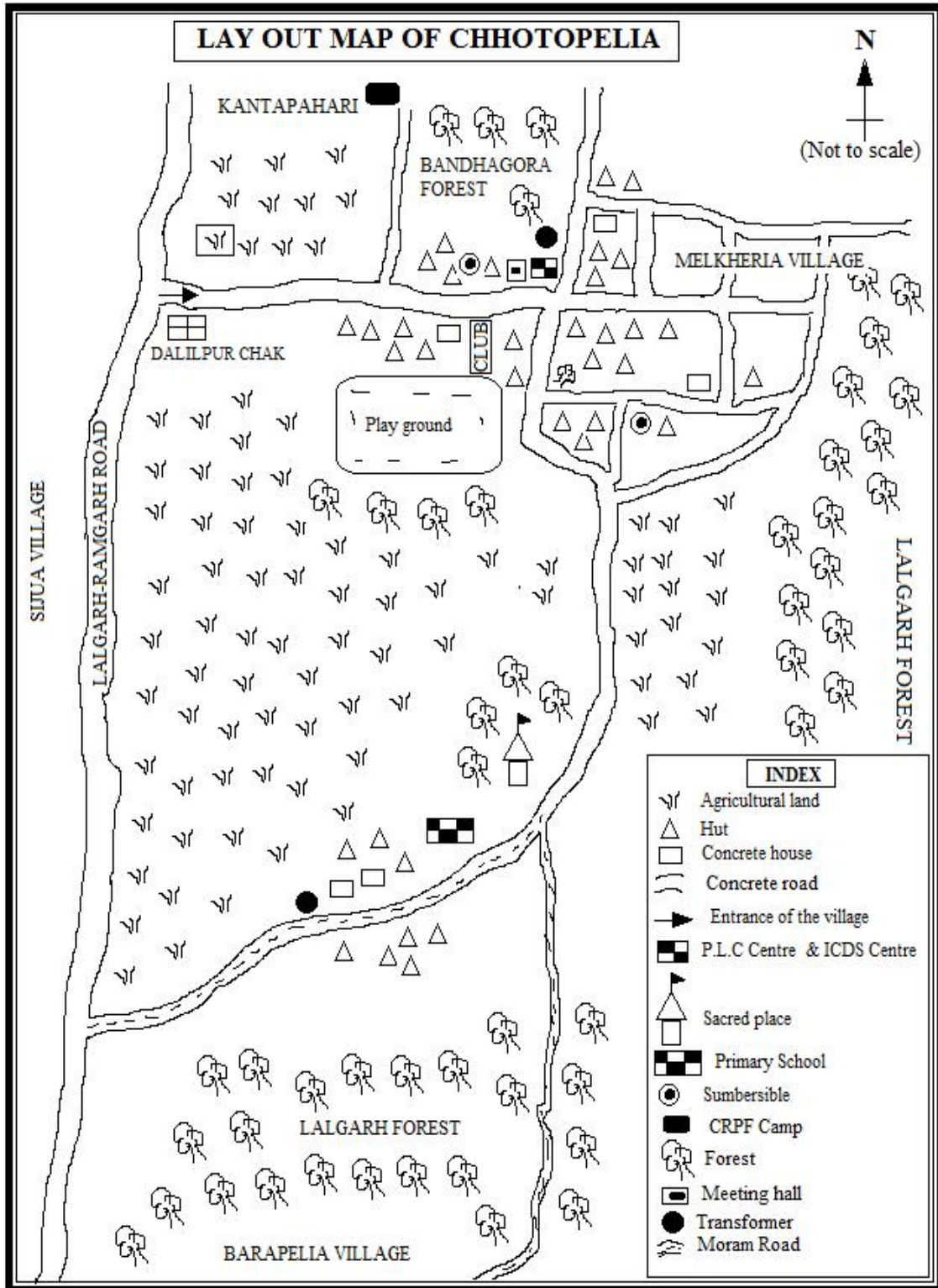
There are three tube wells and two submersible pumps in the village. However, only one submersible pump is in working condition at present. In most cases the villagers collect drinking water from tube wells and water for domestic purposes such as bathing, washing, cooking, etc. from submersible pump.

There is hardly any government health care facility in Chhotopelia village. Kantapahari Primary Health Centre (located approximately 2.5 km from the village) is the nearest sub-health centre which the local people can visit for emergency and minor injuries. In serious cases, they have to visit either Block hospital at Lalgarh or District hospital at Midnapore town, which are approximately 8 km and 45 km away from the village respectively.

The overall sanitation and drainage system are below par the district level. Due to this poor drainage system, the people have to face a lot of problems during the rainy season. Only a few houses have their toilets.

In this village, there is one Public Literacy Centre (P.L.C.), one A*nganwadi* centre (ICDS) and a primary school. For studies starting from the secondary level onwards, they have to go to Kantapahari, which is approximately 2.5 km away from the village or other places like Lalgarh, Ramgarh, etc.

Map 1.6: Layout map of Chhotopelia village (Not to Scale)

LAY OUT MAP OF CHHOTOPELIA

N

(Not to scale)

KANTAPAHARI

BANDHAGORA FOREST

MELKHERIA VILLAGE

DALILPUR CHAK

CLUB

Play ground

SIJUA VILLAGE

LALGARH-RAMGARH ROAD

LALGARH FOREST

INDEX

𝛾 Agricultural land

△ Hut

▢ Concrete house

Concrete road

➤ Entrance of the village

P.L.C Centre & ICDS Centre

Sacred place

Primary School

⊙ Sumbersible

■ CRPF Camp

Forest

▣ Meeting hall

● Transformer

Moram Road

LALGARH FOREST

BARAPELIA VILLAGE

Map 1.7: Satellite view of the village Chhotopelia (accessed from the Google Earth on 11.04.2018)

1.6.1.4.2 Kashitoria (JL No. 841)

Kashitoria is a multi-ethnic village under the Aguiboni Gram Panchayat of Jhargram Block and falls under Jhargram Police Station in Jhargram district. This is a small village having a population of 126, including 61 males and 65 females. It consists of 33 families belonging to the Santal, Hari and Teli communities. The Hari is the dominant ethnic group - a scheduled caste people in this village. The village is located

approximately 27 km away from Jhargram Police station, and about 1.5 km from the National Highway No. 6 (presently renamed as NH39). The village is under the Kasitorhia *mouza*. In this village, there are two hamlets, locally called as *para.* These are *Uttar para (*northern hamlet), where the only Hari community settled, and *Dakshinpara (*southern hamlet), where the Santal and Teli communities are living.

The village is surrounded by forest in the east and north, and by agricultural land and a canal in the west, and by Fasitala village in the south.

There is an A*nganwadi* centre (ICDS) located at the centre of Kashitoria village. For primary education they have to go to the neighbouring Aguiboni village. For secondary and higher secondary level education, they have to go to Aguiboni High School, which is situated approximately 1.5 km away from the village. For higher education they have to go to Subarnarekha Mahavidyalaya at Gopiballavpur or Jhargram Raj College at Jhargram town, which are located approximately 15 km and 27 km from the village respectively. One *Alchiki* medium school is located at the east side (near Simli forest) of the village.

The health care facility in the village is near absent in the village. Aguiboni Primary Health Centre (approx. 1.5 km from the village) is the nearest sub-health centre where the people use to visit for emergency treatment. In case of serious illness, they have to visit either Tapsia Gramin Hospital at Gopiballavpur (approx. 12 km from the village) or District Hospital at Jhargram (approx. 25 km from the village). There is no sanitation and drainage system at all. However, only a few houses have toilets.

Map 1.8: Lay out map of Kashitoria village (not to scale)

LAY OUT MAP OF KASHITORIA
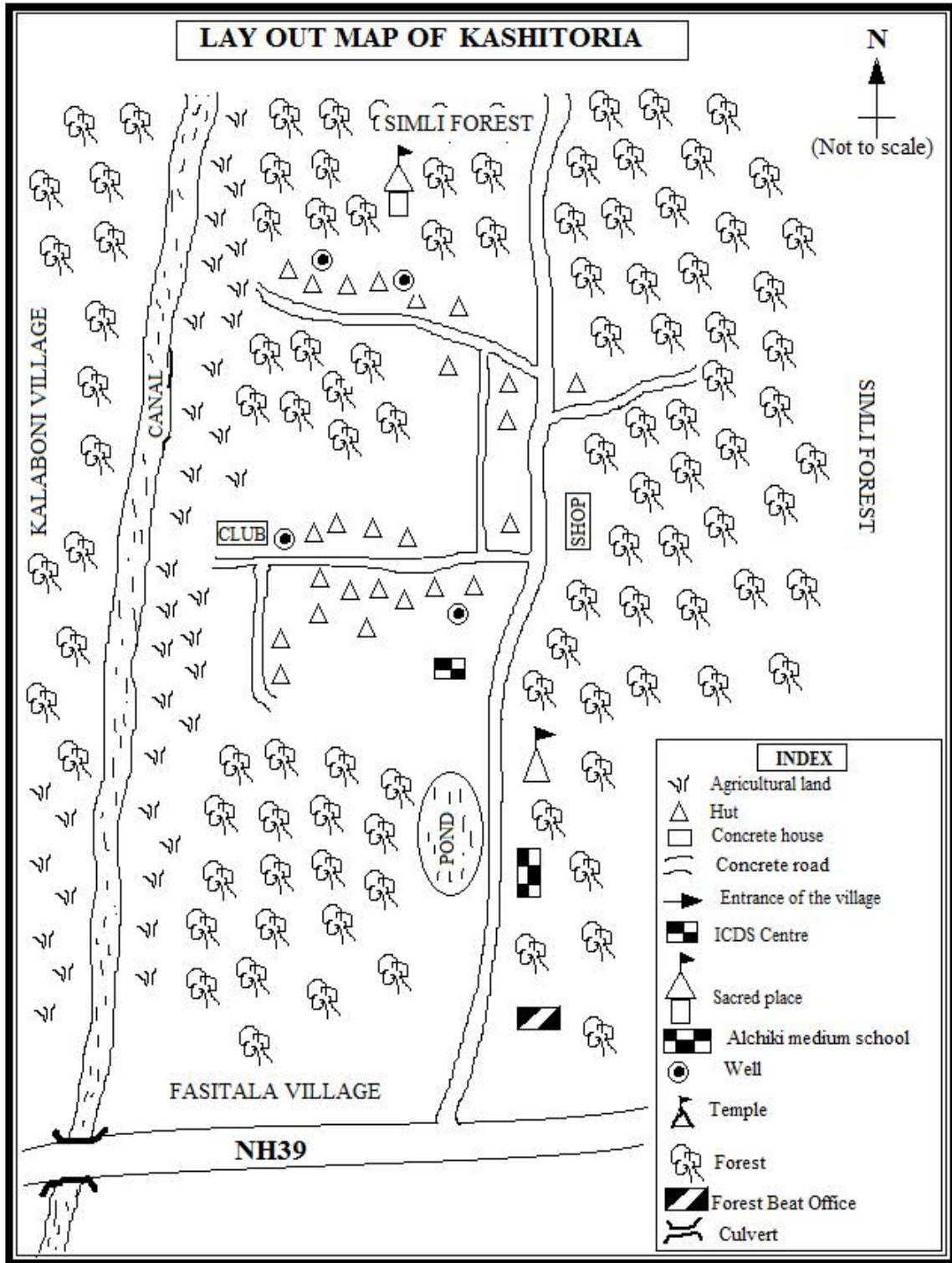
Map 1.9: Satellite view of the village Kashitoria (assessed from the Google Earth on 11.04.2018)

1.6.1.4.3 Shimuldanga (JL. No. 423)

Shimuldanga is a tribal village under the Chatibandh Gram Panchayat of Salboni Block and falls under Salboni police station of Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal. It is a small village having a population of 102, including 49 males and 53 females. It consists of 25 families belonging exclusively to the Santal community. It is thus a uniethnic village. The village is approximately 25 km away from Midnapore town and

about 15 km from Salboni Police Station. The village is under the Sitanathpur *mouza.* A *Jaherthan* (sacred grove) is located at the entrance of the village.

Shimuldanga village is surrounded by Chatibandh village in the east and by the Jindal Steel Work (JSW) in the west, by Banshkopra village in north and Renkishol village in the south. Most of the houses are built of mud with thatched roofs and these are closely situated to each other. A very few families have brick houses with asbestos roof, which are constructed under the scheme of IAY and presently under the government scheme of PMAY-G.

Agriculture is the main economy in this village. For smooth running of their livelihood they also engage themselves in daily labour, leaf-plate making, forest product collection, fuel business, etc. However, day-to-day livelihood of the people depends principally on the collection of forest produces like fuel wood, *Sal (Shorea robusta)* leaves, etc. Among some families a few women are engaged in making of *sal* plates and metal ornaments.

Most to the villagers use to bring drinking water from a tap that is meant for providing water from Sitanathpur water supply project. But when the tap becomes out of order the villagers have to collect their drinking water form a local canal, which is located about 2 km from the village. They accomplish their domestic works such as bathing, washing, cooking etc. with water from the tap as well as canal. Most of the household have dug-wells that retain water only during the rainy season.
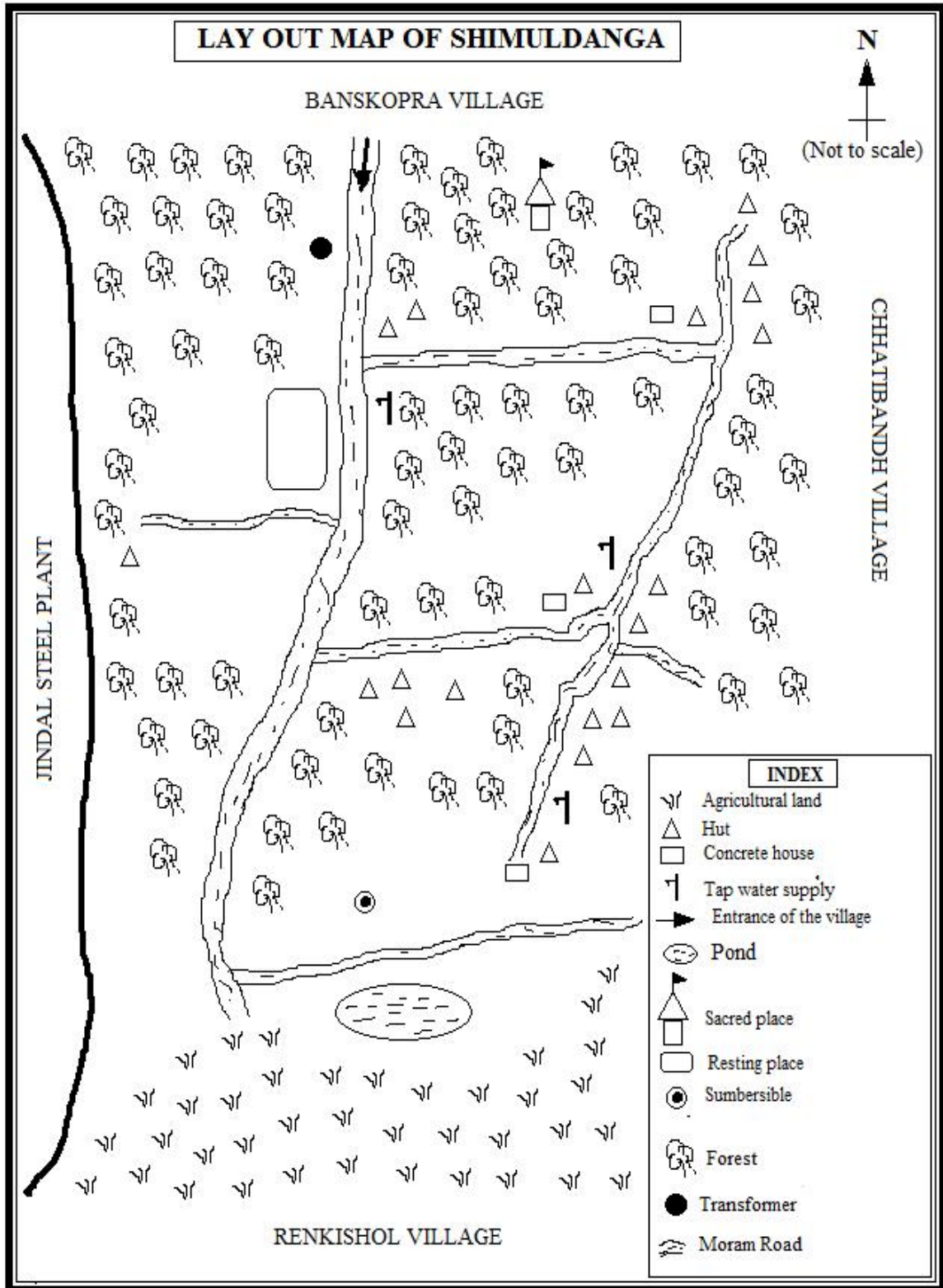
The health care facility in the village is almost like the other villages. For small injuries and health problem they use to go to the traditional medical practitioners,

commonly known as the *Gurubaba* in this village. In serious cases, they have to visit either Salboni Health Centre (approx. 4.5 km from the village) or District hospital at Midnapore town, which is situated approximately 25 km from the village.

The sanitation and drainage system is not up to the mark. Very few houses have toilets and rest of them have to go to the nearby forest for open defecation.

There is no ICDS centre or primary and high schools at Shimuldanga. This is the reason why the children use to go for their education to Sitanathpur and Banskopna villages which are located about 1.0 km and 2.5 km away from the village. For higher education they can to go to Salboni Government College or Midnapore College.

Map 1.10: Lay out map of Shimuldanga village (not to scale)

LAY OUT MAP OF SHIMULDANGA

N

(Not to scale)

BANSKOPRA VILLAGE

JINDAL STEEL PLANT

CHHATIBANDH VILLAGE

RENKISHOL VILLAGE

INDEX

𝚼 Agricultural land
△ Hut
☐ Concrete house
𝚼 Tap water supply
→ Entrance of the village
⬭ Pond
⚑ Sacred place
▭ Resting place
◉ Sumbersible
🌳 Forest
● Transformer
〰 Moram Road

Map 1.11: Satellite view of the village Shimuldanga (assessed from the Google Earth on 11.04.2018)

1.6.1.4.4   Aushabandhi (JL No. 120)

Aushabandhi is a tribal village under Manidaha Gram Panchayat of Midnapore Sadar Block and falls under Kotwali Police station (very recently it is brought under the newly created Gurguripal Police station) of Paschim Medinipur district. It is a medium sized village having a population of 344, with 173 males and 171 females. It consists of 73 families belonging exclusively to the Santal community.

The village is approximately 15 km away from Midnapore town. The village is under the Daha *mouza.*

The village is surrounded by Daha village in the east and Gurguripal forest in the west, Kharhkachati forest in the north and in the south by Shimulsodh forest.

The settlement pattern of the village is linear in fashion. Most of the houses are made of mud with roofs thatched with straw and asbestos. There is a very few *pukka* houses (made of bricks) which are constructed under the *Indira Awas Yojana* (IAY), *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin* (PMAY-G), *Geetanajali* and *Amar Thikana*. The last one is a housing scheme implemented by the Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal in this village. There is no boundary wall between the houses in the village.

Cultivation of paddy is the main economy in the village. Maximum people of this village are share croppers. Paddy cultivation is done twice a year. The villagers are also found to engage themselves in daily labour, shop keeping, leaf-plate making, forest product collection, fuel business, etc. To maintain their livelihood they depend upon collection of fuel wood, *Sal* leaves, honey and any other minor forest products. In some families females are found to remain busy in making of *sal*-plates, bamboo baskets, etc.

Tap water, which is supplied from Nayagram, is the main source of drinking water at Aushabandhi. They accomplish their domestic works such as bathing, washing, cooking, etc. with water from dug-wells, submersible pump and tube wells. However, most of the tube wells are not in working condition.

There is hardly any health care facility at Aushabandhi village. For minor injuries and health problem they had to go to the nearest Nayagram Primary Health Centre, which is approximately 2.5 km from the village. For serious and emergency cases they visit the Midnapore Sadar Hospital at Midnapore town which is approximately 15 km from the village. In the village, there are no proper sanitation and drainage facilities. During rainy season water overflows the roads and courtyards.

There is one A*nganwadi* (ICDS) centre located at the forest side of this village. For primary education children have to go the neighboring village Mohra. For secondary and higher secondary levels study the children use to go to Nayagram Benasuli High School, which is approximately 2.5 km from the village. For higher education they can go to Midnapore College, K.D. College, Raja N.L. Khan College etc.

In this village there are two types of political organization, *viz.*, statutory and traditional. For any kind of internal dispute the villagers depend on the judgment of the traditional political body, called as *soloaana*, which is constituted by the villagers. When they are not satisfied with the judgment of the traditional organization, they use to go to the statutory political bodies.

Map 1.12 : Lay out map of Aushabandhi Village (not to scale)
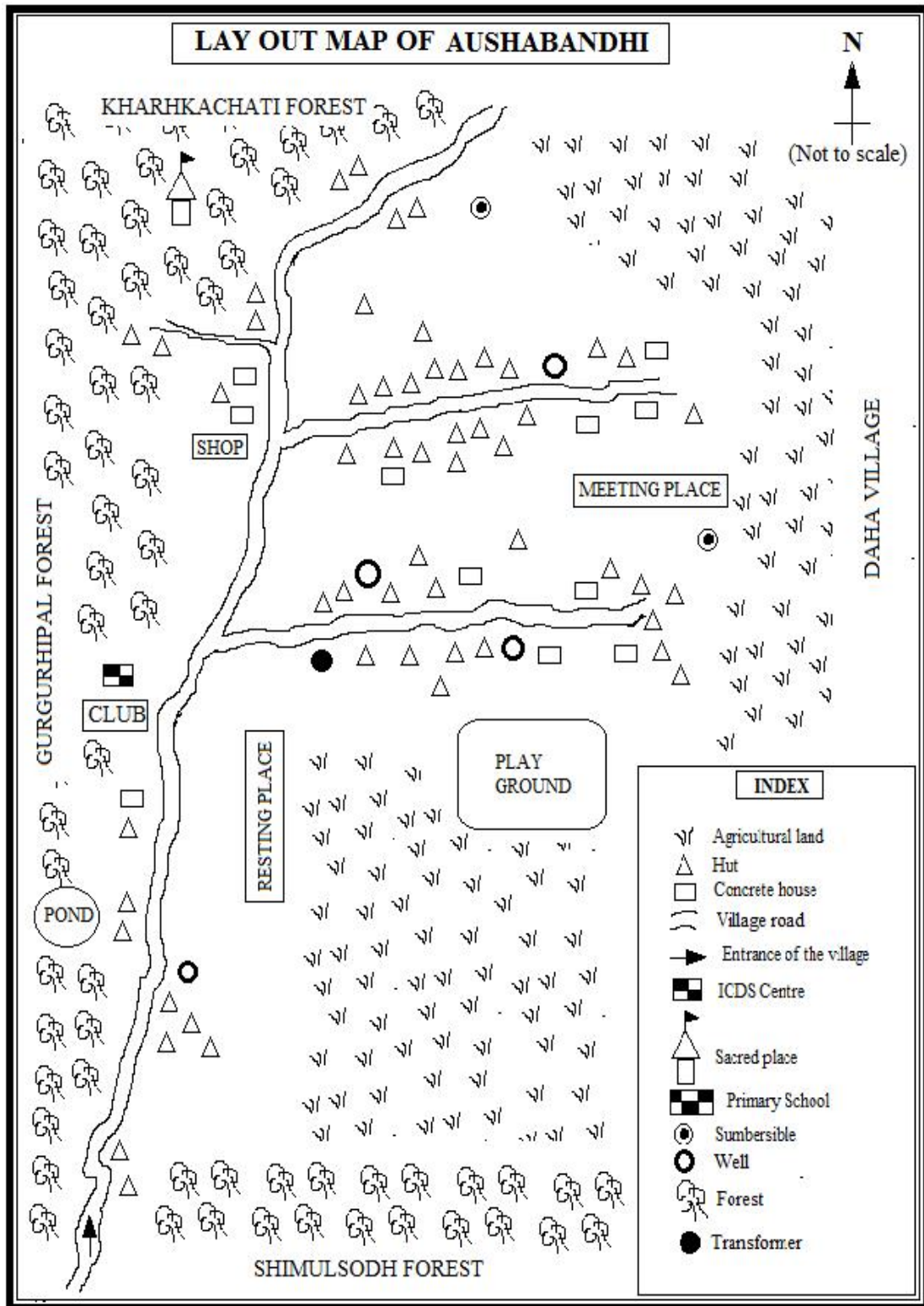
Map 1.13: Satellite view of the village Aushabandhi (assessed from the Google Earth on 11.04.2018)

All the four villages have witnessed excessive political violence with varying degrees during the so called Maoist movement of Junglemahal area and the socio-economic life of the ethnic groups living in the villages has been seriously affected.

1.6.2 The People

This section deals with the different ethnic groups of the villages under study. Chhotopelia, Shimuldanga and Aushabadhi villages are inhabited exclusively by the Santals, whereas Kashitoria village is inhabited by the Hari, Teli and the Santal communities. A brief description about the communities concerned is as follows:

1.6.2.1 The Santal

The Santals are one of the largest homogenous tribal groups in India. As per 2001 census, they are the third largest tribal group (only after the Bhil and Gond) in India and the largest in the state of West Bengal. They are distributed over the south-eastern plateau of Jharkhand (formerly Bihar), West Bengal, Orissa and Assam. In West Bengal, there are 38 tribal groups (Baskey, 1987). As per the 2011 census, 5.5 per cent of the total population in West Bengal is tribal population. Out of this total tribal population, 51.80 per cent belong to the Santal tribe. They are distributed in various districts of West Bengal. But their highest concentration is found in Jhargram and Paschim Medinipur, followed by Purulia and Bankura districts.

The main economic pursuit of the Santals is agriculture. The Santals are divided into different *paris* (clan) and sub-*paris* (sub-clan), mostly named after plants, animals, fruits or other materials objects commonly referred to as their *totems*(Dubey, 1965). They are very frank, open minded, honest and gentle people and usually found to have a calm, joyful and cheerful life. Archer (1946) called them a 'musical people'. They have cycles of elaborate songs and dance forms for different festivals, rituals and rites associated with their life cycle as well as agricultural operations. They are generally shy

of fighting (Singh, 1981). They are known for their courage, patriotic fanaticism and enthusiasm. They are, as Roy Choudhury (1961) observes, simple but respectful to their social code of honesty that helps the tribe to keep their solidarity.

The mother tongue of the Santals is Santali, which comes under the Austro-Asiatic language group. Santals have their own script called as the *Alchiki* which was developed by Pandit Raghunath Murmu in 1925. They can speak fluently Bengali and Hindi as well.

1.6.2.2 Hari

The Hari community is basically found in West Bengal. They are considered to be an indigenous people belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) category. As per the 2001 census report, the total population of the Hari is 3,90,619 that makes up 2.1 per cent of total Scheduled Caste population in West Bengal. They are under the fold of the so-called '*harijon*' (untouchable), a nomenclature first used by Mahatma Gandhi. However, at present the Hari community is commonly referred to a *Dalit*.

The Hari practices Hindu religion and worships the Goddess Kali, Manasha and other Hindu Gods. They occupy the lowest social rank in the social hierarchy of Hindu caste system. Traditionally, they are familiar with playing of musical instruments such as drums in wedding ceremonies, festivals, pujas, etc. They are very skillful in making musical instruments (drums, etc.) and handicraft items. However, now-a-days they are mostly engaged in agricultural activities and other daily manual works as day-labourers.

1.6.2.3 Teli

Traditionally, the Teli is an oil presser caste group. They are involved in manufacturing and trading of oil in the region across West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. Currently they are included under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category in West Bengal.

The Teli has a mixed tradition, having a mythical origin. The creation of the first Teli is ascribed to the God *Siva*, who took massage with oil after taking bath. This oil is believed to be made from his own sweat by a man named Rupnarayan Teli or Manohar Pal. There is another story that relates it to the creation of men by the Goddess *Bhagavati* who ordered them to bring oil for her. There are two sub-castes of Teli: the *Ekadas* and *Dwadas* Teli. The first Teli or, in other words, father of all Telis is believed to be Manohar Pal, a *beopari* or hawker known for his service of selling oil in and around the villages (Rishley,1892).

1.7 Problem faced

I have faced many problems during the whole period of this present research work. The first and foremost was the selection of suitable study area which might represent the gamut of the Maoist conflict in Junglemahal area. Keeping in mind the time and funding available for the work, four villages were selected on the basis of various factors such as historical, cultural, linguistic, geographical importance, and the nature and extent of the Maoist violence and counter-violence. I conducted pilot surveys in various phases to finalize the selection before conducting the actual fieldwork. The pilot survey

was important from two reasons: firstly, it helped to make rapport with villagers for further study in the proposed geographical area, and secondly, it helped to decide upon the villages for the proposed work. Initially, it was learnt that people from these villages were not willing to share information about them and on the movement. They tried to avoid answering questions on the Maoist movement or on the counter strategy. But, I continued to talk with the people on their day-to-day miseries. This made me realize their feeling of insecurity over years. Their safety and security were under threat both from the Maoist activists and the counter-insurgency forces deployed across the region. Fortunately, after interaction over a prolonged period some people became friendly with me and they helped a lot to enter into the domain of the present work.

The second important problem was that previously there were cases of similar visits at Chhotopelia and its adjoining villages. But, it turned out to be otherwise. Some of these previous visitors appeared to be accompanied with the Maoist cadres. Obviously, the village people lost their trust on outsiders. Moreover, Maoist movement and the counter insurgency measures gave them a painful memory of torture, harassment, brutal police act, etc. They were hesitant to talk on the issue since they were already frustrated and depressed over the violent activities of which they were the ultimate victims. Keeping all these problems in mind, I approached first the local authorities like panchayat members and traditional village leaders to sharing their experiences. This approach magically worked in favour of me, though it took longer time than the expectation. I explained about the proposed research topic and objectives, and later on, convinced them about the academic importance of this study. Subsequently, I requested these persons to introduce me to somebody else for having interaction. And, they came

forward to help me. There were similar situations at Kashitoria, Shimuldanga and Aushabandhi also. It took many days to convince the village leaders initially, but I became successful to convince them later on.

Thirdly, I became the point of suspicion. The Maoist activists suspected me initially as a prospective informer to police and the police suspected me as an activist. I had to cautiously handle the security forces that were patrolling in and around the villages. Since the movement witnessed different shades and spurts of violence I could not carry out my fieldwork at a stretch. I had to change my plan and schedule of my fieldwork frequently.

Apart from these, there were other difficulties such as the problem to access data from government offices, unavailability of staff in government offices to provide records and documents, and lack of sufficient secondary sources on this specific domain of research. Moreover, many villagers left their village for long time to avoid the Maoist activists or police. Some even left home for jobs or works especially after the beginning of this movement. This is because during the movement the poor people could hardly find any work as wage labourers in Junglemahal area. In many cases only aged women were found in their houses, who were reluctant to share their experiences. That is why, most of the case studies have been taken from the female respondents. Thus, that was a very hard time to find out suitable respondents. Cases of child marriage, particularly of the girls, were on rise to provide them safe homes. They were married off outside the disturbed areas. This became another difficulty to interact with the teenagers to understand their mental state and other things.