

## CHAPTER - II

### DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION

#### 2.1 MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

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The existence of the Toto tribe was first mentioned by Babu Kishen Kanta Bose, a British Government Employee of Rangpur Collectorate. David Scott, who was the collector of Rangpur, sent him to Bhutan Government as an envoy in 1815. Bose however found people called Totos in a village called Lukepur under the Falakata tahasil of Western Duars, and not at Totopara, the present site of their habitat. And one had to wait for another 50 to 60 years after the visit of Bose to know about the present Totopara village. The village as also the Totos inhabiting it were traced by D. Sunder in course of his survey and settlement operation in 1895. Since then, the Totos have become a popular topic for discussion both among the official and academic circles.

#### 2.1 MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

The Totos cannot say anything about their origin or the

meaning of their ethnonym. The name of the community is pronounced differently not only by others but the Totos themselves. It is found that the elders generally identify themselves as 'Toto' whereas the younger generation appears to prefer the word 'Toṭo'. Whether this change in pronunciation has any bearing upon the meaning of the word cannot be ascertained at the present state of our knowledge because not much of researches have been undertaken so far about the language of the people concerned.

It is known that often the name of a community is derived from the name given to them by their neighbours, that is, the ethnonym is none other than the exoethnonym. Therefore, a brief discourse on the neighbouring languages may be of some use. Let us first turn our attention to the Bhutias. The word 'Toṭo' in Bhutia language means an image. Therefore, to discover a link between an image and the name of the community will be a little too far-fetched, more so because the Totos are known to be neither painters nor sculptors. The word 'Toṭo-fong' in Limbu language means roasted meat or burnt meat. From this, a meaning of the word 'Toto' can be derived. It may mean roasted meat-eaters or the people who consume roasted meat. The Totos are inveterate meat-eaters and they do so often by simply roasting on fire. In Rabha language 'Tapta:p' means quickly (District Census Handbook 1961:125). The people who walk quickly can therefore be addressed with the use of this word. The Totos are known to move first when the occasion arises in connection with their portage or trade

tours which they are used to undertake very often. Again in Toto language itself, there is a verb 'Totowa-wang' which means - come quickly. From this verb an inner meaning can also be derived as the people who can walk quickly even with heavy loads.

Similar to the origin of the name of the Toto tribe, no historical evidence has yet been unearthed about the place of their origin. Earlier scholars have left only some cursory remarks on this issue. In this regard, Sunder states that "The Totos are unable to say whence they came, but allege that they have been at Totopara for many generations. They are different from the Bhutias in many respects, and have a language of their own" (Sunder:84).

Next to Sunder, John F. Grunning wrote in 1911 that "The Totos are a curious race whose village is built on a hill called Badoo, about 5 miles from the Huntapara tea garden. There are only forty houses left and they do not know whence they came, nor of what race they spring, though they allege that they have been at Totopara for many generations. They have a language of their own, and as they associate little with other races, they can only speak a few words of Bengali and it is very difficult to communicate with them" (Grunning:40).

J. Milligan, in his Survey and Settlement Report (1916) made no comment on the origin of the tribe, while B. Mukherjee (1931) only notices that the Totos are 'allied to Bhutias'.

In course of his census works A. Mitra (1951) wrote the following : "He has the unique distinction of belonging to a very rare race; it lives in only one village in the wide world, has a spoken language of its own and numbers only about 325 souls ... Anthropologists are in two minds about his origin and they do not quite know from where he came. He is different from Bhutias, the Garo, the Mech, the Rajbansis, among whom he lives in Jalpaiguri". He again narrates, "The Totos claim Totopara as their ancestral home, but have a tradition of having migrated from somewhere else" (Mitra:CCXV-CCXVI). He himself however made no surmise about the place of origin of the Totos.

Roy Burman had tried to probe deeper into the matter. He found that there are various myths or traditions current among the Totos about their origin and source of migration. To decide about the veracity of any one of them was no easy matter. However he noted the following facts latent within the tradition cherished by them : (1) the Totos believe that there was previously no clan division among them, (2) during the community festivals the different Toto clans have to perform different rites, (3) different Toto clans are believe to have arrived at Totopara at a different time periods, (4) many of the Totos believe that different clans are named according to different places of their origin, (5) some Doyas (a neighbouring community inside Bhutan), Nepalis as also the Totos subscribed to the view that the Totos previously lived inside Bhutan and the Bhutia chief of Paro

ordered them to settle at Totopara for porterage work, and (6) the various Toto clans are arranged in various types of moieties indicating their consociation with the Bhutias to the north on the one hand and the Meches to the south on the other.

From a careful scrutiny of the above, Roy Burman came to the conclusion that before coming to Totopara, the Totos used to live dispersed in different areas in the neighbourhood of Deingcho garden inside Bhutan. There was no territorial unity of the tribe at that time and they used to gather only occasionally for performance of different worships at Deingcho. "Genealogy shows that the settlement of the Toto commenced at Totopara eight generations ago. This approximately places the time to the middle of the 18th century.... recorded history shows that Bhutia domination was established on the adjacent plains at the beginning of the 18th century. Before that, the area was under Cook domination. And the relation between the two people was never happy. The Bhutia used to plunder the inhabitants of the plains, and massacre them or carry them off as slaves. It is therefore unlikely that the Bhutia were able to maintain peaceful supply-line, through a hostile land, specially when it was not under their own control. Southward journey of the Toto for bringing rice, salt etc. can therefore be ruled out at that period. It was only after the Duars came under the control of the Bhutia that the problem of maintaining a peaceful supply line arose. The shift of the Toto from Deingcho area to Totopara, within a generation of Bhutia

domination of the southern plains therefore seem to have been dictated by practical necessity of the Bhutia rulers" (Roy Burman:75-76 Part II Ch.2).

After weighing all evidence Roy Burman had the following to say : "My answer is that no traditional structure of the Toto existed at all. Toto was a new tribe - a child of Bhutia state-craft" (86). Further, "the Toto were originally war captives of the Bhutia, carried inside Bhutan from among different people in the Duars. They were organised into working gangs by the Bhutia to render slave labour.... At that time these workgangs themselves did not live in the bordering areas as in the eyes of the Bhutia, they were of uncertain loyalty. Bhutia however tried to integrate those people in the total set up by encouraging ritual performances in Bhutia pattern .... These provided the slaves with new incentives to build up new ethos of life, and a community was in the making. Settlement at Totopara intensified the process of community building.... In the new settlement the Toto had to maintain two faced contact in the interest of the Bhutia rulers - one with the Mech - Cooch group in the south and another with the Bhutia masters themselves in the north.... The slaves gained a new expanse of life. They attained their distinctiveness, not by constructing their activity-field, but by selective accommodation of all that interposed in their life. It was a bye product of Bhutia state-craft, but it was direct product of human spirit, which had its creative outlet in constructing new when their old

was charred in slavery" (Roy Burman:94-96 Part II Ch. 2).

C.C. Sanyal was inclined to discover the similarities between the sub-Himalayan tribe of the Totos on the one hand and the Lokhe or Bhutanese proper who themselves are only a branch of Tibetans. He said "It may be that the Totos are one of them or a mixture of them or a different and a distinct tribe, but, in their dress and deportment they agree in large measure with Lokhe or Bhutanese with special characteristics of their own"(Sanyal:9).

Michael Aris also corroborated to some extent a similar view. In his book on Bhutan he wrote, "... small groups of similar people are also found in the West. They are known as 'Tok-top' and live in two permanent villages south of sPagra called upper and lower Toktokha, ... The Toktop males wear a peculiar garment woven from nettles called a 'Pakhi', crossed over the chest and knotted at the shoulders very much like the dress of the Lepchas. The other connection one might suggest is provided by the Toto people living in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, often thought by anthropologists to be an ancient emigrant group of Bhutan" (Aris:xviii).

In his conversation with the present author, Dr. S.K. Pathak, a Tibetologist, had once suggested that the Totos might have migrated from Tromo valley, near the Jelep-la. It may therefore be surmised from the statement of Dr. Pathak and Michael Aris that the 'Tok-top' of Bhutan and the Totos of Totopara belong

to the same ethnic family, who lost their common identity after migrating from their original homeland somewhere in Tibet or in West Bhutan. These small groups are now living in complete isolation from each other in several places scattered for many generations. The Toto tribe also may be one of the missing-links, who lost some characteristics of their ethnic affinities with others due to lapse of time and migration.

To get a precise idea about the antecedents of the village Totopara is equally difficult. According to a myth of the Totos, the Totos were earlier the inhabitants of Cooch Behar State and used to lead a nomadic life, depending on hunting, gleaning and partly on seasonal jhooming. The myth was narrated thus, "Once the Totos set out for hunting, but did not find any animal throughout the day. Just before sunset, they at last were able to kill a Sambhar and returned to their shelter. They consumed the meat of the Sambhar as a delicious meal in the night, but kept its head for the next morning. During the night the Headman of the Totos was ordered by the divine voice to offer the same animal which they had killed in the evening.

"The next morning, with great surprise, the Headman found that the head which they had preserved is not that of a Sambhar, but of a cow instead. However, according to the instruction given to them by their Supreme God, the Headman, in consultation with the village elders, decided to offer the cow to their God, in course of worship as also penance.

"Meanwhile the king of Cooch Behar was informed of this fact. In rage, he expelled the Totos from his Estate. In this situation, finding no other place, the Totos migrated to Bhutan and started living there permanently. After a few years the Totos were outraged by the Bhutias and were taken as Zapo (Slave). Some of the Toto slaves were engaged as porters for carrying arms and other provisions to the war front, at the time of war.

"Then one day seventeen Totos managed to escape under the veil of darkness, late in the night. They hid themselves for a few days to escape from being captured by the Bhutias. Thereafter they proceeded further, and attacked a small village on the way in the night. The villagers were then deep asleep. The male members of the village were killed in the encounter. The Totos occupied the houses and captured the women of the village without much resistance. Then they started life anew in that village with the captured women" (Majumdar:217-220).

According to the Toto village elders, that particular village is the present Totopara, the only existing Toto settlement in India. But the exact identity of the people, who were defeated by them, is not clearly known. Some of the Totos believed that they belonged to the Rabha community. They also narrated that, out of the seventeen ancestors of the Totos, only thirteen persons survived after the battle over the occupation of the village of Totopara. According to them, the thirteen clans of the

Totos originated from the name of those ancestors who were the founders of that village. Thus, to save themselves from the Bhutias, and to protect their separate identity, they choose this secluded place which was cut off from the outside world for a long time.

The story narrated above may be wholly or partly related to the Toto tribe but, at present, there is no scope to verify it. Owing to the change in the geo-political environment in the Western Duars, especially at the time of transfer of political power from the Bhutias to the British Government, several small ethnic groups had left their settlements for safety and livelihood, leaving their memory to the name of the villages deserted by them, a study of which may be an interesting topic for the onomastics. Some of these migrated tribes are Kiranti, Doya, Khonia, Tandoo, Jalda, Toto etc. and the villages which still bear the memory of these particular tribes are Kranti (Kiranti), Jaldapara, Khonia Baste, Tondoo, Doyamara, Totopara etc., located within the boundaries of the present-day Jalpaiguri district.

The causes of migration of these small tribes are not exactly known to anybody. But, it appears from settlement records and local hearsay that these tribes left their settlements in large number during and after the Anglo-Bhutan war of 1864-65. Presumably, the causes of migration were as follows :

- (i) Destabilisation in the geo-political environment of Western Duars, as a result of uncertainty in administration during the later part of Bhutanese rule in this area;
- (ii) Transfer of power from the Bhutanese to the British Government after the Anglo-Bhutan war in 1864-65;
- (iii) Expansion of tea plantation along the northern part of the Western Duars, which was mainly populated by small ethnic groups;
- (iv) Abolition of 'Dao-Khazna' or 'Capitation Tax' (which was prevalent during Bhutan rule) and gradual imposition of land tax etc. in terms of cash;
- (v) Imposition of Indian Forest Preservation Act 1886 and banning the exploitation of forest resources without taking prior permission of the Forest Department;
- (vi) Conversion of community lands possessed by the tribal groups (which they used once for shifting cultivations), into Jote lands on the basis of individual ownership;
- (vii) Migration to secluded places with a view to retain their separate identity; and also
- (viii) Unusual and unequal competition with the newly settled communities, etc.

Besides the present Toto village there were at least four other Toto villages within the boundary of the present Jalpaiguri district. The villages which have been deserted by the Totos are (1) Totopara, in Falakata, (2) Tatpara, in Alipurduar, (3) Totapara, in Dhupguri under the Banarhat PS, (4) Tatgaon, in Māl.

1. There is a village in Lukepur (Luxmipur), pargana under Falakata tahasil, situated on the bank of river Dudua, on Dhupguri-Falakata road, called Tot'pārā'. A good number of Totos lived there once upon a time. Kishen Kanta Bose on his way to Rangpur from Bhutan found the village. In course of his investigation, Charu Chandra Sanyal was informed by some elderly people that there were some areca-nut trees in the village, which had been planted once upon a time by the Totos.

2. The second settlement of the Totos named Tat'para is situated in Pargana Bhatibari, under Alipurduar police station. At the time of his survey and settlement, Sunder was reported by the local people that the Totos had left for Bhutan from that place during the Anglo-Bhutan war in 1864-65.

3. The third settlement of the Totos is named Totāpārā. It is situated in Moraghat Taluk under Dhupguri Block in Banarhat Police Station. Later on, this settlement was converted into Totapara Tea Estate established in 1892. At present none of the Totos are found in that tea garden. During his investigation in 1953, Sanyal came to know that there was once a Toto settlement on the bank of river Ranga-tee, in a place which was subsequently occupied by the Mech cultivators. He was told by the local informants that the 'Totos looked like the hill people', and also that some of them migrated to the hills and settled in Dianapari in Bhutan, probably near the source of the river Diana' (Sanyal:4).

4. The fourth village named Tot'gaon is situated in Cheng-mari Pargana, under Mal Police Station. However, there are no Totos at present in the village.

Sanyal had stated that the village Totgaon was renamed as Sundari Busti, and also that 'about seventy years ago more than three-fourths of the area of Totgaon was washed away by the river Teesta', and the remaining portion also followed the same course in recent years. But it appears from the census reports that the areas of 1. Paschim Totgaon (753.67 acres) and 2. Purba Totgaon (1163.77 acres), which were recorded in 1951, have remained unchanged till now, and have not been washed away by the river Teesta. The only change which have taken place in these two segments of the Totgaon is that both the segments were recorded as 'uninhabited' till the 1971 Census and, later on, during the Census survey, it was recorded that in all there are 17 households in Paschim Totgaon comprised of 92 population. The other segment of the village, the Purba Totgaon, was recorded as 'Uninhabited' uptill 1981. However, no Toto is living in both these places since long ago.

Sanyal had mentioned of the existence of two Totos at Totgaon under Mal Police Station. Though, 'still they call themselves Totos', it is curious to note that they were named as Barsing Mech and Khor Mech (Sanyal:3). This is obviously an indicator of the historical process of tribe-caste continuum. In this

context it may be recollected that Sunder had not found any Totos in the area in late nineteenth century. Therefore, there are all the reasons to presume that an acculturation process had been silently operative for a very long time. During his survey operation in 1877 Sunder did not find any Totos at Totpara under Falakata Tahsil. He found the Mouza under the 'cultivation of paddy, jute and tobacco by the Rajbansis' instead (Sunder:Appendix I. i-vii). After so many years that have elapsed from then on, there is no use now enquiring into the origin of these Rajbansis. Further it should be remembered that desertion rather than acculturation was also quite frequent. Anyway, as far as Totpara under Falakata is concerned, the Mouza was granted on lease to the Sarugaon Tea Company in January 1901 (Ghose:99).

It may be noted now that all the five settlements of the Totos including Totopara, the area under present study, were established on the bank of some river or streamlet in the vicinity of forest. It appears that such spots were selected for settlement where there is a natural source of water. It was all the more essential to do so because during the winter months it becomes very difficult to get water from the artificially dug wells in the Duars region bordering on the hills. The Totos have also been heavily dependent on forest collection besides other economic activities for their livelihood. Therefore, their stay in the forest areas is easily explainable.

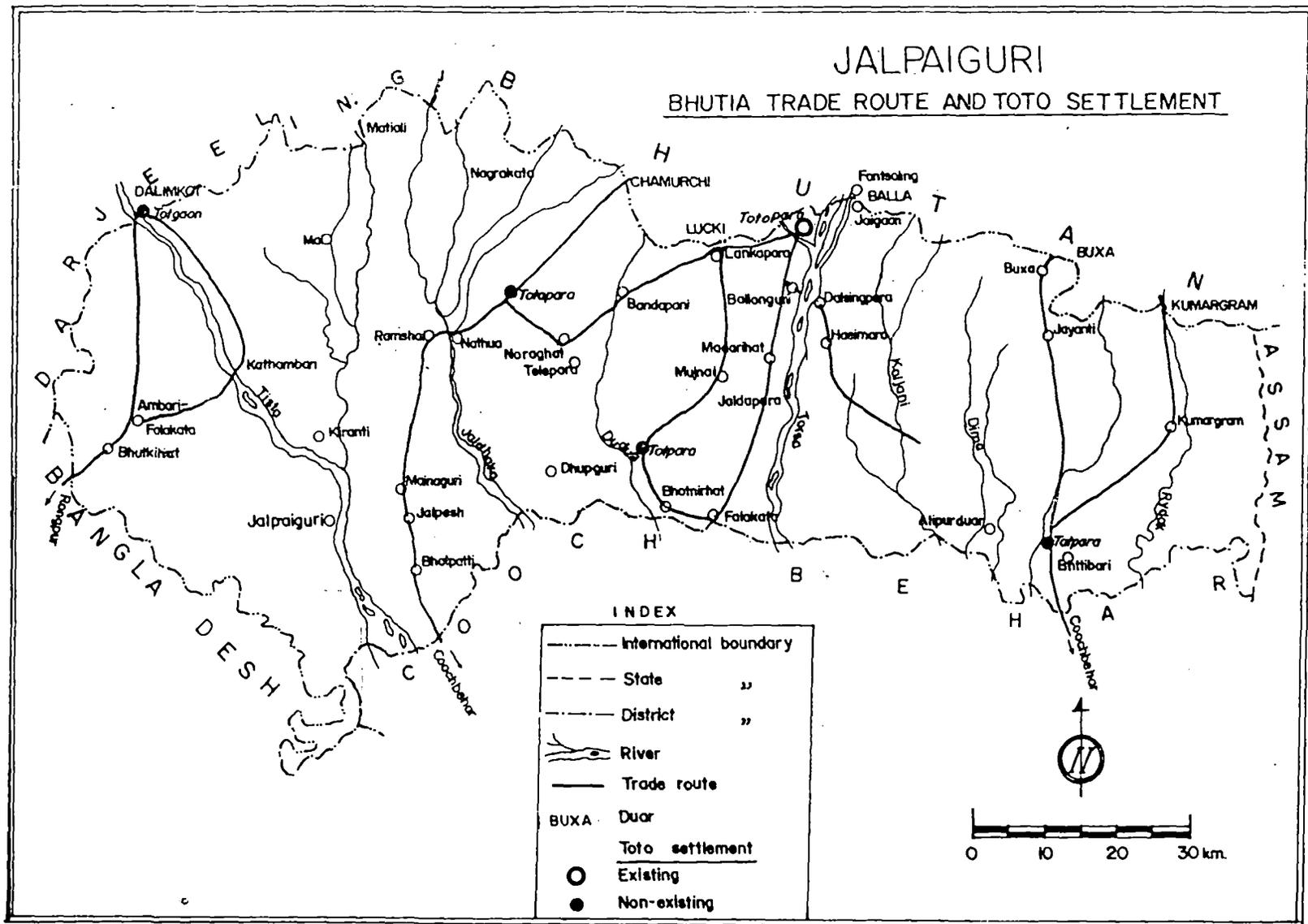
As has already been mentioned the Totos were made slaves by the Bhutanese Administration during their rule over the former before the British takeover. Under the jurisdiction of the Zinkaffs i.e. the Bhutanese officials at the intermediate level the Totos were required to carry different commodities between the high hills of Bhutan on one side and the plains of India on another. Such trade-tours are called Hui-hwa in the Toto language and they were carried throughout the dry seasons of the year across the Duars. There were 11 Duars between Bhutan and the territory of the British India of which five were located along the border of the newly constituted Jalpaiguri district. These were from west to east Chamurchiduar, Lakhipurduar (Luckeepur), Balladuar, Buxaduar and Kumargramduar. Besides, there was another Duar named Dalimkote, connecting the extreme western part of Duars and Ambari-Falakata, which was later on amalgamated with the Darjeeling district.

It appears that the Totos were settled in different places under patronage of the Bhutias for their own interest, in particular to render Hui-hwa or free porterage service regularly. As such, the Totos had no independent role to play other than rendering the duties entrusted to them by the administrative authorities. On the other hand, due to their extensive tours as porters they were forced to remain absent in their villages and hardly got any time to improve their own economic condition by themselves. As a result, they also had little opportunity to

establish any intimate relation with the other local people in their neighbourhood.

Due to their indifferent attitude towards the local people and perhaps for maintaining close relation with the Bhutias, who were treated as foreigners by the local people, the Totos were also not well accepted by the plainsmen. As a result, it is evident that almost all the Totos of the various settlements mentioned earlier (except the Totos of Totopara, the village under study) had left their settlements during the Indo-Bhutan war in 1864-65 or immediately thereafter along with the departure of their erstwhile masters, the Bhutias.

It is possible that the Totos of Totopara in Madarihat P.S. which is under the present study, did not leave their settlement even after the Indo-Bhutan war owing to the misunderstanding that the place had been located under the jurisdiction of the Suba of Baladuar under Bhutan. Soon after, the survey and settlement department in course of their operation fixed a capitation tax among the Totos, amounting to rupees sixty only, according to the number of the Toto households. In return, the Totos were assured of a peaceful life in Totopara. Moreover, they had become free from the bondage of slavery under the Bhutanese administration. Over time, the experience of an uninterruptedly free and peaceful life must have prevailed over the Totos of Totopara, who did not like to leave their present settlement, and thus they became permanent citizens of India.



MAP NO. 3

TABLE - 2.1

## LOCATION OF THE TOTO SETTLEMENTS ALONG THE OLD TRADE ROUTES

Sl. No.	Village	Name of the river-stream-lets.	Name of the forests	Connecting the	
				Duars	Places in Jalpaiguri district
1.	Tatgaon	Teesta-Leesh	Chumukdanga	Dalimkote	Kathambari, Rongdhamalli, Ambari-Falakata etc.
2.	Totapara	Ranga-tee (Gilandi)	Moraghat	Chamurchi	Maynaguri, Jalpesh, Bhotpatti etc.
3.	Totpara	Dudua	Shalbari	Lakhipur (via - Lankapara)	Bhutnirhat, Falakata etc.
4.	Tatpara	Gadadhar	Torsha/ Buxa	Buxa/ Kumargram	Bhalka, Bhatti-bari, Cooch Behar etc.
5.	Totopara	Deeptee, Guatee, Torsha	Titi	Balla/ Lakhipur	Madarihath, Jaldapara, Falakata etc.

2.2 SURVEY OPERATIONS

After the annexation of Western Duars into Indian territory, T.H. O'Donnell was engaged to demarcate the boundary between India and Bhutan in 1866. In his survey he, for the first time, recorded the area of the village Totopara as 1027.36 acres, and a sum of Rs. 60/- was fixed as tax for the whole area of the village.

But, for a long time, the village Totopara remained as a matter of dispute between Bhutan and India, owing to faulty demarcation of the border pillars. The 80 miles long border line lying between Bhutan and Jalpaiguri district ran through dense forests which was practically inaccessible in those days. The boundary pillars were not properly erected, specially along the border of Totopara village. In fact, a double line of border pillars were erected at Totopara area at a distance of about one mile between the lines.

The southern slope of the Tading hills upon which the present Totopara village is situated was included in the occupied Baladuar. But, the Suba of Baladuar claimed Totopara settlement as part of Bhutan and compelled the Totos to pay the same amount (Rs. 60/-) to the Government of Bhutan, through him.

The Government of Bengal readily respected the claim of Bhutan on Totopara. Later on, the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri and the Suba of Baladuar personally went to the disputed area. The Deputy Commissioner explained the cause of misunderstanding to the Suba of Baladuar and demolished the allegedly misplaced pillars in the presence of Suba himself. The Government of Bengal ordered Fassion, the Assistant Magistrate of Buxa, to demarcate boundary line quickly and correctly (April 1877). However, it appears from the records so far available that the dispute over boundary pillars remained a live issue till 1891-92, (after about 27 year of Indo-Bhutan war), when the whole boundary

was relaid by Captain Hodgeson under the Bengal Inner Frontier Regulation V of 1873 (Majumdar A.B.:164; District Census Handbook, Jalpaiguri 1961:9).

Thus it appears that the village Totopara was noticed and taken cognizance of immediately after the Indo-Bhutan war of 1864-65, when T.H. O'Donnel not only surveyed the village but also fixed a tax for the village area. And thereafter, the location of the village at the newly established international frontier was responsible for creating confusion about the political jurisdiction over it. It will therefore not be correct to say, as some have done, that Totopara was a discovery of Sunder in 1894-95 only, although it must be conceded that the Totos as a distinct community was first explicitly mentioned by D. Sunder in his Survey and Settlement Report of Jalpaiguri in 1895.

The first regular Survey and Settlement Operation of Western Duars was carried on by D. Sunder in 1889-94, and the total area of the village was recorded as 1,116.74 acres. Further, the whole area was recorded as the community land of the Totos in the name of their headman (instead of religious head or Subba of the village, which was prevalent during the Bhutanese rule). From the Sunder's report it is found that there were only 36 houses in the village at the time of his Survey. Regarding the tax, he wrote "The Totos of Totopara pay Rs. 105/- annually as revenue for their orange groves" (Sunder:133). It was mentioned as a lump sum tax by Milligan, in his report.

Milligan, District Settlement Officer, carried on a second Survey and Settlement Operation of Western Duars during 1906-16. In his Survey report the area of Totopara village was recorded as 2003.00 acres. He also recorded this land as the community land of Dongey Mondal (the then Headman of the Totos). He left some valuable information about this tiny tribe in his survey and settlement report. From his report, it appears that the number of the Toto houses were 60 with a total population of 235 persons. He strongly recommended that, '... they be allowed to remain in undisturbed possession of the whole block of 2003 acres, and that all transfers, mortgages, sub-letting or other disturbing practices be totally forbidden and prevented by the district authorities' (Milligan:111-13). It was Milligan, who for the first time fixed the Capitation tax (poll tax) on the Totos at the rate of Rs. 2/- per adult per year. A total of Rs. 120/- was calculated on the basis of sixty adults living in 60 separate houses in 1911.

A third survey of the district was conducted under the supervision of B. Mukherjee in 1931. During the settlement operation the capitation tax of Totopara was raised to Rs. 2-4 annas per head per adult. The total number of families was calculated to be 63, and accordingly the total tax of the village was fixed at Rs. 141-12 annas per year.

The fourth survey was carried on by the Government of India in 1951, and the area of Totopara was demarcated as 1996.76

acres. According to the latest survey conducted by the S.L.R.O. Falakata in 1969, the present area of the village Totopara was recorded as 1991.59 acres.

TABLE - 2.2  
AREA OF TOTOPARA RECORDED DURING DIFFERENT SURVEYS

Year	Survey conducted by	Area in Acres
1866	T.H. O'Donnel	1,027.36
1891-92	Captain Hodgeson	1,027.36
1889-94	D. Sunder	1,116.74
1906-16	J. Milligan	2,003.00
1934	Settlement Record	1,993.79
1951	Government of India (Census-1951)	1,996.76
1969	District Charge Officer	1,991.59

Source : Census Hand-book, Jalpaiguri, 1951;  
Sub-Plan for the Tribal areas of West Bengal,  
SC & ST Welfare Dept. Government of West Bengal,  
1975;  
Settlement Reports, Jalpaiguri.

The variation in land records through different periods was caused owing to addition and omissions of certain areas during the survey. But, these earlier variations does not affect the traditional occupational pattern of the tribe, because of their small number and virtually a large area under their effective possession. What had created imbalance in the human ecology and economy of Totopara, is the gradual encroachment of the lands of the Totos by the squatters.

### 2.3 ETHNIC METASTASIS OF THE VILLAGE

The sub-Himalayan Bengal has been one of the backward areas of the country. During the beginning of the century along the foothill of Duars the tea gardens existed like small islands with small population within a vast, lush green and undulated ocean of forest areas. Besides the tea gardens, there were small trade centres where the timber merchants and small shop-keepers flocked. These trade centres or Haats had a character of multi-ethnic population comprising the Behari, Marwari, Bengalee, Nepali etc. There were some 'Forest Villages' and small tribal hamlets around the deep forests. The forest villages were both mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic in nature inhabited by Mech, Rabha, Garo, Modesia, Nepali etc. On the other hand, most of the tribal hamlets were mono-ethnic inhabited by Mech, Rabha or the Toto.

This demographic scenario had remained unchanged till a few decades back due to the following reasons :

- (i) The lands of the foothill areas were earmarked for forest and tea gardens. There was hardly any Jote land available for establishing a settlement;
- (ii) The strictness observed by the Forest Department against any encroachment on the Forest land;
- (iii) The dominant role played by the European planters and Managers without whose permission nobody was allowed to build any house on the Tea-lease lands and adjoining areas;

- (iv) The foothill areas were not suitable for traditional wet-cultivation;
- (v) This region of sub-Himalayan Bengal was marked as one of the most unhealthy places of the country, owing to Malaria, Kala-azar, etc.

The refugees from East Bengal restricted their movements within the plains and paddy producing areas, according to their traditional ethnic-habit. In most cases, the Bangalee refugees were reluctant to establish their settlements along the foothill areas of Duars, except for businessmen and some other professionals. As a result, the people who settled along the foothills of sub-Himalayan Bengal during the past few decades are mostly the Nepalis from Nepal and Bhutan. The Nepalis by and large started establishing their settlements in the forest fringe areas and 'forest-villages' of Duars permanently by the fifties of this century, after the withdrawal of European planters from the country and resumption of some of the Tea-lease lands from the tea gardens by the Government. Such lands were recorded as vested to the State. By this time the 'Indo-Nepal Treaty' was also signed in 1950. The treaty provided the scope to the Nepalis to migrate lawfully and settle on any land of their choice. A large number of Nepalis were also deported by the Bhutan Government from the Western Bhutan since the later part of this decade due to political unrest there. This deported Nepalis also took shelter in the foothill areas of Duars for their livelihood from time to time. The Nepalis found this area suitable for their livelihood

according to their ethnic habit. Initially, they practised Bathan (Cow-shed; Cow herding), small agriculture, lumbering and worked as daily rated workers on construction sites or porters.

The village Totopara was purely mono-ethnic in nature in the past, but it has been converted into a multi-ethnic one with the passage of time. At the time when Totopara was annexed from Bhutan to the British territory, the village was completely mono-ethnic in nature. It was then populated only by the Toto tribes, and the village was practically isolated from the outside world. There was no road communication between the village and the nearest centres of the economic activities of the district. The village was surrounded by dense forests, lofty hills and turbulent streamlets and rivers. Over and above, the forest tracks leading to the village was infested with wild animals including elephants and tigers. As a result, the people from plains rarely used to visit the village. On the other hand, as a small ethnic group, the Totos were suffering from a fear-psychosis of losing their ethnic identity or becoming reduced to the status of slaves by the more powerful communities. For this reason they were not interested to allow any outsiders to enter their village and stay there for the night even though they were not known to misbehave with the strangers.

On the other hand, the village was treated as protected area (though undeclared) by the district administration. As a

result, no squatter was allowed to stay there permanently nor to encroach upon any land within the Mouza Totopara. Milligan, the then Land Revenue Officer, left a valuable recommendation to the district authorities in his report (1919). He wrote "I think all Government officers who know the place would agree that to admit outsiders to this isolated and peaceful retreat would mean their speedy disappearance, which would be pity" (Milligan:111-13).

The history of demographic transformation in Totopara is related to the trans-border trade system and land-rush. From the local respondents and previous documents it is known that the Totos came in contact with the other communities (Mech, Rabha, Rajbansi etc.) in connection with the trans-border trade, especially in oranges.

It was reported by both the elderly Toto and non-Toto respondents that owing to the strict taboo imposed by the Totos on the entry of the foreigners in Totopara, no outsider was allowed to settle there. But, some well acquainted dealers and porters were allowed to enter the village between Mankaiu festival (in November-December) and Sarde worship (in February-March) during the winter season, which was the orange plucking season of the area. Prior to the third decade of this century the traders were allowed to stay there on a purely temporary basis. But, they had to leave the village immediately after the completion of the Sarde worship.

The first ever information about the existence of the non-Totos in Totopara are available from the Census Report of 1911. But, the number was very small, a bare 35 only which again declined to only 6 heads in 1931. From a careful look into the size and fluctuation in the figures it may be made out that the nature of non-Toto settlers in Totopara was migratory and temporary during that period. In fact, the settlement of non-Totos in a large number was recorded for the first time in the Census of 1951, prepared by A. Mitra. Narrating his visit to Totopara, he wrote, "The entrance to the mouza was marked by the ruins of abandoned huts, at which sight my heart sank because Sunder in 1894 had reported that there were only 36 houses left of the Totos. But presently we came to a small clearing and heard human voice, and on to a bamboo enclosure with a gate, outside of which were four shops of Marwaris and Beharis with heaps of oranges and grocery like matches and condiments. There was also a miserable cloth shop" (Mitra:CCXV).

It may be noted here that Mitra mentioned nothing in his report about the existence of the other communities specially about the Nepalese, who at present outnumber the Totos. Perhaps the Nepalese who had settled earlier were dispersed from the village before his visit to Totopara. He only mentioned about some ruins which he found at the entrance of the village. The Census figures of 1951 however recorded 66 Nepali and 3 Behari families comprising a total population of 253 persons, forming 44.6% of the total population of the Mouza Totopara.

In 1953, Sanyal wrote, "There are 69 houses for the Totos, 4 houses for the permanent local merchants and 49 huts form the Mahakali Colony (Deosthān). The majority of Nepalis are not permanent residents. They come for trade and make their temporary residence in Subapara. Only 30 Nepali families live in Subapara permanently .... A forest cart road leads into Totopara and passes right through the small market up to Mahakali Colony at the other end .... There are four enterprising outsiders who selected this secluded backward site for business. They have come just to earn a living and make money but on the whole are liked by the Totos. Three of them are Beharis (Bhojpuris). They are (1) Lachman, son of Patwari (deceased) who had started the first shop about forty years ago and Lachman, his son, is now carrying on his father's business, (2) Sarokenath is doing business for 20 years and (3) Kedar is comparatively a newcomer. One Bhutia, Kancha Bomjan, is doing business for the last 30 years. They have become permanent residents. During cold weather, in orange season many more businessmen, mostly Nepalese, build temporary houses and stay for about six months using the village as a place for the purchase of orange from the villages further to the north in Ehutan. The hum of business, the porters bringing their loads of orange or taking them away and wholesalers making purchases for export to the other places of India, enlivens the village. The permanent shopkeepers keep a stock of rice, flattened rice (Chira or Chura), pulses, gur, sugar, mustard oil, kerosene, salt and

spices. Some cloth and a few shirts, coats, blouses, blankets, hurricane lanterns, other household utensils, etc., are also stored. Tea stalls appear in orange season only" (Sanyal:14-15).

But the name of the communities and the paras or localities which have been mentioned by Sanyal are confusing, because the Mahakali Colony (Deosthān) or Subapara are situated within the centre of the village and mainly populated by the Totos. Only 5 to 6 houses can be seen in Subapara (Subbagaon) where people live permanently but no Nepali house can be seen in Mahakali Colony (Buduri) or Puzagaon (exclusively populated by the Budubei clan of the Toto community). Among others, only 2 Behari merchants are at present living there.

Roy Burman, in his dissertation prepared in 1957, wrote that, '... at present there are 66 Nepali families and 3 Behari families there' (Roy Burman:608). In his survey it is also found that these families were non-familial, thereby indicating that they were as yet temporary residents of the village.

The 1961 Census Report recorded 104.58% population growth in Mouza Totopara during 1951-61, which is much higher than that of the population growth of the district and the Madarihat Block. The growth rate of population as recorded for the district and Madarihat Block during this period are 28.76% and 36.74% respectively. From this Census report and also from the records available with the Tribal Welfare Centre (TWC) it is revealed that there were 784 non-Toto population in the Mouza

Totopara, forming 67.59% of the total population of the village in 1961.

Amal Das recorded the non-Toto population in 1969 as follows : Nepali-658, Behari-14 and Marwari-2, with a total non-Toto population of 674, forming 58.3% of the total population of the Mouza.

From the 1971 Census Report it is revealed that population growth rate of the village has declined considerably. It was recorded as only 3.87% (45 persons) during 1961-71, which is much lower than that of the district and Madarihat Block. The population growth rates of the district and Madarihat Block were recorded as 28.76% and 25.46% respectively. The total non-Toto population was recorded as 648 forming 53.8% of the total population of the village.

The 1981 Census recorded 24.23% population growth in Totopara during 1971-81, which is almost similar to that of the district and the Madarihat Block. The percentage of growth of population in the district and Madarihat Block were 26.55% and 22.46% respectively. The non-Toto population of the village was recorded as 781 persons i.e., 52.2% of the total population of the district.

In the year 1984, the T.W.C. recorded 850 Nepali and 113 persons of other communities making a total non-Toto population of 963 persons, or 55.37% of the total population of the village.

From the unpublished Census records of 1991 obtained through official courtsey, it is found that the non-Toto population has gone up to 1270 forming 58.41% of the total population of the village.

The earliest figure for the Totos is available from the official Census report of 1901. But after 1951, no Census figure for them is directly available because the Totos were enumerated under one head along with Bhutia, Sherpa, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo etc. However, some reasonable estimates can be made based on certain assumptions so that a continuous time-series is obtained for the purpose of getting an idea of how and when the mono-ethnic village became a multi-ethnic one.

TABLE - 2.3

POPULATION OF TOTOPARA AND THE TOTOS

Year	Toto	Total	% of Totos to Total popn
1901	171	171	100.0
1911	200	235	85.1
1931	328	334	98.2
1951	314	567	55.4
1961	376	1160	32.4
1971	557	1205	46.2
1981	716	1497	47.8
1991	904	2174	41.6

In Table - 2.3 are presented the figures of Toto and total population in Totopara from 1901 to 1991 culled from various sources. Some explanation of how the data were arrived at is needed. The data for 1901, 1911 and 1931 are obtained from the Census Reports. A Mitra, who conducted the Census operation in 1951 in West Bengal, had said that no data is available for 1921 and 1941 Censuses. However, C.C. Sanyal and some others have presented in their accounts the population figures of the Totos for those years also reportedly from the census records. One does not know how they did it. The present author prefers to go by the information provided by A. Mitra. For 1961 the population is not available separately; however, number of Toto speakers in Jalpaiguri district is given, and that is taken to be the figure of Totos in Totopara. For 1971, 557 is the number of scheduled tribe population in Totopara. Hence, this is taken to be the figure for Totos even though a few non-Toto tribal people may have been accommodated in the said figure. In 1981 census the number of scheduled tribe population in Totopara has been registered as 716. The T.W.C. figure for the same year as available from their records is 761, and Sukumar Das in his report has quoted the latter figure. For 1991, figures have been obtained from the unpublished census records available with the administration through their courtsey as mentioned earlier.

In Table - 2.4 the population figures of Toto, Nepali and others in Totopara have been presented for various years from

TABLE - 2.4

POPULATION OF TOTO, NEPALI & OTHERS IN TOTOPARA  
1952 TO 1991.

Year	Toto	Nepali	Others	Total
1952	383	191	-	574
1953	322	228	-	550
1956	322	310	6	638
1969	482	658	16	1156
1972	560	690	37	1287
1979	675	717	91	1483
1984	776	850	113	1739
1991	904	1153	117	2174
1991*	926	1166	153	2245

1952 to 1991 as obtained from different sources. The 1991\* figures are obtained from the author's own survey whereas the other figure for the same year has been obtained from the unpublished Census records. The 1984 figures as also that of 1979 are obtained from the records of the Tribal Welfare Centre and also varified by the author during his surveys in those years. The figure for 1972 is obtained from a report submitted by Santosh Bhattacharjee, who was the Welfare officer of Totopara during that time. The 1969 figures have been obtained from the data furnished by Amal Das, Director, Cultural Research Institute, Calcutta in his book on the Totos. The figures for 1956 were worked out from the information furnished by B.K. Roy Burman in his dissertation on the Totos wherein he has said that there were 322 Totos, 66 families

of Nepalis and 3 families of others during the time of his investigation. We have assumed five persons per family of the Nepalis and two for other non-familial households of the remaining communities. The 1953 figures are obtained from the report furnished by J. Sarkar who was the Welfare officer of the village at that time. Finally, the 1952 data have been obtained from the office of the District Health Officer, Jalpaiguri.

TABLE - 2.5

COMMUNITY-WISE BREAK-UP OF TOTAL POPULATION OF TOTOPARA, 1991

Sl. No.	Community	No. of families	Population			Percentage
			Male	Female	Total	
1.	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Behari	14	54	29	83	3.7
2.	Bengalee	9	16	8	24	1.06
3.	Hindusthani Muslims from Bihar & U.P.	5	15	8	23	1.02
4.	Garos	2	6	8	14	0.6
5.	Lepcha	1	1	1	2	0.08
6.	Mech	1	3	1	4	0.17
7.	Marwari	1	2	0	2	0.08
8.	Oraon	1	1	0	1	0.04
9.	Nepali	209	630	536	1166	51.9
10.	Toto	180	473	453	926	41.3
Grand Total		423	1201	1044	2245	100.00

Source : Field investigation by the author.

In Table - 2.5 is presented the community-wise break-up of

Totopara even after repeated information where passed on to them by the Totos.

#### 2.4 CHANGES IN SOME DEMOGRAPHIC ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOTOS

As has been mentioned earlier, the population figures for the Totos is available for the first time from the Census Report of 1901. The total population was 171 consisting of 36 households, with a break-up of 72 males and 99 females. It would be observed that the females outnumbered the males substantially. In contrast to this, the males and females were 473 and 453 respectively during the survey made by the author in 1991. The Table - 2.6 puts together whatever meaningful data are available on this issue in one place so that the changes over time can be seen in its proper perspective.

TABLE - 2.6

TOTO POPULATION ACCORDING TO SEX IN SELECTED YEARS

Year	Male	Female	Total
1901	72	99	171
1951	157	157	314
1964	206	189	395
1969	242	240	482
1979	343	332	675
1984	401	375	776
1991	473	453	926

Source : Census Reports (1901 and 1951); Chakraborti and Chattopadhyay (1964); Amal Das (1969); D. Dhali (1979); TWC (1984); and Field Investigation by the author (1991).

The female population which was considerably higher in 1901 became balanced with the males in 1951, and it remained so, by and large, till 1969. After this period the males have been regularly outnumbering the females in all counts. Why this has so happened may not be answered immediately with any certainty. But the fact cannot be ignored that considerable changes must have taken place within the Toto society itself of which the sex ratio is only an indicator.

TABLE - 2.7

GROWTH RATE OF TOTO POPULATION FROM 1901 TO 1991

Year	Toto population	Decennial Growth rate in Percent
1901	171	-
1911	200	16.9
1931	328	64.0
1951	314	- 4.3
1961	376	19.8
1971	557	48.1
1981	716	28.5
1991	904	26.3

At this stage, it would be pertinent to once again look into the growth performance of the Toto population from 1901 (Table - 2.7).

It will be observed that during the 30 years between 1901 and 1931 the growth was quite satisfactory. But during the next

30 years the population was almost stagnant with rather a fall in the size of population between 1931 and 1951. This period must therefore have been very crucial as far as the survival of the community is concerned. From 1961 onwards the growth rate is significantly high showing the relative prosperity of the people and the security they are enjoying during the last 30 years. But it is again during this period only that the sex ratio has been adversely affected as far as the females are concerned. These figures also serve one more purpose. They rule out the popular belief that the Totos are a vanishing tribe. It is a fact that the Totos were once left uncared for and was leading an isolated life on the lap of nature. As such, they had been suffering from poverty, malnutrition, diseases etc. which were the main impediment to their growth till 1951. The increase in their population

TABLE - 2.8

AGE-STRUCTURE OF TOTO POPULATION

Age-Group	1951		1979		1991	
	Popn.	Percent	Popn.	Percent	Popn.	Percent
0 - 4	45	14.3	110	16.2	170	18.3
5 - 9	46	14.6	111	16.4	136	14.6
10 - 44	194	61.7	378	56.0	528	57.0
45 and above	29	9.1	76	11.1	92	9.8
TOTAL	314	100.0	675	100.0	926	100.0

Source : A. Mitra (1951); D. Dhali (1979), and Field Investigation by the author.

during the post-Independence period is the outcome of welfare measures taken up by the Government and several other voluntary organisations. Since 1951, the Totos have gradually come in direct contact with the district administration and also with the outside world. The traditional world of beliefs and superstitions along with the geographical isolation is breaking down fast, even though this is accompanied with the influx of outside people in their midst and the consequent exploitation.

The growth in population has a direct bearing upon the age structure of the population. From Table - 2.8 it will be observed that the proportion of children in the total population has increased considerably over time whereas there is a slight fall in the economically active group.

TABLE - 2.9  
DISTRIBUTION OF TOTO POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX, 1991

Age-Group	Male	Female	Total
0 - 4	84	84	168
5 - 9	76	62	138
10 - 14	60	55	115
15 - 19	39	48	87
20 - 24	60	54	114
25 - 29	40	36	76
30 - 34	33	27	60
35 - 39	23	19	42
40 - 44	17	16	33
45 - 49	17	17	34
50 - 54	11	15	26
55 - 59	8	5	13
60 -	5	15	20
TOTAL	473	453	926

Source : Field Investigation by the author.

It will further be seen from Table - 2.9 that the males outnumbered the females in all the age groups excepting 15-19, 50-54 and, 60 and above. In the category of children aged 0-4 males and females are equal in number. This indicates that the females are not taken equal care of as the males and, therefore, many of the females die early even though their population is balanced at the initial stage. It is also apparent that the females particularly those who survive the neglect meted out to them live longer than the males for whom the struggle and curd-gery of life take a heavy toll when they are in the middle ages.

TABLE - 2.10

AVERAGE SIZE OF A TOTO HOUSEHOLD

Year	No. of families	Total Population	Average Size
1951	71	314	4.4
1964	85	395	4.6
1969	96	482	5.0
1979	123	675	5.5
1991	180	926	5.1

Source : Same as in Table - 2.6.

Let us now have a look into the average size of a Toto household. The relevant data in this regard have been culled from different sources and presented in Table - 2.10. From there it will be observed that the average size of a Toto family has increased over time. In 1951 and 1991 the size was 4.4 and 5.1 respectively.

TABLE - 2.11

No. of Inmates	1951		1991	
	No. of houses	%	No. of houses	%
1 - 2	12	16.9	19	10.6
3 - 4	28	39.5	44	24.4
5 - 6	21	29.5	66	36.6
7 -	10	14.0	51	28.4
TOTAL	71	100.0	180	100.0

We do not have enough of comparable data on the number of inmates per house. There are undoubtedly much information about the same in both Amal Das and D. Dhali but because of the different size-group specification followed by them they cannot be used for obtaining a time-series. In Table - 2.11 is presented the data regarding the number of inmates per house as obtained from the Census report by Ashok Mitra and the author's own field investigation.

It would be seen that the proportion of families having 5 or more members have increased significantly between 1951 and 1991. On the other hand the proportion of families having one to four members have come down drastically. If we examine the data that are available about the type of families (Table - 2.12) it would be found that the proportion of extended (joint) families have gone down much over time and the number and proportion of elementary families have very much increased. Therefore, the

TABLE - 2.12  
TYPE OF THE TOTO FAMILIES

Family Type	1964		1991	
	No.	%	No.	%
Non-familial Unit (Man)	1	1.2	6	3.3
Non-familial Unit (Woman)	2	2.3	4	2.2
Conjugal Unit	7	8.2	13	7.2
Elementary family	48	56.5	121	67.2
Extended (Joint) family	27	31.8	36	20.0
Unit with Patri/Matrikins	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source : Chakraborti & Chattopadhyay (1964); Field Investigation by the author (1991).

increase in the number of inmates per house must be due to the increased birth rate. However, this could not be satisfactorily resolved due to the insufficiency and inaccuracy of the data available with the Tribal Welfare Centre, Totopara, regarding the registration of births and deaths.

"Through want of data it is not possible to say definitely whether the Totos of Totopara are a vanishing people or an increasing one" was the comment of Sanyal in 1953. He also said,—"The history of the earlier settlements point to the fact that three to four generations ago a considerable number of Totos lived in Western Duars.... The whole area of Western Duars was under Bhutan till 1865 and probably due to depredation of the Bhutias, due to influence of other cultures and also due to the notorious malaria

of Western Duars the number began to fall off till there remained no trace of any Toto in the old settlements in the plains of Duars. The small number that survived moved from place to place as a wandering tribe in search of a shelter. Evidences are not lacking to establish that some of them were absorbed in the Mech family, some went to Nepal and upper Bhutan and were probably incorporated into the people of the place. The few that could save themselves had to seek shelter in the very secluded and healthier portion of a hill surrounded by deep wood where they confined themselves strictly within its limits. This is the present Toto-para where they are slowly increasing in number" (Sanyal:5-14). Much after what Sanyal had noticed, Amal Das stated in 1969 that "the Totos are not dying out as is the general belief" (Das:39). At present, from what has been presented above, it has become further clear that the Totos are no longer a vanishing tribe as was the apprehension in the past. Their growth is satisfactory even though the ethnic metastasis that is overwhelming them is a cause for alarm.