

CHAPTER – THIRTEEN

13.0 Population, Settlement including Agriculture

13.01 Population

Land is the ultimate asset of the nation and in view of the rapidly increasing population, land must be made productive to feed the additional mouth every year. The earth's resources, physiographic conditions and human population are inherently connected. The fundamental relationships are: people rely on food air and water for life. The earth's resources provide energy and raw materials for human activities and those activities in turn have an impact on earth's resource systems.

Population and resources have always been a matter of concern to the scholar of various disciplines with the increasing pressure of population and land resources, agriculture has by and large expanded horizontally and vertically. The changing pattern of land use as a result of increasing number of population could be realized in a micro level in a predominantly agricultural land. Agriculture is a very important resource of occupation in rural areas of Darjeeling district. It is relatively less important as a resource of employment compared to other plain areas of North Bengal. According to 2001 census (Table 13.01) the population of the Darjeeling district was 1299919 persons. In 2001 the number has gone up to 1605900. The density of population per square kilometer in 1991 was 413 but in 2001 the density of population has gone up to 510 persons per sq.km. It can be seen from the table 13.01 that density of population is highest in Siliguri Municipal Corporation and the number is 14160 persons per/sq.km. followed by Darjeeling Municipality and density is 10173 persons per square kilometers, Kurseong has 7934 density per sq.km. and Kalimpong has 4952 density per sq.km. However, in hilly areas of Rangli Rangliot density of population is lowest in the district. Excluding the municipality areas of the hill areas of Darjeeling district other regions of the hill shows low density of

DISTRICT-DARJEELING

Density of Population

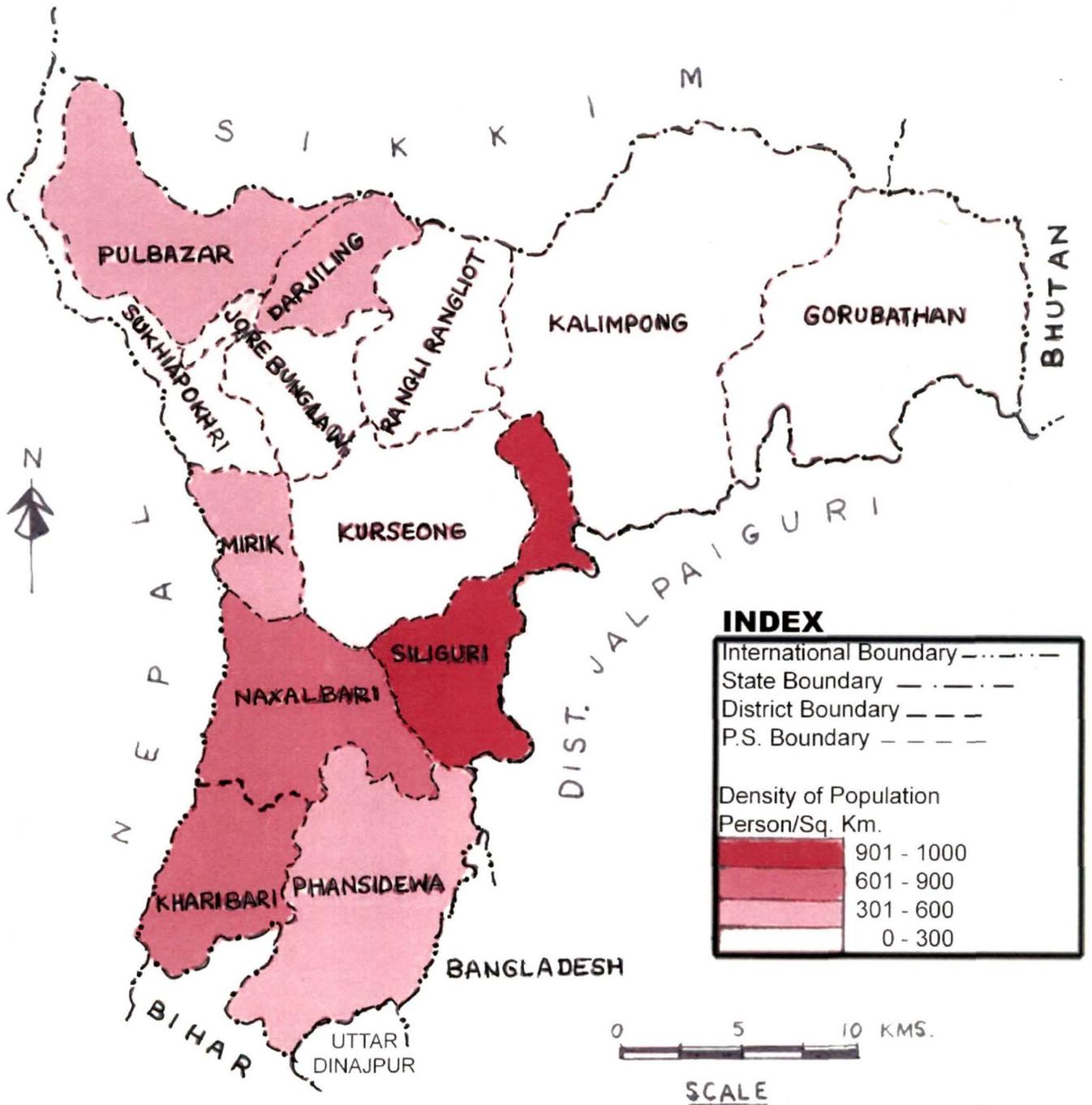


Fig- 13.1

population. In Siliguri subdivision density of population is lowest in Phansidewa (509 persons) and Kharibari (615 persons) Matigara and Naxalbari have more or less same density of population. Table 13.02 will given more idea about the growth of population by sex since 1901 till 2001 according to census of India 2001. Fig. 13.1 shows density of population in Darjeeling district.

Table 13.01

Area, Population and Density of Population in the District of Darjeeling, 2001 (P)

Sub-division/C.D.Block /M/MC/NA	Area in Sq. K.M.	Population (Number)	Density Per Sq.K.M.	P.C. of population to district population
Sadar Sub Division	915.09(P)	38821	424	24.08
Darjeeling/Pulbazar	212.71	115821	545	7.21
Rangli Rangliot	305.83	64296	210	4.00
Jore Bunglow- Sukhiapokhri	385.98	100674	261	6.27
Darjeeling(M)	10.57	107530	10173	6.70
Kalimpong Sub Division	1074.81(P)	225143	209	14.02
Kalimpong-I	321.16	67672	211	4.21
Kalimpong-II	303.00	60216	199	3.75
Gorubathan	441.97	54275	123	3.38
Kalimpong(M)	8.68	42980	4952	2.68
Kurseong Sub-Division	476.41(P)	176585	370	11.0
Kurseong	342.58	85109	248	5.30
Mirik	122.28	42230	345	2.64
Kurseong(M)	5.05	40067	7934	2.49
Mirik(N.A.)	6.50	9179	1412	0.57
Siliguri Sub Division	822.27(P)	815851	992	50.80
Matigara	140.60	126704	901	7.89
Naxalbari	181.51	144942	799	9.03
Kharibari	143.50	88206	615	5.49
Phansidewa	336.56	171384	509	10.67
Siliguri(M.C.)	20.10	284615	14160	17.72
District: 1991	3149.00	1299919	413	100.00
2001	3149.00	1605900	510	100.00

M = Municipality, M.C. = Municipal Corporation, N.A. = Notified area.

Source: Census of India, 1991 & 2001.

Table 13.02**Growth of Population by Sex on Different Censuses in the District of Darjeeling**

Year	Total Population	Index with 1901 as base	Male	Female	No. of Urban females per 100 males	Urban	Rural	P.C. of rural population to total population
1901	265780	100	141697	124083	88	21393	244387	91.95
1911	279899	105	149636	130263	87	24579	255320	91.22
1921	294237	111	155014	139223	90	28703	265534	90.24
1931	332061	125	176551	155510	88	43479	288582	86.91
1941	376369	147	199891	176478	88	58167	318202	84.55
1951	459617	173	246738	212879	84	94481	365136	79.44
1961	624640	235	335036	289604	86	144637	480003	76.84
1971	781777	294	415442	366335	88	180212	601565	76.95
1981	1024269	385	542567	481702	89	282153	742116	72.45
1991	1299919	489	679323	620596	91	396060	903859	69.53
2001(P)	1605900	604	826334	779566	94	520877	1085023	67.56

Source: Census of India, 2001.

From the table 13.02 it is clear that the percentage of the rural population to total population in 1901 was 92 percent, till 1941 the figure was 85 percent. After independence the percentage was around 80 percent but gradually rural population has been decreasing. In 2001 rural population to total population in the district has gone down to 67.56 percent.

The growth of urban population in the district of Darjeeling has increased steadily over decades with varying growth rates from one decade to another. This higher rate of growth of urban population is mainly due to the fact that the hill areas of Darjeeling opened up by the British gave a number of opportunities to the immigrants. With the establishment of tea gardens new roads were constructed, new commercial centres as well as new settlement were started. The growth rate of urban population in the hill

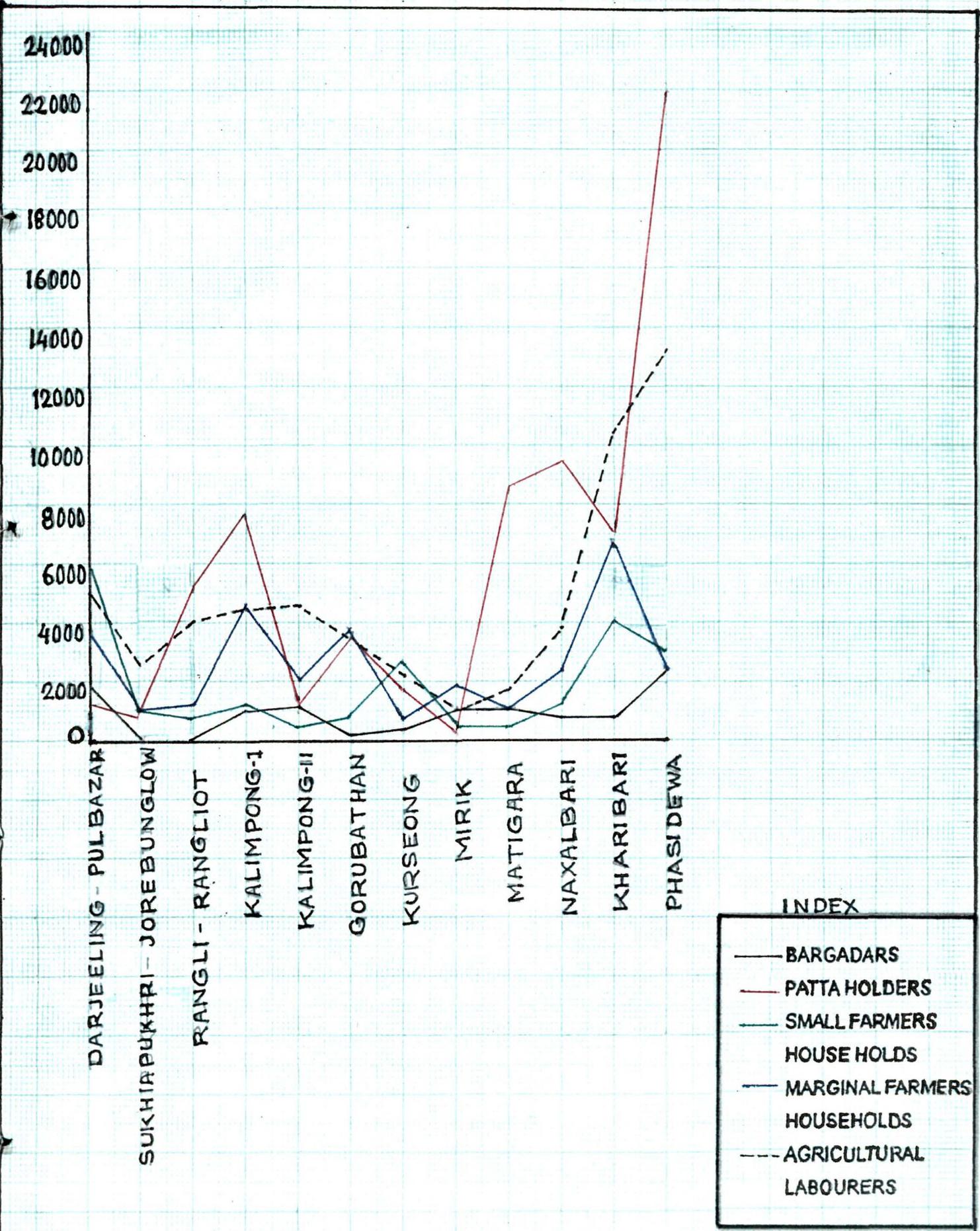


Fig.13.2 POPULATION FEATURES OF FARMERS IN THE BLOCKS OF DARJEELING FOR THE YEAR 2001-2002

areas as a whole are found to be more or less stagnant during 1931-61. It has increased in 1981. The increase in the rate of growth of urban population can be explained by recent increase in the employment opportunities.

But the decline in the rate of growth population in the hill areas of Darjeeling in 1971 and from 1931 to 1961 is the result of establishment of Siliguri town in the 1931. In the same year the percentage of population in Siliguri town to the total population was 13.95 percent in 1981 due to immigration of people from near by states and hill areas of Darjeeling. Because of the strategic location of the Siliguri town which is an important trade centre of not only West Bengal but that of whole North-Eastern India is connected with different part of India by railway, roads and airways.

Population features of farmers in the blocks of Darjeeling is plotted in the table 19.03 and Fig 13.2 respectively.

Table 13.03
Population features of Farmers in the Blocks of Darjeeling for the year 2001-02*
(Number)

Sl. No.	Name of Block	Bargadars	Patta holders	Small farmers households	Marginal farmers households	Agricultural labourers (2001)
1.	Darjeeling-Pulbazar	1946	12139	5810	3795	5159
2.	Sukhipokhri-Jurebunglow	27	881	1051	1668	2675
3.	Rangli-Rangliot	115	5308	979	1327	4031
4.	Kalimpong-I	1116	7778	1248	4710	4441
5.	Kalimpong-II	1221	546	415	2156	4657
6.	Gorubathan	114	3524	885	3927	3650
7.	Kurseong	132	956	2789	851	2214
8.	Mirik	23	252	215	1986	1353
9.	Matigara	1008	8665	430	1105	1820
10.	Naxalbari	1676	9485	1128	2453	3960
11.	Kharibari	803	7147	4015	6862	10445
12.	Phasidewa	2221	22035	3088	2059	13182

Notes: 1. Marginal farmers household possessed agricultural land measuring upto 2.5 acres (7.5 bighas)
2) Small farmer household possessed agricultural land measuring more than 2.5 acres and upto 5 acres (15 bighas).

Sources: 1) *Census of India, 2001.* 2) *B.L. & L.R.O., Darjeeling, 2002.*

Table 13.03 shows Kalimpong I, Kalimpong II, Matigara, Naxalbari and Phansidewa have more than 1000 bargadars in each block. Pattaholders are highest in number in Phansidewa block (22035 pattaholders) Darjeeling Pulbazar has more than 12,000 thousand pattaholders of land. But Mirik block has only 23 Bargadar 252 pattaholders, and 215 number of small farmers. Other Blocks such as Phansidewa, Kharibari, Naxalbari, Kurseong, Darjeeling, Pulbazar have between 6000 to 2000 number of marginal and small farmers. The rest of the blocks have between 2000 to below 500 numbers of marginal and small farmers. Kharibari and Phansidewa have more than 10,000 agricultural labourers. Other blocks of the district have less than 5000 agricultural labourers Agricultural farmers gives an idea about the agricultural practices in the district. The plain blocks have more farmers and agricultural labourers and agriculture is practiced throughout year. Less number of agricultural labourers and small farms indicate that agriculture is not practiced extensively.

13.02 Settlement and Agriculture

The complex physiographic conditions occupy large part of the district of Darjeeling. Terrain altitude, drainage pattern, soil fertility and socio-economic factors have influenced the distribution of settlement patterns. In hill areas of the district rural settlements are found scattered and in great isolation. These settlements are mainly concentrated near rivulets or small streams in local term, which is known as '*jhoras*'. The scarcity of water in hill areas is one of the reasons for this type of settlements. There are 620 inhabited villages and 243872 households in Darjeeling district. Total number of inhabited villages and households are shown blockwise in Table 13.04.

Table 13.04
Inhabited Villages and Household – 1991

Sub-division	C.D.Block/M/MC	Inhibited Villages	Households
Sadar		120	66274
	Darjeeling-Pulbazar	48	22643
	Sukhiapokhri-Jorebunglow	43	18283
	Rangli-Rangliot	29	12123
	Darjeeling(M)	-	13225
Kalimpong		96	34240
	Kalimpong(M)	-	6853
	Kalimpong I	43	9513
	Kalimpong II	22	8915
	Gorubathan	31	8959
Kurseong		68	
	Kurseong(M)	-	4525
	Kurseong	57	15385
	Mirik(M)	-	1410
	Mirik	11	6670
Siliguri		336	115368
	Matigara	162	38070
	Naxalbari	-	-
	Khoribari	174	37827
	Phansidewa	-	-
	Siliguri(MC)	-	-
District		620	243872

Note: M = Municipality, MC = Municipal Corporation.

Sources: 1) Directorate of Panchayat W.B.

2) Census of India, 1991.

The rugged topography of the district of Darjeeling is a handicap for the development of larger settlements. The northern hilly tract of the region has sparsely spaced settlements due to uneven surface, the presence of large forest areas and prevailing climatic conditions of the region. Hills with ridges, spurs, deep and wide valleys offer a settlement pattern strikingly different from each other. Statistical data available from the census of 1991 (Table 13.04) presents the settlement pattern of both hill and plain areas of Darjeeling. It has been observed that hill region has 284 number of inhabited villages and plain areas of Siliguri Sub-division though it has less land area but number of inhabited villages are 336.

There is no general pattern in the distribution of different social and cultural amenities and therefore, no general pattern of settlement is found in villages of hill areas. Land use in the ordinary villages of the hill region has no similarity with rural settlement of Siliguri Sub-division. In villages the entire settlement is surrounded by agricultural land. Other settlements in the village have developed within this village settlement and outer boundary of the village is not in a systematic manner. In Darjeeling district one to two houses form a hamlet. The houses are made of timber and bamboo, which are easily available. The roof is made of corrugated iron sheets. The houses have one or two doors a few windows and verandah is found in most of the houses. There is no village in urban centers like Darjeeling Sadar Kurseong, Kalimpong due to low agricultural activity. Villages are found with cluster of houses in a few markets to which people go for their weekly purchase.

In hill areas of Darjeeling settlements have grown in a dotted fashion following the national highway and district roads. The presence of mountains and hills in this area has limited land available for cultivation and agricultural productivity is very low. However, administrative, commercial and civic amenity services occupy central locations. Though their number is insignificant. For example, concentration of settlement is observed in market areas of Takdah, Pulbazar hat, Mirik, Reshi hat, Budhbari hat, Dhangia Bazar and Singla Bazar. Bijanbari, Sonada, Sukhiapokhri,

Tindharia have major road links with administrative center and have some settlements which are more urban in character. In plain areas of Siliguri Sub-division dotted patterns of settlements are found along the National Highways, State High Way, district road, unmetalled roads and Hill Cart road. In various mouzas of the region a number of houses are found to be clustered together in one place consisting one hamlet separated from similar hamlet by a tract of agricultural land. Excluding tea gardens and some urban, semi-urban centers settlements are found around market centers or along the roadside. In villages land is dotted with many hamlets with individual cultivated land and all hamlets are linked by kuccha or unmetalled road. This type of loose pattern is termed as amorphous pattern of settlements. (Singh 1965)¹ Siliguri Sub-Division is also covered with some patches of forest settlements.

13.03 Types of settlement

There are some broad divisions of settlements observed in Darjeeling district. These are plantation settlement, Forest settlement, Khasmahal settlement, market settlement agricultural settlement and urban settlement. Tea plantation predominates in Kurseong and Darjeeling Sub-divisions. Occupying 16.19 p.c. and 12.12 p.c. of the total land area respectively There are 49 tea gardens in Darjeeling and 35 in Kurseong. The rural character of settlement is observed in tea gardens. There are 26 tea gardens in Terai region. The tea garden settlement is self sufficient and provided with primary schools and co-operatives etc.

There are about 50 government estates known as Khasmahal in Kurseong. The government has distributed Khasmahal areas and house sites to landless cultivators and thus the area is becoming populated. Major part of Kalimpong Sub-division is covered by forests. Yet the number of forest village is only 11. These villages are established by the forest department in the fringe areas of the forests and villagers are employed in different activities of the forest. There are 33 forest villages in Darjeeling and its in Kurseong. The low density of population has resulted in dispersed

¹ Singh, R.L., 1965 : The Terai Region of U.P. : A Study in Human Geography, University of Allahabad, India, p. 159.

settlements in this region. Some forest settlements are also observed in Siliguri subdivision. Market settlement in hill areas are situated along the trade route and also by the side of the roads joining the main road leading to plains. As it has already been mentioned that market settlements are found in Takdah, Pulbazar hat, Mirik region. In plain areas as well as in hill areas concentration of commercial activities are on main roads which divides settlement almost into two halves. Agricultural settlements are surrounded by the agricultural land in the villages. This type of settlement is observed throughout the district. In urban areas road plays a vital role in the distribution and development of settlements. Residences are built by the side of the main roads and are also found in the areas served by lanes, commercial areas occupy the two fronts of the main roads in urban settlement. It may be concluded that the northern hilly tract of the region presents sparsely spaced settlements because of the relief and large tract of forest cover. Agricultural activities are mainly governed by the environmental conditions of the region. The plain areas of the district are densely populated and cultivation is practiced throughout the year except in urban areas.