

INTRODUCTION

The foothills of the Himalayas covering the districts of Darjiling and Jalpaiguri of West Bengal occupy a significant position in the Tea Map of India (fig-1). After the industry was established as a commercial enterprise in Darjiling, planting was extended first to the Terai and then to the Dooars, which together constitute the narrow strip of land, approximately 30 km in length, at the foot of the Darjiling and Sikkim Himalayas, from the eastern border of Bihar to the River Sankos on the Assam border.

The Terai area of Darjiling district, area under investigation is situated in the northern part of West Bengal, India (fig-2). According to recent census, Darjiling is spelled as Darjiling. It covers mostly the thick alluvium and partly the Piedmont Plain of Mechi – Mahananda interfluves which is referred to as Chicken neck. It lies between 26°26' N and 26°50' N Latitude and 88°05' E and 88°27' E longitude and is represented by parts of the survey of India (S09) toposheet no. 78 B/1, 78 B/2, 78 B/3, 78 B/5, 78 B/6 and 78 B/9 on the scale of 1 : 50,000. On its southern side lie partly the district of North Dinajpur and partly the State of Bihar.

The area of investigation is divided into four administrative blocks – Matigara, Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa. The area under review included forty two registered tea estates. The area under review is well connected by roads and railways. Most of the interior villages are connected by metalled or unmetalled roads.

The area clearly exhibits three distinct seasons viz. rainy, winter and summer cultivation practices by and large depends upon the monsoonal rainfall. Tea cultivation is practiced in marginal and sub marginal soils. Soils are acidic in nature. Erratic distribution of rainfall is found to be a part of climate in these days in Terai. Multiple type of pest is found responsible for variable degree of damage in tea cultivation. The problem of pest becomes more acute due to erratic behaviour of rainfall. The Tea Industry is an agro based and labour intensive industry. It largely depended on manual labour than technological inputs. The total growth and production of plants are in fact derived from the environment through the special mechanism and properties possessed by the biological system (William and Joseph 1976).

LOCATION MAP

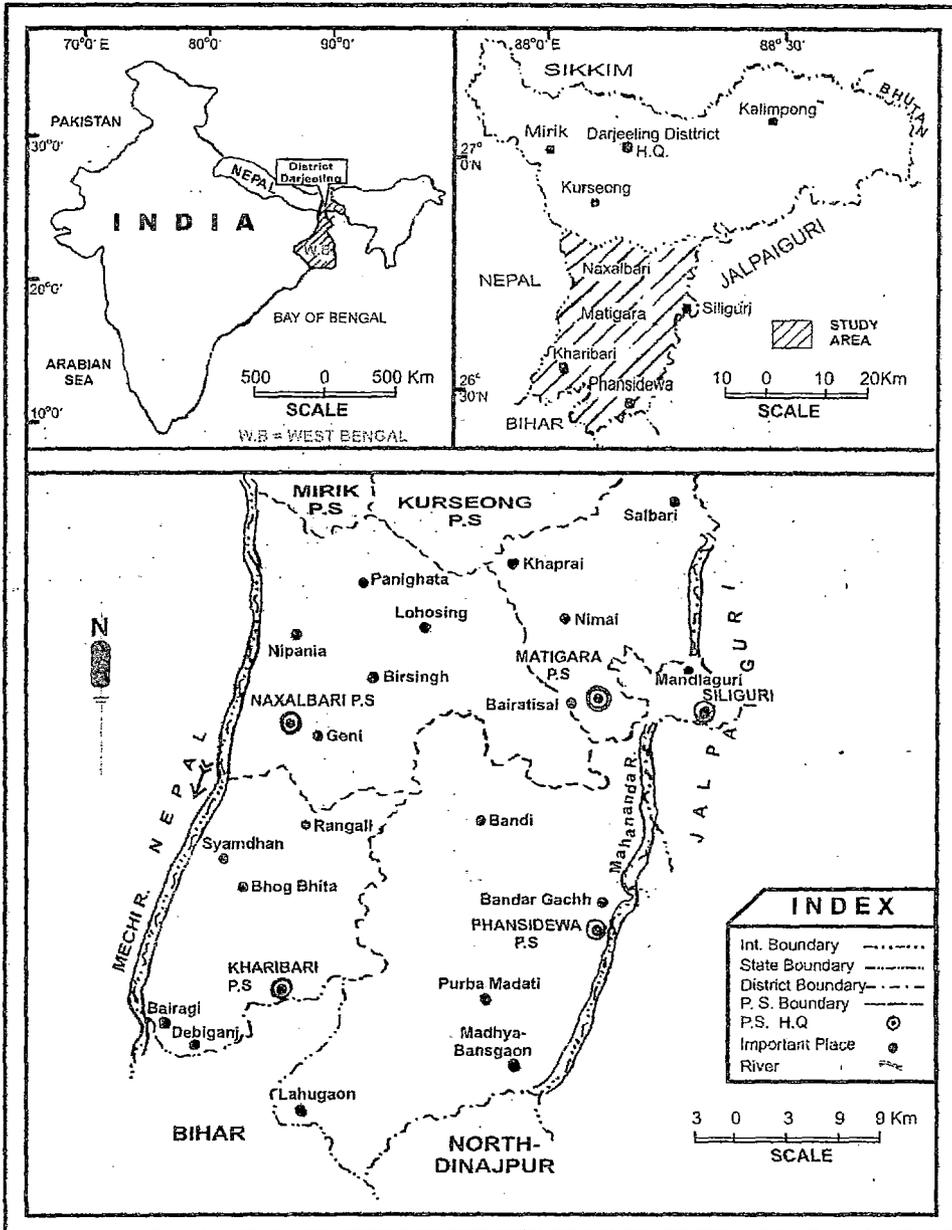


Fig-1

THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR INDIA

Tea industry requires creation of strong and healthy production base to meet the demand for rapidly rising internal consumption commensurate with the increase in population and per capita consumption as well as the demand for export. So, to have a bright future of tea the coax

of complacency must be stripped off and harder work must be down with extra alertness for a very prosperous era of Tea.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are:

- (i) To study the physical aspects like geology, relief, drainage, climate soil and vegetation of the Terai Region and their interrelation for assessing the major problems like flood, drought, siltation soil erosion, deposition and its effects on tea plantations.
- (ii) To study the history of tea cultivation and back ground of the tea garden.
- (iii) To study the landuse pattern of tea garden and to study the growth and development of tea gardens and tea industry.
- (iv) To study the processing, marketing of tea industry and its consumption in the national and international market.
- (v) To evaluate the demographic set up like distribution of population, literacy rate and occupational pattern of the people, which are greatly attributed to the tea plantation as it is large agro based and labour intensive. It largely depends on manual labour than technological input.
- (vi) To study the availability and accessibility of the existing socio economic functions like education, health, marketing electricity, water supply etc. which contribute much for the all round development of tea industry.
- (vii) To identify the problems and associated constraints in tea gardens and tea industry.
- (viii) And finally to suggest a strategy for the development of teagardens and tea industry and the socio economic conditions of the people.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The tea industry is one of the organized industries in India. There are two main tea growing area:

- (i) The Southern States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka and
- (ii) The North Eastern states like Sikkim, Assam and West Bengal.

The pattern of ownership and management of tea plantation varies from the smaller privately owned Estates to the larger Agency Houses. The later in particular are efficiently run and have the organized and trained management to properly carry out whatever programmes or activities they under take.

Plantation by their very nature is situated in remote and hilly areas. They are comparatively isolated and far from the amenities which cities provide with the result that each is a relatively closed, self contained community with strongly institutional and social structures.

Most of the tea gardens workers are descendents of immigrants from other parts of the country and reside on the plantation in which they work and where their children would eventually seek employment. The plantation workers for their dependents seldom lead the tea gardens life. Rapid population growth has been a major socio economic problem to the community and Tea Estate managements.

The quality and quantity of production depends on several geo-climatic and management factors. But man has no control over nature. So the natural calamities like floods and draught are the main cause of low productivity.

The main problem of the tea industry in India as also in other producing countries is the uncertainty of the price level which is determined mostly by the demand and supply position. Unlike other commodities, tea producers are not able to fix the price tag on their product nor are they in a position to pass on incremental costs and levies to the consumers. Consequently periodic slumps in tea prices tend to threaten the viability and even the very existence of tea industry from time to time. Major slumps have occurred in the past owing to over supply and increased stock of the commodity in international market.

Now most of the tea gardens and tea industry of the area studied are facing such problems. The study will cover all aspects of problems and formulæ a strategy for development not only for the tea gardens and tea industry but also for the people associated with this industry in North Bengal.

METHODOLOGY

(i) In view of the absence of most of the data for the micro level study, extensive questionnaires have been made to cover different aspects of the study area. The questionnaires are divided into two parts. The first part comprises through a pilot survey of total forty two tea gardens of Terai (fig-3). The Questionnaire is related to all aspects of individual tea garden. No specific sample technic was adopted regarding data collection. The second part comprises of workers socio – economic function. Extensive field work was conducted tea garden wise. Interview was conducted with the worker and the local people separately to get information about the tea garden. Most of the field works was conducted during March 2002 to December 2004.

LOCATION MAP

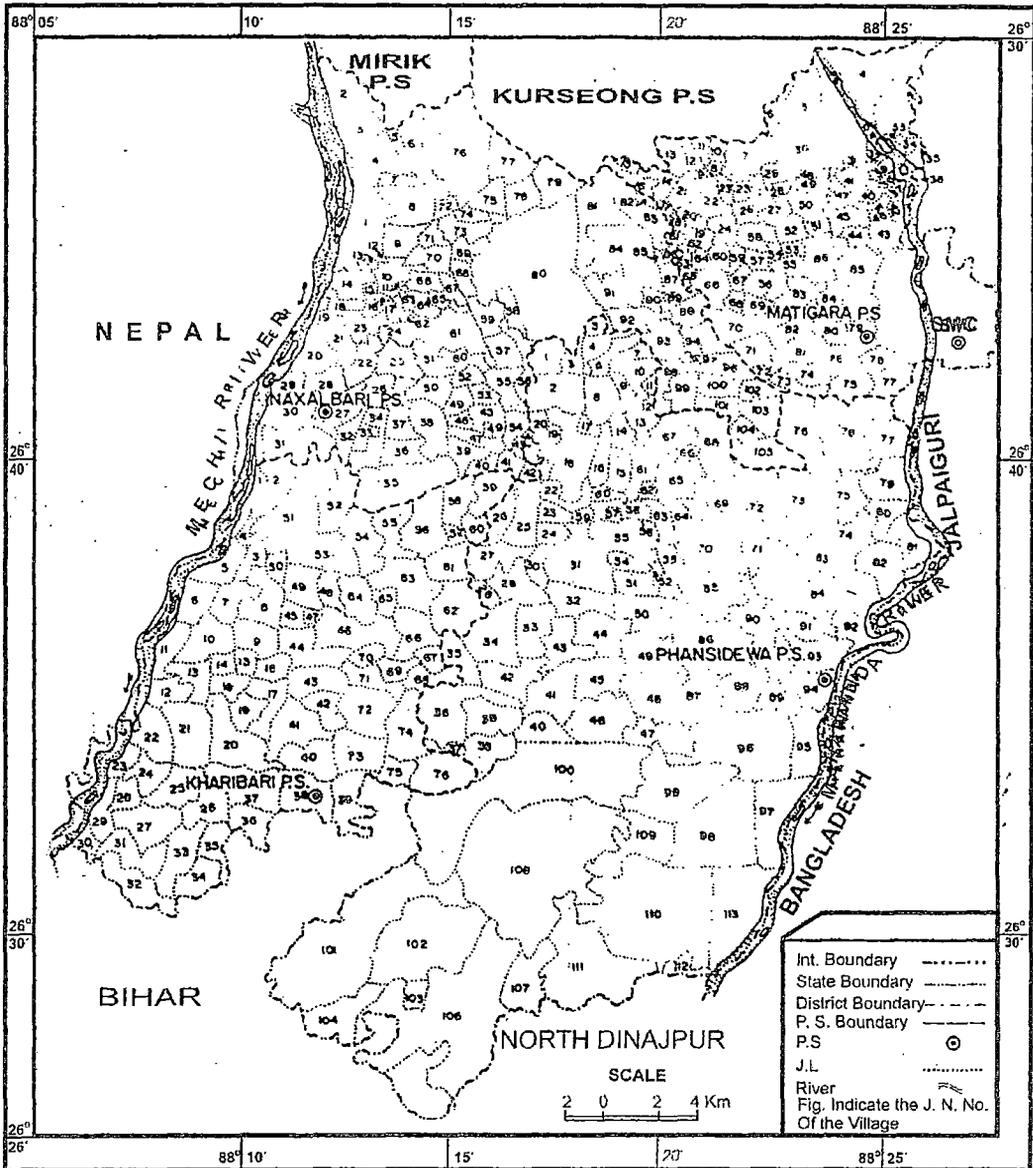


Fig-2

- (ii) Data and information were also collected from secondary sources such as reports of the Indian Tea Planters Association (ITPA), Dooars Branch Indian Tea Association (D.B.I.T.A), Tea Board, Tea Association of India, Tea Research Association, (TRA), Census 1981 and 1991.
- (iii) Information and literature have also been collected from different libraries, journals and personal experiences.

- (iv) Soil fertility and land capability were determined by the method of soil sampling and soil testing in the T.R. A. Laboratory.
- (i) Available data were computed by scientific calculator and computer and the results have been analyzed for obtaining the explanation and conclusion.
- (ii) Maps and models have been drawn using different cartographic techniques and computer to illustrate the data and information in maps and diagrams.
- (iii) Lastly photographs were taken to pin point the different stages of tea plantation and tea industry and to identify the problems like physical, demographic, socio – economic condition associated with tea industry.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURES

There have been several studies of various aspects of tea industry. These are mainly on tea bush culture and financial management. A few studies particularly dealt with geographical aspects and labour relationships. Brief reviews of those studies are made below.

Sir Percival Griffith (1967) in his book "History of the tea industry in India" describe vividly the history of Indian tea industry and its different aspects like production labour recruitment ownership etc. He also tells about the origin of trade union movements in some areas. This book is one of the most authentic books regarding the history of tea industry in India.

Tushar Kanti Ghosh in his Book "The tea garden of West Bengal" 1987 wrote about the history of tea plantation of West Bengal, the land management policies rules, regulations etc. and the problem existing therein. He also wrote about the land management in sick gardens and the existence of dual economy.

Manas Dasgupta in his article "Trade Union Movement in Tea Plantation" (1988) is of course a pioneer in this field. But it had some limitations.

Sharit Bhowmik in his Book 'Class formation in plantation system' is a unique and fine analysis of different aspects of class formation and its relation to class consciousness. The system of plantation has changed their traditional economy. 'Life and labour of plantation Women Workers' which was investigated by Mita Bhadra shows that ideas, values, awareness concerning status are a function of educational cultural back ground.

Kanchan Sarkar has discussed the trade union movement in tea industry in Darjiling hill areas with special reference to its sickness since independence. This study does not present the geographical factors responsible for its sickness.

The above studies mentioned earlier on different aspects of tea plantation were highly informative and necessary. But none of them was made on the physical problem of tea plantation and as well as the social and cultural problems of labourers.

This study will cover all aspects of problems and formulate a strategy for development, not only for the teagardens and tea industry, but also the people associated with this industry in North Bengal.

CONSTRAINTS OF STUDY

The data and information available are mostly unreliable. Data from census operation teagarden wise reveals contrasting figures of area and population of the tea gardens. Census gives a gross inadequacy of data for research work. As no one worked in the study area so the area is virgin and most of the work which has been mentioned earlier are the results of on the spot survey and personal experiences of the investigator.

DESIGN OF THE THESIS

The whole work commences with, the identification of the location of the tea industry of Darjiling District and giving the Review of Literatures, purpose, objectives and methodology adopted for the study. Then the work commences with the:

- 1st chapter: Physical background of the study area.
- 2nd chapter: History of tea plantation and tea industry.
- 3rd chapter: Land use in tea garden
- 4th chapter: Production and marketing of tea.
- 5th chapter: Demographic character of the tea garden.
- 6th chapter: Socio-economic structure of the people.
- 7th chapter: interaction between management and workers.
- 8th chapter: Problems associated with tea industry.
- 9th chapter: Strategies for development of tea gardens and tea industry.
- 10th chapter: Suggestions and conclusion

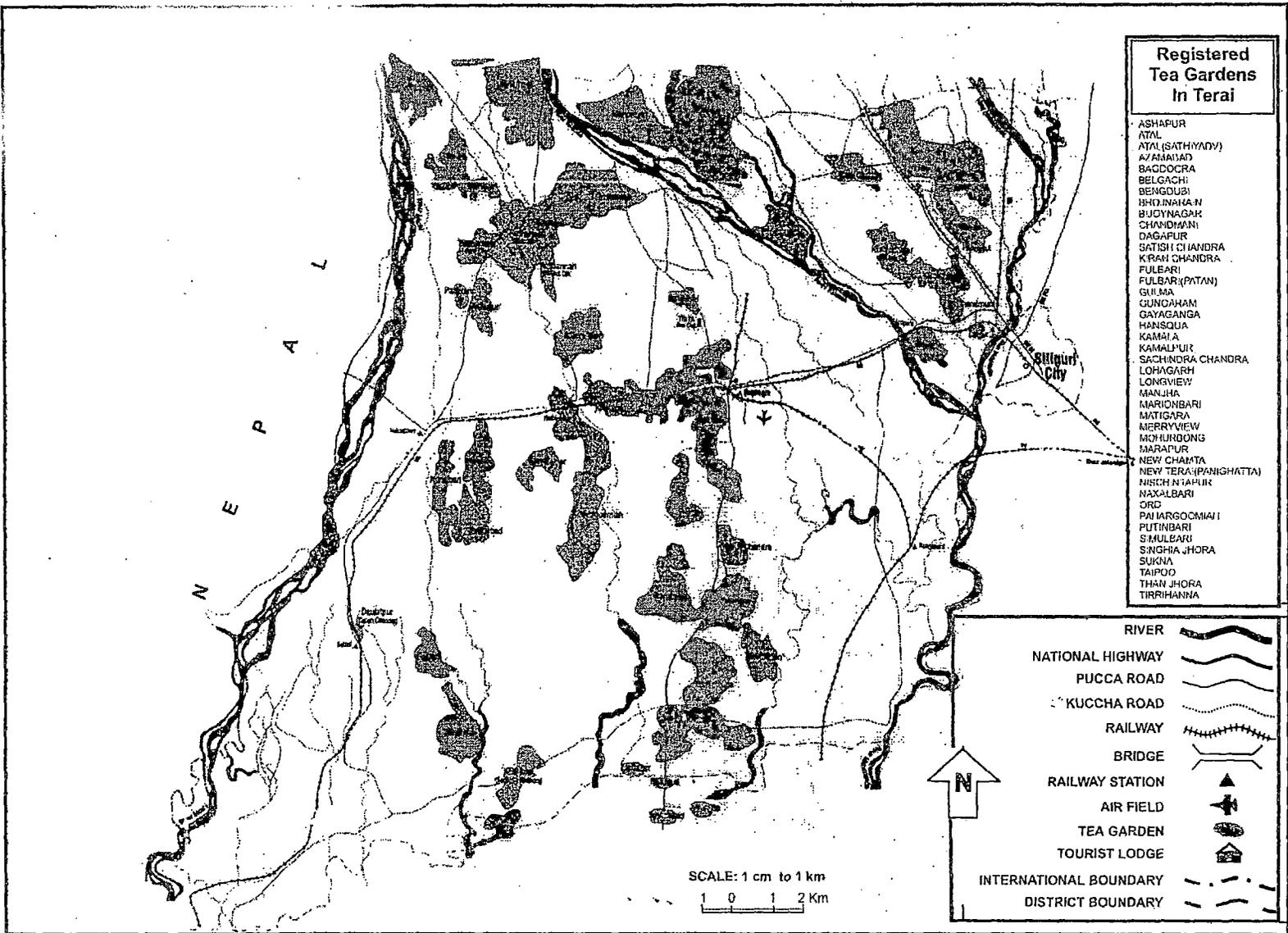


Fig-3