

CHAPTER – V

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTER OF THE TEA GARDENS

INTRODUCTION

The study of human population by statistical methods is called demography. It is derived from two Greek words. “Demos” means the people and “Graphy” means involving all the aspects of population, its distribution, composition, sex ratio, growth rate, literacy, occupation and migration as stated by Cox P. R. in 1970. On the broader sense demography is the study of the various determinants of population change and the impact of population on the world. (Wumsch, 1976). Population which was neglected previously started to attract the notice of newer topics as sample survey was induced for assessing any particular phenomena in demography (Desai, 1975).

The development of the tea garden depends on its demographic character. For analyzing a comprehensive geographical region, the different growth of population should be taken into account. According to Trewartha, number, densities, distribution and quality of the population provided the essential background for all geography (Trewartha, 1997). The study of population is the single most important approach to geography and one in which the regional concept has its broadest application (Ghosh, 1985).

The introduction of statistics in every branch of the study of demography was stated by Mathur (Mathur, 1986). Therefore in this context, population geography is concerned with spatial variation in their distribution, composition and migration in the nature of place with more emphasis on space and time (Clarke, 1972). Whereas demography deals with a single topic was stated by Cox. Knowledge of the elementary techniques of demography, are indispensable to Population Geography as they are the basic tools, the ignorance of which may result in faults in correlation of phenomena. It is seen through the studies (Bhande. et. al., 1978) that the study of Population Geography is also multidisciplinary, and the artificial distinction between demography and population studies is disapproved by population scholars today.

Thus the study of demography is vital from the point of economic development of a tea garden because people are the main instrument of production. It is also necessary to know their concentration and make plans for the general welfare of the society.

This chapter deals with (1) Population distribution and their growth, (2) Density of population, (3) S.C. / S. T population, (4) Literacy, (5) Religion and migration, (6) Workers, (7) Sex ratio and age structure.

5.1 DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

The interpretation of population distribution in terms of area and population quality etc. gives an idea about the pattern of people, regional contrast and disparities including the degree of concentration in different areas. It has been estimated that about 80 percent of the world's total population is concentrated only over 20 percent of world's total land area. Not only the social and economic systems but also the behavioural system is to a certain extent found to be a product of the pattern of distribution of various components of both static and dynamic nature (Hasanuz Zaman –1998).

Table 5.1 Range of Population of tea gardens in Naksalbari P.S

Population range	Status	No. of tea gardens	Percentage of tea gardens to total
< - 1000	Very Low	8	42.11
1000 – 2000	Low	6	31.58
2000 – 3000	Moderate	3	15.79
> 3000	High	2	10.52
Total		19	100.00

Graphical Representation of Range of Population of Naksalbari P. S.

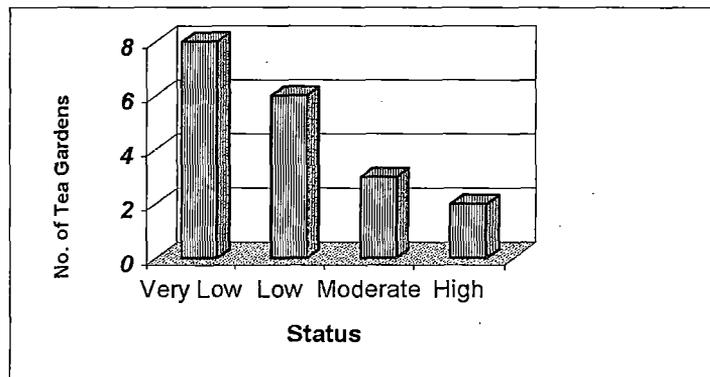


Fig 5.1

According to the population census 1991, Naxalbari P. S, had a total population of 102,537 persons. Out of these 19 tea gardens share 29,297 persons. Out of 19 tea gardens Bengdubi had the lowest population of about 444 person and Nakshalbari tea garden had the highest population i.e. 4,612 persons. The distribution of population in Naxalbari P. S is very uneven. Two tea gardens of Pvt. Ltd. companies have high concentration of population. But it is to be noted that other two gardens of Pvt. Ltd. companies in this P.S have low concentration of

population. The Public Ltd. Company owned tea gardens, show low to moderate concentration of population. There is only one sole proprietorship garden Bengdubi, which had the lowest population. (Fig 5.1)

It is evident from table 5.1 that gardens comprising 42.11 percent of the total have population less than 1000. These gardens are namely Ashapur, Atal, Azamabad, Bengdubi, Bijohnagar, Manjha, Kiran Chandra, Pahargoomiah. Seventeen out of 19 gardens have population less than 3000. They composed 89.48 percent while on the other hand 10.52 percent of the gardens have population range above 3000. So it can be noticed that most of the gardens are in the category below 1000. Thus can be said from the distribution of population that Naksalbari tea garden located in between Atal and Bijohnagar has the highest population among the tea gardens. The concentration of population is high in Naxalbari tea garden, because it lies in the vicinity of the Naksalbari Bazar area.

Table 5.2 Range of Population of tea gardens in Phansidewa (P. S)

Population Range	Status	No. of tea gardens	Percentage of tea gardens to total
< 1000	Very Low	3	30
1000 – 2000	Low	3	30
2000 – 3000	Moderate	1	10
> 3000	High	3	30
Total		10	100

Comparative Study of Population Range (1991) of Phansidewa P. S.

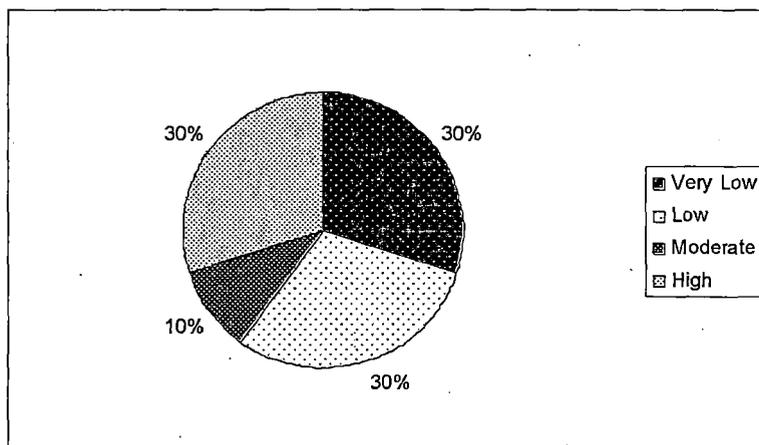


Fig 5.2

According to population census (1991), Phansidewa P.S had a total population of 1,40,045 persons. Out of these 10 tea gardens shared 25,436 persons. Taipoo had the lowest population of 660 persons and Matidhar & Bijalimoni has the highest population i.e. 8926 persons. (Fig 5.2)

It is evident from table 5.2 that 3 tea gardens comprising 30 percent of the total has population range less than 1000. These gardens are namely Taipoo, Hansqua and Singhia Jhora. Seven out of 10 gardens have population less than 3000. It indicates that 70 percent tea gardens in Phansidewa P. S have population range less than 3000. While on the other hand rest 30 percent of the gardens have population range above 3000. Analyzing table 5.2 it can be visualized that majority of the tea gardens are in the category less than 3000 population range. The distribution of population in Phansidewa P.S is very uneven. The Pvt. Ltd. Company owned tea gardens share a small percentage of population compared to Ltd. Company. The rate of growth of population is not remarkably high.

Table 5.3 Range of Population of tea gardens in Matigara (P. S)

Population Range	Status	No. of tea gardens	Percentage of tea gardens to total
< 1000	Very Low	4	28.57
1000 – 2000	Low	9	64.29
2000 – 3000	Moderate	1	7.14
> 3000	High	Nil	Nil
Total		14	100.00

Comparative Study of Population Range

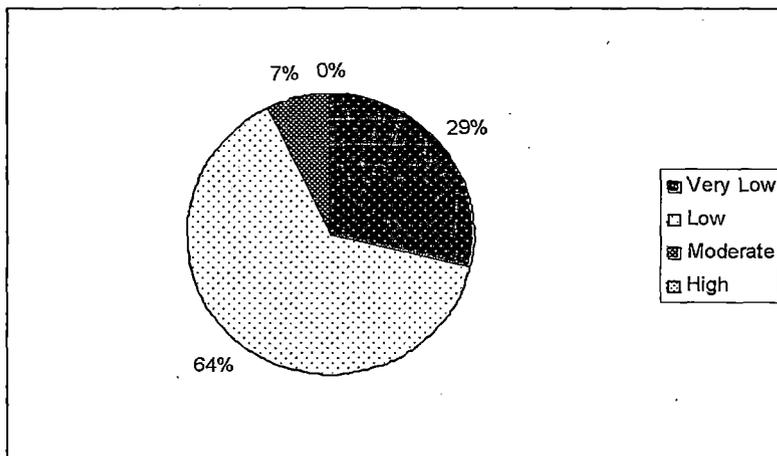


Fig 5.3

According to population Census (1991), the Matigara (P.S) had a total population of 84,760 persons. Out of these 9 tea gardens shared 8,697 persons. The distribution of population in the following P.S is uneven. It is evident from table 5.3 that 4 tea gardens comprising 28.57 percent of the total population have population less than 1000. Analyzing the table it can be visualized that most of the tea gardens are in the low to very low category. There is only 1 tea garden which is in the moderate range. There is no tea garden having population above 3000.

The Kharibari (P.S.) had a total population of 2,04,057 persons. Out of these 4 tea gardens shared 7,890 persons. In the study area there is only one tea garden i.e. Simulbari which comes under Kurseong P.S, had a total population of 2,744 persons in 1991. (Fig 5.3)

It is observed that majority of the tea gardens in the study area show marginal growth rate of population and is mostly located near the market. Whereas very slow growth rate is observed in the tea gardens far away from the market place and communication systems. This clearly indicates that people are attracted towards the availability of amenities.

5.2 DENSITY OF POPULATION

Density of population is one of the most important parameters to determine the pressure of population on land. It is seen that the tea gardens have very low to low density of population per km sq. it varies from 4 persons per hectare to 16 persons per hectare.

Table 5.4 Density of population per hectare by range in the study area

Density/hectare	Status	No of tea gardens	Percentage of tea gardens
< 4	Very low	15	35.71
4 - 8	Low	13	30.95
8 - 12	Moderate	7	16.67
12 - 16	High	3	7.14
>16	Very High	4	9.53
Total		42	100.00

It is seen from table 5.4 that about 70 percent of the tea gardens have low to very low density of population per hectare. On the other hand only 16.67 percent of the tea gardens have moderate density of population. Tea gardens like Atal, Gayaganga, Lohagarh, Nischintapur, Putinbari, Thanjhora, Manjha have very low density of population and gardens such as Ashapur, Kamala, Bagdogra, Sanyasistan, Satischandra have moderate density of population per hectare. Only 16.67 percent are within the high to very high category. These include Marapur, Kiran Chandra, Matigara and Naxalbari. (Fig 5.4)

Comparative Study of Population Density

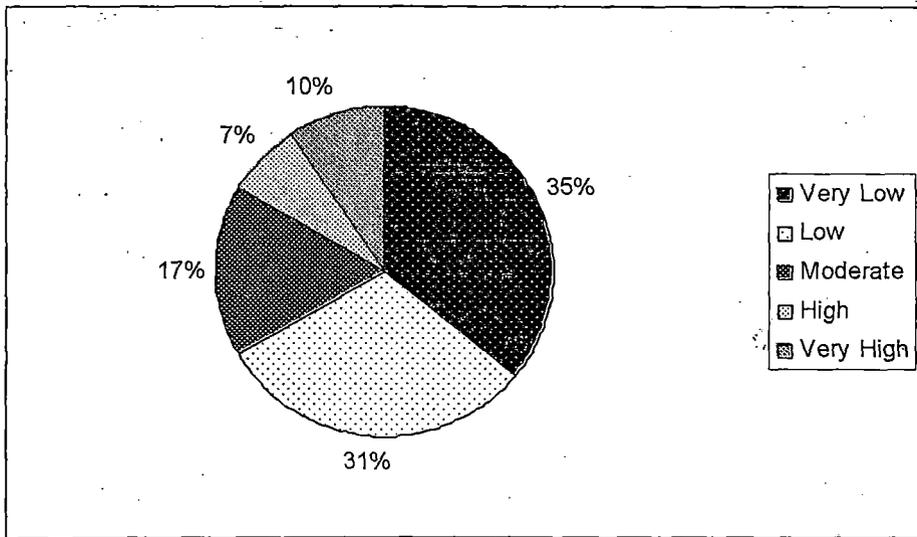


Fig 5.4

Thus it can be said that the density of population per hectare in the tea gardens is very uneven. In every tea garden, the settlements are concentrated within a limited zone. Tea is mainly an agricultural product and tea gardens are mostly located in remote rural areas away from the city. The places where tea gardens are situated, tea cultivation and manufacturing is the only activity that supports the economy of those areas. So these places usually have low concentration of population.

5.3 COMPOSITION OF POPULATION

Composition of population is an important determinant of human resources. Each family comprises of both male and female members, further differentiated as children and old age, people who are generally called dependants. It is also differentiated on the basis of literacy and illiteracy.

The study area is a composition of several tribes of the country. Until recent past Terai was the confluence point between the Darjiling hills and Assam valley. It is known from historical account that tribes were the first settlers in this region. The main tribes of the tea garden are Santal, Munda, Metch, Orons and others. A few Gorkhas from Nepal and Bhutan came here to settle as choukidars. Apart from this, a few scheduled castes reside in these gardens. The study has revealed that the tea gardens are dominated by scheduled tribe people. It is evident that only a few families are from general and OBC groups which is very small in percentage. Generally the office staff belongs to this group.

Table 5.5 Classification of tea gardens on the basis of percentage of scheduled tribe population to total

Ranges	Category	No. of tea gardens	Percentage of tea gardens
< 25	Low	10	23.81
25 - 50	Moderate	8	19.05
50 - 75	High	13	30.95
> 75	Very High	11	26.19
Total		42	100.00

Comparative Study of Scheduled Caste and Tribes

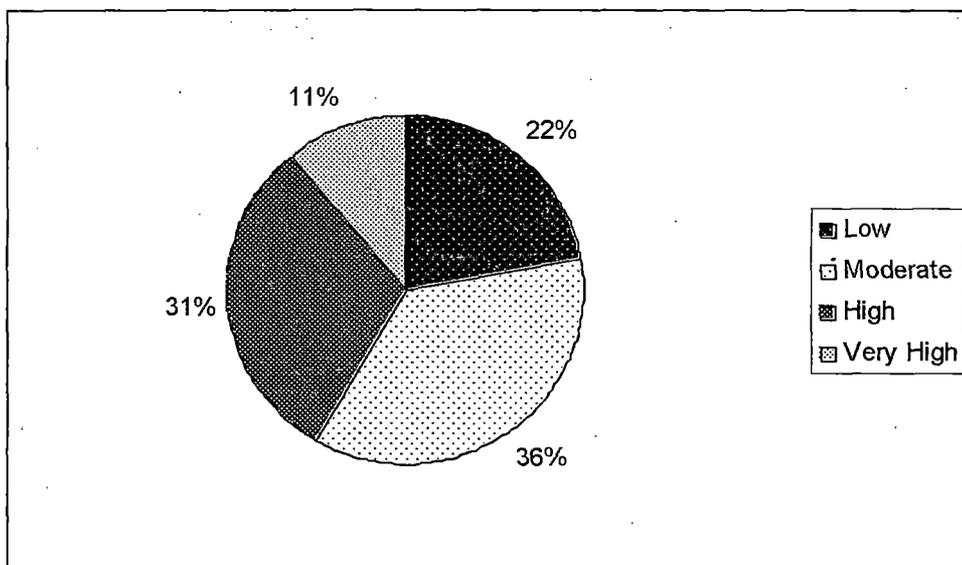


Fig 5.5

Table 5.5 reveals that 57.14 percent of population is the high to very high category. Only 19.05 percent is in the moderate category and a very small percentage of 23.81 are in the low category. As mentioned earlier tribes were the first settlers and the labourers working presently in these gardens are their descendants so the tribal population of these gardens is pretty high. (Fig 5.5)

Table 5.6 Classification of tea gardens on the basis of percentage of scheduled caste population to total

Ranges	Category	No. of gardens	Percentage of tea gardens
< 25	Low	27	64.29
25 - 50	Moderate	10	23.81
50 - 75	High	3	7.14
> 75	Very high	2	4.76
Total		42	100.00

Comparative study of scheduled caste population

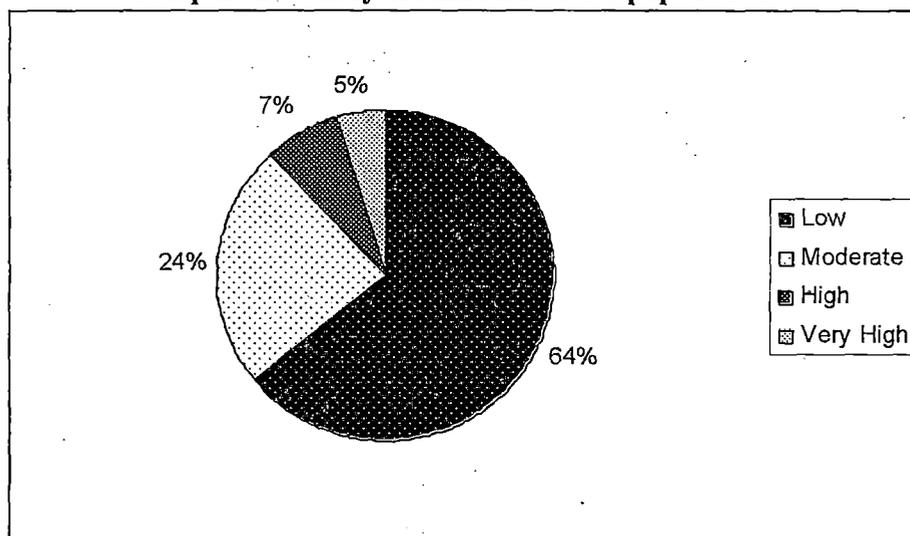


Fig 5.6

Table 5.6 clearly reveals that the percentage of scheduled caste population of the area is low. Only 11.9 percent is in the high to very high category. (Fig 5.6)

However the specialty of these gardens is that all the tribes and communities have lived together from time immemorial in peace harmony and tranquility. Composition of population by sex is also noticed in this industry. A striking feature of this industry is that female work force is more compared to men.

5.4 LEVEL OF LITERACY

In population geography, literacy is considered as a reliable index of socio cultural and economic advancement of an area. Literacy is essential for eradicating poverty and mental

isolation for cultivating peaceful and friendly international relations and for permitting the free play of demographic process (Chanda et. al. 1980). The trend of literacy is the index of socio – economic development of the society. Literacy differential exists not only amongst religions and groups but also among social and occupational groups. Generally these differences of literacy reveal the socio – economic background of these groups. Literacy concept is not the same in all the countries. It varies from country to country.

Generally high measures of agricultural productivity, high level of urbanization and high degree of industrialization are responsible for the high concentration of literacy. Literacy is one of the important factors that measure the level of educational facilities available in the Terai tea gardens. Here literates are those who can at least sign their names. The level of literacy of the workers has been shown in table 5.7

Table 5.7 Literacy rate in percentage to total population in the tea gardens

Percentage of literates	Category	No. of tea gardens	Percentage of tea gardens to total
< 20	Very low	7	16.67
20 - 40	Low	20	47.62
40 - 60	Moderate	10	23.81
60 - 80	High	4	9.52
> 80	Very high	1	2.38
Total		42	100.00

Comparative study of Literacy Rate in Percentage

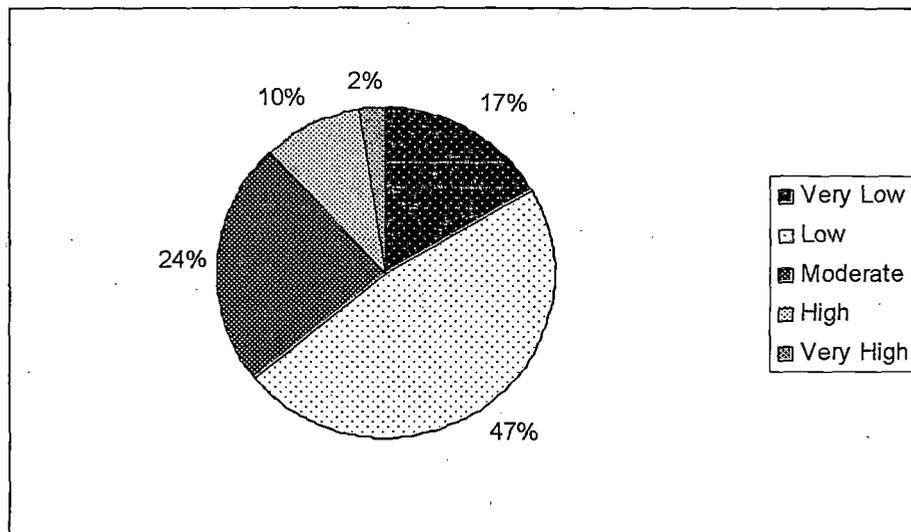


Fig 5.7

According to Census (1991), the male percentage of literates is higher in all the 5 PS. The female literacy is far below the male literacy, the reason being too much engagement in household work in addition to early marriage and negligence by the guardians to the female children. Poverty is also responsible for the low percentage of literacy.

Table 5.7 indicates that 65 percent of the tea gardens are in very low to low range of literates. Only 23.81 percent has moderate range of literacy (Fig 5.7). It can be seen that only 11.9 percent of the tea gardens are in very high to high range of literacy. These gardens include Azamabad, Belgachi, Ord Terai, Sukna, Lohagar. The percent being less in moderate to very high group indicates that the tea garden areas are still underdeveloped.

It is observed that literacy rate in the tea gardens is comparatively low in comparison to the state or district as a whole. Tea gardens are considerably less developed, though the national economy has been improved by the tea garden labourers' proficiency. One of the vital factors for less progress of literacy in the tea gardens is that labourers are very poor.

5.5 RELIGION AND MIGRATION

It is observed that during the pre-independence period almost all the people of this region were either Hindus or Christians. After independence few Muslims came to settle in these regions. The tea gardens are usually located in backward areas so the workers live within their own community and practice their own traditions and customs. Literacy rate is low among the tea garden workers and hence they are concerned with their ethnic religion. High percentage of Christian population is found in almost every tea garden. Most of the Christians were transferred from low caste Hindus in the past. Tribes like Munda, Oraon, Santal, Modesia belongs to this religion. The Hindus located in the tea gardens are mostly Bighari, Rajbansi and others too. It is seen that the tea gardens have very low Muslim population about 1 to 2 percent. Muslims are found in 4 or 5 tea gardens namely Manjha, Marapur, Azamabad, Bijohnagar.

It has been noticed that almost all the labourers in the tea gardens of Terai, Duars and Darjiling hills are immigrants and their descendants. Labourers of Terai were mainly recruited from the aboriginal areas of Chotanagpur (Bihar) and from Nepal and Bhutan. There is no specific legislation regarding the recruitment of labourers in tea gardens. By 1861 the British Government began to show concern about the policy of recruitment of labourers in tea gardens. The first inland emigration act was passed in 1863. This was in 1921 when several legislations had come into being seeking to protect plantation labour. The employers encouraged families rather than individual to migrate for tea gardens. It is found that the percentage of immigrants

in the tea gardens of this area increased at least up to 1921, thereafter the percentage had decreased. Thus after 1921, tea industry had a settled labour population who were following their successors. At present, about 92 percent of the workers are resident labourers in the tea gardens of West Bengal.

5.6 WORKERS IN TEA PLANTATION

Tea plantation is associated with a resident labour of alien origin. All tea plantation at the initial stage faced labour crisis, as the tea regions were then very thinly populated and the local people were not interested in getting involved in the tea industry. So the plantation owners started hiring migrated labourers from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chota Nagpur Plateau. They were the Modhesia tribes like Oran, Mundas and Karian, Karas, Sowara, etc.

Occupational hierarchy was very strict and rigid then. Management exercised direct control over the labourers, both in the work place and outside. This created a unique pattern of master servant relation but gradually that system changed. The management these days has become very considerate and seeks the welfare of the labourers. They have realized that the socio cultural conditions of the tea plantation workers have an impact on the tea industry. The health and attitude of the workers have direct effect on the productivity of an estate. .

The Tea District Emigration Act of 1868 gave rise to the first batch of legally recognized labour. By virtue of tripartite settlement during the last 25 years quite sizable volumes of employment in different categories have been created (Labour Gazette, 1994).

Most of the plantation workers are daily rated and monthly rated employees. Daily rated workers are engaged mostly in plucking jobs. They are also engaged in other jobs like paniwalas, sweepers, mallies, crèche attendants, etc. About 50% of the daily rated workers are women who are mostly engaged in plucking. Monthly rated employees who constitutes clerical, medical and sub staff comprises about 11% of the total employment in tea plantation.

The average number of daily labourers employed in Terai is about 1,86,240. Out of them 1,67,558 worked in tea gardens and 18,682 worked in factories. Of the total labour force female comprises about 48% of the total. The number of residents and outside workers were 1,37,589 and 25,091 respectively. The average labourers employed per hectare is 24 and the annual output is on an average of 702 kgs.

There are two types of workers engaged in tea gardens. They are permanent and temporary. Almost all the tea gardens have 80 to 90 percent permanent labourers and the rest are casual. The employment of female labourers per hectare is found more than their male counterparts

since female labourers are mostly engaged in plucking. Child employment is made more on casual basis than permanent.

The average wage earned by a permanent labour is Rs. 24.30 and that of a child labour is Rs.12.27; an extra amount of Rs 1.20 and 1.50 are given to those engaged in special type of work. The paniwala, sprayer, workers engaged in transport and fencing gets Rs 24.30 + 1.20 = Rs 25.50 and a factory worker gets Rs 24.30 + 1.50 = 24.80

Table 5.8 Distribution of man days spent on different types of field operations (2003)

Field operations	Percentage of total man days
1. Plucking	52.7
2. Manuring	2.0
3. Weeding	4.8
4. Irrigation	1.0
5. Disease control	1.4
6. Pest control	3.2
7. Pruning	4.5
8. Others	30.4
Total	100.00

It is observed from table 5.8 that 52.7 percent of total mandays were spent in plucking operations followed by 17 percent for the field operations like manuring, weeding, irrigation etc. Other field operations for which the break up was not available constituted about 30 percent of the total mandays was utilized in field practices.

Table 5.9 Mandays spent on different types of factory operations (2003)

Factory Operations	Percentage of total mandays
1. Withering	18.1
2. Rolling	18.4
3. Fermenting	12.5
4. Drying	12.8
5. Weighing Sorting / Cutting	9.4
6. Packing	7.8
7. Others	21.0
Total	100.0

(Sarkar, A.R (2003) Tea Economics Part 1, The Assam Review & Tea News Vol 92 No. 8)

It is observed from table 5.9 that the maximum proportion of mandays was spent on withering and rolling 36.5 percent. Fermenting and drying operations like weighing / sorting / packing etc took altogether 42.5 percent of total mandays spent. Other factory operations constitute about 21 percent of the total mandays spent.

5.7 AGE-SEX STRUCTURE OF POPULATION

Study has revealed that the number of males and females in the age groups 6-14 years and between 15-18 years are much greater. In fact this very age group employed for plucking is designated as child labour. However the number of male population is higher than female population in almost all the tea gardens of the area under study. Tea garden like Kiran Chandra has 51.63 percent males and 48.37 percent females, Ashapur has 51.67 percent males and 48.37 percent females, Mohurgong & Gulma has 52.41 percent males and 47.59 percent females. Tea gardens like Azamabad have 91.39 percent males and 8.60 percent females, Ord Terai has 95.87 percent males and 4.13 percent females, Naksalbari has 95.28 percent males and 4.72 percent females.

Overall population is large in the age group between 19 and 44 years. It means that number of functioning population is large. But the age group above 45 years is much less, indicating thereby that life expectancy is less though there are exceptions in some tea gardens. Moreover it has been found that the number of children in tea gardens is less than expected, which is against the general findings in age-sex pyramid, where the child population group remains higher. Reason behind this fact is that in 1992 ILO and UNICEF jointly started a couple of projects in these tea gardens.

- (i) Integrated Parasite Control
- (ii) Family Planning
- (iii) Mother's Care

It is also revealed from field survey that many of the eligible couples of the study area have come under this project. As a result of which during the year 1994-95, birth rate had declined significantly, thereby lessening the number of children in the age group 0-1 year. Another remarkable finding is that the number of male / female between age group 19-44 years is more which may be due to improved health conditions. So, it can be seen that work culture in the tea gardens have improved as compared to earlier. It is also seen that manday wage ratio is in a better side.

CONCLUSION

In the light of analysis it reveals that demographic character has a vital role to play in tea industry itself. According to population Census Naxalbari P.S had a total population of 1,02,537 persons. Out of these 19 tea gardens shared 29,297 persons. Phansidewa P.S. had a total population of 1,40,045 persons. Out of these 10 tea gardens shared 25,436 persons. Matigara P.S had a total population of 84,760 persons. Out of these 9 gardens shared 8697 persons. Kharibari P.S had a total population 2,04,057 persons, out of these 4 tea gardens shared 7,890 persons. The distribution of population in the tea gardens is very uneven. The density of population is also uneven in the tea gardens. Tea is an agricultural product and tea gardens are mostly located in remote areas, which is away from the hustle and bustle of city life. The places where these tea estates are situated tea cultivation and manufacturing is the only activity that supports the economy of those areas. So these places have low concentration of population.

It has been revealed from study that tea gardens are a composition of several tribes of the country. Only a few families are from general and OBC group. The literacy rate is low in the tea gardens. There is a gap between the male and female literacy. The trend of literacy has been increasing. The age sex ratio of the areas reveals that females are less in number than males. The population in the age group 19 – 44 years is more useful to the production, so this age group is highest in the tea gardens.

Hence it is essential to identify the level of socio – economic functions in the tea gardens. A detailed discussion has been done about the socio – economic structure of the area in the next chapter.