

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Background and Statement of the Problem:

The Dhimal or Dhemal, a little known community of West Bengal, had been categorized as non-Aryan tribe before the independence. Now, after a transitional non-recognition period by the Govt. they have classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) of West Bengal. The history of study (and not to study) on Dhimals of India narrate the negligence for which once non-Aryan tribe of British India having no reservation on any field, have to compete with others (the recognition as an OBC is a recent one, though they are not satisfied with present status and demand for the status of Scheduled Tribe instead of OBCs). The uneven competitions push them much behind whether in the field of education, occupation or socio-cultural context as a whole. The population figure hardly touches the number nine hundred even today. That is why this diminutive group sometimes misleads as vanishing races by some amateurs. Though their counterpart of Nepal, with which they have a marital relation and belong to same (biological) population, have better numerical strength, socio-economic and educational attainment as well as amulet of tribal status of their own. Even they (Dhimal of Nepal) had received much importance in various writings of Nepali scholars.

The study of Indian Dhimals may be fourfold: the first consist of some eminent scholars like Hodgson, Dalton, Hunter, Risley etc. of nineteen century with their ethnographic note on Dhimals, the second set of study is characterized by sporadic occurrence of the term Dhimal to compare with other group of people specially in linguistic and socio-cultural interest. The third set of study may be attributed to Govt. census and gazetteers mainly related to number as well as identity of the group. The fourth or recent set may be attributed to monographs of amateurs as well as reports based on short field duration (or part of the population) by some trained scholars.

Among them, the census reports and reports written by amateur scholars misleads the study on Dhimals either in observation or the numerical strength of the population. There is a continuous census enumeration on Dhimal population (or sometimes language spoken) up to 1951 except 1941, some of which overlooked by amateurs. Though the census enumeration may not display the exact figure specially whenever the language taken into consideration for enumeration. Whatever it is, we have a continuous enumeration or presentation of Dhimals up to 1951 census except the last pre-Independence census. Again after the introduction of Scheduled Caste and scheduled tribe list order 1950 or even Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe list (modification) order 1956, the Dhimals can't find themselves in the list of Scheduled Tribe, though there was a clear indication of tribal status of Dhimals on first set of writings specially by Hodgson, Dalton, Risley and so on.

However, the number of Dhimals, as per recent writings, is a decreasing one. The assumption is totally depending upon the number of Dhimal on census report, without having any demographic data on fertility or mortality. Even their base constructed with a false interpretation of 15000 souls suggested by Hodgson as the number of all Dhimals between river Konki and Dhorla or Torsha, and misleads as number of Indian Dhimals of that period.

Whatever it is, the recent history of Dhimal study exhibits clear cut negligence from Government side, if as per previous scholars, they belong to tribal group; and misleading information by some amateurs as well.

However, within their own limitation the amateurs took the responsibility to familiar us (and Government) with the tragedy of Dhimals they suffer even after the independence of the nation. Even they (amateurs), along with scholars of India and Nepal as well, have prepared a readymade list of socio-cultural aspect of Dhimals for our consumption and further research.

Anthropological documents covering both biological and cultural aspects of Indian Dhimal (or even Dhimals of Nepal) are very limited. Some sporadic documents by amateurs and some field based study by trained scholars in a part of Dhimal population may available but all of them covering social-cultural-linguistics only and physical or demographical data on whole population is literally absent.

1.2: Review of Literature:

The studies on Dhimals, as stated earlier, are very few. Among them the study of social anthropological or sociological interest predominated: no study was conducted, as per author knowledge, regarding bio-anthropological or anthropological perspective as a whole.

The first known information of Dhimal may find in *Tabaqet-i-Nasiri* by Minhajus Siraj as early as 1261. He only informed that present Darjeeling terrain was once exclusively inhabited by Dhimal people together with the Meches and the Tharus (c.f. Bhattacharya, 2005).

However, the first identified monograph or ethnographic study on Dhimal may be confined to English administrators for the sake of their administration, though scholarly attitude of the articles may not be overruled. Probably the reward goes to Brain Houghton Hodgson (1847) to publish first monograph on Dhimal Tribe along with Kocch and Bodo entitled "*Essays the first on the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes*". The study comprises of three parts viz. (i) Vocabulary (ii) Grammar and (iii) Location, numbers, creed, customs, conditions, and physical and moral characteristics of the people. Immediately after the publication he (Hodgson) had communicated the third part in toto to the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and finally found its position to the issue of 1849 of said journal (Hodgson, 1849). After thirty one year of the second publication Hodgson published the same paper with original three parts in toto, under the section-I "On the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes" of his famous volume "*Miscellaneous Essays relating to Indian Subjects. Vol.-1*" (Hodgson, 1880a). However, before 1880 publication, Hodgson in his work "*Essays on the languages, literature and religion of Nepal and Tibet*" sporadically mentioned the name of Dhimals only for comparison (Hodgson, 1874). The second volume of "*Miscellaneous Essays*" also had some specific occurrences of Dhimals to compare the vocabulary and grammar of Tibetan, Dhimal, Bodo and Garo Tongues (Hodgson, 1880b).

Hodgson's three studies (first mentioned three) on Kocch, Bodo and Dhimal tribes mainly concentrated on linguistic and social-cultural aspects of the population except the second, in which vocabulary and grammar portion of the original writings

had been excluded. Hodgson enumerated the number of Dhimals do not exceed 15,000 souls, "are at present confined to that portion of Saul forest lying between the Konki and the Dhorla or Torsha", mixed with Bodo but in separate villages and without intermarriage (1847: 151). He (Hodgson) described the Bodo and Dhimal tribes as of the same race, however, comparison of language does not support so close connection, he added. Hodgson also stated that it is difficult to suppose the Bodo and Dhimal languages other than primitive (Hodgson, 1847, 1880a). Dhimals has been classified by Hodgson as Tamulian, having less height, less symmetry, more dumpiness and flesh, large cheek bones, a shorter wide nose, often clubbed at the end and furnished with round nostrils; eyes less, and less fully opened and less evenly crossing the face by their line of aperture; ears larger, lip thicker, beard deficient, colour brunet, but darker on the whole.Mountaineers exhibits the Mongolian type of mankind more distinctly than the lowlanders; he added (1847: 150).

Hodgson identified their religion as the religion of nature, or rather, the natural religion of man have neither temple nor idol; their cultivation as shifting cultivation; and according to Hodgson, this race assure him that they once had chiefs when they dwelt as a united people in Mourang. (Hodgson, 1847, 1849, 1880a).

In an another article (*Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*) Hodgson pointed out that, to the lower region (of Himalaya) again, and to similarly malarious sites of the middle region, are exclusively confined to the Kocches, the Bodos, the Dhimals and others; and also categorized the Dhimals as 'broken tribes' under the term 'Awalias' with Kocch, Bodo, Garo and others (Hodgson, 1874).

Latham (1859) in his study "*Tribes and Races*" identified the place of Dhimals as full of malaria everywhere with unfavourable conditions affect the human frame; and stated "yet the Dhimal, the Bodo, and others thrive in it, love it, leave it with regret" (1859:93). Several reports, according to Latham, "have noticed the unhealthy complexion and undersized limbs of the foresters of the Saul belt, the so called aborigines of the district". He (Latham) opined that the Dhimals are separate from that of the Bodo as languages of the two are different, pantheons of the two are different, details of the marriage ceremony are different, and funerals even festivals are different. Again he believed that Dhimal, Kamul and Tamul to be the same.

After the famous and exhausted work on Dhimals by B. H. Hodgson, the work of Edward Twite Dalton (1872) may be mentioned. Dalton in his famous study '*Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*', described Dhimals along with Bodo and Mech under the section 'Population of Assam Valley'. This portion of the article mainly concentrated on Kacharis or Bodo, Mech and Kocch in greater extent with a feeble description on Dhimals; whatever it is, the article had derived from Hodgson. Dalton presented a comparative vocabulary of Dhimal along with Chutiya, Bodo, Garo, Mech and Kocch population. He also pointed out "at least marriage ceremony is performed by the Dhimal, who appear to be of the same family and are located with the Bodo (1872:86).

Hunter (1876) in his famous work '*Statistical Account of Bengal*' classified Dhimal as 'Aboriginal Tribes' of Natives of India and enumerated the number of population as 873. Hunter wrote about their mode of cultivation, religion, manners, and customs, but according to him, he takes the extracts, in a condensed form, from the valuable monograph by Mr. B. H. Hodgson. As per his condensed form, Dhimals are of "nomadic cultivators of the wilds; for ages transcending memory of tradition, they have passed beyond the savage or hunter state, and also beyond the herdsman's state, and have advanced to the third or agricultural grade of social progress" (1876:67). They never cultivate the same field beyond the second year, or remain in the same village beyond four to six years (Hunter, 1876). Hunter had published a book related to comparative dictionary (of Dhimals and non-Aryan tribe and Population of India) before 1877 publication (Hunter, 1868), which, according to Hunter, brought together the languages of the non-Aryan Tribes and peoples who dwelt within or border upon the British Empire of India.

In his another study '*Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson*' Hunter discussed about the Dhimals as stated by Hodgson in his writings, and pointed out that the Hodgson's essay "on the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes", as per Latham, the leading British ethnologist, to be "a model of an ethnological monograph" (Hunter, 1896).

Risley in his famous work "*The Tribes and Casts of Bengal*" devoted as many as four pages for Dhimals. He wrote "Dhimal, Dhimal, Maulik, a non-Aryan tribe of the Darjeeling and Nepal Terai belong to the same main stock with Kocch ... rapidly losing their tribal identity by absorption into the large heterogeneous Rajbansi caste".

He added “any Dhimal can become a Rajbansi at any time if he is only prosperous enough” (1891:225). After comparing the number of Dhimals as enumerated by Hodgson in 1847 as 15,000 and subsequent census data of 1872 (873 person) and 1881 (662 persons), he stated, “they seem likely to disappear altogether as a separate tribe within the next generation...they affect a dislike for the tribal name Dhimal, which is now used only by outsiders, and prefer to call themselves by the modern title Maulik” ((1891:225). Risley also added an ethnographic note on Dhimal including their internal structure, marriage, religion, funeral, social status, occupation and so on. Dhimals, as stated by Risley, have made a marked advance in the direction of Hinduism from simple Nature-worship as described by Hodgson (Risley, 1891).

O'Malley in his district gazetteer (Darjeeling) sporadically stated the name of Dhimal. “It is an unhealthy marshy tract, formerly covered by dense malarious jungle, in which aboriginal tribes of Meches, Dhimals and Koches burnt clearings...” which is called ‘nomadic husbandry’. he added (1907:2). To give an ethnographic note on the Rajbansis he stated about the Dhimal “who might be defined as a non-Hinduized Koch or Rajbansi among and beside them” (1907:47).

Endle (1911) in his work on Kacharis had classified Dhimals as Northern group of Kachari population along with Bara Kachari, Rabha, Mech, Koch and some others; and trace immigration line of these group who entering north-east Bengal and Western Assam through the valley of Tista, Dhorla, Sankosh etc. and founding these what was formerly the powerful kingdom of Kamrupa (Endle, 1911).

Grierson in his famous study ‘*Linguistic Survey of India*’ classified Dhimal language as ‘Eastern Pronominalized group’ of ‘Pronominalized Himalayan Group’ under ‘Tibeto-Himalaya Branch’ of ‘Tibeto-Burman subfamily’ which may be categorized under ‘Tibeto-Chinese group’. In the Pronominalized group, he added, the influence of the ancient Munda language is far more apparent (Grierson, 1926). In volume III of said survey Grierson identified Dhimals as ‘Eastern Subgroups’ of ‘Complex Pronominalized Languages’, and opined that “Dhimal has formerly been considered to belong to the Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman Languages.....it can not therefore be any doubt that Dhimal must be separated from the Bodo group and dealt with in connection with the Pronominalized dialects of Nepal” (1909:275).

Dash (1947) had reported the census figure of Dhimals of Darjeeling district from 1872 to 1931, which indicate a sharp decline of the said group. There were 873 Dhimals in 1872, 631 on 1891, 444 in 1911 and 375 in 1931. "The 1941 census seems to have lost trace of the Dhimals are apparently no longer recorded as such", he added (1947:67). He also identified Dhimals as a *jhum* cultivator, who cultivated scanty crops of rice and cotton, by methods of nomadic husbandry.

Chatterji (1951) resolved the status of Dhimal language and categorized them under Tibeto-Burman family. He observed that they (Dhimal) speak a language of *Kiranti* word structure. Chatterji also opined that during life time of Buddha, Mongoloids of Nepal, speaking languages like Newari, Magar and Gurung and the Pronominalized languages like Dhimal, Khambu, Kanawari and others had formed nucleus or basis of the Himalayan.

Upreti, 1966, in his report to USAID/N opined that there is a certain similarity between the Dhimal and Limbu language. He also traced close relationship between two after analyzing their folklore, where the forefather of Dhimal seems to be the younger brother of Limbu, who (forefather of Dhimal) lost his way during an adventurous expedition to find cultivated land (Bista, 1980).

Diwas (1973, 1980) documented a detailed folk life of Dhimal (of Nepal) after conducting a project entitled 'A Brief Introduction to the Dhimal Folk Life Study'. The studies cover a wide range of folk life of Dhimal including their folk songs, folk lores, folk stories, folk ways, festivals, paintings and so on. The studies also intend to identify their origin, racial history as well as social-cultural aspects in the form of rites and rituals in connection with birth, marriage and funeral. Beside these he also documented family, marriage, kinship, clan and village organization, economic activities of Dhimals residing eastern part of Nepal. Dahal (1979), a member of the same project, also documented folk life of Dhimal, as a findings of said project. In all cases (all three books), the reports are based on social-cultural life only; physical characteristics are very few or almost missing, though, one of the important objectives of the project happened to be the racial history and physical characteristics.

Das (1978), as per Endle's work, classified Dhimal under Northern Group of Kachari population, and opined that considering the linguistic affinities of the Kacharis with the Garos as well as the tribes known under different names as Dhimal, Chutiya,

Koch, Rabha, Mech etc., many authors opine the possibilities of existence of some ethnological relationship between these tribes, but without thorough anthropometric data it is difficult to say to what extent such racial affinities exist among them, he added.

Bista worked on Dhimals of Nepal and stated “the Dhimals do have a mongoloid physiognomy” with “comparatively dark complexion is, of course, attributed to the heat of the tropical sun”, and as per census report (of Nepal) of 1961 only slightly over 8,000 Dhimals recorded, he added (1980:142). They (Dhimal) were nomadic, practicing shifting cultivation until some times ago, they have traditional village councils with a headman called *Deonia* and the priest who presides over all of the religious function is called *Dhami*. Bista opined that the younger Dhimals are getting sanskritized by enlisting Brahman priests for their birth and death rites and in some other sphere of life (Bista, 1980).

Sarkar and Gangopadhyay (1989) in their socio-economic survey on Mech, Dhimal and Tharu of Darjeeling Terai, identified 100-110 Dhimal family under Mouri jot, Hochai Mallick jot, Dhimal jot etc. of Naxalbari Block. By reviewing historical documents they identified two major factors of socio-economic pressure during British rule; the first one being the huge migration of outsiders to this region because of tea cultivation and second one being the conversion of forest to cultivated land, for which they supposed to lost their traditional *jhum* cultivation.

Regmi (1991) in his book “The Dhimals: Miraculous Migrants of Himal” documented detailed ethnographic account of said Nepalese ethnic group. This seems to be more authentic and vigorous study on Dhimal (of Nepal), specially after Independence. According to Regmi, “though Dhimals are spread up to Assam now, their early settlement did not extend beyond the Kankai river.....the Dhimals migrated first from north-east parts of Nepal-Tibetan area to western plains of Koshi zone of Nepal and then to the extreme east where they live now” (1991:57). He has also documented a wide range of economic, political organization, social hierarchy, kinship and phases of life. He opined that “Sanskritization among the Dhimals has been a process that was set in notion over thirty years ago” (1991:242).

King (1994, 2001) studied Dhimal language (on Nepal) and stated that Dhimal is a Bodic language spoken by approximately 30000 individuals in the lowlands of

southeastern Nepal and adjoining areas of West Bengal, India. He also opined that. Toto of northern West Bengal, India, probably stands as its closest relative.

Gautam and Thapa-Magar in their "*Tribal Ethnography of Nepal*" devoted as many as nine pages for ethnographic profile of the Dhimals including historical background, language, life cycle rites, religion, festivals, dress, ornaments, business, economics and some observable physical characteristics as well. As per said article their (Dhimal) skin pigmentation is dark brown, hair is thick, coarse, black and straight, minimal body hairs, thin almost scanty eye brows and eye lashes, eyelids with characteristic mongoloid folds, short, low nasal roots, ending in flared nostrils and large holes. medium or slightly thick lips, long thin ears, rounded chin and fat laden cheeks (1994:171). They (authors) guess a possibility that it may be the Rajbansi and Meche who have christened them, and find out the literal meaning of Dhimals as the meaning of *dhi* is near the river and *malo* means missing (Gautam and Thapa-Magar, 1994).

Singh (1996) in his work "*People of India*" pointed out that the Dhimal, Jharwa and Maulik are synonymous of Dhimals. In an early period they have also distributed in Andaman and Nikobar Island, Singh added, but presently they are concentrated in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The Dhimals of West Bengal, as per Singh, are divided into two sub-tribes Agnonia and Dongia and bearing surnames of Dhimal and Maulik. Singh (2008) in another volume of *People of India* (West Bengal volume) mentioned about the Dhimals of North Bengal, and stated that, "they are also known as Dhimal. Maulik and Jharwa. The term Mauik, came from the word *moling*, meaning a stump of a Sal tree. Jharwa means one who lives in the jungle" (2008:392). "They use Maulik as surname, instead of their traditional one, Dhimal", he added (2008:393). In this volume some information of Socio-Cultural life of Dhimals are also noted.

Deb Burman and Chaudhuri (1999) described some of the demographic features of Dhimals of Hatighisa Gram Panchayat (G.P.) only and enumerated total number as 330. After detailed socio-demographic information, they concluded, "that the Dhimals is a backward community having tribal origin" (1999:17). "Acceptance of *Mallick* or *Maulik* title as well as adoption of Hindu religious practices is the stereotype for not considering them tribe. But the strong argument in favour of non-inclusion of the Dhimals in the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India could be their

migration to the neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bhutan at the time of enumeration”, they added (1999:17).

Roy (1999) in his unpublished M. Phil. dissertation described the socio-economic aspects of Dhimal population of Hatighisa G.P. under Darjeeling district of West Bengal, India. According to Roy, predominance of nuclear family and slightly predominance of female over male may be seen. He also noted the prevalence of *barter system* among Dhimal community of this region.

Maitra (2001a) enumerated total number of Dhimal family of Darjeeling district as 165 having 1074 souls. He defined Dhimals as “Diminutive Group” and suggests a strong affinity of Dhimals of North Bengal with Dhimasha (Dimasa?) of Assam. He had collected some physical and genetical characters like Somatoscopy, Cephalic Index, Nasal Index, Stature and ABO, Rh(D) blood group of the Dhimals but with no or feeble interpretations; though his work on socio-cultural aspects may be recommended for further research. His above said study, though methodologically not sound but may be evaluated because of his thought provoking ideas that bifurcation of the Dhimal lineage from the main Mongoloid stock took place around 500 BC (Maitra, 2001b); he even calculated the separation of Toto from Dhimal, by linguistical analysis, as 800-1200 AD (Maitra, 2005); however, it may require further research to establish the fact.

Banopadhyay (2004) in his book '*Dhimal*' try to find out many sphere of social-cultural traits including language by extensive field work to evaluate present status and identity of this little known community. However, some of his findings specially population figures, some inferences, lack of citation for historical and other works are of questionable beside methodological aspects. However, he collected a wide range of information both historical and field data. The range of field information varies from origin and development of Dhimals to Material culture, Clan structure, Family, Village and other organization, Life cycles related rituals, Religious aspects including festivals, arts and crafts as well as language (including vocabulary) of the population. The importance of such data may not be overruled.

Bisht and Bankoti (2004) in their '*Encyclopedic Ethnography of the Himalayan Tribe*' have documented a brief ethnographic note on Dhimal, which includes history of origin and development, social life viz. settlement, kinship, dress and ornaments; Rites

and Rituals viz. name giving ceremony, marriage, death, religion and culture as well as a small note on economic activities.

Biswas (2004) had identified recent cultural attributes of Dhimals including social structure, folklore, magic religion as well as rituals related to birth, marriage, death and other stages of life in a vernacular writing. Later on he documented historical perspectives of the community by documentary research, keeping in mind the identity of the population as stated by others (Biswas, 2008a). The third one, after examining age-sex structure and fertility-mortality rates of the population, identified a positive population growth of its own (Biswas, 2008b).

In the same volume of Maitra's last article, Chakladar and Biswas presented a comparative vocabulary of Dhimal and Toto language in respect of Bengali to find out similarity between former two, but with poor or no conclusion; however, they had nicely prepared a tabular form of internal structure of Dhimal society (Chakladar and Biswas, 2004).

Bhattacharya (2005) in his field work on some part of population identified 12.79% landless household, 46.5% literates, 40.7% agriculturist, 46.51% day labour and overall annual family income as Rs.16270.00. He identified a wide range of malnutrition with poor health and sanitation and prevalence of diseases among Dhimals of the region. He also evaluates the market economy as an agent of de-peasantisation of the population. "This transformation might have emerged out due to various social factors which include their increasing proximity to the market", he added (2005:99).

Chakrabarti et. al. (2006) had identified the information needs of the Dhimal community and concludes that illiteracy and ignorance are the main obstacles to the development; they are aware about modern medical care but not so in respect of sanitation. Most of them are unaware about market places other than Naxalbari; and the rural library of Naxalbari is totally detached from the community peoples, they added.

Mondal (2007) classified all the mongoloid tribes living in the sub-Himalayan ranges as *Desias*; and opined that the history of migration of these groups of North Bengal is quite old. He also documented the name of Dhimals as inhabitant of Terai areas of North Bengal.

In a recent study Datta Banik et. al (2007) explore the nutritional profiles of adult Dhimals, which as per authors, are better than those of some of the other tribal

populations of eastern India, however, they recommend immediate appropriate nutritional intervention programs for this ethnic group. In another study Datta Banik et. al. (2009) opined that the Dhimals are suffering more compared to Mech and Rajbanshi in this region with respect to their ill health and poor nutritional status.

The Government Census and gazetteers may have greater importance on present status of the Dhimals of India. The recognition as aboriginal tribes throughout first couple of census and not recognized them as Scheduled Tribes after the constitution Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes order 1950 or even Modification order 1956, is somewhat confusing.

The 1891 census headed by O'Donnell classified them as Forest and Hill tribe in Rajshahi division of Bengal including 19 male (out of them 18 belongs to Darjeeling district, one belong to Dinajpur district) and 9 female (all belongs to Darjeeling district) of Bengal region (Census of India, 1891).

The first census of twentieth century (1901) by E. A. Gait had identified the location as 'Darjeeling and Nepal Terai' and stated that the Dhimals often call themselves Rajbansis. Their title is Maulik. They have a language (Dhimal), but many now speak Bengali. The census classified them as Hindu and enumerated the number as 632 including 333 male (332 from Darjeeling district and one from Rajshahi district) and 299 female (all from Darjeeling district). Though linguistically, as per census 1901, the figure reduced to 607 with 314 male and 293 female (Census of India, 1901).

The next census (1911) provides a single sentence by saying that the Dhimal and Thami are numerically insignificant, being spoken only by 444 and 292 persons respectively (Census of India, 1911).

In 1921 census Thompson classified the Dhimal language as "Pronominalized Himalayan Group" and enumerated total number of speaker (in Darjeeling District of Bengal) as 505 including 244 male and 261 female (Census of India, 1921).

In 1931 census Porter classified Dhimal (Dhemal, Agnia, Later, Dungia) as Hindu and identified 621 speaker of the language (in Darjeeling district, as well as in Bengal) including 380 male and 241 female (Census of India, 1931).

The 1941 census by R. A. Dutch was the first census having no data on Dhimal population or languages as well. The census had enumerated district wise community strength including scheduled and non-scheduled tribes, but surprisingly the census

simply ignores the said population (Census of India, 1941). According to Dash (1947) "the 1941 census seems to have lost trace of the Dhimals and Koches are apparently no longer recorded as such" (1947:67).

The 1951 census by A. Mitra again enumerated Dhimal (language) speakers as 124 including 102 male and 22 female; all residing in rural areas, as per census (Census of India, 1951).

The 1961 census by J. Datta Gupta cited Dhimals as 'Aboriginal Tribes' under "Census classification of castes and tribes in Bengal 1872" as well as "Agricultural community in Himalaya" as per "Castes, Tribes and Races by Traditional Occupation or Nationally, 1891" (Census of India, 1961). However, the census stopped to enumerate any figure of Dhimal by its survey, though the census had identified a village (Scheduled Caste Villages, W.B 1961) named *Dhemal* (JL. No.18) under Naxalbari P.S. of Darjeeling district (Census of India, 1961). After that no census (1971, 1981, 1991, and 2001) had documented any trace of Dhimal community or languages. though some numerically small population including Jatpu and Halam with single household considered for documentation.

1.3: Research Gap:

The review of literature suggests a wider gap of anthropological research on the study of the Dhimal. Except voluminous work of Hodgson all the works are concentrated on some part of socio-cultural and linguistic aspects only. No data is available on physical, genetical, demographic or even on complete social-cultural aspects in true sense of Indian Dhimals. Many of the writings are from vernacular language and published other than referred journals or books of national/ international interests. Hence, some of the studies are without any scientific survey and/ or by armatures. Because of lack of proper scientific techniques for data collection and interpretations, many of the studies may not be referred for further studies. However, their enthusiasm may not be ignored, as it may contribute founding stone of many of the serious studies. Therefore, the review of literature strongly suggests a detailed

anthropological study comprising physical, genetical, demographic as well as social cultural aspects of Indian Dhimals in a holistic manner.

1.4: Aims and Objectives of the Present Study:

After the review of literature it has revealed that a few studies were conducted on the social-cultural as well as linguistic aspects of the Dhimals of India (North Bengal) and Nepal as well. Some demographic characters were identified but represent a portion of population or even without enumerating fertility, mortality and migration rates and ratios. The study on Physical or Biological aspects of Dhimals are negligible, whenever it may appear in their writings, a few characters were identified, measured from a small portion of the community, some without any scientific methodology and overall without any interpretations.

Keeping in the mind the above observation the basic objective of this study identified as "to present an (holistic) anthropological perspective of Dhimals of Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, India".

The specific objectives of the study may be summarized as –

1. To document history (including oral history) of the Dhimals on the basis of information available from the community and also from folk history and library sources.
2. To examine the basic demographic features of the Dhimals of North Bengal with a view to find out the reasons of their diminutive condition, if any. To finalize the matter, i.e. whether they are decreasing or increasing, the study of population pyramid, comparison of fertility-mortality-migration rates, are inevitable. The study also intends to examine other demographic and socio-economic profile as well as biological dimensions of health and other bio-events of the Dhimals of North Bengal.
3. To explore morphological and genetic features of the Dhimals (of North Bengal) through measurable and observable parameters which includes measurements and observations on head, face, body as well as the genetic characters like ABO and Rh

(D) blood group, colour vision, PTC taste, Dermatoglyphics, etc. The parameters selected were identified by various scholars as the parameters of population variation.

4. To highlight the social and cultural attributes of Dhimal (of North Bengal) with particular reference to change in contemporary times. The social-cultural attributes include material culture in one hand as well as social structure and social organization in the form of internal divisions, marriage, family, life cycles, and religion, rituals, festivals and cultural practices on the other hand.

5. Finally the study intends to examine the identity of the Dhimals of India by its findings from primary and secondary sources. For this, the study also intends to assess the present OBC status of Dhimals conferred by the Government as well as tribal status suggested by previous scholars and the community itself.

1.5: Significance of the Study:

The significance of the present study may be twofold –to explore anthropological aspects and its applied part. First, the study is the first time attempt to explore the detailed anthropological (both Biological and social-cultural) profile of Indian Dhimals. The detailed data may be available for further study on biological or social-cultural field with special emphasis of population comparison and identity. Another part is of applied in nature. The study intends to identify health, socio-economic-educational status as well ethnic identity (measured by biological and social-cultural parameter) of the group. Hence it is expected that the findings of the study shall help to provide inputs to academicians, planners, policy-makers, government officials as well as non-governmental developmental organization to understand the bio-cultural situations and problems of the population for policy formulation as well as application of the same.