

Chapter 3

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THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE UNDER STUDY

3.1: Physical Features of the Region:

3.1.1: Geographical Settings:

Naxalbari or Naksalbari is located at 26° 40' 48" North and 88° 13' 12" East with an average elevation of 152 meters. The area is very near to Indo-Nepal border; and Kakarvita, the border is about 8 km west to Naxalbari. Other three sides of Naxalbari share its border with three Police stations of Darjeeling district; Mirik at north, Kharibari at South and Matigara at East. Siliguri, the sub divisional headquarter as well as important landmark of North Bengal, is about 22 km east from Naxalbari and Bagdogra, the main airport of North Bengal and nearest urban centre is about 8 km from Naxalbari; both are easily accessible by road and railways in some extent. Darjeeling, the district headquarter is about 100 km from Naxalbari. Almost all the villages are situated around Naxalbari with a radius of 10 km and accessible by metalled and/or unmetalled (mud) road (Census of India, 2001; District Statistical Handbook, 2005).

3.1.2: Geology:

The Terai portion of the district is low lying belt of country, transversed by numerous rivers and streams rushing down from the hills and by the upland ridges which mark their courses. Geographically the Terai region supposed to be a part of the plain land of India, but geologically it is sort of neutral country; the greater part neither of the alluvium of the plains nor the rocks of the hills, but of alternating beds of sand, gravel and boulders. The northern part of Terai region are made of unaltered

sedimentary rocks and different grades of metamorphic rocks but well cemented and more compact alluvial detritus consists of soft, grey, massive sandstones, mudstones, shale, mottled clays, conglomerates and subordinate bands of earthy limestone and ignite. (Dash, 1947)

3.1.3: River System:

The Mechi takes its rise under the Rangbang spur in the Singula range on the Nepal frontier and flowing from north to south marks the western boundary of the block (and district also) from its source. After it enters into Terai, it divides into two branches near the lower Mechi forest and eventually joins the Mahanadi in the Purnea district of Bihar (O'Malley, 1907). The main left bank tributaries of the Mechi, from north to south, are the Kiyang khola which joins at an altitude of 2084 feet and Ashli jhora at 1400 ft and the Mana jhora at about 1000ft (Banerji et. al, 1980).

3.1.4: Flora:

Botanically, the Terai region is readily defined as the region of forest trees, amongst which the Sal, the most valuable of Indian timber, is conspicuous. The vegetation of the region is rich in the number of species and varied in character. The lowest part of Terai comprising the slopes leading up to the base of the outer hills is characterized, specially in its western half, by forests of *Shorea robusta* (Sal) with a mixture of other trees such as *Dillenia pentagyna*, *Butea frondosa* and species of *Terminalis* and *Eugenia*. Large stretches of Savannah forest of *Dillenia pentagyna*, *Butea frondosa*, *Eugenia obovata* may also found. *Dalbergia sissoo* is plentiful near river bank along with *Acacia catechu*, *Bombax melabaricum*, *Nauclea cordifolia*, *Garuga pinnata* and so on. Patches of mixed forest also occur formed by large number of species viz. *Schima wallichii*, *Terminalia tomentosa*, *Terminalia myriopteron*, *Artocarpus chaplasha*, *Bombax malabaricum*, *Dillenia indica*, *Eugenia formosa* and many species of figs. (O'Malley, 1907, Banerji et. al, 1980)

3.1.5: Fauna:

In the Terai the tiger (*Felis tigris*) and leopard (*Felis pardus*) are common, with tiger-cat (*Felis viverrina*), the marbeled tiger-cat (*Felis marmorata*), the leopard-cat (*Felis bengalensis*) and the common jungle-cat (*Felis chaus*). Several species of *Viverra* including large civet-cat (*Viverra zibetha*), the lesser civet-cat (*Viverra malaccensis*), the tiger-civet (*Prinodon pardicolor*) and several species of paradoxura and mongoose family may also found. The jackal (*Canis aureus*) is the only representative of the genus *Canis*; the wild dog (*Cyon rutilans*) of the genus *Cuon* and the Indian fox (*Vulpis bengalensis*) and hill fox (*Vulpis montanus*) of the genus *Vulpis* found frequently. The order Ungulata comprise of elephant (*Elephas indicus*), wild pig and various ruminantia is also common. The ruminantia also include the gaur (*Bos gauris*), the deer tribe include sambar (*Rusa aristotelis*), the spotted deer (*Axis maculates*) the hog deer (*Axis porcinus*), the barking deer (*Cervelus aurcus*) and goat tribe comprise the serow (*Nemorhadus bebalina*) and the goral (*Nemorhadus goral*) are also available. Among Ursidae the Himalayan black bear (*Ursus torquatus vel tibetanus*) and the Indian sloth bear (*Ursus labiatus*) are also found. The genus *Lepus* include the common Indian red tailed hare (*Lepus ruficundatus*) and less common hispid (*Lepus hispidus*) hare. Other mammals are monkeys, squirrels and several species of porcupines, martens, moles, civets, rats and mice. In Terai the lesser florican (*Sypheotides bengalensis*), red jungle fowl, red spur fowl (*Galloperdix spadiceus*), pea-fowl (*Pavo cristatus*), kalij and black partridge (*Fraxcolinus vulgaris*) are also common besides several species of quail snipe, duck and waders. There are about 47 species of snakes in the district of which 17 are more or less poisonous. Among them the more common are hamadryad or king cobra (*Naia bungarus*) the common cobra (*Naia tripudians*) the karait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) the baded karait (*Bungarus fasciatus*) viper (*Vipera russellii*). The python is found in the Terai also. The several type of fish found in the region; among them the mahseer the katli, are more frequent. (O'Malley, 1907, Banerji et. al, 1980)

3.1.6: Climate:

The Terai regions including Naxalbari are at low altitude and are more directly affected by conditions which regulate weather in the plains and occasionally affected for a few days by a hot dry wind which, during hot weather, blows from the west of Bihar. The average annual rainfall is about 4528.5 mm throughout the subdivision. Maximum temperature of sub division is recorded as 39⁰ C with a lowest minimum of 4⁰ C (Census of India, 1991).

3.2: Ethnic Composition:

The population of Darjeeling district is heterogeneous in nature. The majority of the hill people are of Mongolian origin, mainly various Nepalese castes, but a large number of Lepchas, Bhotias and Tibetans may also found. In Terai the mixture of races is equally important. Here the aboriginal Koches or Rajbansis are most numerous. A majority of the inhabitants were born elsewhere and the Mundas and Oraons from Chotonagpur and the Santal from Santal parganas have a large numerical strength. Darjeeling district thus, often described as 'Babel of tribes and nations' because of these heterogeneous ethnic groups. (O'Malley, 1907)

Rajbansis along with other Bengali Scheduled Castes have always formed the bulk of the population of the Siliguri subdivision. But the colossal immigration of Bengali Hindus from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and other places in course of last three decades or more, has reduced the numerical superiority of the Rajbansis in this area, which, although inhibited by a sizable number of Nepalese, is not liked by other Hill people (Banerji et. al., 1980).

The reference populations, Dhimal, are surrounded by different Nepalese communities, Rajbansis and other Caste groups as well as Chotonagpur tribes of adjacent areas. Among them Rajbansis are more in contact with Dhimals followed by Nepali communities. Even some of the practices of said communities supposed to be followed by Dhimals of the region.

Rajbansis, the numerically dominant scheduled caste community of Darjeeling and also West Bengal constitute a great share of district population specially in plain region. They profess Hinduism and worship Hindu gods and goddesses. They supposed to be a Mongoloid race that entered Bengal from the east or descended from a Dravidian stock with intermixture with Mongoloid races.

Nepalese are the largest multiethnic community of Darjeeling district specially in Darjeeling Himalaya, are Hindu by religion and divided into roughly twenty caste groups. Among them numerically stronger are Khambus or Rai, Murmis, Limbu, Khas or Chettri, Brahma, Mangar, Gurung, Newer, Gharthi, Kami, Damai, Sarki and so on. As name indicates they emigrated from Nepal, to work as labourer in tea gardens; and according to Subba (1989) they had migrated to this land in the middle of eighteen century. They are concentrating on hilly regions of the district and are of Mongoloid in origin.

In general, people of hilly tract of Darjeeling are Indo-Mongoloid in origin and many of them migrated from southern Tibet-Bhutan region or Nepal. Whereas, the plain people are more heterogeneous in nature with a Proto-Australoid strain as well as Dravidian intermixture and migrated from other parts of undivided India. During nineteen century the population composition of the district stands in favour of immigrants; Nepalese communities and Chotanagpur tribes for tea cultivation, Bengali caste groups as refuges from East Pakistan and so on. As a result, the autochthones become dwindling and facing difficulties to retain cultural heritage and numerical dominancy as well (Biswas, 2008c).

3.3: Historical Background:

3.3.1: Historical Background of the Region:

Indian Dhimals as per present survey are mostly concentrated on Naxalbari block under Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling district, West Bengal, India except a few from outside Naxalbari but within jurisdiction of Darjeeling district. District Darjeeling is the one of the six district of Northern part of West Bengal popularly known as North

Bengal. District Darjeeling is comprised of three hill subdivision viz. Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong and single plain one i.e. Siliguri. Siliguri subdivision is again divided into four numbers of Blocks viz. Matigara, Khoribari, Phansidewa and Naxalbari. Naxalbari block has two Police Station- Bagdogra and Naxalbari. By nature all the blocks under Siliguri subdivision are classified as Terai or plains of the district.

The district Darjeeling (major portion of today's Darjeeling district) was part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim. Kalimpong was taken by Bhutan and in 1780, Gurkhas, after seized their power in Nepal, invaded Sikkim and during next 30 years they overran Sikkim as far east as the Tista and annexed the Terai portion. A treaty in 1816 (Segouli treaty) was signed between Nepalese and the East India Company and the tract was added to the East India Company. After treaty of Titaliya (1817) the company then restored the whole region between Mechi and Tista to the Raja of Sikkim and guaranteed his sovereignty. Within few years relations of Company with Sikkim deteriorated and Company withdraw the annexation of the Terai and the portion of the Sikkim hills bounded by the Ramman and the Great Rangit on the north, by the Tista on the east and by the Nepal frontier on the west. The said land was handed over to East India Company by Raja of Sikkim in 1835. The Terai portion was annexed in 1850. Kalimpong area was annexed by the company in 1865 following the Sinchula treaty between the British and the Raja of Bhutan. The district Darjeeling was formed around the hill areas of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong in 1869 and some Terai areas (Siliguri, Khoribari, and Phansidewa) were included in 1886. Finally the district attained its present dimension in 1866. (Hunter, 1876; Sannial, 1880; O'Malley; 1907; Dash, 1947)

The Terai and the hill territory annexed from Sikkim were managed by the Superintendent who after 1850 was called the Deputy Commissioner. Immediately after annexation of the Terai (in 1850) the southern portion was placed under the Purnea district, but in consequence of the dislike of the inhabitants to this transfer it was cancelled and the whole area was attached to Darjeeling. In 1907 Siliguri subdivision was created to re-establishing the Terai subdivision. The district was included in the Rajshahi division until October 1905. After that as a result of partition of Bengal, it was transferred to the Bhagalpur division. However, again it was transferred to the Rajshahi division during 1912. (Hunter, 1876; Dash, 1947)

According to Hunter (1876) the upper portion of *tarai* or plains is chiefly covered with forest and dense jungle suitable for cotton cultivation and chiefly inhabited by the Meches and Dhimals; the lower portion, however, is more open and cleared, and in this tract rice is the crop principally cultivated. The 1872 census identified 11,111 household comprising of 47,985 populations within Terai subdivision of Darjeeling district. The rapid development of Terai as well as district as a whole after 1866 is mainly due to agriculture development, improvement of communication and establishment of educational institutions. However the last one is confined to hills only. The improvement of road as well as opening of railways as a means of communication affects the development of the region. The development of agriculture, as per Dash (1947) is of threefold; first a major portion of the forest land was brought under cultivation, second, replacement of old Jhum cultivation by more efficient methods including terrace cultivation, ploughing and irrigation, and third introduction of new crops like tea, cinchona, potatoes, cardamoms and oranges.

3.3.2: Historical Background of Dhimals:

Within this unhealthy region of Terai, which according to Hodgson (1847) is deadly from April to November, yet the Dhimal and some others not only live but thrive in it, exhibiting no symptoms whatever of that dreadful stricken aspect of countenance and from which marks the victim of malaria. The Bodo and Dhimals alleged that they cannot endure the climate of the plains, where the heat gives them fever; however, Hodgson opined that this is a mere excuse for their known aversion to quit the forest. He also noted that Bodo and Dhimal once occupied the entire northern and eastern skirts of the Kocch country but later on (during Hodgson's study) Dhimals confined to a limited area between Konki and Dhorla or Torsha rivers. There seems to be an ancient connection of the Dhimals with the west or Nepal side; Hodgson (1847) had identified a tract of country lying between the Konki and the Mahananda which was called Dhimali.

The study on Dhimals as well as enumeration was started long before independence. Table-3.1 is a compilation of population enumeration of the Dhimals. Hodgson in 1847 identified near about 15000 Dhimals who lived within the tract lying

between the Konki and the Dhorla or Torsha. Later on enumeration on Indian Dhimal had started as early as 1872 when first census of India had been carried out. The census figure of the Dhimals throughout the history is not consistent in nature; therefore, population growth may not understand after analyzing population figures of different stages. In some cases only persons using Dhimal language were categorized as Dhimals.

Table-3.1 exhibits that population figures of Dhimals throughout the year are not consistent in nature. The reason may be lack of trained worker (without any knowledge of population identity of Dhimal) for the census enumeration as well as adopting wrong methods (recall or data collected from few informants instead of door to door survey) for post-Independent works. However, in some cases, Dhimal can present themselves as other than Dhimals, specially during pre-Independence census, as Indian Dhimal have adopted the surname Mallick instead of Dhimal. Whatever it is, as per present field work, the recent population enumeration of Dhimal as cited by Maitra (2001) and Bandyopadhyay (2004) may also be excluded because the enumeration was based on recall or approximation basis without any complete scientific field survey.

Table-3.1: Growth of Dhimal (Indian) Population

Year	Total	Male	Female	Reference
1847	15000	-	-	Hodgson, 1847 (between Konki and Dhorla rivers)
1872	873	-	-	Dash, 1947
1881	-	-	-	Census of India, 1881
1891	28	19	9	Census of India, 1891 (as per language spoken)
1891	631	-	-	Dash, 1947
1901	632	333	299	Census of India, 1901
1911	444	-	-	Census of India, 1911
1921	505	244	261	Census of India, 1921
1931	375	-	-	Dash, 1947
1931	621	380	241	Census of India, 1931
1941	-	-	-	Census of India, 1941
1951	124	102	22	Census of India, 1951 (as per language spoken)
1980	552	-	-	Bandyopadhyay, 2004 (estimated by Dhimal Sangha)
1981	514	-	-	Maitra, 2001 (after recall from Mr. P. Mallick)
1994	804	-	-	Maitra, 2001 (data collected from Bartaman Patrika)
2000	1074	-	-	Maitra, 2004 (personal field work)
2003	989	-	-	Bandyopadhyay, 2004 (estimated from 2 persons)
2003	900	468	432	Present Field Work

Therefore, the population figure of the Dhimal population as collected after a long scientific household survey from all the Dhimal families residing here as per knowledge of reference population is 900, which indicate a slow but positive population growth of Dhimal population of this region.

3.3.3: Folk and Oral History of Dhimals:

According to Dhimals themselves, the term Dhimal is a combination of *dhi* mean near the river and *malo* means missing; therefore they are the missing people who inhabited near river. Rajbansi and Meches also called them Dhimal; and in Mech dialect the tern *dee* denotes water or river. On the other hand Indian Dhimals used Mallick as surname (instead if Dhimal as Nepal), which may derived from the term *muling* (the main pillar of the house, which have to erect at the time of construction of house) or because of owner of agricultural land (*Malik*) once at a time.

Dhimals have no written records about their history of origin and development. Therefore some legends in the form of folklore are the only source of such mythical origin. The collections of such folklore are as follows:

The first one is related with sage Parashuram, who became angry when he found his plough in the river, which was because of naughtiness of Dhimals. They flew from Kashi, which they claimed to be the homeland, towards east, to escape from sage's anger. Therefore, they claimed to be a member of Kashi gotra.

The second one is the story of two brothers; at the time of their way back from Kashi, the younger one lost the way instead of much attention from elder. Therefore, the younger brother stopped at present place. Dhimals claimed to be descendant of younger brother, while the elder's descendants are Limbus.

The third one is also the story of two brothers, who are of Limbu by affiliation. They came down from their highland village to find out new land for cultivation. On the way back the younger after consuming liquor became dead drunk. Therefore, the elder brother used to make the way by cutting the banana trees, as the younger brother supposed to come later on after recover from intoxication. Meanwhile the banana tress

became growing to natural shapes and the younger brother (the forefather of Dhimals) supposed to loose his way and settled at the foothills of present positions.

They believed to be the descendant of *Dhilompa*, the son of *Than Daba*, who supposed to be youngest of Kirati brothers; and also regarded Limbus as their nearest kins of all Kiratis. They have some explanatory myths on origin of different clans, which are discussed on 7.2 (Clan Organization) under Social Structure and Social Organization.

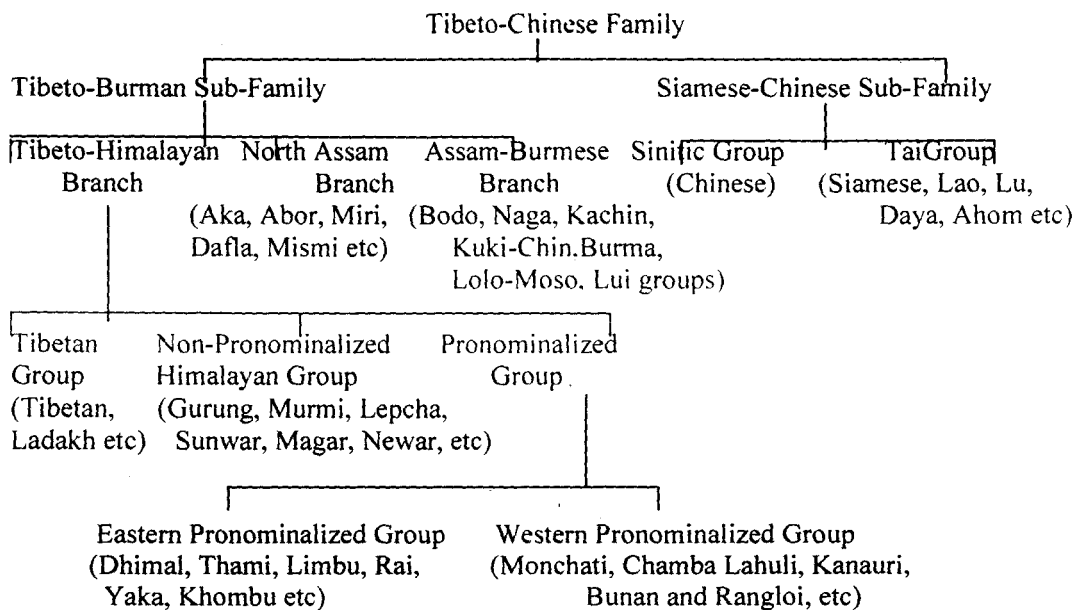
3.4: Language:

The language they spoken are their own and called 'Dhimal' language. They have no such script which can document their language; hence, written records of the language are absent. For this, they have to rely upon dominant script of the region; for Nepal it is Devanagari, and for West Bengal it is mostly Bengali script, though use of Devanagari may also have seen.

Dhimal language may be classified as eastern Pronominalized Himalayan language under Tibeto-Burman language family but without any scripts. So, it seems to be a language that supposed to remember whatever one hears. For this some changes are inevitable throughout the history. Some scholars opined that some aspects of Austric grammar may have introduced among eastern part of Pronominalized groups including Dhimals. Grierson (1927) in his 'Linguistic Survey of India' identified them as *Kiranti* dialects and clubbed them with Thami, Limbu, Rai, Yaka, Khambu and other such language of eastern Pronominalized groups. Chatterji (1951) stated that the term *Kirata* (in Sanskrit) indicated the wild non-Aryan tribes living in the mountains, particularly the Himalayas and in the north-eastern areas of India, and are Mongoloid in origin.

Two main varieties of dialect may have seen, eastern and western varieties, though mutually intelligible. The western dialect has been significantly influenced by Tharu, whereas, for eastern dialect has been in close contact with Rajbanshi speech.

Figure 3.1: Tibeto-Chinese Language Family (Grierson, 1927)



The cardinal numbers they used to count as per traditional way are up to ten; these are (starting from one) *E, Gne, Sum, Dia, Na, Tu, Nihi, Ye, Kuha* and *Te*. Sometimes the word '*long*' used to suffix after each words of cardinal numbers. However, they can also identify zero as '*haidong manthu*', but not used as a part of cardinal number. After ten they suppose to follow Indian '*ganda*' and '*bisa*' (1 *ganda* = 4, 1 *bisa* = 20). Many of the words from neighboring Rajbansi and Nepali communities added in Dhimal vocabulary in some extent. Some opined that many of the Dhimal words are found to be similar to those in Toto.

Regarding week or month they are readily follow Bengali terms with suffixing '*dina*' and '*masta*' respectively, which are also derived from Bengali '*din*' mean day, and '*mas*' mean month. They recon three season only; these are winter or '*chung dina*', summer or '*saka dina*' and rainy or '*o-ai dina*'. Similarly they recon six cardinal points of the globe as '*dahe*' or north, '*mahe*' or south, '*nuhe*' or east, '*dihe*' or west, '*ruhuta*' or upper and '*leta*' or lower. Regarding colour they can differentiate six by their own language; these are white or '*jeka*', black or '*daka*', blue or '*nelpa*', green or '*pelka*', red or '*eka*' and yellow or '*euka*'.

Dhimal are mostly bilingual; beside their own Dhimal language, specially for outside interaction they have to rely on Bengali. Even, in many cases they are bilingual in respect of Dhimal and Nepali language. Hindi is also a familiar language to some extent. In all cases women supposed to use their own language more than their men counterpart, followed by older male of the society. Youths are using other language more, and many of them can't able to speak their own language. On the other hand, Dhimal has borrowed words and sounds from others, specially from Rajbanshi and Nepali communities. Less frequent Dhimal words are rapidly replaced by words from said languages.

3.5: A Brief Profile of the Villages under Study:

A total of 158 Dhimal household were identified in a survey of 2004, as population figure of Indian Dhimals, with the help of Dhimal people already identified by others. A total of 900 people were identified using household survey. Later on a single family comprised of five members from Adhikari Bazar of Raniganj-Panishali Gram Panchayet under Khoribari district has come in contact with large Dhimal population; however, because of late identification they were not considered for demographic study.

Overall 20 villages were identified from the region. Majority of them are from Naxalbari block (152 families with 860 souls), followed by Khoribari (5 family with 33 souls); and a single family with seven members from Matigara block. The study suggests two major regions of old Dhimal concentration viz. Maniram and Hatighisa Gram Panchayet of Naxalbari block. Later on they supposed to migrate in different directions including a major one to Khoribari. Village wise major concentrations are Ketu Gabur of Maniram G.P. (40 families with 234 souls) followed by Surajbar of same G.P. (15 families with 94 souls), and Ketu Gabur (16 families with 81 souls), Goldas (13 families with 76 souls) and Hochai Mallick (13 families with 70 souls) of Hatighisa G.P. Overall, table identified, that the mean number of people per household is 5.7.

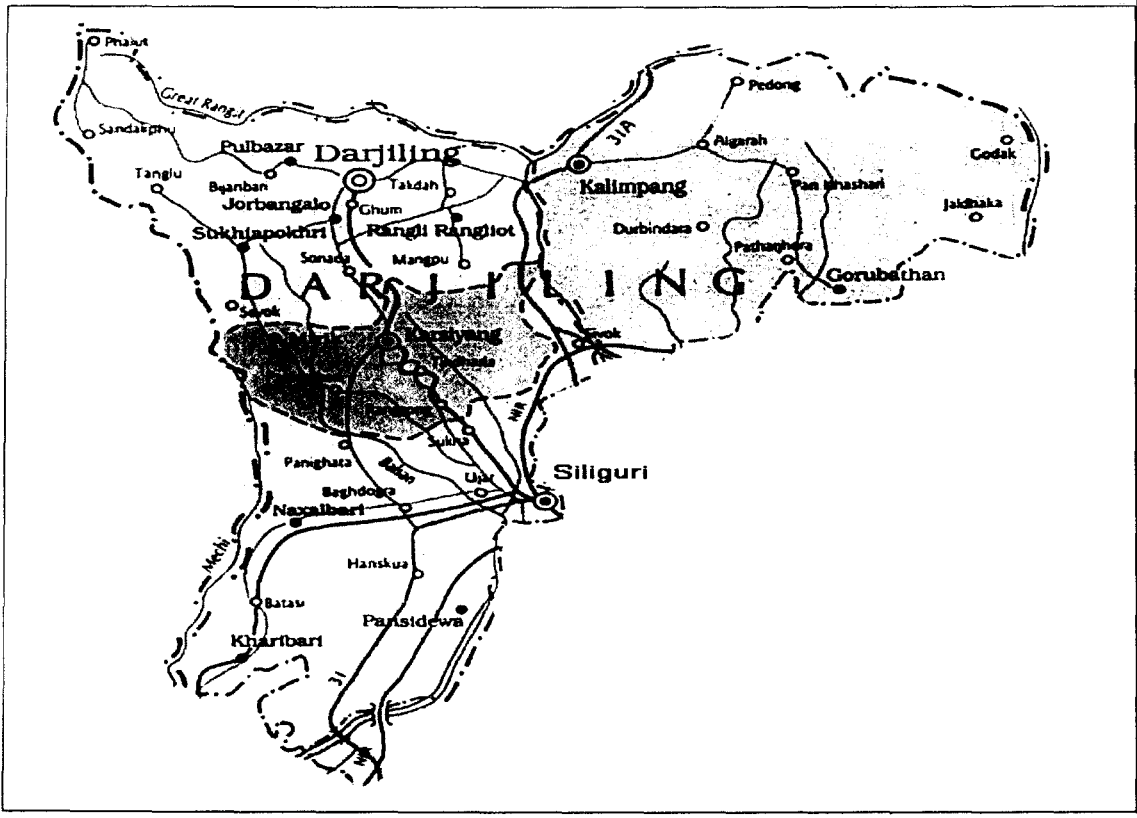
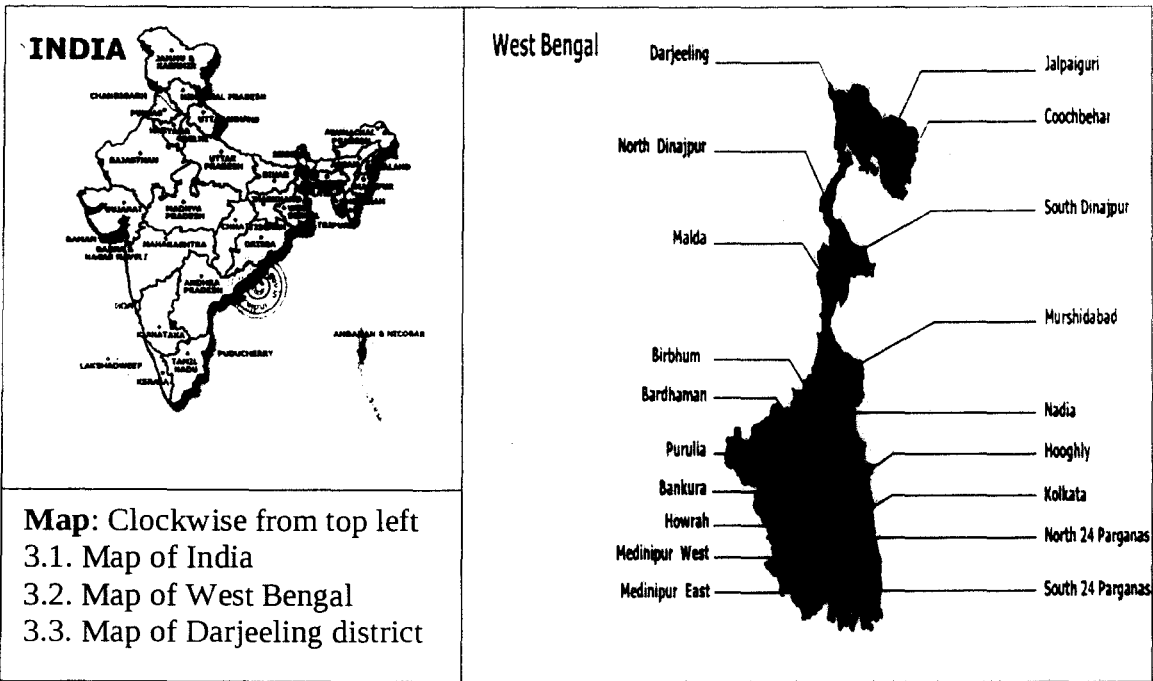
Table 3.2: Village wise break-up of Dhimal Population

Sl.No	Name of the Village/ Jot	Gram Panchayet	Block	Family	Population
1	Surajbar	Maniram	Naxalbari	15	94
2	Siubar	Maniram	Naxalbari	8	45
3	Ketu Gabur	Maniram	Naxalbari	40	234
4	Kilaram	Maniram	Naxalbari	7	35
5	Nehal	Maniram	Naxalbari	2	13
6	Jhapu	Maniram	Naxalbari	5	27
7	Chamaru	Maniram	Naxalbari	1	10
8	Posadu	Maniram	Naxalbari	2	10
9	Bara Maniram	Maniram	Naxalbari	2	7
10	Goldas	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	13	76
11	Sada Mallick	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	5	26
12	Velu	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	7	46
13	Chat Jimdarguri	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	5	27
14	Hochai Mallick	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	13	70
15	Mouri	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	9	49
16	Jharu	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	2	10
17	Ketu Gabur	Hatighisa	Naxalbari	16	81
18	Rambhola	Buraganj	Khoribari	4	28
19	Dakua	Buraganj	Khoribari	1	5
20	Kalam	Matigara	Matigara	1	7
	TOTAL			158	900

Source: Present field work 2004

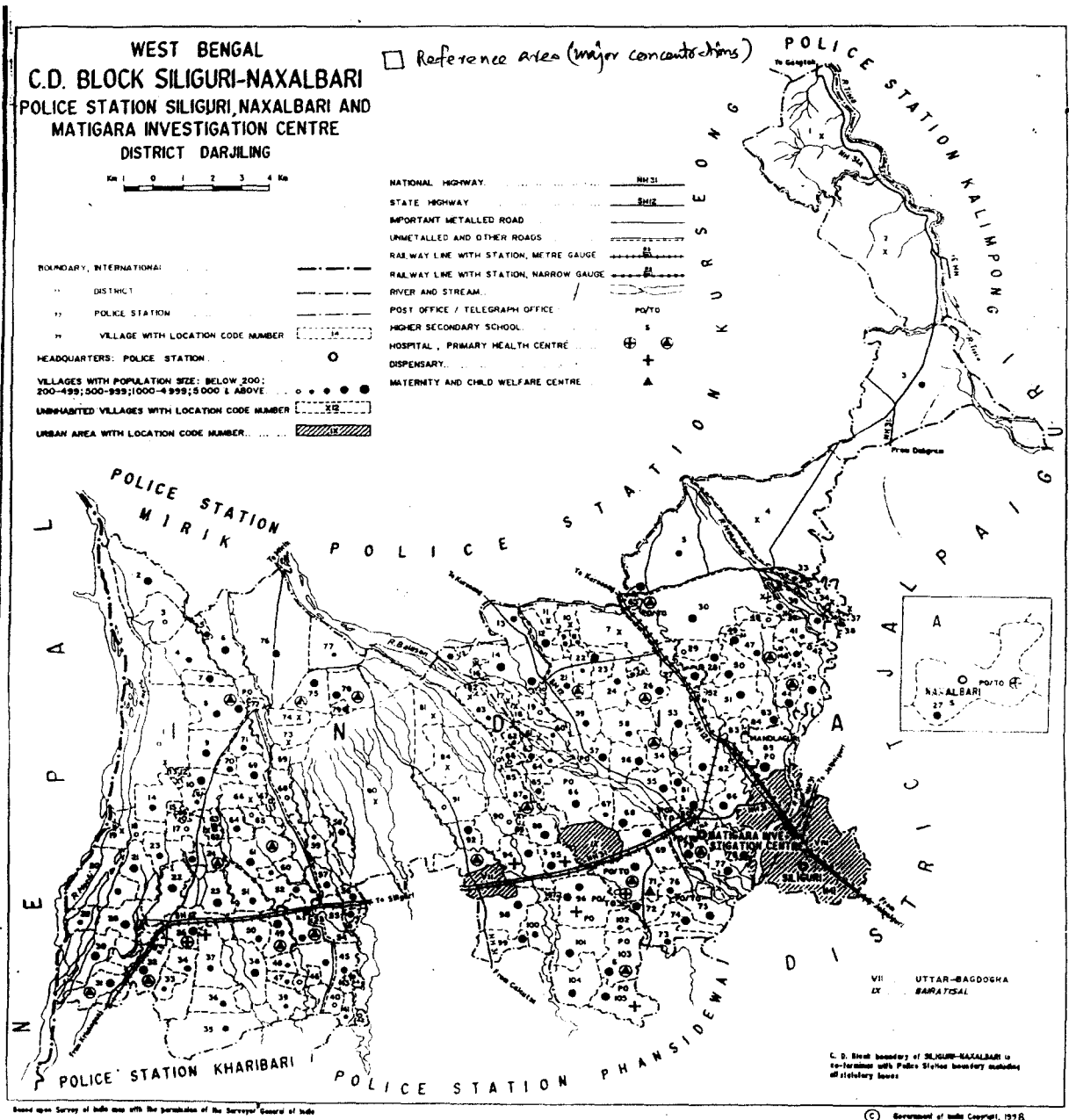
Almost all the big villages have, as per 1991 census, at least one primary school/ adult literacy centre; others supposed to access it within one/two km from their house. Nearest High school is at Naxalbari or Hatighisa, which are of 5 to 8 km from villages and accessible by bicycle, rickshaw van or sometimes simply by walking. Nearest market is a Naxalbari and distance range from 5 to 10 km from villages. The same is true for rail connectivity; however bus communication is about 5 to 8 km. Village approach road are *Kuccha* or un-metalled, however, connected with metalled road; and accessible by rickshaw van only. Nearest medical centre is Naxalbari, and nearest town is Bagdogra with a distance of 6 to 20 km. For Post office access they supposed to cover

a long distance from villages, which ranges from 5 to 8 km. All the villages irrespective of location are far away from water supply; villagers have an access over tube well or well within their village or sometimes at a distance of 2 km. The study identified that, even now-a-day, more than half of the Dhimal family supposed to collect drinking water from well (37.34%) and even river (14.56%) as well. Remaining families (48.1%) have an access over Tube Well. As a rough estimate during field work, the villagers of Ketu Gabur (Maniram G.P.) residing eastern side of the river have to depend on River, whereas, many people from Siubar, Jhapu Jot, Goldas, Velu, Sada Mallick, Chat Jimdarguri, Rambhola and some part of Hochai Mallick and Mouri have to use water from Well for drinking. Others have an access over personal or village Tube Well. Only a small portion of the villages or part of it has an access over electricity; majority of them have to rely upon other sources. Therefore, for this region in general and people in particular, it can state that 'no amenities are available except drinking water' (Census of India, 1991), which sometimes stands false if treated as 'safe drinking water'.



Sources: 3.1 National portal of India, 3.2 Official site of Govt. of West Bengal
 3.3 Darjeeling district official website

Map 3.4: Map of Naxalbari (with Siliguri) Block



Source: Census of India, 1991

3.6: Findings:

The physical features of the region suggest the region as a part of terai of Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and adjacent to Indo-Nepal border. The river Mechi supposed to act as an international boundary. Naxalbari, the block headquarters is well connected by road and rail. The region is rich in respect of forest trees and numerous wild animals including reptiles and birds.

The population of the region is heterogeneous in nature. In this region Rajbanshis are more numerous followed by Chotanagpur tribes and other Bengali caste groups and Nepali communities.

Historically the region had been ruled by different dynasty. However, it is East India Company who finally managed to restore whole region of terai. The enumeration of Dhimal population had been started from as early as 1872 census. However, the figures are not reliable in true sense for many reasons. The folk and oral history suggests a close relation of Dhimals with Limbu and other Kirati groups of this region.

Their language is characterized by no script and may be classified as eastern Pronominalized Himalayan language under Tibeto-Burman family. However, they are bilingual; can speak Bengali and/or Hindi beside their own language.

Villages are more or less remote in nature and accessible by unmetalled road. Overall 20 villages were identified having 900 Dhimals from 158 families. Majority of them are from Hatighisa and Maniram G.P. of Naxalbari block, district Darjeeling, West Bengal, India. For this region in general and Dhimal in particular, it can be stated that 'almost no amenities are available except drinking water'.