

CHAPTER-I

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India is characterised by the diversity of its population and this diversity is enriched by the presence of tribal population. They add vibrant colours to the monotonous picture of homogeneity as India is the abode of 705 tribal communities¹. Each tribal community is unique in terms of its lifestyle, culture, belief etc. They collectively contribute 8.6% to the total population of the country. Unfortunately, this large segment of the population is still lagging behind. They are considered as the poorest of the poor and the **‘most marginalized section’**² of the society. It is hard to believe that in a country like India, a fastest growing economy, such a large number of people hardly manage a decent living!

1.1 Definition of Tribes

The term ‘tribe’ is derived from the Latin word ‘tribus’, Umbrican word ‘trifu’ and Greek word ‘phule’.³ The tribes are known by different names in India. In ancient Indian literature, the Aryan introduced them as Dasyus i.e. **‘other than themselves’**⁴. Besides, Nishadas, Sabaras, Bhils, Kollas, Kiratas, Dasas, Sudras, Dramidas, Dravidas,⁵ Abhiras and Pulindas⁶— all are used to refer this tribal people. Later, they are referred as **‘Aboriginals’** by Sir Herbert Risley and Lacey, Mr. Elwin and Shri A.V. Thakar; **‘Hill Tribes’** by Sir Baines; **‘hill tribes and wilder aboriginals’** by Mr. Grigson; **‘aborigines’** by Shoobert; **‘animist’** by Mr. Tallents, Mr. Sedgwick, Mr. Martin; **‘primitive tribes’** by Dr. Hutton; **‘jungle people, forest tribes or folk’** by Mr. Baines; **‘backward Hindus’** by G.S. Ghurye and **‘submerged humanity’** by Dr. Das and Das.⁷ However, in recent period, the terms Vanyajati, Vanavasi, Pahari, Janjati, Adimjati and Adivasi are very commonly used to denote them. They are referred as ‘Scheduled Tribes’ in the Indian Constitution.⁸ After independence, the Census authority uses the term Scheduled Tribes for Census enumeration. Though in the previous Censuses, they were mentioned as people having a tribal form of religion in 1891 Census, animist in 1901 Census, tribal animists or tribal religion in 1911 Census, hill and forest tribe in 1921 Census, primitive tribe in 1931 Census, tribe in 1941 Census.⁹

All the above terms actually denote a single community i.e. tribe. Now, who are the tribes? It is very difficult to provide a unanimous definition of tribe. But for the purpose of Census, it is important to identify tribes. Generally certain criterions are used to identify a tribal

group. During the Census 1901, the single criterion which is used to define the tribe is their religious beliefs.¹⁰ Later, the Lokur Committee (1965) suggested five criteria based on which a community can be regarded as the Scheduled Tribe. These are— primitive traits, distinct culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the other community at large and backwardness.¹¹ However, the criteria are modified several times by different anthropologist, sociologist or other academicians who define tribes from their own perspective.

According to Oxford Dictionary, **“a tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor”**¹².

Imperial Gazetteer of India defines, **“A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous, though originally it might have been so”**¹³.

Majumdar defines tribe as **“a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes, without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, belief and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of a homogeneity of ethnic and traditional integration”**¹⁴.

The opinion of FUCHS about the Indian tribe is not much different. He says, **“as far as Indian tribes go, the essentials seem to be only a comparatively simple and primitive economy, combined with a certain degree of residential instability, a simple, though not always, classless social organization, and especially that feeling of being a different and separate social unit— apart from the majority communities of India. The social and political solidarity expressed either by a common name, a common distinct language or dialect, endogamy, similar customs and traditions of a social and religious nature appear less important”**¹⁵.

The constitution of India in the article 366 (25) defines scheduled tribes as follows : **“Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities as parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342, to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this constitution”**¹⁶.

From the above definitions, some common characteristics of tribes can be pointed out. These are—

- The tribal people have a sense of belongingness to a common territory which they refer as their '**homeland**'¹⁷ even today and these places are mostly inaccessible hilly and forested terrain.
- Every tribal community has its own ancestral origin. Generally, the tribal people of India belong to three racial stocks. These are— Negrito, Proto-Australoid and Mongoloid.¹⁸
- They speak one common dialect which is regarded as their part of identity.
- One tribal community is distinguished from others by their distinct culture.
- The tribes follow their definite social norms and customs. Endogamy is very common among the Indian tribes.
- They earn their living from primitive form of economy.

1.2 Classification of Tribes

India is considered as the '**melting pot**'¹⁹ of different tribes. Each tribal group is unique in terms of their culture, language, religion and so on. Hence, the tribes of India can be classified from different aspects. The study presents here a brief discussion on the classification of tribes of India based on their geographical distribution, linguistic affiliation, racial characteristics, level of integration, economic activities and cultural pattern.

Based on Geographical Distribution

Guha divided the tribes of India into three regional groups while Roy Barman identified five tribal zones. Vidyarthi & Rai proposed four main geographical regions along with one sub-region of Islands. These are— 1) Himalayan Region, 2) Middle India Region, 3) Western India Region, 4) South India Region and 5) Island Region.

Based on Linguistic Affiliation

Linguistically, the tribal people can be classified into four major language families. These are— 1) Austro-Asiatic Family, 2) Tibeto-Chinese Family, 3) Dravidian Family and 4) Indo-European Family.

Based on Racial Characteristics

Before discussing the racial origin of the tribal communities of India, the racial classification of Indian population should be known. Guha identified six main races along with nine sub-types. The major racial groups are— 1) Negrito, 2) Proto-Australoid, 3) Mongoloid, 4) Mediterranean, 5) Western Brachycephals and 6) Nordic.

Guha mentioned that the tribal communities living in India belong to the first three racial groups i.e. the Negrito, the Proto-Australoid and the Mongoloid.

Based on Level of Integration

Vidyarthi & Rai divided the tribal people of India into five main groups on the basis of their level of integration with the non-tribal population. These are— 1) Distant Tribal Communities, 2) Rural Tribals, 3) Semi-Acculturated Tribals, 4) Acculturated Tribals and 5) Totally Assimilated Tribals.

Based on Economic Activities

The tribal people can be classified into eight groups on the basis of type of economic activities, they engage. These are— 1) Forest-Hunting type, 2) Hill-Cultivation type, 3) Settled-Agriculture type, 4) Simple Artisan type, 5) Cattle-Herder type, 6) Labour, Agricultural and Industrial type, 7) Folk-Artist type and 8) White-Collar jobs and Trader type.

Based on Cultural Pattern

Vidyarthi & Rai further classifies tribes of India into five categories based on their cultural types. These are— 1) Forest-Hunting type, 2) Hill Cultivation type, 3) Plain Agriculture type, 4) Simple Artisan and Folk Artist type and 5) Industrial and Urban Workers.²⁰

1.3 Approaches to Tribal Development

What would be the right approach to develop the indigenous people of India is a matter of great concern for the thinkers, planners and policy makers, especially after independence. In different times three different approaches have been adopted in India regarding the development of tribal people. These are isolation, assimilation and integration approach.

The name of Verrier Elwin is mainly associated with the isolation approach. Though, before him, the British Government had already adopted the policy of isolation to deal with the tribal people. At the very beginning, the British were not willing to do it. Rather with the view of opening up the entire tribal belt, they introduced the new land settlement policy which badly affected the rights of this indigenous people on land. Moreover, the exploitation by the forest contractors, money lenders and landlords had crossed all limits which ultimately results in different tribal uprising. On this ground, the British Government decided to keep them isolated from rest of the India and formed a non-regulating area by passing the Regulation XIII of 1833. In 1874 another Act was passed to declare the tribal areas as 'Schedule Districts' which were further categorised as 'Wholly Excluded Area' and 'Areas of Modified Exclusion' under section 52A of the Government of India Act 1919.²¹ Finally, as per the Act of 1935, the tribal areas were again specified as 'Totally Excluded Areas' and 'Partially Excluded Areas'.²² The ultimate aim of British behind the enactment of all these laws was to confine this people in some specially notified tribal areas to keep them away from the mainstream population with a view to protect the tribal people from further exploitation of the larger society. Moreover, the British thought that because of this isolation neither tribal insurgence would arise nor they would engage in Indian freedom movement.

Later Elwin also supported the policy of isolation to protect the tribal people and suggested to form a 'national park' for them which led to a great debate between Ghurye and Elwin. However, Elwin did not suggest this for the entire tribal population. He made this suggestion only for the Baigas in order to protect them from exploitation. For the majority of the tribal population, he promoted the same policy as of general population.²³

Contrary to the policy of isolation is the policy of assimilation, mainly advocated by Ghurye. He was of the opinion that the tribal people had been living a very primitive and uncivilized life inferior to the dominant majority of the country. For centuries they are living in extreme poverty which aggravate their sufferings several times. But those tribes who are in close contact with the non-tribe population shows an immense change in their living condition e.g. the Malers or Paharias of Bengal. Ghurye opined that the complete assimilation of this backward people with the larger society would improve their condition by leaving their primitive traits and borrowing the culture of the so-called superior society.²⁴

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After independence, the two extreme approaches of isolation and assimilation were abandoned. Instead, it is decided by the policy makers to integrate the tribal people with the larger society of the country. The integration approach does not demand for the homogeneity of culture rather it provides space for diversity. That means each and every tribal community may maintain their distinct culture and identity without assimilating with the mainstream population.²⁶ This right of the tribal people is further protected by the Constitution of India by providing different constitutional provisions and safeguards. In this context, the name of the ex-prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru should be mentioned who was a strong supporter of this approach. He defined five principles, basically known as ‘Tribal Panchasheel’²⁷ which is considered as the guidelines for tribal development. He has written this in his foreword to Elwin’s book ‘A Philosophy for NEFA’. These five principles are—

- 1) **“People should develop along the lines of their own genius, and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.**
- 2) **Tribal rights in land and forest should be respected.**
- 3) **We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. We should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.**
- 4) **We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.**
- 5) **We should judge results not by statistics of the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved”.**²⁸

However, Nehru’s ‘Panchsheel’ is not supported altogether. Xaxa stated that Nehru’s principles are applicable to the North East frontier states only and not for the development of the tribal people of mainland India.²⁹ There may be some debate regarding the applicability of ‘Tribal Panchsheel’ for the development of the whole tribal population of India but the integration approach is acclaimed widely.

1.4 Relevance of the Present Study

At the dawn of independence, our national leaders have planned for a better India. A better India which promises its countrymen to fulfill their basic needs; take care of their health and

education; provide a better living; and above all, free air to breath and a complete sky to fly so that no one will be deprived of its rights, will not be exploited by others. Rather all of her men participate in the country's journey towards development and those who are left behind will be supported by the country because a country will be prosperous only when all of her men shine equally.

In view of this, the framers of the Constitution have found out those communities who are backward and enlisted them in the Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. Tribes are regarded as the most backward community of the country. So, a separate schedule is prepared for them in order to provide special privileges. Different constitutional provisions and safeguards are provided for their upliftment and integration with the larger society. Yet, the situation of this segment of the population is really disappointing as they are still lagging behind. They are too poor to manage sufficient food and shelter for them. Most of the tribal houses are *kancha* house which does not provide proper protection from bitter cold in winter or scorching heat in summer. They suffer from malnutrition, anaemia and many other diseases though are not able to obtain proper care and treatment owing to their poor financial condition as well as the lack of proper health care delivery system in the tribal areas. Education may play the most crucial role to change this situation but their poor educational achievements decelerate the rate of progress. However, the Government of India has undertaken different welfare measures during the successive planning periods and allotted funds for those developmental schemes. Though the result is not very encouraging, rather it emphasises the need of taking this issue more sincerely and find out the right way to bring an effective change in the tribal situation. Previously, several studies have been conducted on this problem but most of them are at macro level. But, the problems and priorities of tribal people vary from one area to another depending on the situation of local area. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct the micro level studies widely to identify and quantify the socio-economic factors which are responsible for the backwardness of the tribal people of an area. Hence, we must focus on their social, economic and health condition as these are the three pillars which help to develop our concept properly.

This study is just a sincere attempt to have an idea of the present condition of the tribal people. For this, Dakshin Dinajpur has been selected as the study area, which is regarded as one of the backward districts of the state of West Bengal. The present work intends to study the socio-economic condition of the backward segment of the population of this district where more than 16% of its total population belongs to the Scheduled Tribe group. But,

very few studies have been conducted on the tribal people of this marginal district. Hence, there is a need to conduct a research study on them which aims to assess the actual condition of the tribes of this district and provide a guideline for their development.

1.5 Location of the Study Area

Dakshin Dinajpur is a small and marginal district of West Bengal which is situated between 25°10'55''N to 26°35'15''N latitude and 87°48'37''E to 89°00'30''E longitude (Figure 1.1). The district is surrounded by Bangladesh in north, east and southern side while it shares its boundary with Uttar Dinajpur district in the north-west and with Maldah district in south-west side. Administratively, it is included in the Jalpaiguri Division of the state. The total geographical area of the district is 2219 sq. km with an urban occupancy of about 20.75 sq. km. The district has two subdivisions i.e. Balurghat and Gangarampur. The district is comprised of eight community development blocks (Kumarganj, Tapan, Balurghat, Hilli, Kushmandi, Bansihari, Harirampur and Gangarampur), two municipal towns (Balurghat and Gangarampur) and five Census Towns (Par Patiram, Dakra, Chak Bhrigu, Gopalpur and Harirampur). In every community development block, the three-tier panchayet system i.e. panchayat samity, gram panchayat and gram sansad is observed. In this district, there are total 8 panchayat samity, 65 gram panchayat and 1002 gram sansad, which cover 1638 mouzas and 1582 inhabited villages.³⁰

1.6 Review of Related Literatures

In this segment, a brief review of the related articles and books have been done which helps to know the different aspects of tribal life as well as their problems discussed in the previous works. It also helps to comprehend the progress of the work on this topic.

'Tribal Demography in India' (1957) written by Mamoria is an important book to know the then tribal situation in India. He has attempted to address all aspects of tribal life. The introductory discussion about the racial types of Indian tribes proposed by several ethnologists as well as the classification of Indian tribes provides the basic knowledge about tribes. He has further discussed about their social and economic condition. Thus, problems of tribal life are pointed out and suggestions for the improvement of tribal situation are given here.³¹

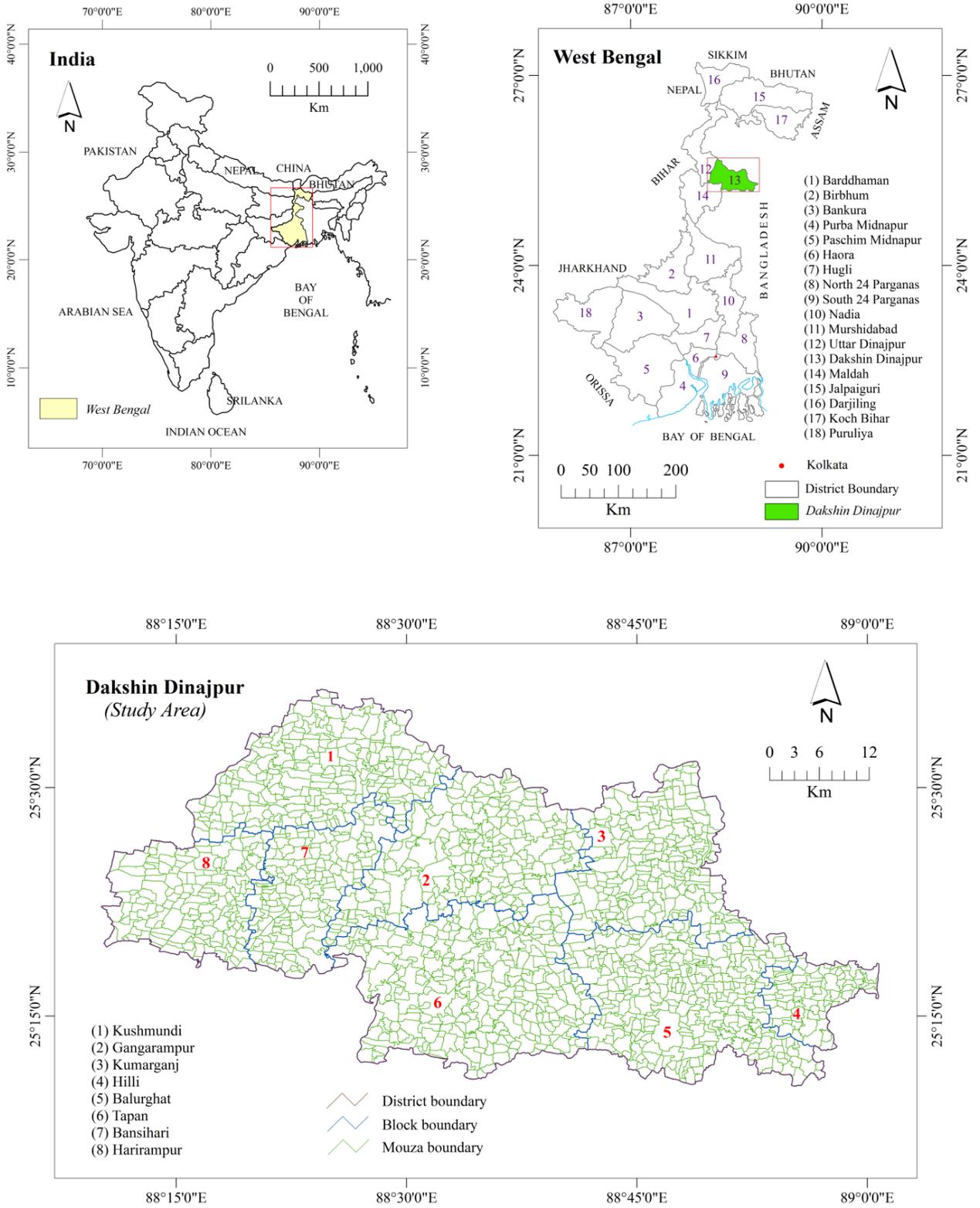


Figure 1.1 Location of the Study Area

The 'Handbook on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal' was published by the Tribal Welfare Department in 1966. This book is extremely helpful for the study of Scheduled Tribe population of West Bengal. For the upliftment of the weaker section of the society, the constitution has provided specific safeguards for them and these communities have been enlisted in the lists of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. At that time, West Bengal had 41 Scheduled Tribe communities. However, all of them were not scheduled throughout the state. Among them, seven groups were scheduled throughout the state, eleven groups were scheduled throughout the state except Purulia and territories transferred from Purnia of Bihar and twenty two communities were scheduled only in territories transferred from Bihar. Besides, the book provides the basic information regarding the habitats, concentration and distribution pattern, origin, occupation, racial affinity, religion, linguistic position, social status of the tribal communities of this state.³²

S. Fuchs (1973) in his book 'The Aboriginal Tribes of India' has attempted to present a more comprehensive description of the tribal people of India. He has preferred the term 'aboriginal tribes' to address them. In this book, an attempt was made to reconstruct the racial history of India by arranging the aboriginal tribes into different racial groups. The further discussion about the tribal people of India was done by dividing them geographically into different groups. The author has first presented the general description of the tribes of a particular area and then mentioned the important characteristics in detail which seems to be very useful to have a clear idea about the aboriginal tribes of India. The book has also discussed about the tribal welfare programmes undertaken during the post independence period by providing them different safeguards and privileges. However, the author has warned that all these welfare activities should not be conducted in such a way that it leads to the demoralization of this people.³³

Bahadur in the third volume of his book 'Caste, Tribes & Culture of India – Bengal, Bihar & Orissa' (1977) has discussed about some tribal communities like Munda, Oraon, Mahali, Ho, Bhumij, Kharia, Birhor etc. living in the above mentioned three states. He has discussed about the origin, social structure, physical characteristics of the selected tribal communities. Besides, their religion, festivals, marriage type, dress pattern, dance and song which are unique for individual tribal communities have been also presented in this book.³⁴

Sharma in his book 'Tribal Development—The Concept and The Frame' (1978) has presented a very detailed discussion about the tribal development. He has discussed about

the economic development of the backward tribal region, the problem related to it and the ways to overcome it. The tribal economy is intimately related with forest economy. He has stated that while planning for the development of the tribal people, it should be noted carefully. Besides, while developing industries in tribal areas, the local communities should be involved actively instead of exploiting them. Finally, for the proper functioning of the tribal development programmes, the administration and personnel system should work sincerely which has been also discussed in the context of the environment.³⁵

Bharadwaj in his book 'The Problems of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes in India' (1979) has discussed about the two major issues of Indian society related to the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe population. These are untouchability and backwardness of the tribes which are the major obstacles for a nation's progress. He has discussed how caste system was developed in the Hindu society and ultimately leads to the evil custom of untouchability. For their backwardness and poverty, they are not allowed to enjoy equal status in the Hindu society. To eradicate such social evils, different steps have been taken. Constitutional safeguards are provided to them yet the situation has not much improved. Actually, the constitutional provisions are unable to change the age old mind set of people. So, it is essential to adopt a scientific approach. It is stated that reservation should be provided to those who really need this. Therefore, the author has suggested that different concessional opportunities should be provided only on the basis of economic backwardness. He has also proposed that instead of regarding a whole class as backward, it is better to consider individual because even within the weaker section, some people may be of well off condition.³⁶

Chatterjee in his book 'Racial Affinities of Early North Indian Tribes' (1979) has presented a racial history of the tribal people of north India which can be traced in ancient Indian literature. He has collected information from Veda, Purana and Dharmasastra. In Rig Veda, there is a reference of Dasyu-varna who in his opinion is the aboriginal people of India, mainly consisted of Proto-Australoid and Paleo-Mediterranean. Similarly, Kiratas are Paleo-Mongoloid people found in sub-Himalayan region. Likewise, the description of the people of India, their racial stock, tribal groups from Purana and Dharmasastra have been also presented here.³⁷

The issue of religion is an inevitable part of tribal life and in this regards, Troisi's book 'Tribal Religion—Religious Beliefs and Practices among the Santals' (1979) has made

immense contribution to build a concrete idea about the religious belief of tribals, more particularly, Santals. They believe in supernatural spirits and powers, perform different religious rites and celebrate several religious festivals and ceremonies. Magic is an important part of tribal life which is discussed here along with witchcraft. Through the entire discussion, he has pointed out how religious beliefs and practices are closely associated with their life and helps to bind them which actually maintain their existence as Santal.³⁸

In the study of socio-economic condition of the tribal people, the book ‘Scheduled Caste and Tribes—A Socio-Economic Survey’ written by C. Parvathamma (1984) is worthy to be mentioned. It is an in depth study of the socio-economic condition of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes people of Karnataka. The book throws light on different aspects of life of this backward section of India. Along with their demographic characteristics, the book has discussed about their housing condition, possessions of different assets, occupational structure, financial position, education, political awareness etc. A very important issue i.e. caste and untouchability in Indian society is also discussed here, which clearly reveals the condition of these people.³⁹

The book ‘The Tribal Culture of India’ (1985) written by Vidyarthi & Rai is of immense importance in the study of tribal people of India. They have presented a detailed discussion about the tribal history. The concept of the tribe along with their classification and characteristic features are presented here, which helps to build a clear idea about the tribes of India. The knowledge is further enriched by the discussion of their social, economic, political and religious life. The authors have presented every details of tribal culture with reference to the different tribal communities. The diversity of tribal world, their uniqueness is highlighted here. Besides discussing the traditional tribal way of life, the present cultural changes of the tribes is also represented in this book.⁴⁰

Khere in his book ‘Social Change of Indian Tribes—Impact of Planning and Economic Development’ (1991) has discussed about the impact of economic development plans on the social changes of tribal people. The present research is done in the context of Munda tribe. The study reveals that the way of living and economic condition of Munda tribe is improving and they are moving towards modern ways of living.⁴¹

The book ‘Tribal Culture, Economy and Health’ written by S. Bairathi (1991) attempts to study the different tribal problems and analyses the impact of different development

schemes in the context of Saharia tribe of Rajasthan. The author has discussed about culture, economy and health care practices of the Saharia tribe and also critically analysed the impact of different development schemes on their life. The book has also highlighted some major issues like the consequences of indebtedness, adoption of family planning, status of women in Saharia society, their educational status etc. Thus, the author has discussed about different problems of tribal life and showed that the complete benefits of different Government schemes are yet to reach to this section of the society. Besides, he has discarded this concept that modernization leads to the destruction of the tribal culture. Therefore, they should not be deprived of the development benefits on this ground. Thus, it can be stated that the author has preferred integration approach to assimilation approach to deal with the tribal people.⁴²

The book on tribal language 'Tribal Identity—A Language and Communication Perspective' (1992) written by Khubchandani is a valuable addition. He has presented a brief account of major language families in India and tribal language as a part of it. The ancestral language of different tribal communities and its maintenance or shift among them, issue of bilingualism and speaking of non-tribal language as contact language are critically discussed here. Language is considered as part of tribal identity and language shift leads them towards identity crisis.⁴³

Ghurye (1995) in his book 'Scheduled Tribes' has discussed about the so-called aborigines whom he called the Scheduled Tribes. He has stated that the tribes were animist but it was very difficult to differentiate between Hinduism and Animism. So, he has described these Animists as 'backward Hindu'. The book has discussed about the different problems faced by the tribal people and steps taken for their welfare during pre and post independence period. The different approaches to deal with the tribal problems i.e. isolation approach of Britishers or assimilation approach of later period is discussed here. Ghurye has advocated the assimilation approach for tribal development.⁴⁴

The book 'Tribal Food Habits' (1999) by Rajyalakshmi is an in depth study on food habits of tribal people. Though the present study is based on four tribal communities, namely, Jatapu, Savara, Gadaba and Kondadora, yet an outline is obtained about their food habits and nutrient composition. The study has also focused on the food and nutrient consumption of women of reproductive age-group and children. It is observed that the intake of cereals

and vegetables were adequate among the respondents though their diet lacks different food nutrients.⁴⁵

The book 'Tribal Women in Development' (2002) is a comprehensive work of Mukhopadhyay where she has discussed about the status of women considering the practice of bride-price, educational attainment, their health condition and also magic and witchcraft. The study has presented the changing scenario of dependence of tribal women on the forests to their adjustment in industrial set up. Further, the discussion about the selected tribal communities highlighting their characteristic features has enriched the knowledge.⁴⁶

Mitra in her book 'Development Programmes and Tribals—Some emerging issues' (2004) has attempted to evaluate the success of the development programmes, more particularly, the ITDP loans by assessing the socio-economic status of ITDP beneficiaries. The study has first reviewed the existing tribal development plans and programmes and then laid special focus on the impact of ITDP on the tribal people in respect of the tribes of Birbhum district of West Bengal. The study finds out that this development scheme has significant influence on the tribes of this area though it varies from one person to another as all people are not able to take equal advantage from this scheme.⁴⁷

The different problems which the tribal people confront is discussed in the book 'Tribes and Tribals—Struggles for Survival' (2006) written by Dixit. Their social problems, health problems, issues of land alienation, marginalization, Human Rights are addressed here which clearly exhibits the struggles of the tribal people even in this present era. Besides discussing the problems, the study has also focused on the National policies and the convention related to indigenous and tribal people adopted on 1989 by the General Conference of the International Labour Organisation, specially made for the development of tribal people.⁴⁸

Jha (2009) in his paper 'Health Status of Tribal Women in India' has attempted to study the health status of tribal women on the basis of some selected parameters i.e. sex ratio, female literacy, marriage practices, age of marriage, fertility, mortality, life expectancy at birth, maternal mortality etc. The study has revealed that the health status of tribal women is comparatively lower than the general population. Hence, the author has suggested to formulate a proper plan of action to improve the health status of tribal women.⁴⁹

Jafri and Pathak (2009) in the article 'Social and Economic Status of Tharu Tribe in Uttar Pradesh' have studied in detail the socio-economic life of Tharu tribe. In their study, they have found out the age and sex ratio, average size of the household of Tharu tribe. The marital status of the respondents is also discussed which has indicated the existence of child marriage in this society. Literacy rate among the Tharu tribe is very low but now-a-days it is found to be improving due to different Government initiatives. Tharu is an agriculture tribe though agriculture is not much developed here. Hence, their meager income has compelled them to live in extreme poverty. Therefore, along with the adults, both children and aged people have to engage in earning activities. The present paper has also compared the status of Tharu tribe with the non-tribal population which rightly indicates that they are more backward and underdeveloped than the non-tribal people here.⁵⁰

Mohanty (2010) in his article 'Tribal Identity in Indian National Secular Perspective: Contributions from Orissa's Indigenous Traditions' has attempted to discuss the contribution of Orissan tribes towards the growth of secularism in India. The Orissan tribes have influenced the Indian civilization and culture in different ways. Similarly, they are influenced by the mainstream culture and the study has also showed this by citing different examples. The study has revealed that many regional languages have developed due to the mixing of Sanskrit or Pali with different tribal languages. Different religions were also influenced by tribal customs and traditions. Likewise, the mainstream Indian civilization has great impact upon the tribal customs and beliefs. Beside these, Orissan tribes also actively participated in different movement against the British. During pre-independence period, several revolts broke out in Orissa which offered a great resistance to the colonial government. In this way, the tribal people have contributed to the freedom movement of India. Thus, it is evident from the study that tribal culture has great impact upon the development of secular India.⁵¹

Hasnain in his book 'Tribal India' (2011) has presented a detailed study of tribes in India focusing on their society and culture. The author has discussed about the social, economic and political organization of the tribal people. The problems of the tribal people are also addressed here along with the development strategies, plans and programmes adopted for the tribal development.⁵²

Singh and Patidar (2011) in the article 'Literacy Differentials in Tribes of South-East Rajasthan' have studied the level of tribal literacy as it rightly indicates the spread of

education in the tribal society. Further, they have highlighted the disparity of education among tribal and non-tribal and also among tribal male-female by calculating differential index. In the study area, high literacy differentials among tribal male-female has been registered which indicates the poor status of women in the tribal society. Again the huge gap in literacy rate between tribal and non-tribal people indicates the backwardness of the tribal society. However, the situation is quite different for Mina Community who is in better position compared to other tribal groups. Finally, the paper has suggested for some strong initiatives to reduce these persistent inequalities in literacy.⁵³

Das and Sharma (2011) in their article 'Literacy Pattern among Tribal Women in Assam' have made an in-depth study to find out the level of educational attainment among the tribal women in Assam. They have studied the progress of literacy among the tribal women from the period of 1971 to 2001. The article has highlighted the spatial variation especially the rural-urban differential in female literacy among the major tribal groups in Assam. It is observed that the level of literacy has been improving among all the groups from one generation to another as highest literacy rate is found in the age-group 10-19 and lowest in the 60+ age group. However, the pattern of literacy is not same among all the tribal groups in Assam. It varies from one group to another.⁵⁴

Maiti (2011) in her article 'Health and wellbeing as factors affecting quality of life : A study among the Tharu women of Uttarakhand' has studied the health status of Tharu women. The physical, reproductive and psychological health, their attitude towards health care and the role of Government to provide improved health care facilities to the Tharu people are discussed here. The study has revealed that the Tharu women are living a healthy life both physically and mentally in the study area. However, it has not reached at the desired level as some portion of Tharu women are still unaware of the need of nutritious food, proper check up during pregnancy, institutional delivery etc. and thus they have been suffering from various health problems. Finally, the author has recommended some suggestions for the improvement of the quality of life of the Tharu women.⁵⁵

Boruah (2011) in his article 'sustainable Tribal Development: A Case Study in Nagaland' has attempted to focus on the available health care practices and health status of the Ao Naga tribe of Mokokchung district of Nagaland. It is observed that modern medicare system is not available here. So, people have to depend mostly on the traditional healing system. Actually, they do not know how to protect themselves from different diseases. Even, they

are not aware of the need of maternal and child health care. The author has concluded that the unawareness about different diseases, unhealthy living condition, improper food habit and inaccessibility to modern health care are responsible for the occurrences of different diseases among the Ao Naga tribe.⁵⁶

Sen and Ghosh (2011) in their article 'Development of Tribals through Government Scheme—A Study in Birbhum District of West Bengal' has attempted to assess the level of development of the tribal people and the influence of two schemes (TSP & SGSY) on their development. They have studied the socio-economic status of the tribal people on the basis of some selected criteria. Besides, the depth of poverty of the tribal people in the study area are measured using the Foster, Geer and Thorbeck's model which has rightly represented the situation of the beneficiary households under TSP and SGSY schemes. The study reveals that both TSP and SGSY schemes have failed to improve the quality of life of the tribal people here. Finally, they have suggested few measures for the effective implementation of different Government schemes for the development of tribal people.⁵⁷

Dutta's book 'Tribes of North Bengal—Culture Society & Politics with special reference to West Dinajpur' (2012) is one of those rare books which provide some information about the tribes of Dakshin Dinajpur. Here, the special focus is laid on Santal community. This book has presented a historical account of tribes of this region by discussing about shift of tribal people from Animism to Hinduism and the role of Kashiswar Chakraborty in the religious conversion of Santals. Their involvement in the Tebhaga movement of North Bengal is also discussed here. Besides, the practice of witchcraft, different incidents of witchcraft happened in this region and reasons behind such incidents are critically reviewed here.⁵⁸

Thakur (2012) in his article 'Work Participation and Dependency Ratio Pattern of Tribal Areas of Himachal Pradesh' has examined the spatio-temporal pattern of male-female work participation and work force structure of the tribal people of Himachal Pradesh. The study reveals that the overall work participation rate has increased slightly in 2001 and indicated the sectoral shifting of tribal economy from farm based occupation to non-farm based activity. The paper also intends to analyze the spatial pattern of dependent population in the study area. It is observed that the old age dependency is not high in the study area due to lower life expectancy and higher mortality rate among the aged persons.⁵⁹

Mondal (2012) in his paper 'Inequalities in Literacy of Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal' has studied the level of literacy among the thirty eight notified Scheduled Tribes in West

Bengal. Actually, the study has focused on the gender disparity in literacy and tried to find out its relationship with occupational pattern of the tribes. Here, inter-tribal variation in gender disparity in literacy is observed. He has pointed out that there is a complex relationship between literacy and its gender disparity with occupational pattern.⁶⁰

Thakur and Kumar (2013) in their paper 'Distribution, Density and Growth of Population in Scheduled Tribe Areas of Himachal Pradesh: A Village Level analysis' has studied the distribution, density and growth of population in the tribal areas of this state. It is a village level analysis of the data of two Census periods i.e. 1971 and 2001. The author has divided the study area into different altitudinal zones and described its climate and drainage pattern and tried to associate these factors with the growth, distribution and density of population here. The study has revealed that the areas with low altitude and relatively comfortable climate have high concentration of population compared to the high altitude areas, as these areas are not suitable for agriculture. Thus, the distribution pattern of population in the study area is highly uneven and significant change is noticed over the two census period.⁶¹

Dutta (Daspupta) and Sivaramakrishnan (2013) in their paper 'Disparity in the Literacy among the Scheduled and Non-scheduled Population: Indian scenario in the 21st Century' have attempted to compare the level of literacy between the Scheduled and Non-scheduled people in India and highlighted the existing disparity in literacy. They have analysed the spatiotemporal pattern of literacy gap existing between these two groups. The present paper has also studied the male-female and rural-urban literacy disparity and pointed out the probable reasons of such literacy disparity. Finally, emphasising the role of education for the all round development of the country, they have suggested to reduce the literacy gap between the Scheduled and Non-scheduled population in India.⁶²

Kispotta (2014) in his article 'A Socio-Economic Miserable Condition of the Tribals in Chhattisgarh (A case study of Dharwar, Surguja district, C.G)' has attempted to examine the socio-economic condition of tribal people of Chhattisgarh, living in the inaccessible hilly and forest areas so that proper steps can be taken for their development considering their actual needs. The study reveals that the tribal people of this area are in very poor condition. Still, they are not very interested to migrate to some other place for better life because they love to stay with their community which is the natural tendency of the tribes. Thus, the author has rightly highlighted the different problems of tribal people of Chhattisgarh which should be paid immediate attention for improving the situation.⁶³

Prajina and Premsingh (2014) in their article ‘A Study on the Socio-Economic Status of Tribes with Special Reference to the Tribal Students of Kannur District, Kerala’ has studied the socio-economic status of tribal people, based on the tribal students of residential schools. The study reveals that the parents of most of the respondents are literate though they are not highly educated. But, now they realise the importance of education and wants to educate their children. They have now started to discard their aboriginal habitat of forest and hilly areas and settle in the surroundings of the so called civilized people. They are now participating in different social organizations and some of them also hold dignified positions. However, the economic condition of the respondents is not very well. Parents of most of the students work as daily labour and none of them have permanent Government job. Thus, the study highlighted that the tribal people of Kerala are actually in a transitional state. Though they are backward in some aspect, yet there is a clear indication of improvement of their livelihood and it can be noticed in their educational and social status.⁶⁴

Majumdar and Madan in their book ‘An Introduction to Social Anthropology’ (2018) has discussed about different social attributes like family, kinship, clan, marriage, religion etc. in the primitive society. Their social organization, law and order, art and culture and economy are discussed here. The discussion has mainly focused on finding the theoretical background of the origin of those attributes in tribal society, their characteristics features and illustrated all these with examples of Indian tribes so that it can be understood easily. Thus, the book provides the basic knowledge about the different social aspects with reference to primitive society.⁶⁵

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are—

1. To assess the social condition of the tribal population of the study area on the basis of some selected parameters like religion, language, education, housing condition, food habits etc.
2. To evaluate the economic condition of the tribal population of the study area by analyzing their occupational structure, income, expenditure, incidence of indebtedness, savings etc.

3. To assess the health condition of tribal population by considering their disease pattern, type of treatment preferred, reproductive and child health care etc.
4. To find out the disparity in the socio-economic condition of the tribal communities of the study area.
5. To evaluate the overall socio-economic condition of the tribal population of the study area to understand their level of development.
6. To make some recommendations for the socio-economic development of the tribal population of this district.

1.8 Hypothesis

1. The housing condition of the tribal population of the study area is very poor.
2. The tribal people of the study area are backward in educational achievements.
3. The economic condition of the tribal population indicates their poor status though the work participation rate is more among them.
4. The occurrences of illness are more among the tribal population of the study area.
5. There is little variation in the socio-economic condition of the tribal communities of the study area.
6. Achievement of tribal development is poor in the study area as they are still backward.
7. Number of beneficiaries of different government facilities and schemes is less among the tribal population of the study area.

1.9 Sampling Design

The total population of Dakshin Dinajpur district is 1676276 persons of which 16.43% belongs to the Scheduled Tribe population. In this district, 38 different tribal groups have been identified in the Census 2011.⁶⁶ The present research work aims to study the overall socio-economic condition of tribal people as well as to find out the inter-tribal disparity among the seven pre-selected tribal communities i.e. Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bedia, Mahali, Mal Pahariya and Lohara which together comprise around 94% of the total tribal population of this district (Appendix-1). To collect the sample for this study, the multistage stratified random sampling technique has been applied. The sample has been selected from both the rural and urban areas of Dakshin Dinajpur. The selection of sample has been done in three stages i.e. selection of blocks and urban centers, selection of mouzas and wards and

selection of households. Dakshin Dinajpur is comprised of eight community development blocks, two municipalities and five census towns. For this study, Balurghat, Tapan and Bansihari blocks have been selected as sample blocks and Gangarampur (M) and Dakra (CT) have been selected as sample urban centers for having highest percentage share of tribal population to total population of that administrative unit. From the selected blocks and urban centers, mouzas and wards (Figure 1.2) have been selected using the Simple Random Sampling Without Replacement (SRSWOR) method (Appendix-2). Here, Tippett's series⁶⁷ has been used to select the sample mouzas and wards. Following this method, 7.4% mouzas and 15.8% wards have been selected from sample units using random sampling numbers. Finally, in the selected mouzas and wards, house-to-house visit was carried out to find the Scheduled Tribe households. For the present research work, total 987 rural and 68 urban households have been surveyed.

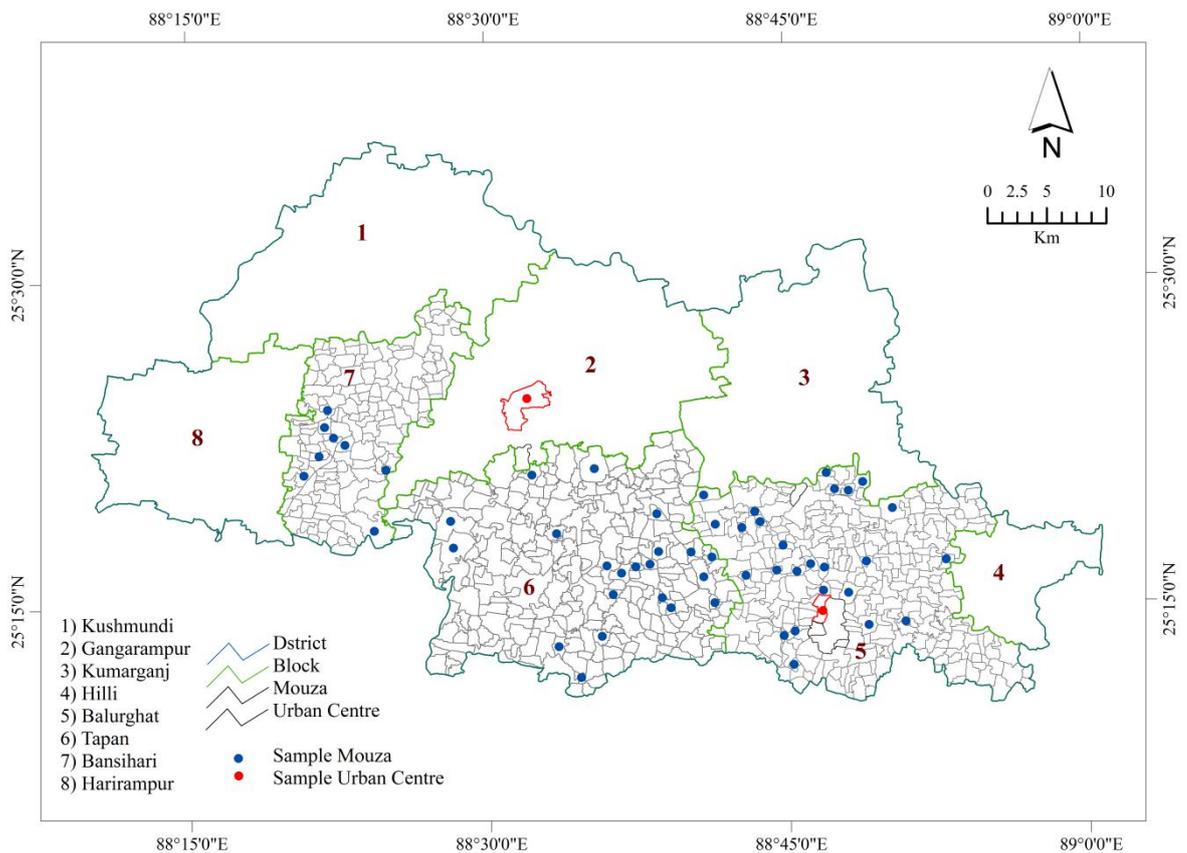


Figure 1.2 Location of the Sample Mouzas and Urban Centres

1.10 Data

As this study aims to examine the socio-economic condition of tribal population, it requires both the primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

The necessary primary data has been collected from the field of study i.e. from the sample mouzas and wards already selected through Simple Random Sampling Without Replacement (SRSWOR) method with the help of a pre-tested schedule (Appendix-4) specially designed for this purpose.

Secondary Data

The required secondary data has been collected from Census of India Report published by Registrar & Census Commissioner, District Statistical Handbook (2014) published by Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Report of the High Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India published by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Report of Health on March, 2011-12 published by Directorate of Health Services, State Bureau of Health Intelligence, National Health Profile 2018 published by Directorate General of Health Services, Central Bureau of Health Intelligence, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Block Development Office, etc. and other related books, articles, reports, news paper and related websites.

1.11 Methodology

To assess the socio-economic condition of the tribal population of Dakshin Dinajpur, the collected data has been first verified, coded and then tabulated. Finally, with the help of statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version-22), the collected data has been analysed using some suitable statistical techniques to get the real picture of the study area. In this research work following methods have been applied—

Chi-Square

The Chi-Square is used to find out whether the two variables are significantly independent of each other or not. In other word, any significant difference among the two or more categorical variables is explored through the use of this method.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

This method is used to compare more than two populations. It helps to determine whether there is significant difference among means of more than two independent variables. This method uses the variance to compare the means at one time.

Sopher's Disparity Index (Modified by Kundu and Rao)

To measure the disparity between two groups of population, the Sopher's Disparity Index (modified by Kundu and Rao)⁶⁸ is used. Here, the higher index value refers to higher disparity and vice-versa. This index can be calculated with the help of the following formula:

$$\text{Disparity Index} = \log \frac{X_2}{X_1} + \log \left(\frac{200 - X_1}{200 - X_2} \right)$$

where, X₂ stands for percentage of one group (e.g. male literacy rate), X₁ stands for percentage of other group (e.g. female literacy rate) and X₂ >= X₁.

Language Vitality Index

In order to study the pattern of retention of ancestral language among the tribal people, the Language Vitality Index⁶⁹ is prepared. It refers to the number of ancestral language speakers of a tribal community per 100 population of that particular tribal community. Higher the index value, higher is the retention of ancestral language among that particular community and vice-versa.

$$\text{Language Vitality Index} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Tribal Language Speaker}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100$$

Dependency Ratio

It is the ratio of the dependent population (0-14 years and 60 years & above) to the working population of a particular community. It is used to find out the pressure of dependent population on working population. The higher value of dependency ratio indicates higher pressure of dependent population on working population and vice-versa.

$$\text{Dependency Ratio} = \frac{\text{Number of people aged 0 - 14 yrs} + \text{Number of people aged 60 yrs \& above}}{\text{Number of people aged 15 - 59 yrs}}$$

Index of Aging

The Index of Aging is used to show the relationship between the young and old age group population of a community. It refers to the number of elderly population (60 years & above) per 100 young (0-14 years) population. Higher the Aging Index value, less is the juvenile pressure than the senile population and vice-versa.

$$\text{Index of Aging} = \frac{\text{Number of people aged 60 yrs \& above population}}{\text{Number of people aged 0 – 14}} \times 100$$

Development Index (DI)

To assess the level of overall development of the tribal people of Dakshin Dinajpur, the Development Index (DI) is used. It is a Composite Index which is constructed considering 3 major aspects i.e. social, economic and health condition of the tribal people. The Development Index (DI) is actually the combination of 3 separate indices i.e. Social Index (SI), Economic Index (EI) and Health Index (HI), which is developed by giving equal weightage to the three indices. The detailed methodology of construction of the Development Index is presented in chapter-VII.

Maps and Diagrams

After the analysis of the data, necessary maps and diagrams have also been incorporated to get a more clear view of the actual situation. The relevant maps and diagrams have been drawn using the mapping software (ARCGIS, version 9.3) and MS Excel (2007).

1.12 Framework of Thesis

For the convenience of the discussion, the present research work is divided into nine chapters.

Chapter-I: In this chapter, at first, a brief introduction is given about the tribes. The definition of tribe, their characteristics and classification are discussed, which provides a basic idea about the tribal people of India. Then, the relevance of the present study, its objectives, hypothesis, data source, methodology and location of the study area are discussed. Besides, a brief review about related literature is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter-II: This chapter presents a brief discussion about the geographical profile of the district of Dakshin Dinajpur. It focuses on both physical and demographic profile of the

district. The physical profile has significant influence in determining the livelihood of tribal people while demographic profile helps to compare the demographic characteristics of the tribal people of this district with its overall demographic characteristics.

Chapter-III: To study the socio-economic condition of the tribal people of Dakshin Dinajpur, seven tribal communities are selected. They are- Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bedia, Mahali, Mal Pahariya and Lohara. This chapter presents a brief account of these seven tribal groups.

Chapter-IV: In this chapter, the social condition of the tribal people is studied. Hence, this chapter focuses on their language, religion, concept about 'homeland', marriage, food habits, clothing, housing condition and educational attainment which rightly evaluate the social condition of the tribes of this district.

Chapter-V: This chapter contains a discussion about the economic condition of the tribes of this district. Their traditional occupation as well as present occupational distribution is represented here. The study lays special focus on agriculture and labourer as these are two main occupations in which majority of workforce engage. Besides, their income, expenditure, saving and indebtedness are also given due attention in the discussion of economic condition.

Chapter-VI: The sixth chapter discusses about the health condition of the tribal people. The study focuses on occurrences of different illness among the tribes as well as their attitude towards modern health care system. The maternal and child health care is also discussed here, without which the discussion about the health condition of tribal people remain incomplete.

Chapter-VII: This chapter attempts to assess the level of overall development of the tribal people considering their social, economic and health condition. Hence, a Development Index is prepared on the basis of some selected variables, relevant to determine the level of development of tribes of this district.

Chapter-VIII: This chapter summarizes the major problems regarding the social, economic and health condition of the tribal people of this district. Further, the study makes some suggestions for the improvement of the socio-economic condition of the tribes of this district.

Chapter-IX: This chapter concludes the study with a brief summary of the present research work as well as testing the hypothesis of the study.

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