

## Research Setting — The Gardens and The Labourers

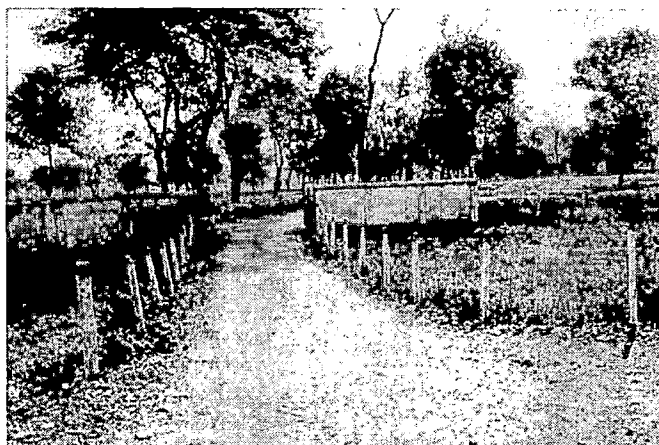
In this chapter discussion is made on the research setting i.e. the two tea gardens namely Matigara Tea Estate and Soongachi Tea Estate, studied in Terai and Doars respectively the plantation system and its people. The two gardens represent a typical plantation of the Terai and Doars region of North Bengal. The Matigara Tea Estate of Terai being the smaller one studied thoroughly while in the Soongachi Tea Estate of Doars, the bigger one, observation is made mainly from its tribal sudded parts. Under the following paragraphs the two gardens, their plantation system and their labourers are discussed one by one. Discussion is made on the primary data collected through census and interview schedules.

### Garden No. 1

#### Matigara Tea Estate

Matigara Tea Estate of Terai Darjeeing is one of the plantation studied. This tea estate was established in 1932 in Darjeeling district at Matigara block by the side of No. 31 National Highway on which buses ply frequently. The nearest town ships are Siliguri and Bagdogra each at about 8 kms away in the east and west respectively. Being at the fringe of the urban centres adibasi labourers of the plantation have been considerably influenced by the urban way of life.

The owner of the plantation is Hurdeo Das Co. (P) Ltd. It covers an area of 124.46 hectares under tea. Factory is on 0.35 hectare while quarters and roads cover 9.53 hectares and 5.08 hectares respectively. The estate



*Matigara Tea Estate*

produces CTC type of tea. The yearly production is at about 140,000 kgs while monthly production is roughly 12439 kgs. The estate is in two blocks

namely Eastern and Western Block respectively. In between these two blocks river Balason passes. The factory and the main office health centre, quarters of Deputy Manager and Clerks are at the Eastern Block with four labour lines while the other four lines and the Manager's quarter are at the Western Block.

At the time of investigation, in 1998 March-April, there are 228 permanent labourers (official record 214) of which 47.8 percent are male and 52.2 percent are female. Beside there are 83 male and 84 female temporary labourers. There are 50 child and adult temporary labourers, both male and female, getting daily wage. Only the permanent labourers are provided with quarter (officially the number is 163) most of which are pacca and twin quarters. 40 percent of the pacca quarters have electricity in eight residential lines. 20 (officially 27) wells are distributed in these lines for providing drinking water, often bathrooms are attached to it. The garden has no primary school nor any hospital but only a health centre. There is a recreational centre established in 1997 with some indoor games like ludo, carram etc. The total number of households in the plantation is 204 of which 3 are of the three managers and eight are of the clerks. Of the rest 193 households are occupied by the labourers and substaffs of different adibasi and Nepali and Bihari caste groups. 93.78 percent of the total labour household are of Adibasi group while the rest 6.27 percent comprise the nontribals. The CITU trade union has prime hold in the garden.

## **Population**

As the study is on the plantation labour society and their children analysis of population structure is made of the labourers and the substaff categories, who are in most of the cases promoted from the labourers. The population of the three managerial households and the clerical staffs are not analysed here.

The labour population of the plantation consists of multi ethnic communities (Table 5.1A). The labourers belong to the various adibasi communities of Bihar, Madhyapradesh and Orissa alongwith of few Nepali and Bihar Caste groups. Of the total labourer and sub staff population there is one Rajbansi women (casual labourer) from Alipurduar married to a Naik man. Among the total labourers (950), 92.94 percent (883 persons) are from different adibasi groups while 7.05 percent (67 person) are from the non tribals. Of the tribal households of 181 there are 19(10.49percent) households

**TABLE 5.1A. : Age and Sexwise Distribution of Adibasi and Non Adibasi (Labour and Sub-staff) Population : Matigara Tea Estate**

Sl. No	Ethnic Groups	House hold No.	0-6		7-14		15-18		19-50		Above 50 Yrs		Total	Percentage
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
<b>A. Adibasi</b>														
1.	Oraon	19	9	12	9	5	3	4	29	29	7	1	108	12.23
2.	Munda	37	16	19	17	16	6	6	36	41	4	5	166	18.79
3.	Kheria	5	3	2	2	1	-	-	4	6	2	2	22	2.49
4.	Kisan	3	1	1	1	2	-	-	3	3	2	-	13	1.47
5.	Baraik	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	4	-	-	4	9.45
6.	Malpahari	3	1	4	2	-	1	-	4	5	1	-	18	2.49
7.	Mohali	26	15	10	18	16	10	2	29	24	4	3	131	14.83
8.	Bhokta	6	-	1	6	8	3	-	6	11	1	-	37	4.19
9.	Korwar	4	-	-	2	1	2	3	6	4	1	-	19	2.15
10.	Lohar	30	7	14	17	10	5	8	33	37	4	3	138	15.62
11.	Turi	3	-	2	1	2	-	-	2	3	2	1	13	1.47
12.	Roidas	2	-	1	2	1	-	-	3	3	-	-	10	1.13
13.	Naik	42	26	23	17	23	8	8	45	47	6	1	204	23.10
14.	Total	181	78	89	96	85	38	31	200	214	35	16	883	100.00
Percentage			8.83	10.07	10.87	9.73	4.30	3.51	22.65	24.23	3.97	7.80	100	
<b>B. Caste Group</b>														
1.	Napali	6	1	3	5	3	3	-	7	9	1	1	33	49.25
2.	Bihari	6	1	-	5	5	3	1	9	5	3	1	33	49.25
3.	Bengali	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1.49
Total		12	2	3	10	8	6	1	16	15	4	2	67	(100)
Percentage			2.98	4.47	14.92	11.94	8.95	1.49	23.88	23.00	5.96	2.98	(100)	
<b>Adibasi &amp; Caste Group</b>														
A.		181	78	89	96	86	38	31	200	214	35	16	883	92.94
B.		12	2	3	10	8	6	1	16	15	4	2	67	7.04
Total		193	80	92	106	94	44	32	216	229	39	18	950	(100)
Percentage			8.42	9.68	11.15	9.89	4.63	3.36	22.73	24.10	4.10	1.89	(100)	

Source : Field Observation.

of Oraon, 37 (20.44 percent) of Munda, 5 (2.75 percent) of Kheria, 3 (1.65 percent) of Kisan, 1 (0.55 percent) of Baraik, 3 (1.65 percent) of Malphari, 26 (14.36 percent) of Mohali, 6 (3.37 percent) of Bhokta, 4 (2.20 percent) of Korwar, 30 (16.50 percent) of Lohar, 3 (1.65 percent) of Turi, 2 (1.10 percent) of Roidas, and 42 (23.44 percent) of Naik.

Among the non adibasi households of 12 there are 6 (50 percent) each households are of Nepali and Bihari caste groups. The Biharis are mainly substaffs and the cooks of managerial quarters while labourers are there also from Napali caste group.

Of the multi ethnic population of this tea estate the numerically dominant tribal groups are Naik, Munda, Lohar, Mohali and Oraon comprising 23.10 percent (204), 18.79 percent (166), 15.62 percent (138) 14.83 percent (131) and 12.23 percent (108) of the total adibasi population respectively. The population of the various other tribal and non tribal groups are comparatively low of which Bhokta comprises 4.19 percent, Kheria 2.49 percent Korwar 2.15 percent, Malpahari 2.03 percent, Turi and Kisan 1.47 percent each, Roidas 1.13 percent and Baraik 0.45 percent. Of the non tribal population Bihari and Nepali caste groups comprise 49.25 percent each with one Rajbansi woman.

### **Housing, Sanitation and Drinking Water Facilities**

The plantation provides eight residential areas of the labourers known as 'labour lines' where housing facilities are available for the labour families. In the eight labour lines, known as 7 no line, Gudamline, Station line, Pakka line, 9no. line, 10 no. line, 11 no. line and 12 no. line, labour quarters are scattered. There are 163 labour quarters provided to most of the permanent labourers while some of them and the casual labourers also live in self build thatch roofed houses in the labour lines. Almost all the quarters have about one katha land for kitchen garden. The concentration of population



*Labour line, Matigara Tea Estate*

in the labour lines are not equal. Highest concentration is in the 9 no. line in the Western Block where 54 tribal households are located alongwith the Pakka line and Station line of Eastern Block where concentration of household is 42 and 30 respectively. The 12 no. line (of west) and Gudam line (of east) have also fairly high population 24 and 20 households respectively followed by 10 no. line with 15 households. The number of household in 10 no. line is 5 while in 7 no. line only 2 families reside. (T-5.2).

The brick build Deputy Manager's Bungalow and the factory is situated at the centre of the Eastern block behind which there are the quarters of the clerks (Babus) at the end of Gudamline. The labour quarters start in the Gudamline are segregated by a that thatchwall from the Babu quarters. Another Banglow is situated at the extreme northern part of Western Block just beside the national highway housed by the Manager and the Assistant Manager. Behind this there is the recreation club of the labourers established in 1997 housed in a one storied pacca building.

**Table 5.2** Distribution of Adbasi and Non Adibasi (Labour and Substaff) Residence in the different Lines : Matigara Tea Estate.

Sl.	Ethnic Group	I 9no. line	II 10no. line	III 11no. line	IV 12no. line	V 7no. line	VI Gudam line	VII Stn. line	VIII Pacca line	Total
1.	Oraon	1	1	-	5	1	2	2	7	19
2.	Munda	12	-	-	3	-	4	2	16	37
3.	Kheria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
4.	Baraik	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
5.	Mohali	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	1
6.	Malpahari	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
7.	Mohali	15	1	-	8	-	-	-	2	26
8.	Bhokta	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	4
9.	Korwar	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	4
10.	Lohar	-	-	-	1	-	1	21	7	30
11.	Turi	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
12.	Roidas	-	11	2	-	1	3	3	-	42
13.	Naik	22	11	2	-	1	3	3	1	42
14.	Nepali	-	1	1	-	-	3	1	-	6
15.	Bihari	-	-	-	4	-	2	-	-	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>193</b>
	Percentage	27.97	8.29	2.59	12.43	1.03	10.63	15.54	21.76	(100.00)

**Source :** Field Observation.

Just like the other industrial communities the population of the plantation is heterogeneous who live interspersed in the labour lines. No residential

segregation is seen according to tribal and caste communities in the population. Only the Bihari caste groups are concentrated in a part of the 12 no. line (4qrs) behind Manager's Banglow and 2 in Gudam line behind the factory near Babu quarters. No. such concentration is seen among the Nepalties. Such multi ethnic residential population is non traditional. Naiks are mainly concentrated in no. 9 and 10 lines; Oraons are in no.12 line and Pacca line, Mundas are in no.9 and Pacca line, Mohalis are in 9 and 12 no. line Lohars are in Station line and Pacca line. The other ethnic groups are scattered all along the eight lines while 5 Kheria households are seen in Pacca line only.

The garden authority fails to provide proper sanitation facility for all the labourers. There are 20 wells scattered along the eight lines of which 5 are in the highly populated no.9 line three each in Pacca line Gudam line and Station line, 2 each in no.12 and no. 11 line and 1 each in no.10 and no.7 line. These are the sources of drinking water as well as the sources of water for bathing and washing cloths. On the off day of the week, which is Tuesday here, people often go to the near by river Balason for washing cloth. Some public urinals and latrines are also seen in some lines while it is informed that the authority has started to build latrine with the labour quarters.

### **Household**

In plantation it is a bit difficult to identify the types of the families. Here it is seen that some individuals who live in a family in certain cases are unrelated members. Without going into the detail complexities here only the distribution of the labour household in two predominant family types viz. Nuclear and Joint, is discussed. The Nuclear families comprise parents and unmarried children. Joint families include married couples, unmarried and married children alongwith their relatives. The average size of the labour household is of 5 members and the size of the families varies from 1 to 10 members. On and average there are 4.80 members as per family; in case of tribal family it is 4.87 while in case of caste group it rises up to 5.58.

In the plantation there are 193 labour households of which 62.69 percent are nuclear type 10.63 percent are joint type and the rest are unclassified. Of the total caste group household 62.69 percent are nuclear type. Of the total unclassified families two tribal families are single and most of the others are the residue of joint family. (T.5.3A).

It is revealed from the table that majority of the households are of nuclear type, which is very common in any industrial society. Plantation system also influences the labourers to live in nuclear families because the houses that are provided to them are suitable for nuclear family. Besides, there are other facilities like the family ration of food, firewood, adoption of casual labourers etc. encourage the nuclearisation of labour family in plantation.

**Table 5.3A:** Household Distribution among the Adibasi and Non-Adibasi (Labour and Substaff) Population : Matigara Tea Estate.

Sl	Ethnic Group	Total no.of household	Percentage	Types of households		
				Nuclear	Joint	Unclassified
<b>A. Adibasi</b>						
1.	Oraon	19	10.49	10	5	4
2.	Munda	37	20.44	25	3	9
3.	Kheria	5	2.76	2	-	3
4.	Kisan	3	1.65	2	-	1
5.	Baraik	1	0.55	1	-	-
6.	Malpahari	3	1.65	1	1	1
7.	Mohali	26	14.36	18	1	7
8.	Bhokta	6	3.36	5	1	-
9.	Korwar	4	2.20	3	-	1
10.	Lohar	30	16.57	18	2	10
11.	Turi	3	6.65	2	-	1
12.	Roidas	2	1.10	1	1	-
13.	Naik	42	23.20	28	4	10
<b>A.</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>47</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>		<b>100.00</b>	<b>68.50</b>	<b>9.95</b>	<b>21.55</b>
<b>B. Caste Group</b>						
1.	Nepali	6	50.00	2	1	3
2.	Bihari	6	50.00	3	1	2
<b>B.</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>		<b>(100.00)</b>	<b>41.66</b>	<b>16.66</b>	<b>41.66</b>
<b>Adibasi &amp; Caste Group</b>						
	<b>A.</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>92.78</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>47</b>
	<b>B.</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6.21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>52</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>		<b>(100.00)</b>	<b>62.69</b>	<b>10.36</b>	<b>26.94</b>

**Source :** Field Observation.

### Mother Tongue

In the multi ethnic society of plantation different tribal and non tribal ethnic groups work together and live side by side within the garden in labour lines. During their daily course of day to day activities they have to interact. Here most of members of the different tribal groups are the members of the

second or third generation of the migrated tribals who are totally cut out of their natal place as well as their native culture. Even they can not speak in their mother tongue. Here they speak in a common language of tribal dialect mixed with broken Hindi, locally termed as 'Sandri'. Not a single Oraon or Munda here can speak in their original mother tongue 'Kurkh' or 'Mundari'. Only the elderly persons have ever heard the name of their respective mother tongue. Nepali and Bihar caste people speak in Napali and Hindi respectively though 'Sandri' is the common language.

**Table 5.4A : Mother Tongue of the Ethnic Groups (Labour and Substaff): Matigara Tea Estate.**

Sl.	Ethnic Group	Mother tongue				Total
		Sandri	Nepali	Hindi	Bengali	
1.	Adibasi	883	-	-	-	883
2.	Nepali	-	33	-	-	33
3.	Bihari	-	-	33	-	33
4.	Bengali	-	-	-	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>950</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>92.94</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>(100.00)</b>

Source : Field Observation.

## Migration

Tea plantation is always associated with a resident labourforce. In the initial stage due to acute labour crisis labourers were imported from the adibasi people of the neighbouring states. But later on the industry got strong hold in this region, new labourers were adopted to the garden from among the family members of the immigrant labourers settled in and around the plantation. Most of the labourers of this tea estate are the descendents of those previously settled labourers.

In Matigara tea estate 86.63 percent of the adibasi are Matigara born, 46.33 percent of which are child and adolescent group. 13.36 percent are migrated population of which 1.57 percent came from other state, about 6 percent each from the other tea gardens and other bastee. Of the migrated tribal population 77.96 percent are female who have migrated due to marriage. Most of the migrated male population are the 'Ghardamad' who latterly got job in the garden. The large portion of the migrated population came from the other states are elderly people who came here long past in search of work from Bihar, Madhya pradesh and Nepal.

Of the caste people 65 percent<sup>are</sup> Matigara born 81.81 percent Nepalis are Matigara born. The rest 18.19 percent is the only immigrants. Of the Biharis 45.45 percent are adolescent and children who are Matigara born except the two male all nine adult population came out of the state i.e. from Bihar. (T.5.5).

**Table 5.5.:** Migration among the Adibasi and Non Adibasi (Labour and Sub staff) Population : Matigara Tea Estate.

Sl. Ethnic	Matigara Tea Estate Born				Migrated Population				Other Basti		Migrated	
	M	F	C/A	Total	Other State		Other TG		M	F	Total Popu.	Total Popu.
1.Oraon	35	14	42	91	-	5	-	6	1	10	17	108
2. Munda	34	30	80	144	-	-	1	9	5	2	22	166
3. Kheria	6	4	8	18	-	-	-	2	-	2	4	166
4. Kisan	2	3	5	10	2	-	-	-	1	-	3	13
5. Baraik	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	4
6.Malbahari	4	5	8	11	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	18
7. Mohali	29	14	71	114	2	2	-	6	2	5	17	131
8. Bhokta	8	8	18	34	-	-	-	2	-	1	3	31
9. Korwar	7	3	8	18	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	19
10.Lohar	34	27	61	122	-	-	2	7	1	6	16	138
11.Turi	2	2	5	9	-	-	1	2	1	-	4	13
12. Rohidas	3	2	4	9	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	10
13. Naik	45	26	105	176	1	2	1	10	4	10	28	204
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>883</b>
Percent	23.66	15.62	47.33	86.63	0.56	1.01	0.59	5.32	2.03	4.07	13.36	100
<b>B. Caste Group</b>												
1. Nepali	6	6	15	27	1	2	-	-	1	2	6	33
2. Bihari	2	-	15	17	10	6	-	-	-	-	16	33
3.Bengal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.94</b>	<b>9.95</b>	<b>44.77</b>	<b>65.67</b>	<b>16.41</b>	<b>11.94</b>	-	-	<b>1.49</b>	<b>4.47</b>	<b>34.32</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Adibasi &amp; Caste Group</b>												
A.	209	138	418	965	5	9	5	47	16	36	118	883
B.	8	6	30	44	11	8	-	-	1	3	23	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>950</b>
Percentage	22.84	15.15	47.15	85.15	1.77	1.78	0.52	4.94	1.78	4.10	14.2	100.00

Source : Field Observation.

**TABLE 5.6A : Marrital Status of the Adibasi and Non-Adibasi (Labour and Sub-staff) Population : Matigara Tea Esatate**

Sl.	Ethnic Groups	A d u l t P o p u l a t i o n										Total population
		Married		Widow/ Widower		Divorced seperated		Adult un-married		Total Adult population	Child /Adolecent unmarried population	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
1.	Oraon	28	28	4	2	-	-	4	-	66	42	108
2.	Munda	34	35	4	8	-	-	2	3	86	80	1660
3.	Kheria	4	4	28	4	-	-	-	-	14	8	22
4.	Kisan	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	8	5	13
5.	Baraik	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	4
6.	Malpahari	4	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	10	8	18
7.	MOhali	27	25	4	2	-	-	2	-	60	71	131
8.	Bhokta	7	8	1	1	-	-	-	2	19	18	37
9.	Korwar	4	4	-	-	-	-	3	-	11	8	5
10.	Lohar	32	32	5	3	-	-	-	5	77	61	138
11.	Turi	3	3	1	-	-	-	-	1	8	5	13
12.	Rohidas	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	4	10
13.	Naik	41	43	4	2	1	1	5	2	99	105	204
A.	<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>889</b>
	Percentage	21.51	21.52	3.17	2.49	0.11	0.22	1.81	1.80	52.66	47.33	100.00
B.	<b>Caste Group</b>											
1.	Nepali	5	5	-	2	-	-	2	3	18	15	33
2.	Bihari	6	6	2	-	-	-	4	-	18	15	33
3.	Bengali	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
B.	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>67</b>
	Percentage	17.90	17.90	2.90	-	-	-	8.95	3.00	55.22	44.77	100.00
	<b>Adibasi &amp; Caste Group</b>											
A		190	193	28	22	1	2	16	13	465	418	883
B		12	12	2	2	-	-	6	3	37	30	67
	<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>950</b>
	Percentage	21.26	21.68	3.15	2.51	0.10	0.20	2.00	1.68	52.84	47.15	100.00

Source : Field Observation.

## Marriage

Marriage has a vital role in our life as well as in the life of ignorant poor tribal people of plantation. In this garden out of the tribal adult population of 465, 384 persons are married, 29 are unmarried, 49 persons are widow and widower and two women and one man are separated the rest 418 persons are adolescents and children who are unmarried. Of the caste group 24 adult persons out of 37 adult are married, 2 each are widow and widower 9 person are unmarried. The rest 30 persons are of child and adolescent group are unmarried. (T. 5.6A).

Marriage to be strictly monogamous though two cases of polygamy is observed among the two Naik families where the wives live together with their husbands in the same family openly. There may be some secret case of polygamy but except these two case there is no family where the 'Satins' live together. There may be the first wife or husband had gone away alone or with others to other place.

Inter tribal marriage in this plantation society is common. Being close to the urban centre it is increasing in these days. Here there are 16 cases of inter tribal marriage and three cases of marriage between the tribals and the Nepali caste group and Rajbansi woman. Biharis are a bit conservative in this respect. (T. 5.6B).

Most of the senior people opines that negotiation marriage is preferable after the age of 18 years though they admit that the younger people very often fled away at about the age of 15-16 years ignoring the ethnic identity of their beloved. Bride price and the system of Ghar Damad are prevalent in this garden.

**Table 5.6B** : List of Inter Tribal and Intra Tribal Marriage occurred (Among Labour and Substaff) : Matigra Tea Estate.

	M	F	M	F	M	F
1.	Naik	Oraon	7. Mohali	Oraon	13. Munda	Bhokta
2.	Naik	Munda	8. Lohar	Munda	14. Munda	Kheria
3.	Naik	Mohali	9. Lohar	Oraon	15. Naik	Lohar
4.	Kisan	Naik	10. Lohar	Naik	16. Mohali	Naik
5.	Munda	Naik	11. Lohar	Mohali	17. Nepali	Naik
6.	Mohali	Naik	12. Oraon	Lohar	18. Nepali	Malpahari
					19. Naik	Rajbansi

Source : Field Observation.

## **Social Control**

In this garden problem of law and order and social control among the labourers is managed by Adibasi Panchayet headed by the selected elders of different adibasi groups. The matters settled by this institution are witchcraft, sorcery, inter ethnic marriage and interethnic dispute, adultery, theft etc. The local trade union leaders also play a main role in the functioning of adibasi panchayet.

## **Literacy**

The picture of education rather literacy is very miserable in this garden. 92.94 percent of the plantation labourers are of adibasi origin. Traditionally they have no culture of education. Besides both the adivasi and caste group labourers are too poor to afford the education for their child. The garden has no school, even the primary one. The poor labourers prefer their children to stay at home to look after their small kids and the household; and as soon as they grown up they also get into the plantation work as child labour to help their parents to earn bread.

Here in the plantation generally three generation of labourers are seen. The first generation at the age group of above 50 years is totally illiterate. Of the age group 19-50 years the rate of literacy is very low among the male and negligible among the female (specially among the adibasis). Education is a fancy of the third generation which includes the child and adolescent population of the garden.

Of the total labour population of the garden only 24.84 percent are literate, a large portion of which are the adolescent and the child population 75.15 percent are illiterate. Of the total adibasi population of 883 persons 21.29 percent i.e. 188 persons are literate and 78.70 percent i.e. 695 persons are illiterate. Of the illiterate persons 167 children are below the age group of 6. Of the literate persons 76.42 percent are adolescent<sup>and</sup> children i.e. 145 persons out of 188 persons of this 96 and 22 persons are at primary and secondary levels respectively. All of them continuing their education. The rest 27 includes only literates and drop outs. Of the illiterates a large portion is occupied by the women. Of the total adivasi women population (230) 97.82 percent (225) are illiterate. 83.82 percent of the total adivasi male population are illiterate. Of the caste population 71.64 percent are literate and 28.35 percent are illiterate.

**Table 5.7A:** Literacy among the Adibasi and Non Adibasi (Labour and Substaff) Population : Matigara Tea Estate.

Sl. Ethnic Group	Illiterate population						Literate population					
	Total	M	F	Adl/	Total	Percentage	M	F	Adl/Child	Total	Percentage	
<b>A. Adibasi</b>												
1. Oraon	106	30	30	30	90	12.94	6	-	12	18	9.57	
2. Munda	166	35	46	55	136	19.56	5	-	25	30	15.95	
3. Kheria	22	5	8	8	21	3.02	1	-	-	1	0.53	
4. Kisan	13	4	3	4	11	1.02	1	-	1	2	1.06	
5. Baraik	4	-	1	1	2	0.28	-	-	2	2	1.06	
6. Malpahari	18	5	5	8	18	0.58	-	-	-	-	-	
7. Mohali	131	29	27	43	99	14.24	4	-	28	32	17.02	
8. Bhokta	37	7	9	7	23	3.30	1	2	11	14	7.44	
9. Korwar	19	4	4	4	12	1.72	3	-	4	7	3.72	
10. Lohar	138	30	39	29	98	14.10	7	1	32	40	21.27	
11. Turi	13	4	4	5	13	1.87	-	-	-	-	-	
12. Rohidas	10	3	3	4	10	1.43	-	-	-	-	-	
13. Naik	204	41	46	75	62	23.30	10	2	30	42	22.34	
<b>A.Total</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>(100.00)</b>	
Percentage	100	22.31	25.48	30.91	78.70		4.30	0.56	16.42	21.29		
<b>B. CastGr.</b>												
1. Nepali	33	2	5	3	10	58.82	6	5	12	23	46.00	
2. Bihari	33	2	3	3	8	35.29	10	3	12	25	54.00	
3. Bengali	1	0	1	-	1	5.88	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>B.Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.00</b>	
Percentage	100.00	5.97	13.43	8.95	28.35		23.88	11.00	35.82	71.64		
<b>Adibasi &amp; Cast Group</b>												
A.	883	197	225	273	695	97.61	38	5	145	188	78.99	
B.	67	4	9	6	19	2.38	16	3	24	48	21.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100.00</b>	
Percentage	100.00	21.15	24.63	28.36	15.15		5.68	1.36	17.78	24.84		

Source : Field Observation.

### Economic Participation

The adibasis work in the garden only as labourers and often as substaffs. In the tea garden plantation work is the main source of income of the labourers. Here there are 228 permanent labourers of which 215 are adibasi. Of the adibasi labourers 53.48 percent are women. Among the caste groups Bihari women are mostly house wife while 50 percent of the Nepali women work in plantation. Most of the labourers get salary in weekly basis (174 rupees per week); the monthly rated labourers (1000 rupees per month) are mostly substaffs, cook and maid of managerial cottage. Here there are 81 male and 86 female casual labourers who work in plantation during the peak seasons. During slack season they work as daily rated labour in road repairing works or construction works and also as sand picker and stone

**TABLE 5.8 : Occupation of the Different Ethnic Groups : Matigara Tea Estate.**

Sl. Ethnic Groups	Total popu.	Permanent lab & Sub-staff				Total permanent	Casual Lab & Sub-staff				Retired		Job outside			Jobless		
		Monthly	F	Weekly	F		Weekly	F	Ado/Child	Daily	M	F	M	F	Ado/Child	M	F	Ado/Child
<b>A. Adibasi</b>																		
1. Oraon	108	2	-	15	10	27	10	15	-	6	8	1	1	1	-	-	3	86
2. Munda	166	-	-	22	24	46	12	18	1	7	4	-	2	1	-	-	-	71
3. Kheria	22	-	-	2	5	7	-	1	-	-	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	8
4. Kisan	13	-	-	1	2	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	5
5. Baraik	4	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
6. Molpahari	18	-	-	2	2	4	3	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	8
7. Mohali	131	1	1	15	14	31	11	10	2	8	3	2	3	-	-	-	-	16
8. Bhokta	37	2	-	2	2	6	1	7	1	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	2	16
9. Korwar	19	-	-	4	4	8	1	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
10. Lohar	138	3	-	10	22	35	14	12	1	5	5	3	5	-	-	2	-	55
11. Turi	13	-	-	-	4	4	2	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
12. Roidas	10	-	-	2	2	4	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
13. Naik	204	4	1	13	21	39	23	16	6	6	6	4	5	3	-	-	3	93
<b>A. Total</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>367</b>
Percentage	100.00	1.35	0.11	0.96	12.79	24.34	8.94	9.39	1.21	4.30	4.07	1.81	2.26	0.67	0.11	0.22	1.13	41.56
<b>B. Caste Group</b>																		
1. Nepali	33	1	-	3	4	8	1	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	3	15
2. Bihari	33	4	-	1	-	5	1	-	-	1	2	-	4	-	-	-	6	14
3. Bengali	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>B. Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>
Percentage	100.00	7.46	-	5.97	5.97	19.40	2.98	4.47	-	1.49	4.47	1.49	7.46	-	-	1.49	13.43	43.28
<b>Adibasi &amp; Caste Group</b>																		
A.	883	12	2	88	113	215	79	83	11	38	36	16	20	6	2	-	10	367
B.	67	5	-	4	4	13	2	3	-	1	3	1	5	-	-	1	9	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>397</b>
Percentage	100.00	1.78	0.21	9.68	12.31	24.00	8.52	9.05	1.15	4.10	4.10	1.78	2.63	0.63	2.1	0.10	2.00	41.93

Source : Field Observation.

breaker at river Balason. Some work as rickshaw puller. All most all the households have kitchen garden attached to their hut. They also raise cattle, pigs, hens which they sell at the time of their dire need. Here there are two small stationary shops within the garden run by two Naiks who also are casual labourers and one shop beside the road run by a Nepali lad which is his full time job. One Oraon woman works as fulltime maid in local house. Here we get child and adolescent labourers mostly among the tribals (50 out of 94) most of whom (97.8 percent) are paid on 15 rupees daily basis. (T.5.8).

The garden has a well organised four tyer bureaucratic structure at the top of which there are the managerial staffs i.e. the Sahibs, at the second tyre the clerk i.e. the Babus and at the third and fourth tyre the sub staff and the labourers. The following table gives the picture of bureaucratic structure of the garden (Table 5.9).

**Table 5.9.:** Bureaucratic Structure of Work Organisation : Matigara Tea Estate.

<b>A. Grade I.</b>	<b>Managerial Category</b>		
	1.	Manager	1
	2.	Deputy Manager	1
	3.	Assistant Manager	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>B. Grade II.</b>	<b>Clerical Category</b>		
	1.	Field	2 (Bagan Babu.)
	2.	Factory	1 (Factory Babu)
	3.	Office	3 (Babu)
	4.	Dispensary	2 (Dawa Babu)
	<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>
<b>C. Grade III</b>	<b>Substaff Category</b>		
	(with special reference to their ethenic Group)		
	1.	Engin Driver	1 (Bhokta)
	2.	Factory Server	2 (Bhokta & Nepali)
	3.	Oil men	2 (Lohar & Oraon)
	4.	Tea Maker	4 (Oraon)
	5.	Boider	1 (Naik)
	6.	Chowkider	4 (Lohar 2, Bihari 1 each)
	7.	Dawalala	1 (Naik)
	8.	Sardar (Factory)	3 (Bhokta 1 Nepali 2)
	9.	Dafadar (Field)	7 (Naik & Lohar & each Malpahari & Bihari 1 each 1 Naik woman married to Nepali).
<b>D. Grade IV</b>	<b>Labourer</b>		
	214 permanent (including male & Female) labourers 167 casual labourers.		

**Source :** Field Observation

## Political Participation

CITU is the trade union that has strong hold on the labourers of this garden. Almost all the labourers are reported to be the member of this union. But very few of them actually know the name of the union or the name of the party it is backed by. Subscriptions are regularly collected from them for the union. They have to attend the occasional meetings of the union without knowing the agenda. The union here fight for the short term issues like the regular payment of salary, payment of Bonus etc. without having any long term issue.

## Religion

The majority of the adibasis of the plantation adhere to their own traditional religion locally known as 'Saosar'. Religious conversion is absent in this garden. One man in Naik was Christian but he had gone away with another woman to some other place. His family claim themselves as 'Saosar' though the name of the children are like the Christian. The Bihari and the Nepali labourers are the followers of Hinduism. The adibasis adopted some traits of Hinduism from their Hindu neighbours like the worship of Tulsi and Siva; They visit the local mandaps during Durga, Kali Puja too. (5.10A).

**Table 5.10A:** Religion of the Ethnic Groups (Labour and Substaff) : Matigara Tea Estate.

Sl.	Ethnic Group	Religion				Total
		Saosar	Hinduism	Christianity	Islam	
1.	Adibasi	883	-	-	-	883
2.	Nepali	-	33	-	-	33
3.	Bihari	-	33	-	-	33
4.	Bengali	-	1	-	-	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>950</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>92.94</b>	<b>6.94</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(100.00)</b>

Source : Field Observation.

## Social Interaction

Interaction is unavoidable among the different tribal and non tribal groups being in same living and working environment in the garden. Every ethnic group has evolve their course of interaction upto a certain level. Here all the tribal groups behave like a same community. There is no such pronounced

social differentiation or the notion purity or pollution. Though all the different tribal groups prefer marriage within their groups still there are 16 cases of inter tribal marriage none of which has to pay any penalty for such marriage. Except the Oraons and Mundas all drink and dine together in social occasions. They solve their dispute togetherly. As far as the caste group is concerned the Biharis try to keep their ethenic identity intact and live in two clusters in 12 no. line and Gudam line near managerial quarters and the clerk quarters. In case of Nepali there is no such segregation. Even the Nepali family of 12 no. Line has to accept a daughter in law from the neighbouring Malpahari family, but they themselves admit that it is a stray case. These people inform that they have a friendly relationship among themselves. Even when dispute occur the tribals support the caste group if they think that they are not the offender. No personal dispute is taken upto community level. But the notion of purity and pollution is very strong among the caste groups and the adibasis. The caste people never take prepared food (pakka khana) from the adibasis. In case of social occasion they attend the occasion but without eating food they take 'Dhaonsa' of non-prepared (Kaccha) food from them. During the 'Gram than puja' i.e. the worship of the old simul tree both the caste people and the adibasis take part togetherly and all take 'prasad' of candy (batasa) and fruit. During the worship of 'Khar' or 'Tista buri' (river Balasan) the adibasis collect 'Viksha' from the caste people too.

### **Interaction of Plantation labourers with the World outside and their Outlook**

Tea plantation are usually situated in remote areas and the labourers are to live within the boundary of the plantation. They have minimum connection with the world outside. But Matigara Tea Estate being situated near the Siliguri town the labourer's interaction with the outside World is greater than that of the labourers of the interior plantations. The society of Matigara Tea Estate has undergone some changes but by and large it has remained traditional. The young boys and girls have changed styles of their dresses. They occasionally visit Siliguri town. The old and middle aged persons mostly remain confined within the tea garden. Their contact with the world outside is limited. They only meet the outside people in the local weekly market i.e. the Haat which takes place here on Tuesday. This market day is also the weekly holiday of this garden as well as the neighbouring gardens too. And the day before is the payment day. Many labourers from the neighbouring

tea gardens assemble in the Haat where they drink, gossip and exchange information with one another. This<sup>is</sup> also a place for romance for young boys and girls. Many marriages are negotiated in the Haat. Most of the labourers come to the Haat for drinking rice-beer (Haria) and country liquor (Daru). Haat is perhaps the only place of contact with the outside world particularly older generation of labourers. While the young girls and boys are fond of cinemas and frequently visit town for this purpose. The men and women of this garden are not so orthodox as the labourers of the gardens of remote area and do not maintain purity and pollution concept regarding food. They admit that they eat and drink food touched by persons belonging to other status groups and also interdine with them in Haat.

Among the adibasi labourers smoking and drinking are very common among both men and women labourers but now a days a tendency among the women is seen to be abstained from drinking and smoking. This may be the influence of their caste neighbours upon them. These people are less conscious of their living condition. Their outlook can be judged from their low level of literacy. They have no idea of the need and importance of education and do not encourage their wards to go to schools. Their knowledge about world outside is very poor. Most of them even do not know the name of the country or their natal place. The garden is the only universe for them. They remain in an under-dog position and have become prisoners to a self-perpetuating system in which it is difficult to come out and improve their condition.

### **Garden and the Women**

In plantation society the women labourers enjoy considerable freedom of action and their status when compared to their caste counter part is higher. But as far as it is compared to men it is very low. The statement should be proved by analysing the situation in the garden studied.

It has been seen in the garden that the adibasi women suffers from fewer restrictions in society than the caste women. They can select their mates and can leave their mates when they like or they can marry again. The system of brideprice prevalent here refers to some kinds of higher status of women in the society. In this society marriage being easily dissoluble the children may remain in the custody of mother or father as may be agreed upon. In the nine cases seen in the garden the children stay with their mother

and when the mother remarry the step father accepts the children in the family fold as his own. This has been possible because the woman also contribute her wages to support the family. But still this society is male dominated and women are treated as a commodity. The wife is often referred to as the 'kept' by the husband but a husband is never referred to as a ' kept' by the wife.

The overall occupational status of the woman labourers is lower than that of the men labourers. Although wages of men and women labourers are equal to day, the women received lesser wages a few years ago. Plantation women labourers have no voice in adibasi panchyat. Trade union leadership from the women labourers of plantation has not yet been emerged. The educational attainments of plantation women labourers is very low. Generally the education level of plantation labourers as a whole is very poor. In case of women labourers it is almost nill. This has further helped to perpetuate the lower status of women labourers. Her economic contribution has not helped to raise her status so as to make it equal to men.

## **Garden No.2**

### **Soongachi Tea Estate**

Soongachi Tea Estate is the second tea estate studied. This estate was established in 1879 under Jhemse & Finley Company now owned by M/s.



*Soongachi Tea Estate*

S.T. Industry Private Ltd. The Garden is situated in Jalpaiguri district under Mal P.S., at about 3 kms away from Malbazar town beside No. 31 National Highway. The garden owns a land of 1052. 10 hectares on the slope and foothills of which 681.37 hectares is under tea. The rest is occupied by quarters, factory godown and roads. The type of tea produced here is CTC with an average turnover of 15 lakhs kgs. yearly.

Total number of resident labour population of the garden is 9052 persons. Permanent labourers are

1513 (Male 876 and Female 586, 33 adolescent male and 18 adolescents female). At the time of the field work there is 188 temporary labourers of which 45 are male and 143 are female taken from the dependents of the permanent labour household during the peak season. The labourer of different ethnic groups live in the 12 lines scattered haphazardly in and around the garden. The lines, are <sup>in</sup> two divisions namely Nakhati and Bytagool. Name of the lines are Nicher line, Simul line, Jhorna line, Mal line, Kulli line, 6 No. line, Upper line, Premnagar line. The different ethnic groups namely Oraon, Munda, Nagasia, Sabar, Sanathal, Rajwar, Baraik, Majhi, Dhimol, Sonar, Lohar, Mohali etc. live side by side in residential quarters. The garden management have provided 1173 pacca quarters. 65 percent of which are twin quarter. All the quarters have electricity.

The source of drinking water is well as well as taps. Main source is a natural stream, the water of which is stored in an underground reservoir. Then it is sterilized and supplied through taps. In work-side there are latrins three for the males and one for the females.

The garden has a hospital with 25 beds with one medical officer, one mid-wife, two nurses, two compounders. Here there are three primary schools. previously owned by the garden but at present under the control of D.I. There are also 12 creches to keep the children below 2 years and above. These provide milk to the babies and take care of them in absence of their mother.

The garden has 10 recreation centres with the indoor games like carrom, ludo and cards and outdoor games like football, volley ball, and cricket. Often inter line matches are arranged among the labourers. Here there is also a Labour Welfare Unit with two welfare officers. The prevailing Trade Union is CITU.

The garden has a strong bureaucratic organisation of management. Under a strict chief manager there are four assistant managers and one trainee manager, two each law officers and welfare officers and one medical officer, 75 staffs i.e. clerks and 141 substaffs.

As stated earlier that the garden is a very big one having the household of more than 1100. Yet is hard to make a through study of the total garden. A part of the tribal sudded Bytagool line has been selected for the study having 264 tribal labour households. In this part the representative of almost all the tribal groups are available.

**TABLE 5.1B: Age and Sex wise Distribution of Adibasi and Non-Adibasi (Labour and Sub-staff) Population : Soongachi Tea Estate**

Sl. Ethnic Groups	Household No	0 - 6		7 - 14		15 - 18		19 - 50		Above 50		Total	Percentage
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
<b>A. Adibasi</b>													
1. Oraon	54	20	25	14	26	6	9	66	72	21	16	275	23.87
2. Munda	36	7	10	16	17	9	8	41	42	14	10	174	15.10
3. Kisan	11	2	2	5	7	1	2	10	13	6	4	52	4.51
4. Santal	26	4	6	9	11	3	1	31	30	7	8	110	9.54
5. Sabar	34	11	18	14	17	5	6	44	42	5	7	169	14.67
6. Bhumij	4	1	1	1	-	-	-	4	3	1	-	11	0.95
7. Sonar	5	-	4	3	4	1	-	7	7	2	2	30	2.60
8. Lohar	23	5	7	8	14	-	3	29	28	3	5	102	8.85
9. Korwar	6	1	-	3	4	2	2	9	8	2	1	32	2.77
10. Mohali	2	7	4	10	7	2	3	13	13	1	1	61	5.29
11. Baraik	7	1	1	3	3	-	-	8	5	2	3	26	2.23
12. Turi	8	1	1	2	3	1	1	10	10	-	-	29	2.26
13. Rajwar	4	1	1	-	1	1	1	4	4	1	1	15	1.30
14. Malar	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	0.17
15. Porja	11	1	2	3	3	1	1	9	12	4	4	40	3.47
16. Kanjar	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	3	0.26
17. Dhimol	5	3	4	-	-	-	-	8	6	-	-	21	1.82
<b>A. Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Percentage		5.64	7.46	7.89	10.24	2.77	3.21	25.60	25.78	5.98	5.38	100.00	
<b>B. Caste Group</b>													
1. Bihari	13	4	9	4	4	2	2	15	14	4	4	62	52.10
2. Nepali	11	3	1	2	12	4	3	15	14	1	2	57	47.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Percengate		5.88	8.40	5.04	13.44	5.04	4.20	25.21	23.52	4.02	5.04	100.00	
<b>C. Adibasi and Caste Group</b>													
A.	248	65	86	91	118	32	37	295	297	69	62	1152	90.63
B.	24	7	10	6	16	6	5	30	28	5	6	119	9.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Percentage		5.66	7.55	7.56	10.54	2.98	3.39	25.56	25.57	5.82	5.35	100.00	

Source : Field Observation.

## Population

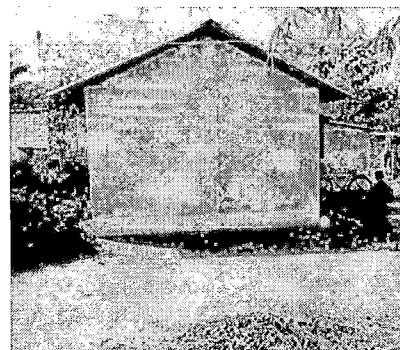
The labour and sub-staff population of this part of the garden is multi ethnic, just as the whole garden. Of the total population (of this part) of 1271 persons 93.63 percent (1152 persons) are from different adibasi groups while the rest 47.89 percent (119 persons) belong to the different caste groups of Bihari and Nepali.

Of the different adibasi groups Oraon is the dominant one with the population of 23.87 percent (275 persons) followed by Munda 15.10 percent (174 persons), Sabar 14.67 percent (169 persons); then come the Santhal 9.54 percent (110 persons), Lohar 8.85 percent (102 persons) and Mohali 5.29 percent (61 persons) and Kisan 4.51 percent (52 persons). The next group comprises Kowar 2.77 percent (32 persons) Sonar 2.60 percent (30 persons) Baraik 2.25 percent (26 persons) Turi 2.26 percent (29 persons) Porja 3.47 percent (40 persons), Rajwar 1.30 percent (15 persons) and Dhimol 1.82 percent (21 persons). The population of other groups like Malar, Kanjar and Bhumij having the population of 0.17 percent, 0.26 percent, 0.95 percent respectively.

Of the total household (of this part) 248 (91.18 percent) are of the different adibasi groups and 24 (8.82 percent) are of the different non adibasi groups. Of the adibasi household the Oraon has 54 households (21.77 percent), Munda 36(14.51 percent) Sabars 34 (13.70 percent), Santhal 25 (10.48 percent), Lohars 23(9.27 percent), Mohali 12 (4.83 percent), Kisan 11 (4.43 percent) Porja 11 (4.43 percent), Turi 8(3.22 percent), Baraik 7(2.82 percent), Korwar 6 (2.41 percent), Dhimol 5 (2.01 percent), Sonar 5(2.01 percent), Bhumij 1(0.40 percent). Of the non tribal households the Biharis have 13 (54.17 percent) and the Nepalis 11 (45.86 percent) household (T.5.1B).

## Housing, Sanitation and Drinking Water Facilities

The plantation provides residential quarters to its permanent labourers. In this part of the garden most of the quarters are pacca. 60 percent of these are twin quarter basis, with electric line. In some places labourers have built thatch roofed sheds for keeping their cattles and often temporary kitchens mostly in the joint households where there are a great scarcity of living room.



*Labourline Soongachi T.E.*

Concentration of population are not equal in all the lines. Though all the lines are multi ethnic still tendency of clusterization of the same ethnic group is seen. This is seen mainly among the Bihari and Nepali caste groups.

The garden authority has failed to provide proper sanitation and drinking water facility. In this area 25 wells are scattered here and there. These are the main source of drinking water with an additional scare supply of tap water. Some public urinals and latrins are also seen in the lines but these are very insufficient. It is informed that beside these there are four latrins in the work place for men and women labourers.

### Household

As is seen in the Terai Garden, in this part of the garden of Doars the household has been distributed among the adibasis as well as the caste groups of Biharis and Nepalis. Though the percentage of the non tribal households are less. Of the total household (of this part) 272, 248 i.e. 91.18 percent are of different adibasi groups and the rest is 8.82 percent i.e. 24 are distributed among the Bihari (13) and Nepali (11) caste groups.

As commonly seen in the tea garden the percentage of Nuclear household is high. Among all the groups, both tribals and no tribals here 48.16 percent households are of nuclear type as against the 26.47 percent joint type of household. The residue of joint families and pairing families single families are grouped together in unclassified group (T.5.3B).

**Table 5.3B :** Household Distribution among the Adibasi and Non Adibasi (Labour and sub staff) Population : Soongachi Tea Estate.

Sl. No.	Ethnic Group	House Hold		Nuclear	Joint	Unclassified
		Total No	Percentage			
<b>A. Adibasi</b>						
1.	Oraon	54	21.77	28	15	11
2.	Munda	36	14.51	14	10	12
3.	Kisan	11	4.43	5	1	5
4.	Santal	26	10.48	0	7	10
5.	Sabadar	34	13.70	18	9	7
6.	Bhumij	4	1.61	4	-	-
7.	Sonon	5	2.01	-	5	-
8.	Lohar	23	9.27	11	6	6
9.	Korwar	6	2.41	2	2	2
10.	Mohali	12	4.83	4	4	4
11.	Baraik	7	2.82	4	2	1
12.	Turi	8	3.22	5	1	2
13.	Rajwar	4	1.61	3	1	-

Sl. No.	Ethnic Group	House Holders		Nuclear	Joint	Unclassified
		Total No	Percentage			
14.	Malar	1	0.40	1	-	-
15.	Powja	11	4.43	6	1	4
16.	Kanjar	1	0.40	1	-	-
17.	Dhimol	5	2.01	2	1	2
A.	Total	248	100.00	117	65	66
		100.00		47.19	26.20	26.61
B.	<b>Caste Group</b>					
1.	Bihari	13	54.17	8	4	2
2.	Napali	11	45.83	6	3	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
		(100.00)		58.33	25.86	12.51
C.	<b>Adibasi Caste Group</b>					
A.		248	91.18	117	65	66
B.		24	8.82	14	7	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>272</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>69</b>
		100.00		48.16	26.47	25.36

Source : Field Observation.

### Mother Tongue

The garden has been established in 1879. The present workers here are the descendants of the immigrant labourers who came from their natal place in the earlier period. These labourers have been born and brought up in and around this garden. None of them know their original language of Kurkh, Mundari or Santhali. Here 'Sandri', a mixture of broken Hindi with Bengali, Nepali and adibasi language is the common 'lingua franca' though the Nepalis and Biharis speak in their mother tongue, Nepali and Hindi respectively.

**Table 5.4B.: Mother Tongue of the Ethnic Groups (Labour and Substaff) : Soongachi Tea Estate.**

Sl. No.	Ethnic Group	Mother Tongue			Total
		Sandri	Nepali	Hindi	
1.	Adibasi	1152	-	-	1152
2.	Nepali	-	57	-	57
3.	Bihar	-	-	62	62
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1271</b>
	Percentage	90.63	4.48	4.87	100.00

Source : Field Observation.

### Migration

This garden is a very old one. It has been established in 1879 i.e. the early stage of tea plantation in North Bengal. At this time due to scarcity of

labourers in this region large scale import of labourers has taken place. But now import of labour from outside the state has been stopped by rules. The present labourers here are the descendents of these immigrant labourers. It has been reported that all the 1152 persons of this part of this garden are born and brought up here.

Previously it has been seen that girl from other garden after marriage come to her husband's garden to live and the garden absorbs her as a labourer. But at present getting a permanent job in a garden has become tougher. So the labourers try to marry the girls of their own garden with a permanent job. Same is happened in case of 'Ghardmad'. Besides, the increasing popularity of love marriage stopped marriage outside the garden. So all the adibasi here are reported to be the settlers of this garden. Some of them may came from the other parts of the garden.

Of the Nepali adults of 32 persons 6 are from Kurseong while the 8 adult Bihari males and 13 females came from outside the state.

## **Marriage**

Marriage has a vital role among the life of the adibasi people. Among them it is common to get married when a man get adult, may be he has a permanent job or not. Of the total adult population of this part of the garden (of 792 persons) 662 persons are married, 78 persons are widow and widower and 52 persons are unmarried. The rest 489 persons are in the age group of 0-18 years i.e. child and adolencents and are unmarried. No divorce or separated person are noted (5.6C).

Marriage is strictly monogamous, though cases of polygamy is seen, divorce or separation is not present here. Stability of conjugal bond depends on the wish of the couple. If either party wishes may go away and marry other person. Tribal Panchayat may intervene though hardly have any success. Negotiation marriage is preferable though the youngsters mostly fled away and marry their beloved outside the garden and then come back. But almost all the adults realise the evils of child marriage which is totally absent in the garden. Inter tribal marriage is common though it is considered to be a matter of social shame and the respondents reluctantly admit the cases. Bride price and the system of Ghardamad is prevalent in this garden.

TABLE 5.6C. : Marital Status of the Adibasi and Non Adibasi (Labour and Substaff) Population : Soongachi Tea Estate.

Sl. Ethn ic Groups	Married		Adult population				Unmarried Adult		Total adult	Unmarried Child & Ad o	Total
	M	F	Widow M	Widow F	Divorced seperated M	Divorced seperated F	M	F			
<b>A. Adibasi</b>											
1. Oraon	68	68	12	20	Nil		7	-	175	100	275
2. Munda	50	50	2	2	-		3	-	107	67	174
3. Kisan	10	10	3	2	-		3	5	33	19	52
4. Santal	35	35	1	3	-		1	-	76	34	110
5. Sabar	45	43	1	2	-		3	2	98	71	169
6. Bhumij	9	9	1	2	-		1	-	8	3	11
7. Sonar	3	3	-	-	-		-	-	18	12	30
8. Lohar	30	30	2	3	-		-	-	65	37	102
9. Korwar	8	8	2	1	-		1	-	20	12	32
10. Mohali	10	10	1	3	-		3	1	28	33	61
11. Baraik	8	8	-	-	-		2	-	18	8	26
12. Turi	8	8	-	-	-		2	1	20	9	29
13. Rajwar	5	5	-	-	-		-	-	10	5	15
14. Malar	1	1	-	-	-		-	-	2	5	15
15. Porja	11	11	1	3	-		1	2	29	11	40
16. Kanjar	1	1	-	-	-		-	-	2	1	3
17. Dhimol	5	5	1	1	-		1	1	14	7	21
<b>A. Total</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>41</b>	-		<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>1152</b>
Percentage	26.64	26.64	2.43	3.55			2.43	1.04	62.76	38.10	100.00
<b>B. Caste group</b>											
1. Nepali	13	13	2	3	Nil		4	2	37	25	62
2. Bihari	11	11	2	2	-		3	3	32	15	117
<b>B. Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	-		<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>117</b>
Percentage	20.16	20.16	3.36	4.20			5.88	4.20	57.98	42.01	111.00
<b>Adibasi &amp; caste group</b>											
A.	307	307	28	41	Nil		28	12	723	439	1152
B	24	24	4	5	-		7	5	69	50	119
<b>Total</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>46</b>	-		<b>35</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>1271</b>
Percentage	26.04	26.04	8.5	3.6			2.75	1.33	62.31	38.47	100.00

Source : Field Observation.

## **Social Control**

Here in this garden social control is maintained by the Adibasi Panchayet with the help of local trade union leaders. In this garden Oraons make a strong hold in the panchayet as they are high in number as a result the smaller groups like Dhimol etc. do not always get justice.

## **Literacy**

As seen in the Terai garden here in this garden too literacy rate among the labourers is very low. This is mainly due to their extreme poverty and lack of culture of education. Education is a fancy of the present generation. Of the total labour population of this part only 24.35 percent are literate; the large proportion of this literates the members of the present generation i.e. persons of the age group of 6-18 years. 75.84 percent are illiterates. Of the total adibasi population of 1152, 20.39 percent are literate and 79.68 percent are illiterate. Of the literates 64.68 percent are adolescent and children. Of the caste people 41.42 percent are illiterate while 68.58 percent are literate. Literacy is high among the Biharies. Though among the caste women literacy rate is low as their tribal counterparts (T.5.7B).

## **Economic Participation**

The garden is old one as well as big. Here the management and the labourers are more organised than the Terai garden studied. Here at the time of my field work there was a total of 1513 permanent labourers. The temporary ones were taken from the dependents of the permanent labourers. Like the Terai garden, here there is no household of only temporary labourers. Here in this part there are 470 permanent labourers 48 percent of which are females. Their adult dependents work as temporary labourers at the pick seasons. In the other time they work as labourers on contract basis in local construction works of road or buildings. The permanent labourers get a daily wage of Rs. 32.30 and work in two shifts i.e. from 7a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 5p.m.

## **Political Participation**

CITU is the trade union that has a strong hold over the labourers. But just as be seen in the Terai garden, the common labourers have a very little awareness except giving the subscription. They attend the meeting called by the Union without knowing its cause and consequences. Only they expect

TABLE 5.7B. : Literacy among the Adibasi and Non Adibasi (Labour and substaff) Population : Soongachi Tea Estate.

Sl. Ethnic Groups	Illiterate population				Total Illiterate population		Literate population			Total literate population	
	Total population	M	F	Ado/child	population	Percentage	M	F	A/C	population	Percentage
<b>A. Adibasi</b>											
1. Oron	275	67	80	75	202	22.00	20	8	45	73	31.06
2. Munda	174	50	50	40	140	15.26	5	2	27	34	14.46
3. Kisan	52	10	15	10	35	3.81	6	2	9	17	7.23
4. Santal	110	28	30	20	78	8.50	10	8	14	32	13.61
5. Sabar	169	45	49	51	145	15.81	4	-	20	24	10.21
6. Bhomij	11	5	3	3	11	11.99	-	-	-	-	-
7. Sonar	30	9	9	12	30	3.27	-	-	-	-	-
8. Lohar	102	28	30	20	78	8.50	4	3	17	24	10.11
9. Korwar	32	11	9	10	30	3.27	-	-	2	2	0.25
10. Mohali	61	10	14	20	44	4.79	4	-	13	17	7.23
11. Baraik	26	10	8	8	26	2.83	-	-	-	-	-
12. Turi	29	10	10	9	29	3.16	-	-	-	-	-
13. Rajwar	15	5	5	5	15	1.63	-	-	-	-	-
14. Malar	2	1	1	-	2	0.21	-	-	-	-	-
15. Porja	40	8	16	9	33	3.59	5	-	2	7	-
16. Kanjar	3	1	1	1	3	0.32	-	-	-	-	-
17. Dhimol	21	6	6	4	16	1.74	2	-	3	5	2.12
<b>A. Total</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Percentage	100.00	26.38	29.16	24.64	19.68		5.20	1.99	13.19	20.39	
<b>B. Caste Group</b>											
1. Napali	57	10	13	5	28	59.57	6	3	20	29	40.27
2. Bihari	62	9	10	-	19	40.42	10	8	25	43	59.79
<b>B. Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Percentage	100.00	15.96	19.32	4.20	49.49		9.24	9.24	37.81	68.58	
<b>Adibasi &amp; Caste Group</b>											
A.	1152	304	336	277	917	95.12	60	23	152	235	76.54
B.	119	19	23	5	47	4.88	16	11	45	72	23.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Percentage	100.00	24.41	28.24	22.18	75.84		5.97	2.67	19.43	24.15	

Source : Field Observation.

from the union that it would help them to get regular wage, increased bonus and can ask the management to make a job permanent.

## Religion

In this part of this garden generally the adibasis are the follower of their traditional religion i.e. Saosar. Three or four converted Christian adibasi family is reported to be present in this garden at the other parts but no Islam adibasi is available here. Acceptance of some traits of the Hindu neighbours is common like the Siv puja, Kali puja, Laxmi puja, attending neighbouring Durga Mela, Saraswati puja etc. All the Nepali and Bihari families are the followers of Hinduism (T.5.10B).

**Table 5.10B.:** Religion of the Ethnic Group (Labour and Substaff): Soongachi Tea Estate.

Sl. No.	Ethnic Group	Religion			Total
		Saosar	Hinduism	Christmity	
1.	Adibassi	1152	-	-	1152
2.	Nepali	-	57	-	57
3.	Bihar	-	62	-	62
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>119</b>	-	<b>1271</b>
	Percentage	90.63	9.41	-	(100.00)

Source : Field Observation.

## Social Interaction

Interaction among the different ethnic groups of labourers are almost same in all the gardens. The different groups behave like a same Universe yet all of them have some differentiation in all levels and a distinct notion of endogamy, exogamy, purity and pollution. At present it is not so pronounced except in case of community participation.

## Interaction of the Plantation Labourers with World Outside and their Outlook

Soongachi tea estate is a comparatively remote garden in Doars. The labour lines being at the more interior parts totally detached to the world outside. The labourers have a very little contact to the near by township and is almost self-sufficient. It has school, hospital, small shops of necessary goods in the garden. The young boys and girls attend the cinema halls at Malbazar mainly on their rest days which is Sunday in this garden. This day

is the day of local 'haat' too. The middle aged malefolk and some womenfolk attend haat to buy their necessary goods and also to meet kins and friends. This haat is their only link to the world outside the garden. Except this they attend the Mal Hospital in the town in most critical cases of illness. The general awareness of the labourers, both male and female, is very low. They know very little of the world except 'two leave and a bud in between.'

### **Garden and the Women**

When analysing the status of women in this garden the garden shows nothing special. The women as wage earner enjoy some facilities in the society but her over all status is still quite low. She suffers from lack of education, work burden and exploitation from family fold and outside. In most cases she always suffers from a sense of insecurity that her husband can leave her and her children whenever he wishes as it is a common practice in this society. Besides, regular abuse and physical torture by drunk husband is a common feature of these women inspite of being a bread earner or housewife. Although they enjoy some facilities more than their caste counter part as they can chose their partner by them selves, they can dissolve their marriage alliances when they think it does not suitable for them but in most of the cases it is not so easy. In this garden I have got atleast five cases where the women have to live with their jobless or characterless husbands for <sup>the</sup>shake of their children. In these days the permanent job has become so scare and the price of things are so high that every man try to marry girl with job and without any liability. So it is tough for the mother of a number of children to get married again except she has a permanent job. Today's women labourers get same wage as their male counter parts but in most cases she has not much hold on their income. She spends it for the maintenance of the household but in many cases the husband forcively take the money and spend it over haria. Finally it can be said that inspite of being bread earner the status of women in the plantation society has not raised much. The society is still very much made dominated where women are treated as comodity.

## OBSERVATION

The two gardens studied in Terai and Doars are of two types. Both are old while the Doars garden is the older (1879) bigger (1052.10 hec) well organised, well equipped than that of the Terai garden (1932; 124.46hec) with higher yearly production of 15 lakh kgs. in comparison to 140 thousand kgs. of the Terai garden. Both of these gardens produce CTC type tea.

Both of the gardens have well organised bureaucratic management under which groups of staffs (Bengali and Bihari caste group) work. The third and fourth categories are formed of sub-staffs and labourers from different adibasi groups of Oraon, Munda, Kisan, Sabar, Santhal, Baraik, Turi, Mohali, Dhimol, Lohar, Naik and other tribal groups who are in small number. The Mundas are high in number in Terai garden with Naik, Lohar, Mohali, Oraon are considerable groups. The Oraons are dominant in the Doars garden. Santhal, Sabar, Sonar, Rajwar, Dhimol, Bhumij are seen exclusively in the Doars garden alongwith the other common groups. At the time of investigation as per official records the number of permanent labourers in Terai garden was 214; male 109, female 119. In Doars garden the number of labourers was 1513; male 876 and female 568.

The labourers of multiethnic community live side by side in labour lines scattered in and around the garden. Except the Bihari no such ethnic clusterization is pronounced. The garden authority provide quarter to its permanent labourers which is more developed in the Doars garden. Here all the labourer quarters are pacca and have electricity and 65 percent of these are twin quarters while in Terai garden 50 percent quarters are pacca. In both of these gardens well are the source of water both drinking and bathing, though in Doars garden tap water is also available. Sanitation and sewage system in both of these gardens are very low.

The Terai garden has only a small health centre while the Doars garden has a 25 bedded hospital. Both of these gardens have a medical team each, to help the labourers in problem.

In both of these gardens among the adibasis Sandri is the common 'lingua franca' as seen in the other Terai and Doars gardens and they are the followers of 'Saosar' religion mixed with some traits of Hinduism. Besides the Biharis and the Nepalis are Hindu and speak in their respective languages.

Both of these gardens are old enough and its labourers are the second or third generation of the earlier immigrants. Most of them are born and brought up in the respective gardens except some women came from neighbouring gardens or basti due to marriage.

Marriage is monogamous and endogenous. It is a rule though polygamy and inter tribal marriage is seen in both of the gardens. No legal divorce is reported while either one of a couple may leave the other and the children as he / she wishes.

Literacy picture in both of these gardens is very low. In Terai garden only 25.05 percent of the labour population are literate and most of them are child and adolescent population. In the studied part of the Doars garden the percentage is 24.15 percent. Most of the literates are the child at the age group of 7-14 years and the adolescent. More than 60 percent in women of both of the gardens are illiterate. Among the tribals there are the lack of culture of education, seriousness and consciousness of education as well. Besides these poverty sicken people hardly afford their basic necessities Education is a fancy to them. Still among the parents of present generation some, sense of consciousness regarding their ward's education have been arose. The Doars garden also provide free primary education for the wards of the labourers; the Terai garden has no primary school of its own but the Kadamtala Primary School, adjunct to it, may serve the purpose to some extent. The willing parents sent their wards to this school. So in both of these gardens percentage of literacy among the children and adolescent are comparatively high.

Plantation work is done in both of this gardens in two shifts with a weekly holiday which is on Sunday and Tuesday in Doars and Terai garden respectively. The labourers get daily basis payment on the day before weekly holiday. In Terai garden it is 29.15 Rs. and in Doars garden it is Rs. 32.30. At the time of investigation there was 215 permanent labourers in Terai garden of which 53.48 percent was women. Beside the permanent labourers there also live some people in separate households who get job in the garden in pick season while in the slack season they work outside as jugari, ricksaw puller and so on. But in the Doars garden there is no such household of temporary labourers. The authority take the dependents from the permanent

labourer's household in pick season. Child labour is also present in both the garden though the authority deny their existence.

CITU is the prevailing trade union in both of these gardens though the labourers mostly are unaware of their political rights and duties. They attend union meetings and gatherings, give the subscription mechanically and the union generally fight for the short term issues like regular payment of salary and bonus.

The adibasi labourers have a cordial relationship with each other and inspite of their ethnic differences behave like single universe. The notion of purity and pollution is not so pronounced in these days, as was in past except community participation. Through regular and intense interaction each group have affected by the customs of others. Local 'haat' i.e. weekly market is the main link of the labourers to the world outside the garden.

The status of women is not raised satisfactorily inspite of being bread earner. They enjoy some freedom than their caste counterparts but as their status with their male counterpart is compared it is quite low. They are exploited both in home and working place and is burdened with a lot of works and responsibilities without adequate authority.