

## Tea Plantation and Migration in Dooars : A Study of its Impact on Demographic Profile and Socio-economic Conditions

Mr. Vikash Mandal

Assistant Professor , Department of Economics ,T .P. Verma College, Narkatiaganj, Baba shaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur, Bihar, India

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Accepted: 05 April 2023  
Published: 28 April 2023

#### Publication Issue

Volume 10, Issue 2  
March-April-2023

#### Page Number

66-70

### ABSTRACT

In India, the tea plantation in India was started in the Brahmaputra valley in the year 1857 by the Colonial State Authority on a large scale. Later, plantations of Tea spread in different parts of the country. The Dooars region of West Bengal was one of them. In lieu of making huge profits, Britishers started cultivating tea in this region by clearing thick forests and undulating land surfaces. Dooars region of West Bengal became the largest producer of tea in West Bengal and the second largest producer of tea in India. Currently, it produces nearly 17 per cent of tea in India and provides direct employment to over 3.5 million people in the region. But the tea industry in this region was developed by the large-scale migration of Adivasi from the Chhotanagpur Santhal Parganana and Singhbhum regions. The British Government not only ruined the status and opportunities of local people but also uprooted them from their motherland. This creates an employment and settlement problem in this region and also dynamically changes the demographic profile of the region. This paper attempts to highlight the increasing trend of population growth during the plantation period and also focuses migration of people from other areas of the country that shaped the demographic profile of this region and also changed the socio-economic structure.

**Keywords :** Demography, Socio-economic, Tea plantation, Migration, Dooars.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Tea growing area of West Bengal is also known as Dooars<sup>1</sup>, situated in the northern part of the state. At

<sup>1</sup> Region of northern part of west Bengal.( Jalpaiguri and Alipuduar Districts)

present, Dooars is the second-largest tea-producing area of the country and the largest-producing area in West Bengal and provides employment of about 3.5 million people directly or indirectly by producing 25 per cent of the country's Tea production. Its history started in the year 1974 when the first Tea Garden of this region was established in the Gazoldoba. Free

simple rules of 1876 enabled the British planters to acquire forest tracts and fertile land at a concessional rate. Within two years of the time span, 13 new Tea gardens were established. Most of the tea gardens were established during the year 1881 to 1961. In the year 1961, the number of large tea gardens were 293 (Tea Statistics, 1960). For the development of the tea garden, there was an urgent need for labour who can work in the garden.

In the initial year, tea Planters faced challenges in the development of the Tea Garden; climate condition was not favourable, and the area was covered with thick forest and undulating land surface (Bhowmik, Sharit K.1981). "Dense forest infested with wild animals had to be cleared, the land had to be prepared, hoeing, planting, weeding, pruning, etc., had to be done, and tea leaves had to be plucked. In addition, roads had to be constructed and houses to be built"(Gupta, R. D .1986). Working conditions and livelihood patterns in tea gardens were not found to attract Local agricultural labourers and peasants. The wage rate in plantations was also much lower than in Railway, public works department, agriculture and non-agricultural sectors. Therefore, local peasants and agriculture labourers were reluctant to work in the sub-human plantation system. Thus, Planters were forced to think in other ways which led to mass-scale migration and demographic shifting in the history of human civilisation. They brought cheap labour from Chhotanagpur, Singhbhum and Santhal Pargana and made their life vulnerable.

**Objective-** Tea Plantation forms an enclave economy within a particular region with a combination of both agriculture and industrial characteristics. To perform agricultural and industrial activities, a huge amount of labour is needed.

In the early stages of tea plantations, a large amount of deforestation occurred in this sparsely populated area.

This can be expressed through the following function

$$y = f(l1, l2)$$

Were,

Y= development of tea Plantations

L1= labour employed in the plantation industry

L2= land used for tea plantation

From the above function, we can see that the development of the Tea plantation industry is totally dependent on land and labour. It means that if the plantation industry of any area is increased at the same time, the industry consumes more land and labour. As a result, it will directly affect the ecology and society of that region. Our study will show how an increase in Tea Plantation Industry in Dooars leads to an increase in population growth. The migration happened at a large scale that changed the demographic and socio-economic profile of the region. In this perspective, our objective of the study is concentrated on the following two areas:

I. To know the role of the tea plantation industry in changing the demographic profile of Dooars region of West Bengal.

II. To know the impact of migration on the socio-economic condition of the region.

**Methodology-** In the present study, we have studied the tea gardens of the Dooars region which is located in the foothill of the Himalayas, the northern part of West Bengal. The region is located between 26° 16' N and 27° 00' N latitude and 88° 4' E 89° 45' E East longitude. Dooars is also known as Jalpaiguri. The district of Jalpaiguri<sup>2</sup> came into existence in the Year 1869, by the amalgamation of the western Dooars of India which lies between the Tista and Sankos Rivers. The study mainly depends on secondary data collected from Indian Planter's Association Report, district census handbook Report, Tea board Report, Labour enquiry committee report, books and related journals.

**Finding -** As the area settled and planted with tea, it witnessed a phenomenal scale of population growth; nearly a sixfold increase during the year 1872 to 1921. During this period population increased by 244.2 per cent. Alipurduar and Kalchini witness a 1042.3 per

<sup>2</sup> Entire district came under Dooars. In the year 2014, Alipurduar came into existence after bifurcating jalpaiguri.

cent increase during the period. A rough census was conducted by the revenue officer of Jalpaiguri during the year 1858- 59. According to this census estimate, the population of the Dooars region were 189067 person. But these data were only estimated therefore accuracy can be questionable. India's first census was conducted in the year 1872. According to this census, the population of the Dooars region were 169288. From 1872 to 1901 growth of the population was 3.5 times during the year 1872 to 1901. During the 1901 to 1911 decade, there was a 21.30% population growth registered. The development of the Tea plantation industry was the main reason for enormous population growth. In the following table, we could see the decadal variation and percentage change of the population

Growth of population during the year 1901 to 1961

| Year | Population | Decadal Variation | Percentage change in a decade |
|------|------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1901 | 546764     |                   |                               |
| 1911 | 663222     | 116458            | 21.3                          |
| 1921 | 695946     | 32724             | 4.93                          |
| 1931 | 740993     | 45047             | 6.47                          |
| 1941 | 847841     | 106848            | 14.42                         |
| 1951 | 916747     | 68906             | 8.13                          |
| 1961 | 1359292    | 442545            | 48.27                         |

Source : *district census handbook Jalpaiguri 1961*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was the century of demographic shifting and Migration. The following table shows the decadal migration of the population in this region. Area registered one of the largest migrations in south East Asia. In the following table of migration, we could see the decadal migration of people.

Migration from the year 1901 to 1961

| year | Total no. of Migration |
|------|------------------------|
| 1901 | 95899                  |
| 1911 | 152174                 |
| 1921 | 163024                 |

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| 1931 | 158757 |
| 1941 | 156765 |
| 1951 | 278842 |
| 1961 | 454177 |

Source: *district census handbook 1961*

Composition of different Tribes in the ST population

| Name of Tribes | Percentage in total ST population |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Oraon          | 51.28                             |
| Munda          | 15.19                             |
| Santhal        | 10.87                             |
| Mahali         | 3.69                              |
| Kharia         | 6.77                              |
| Kora           | 1.57                              |
| Total          | 89.37                             |

Source: *Jalpaiguri district census handbook, 1961.*

According to census data from 1961, the ST population in this area is about 26.10 per cent and 90 per cent of the tribal population were immigrants. 17.27 per cent of the ST population of West Bengal lived in Jalpaiguri district alone. The region faced a Dramatically increase in the immigrant population

**Analysis & discussion:** In the analysis discussion, we have to discuss the impact of migration on demographic profiles and socio-economic conditions of Dooar's.

I. Impact on demography:

From the above migration table, we can see the large-scale immigration of the population in every decade. Workers of the tea garden were mainly ST and SC. These workers belong to different Tribal groups i.e.; Oraon (half of the tribal population), Munda, Kharia, and Santhal. There are also non-tribal communities of the same origin Mahali, Chik Baraik, Ghasi, and Turi.

Indigenous tribes of this region were Mech, Rava, Garo, and Khasi. The population of tribes increased dramatically, but the population of indigenous tribes who lived independently decreased gradually over

time. As a result, indigenous tribes became the minority in status.

With continuous migration and intermixing of different castes and classes, each individual community had started losing their identity.

## II. Impact on Socio-economic condition

Prior to the establishment of Tea Plantation in the Dooars region, there were two categories of indigenous people living in the area, one was dependent on agriculture and its allied activities, and others were dependent on the forest. These Tribes were Mech, Rava Garo, Dhimal, and Khari. They have their own village community and living style. They lived in the forest and were dependent on forest products and practising Jhoom cultivation. With the development of tea gardens, they lost their traditional habitat and were forced to migrate eastward to the region.

Again, the Development of tea plantations and the growth of the worker population created a great demand for agricultural and non-agricultural products. To cater for the food grain and household demands of workers, Colonial State set up Railway in this region. The opening of the railway line brought immigrant people like Marwari and Bihari people. They started settling around the tea garden areas. They were mainly trader class. Soon and then, they became the main supplier of workers' food and daily household consumption goods.

A railway station, cluster of gardens, garden Hat, and market together helped in developing a garden town in the Dooars region. Malbazar, Birpara, Kalchini, Banarhat, Madarihat, and Hamiltonganj were all developed in the same way.

Migrated people were primarily dependent on tea gardens. But the wage rate of the tea garden was very low, therefore, they were forced to work outside the tea garden. They started working as a labour in agricultural fields, brickfields, river Bed, and fishing, weaving and hunting. As a result, migrated tribes became a threat for the local worker.

**Limitation:-** There were annual reports available on immigrant labour in Assam from 1878 to 1928. There were two additional labour enquiry Committee Report, one was the 1906 Report and the other was the 1921 Report. Besides this, the condition of workers in Assam attracted the attention of the nationalist movement Leader-Press. They expose the horrifying state of affairs among the labour of Assam. On the other hand, doors were an isolated area and remained neglected by British Government and Nationalist Media. There were only two enquiry Committee Reports available, one was a 1911 report and the other was a 1936 report. but the report was also devoted and concentrated to Assam and only a few pages were given to dooars. But no regular report on the living of tribal workers. Therefore, difficult to arrange systematic and chronological data

**Recommendation and conclusion:-** Unsystematic migration of people in this area systematically changed the demographic profile of the region. British planters completely uprooted the tribal population from their native place. They brought the labour to the Tea Plantation area on the false promise by the recruiting agent and left them with the tag "a coolie is always a coolie" whether he works in the garden or is settled as an agricultural labour. At the same time, indigenous tribes of the region lose their identity. These consequences of migration could not be reversed. But the same time, the government could take appropriate measures to mitigate the problem.

## II. REFERENCES

- [1]. Hunter, W.W. (1872). Statistical account of Bengal, Jalpaiguri. Royal Printing Press.
- [2]. Dalton, E. T. (1882). A Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal. Government Press, Calcutta.
- [3]. Dooars Planters' Association. (1920). Detailed Report of General Committee, Jalpaiguri. Royal Printing Press.

- [4]. Thomposon, W.H. (1923). Census of India, 1921. Vol (V): Bengal, Part 7. Government Printing Press. Calcutta.
- [5]. Rege, D. V. (1946). Report of an Enquiry into the condition of labour in Plantation of India and Ceylon. Government of India Press. Delhi.
- [6]. Bose, Sanat. (1954). Capital and labour in Indian tea industry. All India trade union congress: Bombay.
- [7]. Tea Board of India. (1960). Tea statistics: 1960-61. Tea Board of India. Kolkata.
- [8]. Ray, B. (1969). Census of India. District Census Handbook: Jalpaiguri. Government Press. Calcutta.
- [9]. Bhowmik, Sharit K. (1981). Class formation in the plantation system. Peoples publishing house, New Delhi
- [10]. Gupta, R. D. (1986). From peasants and tribesman to plantation workers: colonial Capitalism, reproduction of Labour Power and Proletarianisation in North East India, 1850 to 1947. Economic and Political Weekly, XXI (4). 2-10.
- [11]. Tea Board of India. (2009). Tea statistics: 2005-06. Tea Board of India. Kolkata.
- [12]. Sarkar, B. C. (2017). Economic transformation of tribal people from primitive to tea garden workers in Dooars of Jalpaiguri. International Journal of Research, Culture Society, vol. (I), Page-160.

Cite this Article

Mr. Vikash Mandal, "Tea Plantation and Migration in Dooars : A Study of its Impact on Demographic Profile and Socio-economic Conditions", International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology (IJSRST), Online ISSN : 2395-602X, Print ISSN : 2395-6011, Volume 10 Issue 2, pp. 66-70, March-April 2023.

Journal URL : <https://ijsrst.com/IJSRST523103180>