

Tribal Economy and Change: A Special Focus on Oraon, Munda and Santal Tribes in Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal

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Abstract

The study focuses on the economy of the three major tribes of Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal. They are Oraon, Munda and Santal. According to 2011 census, three of them comprise 67.44 percent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the district. All these tribes were brought in the last half of 19th century and the first half 20th century by the British to mainly work as labourers in the newly formed tea gardens, railways and in the forests of this region. Tribes from Santal Parganas were brought to settle as agriculturists in this district. In the later stages, after the British left this region, only the ownership of the tea gardens changed. Till now, the major concentration of these tribes is found in the tea garden villages. However, some of them are engaged in agricultural activities outside the tea garden area and others are seen in forest region. The paper seeks to understand the change in the economy of these tribes in spatio-temporal context. The article developed out of extensive fieldwork and based on a primary data interview schedule. For collecting the primary data, 650 households were chosen from all the 13 blocks of the district on the basis of random stratified sampling. The temporal variation of the economy is shown for a period of 30 years. The techniques followed here are: simple cross tabulation and composite index based on Friedman's test by rank.

Keywords: Hinduization, Economic change, Friedman's test by rank, Oraon, Munda, Santal

The tribal population of India constitutes only 8.6 percent of the total population (according to census 2011) and is treated as a marginalized group outside the mainstream stratified community of the country. Many anthropologists support that the present status of the tribe is a result of colonial effect.¹ In the past, tribes were known as kingdom with definite territory.² They were the highest political unit. These tribes have undergone many changes by political, economic, social, cultural waves of transformation. Some of those waves were so powerful, that it totally transformed the tribal society, economy, habitat, culture and even their identity. Though the present micro-regional study highlights the economic aspect of the tribes, the economy of the tribes is deeply rooted within their culture. The changes in their culture due to Hinduization, Christianity, Colonization, Industrialisation, Urbanisation and Globalisation brought about changes

¹ J. Bara, "Alien construct and Tribal Contestation in Colonial Chhotanagpur: the Medium of Christianity", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(53), 2010, pp.90-96.

² J. Pathy, "Tribe, Region and Nation in the Context of the Indian State", *Sociological Bulletin*, 48 (1&2), 1999, pp.97-117.

in their economic set up also. Broadly, human evolution in terms of society or economy is greatly determined by the intentionality of the human beings themselves.³ But the change among the tribes is mostly determined by the non-tribal population's intention and decision. Tribes are the victims of different types of approaches which are made without their consent. In India, three approaches were undertaken towards them: the **policies of segregation, assimilation and integration**. During the segregation in British period, Businessmen and Government officials had the access to the tribal areas. They introduced modern business pattern and disrupted the barter economy system among the tribes and introduced the concept of money which ultimately led to distress and misery among them.

This study focuses on the Oraon, Munda and Santal communities who were brought to the Jalpaiguri district because of the decision of the British Government to start tea plantation in the 'Duars', the foothills of the Himalayas. These tribes came to work as labourers in tea gardens; some of them were also brought to work as labourers in railways and in forests. However, some of them also got the land and settled as agriculturists. The present study is intended to focus on the economy of these major tribes of the district who are mainly working in the tea gardens and very few as settled agriculturists. It also tries to focus on the change in their economy.

Objectives and Study Area

The major objectives of this study are two folds. First, to explain the present economy of these tribes and second, to assess the change in their economy.

Jalpaiguri district extends between 26° 16' and 27° 0' North latitudes and 88° 25' and 89° 53' East longitudes covering a total area of 6245 sq.km. It has international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh in the north and south respectively and state boundaries with Assam in the east, district boundaries with Darjeeling in the west and Coochbehar in the south and south-east. According to the census of 2011, this district accounts the highest number of Scheduled Tribes (731704) in West Bengal. The three major tribes account 67.44 percent of the total Scheduled Tribes (Oraon 50.35%, Munda 11.78% and Santal 5.31%).⁴ The study undertakes the undivided Jalpaiguri District before its segregation from Alipurduar sub-division in 2014. The latest census of India, 2011 does not show the population of tribes on the basis of the community for the newly formed Alipurduar district. It shows only the total tribal population in the district and block level.

Database and Methodology

This study is predominantly based on primary data, however, for some cases, secondary data was also used. Primary data was collected through the interview and observation method. From 13 blocks, 650 households were chosen on the basis of proportional

³ D. C. North, *Understanding the Process of Economic Change*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2005.

⁴ Census of India, Primary Census Abstract of Scheduled Tribes, Jalpaiguri District, 2011

allocation of total scheduled tribes. Out of that, 446(68.6%), 160(24.6%), 44(6.8%) households are Oraon, Munda and Santal respectively. For collecting secondary data, various government offices, e.g. Census of India, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, reports published by Ministry of tribal affairs and Tea Board of India were consulted. Percentage based study was done for showing the present scenario of the economy of these tribes. To represent the change in their economy, two ways have been adopted. Firstly, simple percentage based study of 30 years time span with cross tabulation about different aspects of their economy was done. Secondly, for calculating the index of change in economy Friedman's Test by Ranks was applied. It is used for testing the differences between conditions when there are more than two conditions and the same participants have been used in all conditions.⁵ This test is based on rank data. For assigning the rank value, each economic indicator across different time period has been taken and following formula of Friedman's test was used:

where, N= number of rows; k=number of column; R_i = sum of the ranks in j th column

For obtaining the rank, the value of a particular variable for present, 10 years ago, 20 years ago and 30 years ago was placed in columns. Then with the help of aforesaid formula, the ranks were assigned for each block, each tribe and each variable. The ranks of 10 years ago, 20 years ago and 30 years ago, were subtracted from the present rank. Then from all these subtracted ranks, mean rank was derived for each block, each tribe for each variable. On the basis of these ranks for all variables of economic change, the composite index was prepared on the basis of the following formula:

$$\text{Composite Index for Quality of Life} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N X_{ij}}{N}$$

where, X_{ij} = Score value of i th element; N= number of element

On the basis of the composite index, the economic change among the tribes has been shown and the whole district has been divided into high, medium and low in these three categories.

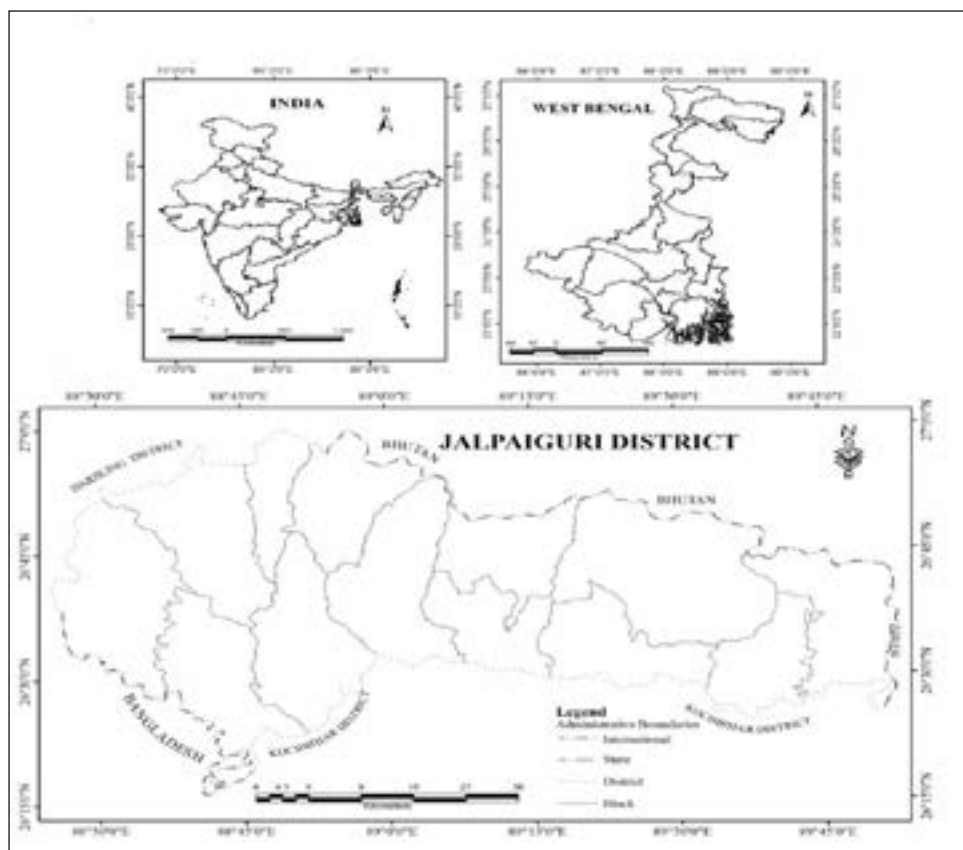
Economy of the Major Tribes in Jalpaiguri District

All the three tribes of this study were originally settled cultivators in the Chotanagpur plateau and Santal Parganas. The Oraons were known as the first plough cultivators of that region. Majumdar discussed the conditions, as well as historical background of the tea gardens and the labourers who worked there.⁶ After the introduction of Permanent Settlement in the region, they became landless and converted to the agricultural labourer. Huge pressure of debt made their life miserable. The Businessmen and the British took their thumb impression on the agreement about which they had little understanding. After the agreement, they were brought in this region to work as bonded labourers.

⁵ A. Field, *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*, (3rd Ed.), New Delhi, Sage Publication, Inc., 2009, pp.573-580.

⁶ B. Majumder, "Jalpaiguri Jelar Janajati" (in Bengali), in T. Ghosh (Ed.), *Poschimbongo: Jela Sonkha* (pp.25-35), Kolkata, Information and Cultural Dept., Govt of West Bengal, 2001.

They used to be known as *Geermitia*(*Agreement*>*Greement*>*Greementia*>*Geermitia*). The economic condition of these tribes was very poor.



Map 1: Location Map of the study area

Their wage was comparatively quite lower than any other labourer in the district. A labourer in jute mill used to get Rs.13.75/month while in these gardens, a labourer used to get Rs.3/month. In 1951 after showing protests, The Central Government of India introduced Plantation Labour Act. It was ratified in West Bengal in 1956. The claims were provision of minimum wage, residential house, pure drinking water and health care facilities. Though the claims had not been fulfilled properly, they at least got the semi-pucca residential houses.

Besides working in the tea gardens, the tribes from Santal Parganas were also brought after the formation of this district to settle permanently as this region was very sparsely populated. They were given land to do agriculture and some tribes were also seen in the forest area who were brought to work as forest labourers. But most of the tribes of the study are concentrated in the tea gardens. The tribes under study i.e. Oraon, Munda and Santal when they came in this region, were concentrated in three main types of economic activities: (a) labourer in tea plantation, (b) labourer in forests and (c) agriculturist.

Economic Change

Economic change is a long process. It is determined not only by the accumulation of experiences of an individual or a society but also the cumulative experiences of the past generation.⁷ When these tribes were brought in this region they lost their economic setup and shifted from agriculturists to plantation workers. A collection of primary information of this long period is not possible, therefore, 30 years duration has been chosen for collecting the same. Though there are many parameters of the economy but here three robust parameters were chosen for doing the Friedman's test by Rank and the percentage based study. The parameters are: (1) Regular Economic Activity, (2) Periodic Economic Activity and (3) Monthly Income

Regular Economic Activity

Regular economic activity is the prime source of income of any household. Among the respondents, 87.38 percent households' primary activity is related to the tea gardens as a daily wage labourer. In Rajganj and Maynaguri blocks, all the respondent households have this primary occupation (Map.2). The share of percentage in this category is found lowest in Alipurduar II block (69.23%) for their engagement in the agricultural activity. The percentage of households was less 10 years ago in this category (84.92%). During this phase, except Kalchini block (60.95%), remaining blocks have shown almost same share or even more than the present situation. In fact, in this decade, Kalchini block's share was less than Alipurduar II block in the daily wage labourer category of the tea garden. As a reason, it can be said that the Kalchini tea garden was closed for last 10 years and re-opened in 2011. Those households, therefore, did not have any regular economic activity in that phase and engaged with different types of periodic economic activities. However, this category of economic activity was much higher in the share of percentage 20 and 30 years ago (91.69% and 91.85%) compared to present. The highest share of daily wage labourer in tea garden is found in Jalpaiguri, Maynaguri and Rajganj 20 years ago. Along with these three blocks, Alipurduar I also registered the highest share 30 years ago. However, Alipurduar II showed again the lowest share in this category 20 and 30 years ago (71.79%). But, the percentage in that period was more than the percentage at present. This whole distribution proves that people are shifting to some extent from their traditional regular economic activity i.e. plantation wage labourer. Marginal variation is noticed in the category of wage labourer in non-tea garden category (3.23 percent, 3.38 percent, 3.69 percent and 3.85 percent in 30 years ago, 20 years ago, 10 years ago and at present respectively). It is found highest in Kalchini block in last 30 years. However, the share of percentage has fluctuated i.e. 8.57 percent, 9.52 percent 30 and 20 years ago to 8.57 percent 10 years ago and 9.52 percent at present. Overall, 3.69 percent households don't have any regular economic activity. The percentage is highest in the block Jalpaiguri (10%) and absent in the blocks Madarihat-Birpara, Nagrakata, Rajganj and Maynaguri. The scenario 10 years ago was different. In that decade, people who did not have any regular economic activity was double than

⁷ D.C. North, *op.cit.*

the present. The reason has already been discussed. It was highest in Kalchini block and absent in the same blocks discussed above. This category is found in much less amount 20 and 30 years ago when it accounted 1.54 and 1.69 percent. Kalchini block again accounted highest (5.71 % and 8.57% respectively) share. Once agriculture was the prime occupation of these tribes but now only 1.54 percent of them are engaged in agriculture. Within 30 years, there is no change in this share. It is same as what it was 30 years ago. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of some tribes in the block Alipurduar II (23.08%). Agriculture is mainly subsistence based and the major crops are paddy, wheat and vegetables. Service accounts only 2.77 percent of the total households and it has increased 1.38 percent 30 and 20 years ago, 2.46 percent 10 years ago to this present condition. It is definitely not showing any major change. Service mainly denotes to clerical jobs in the tea garden offices, teaching in schools, cooking in anganwadis and working as security guards in the offices. This percentage is highest in Dhupguri block (7.50%) at present. This category was found highest in Falakata block 10, 20 and 30 years ago. But the share was less than now (6.98 % in 10 years ago, 4.65 % in 20 and 30 years ago). The variation is not very sharp. Business is another category of economic activity and accounts extremely less among the respondents (0.77%). In Madarihat-Birpara block, the share is 3.33 percent which is highest in the whole district. The value was same 10 years ago in this block but less in share 20 and 30 years ago (1.67%). If it is considered for the whole district, the share has not increased to a large extent but in a negligible way (0.46 % in 30 and 20 years ago to 0.77 % in 10 years ago and at present).

Within the three tribal communities, Munda tribe has the highest share of percentage in daily wage labourer in tea garden category (89.38%) which is followed by Oraon (88.12%) and Santal (72.73%). It should be mentioned that Santals were provided land for doing cultivation by the British when the district was formed. The whole Samuktala taluk was allotted for them once, which is now in Alipurduar II block. The present survey was conducted in Baniagaon village under Alipurduar II block which is a completely Santal dominated village and they practise agriculture. However, the mode of agriculture is at subsistence level. As a result, those Santal households are not engaged in plantation economy and this is the reason for such low percentage of Santals in plantation labour category. In fact, there is no variation in their share of percentage within 30 years. In the same category for previous 20 and 30 years ago, the percentage of households engaged in plantation labourer category in tea gardens was highest among the Mundas but their share was higher than now. It was 93.05 percent and 92.60 percent in 20 and 30 years ago respectively. In the last 10 years, there is a decline in their share (86.10%) and again the share has raised at present (88.12%). Because most of the households in Kalchini Tea Garden were Munda and very few of them were Oraon. Among the Oraon community also, the same trend is seen (93.05 percent, 92.60 percent, 86.10 percent 30, 20 and 10 years ago respectively). In the wage labour of non-tea garden category, Santals have the highest share (4.55%) and it has not changed within last 30 years. It is followed by Oraon community (4.26%) and among them also change is not observed within last 30 years.

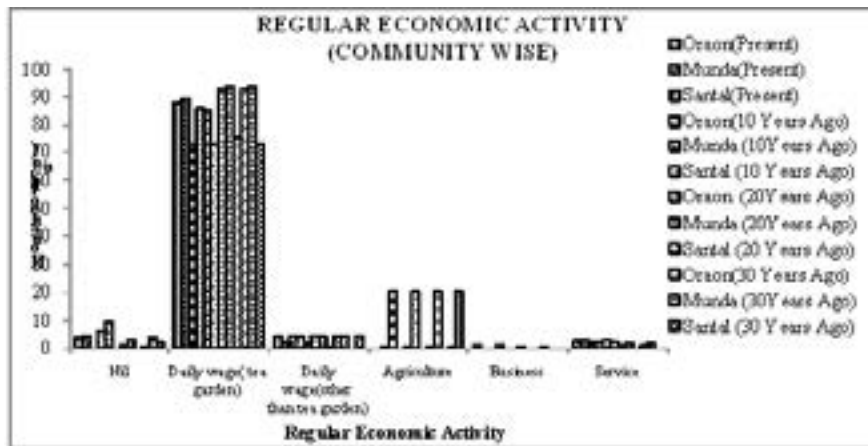
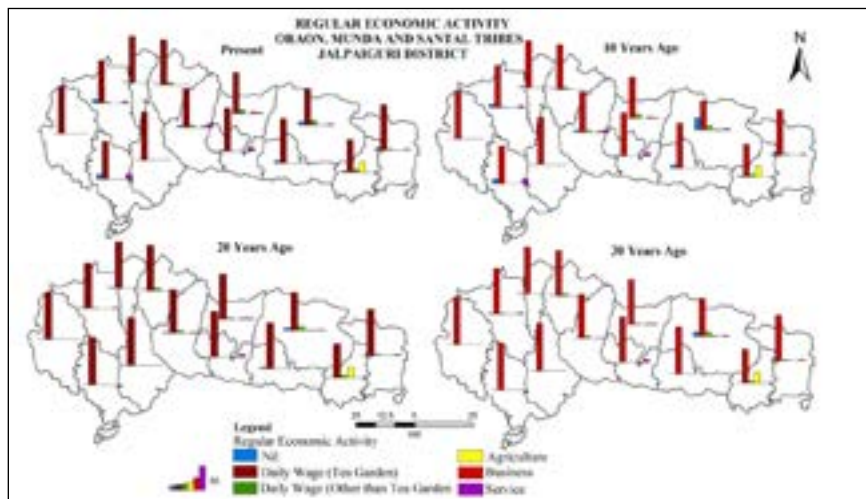


Fig. 1



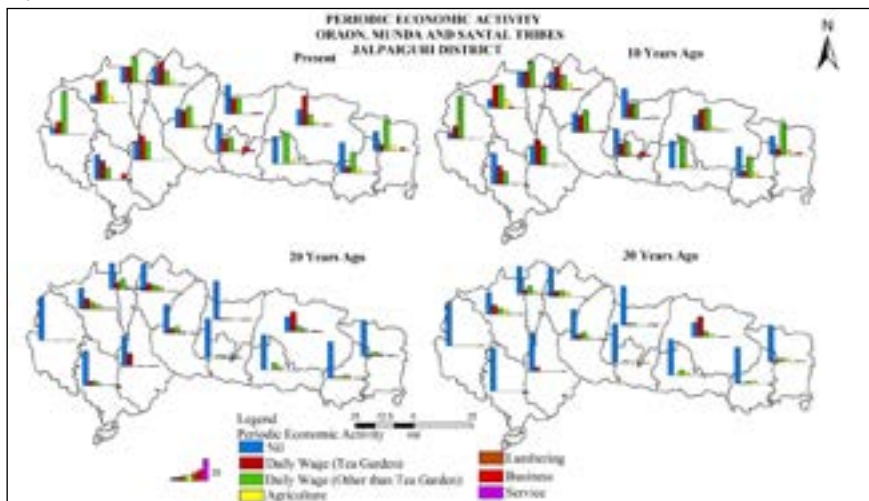
Map: 2

It is only Munda where the share of percentage has increased from 0 in 30 years ago, 0.63 in 20 years ago, 1.88 in 10 years ago to 2.50 at present. There is no change in the category agriculture in the last 30 years. It is found highest among the Santals (20.45%), the very little percentage among the Mundas (0.63%) and totally absent among the Oraons. Business is present among the Oraons (1.12%) to a little extent. It remained same 10 years ago. But change is noticed 20 and 30 years ago i.e.0.67 percent and 0.45 percent respectively. Service is highest among the Mundas at present since last 30 years. It is lowest among the Santals and about 20 and 30 years ago, it was totally absent among them (Fig. 1).

Periodic Economic Activity

Periodic economic activity is not done on regular basis. It can be a subsidiary occupation after primary or regular economic activity. But many households depend solely on

periodic economic activity for their sustenance. In the study area, it is observed that the percentage of households engaged in periodic economic activity has increased at present compared to last 30 years. About 30 years ago, the percentage of households who did not have any periodic economic activity was much higher than the present status which is implying that people are getting engaged in periodic economic activity now-a-days (67.69% in 30 years back to 30.92% at present). The only exception is noticed in the period of 10 years ago where the percentage decreased. About 10 years ago, the percentage was lower than the present in Kalchini block in that category. The reason is the closure of tea garden which has reopened in 2011 in Kalchini block. However, in the block Metiali, the percentage is less at present than what it was 10 years ago. The remaining blocks do not show any change in this category for last 10 years. While about 20 years ago, the percentage of households who didn't have any periodic economic activity was highest in Rajganj (100%) and lowest in Kalchini block (34.29%). The same blocks had the highest and lowest share of percentage 30 years ago too but there was one more block in highest category i.e. Jalpaiguri. The reason for involving in periodic economic activity may be due to uncertainty in tea garden wages and low wage. The percentage of households engaged in plantation labourer (daily wage labourer in tea garden) category in tea garden has increased than the previous decades. The highest percentage is noticed in Maynaguri and Kalchini blocks in 10 years, 20 years and 30 years ago respectively and in Alipurduar I block, this category is absent in all the three decades. Percentage of households who are wage labourers in non-tea garden sectors has also increased at present compared to what it was 20 and 30 years ago. The only exception is seen in 10 years ago when in this category the percentage is highest in all the three decades. The maximum percentage of households engaged in wage labourer in other than tea gardens is found in Kumargram and Metiali 10, 20 and 30 years ago and lowest in Jalpaiguri (10 years ago), Maynaguri, Falakata and Rajganj (20 years ago) and Rajganj, Jalpaiguri, Maynaguri and Falakata (30 years ago). Percentage of people engaged in agriculture did not vary to that extent (5.54% in 30 years ago to 5.69% at present). People practise agriculture in the lands of tea gardens which are legally not permitted. There is also little variation in the category of lumbering within 30 years. This category is only found in Mal block.



Map: 3

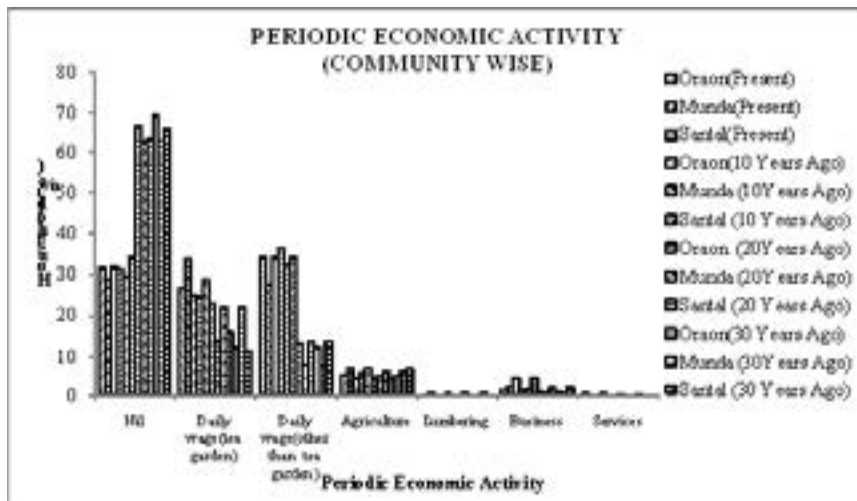


Fig: 2 (Based on Field Survey, 2014)

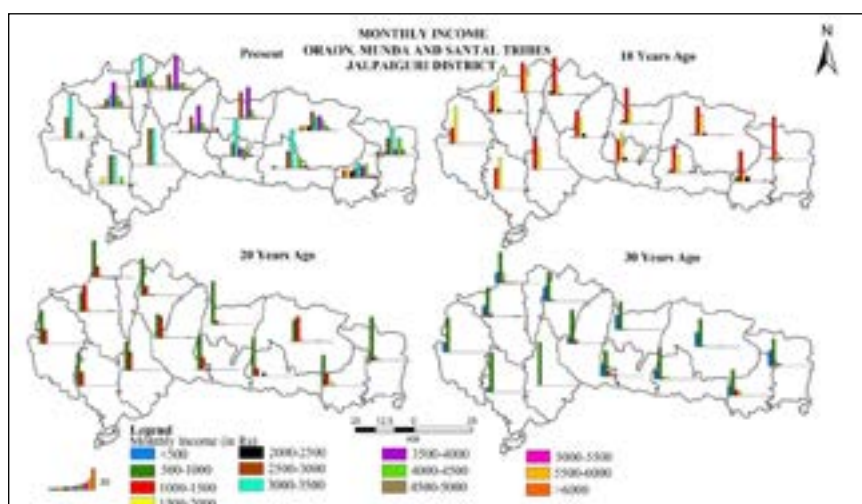
Business is a periodic economic activity of some households. The percentage in this category changed from 0.92 percent 30 years back to 2.15 percent at present. Service as a periodic economic activity is not very pronounced among them. Still, the percentage has increased from 0.15 percent to 0.31 percent at present. Since the last 10 years, the service category is found in Madarihat-Birpara and Falakata. Earlier, it was only present in Madarihat-Birpara block (Map: 3).

The share of the percentage of households engaged in the periodic economic activity is highest among the Mundas since the last 30 years. Daily wage labourer in tea garden is also highest among them since 30 years (21.88% in 30 and 20 years ago, 28.75 % in 10 years ago and 33.75 % at present). This category is found lowest in percentage among the Santals in 30 years ago (11.36%) and since the last 10 years (22.73% and 25.00% in 10 years ago and at present respectively). The only exception is seen about 20 years ago when the lowest share was noticed among the Oraons (13.68%).

The percentage of households engaged as wage labourers of the non-tea garden is highest among the Oraon at present and since last 10 years (34.30% and 36.32 % respectively) while before 20 and 30 years back Santals (13.64%) had the highest share in this category. Percentage of households engaged in agriculture is same for the tribes except for the Oraon what it was in 10 years ago. But the difference is marginal. It was higher than present (5.61 % in 10 years ago to 5.38%). About 20 years and 30 years ago, the highest percentage is noticed among the Munda (6.25%) and Santal (6.82%) respectively. Since 30 years the percentage of business is found highest among the Santals and lumbering is found only among the Mundas while service as a periodic economic activity is only found among the Oraons since 30 years but to a very small extent (Fig. 2).

Monthly Income

The scenario of monthly income is proving the fact that their economic condition is not good at all. At present the lowest limit of income is Rs.500-1000/month. About 84 percent household's income ranges between Rs.2500-4500/month (Map.4).



Map: 4

More than Rs. 6000/month is observed only in Metiali and Mal block. In this category, Munda accounts the highest percentage while Santals do not account for this category. In the income range of Rs.2500-4500/per month, highest share is of Maynaguri block and among the tribes Oraon accounts for the highest share. The lowest limit of the income category (Rs.500-1000/month) is observed only in Alipurduar I (2.94%) block and only found among the Oraons (0.22%). The scenario was different about 10 years ago when the concentration was observed in the income group Rs.1000-2000/month. Some blocks had 100 percent households under this category e.g. Metiali, Jalpaiguri, Rajganj and Maynaguri. Oraon community accounted the highest percentage in the same category. In that phase, another income group i.e. Rs.500-1000/month, the share was higher than present (0.15% at present and 2.92% about 10 years ago). The block which accounted the highest share of percentage in this category was Alipurduar II (10.26%) among the tribal communities Santals accounted the highest percentage of households (11.36%). The concentration of income was between Rs.500 to 1000/month about 20 years ago (64.15%). This percentage was highest in Kumargram block (91.07%) and within the tribes, it was highest among the Mundas (68.13%). More than 30 percent households had income between Rs.1000-1500 about 20 years ago and Mal block accounted maximum share in this category (52.22%). Among the three tribal communities (Fig. 3), Santal accounted the biggest share in the same category (9.09%). The highest level of income during this time had been found between Rs. 5000-5500. But it was only 0.31 percent. This category was only present among the Oraon tribe and in the blocks of Mal and Dhupguri. However, about 30 years ago also the highest concentration is found in the

same income group (Rs.500-1000/month) alike 20 years ago. In the block Maynaguri, it was 100% while Oraon community accounts for the highest percentage in this income group (69.73%). The highest income group was Rs. 5000-5500/month. It was only observed in Mal (1.11%) and Dhupguri (1.25%) blocks which were insignificant like 20 years ago. Only among Oraon community, this income group was present (0.45%).

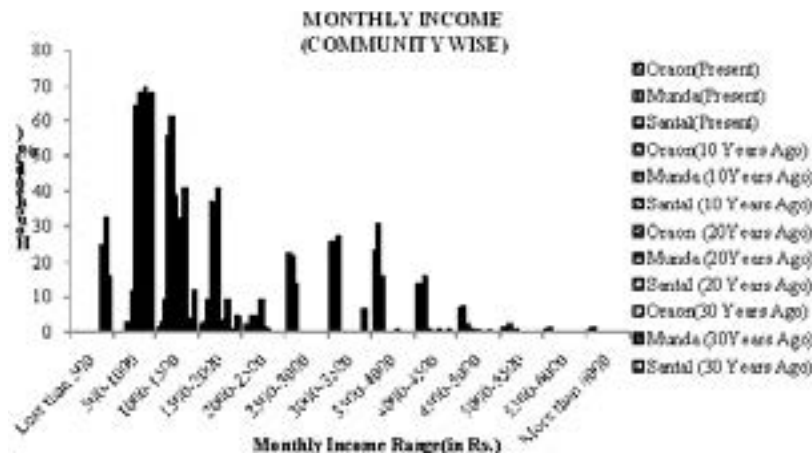


Fig: 3

Index of Economic Change based on Friedman's Test by Rank

For showing the change in economic condition the following indicators were chosen:

1. Regular Economic Activity
2. Periodic Economic Activity
3. Monthly income (in Rs)

On the basis of composite index of economic change, the whole district is divided into three distinct zones, zone of low economic change where the rank value is less than 0.85 comprising Alipurduar I, Alipurduar II, Nagrakata and Metiali; zone of moderate economic change where the rank values range between 0.85-0.95 include most of the blocks. Those are Mal, Dhupguri, Madarihat-Birpara, Kumargram, Falakata, Kalchini, Jalpaiguri and Maynaguri. In the category of high economic change, only one block is there i.e. Rajganj. Here it should be mentioned that, in Rajganj block, change is found the maximum in periodic economic activity and monthly income. On the other hand Alipurduar I and Alipurduar II (both of the block's rank value 0.82) showed the lowest rate of change among all the other blocks. Alipurduar II blocks showed a minimum change in periodic economic activity and monthly income within 30 years of time span (Table 1). This block is immediately followed by Alipurduar I block in these two parameters. Nagrakata and Metiali are two other blocks under the zone of low economic change. In these two blocks, the change is nil in regular economic activity within 30 years. Remaining blocks have shown moderate results in the economic change. Falakata,

Rajganj, Jalpaiguri and Maynaguri also did not register any change in regular economic activity. But these blocks have a high amount of change in periodic economic activity and monthly income. Mention should be done of Kalchini block which has shown a maximum change in regular economic activity. It is directly related to closing down of Kalchini Tea Garden. Within the three tribes, economic change is found highest among the Munda followed by Oraon and Santal. In regular and periodic economic activity, Munda tribe accounts the highest rate of change while in the income category change is found maximum among the Oraon tribe. Santal tribe has shown a minimum change in all the aspects except regular economic activity. Therefore, they accounted the lowest rate of change. But community wise change is not very sharp.



Map: 5

Table 1: Composite Index of Economic Change (Block Wise)

| Blocks | Regular Economic Activity | Periodic Economic Activity | Per capita income | Sum | Composite Index for economic change |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| Kalchini | 0.15 | 0.59 | 1.97 | 2.70 | 0.90 |
| Mal | 0.05 | 0.55 | 1.99 | 2.59 | 0.86 |
| Dhupguri | 0.08 | 0.53 | 1.97 | 2.58 | 0.86 |
| Madarihat-Birpara | 0.11 | 0.58 | 2.00 | 2.69 | 0.90 |
| Nagrakata | 0.00 | 0.51 | 1.99 | 2.50 | 0.83 |
| Kumargram | 0.03 | 0.70 | 2.00 | 2.73 | 0.91 |
| Metiali | 0.00 | 0.52 | 2.00 | 2.52 | 0.84 |
| Falakata | 0.00 | 0.65 | 2.00 | 2.65 | 0.88 |
| Alipurduar II | 0.04 | 0.48 | 1.94 | 2.46 | 0.82 |

| Blocks | Regular Economic Activity | Periodic Economic Activity | Per capita income | Sum | Composite Index for economic change |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| Alipurduar I | 0.03 | 0.49 | 1.95 | 2.47 | 0.82 |
| Jalpaiguri | 0.00 | 0.73 | 2.00 | 2.73 | 0.91 |
| Rajganj | 0.00 | 1.20 | 2.00 | 3.20 | 1.07 |
| Maynaguri | 0.00 | 0.67 | 2.00 | 2.67 | 0.89 |

Based on Friedman's Test by rank

Table 2: Composite Index of Economic Change (Community Wise)

| Community | Regular economic activity | Periodic economic activity | Monthly income | Sum | Composite Index of Economic Change |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|------|------------------------------------|
| Oraon | 0.03 | 0.51 | 1.99 | 2.53 | 1.27 |
| Munda | 0.07 | 0.53 | 1.98 | 2.58 | 1.29 |
| Santal | 0.04 | 0.5 | 1.96 | 2.50 | 1.25 |

Based on Friedman's Test by Rank

Conclusion

The scenario of the economy of these tribes is not showing any healthy sign. These migrated tribes were the victims of the situation created by the British and continued by the non-tribal population of the region. Despite closing down of the tea gardens, less wage, delay in wage, provision of inferior quality of ration, the tendency to shift to another economic activity is not prominent. Other than their main occupation as garden labourers, very minimum population is doing service or business though the change is very marginal. Due to the introduction of MGNREGA, people are working as labourers under different projects. But the number of working days is less and the delay to get the wage is also another problem. Their limited education is another hindrance to shift to any other economic activity. Another fact is related to the revision of wage rate which takes place after each 3-4 years, but it is not in accordance with the present economic condition of the country. The monthly income of the tribes is very low. In some households, where the income range is between Rs.5000 to 6000, their number of family members is large. It is very difficult to meet the basic demand of life with this meagre amount of wage. Those who are practicing agriculture and not residing in the tea garden villages, survive on agriculture at subsistence level till now. Commercial farming is rare among them. Therefore, it can be said that the change is observed among these tribes but the scenario of economic upliftment is rare to be seen.

