

Chapter 4

Setting and Social Ecology

In a social science research of this kind, it is not possible to know and understand the data and to draw the conclusion more accurately unless a fair understanding of the characteristics of the area and complex nature of human behavior and attitude is being interpreted. Therefore it is a pre condition to be familiar with the socio-demographic background of the respondents which helps in understanding their behavioral complex. So this chapter is intended to present a brief description of the area in terms of social, economical and agricultural aspects where the present study has been conducted namely in Cooch Behar district.

Area of the study

The area of investigation is situated in the state of West Bengal located in the eastern part of India. The State of West Bengal in eastern India has a unique social, cultural and ecological background, which influence the living standard and behavioral patterns of the people in many ways. The area of investigation belongs to the Shitalkhuchi block of the Cooch Behar district. The area of the study is comprised of villages namely Chengerkuthi Khalisamari, Jatamari, Choto Khalisamari under Khalisamari gram panchyate.

Profile of the State West Bengal

The name of Bengal, or 'Bangla', is derived from the ancient kingdom of Vanga, or Banga. References to it occur in early Sanskrit literature, but its early history is obscure until the 3rd century BC, when it formed part of the extensive Mauryan Empire inherited by Aśoka. With the decline of Mauryan power, anarchy once more supervened.

Geography

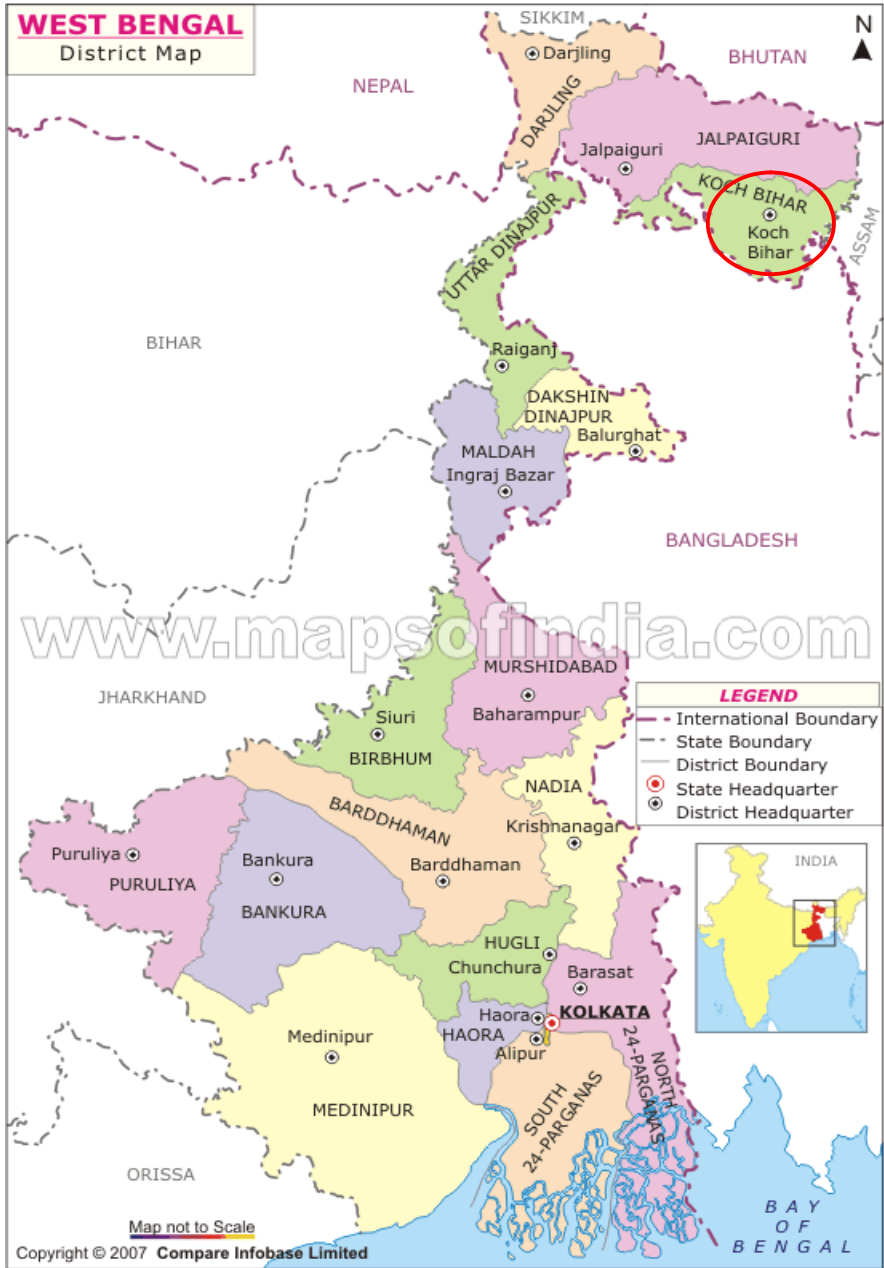
West Bengal was created as a one of the constituent state of the Indian union among the 29th states in India on 15th August 1947 as the result of partition of the undivided British Indian province of Bengal into West Bengal. The state is situated in the North Eastern part of India and lies between 27°13'15" and 21°25'24" north latitudes and 85°48'20" and 89°53'04" east longitudes.

West Bengal flanked by the bottle neck of India in the east, stretching from Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south. It is bounded on the north by Sikkim, on the east by Assam, on the south by the Bay of Bengal and on the west by Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand. It has common borders with the, three international frontiers-to the north, east and west namely Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal respectively. The tropic of cancer runs across the middle of the state and passes through four district viz. Bankura, Burdwan, Nadia and Purulia.

In 1947 when India became independent Bengal was partitioned between India and Pakistan. India's share came to be known as West Bengal and Pakistan's share was called East Pakistan. Later, the state of Cooch Behar, French enclave of Chandranagore and some parts of Bihar were added to West Bengal. Bengal represents the land that possesses a distinct culture with its indigenous art and crafts and makes it an important part of the Indian Union.

According to the 2001 census its present population of this state is 8,01,76,197 in which about 72% are living in rural areas and 28% are living in urban areas. The sex ratio and population density of the state are 934 and 903/ sq. km (as against the national average of 312) respectively. The population growth of the state is 17.77%. The literacy rate of West Bengal is 68.66% (including male literacy 77.58% and female literacy 59.22%).

The state has a total geographical area of 88,752 sq km representing only 2.7 % of the total area of India and area wise position is 13th in the India. The total reported area of West Bengal is 86,87,450 ha. Including this the total cultivable area is 58,12,686 ha. And Forest area is 1,17,477 ha. It is territorially divided into 19 districts like CoochBehar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Hoogly, Howrah, Nadia, Birbhum, Burdwan, Bankura, Purulia, 24 Pargana(N), 24 Pargana(S), Purba Midnapur, Pashim Midnapur and Kolkata. There are more than 341 Community Development Blocks in West Bengal and around 3354 Gram Panchayats and more than 40,782 villages in West Bengal.



Profile of the Cooch Behar District

Figure 1: District Map of West Bengal

In course of time, Cooch Behar has been transformed from a kingdom to a State and from a State to the present status of a district. Before 28th August 1949, Cooch Behar was a Princely State ruled by the king of Cooch Behar, who had been a feudatory ruler under British Government. By an agreement dated 28th August, 1949 the king of Cooch Behar ceded full and extensive authority, jurisdiction and power of the state to the Dominion Government of India. The transfer of administration of the state to the Govt. of India came into force on 12th September, 1949. Eventually, Cooch Behar was transferred and merged with the province of West Bengal on 19th January, 1950 and from that date Cooch Behar emerged as a new District in the administrative map of West Bengal. In fact, being the place of the Raj (monarchy), the district captures the bygone glorious past in the moods of local people even today.

Location

North-Eastern part of West Bengal bounded by the districts of Alipurduar in the north and Jalpaiguri in the north-west, state of Assam in the east (bounded by the districts of Kokrajhar and Dhubri in Assam) and the International Border in the form of Indo-Bangladesh boundary in the south-west, south and south-east. Beside this bounded area there are enclaves (called Chhits) which are outlying and detached tracts of land situated inside Bangladesh. There are 110 such Chhits. Cooch Behar district lies between 25°57'47" and 26°36'20" North Latitude ; between 88°47'44" and 89°54'35" East Longitude. The District Headquarter lies between 26°19'86"N Latitude and 89°23'53"E Longitude. The Area of the district is 3387 sq km, which contributes 3.82 percent of the land mass of the State of West Bengal. Cooch Behar is essentially a flat country with a slight south-eastern slope along which the main rivers of the district flow. Most of the high lands appertain to Sitalkuchi area and most of the low lands lie in Dinhata area. The soil is alluvial of very recent formation. It is mostly sandy and loose. The surface soil is loam and hardly any good clay is found.

Boundary

The Cooch Behar district is located in the north-eastern part of the state under the Jalpaiguri Division of the state of West Bengal and bounded by the district of Jalpaiguri in the north, state of Assam in the east and the international border in the form of Indo-Bangladesh boundary in the south as well as in the west.

Climate

A highly humid atmosphere and abundant rains characterize the climate of this district, with the temperature being seldom excessive. The Period from June to Beginning of October is south-west monsoon season. October to mid-November constitutes post monsoon season. Cold season being November to February and hot season being March to May. In January temperature varying between 10.4°C to 24.1°C, April is the hottest month with mean daily maximum of 32.5°C and mean daily minimum of 20.2°C. Lowest temperature up to 3.9°C and maximum temperature up to 39.9°C have been recorded.

Rainfall

Average annual rainfall in the district is 3,201.3 mm. The rainfall generally increases from the south-west to the north-east. About 70% of the annual rainfall is received during the southwest monsoon season, June being the rainiest month. On an average there are about 102 rainy days with records of more than 400 mm rainfall in 24 hours.

Geographical situation

Table 1: Geographical situations of Coochbehar District: At a glance

SI No	Specification	Area/population
1	Total Geographical area (ha)	3,31,566 ha or 3387 sq km (3.82% of the State)
2	No. of Blocks	12 Number
3	No. of Gram Panchayats	128 Number

4	No. of villages	1188 Number
5	Total cultivable area	2, 64,984 ha. (79.92 % of the total area)
6	Total Irrigated area	64775 ha
7	Area of forest (ha)	3.15 ('000 ha) or 56.99 Sq Km
8	No. of Total Population	24, 79, 155 (as per 2001 census)
9	No. of rural population	22, 53, 537 (as per 2001 census)
10	No. of urban population	2, 25, 618 (as per 2001 census)
11	No. of male populations	12, 72, 094 (as per 2001 census)
12	No. of female populations	12, 07, 061 (as per 2001 census)
13	Total Cultivators	2,90,598 Number
14	Density of population/km ²	732
15	Sex ratio (per thousand male)	914

Source: The official website of West Bengal (<http://www.coochbehar.gov.in>)

Rivers

The rivers flow in a slanting course from north-west to south-east. Six river systems cut through the district flowing in a south-easterly direction. From the west to east these are: the Tista system, Jaldhaka system, Torsa, Kaljani, Raidak and Gadadhar system. Some notable rivers are:

Table 2: Rivers of Coochbehar district

1. Dharla	7. Mansai
2. Dudua	8. Raidak - I
3. Gadadhar	9. Raidak - II
4. Ghargharia	10. Sankosh
5. Jaldhaka	11. Teesta
6. Kaljani	12. Torsa

Agricultural Situation

Favorable climate helps agricultural activity as main source of income. The main crops are rice, wheat, jute and Mustard. This districts is familiar with fruit and vegetables and fruit production through the year. Wheat is one of the most important cereal crops in

Rabi season; Pulse is another important cereal crop and attempt has been taken to increase the productivity as well as production; this district is marginally surplus in rice production.

Table 3: Development Blocks or Panchayat Samities in Coochbehar district

SI No	Name of the Blocks
1	Cooch Behar – I
2	Cooch Behar – II
3	Dinhata - I
4	Dinhata - II
5	Haldibari
6	Mathabhanga - I
7	Mathabhanga - II
8	Mekhliganj
9	Sitai
10	Sitalkuchi
11	Tufanganj - I
12	Tufanganj – II

Source: The official website of Coochbehar district (<http://www.coochbehar.gov.in>)

- Number of Gram Panchayats : 128
- Number of Gram Sansads : 1714
- Number of Inhabited Villages : 1132
- Number of Mouzas : 1202
- Number of Municipalities : 6
- Number of Police Stations : 11
- Number of Panchayat Samities: 12

Table 4: Distribution of rural population of Coochbehar District

Dev. Block	No. of Households	Total Population	Male	Female
Cooch Behar - I	68,419	2,93,267	1,51,337	1,41,930
Cooch Behar - II	67,496	2,89,917	1,51,946	1,37,971
Dinhata - I	66,528	2,81,890	1,45,325	1,36,565
Dinhata - II	60,896	2,44,066	1,26,663	1,17,403
Haldibari	24,238	1,03,969	52,851	51,118
Mathabhanga - I	49,786	2,18,191	1,12,497	1,05,694
Mathabhanga - II	50,902	2,27,397	1,17,100	1,10,297
Mekhliganj	36,007	1,50,767	77,801	72,966
Sitai	26,647	1,10,333	56,016	54,317
Sitalkuchi	42,587	1,85,353	94,277	91,076
Tufanganj - I	59,091	2,43,256	1,25,672	1,17,584
Tufanganj - II	43,430	1,81,246	93,431	87,815
Rural Total	5,96,027	25,29,652	13,04,916	12,24,736

Source: The official website of Coochbehar district (<http://www.coochbehar.gov.in>)

Education

The education system of Cooch Behar district is very enriched and it is maintained by the total 1805 Primary Schools, 120 High Schools, 61 Higher Secondary Schools, 5 High Madrasa, 2 Sr. Madrasa, 16 Jr. High Madrasa, 60 Jr. High School, 2 Engineering or Technical Schools, 16 Professional & Tech. Schools, 9 General College, 2 University namely Uttar Banga Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya and Manishi Panchanan barma Vishwa Vidyalaya, 1 Blind School and 110 Libraries. The Literacy rate of this district is 69.22% (Male: 75.9 and Female: 56.1).

Health

The health condition is maintained by the total 10 hospitals including one district hospital, four sub-divisional hospitals and total 391 health centres. The birth rate is 20.60 (per 1000 population). The

death and infant mortality rate of the district is 7.10 and 50 respectively.

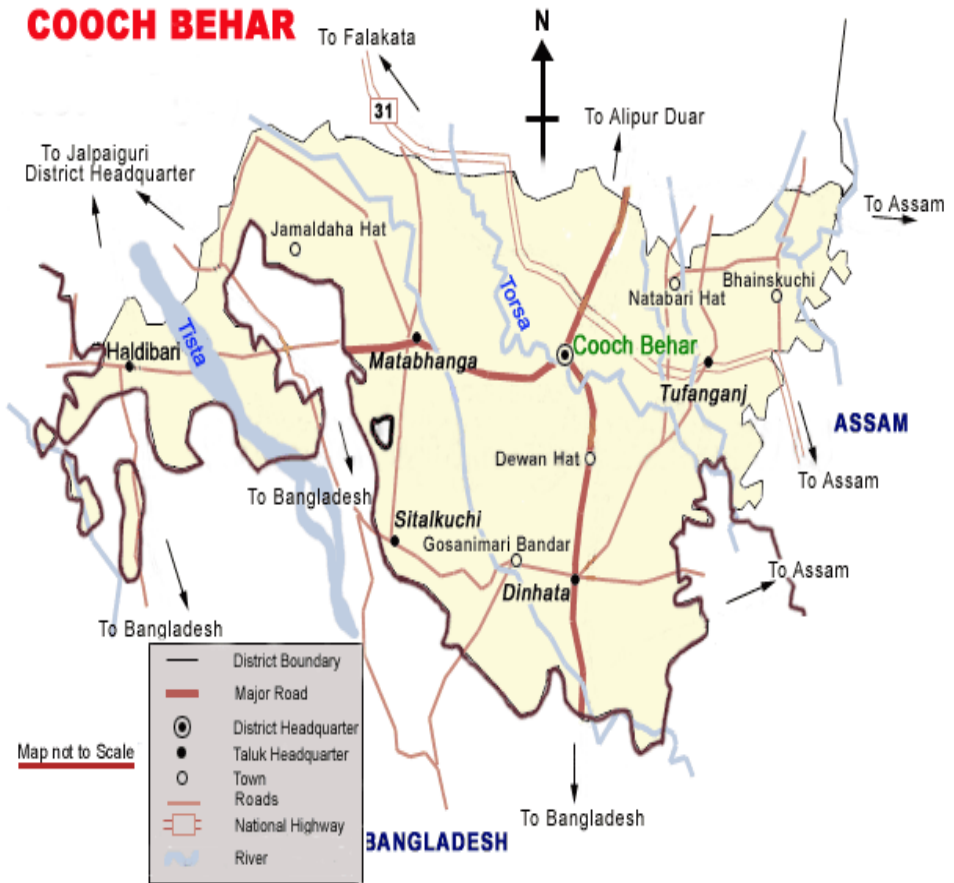


Figure: 2 Map of Coochbehar District

Profile of shitalkuchi block

Sitalkuchi (Community Development Block) is an administrative division in Mathabhanga Sub-Division of Coochbehar district in the the state of West Bengal. Sitalkuchi police station serves this block. Headquarters of this block is at Sitalkuchi.

Geography

Sitalkuchi is located at 26°10'N 89°11'E. Sitalkuchi Community Development Block has an area of 101.53 km². This block has 70 number of Mouza.

Gram panchayats

Gram panchayats of Sitai Block/ Panchayat Samiti are: Bara Koimari, Bhawerthana, Chhoto Salbabari, Golenaohati, Gosairhat, Khalisamari, Lalbazar and Sitalkuchi.

Demography

As per 2001 census, Sitalkuchi block had a total population of 163,802, out of which 84,477 were males and 79,325 were females. Sitalkuchi block registered a population growth of 7.81 percent during the 1991-2001 decade. Decadal growth for the district was 14.15 percent. Decadal growth in West Bengal was 17.84 percent.

Literacy

Sitalkuchi block had a literacy rate of 57.79 percent - males 68.43 percent and females 46.37 percent.

Table 5: Land use pattern of Shitalkhuchi block

Net area under cultivated in acres	54,880.91 (acres)
Area under Pasture, Orchard etc (in acres)	9884
Cultivated waste land	1581.44
Barren Land	148.26
Forestland	141.26
Area of vested Land	5310.58
Amount of Land Distribution there of	4433.535

Source: Block office

Table 6: Source of Irrigation of Shitalkhuchi block

Type of Facilities	Numbers	Area Benefited
Cannels	2	55 acres
Tanks	27	600 acres
RLI	8	505 acres

Source: Block office

Table 7: Co-operative Societies in Sitalkuchi Block

No of Primary Agricultural Co-operative Society (SKVS)	22 Numbers
No of Primary Agricultural Marketing Society (CAMS)	1 Numbers
No of Employees Credit Co-operative Societies	12 Numbers
No of Unemployed Engineer's Co-operative Societies	2 Numbers
No of Labour Contract & Construction Co-operative Society	1 Numbers

Source: Block office

Table 8: Educational Institutions in Sitalkuchi Block

Primary School	124 Numbers
Upper Primary School	21 Numbers
High School	13 Numbers
Madrassa	6 Numbers
Rural Library	6 Numbers
Collage	1 Numbers
MSK	7 Numbers
SSK	38 Numbers
NCLP	1 Numbers
S.H.G (SGSY)	1446 (BPL) Numbers

Source: Gram Panchayat office

Salient Features of Sitalkuchi Block

- Total Area: 101.53 sq. km.
- Rural Area : 101.53 sq. km,
- Urban Area: 0.00 sq. km.
- Agricultural Land: 22,210 ha (cultivable)
- Population total -1, 63,802
- Population Male -84,477
- Population Female -79,325
- Density of Population - 1613
- Child population (0 - 6 years) :

- Male: 14,504
- Female: 14,150
- Total -28,654
- Main Source of Income:-Agriculture
- Total Area available for cultivation: 22,210 hectare

Table 9 Gram Panchyates under Sitalkuchi Block

SI No.	Name of Gram Panchayat
1	Bara Koimari
2	Bhawerthana
3	Chhoto Salbari
4	Golenaohati
5	Gosairhat
6	Khalisamari
7	Lalbazar
8	Sitalkuchi

Source: Gram Panchayat office

Table 10: Population of Khalisamari Gram Panchyate (Census 2011)

Name of Villages	No. of Household	Total Population	Total Male	Total Female
Sonarchalun	610	2775	1435	1340
Sangarbari	264	1140	592	548
Morebhanga	162	811	434	377
Mahishmuri	1017	4929	2599	2330
Madhyam Madhusudan	181	811	405	406
Khasbas Khalisamari	459	2131	1079	1052
Jatamari	506	2314	1205	1109
Chhota Khalisamari	126	597	322	275
Chhota Madhusudan	165	798	420	378
Chengerkuthi Khalisamari	725	3438	1774	1664
Khochabari	45	182	89	93
Total	4260	19926	10354	9572

Source: Gram Panchayat office

Salient features of Khalisamari Gram Panchyate

- Total no of BPL beneficiary -2158 No's (As per 1997)
- No's of Post office - 4
- No's of Primary School -18
- No's of Higher Secondary School -2
- No's of Junior High School -1
- No's of Higher Madrasa -1
- No's of Sishu siksa Kendra-5
- No's of MSK -1
- No's of Literacy Centre - 50
- No's of Anganwari Centre -27
- No's of Primary Health Centre - 4
- No's of Animal Husbandry -1
- No's of Hat (Market) -5

Table 11: Chengerkuthi Village at a glance

Total Population	3438 Number
Male	1774 Number
Female	1664 Number
Total no of House hold	725 Number
Shisu Siksha Kendra	1 Number
No. of Higher Secondary school	1 Number
No. of ICDS centre	3 Number
No. of primary health centre	1 Number

Source: Gram Panchayat office

Table 12: Choto Khalisamari Village at a glance

Total Population	597 Number
Male	322 Number
Female	275 Number
Total no of House hold	125 Number
Shisu Siksha Kendra	1 Number

Source: Gram Panchayat office

Table 13: Jatamari Village at a glance

Total Population	2314 Number
Male	1205 Number
Female	1190 Number
Total no of House hold	505 Number
Shisu Siksha Kendra	1 Number
No. post office	1 Number
No. of ICDS centre	3 Number
No. of primary health centre	1 Number

Source: Gram Panchayat office