Chapter 2

The Field and its social composition

This chapter attempts to describe the field of the study, namely the Jharia coalfields of Jharkhand. In this chapter, one therefore seeks to elucidate the basic features of the field such as the demography, geography, social composition and the residence pattern. One will pay attention to the multi ethnic, multi caste and multi tribal composition of the field. While one will take a look at the different patterns of migration that have taken place, the central focus will be on the working class. The social composition of the field will help identify the different groups of people living in Jharia. The different sections of people who migrated to Jharia came from various socio economic and cultural backgrounds. They therefore had different educational backgrounds and cultural resources at hand. This necessarily implied that they were drawn to different kinds of work in the mining industry. This study will repeatedly draw attention to the manner in which socio economic inequalities had a tendency to be reproduced. Therefore the proportion of tribals in unskilled work would necessarily be higher than the proportion of upper caste people. The reverse would be true in the case of managerial or business activities. Given the fact that tribal women would be least skilled and least educated their location within the mining industry would be vulnerable.

2.1 The Field

One is attempting to describe the field under four broad categories;

- The physical terrain
- Residential pattern
- Socio composition of the field
- Migration pattern
2.1.1 Physical Terrain

Jharia is the fifteenth largest town, and is a major coalfield in the state of Jharkhand, eastern India. Jharia is a block level town of Dhanbad district where coalmining activities are carried out. District headquarter of Dhanbad is around 8 km from Jharia and is the main township of the region. Jharia is located in Dhanbad between latitude 23° 39' to 23° 48' N and longitude 86° 11' to 86° 27' E. Kolkata is situated at a distance of 250km. in the northwest of Jharia and Delhi is located at a distance of 1150 km. southeast of Jharia. This colliery center is situated approximately 170 km. from Jamshedpur. Located on the outskirts of Dhanbad the nearest railway station from Jharia is the Dhanbad Junction Railway Station.

The demography and Geographical area of the study region is as under :-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Population (as per 1991 census)</th>
<th>Area (acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>432839</td>
<td>32204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govindpur</td>
<td>157881</td>
<td>76114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>426415</td>
<td>22709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katras</td>
<td>37520</td>
<td>52806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baliapur</td>
<td>84802</td>
<td>46204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coalfield lies in the Damodar River Valley, and covers about 110 square miles (280 square km), and produces bituminous coal suitable for coke. Most of India's coal comes from Jharia. Jharia coalmines are India's most important storehouse of prime coke coal used in blast furnaces. They consist of twenty three large underground and nine large open cast mines.

This is the most ‘exploited’ coalfield because of available metallurgical grade coal reserves. One uses the term ‘exploited’ deliberately to refer to the haphazard, dangerous and ruthless extraction of coal which takes place in Jharia. Mining in this coalfield was initially in the hands of private entrepreneurs, who had limited resources and lack of desire for scientific mining. The mining method comprised of both opencast as well as underground. The opencast mining areas were not filled back; large craters lie everywhere.
which are mute witnesses to abandoned mining. Local people often describe these abandoned mines as ‘Khadda or khai’. Extraction of thick seams of coal in the past at shallow depth has damaged the ground surface in the form of subsidence and formation of pot holes or cracks right up to the surface, enhanced the chances of spontaneous heating of coal seams and mine fire. This coalfield is engulfed with about 70 mine fires, spread over an area of 17.32 sq. km., blocking 636 million tones of coking coal and 1238 million tones of non-coking coal. Around 34.97 sq. km. area of the Jharia coalfield is under subsidence. It is mentioned in Jharia coalfield reconstruction program that 70% of the underground production of coal would come by caving and balance 30% by stowing and thus about 101 sq. km. underground mining area would be affected by subsidence. The other factor, which damages the land in Jharia coalfield, is opencast mining and overburden dumps (envfor.nic.in/divisions/cltech/Damodar/3.1.htm).

*Photograph 2.1 Large craters due to aggressive mining*
Jharia is famous for its rich coal resource. Coal from Jharia is used to make Coke. Jharia plays a very important role in the economy & development of the city of Dhanbad, and can almost be considered as a part of Dhanbad City. Jharia presents a picture of stark visual contrast with devastated mines on one side and the scenic beauty on the other.

*Photograph 2.2 Caters formed due to Open caste Mining*

*Photograph 2.3 Hills and Forest in the Mining town*
Having described the mining area, the craters and the scenic beauty of the place, one now would like to focus on the settlement colonies, the places where the miners lead their everyday lives (temples, churches, marketplaces, schools,) and so on.

Readers would notice that there is a certain convergence between the socio economic composition of the settlers and the residential pattern. This chapter begins with a focus on the Residential pattern before moving on to the socio composition of the field.

2.1.2 The Residential pattern

There are 14 Urban and 113 Rural settlements, e.g. Jharia, a part of Dhanbad town, Karkend, Katras, Digwadih, Chasnala, Patherdih, etc. All constructions in these settlements
are either Kutcha (mud construction) or Puccka (cemented) single or double storey structure without basements in general. There are only a few multistory buildings.

The Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) had built quarters in the mining town in some 57,000 and 62,000 units in 1985. Most of these houses are in a dilapidated condition due to the lack maintenance. These houses are built in long rows. The rows are often arranged face to face with a broad street in between. In some areas the houses are built facing the back of each other. Some are with the rows of houses with streets in between two rows, crossing each other at right angles. Some of the houses are arranged in rows one above the other like terraces and all the rows face to the same view. All these houses are of different type and are categorised as A, B, C and D. Type A and B are for the top level managers and officials. Type C is for the supervisors and the Type D is for the lower grade workers mostly who are tribals. The houses are not very well planned and are therefore quite precariously constructed. There is a colony of workers who have managed to build their own houses. These houses are kutcha houses and not well planned either.

*Photograph 2.5 Water supply for cooking and washing clothes*
The one room units in these houses consist of single rooms covered with corrugated-iron roofs in one third of the cases, and flats with two small rooms in a majority of the other cases are there, these two room set have electricity and running water facility. These small dwellings of 2.5 by 5.0 metres, in which miners, labourers of different status, vendors, and providers of services reside. The absence of windows and electricity in roughly two-thirds of the dwelling-houses is a severe problem and the distance from the source of drinking water and the main road is too far.

The Supervisors and the foremen benefit from better lodgings in small blocks of flats or group of houses, situated in slightly better localities. These houses comprise of two or four rooms and have annexes (balcony, kitchen). The houses have walls of untreated mud or fired bricks and are covered with tile roofs. Certain economically better off persons also have houses built for subletting out to tenants.
The slums (juggi basti) of those coming seasonally to the mining basin, and the shelters of the poorest and most recent arrivals are also there. The genuine and large shanty town is rare, even though one finds near the Birsa bridge or at naya duniya, for example, clusters of huts made of crates, sheet metal and pieces of polyethylene. The most common of these is the minuscule (one by two metres) mud hut covered with whatever they find and constructed by people themselves.

Some house are built in the ditches along the main road, other are crowded against the walls of the factories and yet others beside the ballast of the railway and next to rubbish dumps.
All the type D houses have single doors. On rare occasion there may be small back door which remain in line with the front door. The space inside the house is divided mainly into two parts one very dark and the other more lighted. But overall very little light enters these houses. The one room house is used for cooking, sleeping and storing. There is one small window in the house which makes the house look dark and smoky throughout the day. Type C houses are 2 room houses and little advanced than the type D. Type A and B are the much better with 3 rooms, kitchen, verandah and a backspace for kitchen gardening. There is another enclosure in the courtyard in which chicken, pigs, goats, sheep, etc., are kept. The ‘Adivasis’ plaster the walls and floors of the house with cow dung and colour and keep their houses neat and clean unlike the houses of other castes belonging to the same status.

Most of the houses have a television, a huge cassette player and loud speaker so that the whole colony can listen to Hindi film songs all day long, a huge aluminum trunk that is
half empty, walls full of pictures of film stars, photos of friends and family in fancy, decorated frames, and a neat pile of shiny, spotlessly clean steel and aluminum utensils. The rooms are totally dominated by a huge double bed, clothing hanging on nails, and, again, the walls plastered with film stars. Workers of grade D (lowest grade) lead a very simple life with bare necessities in their houses, workers of grade C and B are modern in their living style. They have a household full of expensive gadgets.

Photograph 2.9: An outside view of santhali's house

They have khats (bedsteads) of the size of 4' x 2 ½' x 1 ½' which are cross-woven with strings of jungle fibres. The reason for the smallness in size is a continuation of the superstitious belief among them that the man would die if his legs are not outstretched beyond the cot. This cot is also used for sitting outside and for drying grain. Most of the houses have a *machia* of 2' x 1 ½' x 1' cross-woven with strings jungles fibres which is used for sitting. They have *pidha* to sit on the ground floor which is made from the local
wood. Wealthy people use tables, chairs, or benches. Generally the Santhals put their few clothes and beddings on *algani* which is a piece of bamboo hung from the ceiling with strings. Cooking earthen pots, earthen pots containing ghee, oil, etc., and cooked food are either kept on the *takthas* (wooden planks fitted on the walls), on the wall or on shikar which is made of ropes of jungle fibres and suspended from the ceiling. Earthen pots are usually used in the kitchen. They cook on hand made stoves.

*Photograph 2.10 Chullah the handmade stove used in every house for cooking*
The valuables are kept in earthen pots and buried in the floor at a place which is known only to the head of the family. They use thali, katora, glass of metals and karahi, chholni, etc., of iron.

Most of the BCCL houses do not have direct water facility and the people fetch water from a single source which is a common point or water tanker provides water in every galis. Institutions like schools, hospitals, post office, aganvadis center are there in every mohallas and they cater to the needs of local people.
Photograph 2.12 Public Tap for Drinking Water
2.2 Social composition of the Field

One has already mentioned in the previous chapter that the intersection of different castes, tribes, ethnic group played an important role in the trade union movement and forming of 'we feeling' among the working class.

Dhanbad has a major concentration of Hindu Population, followed by Muslim population. Further, populations belong to schedule caste/tribe and rest to other backward classes. The attitude of the tribals and non tribals people towards each other are very different. Majority of the population are from Bihar, besides them Bengalis are also living here followed by Marwaris and Punjabis. Large number of people of eastern Uttar Pradesh, MP and Orissa are also settled in Dhanbad.
The significance of the 26 “most numerous castes in the Jharia Coalfields”, was the preponderance of what is termed the ‘aboriginals’ and ‘semi aboriginals’\(^\text{14}\) (48.8%)-Bauris, Bhuiyans, Kurmis, Ghatwals and Turis; the “Depressed Classes” (20.2%)- Chamars, Doms, Dusadhs, and Musahars; and the traditional peasants, labouring or artisan castes including Beldars, Goalas, Telis, Julahas, Lohars, Koeris (22%). In the first category, the larger Adivasi tribal groups such as the Hos, Mundas, Oraons, Bhumij, etc., were noticeable by their absence, the only exception being the Santhals. Only four castes were of ‘high’ status, (8.8%), viz: Brahmins, Rajputs, Pathans, and Kayasths. The largest single tribes were Santhals (13.3%), Bhuiyans (11.8%), Bauris (11.7%), and Chamars (9.4%) (Simeon, 1995). It is noteworthy that there has been gradual hinduisation even amongst the santhals in the sasdar subdivision of the original district of manbhum. In this district gravitation towards Hinduism is apparent from the names that the santhals have begun to adopt. It appears that where the pressure of Hinduism was great, even though the santhal had been numerous they did try to emulate the customs and life styles of the dominant upper caste hindu , though there seems to have been no inclination on the part of the Hindus to take them into their fold . It is noted that where a tribe converted itself into a caste, the caste tended to remain depressed. This tendency is noticed everywhere, and those tribes who have claimed themselves to be hinduised, have invariably been in the lowest rung of the Hindu ladder because of the fact that the Hindu society till the present decade showed an extreme unwillingness to admit any other race or tribe into their fold. A large section of the tribals of Chota Nagpur have converted to Christianity .However there is evidence of some groups who are highly Hinduised and profess to be Hindus like the Kurmis Mahtos, the Bauris, Bhuiyans. The Turi who generally used to adopt the profession of drummers and instrument men are another set of depressed classes within the Hindu fold who need some consideration. They divide themselves in this district into Maghaya Turi and Bangla Turi indicating that quite a lot of them are settlers from the eastern Magha (district of Hazaribagh, Gaya and Patna) country while the other variety is from Bengal . In the upper caste group the Hindus form the majority of the population. Next to the Hindus

\(^{14}\) One has to keep in mind the debate about the term ‘aboriginals’ and ‘semi aboriginals’ by Prof Xaxa in the “Indegenious Group”.

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are the Muslims, Sikhs, the Christians and Anglo-Indians who form only small minority groups.

The original settlers were the tribals and the other people who came from nearby places were Bengalis, Biharis, Punjabis, Marwaris. The Bengalis being educated opted for clerical or managerial jobs, the Punjabis and the Marwaris were into business and trading (textile or food business) and Biharis were employed as the security guards in the mines also called the lathaiths or the musclemen, who also worked as money lenders. It is alleged that thousands of telegrams were sent from Dhanbad to Arrah, Ballia and Chapra districts (Bhojpur) informing people there that jobs were available in the coalmines (Sengupta 1982: 15).

As is evident from the above account that the socio composition of Jharia is horizontally and vertically divided. In other words, there are different tribal groups as well as low caste groups vying with each other for the very few permanent manual jobs available. It should already be evident from the above account that educated upper caste would avoid such jobs unless forced to. Therefore there are concentration of tribal and the lower caste on the lower end of the mining jobs.

The issues related to the multiple identities of the workers in Jharkhand provide us an opportunity for reviewing the role of ethnicity within the labour movement. ‘Adivasis’ formed the bulk of the coolie proletariat (Mohapatra 1985). The self definition of ‘Adivasi’ was a reflex of the humiliation commonly experienced by Hos, Mudas, Santhals and Oraons in the fields, mines and factories, at the hands of the aliens. Disputes over Singhbhum and Manbhum had affected relations between Biharis, Oriyas and the Bengalis Congressmen for over a decade (1910-1950). An ethnic-tribal identity for Chota Nagpur had been asserted since the beginning of the century. The rebellion led by Birsa Munda in 1899-1900 had reverberations in tribal consciousness during the national movement, with popular folk songs linking Gandhi and Birsa. A ‘Santhal disturbance’ in Mayurbhanj in 1917 was crushed by army action. The various movements of the Oraons and the Hos in the 1920’s and the 1930’s represented the effects of non-cooperation and civil
nearby tea stall the uneducated tribal youths assert themselves by drawing attention to the injustice done to them. The resentment of the unemployed continues to be directed towards the 'outsiders' against the 'foreigners', and it becomes one of the demands which unite the local people.
disobedience upon the Adivasis – the latter proclaimed *Swaraj* and the victory of ‘Gandhi Mahto’.

Non tribal migrants who usually are not working class put great emphasis on educating their children unlike the tribals, whose main objective is to employ the whole family in the mining industry whether legally or illegally. Workers who have migrated from elsewhere have brought with them their attitudes towards women and children, which differs from those that exist amongst the Santhals and the other tribals. The Government has taken several initiatives to educate the poor tribals by providing free primary education but the schools are in bad shape, partly dilapidated and partly looted by pilferers. The teachers are poorly paid, inadequately trained and therefore absent most of the time. Most of these schools do not teach the local language of the tribes. It becomes very difficult for the illiterate parents to send their child to school where they do not even understand the language.

In the word of a child I spoke to:

Humlog school nahi jate kyunki ghar ka kaam karna padta hain...padhna acha nahi lagta.....hum sare dost saath mei kholte hain aur kabhi kabhi maldholai ka kaam bhi karte hain.

(We don’t go to school as we do not enjoy studying and also we got to do household work. I like playing with my friends and sometime we friends do carry bags of coal to help our parents).

They rather would prefer to keep them back at home and make them work as the tribals kids do not find any role model in the school. In such cases the children themselves start to resist schooling, and resort to forming gangs with strong links which helps them get a job in the colliery. The uneducated fifth or sixth grade dropouts form a social group which also have number of youths of other tribes (Kumhars, Bhunyas, Gopas, Mahtos and Bauris) as members. Until 1960s, a secondary school diploma sufficed to get automatic access to employment but after nationalization of mines things have become difficult. By remaining together in a group doing nothing, by refusing to participate in the domestic economy and to work in the fields, by dressing in city attire and hanging around in the
Photograph 2.15 Life of Children at Coalmining Site
Malnourished children, denied access to education and living and working in dangerous conditions.

Census 2001 reported there were 45,135 children between 5-14 years working in the mining sector, accounting for nearly 7 percent of the working children in India. (The Hindu, March 25, 2010).
The people in this region have strong territorial identities; *Hum, yahan ka mool niwasih hain, kahin bahar se nahi aye hain* (I am a Jharkhandi as opposed to the migrant people) distinct by way of culture and language from the Bihari elite. The Jharkhandi sentiment underlies a consciousness of belonging to a fairly vast region, comprising at least the southern part of the state of Bihar. A mixture of regional consciousness, the sentiment of being colonized and a nationalist identity, the Jharkhandi movement, with diverse orientation, is widespread among all the long established social groups, castes, and other jatis of local origins.

The working class in Chota Nagpur had a multi-socio composition and they maintained their multiple identities even after moving from village to industrial area. Money lenders and musclemen from Bihar, clerks and petty managers from Bengal, Parsi industrialists in Jamshedpur all maintained their link with the region they came from. People from various backgrounds were drawn into the movement whether intended or unintended. It is evident that in the story of labour and gender in the Jharia coalmines there was a rich criss crossing of issues of migration, ethnicity, class etc. This combined with ethnic issues, crime, and of course the individual actors and led to many intended and unintended consequences. The historical outline would help better appreciate the complex workings of these dynamics in the field.

### 2.2.1 Migration Pattern in the Mining Town

It is interesting to look at the pattern of migration that took place during the development of the mining town. Labour Migration pattern in Jharia Coal field could be divided into three phases. In the initial phase it was the local labour, neighbouring areas, tribals, adivasis who dug the pit as a family team. The Second phase came with technological innovation, where once the underground mining started, labour force from UP, Bihar, MP started migrating in. The third phase came after nationalization in 1971 where there was a large scale eviction of the adivasi workers by upcountry labour especially north Bihar, Eastern UP and also people from mafia gangs and sometimes even hooligans of colliery owners. When mines got nationalized, even those people who did not work actually got their name in the workers list. Most of them migrated from neighbouring bustees in manbhum district and other nearby districts of Hazaribag, Bankura, Burdwan, and Santhal.
Pargana. A few of them worked in the coalfields of Raniganj, Giridih and Rewa (Coupland, 1911). After the trade boom in 1906-1908, collieries also recruited an increasing number of workers from the distant areas, such as the districts of Gaya, Monghyr, Patna, Sahabad, Mednipore, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur, Pratapgarh, Allahabad, Naurangi, Raipur and Bilaspur (Central Provinces). Some came from more distant regions like Punjab and Madras. By the 1940s, the distant migrants, in fact outnumbered those from adjacent areas. A number of second-generation colliers entered the mines from the 1930s and the 1940s (Banerjee 1981: 91). Most of the early majdoors, who came from the neighbouring districts moved in predominantly as family labour. The first flush of immigrants from the relatively distant areas, roughly between 1905-1906, did not alter significantly the balance between the unit of family labour and those that maintained their families back home in the village. Since 1910, the number of single male workers immigrating in began to grow. The single female miners, largely widows and ‘deserted’ single women, also came to occupy a small proportion of the total working masses by the 1920s and the 1930s (Seth 1940: 65-128). The economic situation of the people determined their migration patterns. As far as women were concerned, they were predominant amongst those communities who were completely impoverished and landless. The women who migrated to the city, alone or with their families, did so when their rural resources were exhausted. They rarely retained a rural base to protect them against the uncertainties of the urban labour market. The Chamars of Bilaspur, and the Jolahas of Monghyr migrated as families, whereas the Chamars of Monghyr and the Jolahas of Hazaribagh did not. The other migrants to the coalfields, those who hailed from further afield, and the higher castes from nearby districts, were much fewer in number, and overwhelmingly male. They came not only to work in the mines, but as traders, moneylenders and contractors too. The Pathans, for example, had become a ‘notable feature of the population’ by 1921, and came as petty contractors and were not ‘altogether welcome in the collieries’.

Workers were recruited from the agricultural classes, who generally returned to their villages for seasonal agricultural operations. But there were some families who had no land to till and therefore embraced coalmining as their permanent occupation and had been living on the coal fields for generations since. About 60 to 85 per cent of the colliery
workers in Jharia (Formally in Bihar) coalfield came to the mines to supplement their income from ancestral vocation (Srivastava 1970: 33). The oldest system of recruitment for coal mines was zamindari system under which some of the employers gave workers land for cultivation so that they might be permanently settled on the collieries. However, this system became more or less obsolete because of the paucity of the cultivable land near coalfields, on the one hand, and not too good output of such workers, on the other. Thus the recruitment of colliery labour may conveniently be studied under the following heads:-

- The Zamandari system of recruitment, which as stated above, became obsolete.
- Direct system of recruitment under which paid agents were sent by the employers to recruiting areas to attract labours to the coalfields and
- Indirect method of recruitment which is still widely prevalent.

The most common form of recruitment, however is through raising contractors or sardars who, as briefly described above, bear all expenses of recruitment and are responsible for coal cutting and loading for which they were paid at a certain rate per ton.

The dominant caste Rajputras who are the migrants from the Gangetic plains, since the middle of the eighteen century, are the large landowners and the zamindars. They turned to labour, business, politics and police services- some also became gangsters. The human habitations are neither too rural nor too urban often discontinuous and locally very dense, and are scattered along the mining area. This migration between villages and mines involved whole families. These families got together with people from the same village or caste to form gangs. Initially the colliery workforce was dominated by the lower caste Bouri community and the tribal Santals. Both these communities were poor, local and imposed no restrictions on women's work. Again most of these migrants who came to work on mines were lower caste and were accompanied by their entire families who too worked in the collieries (Barnes 2006).

The reason for the inflow of rural population into the coalfields was not so much due to their attraction for a city life but rather due to the pressures faced in rural areas itself with regards to land and other issues. There are various other economic and non economic
reasons which also contributed to the pull of the illiterate and ignorant villagers to this industrial life. A total of 63 out of 182 i.e. 34.62 percent of the families migrated due to inadequate cultivable land. The next major cause which led them to leave their abodes was the prospect of better employment, This attributes for 30.22 per cent of the migration.

Table No 2.1- Reasons for Migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate cultivable land</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect of better employment</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meagre income at home</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family difference</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons (including fear from money lenders)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The third reason contributing to migration was the meager income at home; this accounts for 25.28 percent of the total population surveyed. Thus, it can be deduced that 90.12% of the sampled families left their homes due to economic causes, viz., increasing pressure of population on land and the accompanying economic distress. The flow of migration is inter-district as well as inter-provincial.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>18.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hazaribag</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gaya</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.18</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Monghyr</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.24</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.14</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Arrah</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Azamgarh</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Purnia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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Table 2.3- State-wise Distribution of origin of Colliery workers in Jharia Collieries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Place (State)</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>65.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>U.P</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>East Punjab</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that out of 182 families 119 i.e. 65.38 percent were from Bihar, 19.78 percent from U.P, 9.34 percent from West Bengal, 2.75 percent from East Punjab and 2.75 percent from other provinces such as Rajasthan, East Pakistan and Delhi, etc.

From Bihar, a greater proportion of the labour force hails from the district of Dhanbad (18.13%), Hazaribag (17.03%) and Gaya (13.18%) which adjoin the coalfield area. Allahabad and Azamgarh are two important district of U.P which supplied the major proportion of labour force i.e. 6.04% and 3.84% respectively. Similarly Purlia ranked first in West Bengal, supplying 2.19% of the colliery labour to the coalfields of Bihar (Srivastav 1970 : 32).

It has been observed that prior to World War II, the migration was not very high; but the post war situation brought about an increase in the demand for coal which subsequently led to the need for a greater work force and an increase in the number of migrants. Upto the beginning of the Second World War, the percentage of workers migrating to the coalfield was only 14.3. After World War II there was a drastic increase in the number of migrant
labour force; up to 65.4 percent. Nearly one third of the labour force i.e. 35.5 per cent has migrated between 1951-55. It is interesting to note that in the collieries at Jarangdish in Bihar as much as 70 per cent of the coalminers are also cultivators in their agricultural holdings during the morning hours (6 to 9 AM). They then work in the mines from noon till late in the evening (Srivastava 1970: 33). A bulk of the mining labour force in Jharia migrates seasonally between the collieries and the fields.

The above analysis indicates that although in many coalfields of Bihar, labour is immigrant in the sense that it does not actually belong to its place of work, it is nonetheless not purely migratory in the sense in which the word is understood in common parlance. It should also be remembered that in centers like Ahmadabad and Jamshedpur, where wages were more favorable and higher than elsewhere, there is no inducement for labour to migrate from place to place. Lastly, the above analysis also shows that although most coal miners had no stake in land, they still retained their link with their village homes.

The improvement of working and living conditions generally can bring about stability of labour in such coalmines where workers are called upon to work. The Newly formed Trade Union AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress) observed that the only way to secure a stabilized labour force and protect the interests of the workers is primarily to provide adequate housing accommodation for them, and secondly, to make provisions during their illnesses, unemployment and old age. Stabilized labour force was considered to be integral to industrial development, so everything possible was done to make the worker feel that he is an essential and valuable part of the industry. The survey reports showed that most of the workers in the coalfields were landless labourers and they visited their home villages occasionally for rest, recreation, social ceremonies and so on (Srivastava 1970: 33). Workers, *kamgars*, toured their Gaon (Villages) for some socio-cultural reasons. Santhals went to their *bustees* during festivals, such as the sohari (in January or Magh month), for a whole month; the Rajwars, the Turis, the Ghatwals and the mahtos of adjacent areas returned to their villages on the occasions of Tilsakarat, popularly known as Makarsakranti/ Jal/Nadi/Machhali *Puja*. The Up-country single men returned to their

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*15 It was the most popular festival among these people. They considered it to be a celebration of New Year, celebrated around the third week of January.*

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bastes to celebrate Holi (usually for a whole month) and Dashahra. Those who stayed in
the coalfield, on the other hand, celebrated festivals, such as the Kali Puja\textsuperscript{16}, Durga-puja, Diwali, Ganesh-puja and the Holi (Deshpande 1946: 65). The kamins returned to their
bastees when they were pregnant, stayed on for child birth and the early years of child
rearing. This period could span six months to a year for those women who had extended
families in the bastees. In contrast, the settled kamin women continued to work at the
colliery till the very last week of their pregnancy.

The large scale influx of people to the mines gave rise to many other social and economic
problems. The workers who left their rural community to enter mining employment had to
face many difficulties in this new environment. Everything around them seemed alien and
unfamiliar both at home and the work place. Since the workers continued to have
continuous interaction with the place of origin they did not feel alienated and this in a way
helped them retain their attachment and not get cut off from the familiar way of life at
once. This ambivalent attitude renders adjustment to mining conditions all the more
difficult. The workers attitude towards work, which has been conditioned by a flexible
routine characteristic of village life, had to change and this created a lot of stress among
the workers. The regular cadence of mining work, where one man’s job is a motion co­
ordinated with those of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others, and of little use by itself,
alone calls for quite a different attitude. A workers response to these requirements at work
is influenced to a large extent, by his social and cultural background. The way he reacts to
the new environment has an important bearing on his work attitudes and his work turnover.

The Migrants workers were recruited to the mines through contactors, sub-contractors, or
the sirdars. The Contractors or the sardars paid much less amount to the workers as
compared to the minimum wages and the poor workers never raised their voices against
their authority. The attendance registers were not properly maintained and persons who
were found actually engaged in the arduous mining operations were shown as absent on
various occasions in the registers so as to avoid payment of bonus and other benefits­
enjoyed by law but directly or indirectly taken by selfish stalwarts of the industry. Hence,
the call of humanity demanded that the system of employment of labour through sirdars or

\textsuperscript{16} Kali-puja was popular among Bengali speaking mazdoors in.
contactors be abolished and there should be a recruiting department set up under the Bihar Government. To meet this demand a recruiting depot was set up at Gorakhpur in 1942 by the then labour department called ‘Gorakhpur Labor Organization’. The reason why Gorakhpur was selected was that it was surrounded with a large surplus of labour population. When mining began to develop in Jharia there were not enough people in the towns to man it. Therefore vast majority of the industrial workers had to be brought from the villages near UP, Bihar MP etc.

The depot ‘Gorakhpur Labor Organization’ soon grew into a big organization handling about 50,000 labourers. The workers employed in the mines were classified as permanent workers, probationers, Badli or substitutes, temporaries and apprentices.

A “permanent” worker is one, who is appointed for an unlimited period or who has satisfactorily put in three months continuous service in a permanent post as a probationer. A “probationer” is one, who is provisionally employed to fill a vacancy in a permanent post and has not completed three months’ service in that post. If a permanent worker is employed as a probationer in a new post, he may, at any time, during the probationary period, not exceeding three months, be reverted to his old permanent post. Badli or Substitute is one who is appointed in the post of a permanent or a probationer, who is temporarily absent. But he would cease to be a ‘Badli’ on completion of a continuous period of service of one year in the same post, after which he would be deemed to be a permanent worker. A “temporary” worker is one, who is engaged for a specified temporary work. The period within which the job is likely to be finished is also specified as far as practicable. An ‘apprentice’ is a learner, who is either paid an allowance, or not paid any allowance, during the period of his training, which is specified in terms of the workers contract. There were Contract workers and direct labours and there existed no comparison between the conditions of work of contract and direct workers on the same job. The direct labours were the local workers who refused to take up work in the most difficult headings and whenever the local workers demanded extra wages and benefits, the company (Colliery) refused to accept their demands and engaged with contracting migrants through the labour organizations, sardars or middleman. This in a way helped the migrants get access to the coalmines.
It was not easy for the migrants to live life without any confrontation with the local people of Jharia who had more say in the mining town. It was the migrant’s kinship ties and connection at the mining town which helped them lead a normal life. ‘Community feeling’ and lineage-family egoism are much more characteristics than the class consciousness of the migrant workers in the coalfields.

In the coalmines, workers are not unaware of individual mentalities, to which the hierarchy placed explicit limits. Some rely on law, others on the ideology of Marxism or Leninism, and still others on the revolver to extract themselves from the network of blood ties. The life of the mining society we have observed rests in a fundamental manner on the submission of those for whom the work is neither interesting, not provide social identity, without there being any question of a career. Women, children, casual laborers, people from low castes, and rural immigrants without a formal education constitute the base of the working class.