



# Geographies of Resistance: Tribal Responses to Resource Exploitation and Development Politics in Narayangarh; Dantan-I; Dantal-II Region, under Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal, India.

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## Abstract

This study presents an interdisciplinary analysis of the distributions faced by tribal communities residing in Dantan-I, Dantan-I, and Narayangarh blocks of Paschim Medinipur district in West Bengal, India, where resource dependent development has led to environmental degradation, and cultural erosion, examining their adaptive strategies and resistance mechanisms through the lens of socio-environmental justice. The aims of this study are to identify the major forms of resource extraction and development projects in the Dantan and Naryangrarh blocks, and to analyze the patterns of resistance adopted by indigenous communities in response to resource exploitation. This research is qualitative in nature. 190 households have been selected as the sample size for this study. Microsoft Excel was used for data analysis, specifically for the graphical presentation, of this study. The findings of the research indicate that indigenous communities place a strong reliance on institutions such as the Gram Sabha as a primary and secondary mechanism of resistance; furthermore, they prioritize such support as the highest priority for development. This research specifically highlights the adaptation strategies, development approaches, and aspirations of indigenous communities, while simultaneously emphasizing the necessity of formulating inclusive and context-sensitive policies that accord due respect to indigenous environmental knowledge.

**Key words.** Resistance; Resource; Sustainable Development; Explosion; Geo-politics; Political Ecology; Subaltern studies;

## Introduction

"The intricate dynamics of resource extraction and development politics in the Narayangarh & Dantan-I, Dantan-II block under Kharagpur subdivision, in West Bengal have sparked a complex web of resistance and response among the indigenous tribal communities, who are compelled to navigate the challenges of preserving their traditional livelihood, cultural identities, and territorial rights in the face of rapid industrialization and economic growth, thereby giving rise to a critical examination of the geographies of resistance that underscore the nuances of power politics, and place-based struggle". Many times, the concepts of autonomy and self-governance are used interchangeably. However, there is a clear co-relationship between the two. One of the main goals of achieving autonomy is self-governance, which is a means to an end. As an organization, it aids in the establishment of a respectable sociopolitical structure within the community. Autonomy is

fundamental to human nature and has a broader meaning than a unit of self-governance. It aids in the rational definition of human status. It helps people develop their dignity (Ashok Nimesh).

The Oxford Dictionary states that a tribe is a collection of people who are at a primitive or barbaric stage of development, recognize the authority of a chief, and typically believe they share an ancestor. Social transformation is the term used to describe how the online system has changed society and social relationships. It involves mutually beneficial activities and the development of new relationships by societies across the nation. Various characteristics of social phenomena, social systems, customs, traditions, social interaction, common habits, and organizational setup are used to explain social change (Subrata Guha & Md Ismail, 2015). Tribal communities' livelihoods in India are a complicated, dynamic, and multifaceted phenomenon, and how they are perceived varies depending on a number of factors, including geographic location, community type, age, gender, education, changes in infrastructure, services, and resources, as well as social, economic, cultural, ecological, and political factors.

Tribes in India rely mostly on agriculture for their livelihoods, and it is essential to the country's economy, rural development, employment and occupation, agro-industries, food and nutrition security, growth and survival, social, economic, and cultural circumstances, and the reduction of poverty. Rain-fed agriculture, which is primarily used by around 70% of the population, is characterized by low production, unpredictable weather and disasters, damaged soil with low fertility, unprotective irrigation, and degraded natural resources (2016).

The first step in answering this question is to determine whether and when “Resistance” is, in fact, resistance often, actions that are seen as resistance are not actually resistance at all. Other explanations for why sick people might not show up to Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) include the logistical and financial challenge of travelling there, the lack of secure transportation, the inability to find childcare, or a lack of the social and financial resource required to endure quarantine. “Non-Compliance” does not imply resistance. To differentiate between oppositional resistance and reluctance, Guineas authorities used the term “reticence”. Reticence may be assumed by response workers in the event of unreported or absconded cases, or “swab positives”. The aforementioned worries could have been the cause of this seeming hesitancy. More obviously “intentional” actions of resistance, which were more prevalent in Guinea, are the main emphasis here (Annie Wilkinson & James Fairhead, 2017). Several tribal people in Tamil Nadu, India, live in the Sirumalai Hills, which have historically depended on the abundant biodiversity of the area's woods for economic activity, cultural customs, and subsistence. Since they rely on forest-based agriculture, lumber, medicinal plants, and natural resources for their everyday needs, these communities—including the Pali yans and other indigenous groups, have long maintained a close relationship with the forest environment. These people now find it more difficult to maintain their traditional farming methods and obtain the materials they need due to environmental deterioration and changing weather trends. Additionally, fast infrastructural development in the region, aimed at enhancing connectivity and enabling economic growth, has transformed the socio-economic environment. The socioeconomic vulnerabilities of these indigenous groups are further exacerbated by the continued lack of essential infrastructure, including clean water, power, healthcare, and education (Chandramohan Karupiah, 2025).

The capital-state development nexus, which reflects both the governmentality of the developmental state and the neoliberal political rationality of governments, makes up the political economy of resource exploitation. Since the majority of mining takes place outside of metropolitan areas, neoliberal changes intended to increase private investment in the industry are justified in the name of regional and local development. Governmentality techniques that control population behaviour are the foundation of neoliberal developmentalism. Governmentality is the term used to describe methods of governance that control people by enshrined political and economic logic that influences the behaviour of individual citizens, in addition to the institutional authority of nations. Communities opposing mining operations on their lands must be "guided" to embrace development, and these governed populations are arranged for productive purposes defined by market rationalities. In the political economy of resource extraction, governmentality entails managing populations according to the requirements of development. This "guidance" may take the guise of voluntary community consultation procedures, but it may also entail "legitimate" state violence used to disperse people and crush resistance (Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee & et al, 2021).

## Objectives

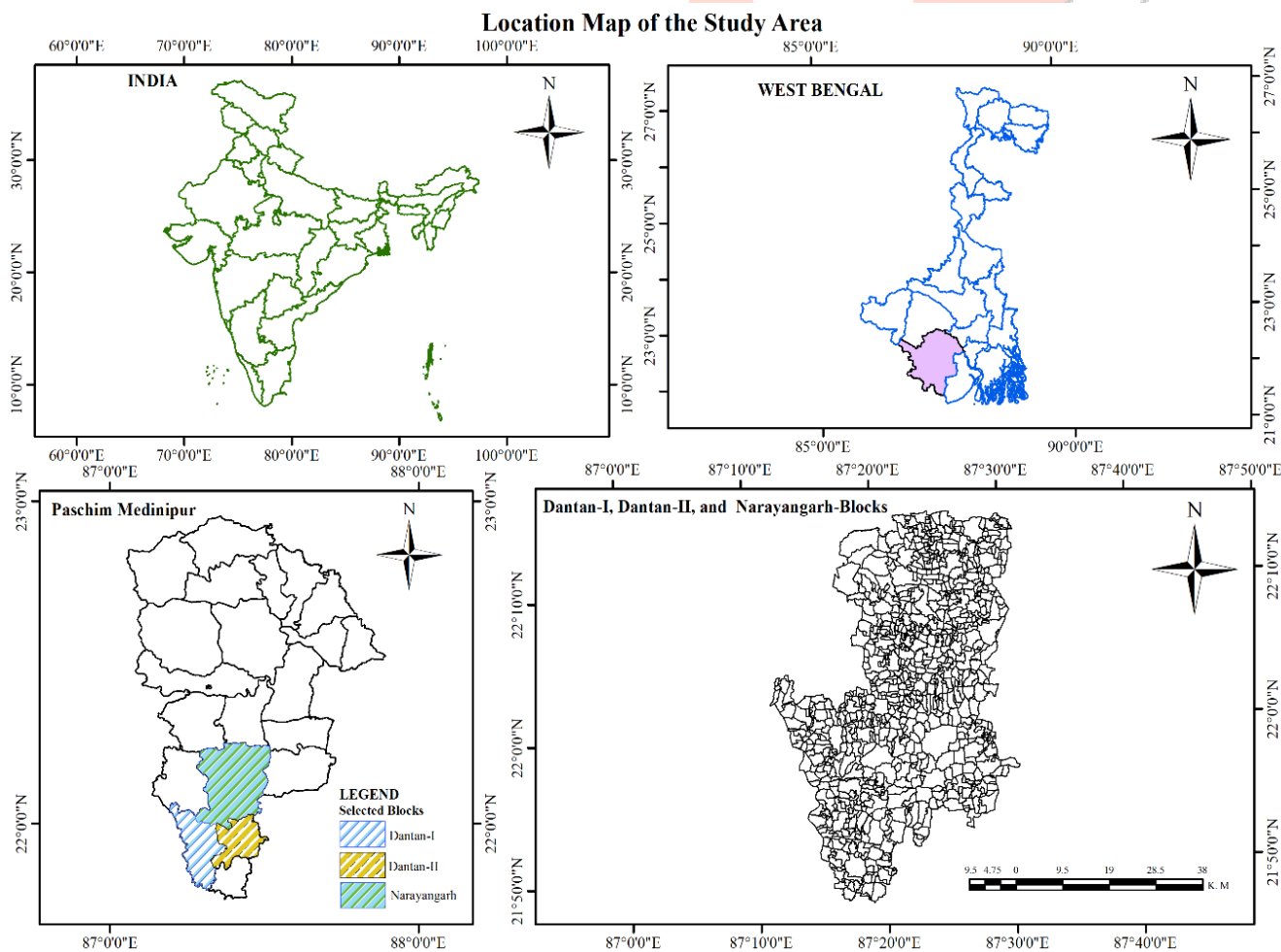
1. To identify the main forms of resource exploitation and development project in the Naryangarh & Dantan Block.
2. To examine the effect of the project on tribal communities, especially regarding land, livelihood, and culture.
3. To analyse the types and patterns of resistance adapted by tribal groups in response to resource exploitation

## Materials & Method

### Study Area

This study highlights the responses of the indigenous people to the politics of resource exploitation and development in the Dantan-I, Dantan-II, and Narayangarh blocks, under the Kharagpur subdivision of Paschim Medinipur district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Situated at the eastern edge of the Chota Nagpur plateau within Paschim Medinipur district, this region serves as a transitional zone between rugged terrain and alluvial plains, imparting a unique geographical character to the blocks of Dantan-I, Dantan-II, and Narayangarh. This study area is characterized by laterite soil and a tropical monsoon climate. Located in the southwestern part of West Bengal, this region is home to several notable indigenous communities, including the Santal, Ho, Kora, Munda, Mahali and Lodha. This region is natural resource abounding in forests and fertile agricultural land, which makes it attractive for infrastructure development and for securing an improved livelihood. The favorable natural environment of those regions, suitable, has enriched agricultural activities. In this study area, various types of crops are cultivated on the land almost yearly, as the land here is multi-cropped, it is possible to produce three distinct types of crops annually, such as kharif, rabi, and Zaid crops.

Fig.1 Study area Map

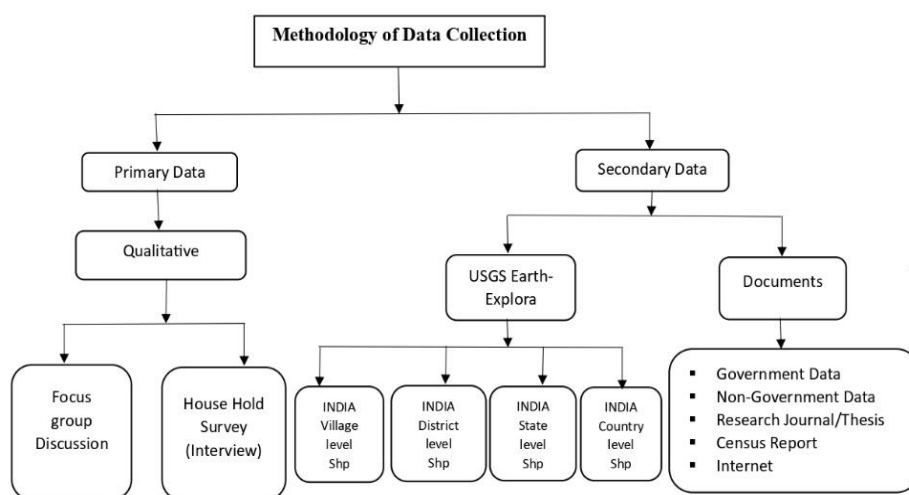


## Data Source

Primary data for this study was collected through filed survey, interviews, and group discussions. Additionally secondary data has been collected through a literature review of various research paper, thesis, government website, NGOs, and Internet. To collected data, a survey was conducted across a total of 55 tribal-inhabited village spanning the three blocks of Narangarh, Dantan-I, and Dantan-II, that is under Kharagpur subdivision of Paschim Medinipur District. Through a questioner-based survey, 190 samples were collected from indigenous communities. To create a location for this study Indian village-level shapefiles were downloaded from Survey of India website.

## Data Analysis Process

Fig.2 Methodology Flowchart



This research is qualitative in nature. Stratified sampling has been used for this research. For the three blocks within the study area, 190 respondents were selected as the sample size. Firstly, the collected data has been arranged. The appropriate graphical presentation such as pie charts, bar diagrams. Microsoft-Excel has been used for graphical presentation in this study. The ArcGIS-10.8 (GIS-based software) software was used to create location map of the study area. Finally, the manuscript has been drafted using Microsoft Word.

## Political Ecology

Political ecology is a multidisciplinary field that examine the interrelationships among social, political, and economic, and environmental issues, and highlighted how power relations shape the distribution of environmental impacts. By critiquing conventional approaches to conservation and development, political ecology argues that environmental change is not entirely natural, but rather socially constructed (Peter A, Walker, 2015, pp-73-82). Political ecology views the environmental as a sphere in which social groups holding diverse political ideologies vie for dominance over the rights to and control of resources (Vaccorn, et al, 2013). Currently, Anthropologists have incorporated production systems, financial systems, and natural resource systems into the analysis of resource management. Political environmentalists, in particular, have been emulating this trend. Discursive materialism, “where ideas, matter, discourse, and power are intertwined in ways that virtually defy dissection”, starts to be seen through the prism of space, poverty, and nature, among other things (A, Escobar, 1996). Since its inception as a critique of non-Malthusianism, third world political ecology has advanced significantly. By highlighting the social and ecological effects of political, economic

and cultural power in the third world, it has successfully challenged over simplified ideas about society and environment. Surprisingly, however, nature's part in this process has remained unclear (Beyant, L. R, 2001).

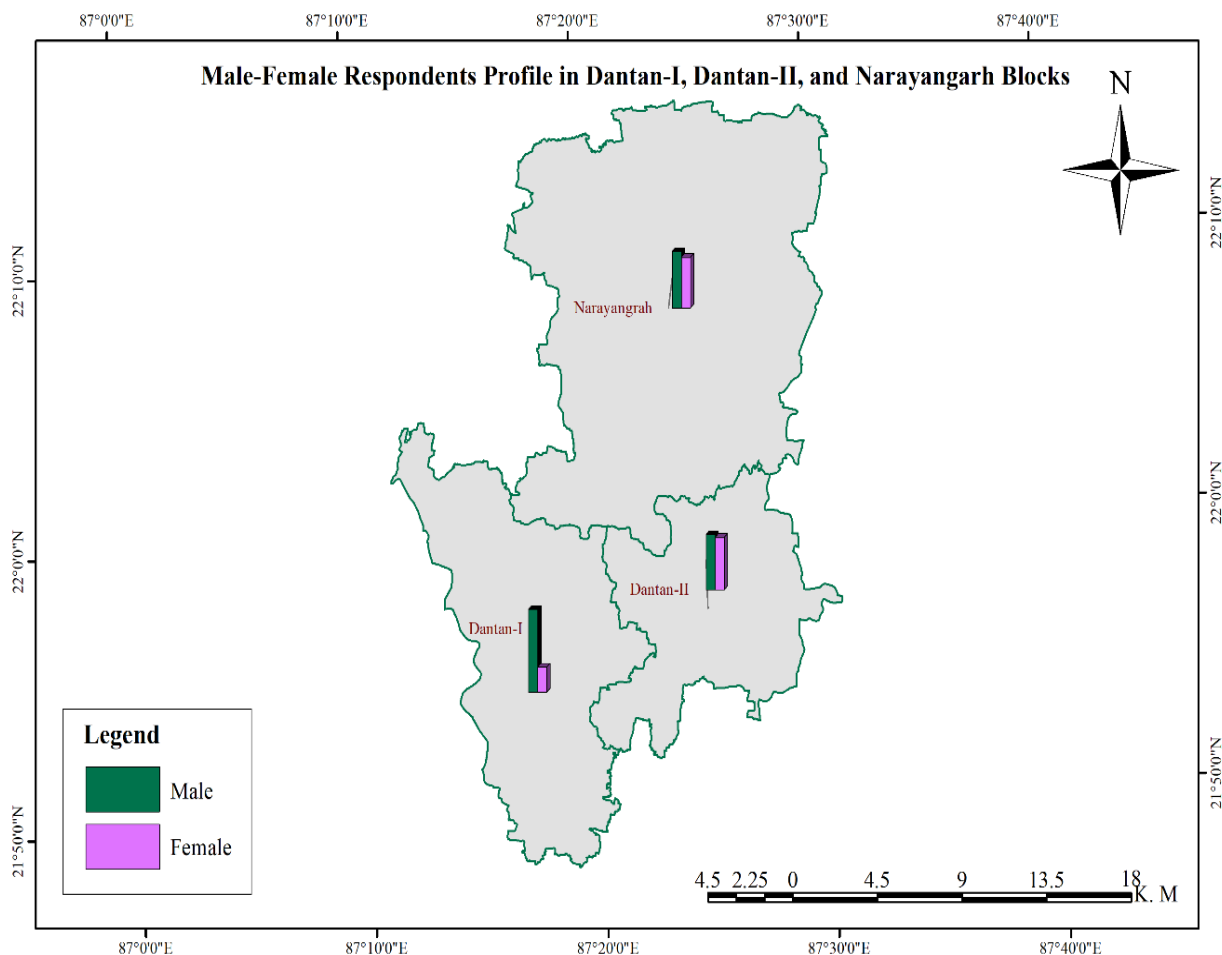
### **Subaltern Studies**

Subaltern Studies is a South Asian school of historiography founded in the 1980s by Ranajit Guha, aiming to challenge elitist, colonial, and nationalist narratives by focusing on the history, agency, and consciousness of oppressed groups (peasants, workers, marginalized caste). The Subaltern experiences of indigenous communities often highlight a stark contrast with the dominant narratives of resource extraction. The post-colonial notion that indigenous peoples are inherently rich in land resource stands in stark contrast to the reality, those communities are themselves marginalized, dispossessed, and victims of exploitation. In Indian states such as Jharkhand & Odisha, tribal groups are mounting resistance against mining projects, highlighting the tension between national development agenda and local rights.

Subaltern Studies is a school of South Asian historiography established by Ranajit Guha in the 1980s. Its objective is to challenge elitist, colonial, and nationalist narratives by shedding light on the history, agency, and consciousness of oppressed groups—specifically peasants, workers, and marginalized communities. The term “subaltern” is introduced as a designation for “the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society,” a concept applicable across various contexts such as class, caste, age, gender, status, or any other relevant parameter. Subaltern Studies analyzes the “dual relationship” between the subordinate and ruling classes, thereby examining the interplay of dominance and subordination within the colonial system—particularly in India—although the methodology of this movement has subsequently been applied to other nations, locales, and historical periods. Overall, the goal of Subaltern Studies is to uncover the histories of those groups that were largely relegated to the margins—or entirely omitted—within colonial and nationalist archives. In Guha's words, the primary objective of the Subaltern Studies collective was to counter “elitism” by recovering, examining, and prioritizing the agency of the subaltern within the complex web of capitalism, colonialism, and nationalism (Bailey. Betik, Spring 2020).

### **Result and Discussion**

Research conducted among the tribal communities of the Dantan-I, Dantan-II, and Narayangarh blocks in the Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal reveals their vehement protest against resource plunder and development centric politics. Those findings highlight the nature of indigenous resistance, the key strategies adopted in indigenous protest, the impacts on local livelihoods, and the nature of development needs for indigenous communities.



**Fig.3** In this map, males and female are represented separately within three distinct blocks

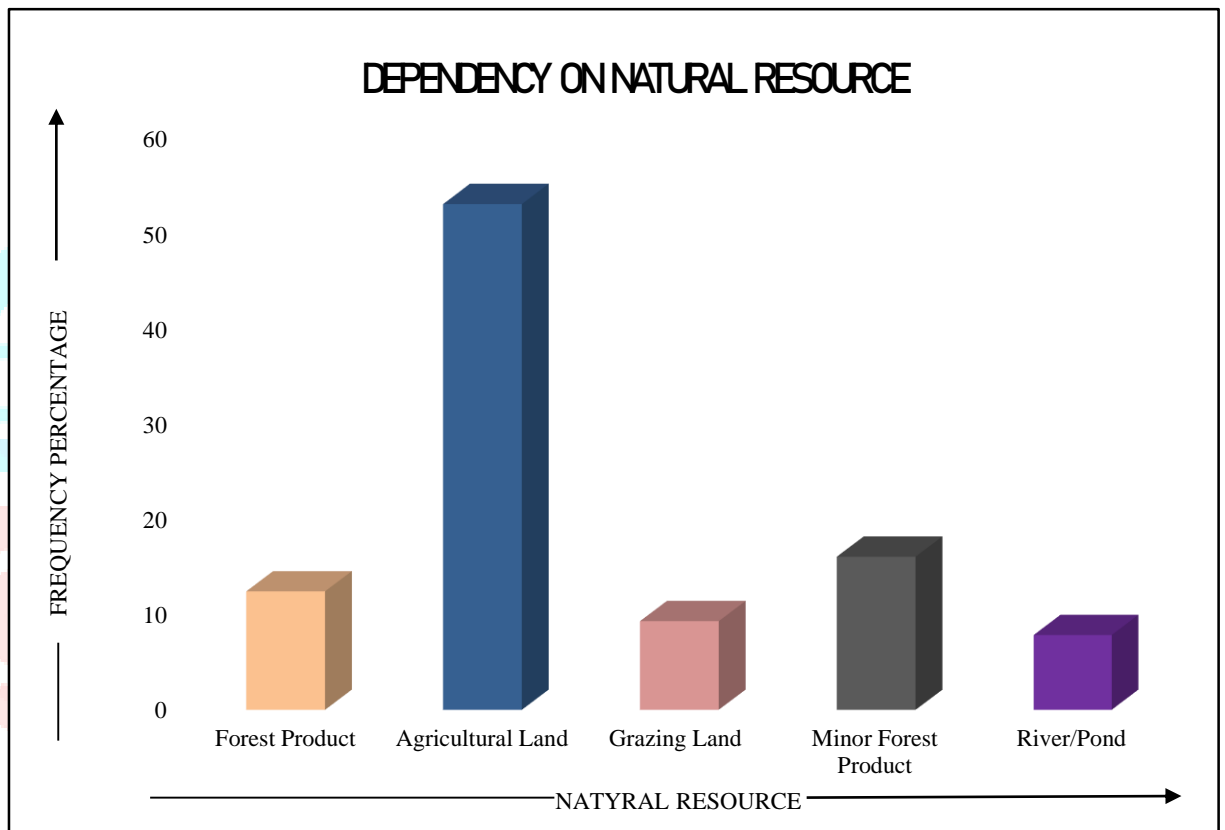
In this study responses were collected from a total of 190 respondents across three blocks: Dantan-I, Dantan-II, and Narayangarh. Distinct gender distributions were observed among the 190 respondents across the three blocks: Dantan-I, the total number of respondents was 86, comprising 20 female and 66 male respondents, in Dantan-II, the total was 47, with 23 female and 24 male respondents, and in Naryangarh block, there were 27 female and 30 male respondents, totaling 57 individuals. Fig.3 presents the statistics regarding male and female respondents across the three blocks. Among the blocks with in the study area, Dantan-I, block recorded the highest number of respondents while there is no significant disparity between the number of male and female respondents within the Dantan-I, blocks, a sustainable statistical difference exists when compared to the Dantan-I blocks, specifically, the number of males respondents is considerably higher than that of female respondents.

Among the respondents in the study area, three age categories were established, namely, 20-40, 41-60, and above 60 years, and responses were collected accordingly. The highest number of responses was received from men and women aged 41 to 60, 20-40 and those over 60 were comparatively limited. This study further observed that the majority of respondents received their education at the primary to secondary level, conversely, the statistics for respondents at the higher secondary and under graduate levels were very low. Incidentally, it is worth nothing that, among the total respondents, a few are currently employed in various government and private organizations. Approximately 40% of the respondents fall under the category of non-formal education,

It is observed that study area is engaged in primary economic activities, specifically agriculture, while a smellers segment is involved in secondary economic activities.

**Table. 1**

Dependency Natural Resource	Frequency Percentage
Forest Product	12.5
Agricultural Land	53.13
Grazing Land	9.36
Minor Forest Product	16.15
River/Pond	7.89

**Fig.4** Illustrating the natural resource

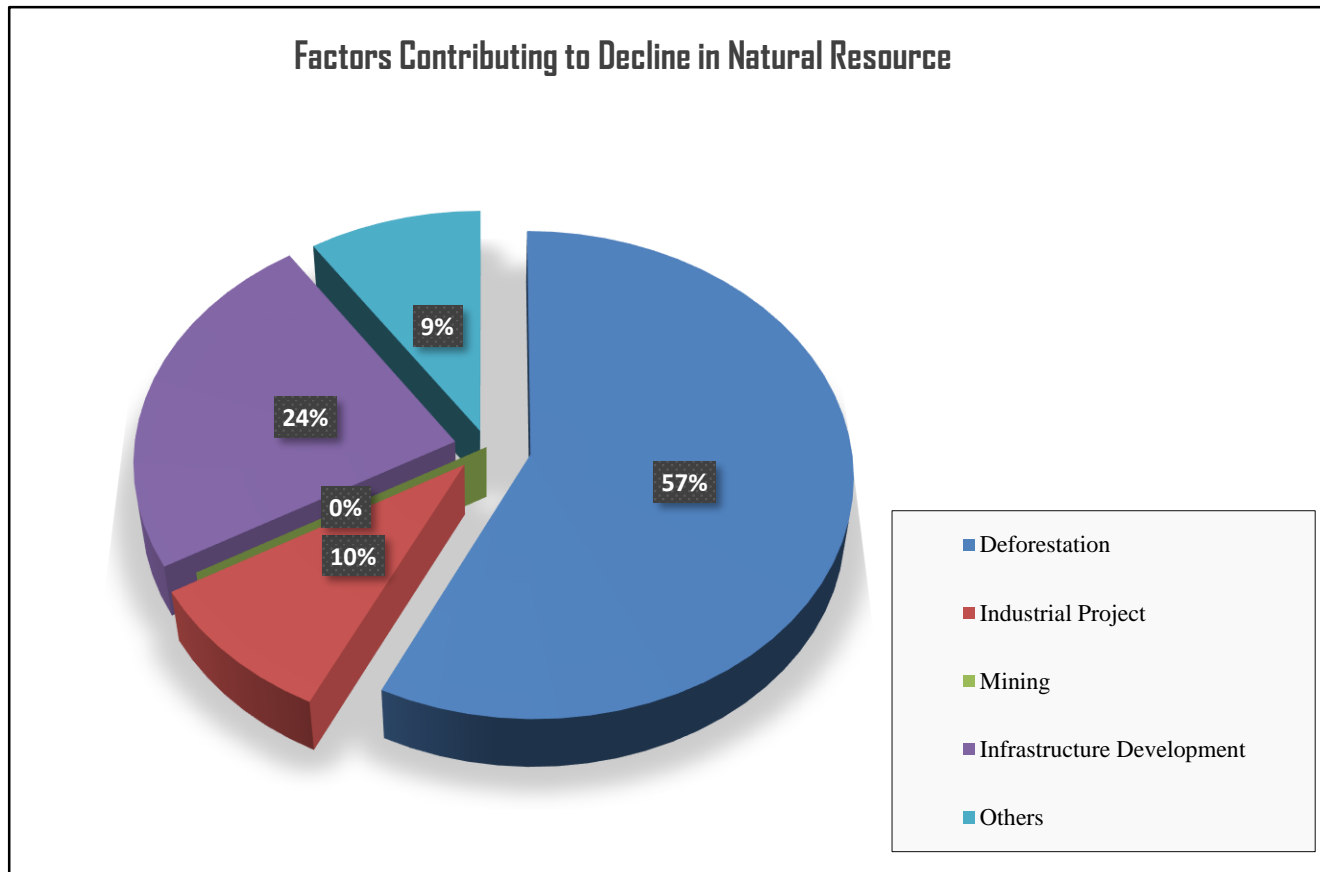
Based on the statistics presented in the table above, the extent of the indigenous population's dependence on various natural resources within the study area has been illustrated through a bar graph, expressed in terms of percentages. The result indicates that, among natural resources, the population of the study area is predominantly dependent on agricultural land which accounts for 53.13% of total utilization. The second most widely utilized natural resource is minor forest product (16.15%), followed by major forest produce at 12.5%. It has further been observed that the significance of natural resources centered around postures, rivers, and ponds is relatively low in many areas, in percentage terms, these figures stand at 9.36% and 7.89% respectively, reflecting a limited reliance on these ecosystems.

Based on comprehensive analysis of the statistics and figures, it can be concluded that the indigenous inhabitants of the study area, in their reliance on natural resource, have accorded the highest priority to agriculture, while conversely assigning only very limited priority to grazing lands.

Table. 2

Reasons	Percentage
Deforestation	56.77
Industrial Project	9.38
Mining	0
Infrastructure Development	23.68
Others	9.38

Fig.5



Factors contributing natural resource decline?

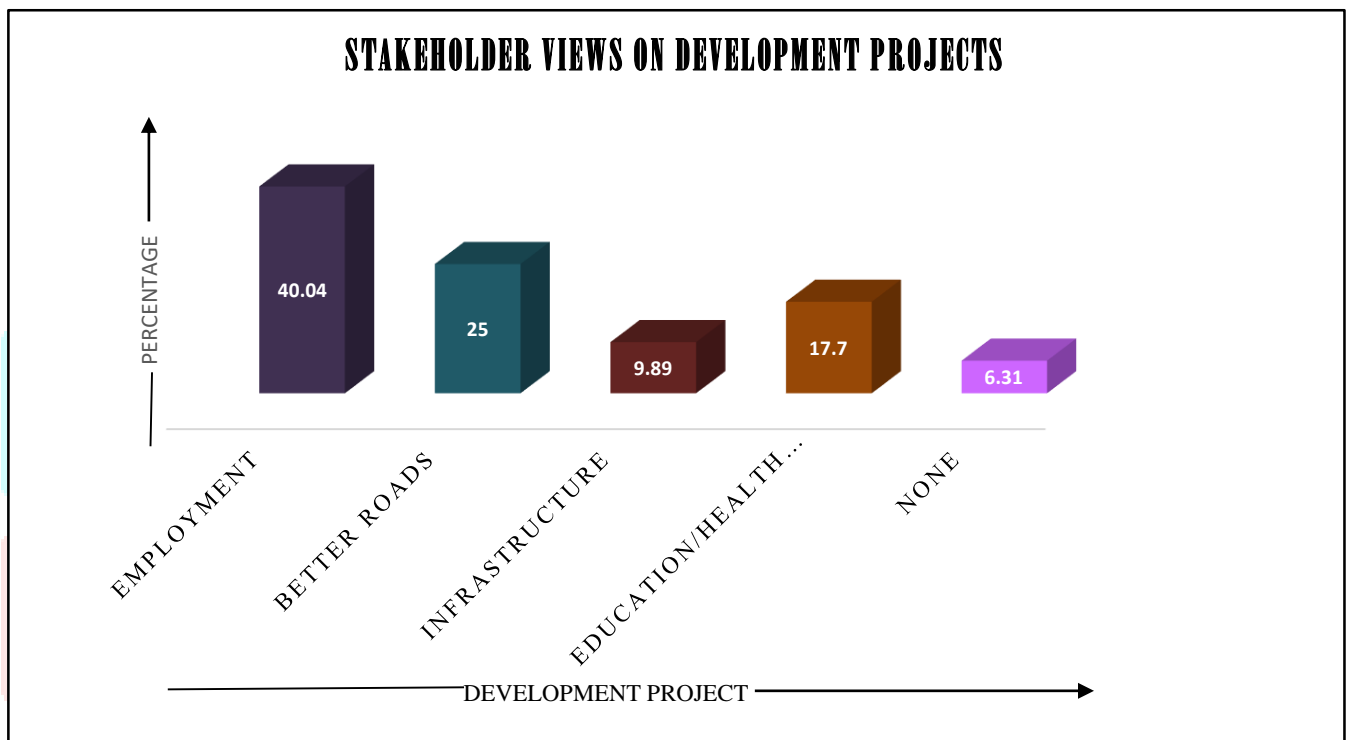
Based on the data presented in the table and pie chart (Fig.5) above, it is evident that deforestation accounts for approximately 57 % of the destruction of natural resources, there by acting as the primary driving force behind this depletion. Infrastructure development accounts for the depletion of approximately 24% of natural resource, signaling the negative human pressure exerted on ecosystems. The context of geopolitical research focusing on tribal populations indicates that those communities may face severe risk due to factors such as deforestation and in future development.

As a result, indigenous communities may motu various forms of resistance, such as resisting the alienation of their land, asserting their rights over natural resources, or organizing movements against environmental degradation. As a remedial resources measure, emphasis must be placed on sustainable environmental management to prevent the wastage of resources in tribal inhabited regions, thereby maintaining a balance between the rights of indigenous communities and environmental conservation.

Table. 3

Perception of Development Project	Percentage
Employment	40.04
Better Roads	25
Infrastructure	9.89
Education/Health Service	17.7
None	6.31

Fig.6 Sawing perception of development project



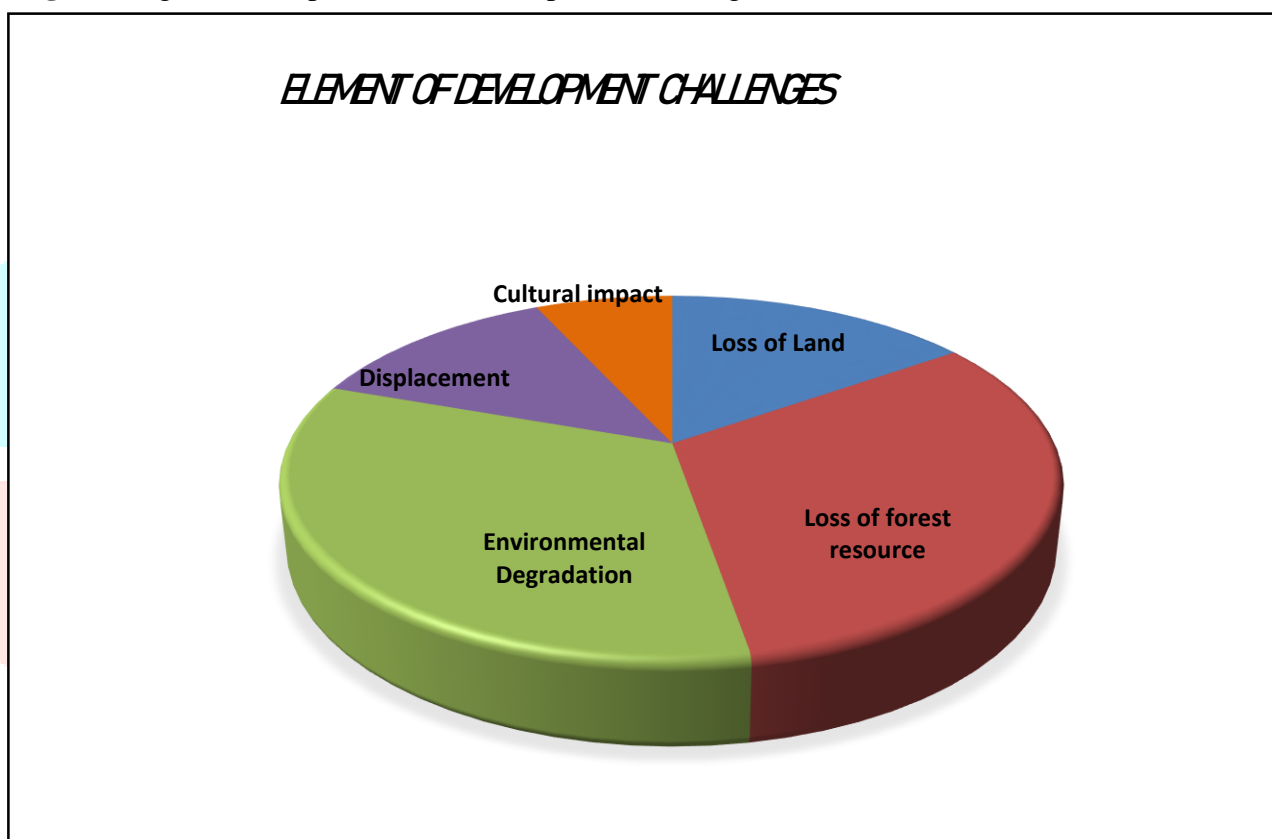
Based on the aforementioned table and bar graph (Fig.6) the results indicate the most significant factor influencing the tribal community's response to development project in the region under discussion is employment, which accounts for 40.04% of the total responses. In other words, they have prioritized employment opportunities as the primary benefit of development communities. The improved road network within the study area constitutes the second developmental expectation, aiming to facilitate various series and address the associated demands. The expectation for educational and health-related development within the community stands at 17.7%. And this is indeed a testament to the awareness of the community. This study further observes that baby expectations regarding aspects such as infrastructure development are quite limited, standing at 9.89%.

Overall, it can be said that tribal stakeholders primarily view development projects as catalysts for economic progress, while progress, while regarding transportation and social projects as secondary priorities.

Table.4

Development's Problem	Percentage
Loss of Land	15.1
Loss of forest resource	31.77
Environmental Degradation	32.81
Displacement	12.63
Cultural impact	6.77

Fig.7 Swing the result pie chart of development challenges



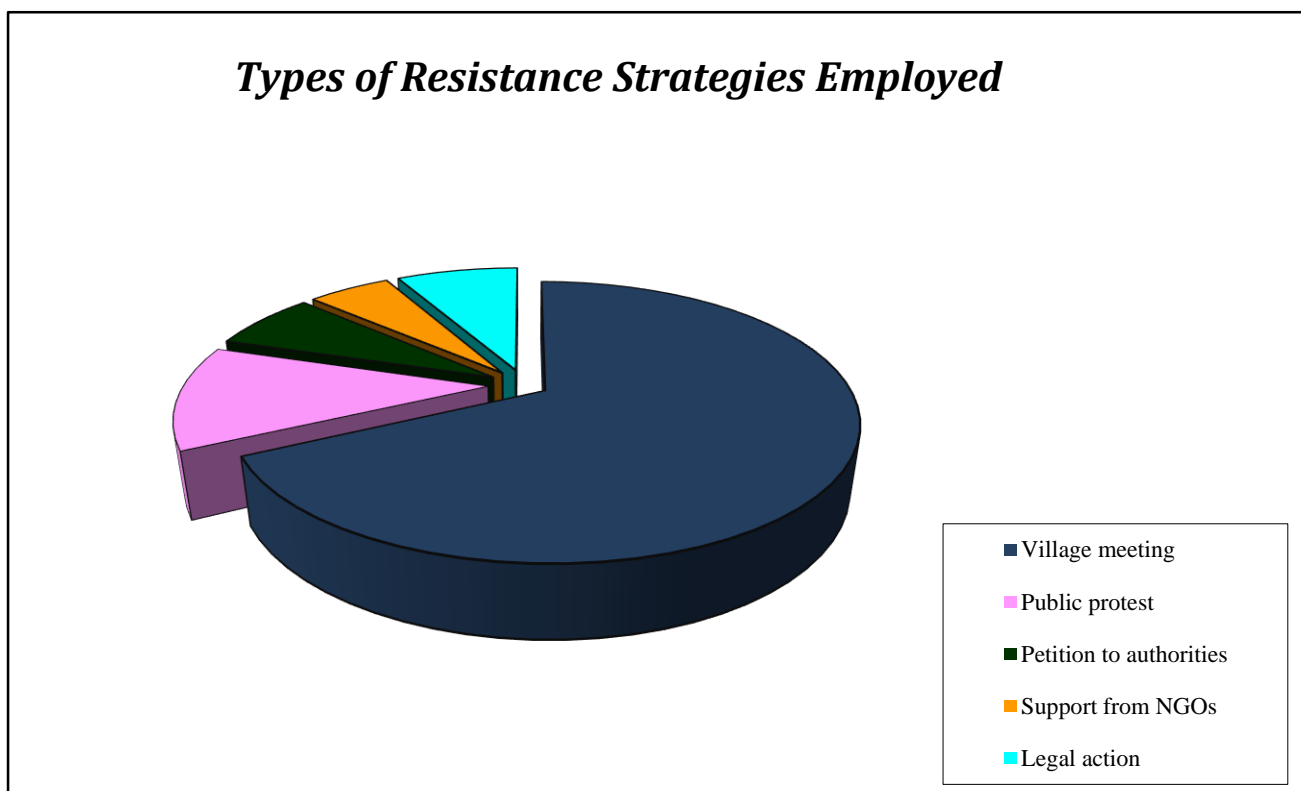
The result indicated by the aforementioned data and the pie chart suggest that environmental degradation (3281%) and destruction of the forest cover (31.77%) continue unabated in the name of development. It is further observed that tribal communities are facing issues such as land loss, displacement, and cultural impact as a result development and employment initiatives. Consequently, amidst a context of geopolitical instability, indigenous communities are being compelled to resort to protest and resistance as a means of asserting their rights over the utilization of resource.

The result indicate that developmental actives have environmental implication. The maintained element clearly indicates that the tribal communities face various problems, therefore, the primary objective in addressing major environmental challenges should be sustainable environmental management.

Table.5

Tribal responses and Resistance	Percentage
Village meeting	66.66
Public protest	11.98
Petition to authorities	6.77
Support from NGOs	5.26
Legal action	7.81

Fig.8 The diagram showing type of resistance

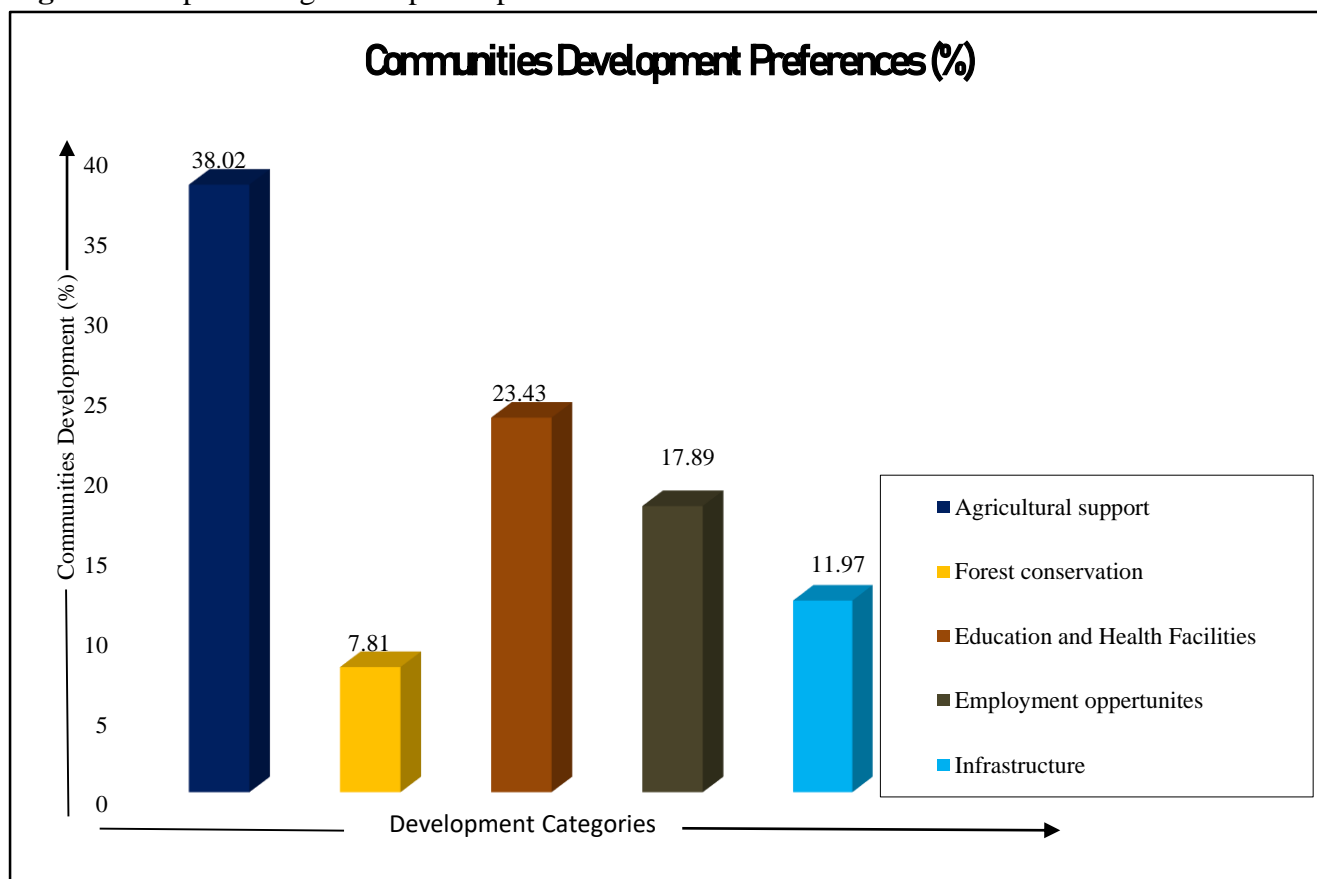


Based on the results presented in table-5 and fig.8, it is observed that, as a primary measure to address development related challenges, 66.66% of the respondents from the indigenous community within the study area expressed reliance on the Gram Sabha. 11.98% of respondents expressed the view that they undertake public protests or protest-oriented programs against development related challenges. In other orders, it is a means of public and visible protest through which they seek to secure their just rights. On the other hand, as means of protesting against development-related challenges, 6.17% of respondents stated that they submit appeals to authorities, 8.1 % indicated that they take legal action, and 5.26% reported seeking assistance from NGOs. In indigenous social systems, discussions held during Gram Sabha are accorded significant importance as a means of protesting against challenge related land rights and resource development conversely, other avenues, such as NGOs, interventions legal actions, or collective protests are utilized to comparatively lesser extent.

Table.6

Development need	Percentage
Agricultural support	38.02
Forest conservation	7.81
Education and Health Facilities	23.43
Employment opportunities	17.89
Infrastructure	11.97

Fig.9 The map showing development preferences



The results presented in table 5 and illustrated in Fig.9 highlight the development and reference status of the indigenous communities within the study area. Based on the data collected from the field survey, the presented bar graph indicates that's 38.02% of the respondents reported that agricultural support is essential for them. This suggests that the indigenous community seeks to sustain their livelihood based on primary economic activities. Among the respondents, 23.43% stated that education and healthcare are essential to their way of life. Education and health are among the most important parameters of the tribal communities in the study area. 17.89% respondents have strongly demanded the creation of employment opportunities or the assurance of economic self-reliance. Among the respondents 11.97 % of the indicated support for infrastructure development. This indicates that the resident community in the study area faces deficiencies in critical areas such as infrastructure. Furthermore, this is reflected in the respondent's tendency to accord less importance to critically vital issues such as forest conservation.

Those priorities have been visually presented in the bar diagram shown in fig. 9. As a result, policymakers will take measures aimed at effectively fulfilling the development aspirations of the indigenous communities within the study area. Primarily, they will receive guidance to focus on agricultural development and vital services such as health & education.

## Conclusion

Research finding indicate that the indigenous communities residing in the Dantan-I, Dantan-II, and Naryangarh blocks of the Paschim Medinipur District in West Bengal, adopt various Strategies to combat resource exploitation and the politics of development. This study Observers that issues such as the depletion of forest resources and environmental degradation constitute major impediments to development activities, factors that, by centering on environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods fuel indigenous resistance. Secondary stressors, such as land loss and displacement, further reinforce collective action. This research acknowledges the distinct identify of indigenous population, integrates environmental sustainability, and addresses grievances such as the depletion of forest cover, forest resource, and environmental quality, consequently it mitigates resistance with in the regio and fosters alignment between resource extraction and the political status of indigenous communities through sustainable management practices.

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