

An Analysis of High Sex Ratio of Scheduled Tribe Population of Darjiling District, West Bengal.

Gunadhar Manna

Assistant Professor in Geography, Barasat Government College, Barasat,
North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India.
email:dearguno@gmail.com

Received: 15th April 2014, Revised: 2nd February 2015, Accepted: 3rd February 2015.

Abstract

The sex ratio of India is characterised by the differences in its rural-urban components, between various religious groups, between various social groups and between various regions. Scheduled tribe (ST) populations is a very important component of total population. Economically, they comprise the poorest section; socially, they are the most deprived ones but demographically, they present a balance sex ratio in comparison to other social groups. This paper is an attempt to analyse factors contributing balance sex ratio of scheduled tribe population of Darjiling district.

Keywords: Sex ratio, Taboo, Migration

Introduction:

Sex ratio is the demographic concept that measures the proportion of males to females in a given population. When men and women have equal chances for survival, there are bound to be near equal number of males and females in the society. In India, however, the female population is much lower than the male population due to high mortality of females, particularly during their reproductive span. Sex ratio in the Indian population has been falling consistently. From 972 female per 1000 male in 1901, the sex ratio fell to 940 female in 2011. This is the cause of concern as it is telling indicator of the health and social status of women, which has a direct and immediate bearing on other key factors like child mortality. More men and fewer women in a population has disastrous effect not only on the social life but also economic vibrancy of a country. Interestingly, in general the scheduled tribe population has a high sex ratio in comparison to the general population.

Area of Study

The study area, Darjiling district lies between $26^{\circ} 31'$ N and $27^{\circ} 13'$ N parallels and $87^{\circ} 59'E$ and $88^{\circ} 53'$ E meridians, covers an area of 3149 km^2 and contains a volume of 1,609,172 population as per 2001 Census. Its tribal population increased from 179,153 (13.78% of the district's total) in 1991 to 204,167 (12.68 % of the district's total) in 2001.

Database and Methodology:

To investigate the level of sex ratio, secondary data has been collected from Primary Census Abstract, Darjiling (1951-2001) and District Statistical Hand book, Darjiling (2008). Simple percentage method is used in decadal basis. Sex ratio is calculated in terms of number of females per thousand males. Methods of linear regression has been employed to find out the rate of gradual decline of differences of percentages of male-female population.

ST Population of Darjiling District

The district of Darjiling numbered a population of 1609172 as per the 2001 census comprising 11,46,124 members of general castes (other than scheduled castes and scheduled tribe), 258881 of scheduled castes and 204167 of scheduled tribes population accounting for 71.24%, 16.08% and 12.68% of the population respectively. The district comprises 4.64 % of the total scheduled tribe population of the state as per the 2001 census. Altogether 38 sub-groups have been enrolled in total in different census years. Out of the 38 sub-groups, only five tribes have been dominant throughout the last twenty years. These five dominant sub groups namely, Oraon, Bhutia (including Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan and Yolmo), Lepcha, Munda and Santal account for more than 85 % of total tribal population of the Darjiling district; So the 33 other subgroups account for less than 15 % of the same. Hence, in terms of demographic statistics, these 33 minor tribes are almost insignificant and none of them have crossed a share of 2 % of total scheduled tribe population of the district.

Sex Composition of Population

Balanced sex composition of a community is the most desirable to the society. Under normal circumstances, a community normally will show a balance sex composition, if the migration is insignificant and morbidity is almost neutral in respect of sex [1]. But in reality except from some tribal groups male dominate over the female in the third world comprise in general and Indian society in particular. Son fixation in Hindu community

has a direct effect on sex composition with less number of female than the male [2]. But tribal community, especially ST community is devoid of such taboo. At the same time, female are not confined in the own household activity within the SCs and STs rather they earn equal amount of money by selling their labour jointly with their male counter parts or some times individually.

The story of ST female employment in the District of Darjiling is some thing different. Female member of the ST community are employed at a significantly in the plantation agriculture. Huge demand of female labour force for collection two young leaves and a bud for every attempt are required in the tea garden. ST female have been employed generations of the generation in the tea gardens of Terai, Duars and hills starting from the very beginning. So ST females are the integral part of earning number in the family. At the sametime ST are devoid of son fixation. So, there must be a balanced male, female in such community.

The recorded information from the census articulated in the table – shows that starting from 1951 number of male have always out numbered female for total population, general population, SC population as well as ST population. But the disparity is high for total population and general population, which is comparatively low for ST population and SC population with some exception of SC population in 1951 (14.12 %).

It is interesting to note that the difference between the percentage of male and female was high in the base point of this investigation (1951) and it has gradually decreased there of the irrespective of general, SC and ST population. The difference was 7.36%, 7.18%, 14.12% and 4.90% for total population, general population, SC population and ST population respectively at the base point of this enquiry. The difference has come down to 3.24% for total population 3.92 % for general population, 2.64% for SC population and 2.0% for ST population respectively at the end point of this enquiry (2001). It is worthy to mention here that the number of male and female has almost in a balanced state for SC and ST population of the distinct in 2001, as both type of population have shown the difference of only 2 % for ST population and a little bit higher for SC population (51% and 49% is considered as the balanced state).

Temporal Changes of Sex Composition

Temporal charge of male female composition in respect to difference of percentage of male and female over the six decades is almost homogeneous in the sense that there is a gradual decline of difference of male–female percentage with the exception of 1961 for

general and ST population where the difference has increased than the earlier. But for SC population, there is a sharp decline of difference from 14.12% to 4.98% in 1961, which is perhaps the reflection of partition of Bengal which points up higher male due to migration of male number of the tea estates in search of jobs.

Taking the gradual decline of difference percentage of male female population in a linear relation (the gradual decline is normally considered is linear relation), we can easily establish the rate of decline and there by balance of male female composition. For total population the linear equation is $y = 8.683 - (0.833) x$, where the rate of decline of difference is 0.833 %. So, mathematically with in a span of 5 decades 0.833×5 or 4.65 % of difference has reduced. Similarly the rate of decline of difference is 0.892 % for General population and 0.644 % for ST population. The rate of decline for ST population is the lowest as from the very beginning the difference was low and gradual decline was also low. The rate of decline is highest for SC population, due to its initial high loading (14.12 %). The rate of decline is almost double than the rate of decline of General population and triple to that of ST population. But of we disregard the initial high loading it will almost be equal to that of ST population. After all, there is a growing awareness of balanced male–female structure which is certainly a healthy sign for the society.

Table – 1: Male-Female Composition of ST Population, 1951 – 2001[3-8]

Year	Total Population		ST Population		SC Population		General Population	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
1951	53.68	46.32	52.45	47.55	57.06	42.94	53.59	46.41
1961	53.63	46.37	52.55	47.45	52.49	47.51	54.08	45.92
1971	53.14	46.86	51.62	48.38	52.96	47.04	53.46	46.54
1981	52.97	47.03	51.56	48.44	52.53	47.47	53.35	46.65
1991	52.26	47.74	51.23	48.77	52.16	47.84	52.48	47.52
2001	51.62	48.38	51.00	49.00	51.32	48.68	51.96	48.04

Source: District Census Handbook, Darjiling 1951 – 2001

Table –2: Trend of Male-Female Differences of Population, 1951 - 2001

	Total Population	ST Population	SC Population	General Population
1951	7.36	4.90	14.12	7.18
1961	7.26	5.10	4.98	8.16
1971	6.28	3.24	5.92	6.92
1981	5.94	3.12	5.06	6.70
1991	4.52	2.46	4.32	4.96
2001	3.24	2.00	2.64	3.92

For Total Pop: $D = 8.683 - 0.833 t$ $r = - 0.96$. For SC Pop: $D = 12.197 - 1.720 t$ $r = - 0.79$

For General Pop: $D = 8.919 - 0.746 t$ $r = -0.89$. For ST Pop: $D = 5.724 - 0.644 t$ $r = -0.95$
Source: District Census Handbook, Darjiling, 1951-2001

Sex Ratio of Population

Sex ratio is out and out one of the most important aspect of any type of demographic analysis. In the Indian sub-continent males are out numbered females. The same is true with the state of West Bengal also. In West Bengal males have always outnumbered females since 1901 when the sex ratio was 945 up to 1941 it was gradually going down in each census year and census 1951 marked a slight improvement (865) over that of 852 in 1941. In 1961 there were 878 female for every 1000 male populations in the state of West Bengal. After that it is gradually going up in each census year, which are 891 (1971), 911 (1981), 917 (1991), 933 (2001) and 947 (2011).

In the district of Darjiling there has been alternate rise and fall in the sex ratio since 1901. At the turn of the present century Darjiling has only 876 females to every 1000 male populations. In 1911, this proportion went further down to 871. The 1921 census marked an appreciable improvement in the proportion of sexes but in the next decade it again fell down to 881. There was slight rise in 1941. In 1951 again there was considerable fall in the sex ratio which was only 863 females for 1000 males. In 1961 census it has more or less remained stationery, the sex ratio only being 864. Except in 1941 Darjiling's sex ratio was always lower than that observed in the state of West Bengal taken as a whole. There was a slight rise 1971 (882), 1981 (888) and remarkable rise in 1991 (914) and 2001 (937).

Trend of Sex Ratio of ST Population

In highlighting sex ratio of scheduled tribe I have included here general and SC population, and thereby total population to make a distinctive comparison, as well as to study the scenario systematically. Taking a glance to the total population of the district, it is clear that there is a continuous rise to sex ratio from 1951 to 2001 where the rate of increase is higher for the urban component and relatively lower of the rural sex ratio for total population with the span of 50 years, the increase of sex ratio is 74, with a ladies of 863 in 1951 to 937 in 2001. The average rate of increase per decade is 14.66 per thousand. The sex ratio of rural population has increased to 956 in 2001 from 905 in 1951, with a difference of 51 points per thousand with a rate of 9.086 per 1000 per decade.

For urban component the scale of increase is higher (178) starting from 721 in 1951 to 899 in 2001. The average rate of increase is 45.37/’000 per decade.

The scenario is significantly different for ST population each component (total, rural and urban) is more balanced than the total population. It is true to the fact that both economically and culturally backward section of the society normally show more balance sex ratio, especially for scheduled tribe, as they do not believe in son fixation, like the mainstream Hindus and women enjoy more respectable position in the family matter. So male – female loading for total ST population is 906 in 1951 and 996 in 2001 with a decadal rate of 17.2 per thousand. The trend is almost same for rural population with initial loading of 911 and the final reading of 993 making almost perfect parity with total population. But female population of this category was not concentrated in the urban areas, as tribes were synonymous to ecological set up rather than urban set up as more male population would come to the urban areas for Job in the unskilled sector. For that reason the initial loadings of male-female ratio was 842 in 1951 and satisfactory steady increase thereafter with an outstanding performance of 1015 in 2001. The decadal increase is 35.94 per thousand.

To make parity, it should be noted from the table-T-6 that sex ratio of general population are maintaining parity with 866 in 1951 compared to 863 to the total population and 924 in 2001 compared to 937 to total. Similarly sex ratio of rural and urban counterpart of general population nearly confirm with the total population.

Table –3: Trend of Sex Ratio of Total Population, 1951-2001

Year	Total		Rural		Urban	
1951	863	SR = 841.4+14.457t r = 0.95	905	SR = 888.8 + 9.086 t r = 0.86	721	SR = 656.8 + 45.37 t r = 0.98
1961	864		909		731	
1971	882		910		793	
1981	888		911		830	
1991	914		934		868	
2001	937		956		899	

Table –4: Trend of Sex Ratio of ST Population, 1951-2001

Year	Total		Rural		Urban	
1951	906	SR = 878.467+17.2 t	911	SR = 886.2 + 15.087 t	842	SR = 806.53 + 35.943
1961	902		909		852	
1971	937		937		936	

1981	939	r = 0.93	935	r = 0.91	981	t r = 0.94
1991	952		949		968	
2001	996		993		1015	

Table –5: Trend of Sex Ratio of SC Population, 1951-2001

Year	Total		Rural		Urban	
1951	752	SR = 782.8+29.34t r = 0.80	810	SR = 844.13+18.2t r= 0.66	442	SR = 481.467+85.62t r= 0.89
1961	905		948		742	
1971	889		902		811	
1981	903		914		857	
1991	916		923		894	
2001	948		950		941	

Table –6: Trend of Sex Ratio of General Population, 1951-2001

Year	Total		Rural		Urban	
1951	866	SR = 835.4+13.17t r = 0.89	912	SR = 889.33+7.857t r = 0.77	728	SR = 782.8+29.34t r= 0.80
1961	849		900		719	
1971	871		905		781	
1981	874		903		817	
1991	905		932		859	
2001	924		948		888	

Source: Above tables Computed by the researcher

On the other hand, sex ratio of SC population is making a parity with the ST population with a relatively low threshold (752 for total, 810 for rural and 442 for urban in 1951, compared to 906 of total, 911 for rural and 842 for urban of scheduled tribe) but a sturdily satisfactory increase thereafter with a little bit exception in 1961.

Sex Ratio of Dominant ST Sub-groups

It is curious to note that as the sex ratio of ST in 2001 has attended almost perfect balance it is my interest to look at the temporal change of sex ratio of dominant ST. The loading of sex ratio of dominant ST sub groups reflect an interesting dynamics.

It has been stated earlier that out of the five dominant tribes Bhutia etc. and Lepcha has been concentrated in the north since long past, where as the Santal, Munda and Oraon and found in South of the district and outcome of migration for plantation farming from Bihar and Jharkhand.

The three sub-groups are found mainly in the plantation farming of the rural areas and sex ratio is very low even up to 1991 in urban areas, because, male tribal of these

communities come to the urban areas as factory labourers mainly or Government service holder preferably of low grade keeping their family in the rural areas.

But in the 2001 enumeration, the loading of sex ratio for urban areas are will above the thousand for Santal and Munda and the entire loading are above thousand for Oraon. Loading in urban areas before 2001 for Santal and Munda and for Oraon before 1991 were very low (less than 1/3 in the beginning and less the 2/3 before 2001 for Santal, while for Munda all time low except 1981).

Table –7: Sex Ratio of Dominant ST Sub –Groups, 1951-2001

Year	Oraon		Bhutia etc.		Lepcha		Munda		Santal	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1961	899	244	1088	785	988	1346	846	24	861	352
1971	942	733	1013	991	769	949	1022	-	921	523
1981	937	778	948	985	943	1089	903	-	925	593
1991	974	1037	917	992	874	938	1002	267	1072	596
2001	1001	1089	1017	988	968	1130	982	1135	990	1031

Source: Computed by the researcher

The rural loading of these three groups were below thousand up to 1981 for Santal and Munda and up to 1991 for Oraon. A peculiar change has been detected for change of sex ratio of Santal community from 1991 to 2001. The total and rural sex ratio was above thousand in 1991 which was come down to below thousand in 2001, where as sex ratio of urban component has almost doubles [from 596 to 1031] which is apparently not a normal behaviour. Similar doubtful situation can be observed for Munda, where enumeration of female male ratio was 267 in 1991, which has become 1135, almost four times of earlier. This is realistic because of low amount of population in this community where a significant rise can be expected for small amount of variation.

Bhutia etc., and Lepcha, more popularly known as the indigenous people of this area have different loading of sex ratio in the rural and urban parts. In the rural parts of Darjiling, Bhutia (including Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan and Yolmo) etc female has outnumbered the male in 1961, 1971 and 2001, and a little bit low in 1981 (948) and 1991 (917), where as urban sex ratio is all time low below the thousand with a sharp rise after 1961 and stagnation thereafter.

Sex ratio of Lepcha on the other hand have loading less than thousand for the most of the decade with the exception in 1961 (1018). Sex ratio in the urban part is all time high except in 1971 (549) and 1991 (938), where as is all time low below thousand. The peculiarity of sex ratio of Lepcha is that both the rural and the urban area are showing fluctuating trend with alternate ups and downs.

The most significant present scenario of the last decade is that all the five dominant tribes in the urban tract have loaded sex ratio more than thousand where as for rural component such high value is found for Oraon and Bhutia etc. only, while others have loading below thousand but very close to balanced sex ratio, which is significantly different from total population and general population.

References:

1. Agnihotri, S.B. (1997): Sex Ratio Patterns in the Indian Population: a fresh exploration, Sage, New Delhi, pp.81-101
2. Das, A.K., & R.N. Saha, R.Gupta, S.M.Chakraborty (ed.) (1991): West Bengal Tribes-Socio-economic and Cultural Life, Special Series.35, Bulletin of CRI, SC & TW Deptt., Govt of W.B., Calcutta, pp299-308.
3. District Census Handbook, 1961: *Darjeeling, Series 23, Part XIII, A & B, Directorate of Census Operations, Government of India, Calcutta, pp25-27*
4. District Census Handbook, 1971: *Darjeeling, Series-22, PartX-C, Directorate of Census Operations, Government of India, Calcutta, pp156-176*
5. District Census Handbook, 1981: *Darjiling, Series-23, PartXIII-B, Directorate of Census Operations, Government of India, Calcutta, pp22-33*
6. District Census Handbook, 1991: *Darjiling, Series-26, PartXII-B, Directorate of Census Operations, West Census of India, Calcutta, pp1-7*
7. District Census Handbook: 2001 *Darjiling, Directorate of Census Operations, Government of India, Kolkata, pp320-325*
8. Mitra, A.: *Census of 1951, District Handbooks Darjeeling, West Bengal Government Press, Alipore, pp95*