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Tribal Migration in Indian Censuses: A Neglected and Litigated Area

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Abstract

Tribe and caste migration in Indian Censuses did not get proper attention during the colonial as well as post-independence periods. Censuses in the post-independence period have followed a conservative approach to enumerating tribes, castes and religions. The migration data on Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) have been presented since the 2001 Census, but its scope is limited. The enumeration of inter-state migration of STs is entangled in legislative jargon. When tribes in India have dipped into severe poverty and unemployment, forcefully alienated from forests and hills, confronted development-induced displacement, and migrated by distress driven to the urban centres in distant places in search of jobs. When the demand for independent territory or statehood, such as Nagalim, Zale'n-gam and many others, consolidating the tribal inhabited areas bifurcated into three to four neighbouring states leads to insurgency and mass cross-border movement of ethnic groups. The presumption of ST migration within the jurisdiction of the State/UT of enumeration in the Censuses during the post-independence period is delusive and very irrational. The study provides insight into such limitations of Census data on tribal migration, legislative jargon and politics involved with it. It also discusses the nature of provided data on tribal migration in colonial Censuses and the independence period.

Keywords: Tribal Migration; Politics on Migration; Colonial Censuses; SCs and STs; Tribal Majority Districts

Introduction

Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India are the most marginalised section among social groups in most social indicators (MoTA, 2013). Overall, 40.6 per cent of STs live below the poverty line, against the non-STs is 20.5 per cent (MoHFW, 2018). According to the 2011 Census, the main workers who are engaged in work for more than six months in a year among the STs declined by 2.2 per cent from the 2001 Census. On the other hand, marginal workers, who do not get a job for the major part of a year, increased by 1.9 per cent during 2001-11 (Census of India, 2001, 2011). Collection of forest products, hunting and gathering, shifting cultivation, pastor and nomadic herder, and creative manufacturing are the principal means of living for most of the tribes in India. In the 2011 Census, two-thirds of the STs were engaged in primary sectors. They heavily relied on farming (79 per cent) as cultivators (34.6 per cent) and agricultural labourers (44.4 per cent) (Census of India, 2011). It is conspicuous that cultivators among the STs declined by 10.1 per cent between the 2001 and 2011 Census, whereas agricultural labours increased by 8.0 per cent. It indicates the marginalisation of tribal livelihoods (MoHFW, 2018). Several empirical studies (Kesari and Bhagat, 2012, 2013; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Deshingkar and Start, 2003; Breman, 1978) suggest that a sheer proportion of temporary migrants belongs to socially unprivileged classes, STs and

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Scheduled Castes (SCs), and it is distressed driven. In an agro-based economy like India, the temporary or seasonal migration of poor and socially backward sections is a ‘risk-coping strategy’ through income diversification of work from farm to the non-farm sector (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Breman, 1994). It is estimated that around 3.5 million tribes left farming and entered the informal labour market in major cities in India in the 2000s (MoTA, 2014).

Tribals are scattered over large areas in the country, mainly in hilly areas, which are endowed with minerals and forest resources. Forests and hills are the basis of their socio-cultural and religious identity, livelihood, and existence. The conversion of lands in the name of development projects puts tribal livelihoods all over India at stake, and they are project-affected or forcefully displaced from their traditional habitats (Fernandes, 2006). The report on ‘Tribal Health in India’ prepared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) in 2018 mentioned that out of 21.3 million displaced persons, around 40 per cent, that is nearly 8.52 million, were tribes displaced during 1951-1990 due to mining, dam construction, industries, wildlife sanctuaries, and other mega projects (MoHFW, 2018). Another report on the socio-economic, health and education status of STs by the MoTA in 2014 claimed the figure of 20.41 million displaced persons (DPs) and project-affected persons (PAPs) from 13 States, out of which 30.70 per cent or 6.3 million are STs (MoTA, 2014). The governments have no exact figure for DPs/PAPs (Fernandes, 2004).

The tribal migration in India is distress-driven and increasing in trend (Mahapatra, 2018). The census data on the migration of STs are very recent inclusion, and its scope is limited and trapped in constitutional provisions. Without accurate data, policy interventions for tribal rights and implications of resettlements and rehabilitation packages fall flat on their face (Fernandes, 2004). In the meantime, it is also a tactic of ruling governments in state and centre to avoid or suppress the extent and magnitude of tribal issues on the excuse of data void (Fernandes et al., 2012).

Moreover, the study on migration in India is highly skewed toward the neoclassical economic approach. Migration is often attributed to economically driven such as poverty-induced (Deshingkar, 2010; Kundu and Sarangi, 2007; de Haan, 1997), driven by unemployment and job opportunities (Mistri, 2021, 2022; Srivastava, 2011, 2021; Reja and Das, 2019), and seasonality related to agri-labourers (Keshri and Bhagat, 2012, 2013; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Deshingkar and Start, 2003), lured by the urbanisation and economic development (Bhagat, 2018; Kundu and Saraswati, 2012; Kundu, 2003), and so on. Even in the Censuses in the colonial period, economic drivers, such as indentured labour migration to tea, rubber and other plantation, seasonal and temporary migration in agriculture, and distressed migrants to the big cities and industrial and mining areas, were utmost accentuation to the data dissemination and discussion (Hutton, 1933; Gait, 1913; Riskey and Gait, 1903a, b; Baines, 1893). The socio-cultural and demographic characteristics, such as religion, race, caste and tribe, gender, social network and other human capitals, have been given less priority—the data limitation bottlenecks to exploring such migration-relational.

Objectives and Data Sources:

The present study attempts to provide insight into the limitations of census data on tribal migration, its legislative jargon and politics to enumeration and dissemination. The nature of provided data on tribal migration in colonial censuses and the independence period is

discussed with empirical rigour. The tribal migration from tribal majority districts is also brought under the purview of the discussion to represent the magnitude and spatial pattern of tribal migration in recent times.

Published census reports in British India from 1872 to 1941 and the reports in the post-independence period are thoroughly reviewed. Most of the reports are freely available in the 'Census Digital Library' maintained by the Office of the Registrar General and the Census Commissioner of India (ORG&CCI) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Government of India (GoI). The soft data of the population census in India are available from the 1991 census. The reference tables for Migration, D-series, are intensively exercised for the study. Different reports on tribal livelihoods and health by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) are also consulted.

Tracing the Tribal Migration in the Censuses

Although data on religion, caste and tribe have been collected since the inception of the Indian census in 1872, data on migration classified by religion, case and tribe has not been given adequate attention in the censuses of British India as well as post- -independence period. Post- -independence censuses did not provide migration data classified by religious communities, though it was sparsely available in the censuses in British India (Hutton, 1933; Risley and Gait, 1903a, b). Apart from the volume of religious migrants cross-classified by distance, colonial censuses tried to attribute the nature of migration.

“The Hindu, in particular, when he leaves his permanent home, suffers from many disadvantages;..... It is therefore very seldom that he permanently severs his connection with his birthplace, and although he may go abroad in search of a better livelihood than he can get in his own country, his exile is, as a rule, only temporary;..... The Muhammadan is not so circumscribed by caste prejudices, but in practice he is found to be almost equally reluctant to go very far from his ancestral home.” (Risley and Gait, 1903a, p.88).

The migration of tribes was reported in the colonial censuses in the context of contracted labour migration to the tea gardens in Assam and Darjeeling (Risley and Gait, 1903a, b). But it did not provide a detailed account of how many (total) tribes migrated from different provinces, the name of the tribes and their clans.

“..... foreign-born denizens of Assam have risen from half to three-quarters of a million, and now form no less than an eighth of the population of the province..... Most of these, emigrants belong to the hardy aboriginal tribes of the Chota Nagpur plateau, who are in especial demand,.....” (Risley and Gait, 1903a, p.128).

General characteristics, such as push-pull factors of migration, trafficking by the recruiting agents and their indentureship, were portrayed in detail.

“The local supply of labour is thus wholly inadequate and the planters, being forced to seek for coolies at a distance..... Owing to the extension of tea cultivation there has of late been a great increase in the volume of recruitment, especially in 1897 when famine acted as a powerful stimulant to emigration.” (Risley and Gait, 1903a, p.128)

Mass recruitment to the tea plantation through the channel of middlemen by a contract of 1-4 years staying in gardens took the form of a 'great recruiting business', and labours had been started to abuse (Gait, 1913; Risely and Gait, 1903a). A new Labour -Act was passed in 1901 by the Britishers to curve labour trafficking.

Detailed castes enumeration was discontinued since the 1941 Census according to the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1936. Only Scheduled Castes (SCs) were enumerated after the 1931 Census. In post-independence India, the newly formed Government was scared to resume the detailed caste census. It might break down communal harmony, peace and unification of the Indian nation (Gill, 2007; Bhagat, 2006; Deshpande and Sundar, 1998). In the first census (in 1951) in independence India, castes and tribes enumeration started as per the state-specific schedule approved by the President of India under the constitutional provisions, Articles 341 and 342. With the discontinuation of the detailed castes enumeration, except for SCs and STs, after the 1931 Census, migration data classified by caste and tribe was not presented by the census commissioner until the 1991 Census. Even the provided migration data of SCs and STs since the 2001 Census are merely a showcase data; these hardly serve the purpose.

A Chronology: Attributes of Migration Data in Censuses

Migration data has been collected in Indian Censuses since the 1872 Census. Until the 1961 Census, data on migration had been collected only based on 'place of birth' (Mitra, 1966). A question on birthplace is asked to ascertain the district, state and provinces (in British India) of the place of birth; if a person was born at a place other than the place of enumeration- is defined as a migrant by place of birth (PoB).

Census in British India until the 1941 Census, the key features of migration data were-reporting the volume of migration, migration within India with the maps of 'main currents of inter-provincial migration' and 'ebb and flow of migration between the contiguous province and states', immigration from foreign countries, and specific demographic and economic characteristics of migration, such as women migration led by marriage customs, contracted-labour migration- majority 'hardy aboriginal tribes' to the tea gardens of Assam and Darjeeling, migration 'influx into Bengal', especially Central and West Bengal, in the mills and coal mines, and earth workers and field labourer, temporary and seasonal migration to Burma for rice-harvesting and -milling, and oil and other industries, and Indian emigration to Ceylon and Malaya and their indebtedness (Hutton, 1933; Gait, 1913; Risley and Gait, 1903a; Baines, 1893). Since the 1911 Census, an attempt was made to categorise the 'nature of migration', viz., casual or minor movements, temporary, periodic, semi-permanent, and permanent. (Hutton, 1933; Gait, 1913). The commuter or 'daily migration' (together 26,000) in Bombay and Calcutta from outside the cities by train only and the same phenomenon in Central Provinces were mentioned in the 1931 Census (Hutton, 1933).

During the 1872-1941 Census in colonial India, the questionnaire based on PoB had gradually been structured to make it more authentic, detailed and disseminated comprehensively. The 1961 Census was a landmark- it widened the scope of data acquisition to fill up the data void (Narayanan, 1975). Questions related to birthplace- rural or urban, duration of residence and nationality were added to elicit migration data (Mitra, 1966). Moreover, different tables D-I to VI presented migration classified by age-sex group, level of education, and categories of workers (Mitra, 1966). In the 1971 Census, a new question, 'place of last residence' (PoLR),

was added to yield valuable and realistic data on migration. If a person had another place of normal residence irrespective of his PoB before he/she came to the present place of enumeration – is defined as a migrant by PoLR.

Legislative Jargon: Enumeration of Tribal Migration

The migration data on SCs and STs suffers enumeration difficulties (Bhagat, 2006). In the independence period, for the first time, migration data on SCs and STs was published in the 2001 Census after 1941. SCs and STs are enumerated in the censuses based on the State/UT-specific schedule approved by the President of India after consultation with the Governor of the state concerned. Clause (1) of Articles 341 and 342 in the Constitution of India confer such power to the President of India. Enumerators must follow the schedule of the State/UT of enumeration during the census to ensure the ST or SC is truthfully returned (ORG&CCI, 2011). The name of the SCs and STs in the list varies from state to state. If a ST or SC migrates to other states, the status by the origin state will not transfer or be considered by the destination state. There is a legal issue recognising STs and SCs of one State/UT as a part of the total population in the destination state/UT while migrating.

Since the 1971 Census, migration has been captured based on PoB and PoLR, where birthplace or last residence differs from the present place of enumeration- recorded on the census household schedule as a migrant. If birthplace or last residence falls within (or coincides with) the state of enumeration, no issue is raised to detect migrants with SC or ST status. If birthplace or last residence falls outside the enumeration states, a legal issue arises to recognise a migrant with SC or ST status. The census enumeration follows the SC and ST schedule of the state of enumeration concerned to reckon the status of migrants (ORG&CCI, 2011). This legal jargon limits the enumeration of or representing the Inter-state migration of STs and SCs.

The reference tables D2 and D3 for India in the 2001 and 2011 Census provide inter-state migration by PoLR and its reasons for migration, respectively, but tables D2 and D3 for ST and SC at the India (national) level are not available. The census organisation not only dropped the reference tables D2 and D3 at the Indian level but also avoided any D-Tables at the national level for SC and ST. The State specific ST migration tables provide intra-state (within-state) migration, which includes intra-district and inter-district tribal migration. These never help to figure out the inter-state migration of ST and the total figure at the national level. Against the backdrop of legal jargon, it is hard to believe that tribal migration is limited to the state boundary when tribals all over India have encountered the hardship of poverty, land alienation, loss of forest rights, and large-scale development-induced displacement and project affected. The presumption that tribal migration is limited to the state boundary in the Census of India is how much delusive is discussed successively.

Politics on Migration Data:

Though census enumeration seems an apolitical affair, it is influenced by the country's political process (Bhagat, 2006). Subtle politics is involved with the 'categorisation of census materials', 'changes in census categories over time, and 'changes in data details' by caste, tribe and religion (Gill, 2007). Censuses in British India categorised and enumerated details of various religions, castes and tribes, whereas Censuses in independence India enumerated only SCs, STs, and major religious communities. M. S. Gill (2007) defined this curtailment of categories during

post-independence censuses as a process of erasing socio-cultural differences in the country led by mainstream parties, making India a more homogenised nation. Except for SCs and STs, the detailed caste census was discontinued after the 1931 Census by the Government of India (SCs) Order of 1936. It was resumed in the 2011 Census after a decades-long debate but again decided to drop in the 2021 Census due to ‘administrative difficulties and cumbersome’ (Sampath, 2021). But castes data in the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)- 2011 has not been published as of yet, and no hope of future publishing (Mandal, 2022).

From employment data to statistics on crime, the ruling Modi government has often been accused of hiding official statistics and delaying the publication of controversial data (Daniyal, 2019). Reference table-D for migration data of the 2011 Census was the last priority to publish- the first provisional data for migration came out sometime in 2015. The Census of India has collected reasons for migration since 1981 in seven categories: work/employment, business, education, marriage, moved after birth, moved with household, and others. The category ‘natural calamities’ as one of the reasons for migration was excluded, and a new reason ‘moved after birth’ was added in the 2001 Census. When ‘natural calamities’ are excluded from the primary category, it automatically merges with ‘other’ reasons, which now include natural calamities or hazards and socio-economic and political stressors, such as riots, conflict and political unrest. The ORG &CCI did not provide any clarifications in this regard. There may be political intentions to hide the large volume of forced and distressed migrants in India (Mistri, 2022). However, one also should not forget that the census authorities face limitations of recording everything potentially pertinent detail.

Intra-state ST Migration: Volume, Share and Changes

Four out of every ten Indian are migrants in the 2011 Census (Mistri, 2022). A total of 455.8 million, or 37.6 per cent of 1.2 billion Indians, reported as migrants in the 2011 Census. Out of 1.2 billion Indians, 104.5 million or 9.0 per cent, were STs in 2011. Around 31.4 million, including 25.6 million intra-district and 5.6 million inter-district, were enumerated as intra-state (within-state) tribal migrants as per PoLR (Table 1). It is nearly 30 per cent of the 104.5 million STs in India. It means three out of every ten STs are (intra-state) migrants, whereas the all-India average is four migrants in every ten. The point to be noted here, the all-India figure comprises three streams: intra-state, inter-state and immigrants, but the tribal figure only includes intra-state (inter- and intra- district) migration. The intra-state tribal migration has increased over the census periods (Table 1). It recorded an increase of nearly 8.0 per cent or 12.7 million between 2001 and 2011. Tribals mostly preferred intra-district migration compared to inter-districts (Table 1).

Table 1. Intra-state ST Migration in India, 2001 and 2011 Census

Types of Migrants	2001 Census		2011 Census		Change 2001-11 Migrants
	Migrants	Percentage	Migrants	Percentage	
Intra-district	15,577,742	83.4	25,600,334	81.5	10,022,592
Inter-district	3,089,638	16.6	5,568,719	17.7	2,479,081
Unclassifiable	-	-	225,145	0.7	-
Intra-state	18,667,380	100	31,394,198	100.0	12,726,818

Source: Computed from Table D2, Census of India, 2001 and 2011

In the 2011 Census, nine states, namely Madhya Pradesh (13.7 per cent), Maharashtra (12.7 per cent), Odisha (9.9 per cent), Gujarat (8.6 per cent), Rajasthan (8.0 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (7.5 per cent), Chhattisgarh (7.0 per cent), Jharkhand (6.6 per cent) and West Bengal (4.7 per cent), cumulatively possessed more than three-quarters (78.7 per cent) of the total intra-state ST migrants in India. All these states, except West Bengal, include Fifth Scheduled Areas as per Article 244(1) of the Constitution of India. The Fifth and Sixth Scheduled Areas are the constitutional safeguard to protect the cultural distinctiveness of the tribes, and it allows administrative autonomy for their development.

Table 2. State-wise Intra-State Migration of ST by PoLR in the 2011 Census

States/UTs	ST Population	Migrants	Per cent*	States/UTs	ST Population	Migrants	Per cent*
Goa	149,275	97,288	65.2	Chhattisgarh#	7,822,902	2,189,506	28.0
A&N Islands	28,530	11,917	41.8	West Bengal	5,296,953	1,481,128	28.0
Kerala	484,839	200,201	41.3	Daman & Diu	15,363	4,184	27.2
Andhra Pradesh#	5,918,073	2,351,220	39.7	Rajasthan#	9,238,534	2,513,964	27.2
Arunachal Pradesh	951,821	373,568	39.2	Tripura**	1,166,813	289,201	24.8
Maharashtra#	10,510,213	3,984,375	37.9	Manipur	1,167,422	287,940	24.7
Karnataka	4,248,987	1,432,902	33.7	Jharkhand#	8,645,042	2,076,202	24.0
Assam**	3,884,371	1,294,548	33.3	Uttar Pradesh	1,134,273	267,645	23.6
Uttarakhand	291,903	96,655	33.1	Nagaland	1,710,973	395,876	23.1
Odisha#	9,590,756	3,101,899	32.3	Lakshadweep	61,120	13,854	22.7
Tamil Nadu	794,697	251,141	31.6	Meghalaya**	2,555,861	577,786	22.6
Himachal Pradesh#	392,126	123,248	31.4	Bihar	1,336,573	301,683	22.6
Mizoram**	1,036,115	317,465	30.6	J&K	1,493,299	267,794	17.9
Gujarat#	8,917,174	2,688,446	30.1	D&N Haveli	178,564	30,203	16.9
Sikkim	206,360	59,071	28.6	India	104,545,716	31,394,198	30.0
Madhya Pradesh#	15,316,784	4,313,288	28.2				

Note.

* Percentage of ST-migrants to total STs population of the States/UTs concerned

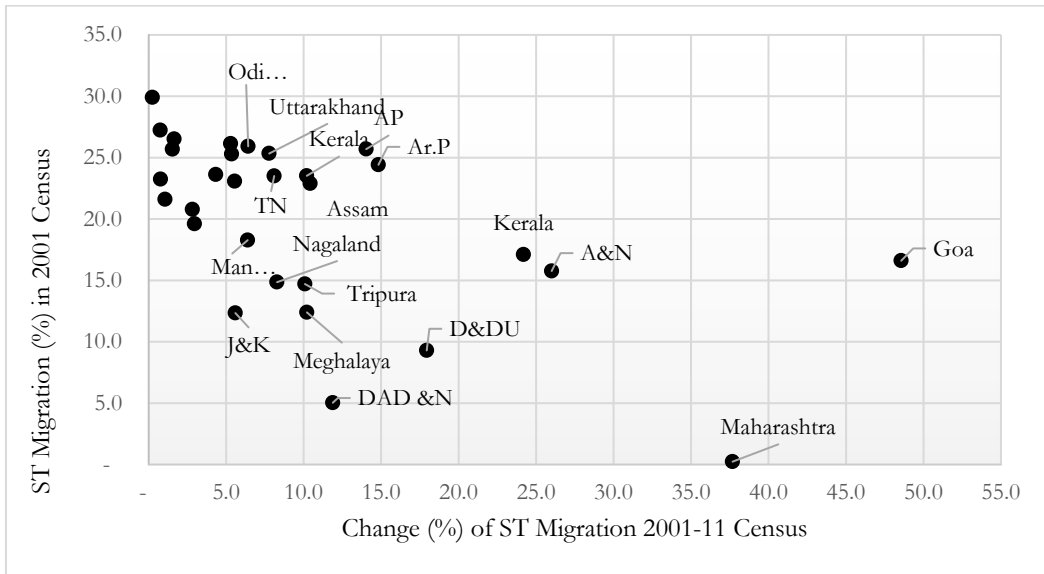
** States having Sixth Schedule Areas under Articles 244(2) and 275(1)] in the Constitution of India

States having Fifth Schedule Areas under Article 244(1) in the Constitution of India

Source: Computed from Census of India, 2011

Table 2 shows the share of ST migrants to the total STs of the States/UTs concerned. The highest proportion of ST migration was reported within the state of Goa (65.2 per cent) in 2011. Goa is followed by Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Assam. Among the UTs, Andaman and Nicobar Islands (A&N) reported the highest (41.8 per cent) share of ST migrants. It has been mentioned that intra-state ST migration increased by nearly 8.0 per cent during the 2001-11 Census. Goa reported the highest increase, 48.6 per cent, followed by Maharashtra, Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (Figure 1). A&N Islands, among the UTs, reported the highest increase, 26.0 per cent, during that period. A&N Islands is followed by Daman and Diu (D&DU) and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DAD&N).

Figure 1. Proportional Change of Intra-state ST Migration, 2001-2011 Census

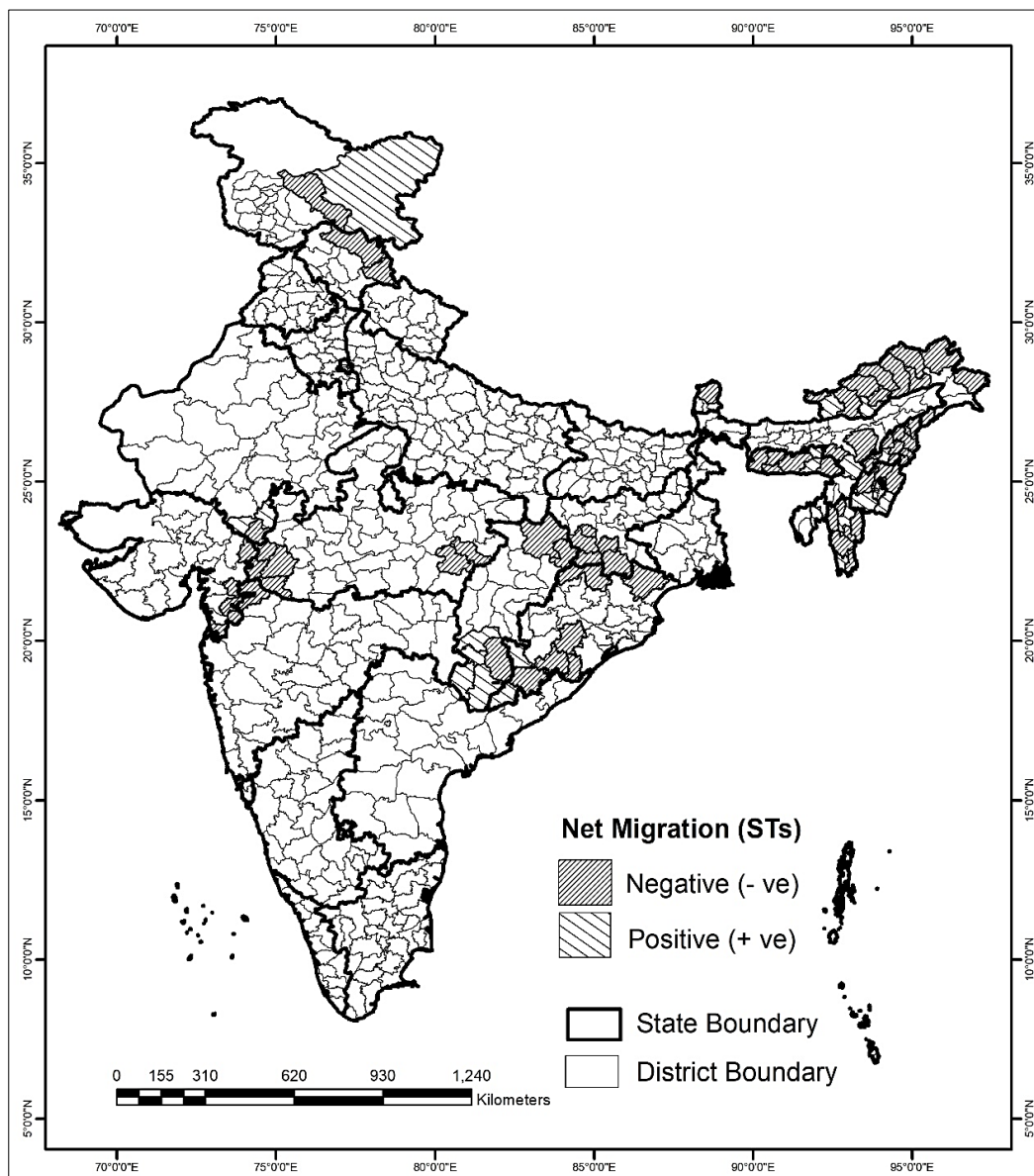


Source: Computed from Table D2, Census of India, 2001 and 2011

Migration from Tribal Majority Districts:

According to the 2011 Census, there were 90 districts or 809 blocks with more than 50 per cent ST population, which includes nearly 45 per cent of the total STs in the country. Out of the 104.5 million STs, 33.6 million or 32 per cent, live in 90 tribal (STs) majority districts (Map-1). The rests, 70.9 million or 86 per cent, live in 495 non-tribal minority districts. The 90 ST majority districts are scattered over 20 States/UTs- 37 and 18 districts are from the states having Fifth and Sixth Scheduled Areas, respectively. Another 30 districts are from North-East states, excluding the Sixth Scheduled states, and the rest, five districts from other States/UTs. Altogether, 48 ST majority districts are located in the eight sister North-East States.

Out of 90 tribal majority districts, 88 districts’ net migration, the balance between in and out-migration in the 2011 Census is estimated. Net migration suggests loss of ST population if the balance is negative (-ve) or gains if the balance is positive (+ve) by the districts for various reasons. Lakshadweep and DAD&N are administratively constituted by only one district each; hence, two districts are excluded from the estimation of inter-district net migration for technical reasons. The net estimation reveals that out of 88 ST majority districts, 77 per cent or 68 districts witness a negative balance of migration against the net positive of 23 per cent or 20 districts. It infers that more STs were migrated out from the tribal majority districts compared to entering into the districts in the 2011 Census. A substantial proportion, 48 per cent, or 42 districts, are estimated to have negative net migration from the states having Fifth and Sixth schedule areas. In a nutshell, the magnitude of (intra-state) tribal migration is more or less comparable to overall migration in India, and tribals are observed to be more migratory in the states having Fifth and Sixth Scheduled Areas.

Map 1. STs Majority District-Cluster, with Net Balance of Migration in 2011 Census

Source: Computed from State/UT specific ST Table D-11, Census of India, 2011

Tribal Majority District-Clusters: An Inference of Inter-state Migration

Map 1 shows the spatial distribution of ST majority districts with the net balance of migration based on the 2011 Census. Tribal majority districts cluster over more than one neighbouring state; most of them, 77 per cent, are net-negative. Hilly districts (Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong and Churachandpir) of Manipur and Assam (Dima Hassao, Karbi Anglong), along with tribal majority states, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, form a wide stretched cluster of ST majority districts in North-East India. In Eastern India, Mayurbhanj and

Sundargarh district from Odisha, West Singhbhum, Khunti, Simdega, Gumla and Lohardaga from Jharkhand, and Jashpur and Surguja from Chhattisgarh form a district cluster, which is very rich in mineral resources. Another district cluster is comprised of Bijapur, Dakshin Bastar Dantewada, Bastar, Narayanpur and Uttar Bastar Kanker districts in the Southern part of Chhattisgarh and border districts, namely Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Kandhamal and Nabarangpur, of Odisha. This cluster is often reported as the Maoist insurgency. In Western India, an elongated cluster is found along the border of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. In Northern India, a small cluster with four districts, two from each of the states, Himachal Pradesh and then J&K, was observed in 2011.

The tribal majority district cluster was variously bifurcated to fall into three to four states at the time of the reorganisation of states (Gill, 2007). This gerrymandering is a subtle politics to dilute demographic strength, which is the basis of political bargaining in democratic politics in India (Gill, 2007). Thus, tribals lost their sizable share by distributing in neighbouring states and being incapable of making a meaningful impact in any of the concerned states. According to Article 19(1)(e) in the constitution of India, every citizen of India has the right "to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India." Therefore, tribals residing in border districts can freely move to neighbouring states for livelihood and other purposes.

Moreover, when a tribal community is shattered into many neighbouring states, it becomes a cause of ethnic tension and insurgency on demand for consolidation and political aspiration of 'self-determination' (Shimray, 2001, 2004). The demand for 'Nagalim' or Greater Nagaland consolidation of Naga clans spreading over Manipur, Assam, Arunachal, and across the border of Myanmar is still a great apprehension, which often turns into ethnic hostility and creates political unrest in Northeast India (Mistri, 2022). Likewise, the demand for the 'Zale'n-gam' or independence of a Kuki nation amalgamation of the Kuki-Chin territories of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh is also a matter of apprehension (Haokip, 2015). There are many more such demands in the Northeast, which are very mobile and dynamic. However, in such conditions, inter-state migration of particular tribal communities is rampant and evoked by ethnic sentiment. The presumption that tribal migration is confined within the jurisdiction of the State/UT of enumeration in the Indian Censuses in the post-independence period is delusive and very irrational. The census organisation and concerned the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) should think logically and find an amicable solution to capture the inter-state migration of STs in future Censuses.

Conclusion

Tribal migration in Indian censuses never gets proper attention during the colonial or independence period. Though the detailed information on tribal migration was limited, colonial censuses attempted to provide a broad overview of the labour migration of tribes from distant provinces to the tea plantation in Assam and Darjeeling. Reporting of the flow of hardy tribal labourers and their precarious condition in indenture had been led solely by the economic intentions to mitigate the crisis of labours from the distant provinces where aboriginal people resided. The censuses in the independence period have shown a more conservative approach to the enumeration of religions, castes and tribes. Propaganda by majoritarian politics to homogenise India by erasing the complex socio-cultural groups has influenced the Censuses to modify or curtail the categories and change data details of castes, tribes and religions over time. Detailed migration data on SCs and STs have been introduced

since the 2001 Census, but its scope is limited; restricted within the State/UT. State/UT specific schedule to assert the SCs and STs under the constitutional provision, Articles 341 and 342, delimits the enumeration of SCs and STs within the State/UT concerned.

Tribals in India have dipped into severe poverty and unemployment and are more marginalised than other backward groups. They are often distress-driven. Forcefully land alienation in the forests and hills in the name of development projects in different parts of India has evoked mass grievances and agitation among the tribes, put their livelihoods in peril, and forced them to be displaced and migrate to the urban centres in search of jobs. A severe data gap is observed at the national level. Data void misleads the extent and magnitude of the tribals' distress, and the implementation of various development schemes falls flat.

Moreover, gerrymandering the tribal majority areas into three to four neighbouring states at the time of the reorganisation of states has weakened the political strength of tribes and created an atmosphere of widespread discontent. The demand for independent territory or statehood, such as *Nagalim*, *Zale'n-gam* and many more, lead to insurgency and mass cross-border movement of ethnic groups. Hence, the presumption of tribal migration limited within the state of enumeration in the post-independence Censuses is very delusive. Being responsible for providing detailed socio-economic and demographic data, the Census of India should take it seriously.

The enumeration difficulties of inter-state ST migration can be overcome by digital intervention. The MoHF announced digital enumeration in the 2021 census. One question related to belonging ST community in the state of origin can be added to migration background characteristics along with others, such as reasons for migration, rural-urban migration streams and duration of staying. The name of the ST returned by the migrant respondent will be verified digitally by the preloading ST list of origin States/UT. The same exercise can also be done for the SC migrants.

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